

KOPAN COURSE NO. 39  
LAMRIM TEACHINGS FROM KOPAN 2006

BY

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Lightly edited by Gordon McDougall, December 2022

Archive # 1587

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LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE

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## Lecture 1: The Best Psychology Is the Dharma

*[No dates were given for these lectures]*

### THE DHARMA IS SOMETHING WE HAVE NOT ENCOUNTERED BEFORE

Good evening to everyone. We are all here this time [for this course]. You all came from very far away, from many countries, at great expense, crossing over the land, crossing over the Pacific Ocean, coming from another planet—from Mars, from Venus, from all those stars!

I remembered saying this once to Tim McNeill, the head of Wisdom Publications, which publishes many different Dharma books, making Buddhism available in the world for people to learn, to awaken their minds, to develop their wisdom and compassion, and ultimately, to achieve cessation of all the suffering and the causes, and achieve full enlightenment. He has been working for Wisdom Publications for a long time. I had arrived in Boston, a very big city in the United States, and Tim was driving me in.

From this huge city, he had come all the way to Kopan Monastery in Nepal, this one particular person. There are millions of people, but this one specific person had come all the way from Boston, United States, to Nepal, a small country, to Kathmandu, to Kopan Monastery. He came all the way to do something new in his life, to have a new insight, a different way of thinking. He wanted a new way of thinking, not living life always with the old way of thinking but a new, healthy way of thinking, a better way of thinking, for a better life, for real happiness, for liberation and enlightenment.

I found it very interesting that this particular person had come here all the way from this big city where there are many millions of people, like he was picked up. A bird or somebody didn't pick him up, an eagle or something. Or an airplane picking him up! Anyway, I'm joking. That person's karma from a past life had ripened, to come to this place, to experience Nepal, to experience Kopan and to meet the Buddhadharma. His karma to meet the Buddhadharma had ripened and particularly the karma to come here, to Kopan Monastery, to learn meditation, to strive for liberation and enlightenment.

This is something that had never happened to any of us before from beginningless rebirths, something we had never experienced before. Because of that, we have experienced endless rebirths, being reborn again and again, dying again and again, getting old and being sick again and again, and having all those problems such as relationship problems, depression, unable to find desirable objects, and so on. Even after meeting a desirable object after years of effort, there is still no satisfaction. We can't get peace and happiness. Our inner life is totally empty, an empty hole filled with dissatisfaction and misery.

All these experiences, these samsaric pleasures or samsaric sufferings, whatever we achieve in this life, there is nothing new; we have experienced them numberless times in the past. Even achieving the perfect meditation, perfect concentration free from the attachment scattering thoughts and sinking thoughts. By achieving that perfect meditation, we attained the form realm numberless times, those god realms where there is no suffering of pain.

All the suffering of samsara comes into three categories: the suffering of pain, which is very gross; and the suffering of change, which refers to samsaric pleasure that is only suffering labeled

on a suffering feeling that is too subtle to notice; [and pervasive compounding suffering]. We only feel the suffering of change as suffering when it becomes gross enough to notice, when we feel it is unbearable. While it is unnoticeable as suffering, our mind labels it as “pleasure” and we believe in that label. We do not believe according to reality, that this is pleasure merely labeled by mind. Being merely labeled by the mind as pleasure is the reality, however, after the mind labels “pleasure” onto that feeling, it does not appear back as merely labeled by the mind. It appears back in the wrong way, as a hallucination. That is, it appears back as *not* merely labeled by mind, not having come from our mind, not created by our mind, not labeled by our mind, and to go more finely, as not *merely* labeled by mind. That feeling appears to exist from its own side, or even more grossly, as totally existing from its own side. In reality, this is not there at all; there is not even the slightest atom of it. Not merely labeled by the mind but existing from its own side—and not only completely existing but totally existing, that is a projection; that is false.

Then, we grasp onto that, causing attachment to arise. That becomes the immediate cause to reincarnate in samsara. The root is ignorance, but attachment is the immediate cause.

Even at the time of death, what causes us to be thrown into our future rebirth is the karmic seed, craving and grasping. When the craving becomes stronger, it is called “grasping,” and those two cause the karmic seed left on the mental continuum to produce our future rebirth, which is in the nature of suffering. In the realm we are reborn into we again experience all the sufferings that we have experienced already numberless times before. So, you see, the nearest cause is attachment. Craving and grasping are in the nature of attachment, the nearest cause of the next rebirth.

If the negative karma to be reborn in the lower realms is stronger, then attachment, craving and grasping, arises and activates the karmic seed to be reborn in the lower realms. If good karma is stronger, then that causes us to be reborn in the higher realms, in the body of a happy transmigratory being, but again it is the same, craving and grasping activates the seed for this to happen. Just as pouring water on the seeds we have already planted makes them sprout, so the karmic seed produces the future rebirth, as a god or human, which has again all the problems, which again is in the nature of suffering. Although, of course, it is only in the nature of suffering, generally speaking there is much more samsaric pleasure experienced with the body of a happy migratory being compared to the lower realms.

I think you have probably gone through meditations on the cause of samsara, the delusions, recognizing their shortcomings, how they are wrong concepts, ignorance, anger, attachment, and so forth. I think you may have gone through that meditation on how these delusions are wrong concepts and how they are harmful.

### **ATTACHMENT IS THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM IN OUR LIFE**

Attachment, in particular, is the foundation of our life’s problems. It is the fundamental problem of our life. No matter how much wealth we have acquired in this world, even if we own the whole world, if we are the only rich person in the world or own the god realms that have hundreds of thousands of times—millions of times—greater enjoyment than all the greatest material comfort and development of the richest country [in our world]. Even if we become king of those realms, there is always the thought of wanting more; we still can’t get satisfaction.

Why do we still have suffering? Why are we still not really happy in our heart? There is no real peace in our heart, in our inner life, no peace, no happiness. There is still a hole missing; we still want more: more power, a greater reputation in the world, more of everything.

That fundamental problem, the whole thing, is because we are continuously dissatisfied. No matter how many friends we can have in this world, how much wealth and reputation we achieve, whatever sensual objects we are able to obtain, in our heart dissatisfaction is always there. We always want better. Even regarding friends, we find one friend but we want better, we want something different, something more. It's always like this. Whatever samsaric pleasure we have: the pleasure of food, sleep, sex, we always want something more, something better. To get satisfaction we always want more and more and more, but we never reach that point.

This fundamental problem is a very simple thing. Because we follow attachment, we have so far been unable to find satisfaction. We have not been able to find peace in our heart. The mistake is following attachment.

And in the same way, in future, no matter how much we are able to obtain all these sensual objects in the world, we can never get satisfaction—forever. Even if we are able to live for billions of eons in this world, even if we own the whole world and we are the only rich person in the world or whatever, because of following attachment, we can never get satisfaction, never get this inner peace and happiness.

Even if we reincarnate in the god realm, it is the same. As long as our mind follows attachment, we can never get satisfaction, this inner healthy mind, this peaceful, liberated mind. Attachment deceives us, cheats us. It looks nice like ice cream; it looks like it's helping us, but actually it is deceiving us, cheating us totally. You are taking the eight Mahayana precepts, so you can't have ice cream or chocolate! People from Switzerland might especially be missing Swiss chocolate!

Attachment looks like it's helping us, it looks like it loves us, like ice cream, but actually it cheats us completely. Then the result is dissatisfaction, unhappiness, making us always look for more and better.

That is the basis, the foundation of our suffering. Because of this, because the mind of attachment is dissatisfied, we engage in so many negative actions. We engage in killing, harming others, even killing ourselves, committing suicide. Why? Because we cannot get what our attachment wants. Our attachment wants a friend to be with us or it wants money, but it doesn't get what it wants. Attachment can clearly be related to the self-cherishing thought. It doesn't get what it wants or it loses it. When we lose the object of attachment and we have nothing more to cling to, grasping so much, suddenly one day, it is lost, and we [want to commit] suicide.

No matter how much education we have, no matter how great a psychiatrist or psychologist we are, no matter how many billions of books or how much education there is, at that time we want to kill ourselves. At that time, when we are suicidal, all these things look like nothing! When we have a problem, it looks like we know nothing. When we encounter a problem in life, it looks like we didn't learn any Dharma. At that time, when we encounter a problem, instead of our mind having power over the problem, controlling the problem, we are overpowered by the problem. Our mind, our life, is overtaken by the problem.

Recently, there have been tsunamis. Do you know tsunamis? Everybody has become very familiar with tsunamis; they have become very famous in Indonesia, Thailand and India. Even in America, what suddenly happened in the United States was a shock. What was it called? Katrina.

It destroyed New Orleans. Before I left the United States, they were still talking so much about that, how some people are still trying to fix it.

Anyway, what I was saying was this. When we encounter a problem, there is an inner tsunami, a tsunami of attachment. Our life is covered by the strong waves of attachment, or like those huge fires always happening. It happened in Australia some years ago and lasted for months and months. In the United States those huge fires are always happening. One after another happens, all the time. Like that, the conflagration, the big fire of anger completely overtakes our life.

It burns us; it burns our happiness; it burns our cause of happiness, our merits; and it also harms others. Getting angry with others makes others get angry with us, which destroys their merits, the cause of happiness. Even the little good karma that has been collected is destroyed.

This inner earthquake, this inner tsunami is much worse than all the external tsunamis that happen in the world. They are nothing in comparison. This inner tsunami of delusions, of attachment, is much more dangerous. We are completely overwhelmed by delusions and by life's problems.

However, I was talking about having suicidal thoughts. At that time, it looks like all this knowledge [is worthless]. There is no question of having other kinds of knowledge, such as the sciences and this and that, even if we have studied Buddhism and become a great scholar, at that time, if we are not practicing and meditating, if we are not integrating the lamrim meditations, the extensive philosophy of the Buddhadharma, when we encounter problems or when delusions arise, when there is danger, there is no refuge in the mind. There is nothing; the mind is empty. Then, many suicidal thoughts can arise in that minute.

So, going back to what I was saying—this comes from attachment. If we check the source, it is attachment; it is related to attachment. Attachment is the foundation.

Because of attachment, there is dissatisfaction. Then, we engage in killing others, in telling lies, in deceiving others, in stealing others' possessions and so forth. We have all these problems, such as relationship problems due to sexual misconduct. These are only a few examples.

Because we engage in all these things, on and on, due to attachment, due to the mind being dissatisfied, we end up in court, being sued and having so much debt. Either we get killed or we spend many years in prison or we end up with a bad reputation. This happens many times these days to millionaires and billionaires; they end up in prison or being sued. This even happens to very famous people, people known to the whole world.

This is all due to following attachment. Because they could not get satisfaction, they engage in all these nonvirtuous actions, cheating and harming others. Then, one day they are found out, and they end their life with a terrible reputation and then in prison. This is constantly happening now. You can see this when you watch TV.

The reason is very simple. All these things are basically the shortcomings of following attachment. By following attachment, they have to experience so much suffering, depression, unhappiness—everything that attachment does not want. All these are the shortcomings of attachment.

Loneliness is all to do with the attachment. Because of the mind following attachment, we feel lonely; we can't stand being alone. Or we are physically with people, living in the family or

working at the office, but we feel lonely because our attachment wants everyone to love us, to be attached to us. When that does not happen, we feel lonely. So here you can see that the mental sickness, the root, is attachment. From that loneliness comes the eight worldly dharmas. Maybe you have gone through that. The eight worldly dharmas mean the attachment clinging to worldly concerns, strongly grasping this life's pleasure.

Of the eight worldly dharmas, when we receive the four desirable objects, that means attachment; when we encounter the four undesirable objects, that means unhappiness, dislike. Basically, with the eight worldly dharmas, when we have attachment to comfort, to pleasure, when that does not happen, the mind becomes so unhappy. It is related.

When there is *no* attachment to this life's pleasure and comfort, without grasping, when pleasure does not happen, when there is the opposite, discomfort, it doesn't bother our mind. If there is no attachment to pleasure and comfort, it doesn't become important; it doesn't bother the mind. But when we are attached to this and it is not happening, when there is discomfort, it bothers us, it causes us unhappiness. When we encounter the opposite of pleasure, the mind becomes unhappy. The unhappiness comes because there is attachment to pleasure.

Without attachment, there is no unhappiness when there is discomfort; it doesn't disturb us. The mind is balanced, equalized. Pleasure and displeasure, comfort and discomfort are equalized in our mind. What this means is that whether or not there is pleasure, it doesn't bother us because there is no clinging to it. It doesn't cause our life to go up and down. Life has stability.

Similarly, having a reputation. There is a bad reputation and there is a good reputation! Many people have a good reputation. We can have a good reputation, where many people praise us. When there is attachment to this, it naturally happens that we dislike having a bad reputation; it makes us unhappy. You can see that very clearly. When we let go of the attachment, let go of holding on to reputation, of needing people to talk nicely about us and praise us, when we don't have that attachment, when we are not being praised or we have a bad reputation, it doesn't bother us. There is no attachment to that reputation.

So, you can see that suffering and unhappiness are completely related to the attachment. Because of attachment, there is dislike and unhappiness. Without it, when those two—good and bad reputation—are equalized in our mind, whatever happens doesn't bother us. Without attachment, our heart, our mind, are continuously kept peaceful, secure, stable.

## **DHARMA IS THE BEST PSYCHOLOGY**

Many times every day we suffer from ups and downs because our life is dependent on all these things; we are attached to all this. In one day there are so many ups and downs, so much sadness because of what people say about us, how people behave toward us, whether they respect us or not. All this is because our attachment needs this. Then, our life is filled with problems, problems made by our own mind. Nobody else makes them, just our own concepts.

There is no need to hold on to that attachment, no need to create problems, no need to experience problems. They happen because we do not know and practice meditation; we do not know and practice the Dharma in our daily life. Living in meditation, in the Dharma, in daily life keeps our mind free from this painful attachment, this grasping. But not knowing and practicing this, we feel unhappy and sad, and we get angry, jealous and all these things. Although we don't



need to create and experience problems, we do, because we lack Dharma knowledge, we lack knowing how to meditate, how to practice, how to look after ourselves.

Practicing Dharma, practicing meditation, in our daily life is the best psychology. If we are living in meditation, in Dharma, in the lamrim, that is the best thought transformation. We might be trying to offer psychology to others, but if we ourselves are not living in psychology, if we are not looking after ourselves, protecting ourselves, then we are not loving ourselves. We can use the words, "I don't love myself" here.

In our daily life, if we live in the Dharma, in the meditation practice, in the best psychology, we are protected from the tsunami of attachment, the tsunami of anger because these delusions cannot come and take over our mind, take over our life. We control the tsunami of attachment and anger, and all the delusions, all the violent thoughts. We are able to protect ourselves from them. That way, we always have security, we always have stability, we always have happiness and peace inside. There is no depression.

One thing is, when we live in meditation, in the Dharma, there is no depression. Not following attachment, because we are free from it, our mind is healthy, peaceful, free. We are not imprisoned by attachment. We are not a prisoner, chained by attachment like the police chain a prisoner's hands. When we don't practice Dharma, when we don't practice meditation in daily life, it is like we are totally living in a prison of attachment, in the eight worldly dharmas, the attachment grasping this life's pleasure. There is no space to think of others, no space for compassion, no space for bodhicitta. There is only total attachment to our own happiness, to the happiness of this life, not to that of future lives and not to liberation for ourselves, but just for this life. So, we are totally imprisoned, with no space to help others who are suffering; the mind is totally occupied by attachment.

In the West there is so much talk about how we should love ourselves. Here, the definition of loving ourselves, the way to love ourselves, to take care of ourselves, is to live our daily life in meditation, in the Dharma, rather than surrendering ourselves to attachment, becoming its slave, being totally used by it like garbage, like toilet paper. Whatever attachment wants, we totally become its slave.

Instead of that, by the mind living in the Dharma, in meditation, we are free, independent. Independent of that most dangerous enemy, we are happy and peaceful. Then, we are able to engage in many virtuous activities. On that basis, it is much easier to develop compassion for others, to help others. Engaging in virtuous activities is the cause of happiness, not only temporary happiness but liberation and enlightenment.

The other way, as I mentioned before, by constantly following desire, worldly concern, without meditation, without the Dharma, we constantly engage in many negative karmas with our body, speech and mind. We harm ourselves and others so much by doing the ten non virtuous actions. Like the examples I gave and so many others, we harm ourselves and others directly or indirectly, and then we constantly experience problems, one after another. Our life is filled with problems. And life goes on like that. It is very, very sad.

Conversely, when there is no attachment to receiving praise from somebody, when there is no clinging to that, there is no dislike or unhappiness when that does not happen. Being praised or not, even being criticized, does not bother us. Whatever happens, there is stability, which means there is so much peace and happiness in our life; we are independent.

When there is attachment to receiving material things, such as birthday presents or birthday cakes, when we don't receive them, it becomes a big problem! It becomes a *huge* issue! The person gave us these things on our last birthday but this time they didn't! Not receiving material things becomes a huge disturbance, causing dislike and unhappiness.

When there is no attachment to receiving material things, when that does not happen, there is no dislike and no unhappiness. These two are equalized. Whatever happens doesn't bother us. There is always stability and peace in life.

## **THE PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH**

By training the mind, in particular in impermanence and death, which is the nature of life, the reality of life, we just meditate. We can relate our meditation on reincarnation to karma, how the result of negative karma is rebirth in the unimaginable suffering of the lower realms. Then, we can begin with the meditation on how this human body is so precious, qualified with the eight freedoms and ten richnesses. It is so unbelievably precious because, with it, we can achieve the three great meanings.

This human body is qualified with the eight freedoms and ten richnesses or endowments. It is translated here as the ten leisures or something like that. It looks the same, the eight freedoms and the ten leisures. There is not so much difference between the first eight and the ten leisures. Here, it is not made very clear.

So I think, with "leisure," we can have some break by smoking a cigarette, that can be a leisure or break. Or we can have the leisure to go to see a movie or the leisure of not working! Because we have leisure and don't have to work, we can have a holiday, go to beach, things like that. So, I think the first term, the "eight freedoms," freedom is stronger. Then, with the ten endowments, there are five things we received from ourselves and five things we receive from outside, from the place, from the teacher, from the people around us, from having teachings exist in our country, things like that.

Even without talking about a human body qualified with the eight freedoms and ten richnesses, with analysis we can see how just being a human being is so precious.

Now, we have the leisure to have tea! So, a short break.

While you are having tea, I am going to recite some protector prayers.

[Rinpoche recites prayers]

So, I will just conclude this part of the talk by saying it's enough just being a human being without talking about the eight freedoms and ten richnesses or endowments, without talking about the perfect human body. We have a human body that is able to understand words and meanings, that is able to communicate. As a human being, just being able to do that is unbelievably precious.

I often mention that, for example, even animals living with people—pigs and chickens, cows and sheep, not the boat! Not a ship! Of course, a ship is not a sentient being, so it is sheep. Anyway, even animals living with people, such as the dogs and cats that people have as pets—including snakes. Some people keep snakes as pets, or crocodiles! I don't think anybody has a dragon as a

pet or a snow lion as a pet. Some people might have an African lion but not a snow lion. Anyway, I'm joking. Even if we explain to these animals for many eons, for billions of eons, that the cause of happiness is virtue, they cannot understand the words and meaning. If we explain to them the meaning of virtue, the actions that result in happiness, and, to elaborate a little bit, are motivated by non-anger, non-attachment, non-ignorance, if we explained that to them for billions of eons, even those animals living with people, there is no way they can understand the meaning.

But for human beings, just having this body that can understand words and meanings, when somebody gives a correct explanation of how virtue is the cause of happiness and that virtuous actions result in happiness, motivated by non-anger, non-attachment, non-ignorance, within those few seconds—it doesn't even take a minute—the cause of happiness, virtue, is understood and the meaning of virtue is understood. So, already we have the wisdom understanding what the cause of happiness is and the meaning of that.

Within a few seconds, we have the wisdom to understand. Because of that, we have total freedom, twenty-four hours a day. Whenever we want, we can create an unmistakable cause of happiness. We just have to work with our mind; we just change our attitude, our motivation for the action, making it pure, unstained by ignorance, anger and attachment. We can do that whenever we want to create the unmistakable cause of happiness. Any time we attempt to create the unmistakable cause of happiness, virtue, we have wisdom. We can learn this within a few seconds.

That shows how this human body is unbelievably precious. Just having a human body, without talking about the eighteen qualities, enables us to do that. It is so unbelievably precious. That means it is so easy to learn Dharma, so easy to learn the path to liberation and enlightenment. That means it is so easy to practice, so easy to achieve realizations. It is so easy to achieve liberation, total cessation of all the sufferings and its cause, karma and delusions, including the negative imprint, the seed of delusion. And it is so easy to achieve great liberation, full enlightenment.

From understanding how it is so easy to learn this within a few seconds, we should also understand that this makes it so easy to develop compassion, generating the path of compassion and developing wisdom so that we can liberate numberless hell beings, numberless hungry ghosts, numberless animals, numberless human beings, and numberless suras and asuras. We can liberate all the suffering obscured sentient beings. It is so easy to develop the essence of the path, wisdom and compassion, and then so easy to liberate other sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering. Even concerning benefiting others, it is unbelievably easy. There is so much we can do just by having this precious human body.

With animals, we can explain to them for billions of eons but they cannot understand, no matter how long they live. Turtles can live for a thousand years. I heard that in Hong Kong there was a turtle who lived for a thousand years. I was about to see it but I didn't get to. Anyway, although they live an incredibly long time, they can't learn even that very short thing—even for billions of eons, they cannot learn the cause of happiness, virtue and its definition.

When we compare our human body to an animal's, even if it is not qualified by all the most precious wish-fulfilling eighteen qualities, just having a precious human body, it is as different as the sky and the earth compared to an animal's body. There is so much we can do for ourselves; we can make so much progress, achieving all this happiness, not only temporary happiness, but liberation and enlightenment. And there is so much we can do to help other sentient beings,

causing them to achieve all this happiness, liberating them from all their suffering, all their problems, from all the oceans of samsaric suffering. With this human body, we have the opportunity to hear, reflect and to meditate on the path. It is unbelievable. This is so precious, so unbelievably precious.

Especially, if we have the eight freedoms and ten richnesses, with each freedom and each richness we can achieve any happiness we wish: the happiness of future lives, achieving another perfect human rebirth in the next life so we can again meditate on the path and continue to have realizations, completing the path to liberation and enlightenment and offering extensive benefit to other sentient beings—or we can be born in a pure land and never again be reborn in the lower realms. The quickest way to achieve enlightenment is by being born in a pure land. In our next life, we can also receive a body with the eight ripening aspect qualities that Lama Tsongkhapa highly admired. We must achieve these in order to complete the path to liberation and enlightenment.

Even with one freedom or one richness, we can create the cause of all that or we can achieve a human body which has the seven qualities and then be able to practice Dharma, to develop the mind in the path and to benefit others. With this one freedom, this one richness, we can create the cause and achieve that.

If, in our future lives, we want to achieve a very beautiful body so we can draw many millions of sentient beings to listen to us and benefit them, so we can liberate them from suffering by revealing the path, we can create the cause and achieve it with this one freedom or endowment.

If, in our future lives, we wish to achieve the four Mahayana Dharma wheels, the four very important conditions to develop the mind in the path, we can do that. With one freedom or richness, we can create the cause, and then, with each of them, we can create the cause to achieve liberation from suffering and enlightenment.

Especially, when we have a human body that has all eighteen precious qualities, with each second we can create the cause of all those happinesses up to enlightenment. Therefore, with this human body qualified with eight freedoms and ten richnesses, even each freedom and each richness is unbelievably precious. As I mentioned before, with it, because we can create the cause of all this happiness, it is more precious than the whole sky filled with billions of dollars.

I'll use the example of money because money is very precious, therefore, it is easy to understand. There is a zillion trillion dollars. Increase that with inflation! (It's a strong market!) Anyway, each freedom and each richness is more precious than a zillion, trillion dollars. All that is nothing compared to the value of the benefit the happiness we get from even one of these qualities. Being able to create the cause of all this is more precious than the whole sky filled with diamonds, gold, even wish-granting jewels, the jewels owned by wheel-turning kings, those who had so much merit they were able to find the jewels in the oceans. Then, by cleaning them in three ways and putting them on top of a banner on top of a house on the full moon day or on those special days, whatever somebody prayed for would materialize. Whatever material enjoyment they pray for, due to the power of that person's good karma and the power of the jewel, due to the karma, it gets materialized. This jewel is the most precious thing among material possessions. Although there might be numberless of these filling the whole sky, compared to even one freedom or richness that is nothing. The value of one freedom or one richness is far greater.

We have been born millionaires and billionaires numberless times in the past; we have been born as kings, even in deva realms, numberless times. We had all this wealth numberless times but that didn't help us become free from samsara; it didn't help us actualize the path. Being born as a wheel-turning king with all that wealth and power didn't make us actualize the path and become free from samsara. We have even been nagas, those animals who, in past lives, made so much charity but did not practice morality, causing them to be born as nagas with so much wealth. They always have wish-granting jewels as crown decorations, but that didn't help them to actualize the path of freedom from samsara. We have been like that numberless times in the past.

Milarepa, the great yogi who achieved enlightenment in one brief lifetime of degenerated time, as well as Gyalwa Ensapa and many other great meditators had nothing, but because they had this precious human body with the eighteen qualities, they practiced Dharma and achieved liberation from samsara and then achieved full enlightenment in that life. Even the subtle negative imprints were purified in that life, and they achieved the state of omniscience in a few short years. Milarepa didn't have a single dollar or rupee or a jewel with him. Therefore, these freedoms and riches are so precious. The whole sky filled with zillions and trillions of dollars or gold, diamonds and wish-granting jewels is nothing in comparison.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama warns us to not become a slave of the machine or material things or money. That means our life should not be used for material gain. These eighteen qualities are much more precious [than anything] material. We should never be careless or take them for granted.

The perfect human rebirth is the first meditation of the path to enlightenment, the very first one. The beginning of the lamrim, the stages of the path, is seeing how precious this is. With this realization, we will only do meaningful things, living a meaningful life and abandoning all meaningless activities.

First of all, just having a precious human body, but then having all eighteen qualities, we must not take this for granted. Why? Because to achieve this, we have practiced morality and charity for so many lifetimes. We have worked very hard for this, living in pure morality. To live in pure morality is not easy; there is a lot of sacrifice. To live in pure morality we need to sacrifice attachment. To even live in one morality purely is not easy; there are so many obstacles. For so many lifetimes, we worked so hard living in pure morality and made prayers, creating so much merit, in order to receive this human body, using this as a boat to cross the river and to practice Dharma. Then, we go beyond, crossing the ocean of samsara and achieving liberation and enlightenment.

### **WE MUST COMPLETE THE WHOLE PATH**

Just about this once, we have this opportunity. We can achieve all these things; we can obtain the three great meanings and have whatever happiness we wish. But this doesn't last long; this life doesn't stay forever. Death is definite, and when death will occur is not certain. It can occur at any time: any year, any month, any week, any day, any hour, any minute, any second. Any moment death can happen, and at the time of death there is nothing that can help, only Dharma, nothing else. Only the Dharma can help at that time, only the Dharma can help us to achieve happiness in future lives, nothing else.

This precious human life happens about once and it is extremely difficult to find again. It is so difficult to create the causes, we can understand that. Therefore, we must practice the Dharma. Since we want happiness, we must practice the Dharma. If we want happiness, we have no choice. Happiness only comes from the Dharma, only from virtue, only from positive, pure thought. Therefore, we must only practice the Dharma. Since we don't want suffering and we want only happiness, we must only practice the Dharma. If our wish is only happiness without the slightest suffering, we must only practice the Dharma. We must practice the Dharma in this life and because death can happen at any time, we must practice right away., The Dharma is the only thing that can help at the time of death.

This is what I was saying before. When death happens, we must make sure to achieve the body of the happy transmigratory being so that we can continue to meet and practice the Dharma, in order to continuously develop our mind in the path to enlightenment. That alone is not enough; we must achieve liberation from samsara. But even if we achieve liberation from samsara, that alone is not sufficient. Achieving happiness for ourselves, even if it is ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara, is not the real meaning of life, the real purpose of our life. The real meaning of life is to benefit sentient beings.

In regard to benefiting sentient beings, there are four ways. Causing them the happiness of this life is one thing. More important than that is causing long-term happiness, happiness of all the coming future lives. That is much more important than causing the happiness of this life, which is very short-term happiness. The second service to sentient beings, causing the happiness all future lives, is more important. Now even more important is to cause them to achieve ultimate happiness, liberation from the entire suffering of samsara and its cause, karma and delusions. That service to other sentient beings is much more important than the second one. Now, the most important service we can bring is to bring them to peerless happiness, full enlightenment. That is the greatest benefit we can offer other sentient beings.

Enlightenment doesn't happen without causes and conditions, therefore we need to actualize the whole path that ceases both the disturbing-thought obscurations and the subtle defilements. The disturbing-thought obscurations are the main obstructions to achieve liberation from samsara, and the subtle defilements, the second type, are mainly the obstructions to achieving the fully knowing mind. We must complete the path that removes all those defilements.

We must complete the whole path. We can learn just one meditation technique in our whole life, like *shamatha*—calm abiding—or something, but even if we have a realization of that, it can't do much. We need to achieve all the stages of the path to enlightenment, the whole path. And that whole path needs to be achieved in order, attaining the realizations step by step, without missing one, in order to achieve full enlightenment, to bring each and every single suffering sentient being to full enlightenment.

There are numberless hell beings, and we need to do this for each of these; there are numberless hungry ghosts with so much suffering, and we need to do this for each of these; there are numberless animals with so much suffering; there are numberless human beings with so much suffering. We need to bring each and every single sentient being to enlightenment. That is the real purpose of our life, the real meaning of our life. That is our object or goal; that is what is to be achieved.

So, not only while meditating on the path, but while working, eating, walking, sitting, sleeping, whatever, whatever other activities we do, our attitude should be for others, to benefit all sentient beings, to bring them the highest benefit, to bring them to enlightenment.

From the root, guru devotion, we begin the path, the lamrim, with the perfect human rebirth. This is what makes us complete the rest of the path, successfully actualizing it. The guru devotion practice is the first meditation, correctly devoting with thought and action. After we have analyzed this, after we have discovered this, we do it.

At the beginning of the talk, I was going to say thank you very much to you, but I got carried away! It was meant to be a thank you, but then I got carried away.

I mentioned how amazing it is [that you have come] from those big countries, those huge cities, where there are many millions of people, coming here to Nepal, coming very far to Kopan, to do not just anything that is called “meditation.” There are so many books and so many organizations about “meditation,” but here we are particularly focused on the lamrim, the integration of the 84,000 teachings of the Buddha into a very clear, simplified, graduated path to enlightenment that, from our side, if we practice it correctly, we can definitely attain realizations and achieve liberation and enlightenment.

### **NUMBERLESS PANDITS HAVE COMPLETED THE PATH**

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha himself was taught by his gurus and completed the whole path and achieved enlightenment. After that, numberless pandits, yogis from many different countries, not only India, practiced correctly as the Buddha explained. Like stars at nighttime, so many achieved the path to enlightenment, many in caves, exactly as the Buddha explained. In their life stories, it is written how they practiced the Dharma, how they have achieved all the realizations. In Milarepa’s life story, it is explained how he did the practice under the guidance of Marpa, experiencing so many hardships, and how he achieved enlightenment within a few years, obeying his guru Marpa no matter how hard it was, even though Marpa only scolded him, sometimes beating him, never saying anything good to him, never giving him teachings for a long time. Because he was normally alone, he didn’t receive teachings, so one time he went with the students in the group, but Marpa immediately scolded him and kicked him out. He made him build a nine-story tower alone, carrying all the stones himself. His back became bruised and thick-skinned from carrying stones. After he had built it, Marpa told him to tear it down and put the stones back where he got them. Then, he was told to build it again and again tear it down, and again, only ever getting scolded and beaten. It was like this for years.

Marpa’s wisdom mother, his consort, felt it unbearable that Milarepa never got teachings, only scolded and beaten and she pushed Marpa to give him teachings and initiations. So, Marpa did this, but actually Marpa’s own wish was to give Milarepa more hardships for longer. If he had done that, Milarepa would have become enlightened even more quickly.

Anyway, in those years Milarepa never became angry with his guru, Marpa. He never developed any heresy toward him, only devotion, seeing him as the Buddha, followed his advice completely. Because of that, he achieved full enlightenment in a brief lifetime of degenerate time.

There are numberless pandits who have completed the path. There are pilgrimages that many people make, even nowadays, to see the caves of these yogis where they meditated. Milarepa had different caves in Nepal and Tibet where he achieved different realizations, and Lama Tsongkhapa too. There are all these hermitages and monasteries where they achieved attainments. Then, they wrote their life stories, explaining how they practiced and achieved realizations. This is the proof. It’s not just belief. It’s not just being told that if we believe this or

that we go to heaven or achieve liberation, whereas nobody has explained how to achieve liberation. It's not like that.

For example, there is a belief in one Hindu sect that says if you jump into the hole where there is a trident and the [three points of the] trident go there [through your body], then you achieve liberation. But at that time you are dead! There is nobody who did that and then showed how they achieved liberation. Or there is the belief that if you go to war, you go to heaven. Nobody explained that. There aren't numberless beings who explained that they went to war and were killed and then went to heaven. Nobody has ever written about that experience.

Anyway, here it is not like that. What I am saying is that Buddhism—the path to liberation and enlightenment—is not mere belief. There are so many logical proofs, reasonings, in the philosophical texts. The simple way to explain it is that the lineage lamas and the many great yogis and pandits wrote about their experience, how they meditated and achieved realizations, and as proof we can see the places where they did it.

### **DECIDING TO COME TO KOPAN WAS YOUR MOST IMPORTANT DECISION**

The other proof we can see is that when we have problems such as attachment or anger or something, when we meditate on the lamrim, when we use those lamrim meditation techniques of thought transformation, it works. If we actually meditate, at that time, while our mind is in that state of meditation, while our mind is patient, anger doesn't arise. Our mind is in patience through meditation using reasoning, which stops anger from arising. Also, through the meditation on compassion, we are able to generate compassion for that person who harmed us, who abused us. Whatever that person did to harm us, we can feel compassion for them. And while our mind is in compassion, anger doesn't arise.

We can see, even from this little experience, how our mind changes through meditation. That is the proof that we can achieve liberation. From this small experience we have in our daily life, that is the reason. From that small experience, there is the proof that we can achieve enlightenment if we continue to practice the path.

The world is suffering. We can see how much suffering there is. All the wars, all the killing, all the torture—so much is happening. Then, there are the tsunamis, the earthquakes, the disasters of fire and water, all the dangers, bringing harm to not only sentient beings but also to non-living things. With so much suffering, bringing peace in the world requires compassion. Peace in our heart, in our individual life and in the world, comes from compassion. Therefore, we need to learn how to develop compassion. And compassion alone is not enough, we need to also develop wisdom.

Therefore, the essence of what I am saying is that what you are doing, coming here all the way to Kopan to attend this course is the right thing to do. What I am saying is that the decision you have taken is the most important decision in your life, to benefit yourself, to benefit the world and to benefit all sentient beings. That is what I want to say. This is the most important education, the education to develop compassion and wisdom and the whole path to liberation and enlightenment, the education about how to cease the delusions, the cause of suffering, and achieve liberation and enlightenment. There is the education in understanding all this and then the education in gaining the realizations through the practice. This is the most important thing concerning your own happiness now and in the future. This is the most important thing if you want to help all sentient beings and help bring about world peace. This is the most important



thing. The more you learn, the more you get experience, the more you will be able to educate other sentient beings. You can offer your experience to others, your education, to liberate the sentient beings from all the suffering.

That's all my mumbling for now!

## DEDICATIONS

[Rinpoche and the students chant dedication prayers]

“Due to all the past, present and future merit collected by me, the three-time merits collected by all sentient beings including the buddhas and bodhisattvas, may bodhicitta—the altruistic mind letting go of the I and cherishing other sentient beings, seeking only happiness of other sentient beings—be generated. Through this bodhicitta, where I can achieve all my temporal and ultimate happiness, may all the happiness that sentient beings wish for be achieved. With this bodhicitta, may the numberless sentient beings receive all their happiness. May this bodhicitta be generated within my heart and in the hearts of my own family members, in the hearts of all of us here and in the hearts of all the rest of the students and their families, as well as all the supporters in this organization and those many students who give up their life to this organization, doing service for sentient beings and for the teaching of the Buddha. All of them and all other sentient beings, may bodhicitta be generated in all their hearts without delay of even a second.” Pray like that. “In whose heart bodhicitta has been generated, may it increase.”

[Rinpoche and the students chant dedication prayers]

“Due to the three-time merits collected by me, may bodhicitta especially be generated in the hearts of all the leaders of the world.” If the leaders of the world generate bodhicitta, many millions of people in each country are led in the correct way. They are led on the path to be free from suffering and to have peace and happiness. It makes a huge difference to all those millions of people in each country if the leader has bodhicitta, is a bodhisattva. So, that prayer is very important.

[Rinpoche and the students chant dedication prayers]

Then, the third prayer. “May bodhicitta be generated in the hearts of the young and old, in those who are called terrorists, anyone who has thoughts of harming the world, whether they are called terrorists or not. May bodhicitta be generated in their hearts without delay of even a second.” That is the most very urgent prayer.

[Rinpoche and the students chant dedication prayers]

That we have this incredible opportunity to meet Buddhadharma and gain understanding of every single aspect of the Dharma that we learn here every day, and that we can purify so much the cause of the suffering, the defilements, negative karma, every day during this course, and that we can collect every single merit to achieve the cause of happiness of our future lives, liberation from samsara and full enlightenment—all this is due to the kindness of Compassion Buddha, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, through whose kindness, the Buddhadharma, the complete Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism, exists in this world. Through that, we are able to learn and we're able to make our life most fruitful, most beneficial, not only for ourselves but also for all sentient

beings. Therefore, we dedicate. “By our merits, may His Holiness have a stable life and may all his holy wishes succeed immediately.”

The existence of Kopan Monastery, the continuity of the courses, all this incredible opportunity is due to Lama Yeshe, who is kinder than all the three-time buddhas. It has happened due to Lama Yeshe’s kindness, whose holy name is extremely rare to mention. Therefore, “May whatever holy wishes Lama Yeshe had in the past be actualized and may his incarnation be able to benefit sentient beings of this world just as Lama Tsongkhapa did.” Pray like that.

[Rinpoche and the students chant dedication prayers]

“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...” We haven’t yet gone into that subject, how all sentient beings have been our own mother. “May all the father, mother sentient beings have happiness; may the three lower realms be empty forever and may all the bodhisattvas’ prayers succeed immediately—as their prayers are only for sentient beings, may their prayers succeed immediately. And may I be able to cause that to happen.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, for any sentient being, whatever connection they make with me, harming me or helping me, whoever sees me, touches me, remembers me, thinks of me, talks about me, dreams of me, who even just sees my photo, merely by that, may it cause those sentient beings’ negative karma to immediately be purified and may they never be reborn in the lower realm forever. May their sicknesses immediately get healed, may they be free from spirit harm and may they be able to find faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and in karma. May they be able to actualize renunciation, bodhicitta and right view and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“Just by seeing me, touching me, remembering me, thinking of me, dreaming of me, whatever, even if they harm me, disrespect me, criticize me, or help me, whatever, may all this cause them to fulfill all their wishes of happiness according to Dharma.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, by having generated bodhicitta in everyone’s heart in this world, may everyone live their life only benefiting others. May they not cause even a single harm to each other and may they achieve perfect peace and happiness. May war, famine, disease, torture, poverty, sicknesses, and the dangers of fire, water and earthquakes, wherever they are happening, be stopped immediately.” Whatever merits we collect here today, as well as those collected in the past, we dedicate to this. “Anywhere that war, famine, disease, torture, poverty, sicknesses and fire, water and earthquakes are happening, may they be stopped immediately. May nobody in this world experience any of these sufferings. May no one experience all the undesirable things of this world forever.”

Then the next dedication is my favorite hobby. My hobby or hippy dedication!

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, which exist but do not exist from their own side, may the I, which exists but which is totally empty from its own side, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, which exists but doesn’t exist from its own side, which is totally empty, and lead all sentient beings, who exist but do not exist from their own side, who are totally empty, to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, which exists but does not exist from its own side, which is totally empty, by myself alone, who exists but does not exist from its own side, who is totally empty.

“I dedicate all the merits to be able to follow just as holy Manjugosha and bodhisattva Samantabhadra have realized. I dedicate all the merits in the same way as the three-time buddhas did and the three-time merits collected by others. May Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings, unifying sutra and tantra, be spread in this world in all the directions. May they be actualized in the hearts of all in this world, may they be completely actualized in my heart, in the hearts of all of us here and in the hearts of the students and supporters, all those who gave up their lives to this organization, doing service to sentient beings and the teachings of the Buddha, and in the hearts of everyone in this world.”

[Rinpoche and the students chant dedication prayers]

Good night. Thank you very much. I hope to see you tomorrow! Sorry, when I came to give teachings, it became like a mad elephant, like a mad horse. It didn’t go on the road; it went all over the field, like a wild horse!

## Lecture 2: How Things Exist

### A STAR, A DEFECTIVE VIEW, A BUTTER LAMP FLAME

I thought to do the oral transmission of the *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga*. Along with that, there is the oral transmission of the short meditation prayer containing the stages of the path to enlightenment composed by Lama Tsongkhapa, *The Foundation of All Good Qualities*. Maybe before the teaching, I will do that oral transmission.

Before that, we'll do the preliminary meditation prayer going for refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, paying homage to the Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, and then the *Heart of Wisdom* sutra.

[Rinpoche chants]

I think maybe you have the English translation, so you can read that. You don't have to become Tibetan; you can read the English translation so it gives meaning to you. Everybody can read these verses together in English, meditating on the meaning of the Buddha's heart advice. [See *Praise to Shakyamuni Buddha*.]

[Students read in English:

Do not commit any unwholesome actions.  
Engage in perfect, wholesome actions.  
Subdue your mind thoroughly.  
This is the teaching of the Buddha.

A star, a defective view, a butter lamp flame,  
An illusion, a dew drop, a water bubble,  
A dream, lightning, a cloud:  
See all causative phenomena like this.

By these merits, may transmigratory beings  
Attain the state of all-seeing, subdue the enemy of faults,  
And be freed from the ocean of samara  
Disturbed by the waves of aging, sickness, and death.]

One of my gurus, the great yogi and great scholar, Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche explained that the first line reveals true suffering; the second line, the true cause of suffering; the third line, the true cessation of suffering; and the last line, the true path. So, these four lines reveal the four noble truths, the fundamental Buddhism teaching, the path to liberation.

Read each point slowly, that gives time to meditate. This is a very important fundamental teaching of Buddhist philosophy to destroy the one enemy that we all have. That is the inner enemy, the delusions that have been harming us constantly. This inner enemy creates samsara and tortures us with all the sufferings of samsara since time without beginning, from beginningless past samsaric rebirths. Not only that, it also harms other sentient beings. It has been harming other sentient beings directly or indirectly since time without beginning, directly or indirectly, from life to life.

Meditating on the first line, *kar ma rab rib* ... [A star, a defective view, a butter lamp flame] is an extremely powerful psychology. It is a powerful meditation to immediately cut the delusions, the ego, the root of samsara, which is the creator of all our negative emotions, all our delusions, all our wrong concepts, and it's also the creator of our karma, the actions and all the results that bring the inexhaustible, terrifying oceans of sufferings of the hell beings, of the hungry ghosts, of the animals, of the human beings, of the suras and asuras. So, it is the cause of all the oceans of problems that bother human beings, suras and asuras.

## **THE ROOT OF SAMBARA ACCORDING TO THE DIFFERENT SCHOOLS**

The creator of all this is ignorance. This ignorance is not just believing that this I, this self, is permanent—while it is impermanent it looks as if it is permanent—or that it exists independently while it exists dependent on parts, by depending on the continuity of the aggregates. It exists depending on this, but we hold onto the I as an independent entity. It is not even that wrong concept we are looking at here. It is not even that while the I is empty of self-sufficiency, we are holding onto it as being self-sufficient. The ignorance here is not that wrong concept. It is not the self-grasping of the person according to the Vaibhashika school, the Sautrantika school, the Mind Only [Cittamatra] school or the Madhyamika Svatantrika school—not even the first of the Madhyamaka schools, the Svatantrika school.

I don't know how to put it very clearly in English, exactly according to the Tibetan term. Each word has meaning in Tibetan, so to give an idea the translation has to be exact without missing a single word. If one word is missing, it is like a machine with some parts missing, it is not a complete explanation, so it doesn't give the complete image.

The ignorance we are looking at here, which is the root of samsara, is not even the ignorance proposed by the Cittamatra school. [Besides the six principal consciousnesses] this school asserts a seventh consciousness, "the mind base of all." From an imprint, both the substance—the object—and the mind knowing the object manifest at the same time. Here, it is called the "knowing phenomenon." I wouldn't say the "knower" because if we say knower it refers to a person, not the knowing of an object.

From the imprint that is on the seventh consciousness, the mind basis of all, the substance manifests out in two ways: one as the knowing phenomenon, the mind, and one as the object. So, it manifests into two: one object, one subject. For the Cittamatra school, ignorance is the object existing without depending on that substance, the imprint on the mind basis of all experiencing out as subject and object, that the I, the subjective phenomenon, exists totally from its own side. That's not a perfect translation, the last part needs to be better. The I seems to totally exist from its own side and is then believed to be true.

This is the wrong concept of what is empty according to the Cittamatra school. For them, this ignorance is the root of samsara, the cause of all the delusions, of karma, of all the sufferings. That is ignorance but it is still a very gross form of ignorance. It is not even that one we are looking at.

According to the Svatantrika school, the first of the Madhyamaka or Middle Way schools, which also has the self-grasping of phenomena, even though this is a wrong concept, it is not the ignorance that is the root of samsara. So now, what is it?

This Svatantrika school accepts that the I is labeled by the mind. (In English, once we use the term “depend,” we have to use the word “on”—we depend on—we don’t say “depend to,” so I normally use “relating to.” I guess that is correct English.) They accept that the I is labeled on the aggregates. They accept that, but they believe that the I, the self, is findable on the aggregates. If we look for it we can find it; it is findable. Therefore, the philosophers of the Svatantrika school think it exists from its own side, which in Tibetan is *rang zhin gyi drup pa*, meaning it exists by its nature. They accept that. Because of that, they cannot accept that the I is merely labeled by the mind on the base, the aggregates.

For them, there is no I merely labeled by mind. That doesn’t exist. For them, to accept that is like nihilism; it is as if the I doesn’t exist. When they accept that the I exists, for them it becomes existing from its own side, existing by nature.

According to the second Madhyamaka school, the Prasangika School, when the Madhyamika Svatantrika school accept that the I exists—which for them means existing from its own side—they fall into the other extreme, eternalism. Having accepted “merely labeled,” because the Svatantrika school don’t accept that, they think the Prasangika have fallen into nihilism.

So, the philosophers of the Svatantrika school cannot accept that the I is merely labeled by the mind, that it exists in mere name, merely imputed by the mind, and they cannot unify that with the extremely subtle dependent arising of the Prasangika School. They cannot unify the emptiness—that the I is empty of existing from its own side and while it is empty it exists in mere name, merely imputed by mind—with the extremely subtle dependent arising. They cannot unify these two on one phenomenon, such as the I.

According to the Svatantrika school of Buddhist philosophers, the right view, the one that is correct, is that the I is not merely labeled by mind; it exists from its own side or by its nature. They think this is correct. Their view of emptiness is that the I exists from its own side, particularly from its own nature it is totally existing. Without appearing to the valid mind, to valid cognition labeling it—without depending on that [valid cognition]—it is totally existing by its own nature. That is the ignorance according to the Svatantrika school of Buddhist philosophers.

However, even *that* is not the root of samsara according to the Prasangika school view. For them, what the previous school, the Svatantrika school believes as correct—that the I exists labeled by mind but is findable on the aggregates and exists by its nature—is totally wrong.

For the Svatantrika school, it must be findable on the aggregates; it must exist from its own side or by its nature, not merely labeled by mind. In some ways, this is a very strong argument. When we think about it, we might accept that the I is labeled by the mind but we cannot figure out how it exists being *merely* labeled by the mind. We accept it must be labeled by the mind but we cannot see how it just exists in mere name, merely labeled by the mind. There must be *something* from its own side. We think that there should be *something* existing from its own side. How can it possibly only exist in mere name, merely labeled by the mind? Sometimes, we think like that.

However, even though the view believed to be correct by the Svatantrika school, that the I is findable on the aggregates, suggests that there should be something from its own side, not just merely labeled by the mind, the Prasangika school cannot accept anything even slightly beyond being merely labeled by the mind. The belief that the I is existing even slightly beyond being merely labeled by the mind—that there should be something from its own side—is the root of samsara.

By not accepting being merely labeled but somehow believing there must be something slightly beyond that, something extremely subtle slightly beyond that, we are creating the root of samsara, which, according to the Prasangika school, is the self-grasping of person.

There are two roots of samsara. Just as there is the self-grasping of the I, we similarly create the concept about the aggregates, the basis to be labeled “I.” We are also not satisfied by the way they exist, how they too are merely labeled by the mind. We cannot figure it out; we cannot understand that there is nothing even slightly beyond that. That self-grasping of phenomena is again ignorance, the ignorance of how the aggregates exist. That is also the root of samsara.

There is this experience that happens on the collection of the five aggregates. There is an I. There is no I, no self, [apart] *from* that, but there is an I *on* that. Our understanding of the real I is that there is no I from above the base, the aggregates, but there is a strong thought of the I *on* the aggregates, something very strong, indestructible. The thought of the I, the name, exists very strongly on the base. I think there is some experience of that.

According to His Holiness, that is correct in the Prasangika view, but according to Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche, this is the Svatantrika school’s understanding of emptiness, not the Prasangika school’s view.

We have this unbelievably strong understanding that the name, the I, the self, exists *on* the base but not *from* the base, not from the side of the base. I think there is a subtle point here and through analysis we can see the subtle difference between those two—the realizations of the Svatantrika school and the Prasangika school.

## HOW WE CREATE IGNORANCE

I want to try to clarify a little bit how we create ignorance according to the Prasangika Madhyamaka school. That ignorance is the creator of all our suffering, it is the creator of our death, which we don’t like even to hear about. We don’t want to talk about or think about it. It’s where death, rebirth and old age come from, as well as all 424 sicknesses, all the curable and incurable diseases including cancer. That ignorance is where all the global problems come from, and the problems of every individual person in the six realms, including all the relationship problems. Now that you have gone through the sufferings of the six realms, with the sufferings of each realm and the general sufferings of samsara, it’s easy to get the idea.

Where all this comes from is our mind, from this ignorance, this unknowing mind. Including diabetes. I have diabetes so I must remember that this is where it comes from! It is the very root where all the problems of tsunamis and earthquakes come from. Those huge waves that wash away hotels and whole towns or cities, killing so many people. It is very interesting that the animals, the elephants or those cows, ran away to the mountains before the earthquake happened, whereas many people died. Just before this happened, they ran away to the mountains and the people didn’t understand, otherwise they would have run away too. The other day, this happened in Indonesia or Thailand or somewhere; a little bit before it happened, the animals ran away to the mountains.

What is the very root where all these problems come from? They all come from this root, from the ignorance holding the I and aggregates as truly existent. In other words, because we trust them, we hold onto them as truly existent. It is this ignorance that has that apprehension.

How do we create this ignorance, this root of samsara? First, there is the mind seeing the base, the aggregates—the body walking or sitting, the mind meditating or thinking of food! You have taken the eight Mahayana precepts, so you might be hungry! So, you are thinking of food or whatever. Depending on what the aggregates are doing, the mind focuses on the aggregates, which is the base to be labeled “I.” The mind that is focused on the aggregates, that same thought then makes up the label “I,” thinking up the name, just making up the label “I” and believing in that.

So first, the mind focuses on the aggregates, the base, and whatever activity it is doing. Then, it makes up the label “I” and believes in that. It makes up the name “I” and believes in that. The next second, as soon as that is done, the I that has received the label appears back. Now, *here* is the problem! When it appears back, it doesn’t appear back as merely labeled by mind, which is the reality, which is true. When it appears back, it appears back as totally false, as not merely labeled by the mind. That means it appears back as existing from its own side, it appears back as something additional, something beyond what is merely labeled by mind, as existing from its own side. When it appears back to the mind, it appears as existing from its own side.

The way the I appears back is false. The definition of false is that which is contradictory to how it exists in reality. The reality is the I has been merely imputed by the mind just now, just the moment before, therefore it exists in mere name, therefore it is totally empty of existing from its own side. The moment before it appeared back as not merely imputed by the mind, it was just that, merely imputed, merely named by the mind.

What I, the self, is, is nothing except what is merely imputed by the mind. Without needing to explain it separately, being merely imputed by the mind means it is empty of existing from its own side. The I exists. It exists depending on the base. It exists in relation to the aggregates—the base—and the thought that labels the “I.” Depending on those two, it exists, therefore it exists in mere name. That means it exists, but it is empty. It is empty but it is not totally nonexistent. It exists in mere name, merely imputed by mind; it is empty of existing *from its own side*; it is empty of being *not merely labeled by mind*.

## **THE CHILD BEFORE IT IS NAMED**

Another very brief meditation on emptiness that I normally mention is to consider a child before it is conceived. Say, the parents discuss what name they are going to give their child, going through a whole big book with lists of names! They decide on “John,” but the child is not conceived yet. There are no aggregates actualized yet, so at that time John doesn’t exist.

In another way, perhaps the child has been conceived—there are aggregates, the baby is there—but the parents haven’t yet labeled it “John.” At that time, John doesn’t exist.

When there were no aggregates, when the baby’s aggregates were not actualized, but the parents have already decided on the name “John,” at that time, John doesn’t exist. And when the baby is born but parents haven’t yet labeled it “John,” also at that time, John doesn’t exist.

So, when does John come into existence? There is a base, a collection of the five aggregates, and then the parents label that collection “John.” The mind has simply made up the label “John.” They agreed; they didn’t fight over the name “John.” Their minds simply made up the label,



“John” and believed in that. Only at that time, when the base is there, the mind has labeled “John” and then believed that, only at that time did John come into existence.

Now here you can see, what is John? What is it? Nothing except what is merely imputed by the mind. John is nothing except what is merely imputed by the mind.

What comes after that? What comes right after that moment where there is a concept believing this is truly existent, holding onto that as existing from its own side? We need to check. Sometimes, we might give the label but might not immediately hold onto that as truly existent. We give the name but—right at that second—we don’t have that appearance that holds onto it as truly existent. Sometimes, if we analyze, according to our own experience, this can happen. But eventually it happens, after we believe, then John appears as truly existent.

Here I am talking of something very subtle, of a question of seconds. Eventually, until we become enlightened, that wrong false view happens for us sentient beings, except for arya beings who have direct perception of emptiness in equipoise meditation. During that time, the arya beings do not have this false view, this hallucination. Otherwise, until we achieve enlightenment, until we remove this subtle negative imprint, we project the concept of true existence onto everything, from hell up to enlightenment, everything: I, action, object, all phenomena, all the objects of the six senses. Generally speaking, after the mere imputation, we believe in that, then everything appears back as truly existent, as not merely labeled by mind, as existing from its own side. That is the hallucination all of us sentient beings have, except when we directly perceive emptiness in equipoise meditation. At that time that doesn’t happen, but when we arise from that meditation, because it is latent, the hallucination happens again. This includes compassion, bodhicitta, even these thoughts have this hallucination of things appearing as truly existent. That doesn’t mean, however, it pervades the entire mind. It doesn’t mean that.

Anyway, [we then believe that] the real John exists from its own side, that it never came from our mind, it was never labeled by our mind, that it is truly existent from its own side.

As I mentioned, there are so many levels of wrong views, the object to be refuted, from the Vaibhashika school, where the object to be refuted is that which is permanent and existing alone or existing independently, up to the very subtle object to be refuted, of the Prasangika school view. All the piles of hallucinations are there, all the false Is, from the very gross level then subtler and subtler, and so on.

Now the question is, there are all these piles of hallucinations, so what is that view, which one? That can be checked, analyzed.

In our view and in the view of the parents the real John exists, not merely labeled by the mind. It exists from its own side; it is there. It appears, we believe it is true, and then we entrust.

I used the word “entrust” when I was translating the *Three Principal Aspects of the Path* with Jon Landaw, who has great knowledge of English. His [knowledge] is the best for revising the Dharma, when I was translating this with him. I had been using “entrust” because it is a bit like a friend we trust so much who then completely cheats us. It’s exactly the same here with ignorance—not somebody else’s ignorance but our ignorance, how we wholly entrust this false I. So, from the dictionary I had been using that word “entrust” as in entrust to a good friend, but actually it has a different meaning. He said it should just be “trust.” I think there’s a section on emptiness, just a few stanzas, and I think that was wrong, that it had a different meaning. So, it is “trust.”

So, we totally trust the I, action, the object, the senses and their objects and everything, and we create our entire false world, including the false I, the false action, the false form, sound, smell, taste, tangible object, whatever—everything is totally contradictory to the reality, to the way it exists. This world is totally the opposite; we think everything is existing from its own side, by its nature, not merely labeled by the mind. Everything is like that twenty-four hours a day, from morning until nighttime, from birth until death, from beginningless rebirths until we achieve enlightenment, except when we are an arya being directly perceiving emptiness in equipoise meditation. Besides that, everything else is a false view, a hallucination.

Of course, that doesn't mean that until we achieve enlightenment we hold on to that as true. I'm not saying that, but [until then] there is the hallucination.

Letting our mind totally trust that as true, that is the root mistake in our mind. That is why we are not liberated from suffering, why we are born with suffering, why we still have a negative emotional mind, why we still have a suffering body and mind. The whole thing is because of that root mistake, we allow our mind to trust everything as true, from beginningless rebirths. Because of that we did not completely eliminate the root of samsara, ignorance. When we let our mind trust all this as true, hold onto all this as truly existent as it appears, that is creating ignorance, the basis of delusion.

That's why we still have not yet achieved ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara, leaving aside enlightenment, great liberation, and, because of that, we are unable to liberate the others from the oceans of samsaric suffering.

So, the parents and people believe there is a real John, real in the sense of existing from its own side, not merely labeled by mind. They totally trust in that.

Now, what I am saying here, we go back to the original, when the name "John" is merely imputed, relating to the parents. The very first time it is merely imputed. The reality is that because "John" is merely imputed by mind, there is no such thing as John existing not merely labeled by mind, existing from its own side or by its nature, or truly existent. There is no real John in the sense of not merely labeled by mind, existing from its own side. That John is totally nonexistent, right there. That is totally empty right there.

That doesn't mean John is nonexistent. John exists, but John exists in mere name, merely imputed by mind. The way John exists is so subtle. He exists but it is unbelievably subtle; what John is, is unbelievably subtle. The border line between John existing and not existing is extremely fine, extremely subtle. It is not completely nonexistent; it exists but it is so extremely subtle.

Because of the unbelievably subtle way that John exists, many great meditators have made many mistakes. It is very easy to slip into either eternalism or nihilism. It is extremely difficult to see the middle way, to realize the middle way of how John exists, devoid of two extremes: eternalism, existing from its own side, and nihilism, being nonexistent. While it exists, it is totally empty of existing from its own side; while it is totally empty, it exists in mere name, merely imputed by mind.

What I am saying is that this is the reality. But sooner or later we have this *real* John appearing to exist from its own side and we hold onto that as true, trusting in that. Now you can compare

what comes later, all these hallucinations and beliefs, these are all totally wrong. What we believe in is a hallucination, a wrong concept.

That is one example. It is a very simple meditation on emptiness, without going through so many logical reasonings. I am using that as an example to understand the I, the self.

Maybe we'll stop here and have some chai.

[Rinpoche and chant prayers]

### **THE TWENTY-ONE TARAS PRAISES FOR SUCCESS**

Yesterday we recited the protector prayers, but at the end we didn't succeed, it got lost. The Hayagriva prayer became endless. So today, we will pray for the success of each of your own practices, to develop the mind in the path, and for the success of all His Holiness's holy wishes and all the projects of the organization. Such as building holy objects in different parts of the world, which is the quickest way to purify human beings' defilements and negative karma and the quickest way to cause them to collect extensive merit and to cause them to actualize the path and bring them to enlightenment. This is the easiest way to cause sentient beings to create the cause of happiness and then after some time meet the Dharma, and then actualize the path, ceasing defilements and achieving liberation and enlightenment.

And [we pray to] offer service to the Sangha, the major monasteries, particularly those in Lama Tsongkhapa's tradition, and to preserve the Dharma and spread the Dharma in this world—the Dharma that is the source of happiness of all sentient beings—to preserve and spread it, as well as to build monasteries and nunneries in different parts of the world to preserve and spread the Dharma amongst sentient beings, giving sentient beings opportunities to live in the Dharma, to take vows and so forth.

There are so many various social services, including many hospices helping the dying, and hospitals and schools, and especially Universal Education, those projects to help the young. And projects like giving food and shelter and so forth, especially in Mongolia and different places. Then, publishing Dharma books to spread the Dharma all over the world. Things like that.

Since everybody cannot become Buddhist, everybody cannot become Muslim, everybody cannot become Hindu or Christian, there has to be some other way to help mankind, to help people in this world generate all the good qualities, developing wisdom and compassion, transforming their mind into a good heart, going from the selfish mind to one cherishing others, and transforming their mind from attachment into having satisfaction, contentment and those many positive thoughts for a healthy mind. That is the way to bring peace in the world.

In a global way of thinking, that also becomes an antidote to war and disease, to torture, poverty, sicknesses and the dangers of fire, water, earthquakes and all the problems caused by nonliving things, those dangers sentient beings experience that come from negative karma, through actions done with the self-cherishing thought, with ignorance, anger and attachment.

Therefore, we have universal education to help people transform and have positive minds, for people to live in virtue, to abandon following the negative mind as much as possible. When the motivation doesn't become negative karma, they engage in positive, pure actions that are the

cause of happiness and success. That brings peace and happiness in the individual's life, in the family, in society, in the country and in the world.

There are other ways to help people, not only through lamrim teachings, through straight Buddhism. There are one hundred and forty to fifty FPMT centers, mostly meditation centers, but also various projects such as social services, helping people in various ways. Each of them has their own many projects, social services and Dharma courses and so many ways to help others, such as building holy objects and giving teachings. Each center in the world has many ways to help others.

So, for all these to succeed and for their wishes to be fulfilled, with all the funding and people to help and whatever is needed, today we are going to recite the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras*, for their success.

[Rinpoche and the students recite the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras*]

### **THE MIND DECORATES TRUE EXISTENCE**

What I was saying before, coming back to how we create the root of samsara, I started this way, with the thought that focuses on the aggregates, which are the base to be labeled "I." That thought makes up the label "I" and then believes in it. Then, for us sentient beings, right after that second, the I which is labeled appears back not merely labeled by the mind. That which was merely labeled just before now appears back as not merely labeled by the mind—totally the opposite to reality.

The same continuity of mind which the moment before labeled the I, in the very next second holds onto it as true, trusting it. It appears as truly existent, as not merely labeled by the mind, as existing from its own side, as something real, as true, and we let our mind hold onto that as true.

At that time, we create the root of samsara, the self-grasping of the person. We created that concept, the ignorance thinking that it is independent, that it exists from its own side. We created the ignorance; we created the root of samsara, the root of all the sufferings. Not having realized that the labeled I appears as a real one, as existing from its own side, not having realized that it is empty, we hold onto it as true. We have not realized that the I is a dependent arising, dependent on aggregates and name, on the thought labeling and the label. Not having realized that the I is a dependent arising, not having meditated on that, not having looked into its nature, we let our mind hold onto it as true, and we trust in it as true. That becomes ignorance, the root of samsara.

Right after the mind merely imputes the I, why does it appear back as not merely labeled by the mind? Why does it appear back totally contradictory to reality, to the reality that it is empty of existing from its own side, of existing in mere name?

Right after the mere imputation, the mind merely imputing I, there is a negative imprint left on the mental continuum by past ignorance, by the concept of true existence, which immediately decorates true existence onto the object, making us see it as something real, as not merely labeled by the mind. This hallucination is projected on the mere imputation, on the merely labeled I. Right after that, it projects the hallucination of truly existent appearance.

Just to make it clear: the body is sitting there, and the mind seeing the aggregates makes up the label “I.” Somebody asks, “What you are doing?” The mind, seeing the aggregate, the body, doing the action of sitting, makes up the label “I” and the label of the action of that I, “sitting,” and it believes in that. When the body, the aggregates, stand, at that time the mind sees the aggregates, the body, standing and merely imputes “I” and merely imputes the action, making up the labels “I” and “standing.” When the aggregates, the body, is walking, the mind merely labels the “I” and merely labels the action of “walking,” making up the labels “I” and “walking.” When the body lies down on the bed, the mind sees that aggregate, the body, doing the action of lying down on the bed and merely imputes the label “I” and merely imputes the action, “lying down.” And then the mind believes in that. It merely imputes all this and then believes in that.

So, in every twenty-four hours, what the mind does, what the body does, what the speech does—the mind sees the aggregates doing those different activities and is constantly labeling the I and constantly labeling the action of the I and it believes in that label. Every twenty-four hours it is like that. That is the reality. If the mind is happy, then the mind sees the aggregate of mind is happy and merely labels the “I” and merely labels the experience “happy” and it believes in that. If the mind is angry, the mind that sees the mind aggregate angry merely labels the “I,” and merely labels the experience of anger as “I am angry.” It’s like that for twenty-four hours a day. The mind is like that, continuously making up the label “I” and the label of the action or experience, and believing in that, what activity it does, what experience it has.

### **ONE THING, DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS, DIFFERENT LABELS**

I am not sure, but I hope this might help. There is a room. We set up an altar, putting a statue there and so forth. So, it’s a shrine room, and we label it “shrine room.” Now we take this out and put all the kitchen things inside, the stove and cupboards and so forth. Now, the mind, seeing this, makes up the label “kitchen” and believes in that. Now, we take all that out and put in a desk, a table, books, computers—all the office stuff— and then by seeing all these things, the mind makes up the label “office” and believes in that.

Like that one room, the same one person [can be seen as different things.] They can be a son or daughter relating to the parents. Relating to their parents, they are the daughter or son. The parents merely impute “daughter” or “son” on the child and they believe in that. Then, they have grandchildren. To their children, they are father and mother but to their parents, they are daughter or son. In the same way, their children will have children. When that happens, when they have children, again the mind will merely impute “grandchildren” and believe in that.

Depending on what activities a person does, the mind sees that and makes up the label “soldier” or “secretary,” “president,” “director.” All this could be one person but with many different activities. Seeing what this person does in their life, the mind makes up all the different labels and believes in that. The mind just thinks of the label and believes in that, depending on what activities the person does.

With flour, we put flour through a machine with a long handle, and when it comes out long and thin, we make up the label “noodle” and believe in that. We now mix together the flour (that was noodles before), shaping it in a round shape and baking it, and when it is ready we label it “bread” and believe in that. Or we mix it with other wonderful stuff and bake it and then we label it “cake” and believe in that.

That is just to give an idea. You can create many more examples of one thing that changes shape, and every time we make up a different label and believe in that.

So here, what I am saying is that it exists. Whatever we label, it exists, it is there. Where is it? It is there, it is there where there is a base. But it is merely labeled, and as merely labeled we believe in it.

If we look for it on the base, where is it? We can't find it. We call it "noodle" but actually where is the noodle? When we look for it, we can't find it. When we don't analyze it, it looks like it's there, but if we analyze it, we won't find it on the base. What exists is what is merely labeled by the mind. That exists, but even that, when we look, where is it?

Does the merely labeled "noodle" cover everything? From the bottom to the top? Then, there would be so many noodles, however many parts there are, however many atoms it has. If the merely labeled noodle covers everything, there will be numberless noodles of that. If we think the merely labeled noodle is there on the base, does it cover everything? Does the merely labeled noodle cover everywhere, on every atom. Then there would be numberless noodles there. And the same, if we have one rupee, there would be so many atoms there, there would be numberless merely labeled rupees.

That should be meditated on and analyzed. Even the merely labeled noodles, even that, we must analyze, we must check. You see, the noodle that appears to us as not merely labeled by the mind and that we believe is true, of course we can't find it existing either on the base or anywhere else in the world. We believe we have been eating real noodles our whole life, but in reality we have never eaten real noodles, real noodles existing from their own side. They don't exist, they have never existed. Since the world began, a not merely labeled noodle has never existed. Not only in this life but forever we have never had real noodles!

We should meditate, analyze and discuss this. We should especially discuss the merely labeled noodle, whether we can find the merely labeled noodle on the base, even on that valid base. Like the table. The merely labeled table is on the base, but we cannot find it. If it is on the base, does it cover every atom of the table? Then, there will be numberless tables, you see. I am just saying, we should analyze.

Is there one merely labeled table or are there many merely labeled tables? If the merely labeled table covers the legs, the top and every part, there would be many, there would be numberless. Anyway, just analyze.

When the parts of the pieces of the table are put together, it can function. We can put things on top. Whether it's square or round, the mind that sees that thing doing that function makes up the label "table." Now, we can change the table, using the pieces of wood to make a chair, like how with dough we can make different things. Now, we change the table, cutting the wood to make a chair to sit on. It's the same wood but a different shape, a different function. Now the mind seeing that makes up the merely labeled "chair." Then, we can use the same wood again but to make different things doing different functions. Then mind seeing that makes up different labels.

What I am saying, when we don't analyze, if we watch our view, it is there. Noodles are there, real noodles on that base, a real table on this base, a real I on the aggregates.

## **AN A DOES NOT APPEAR UNTIL WE ARE TAUGHT IT**

After we write down A, B, C, D, E, F, G, we draw this line like this, then that line, then this one. When we don't know, when we are not taught by somebody that this is A, at that time we see these lines, which is the base to be labeled "A." We see the base, these lines, but at that time, because we haven't been taught by somebody that this is A, our mind hasn't labeled this is an A. That's clear? Our mind hasn't labeled this is an A and, because of that, there is no appearance that this is A. Because we don't have the appearance that this is an A, we don't see that this is an A. Not at that time, before somebody has shown us that this is an A. When somebody educates us, introducing us to this as an A, then our mind follows that and we believe that. We then label relating to that, that this is an A. Following the other person's label introduced to us, our mind labels "A" and we believe in that. After that, we have the appearance that this is an A, we see that this is an A. Within those seconds, there is a whole evolution we are not aware of that takes place up to us seeing that this is an A.

Basically, we are educated, we are introduced by somebody, that this is an A, then the mind sees this base and merely imputes the label "A" and believes in that.

Now, the next thing, on that design, we see a real A. What is the meaning of "real"? When we talk in daily life about "real," we normally don't use any philosophical terms from the scriptures, such as existing from its own side or by nature or truly existent. We don't use that. But in ordinary language, this is what describes the object to be refuted, *gag cha*. In ordinary terms it is real, so a real A is that which is not merely labeled by the mind, which exists from its own side, appearing from there. That is because of the negative imprint left on the mental continuum by the past ignorance, the concept of true existence, that comes right after the mere imputation of "A." Right after that, the imprint projects, decorates, the hallucination of true existence.

So, now we have the appearance of the real A from there, the hallucination, falsely projected there by our ignorance. Then, not having realized that the A is empty, not meditating that the A is dependent arising, merely imputed by mind, we allow our mind to hold onto that as true. With that we create the concept of true existence, that ignorance. Like that, from A down to Z, we can write down every letter, as we are instructed by someone, showing us that drawing like this means this, drawing like that means that. In that way, we are educated in the names, the labels.

## **OUR REAL LIFE IS NOT THERE**

In some ways, when we are in university, in college or at school, when we are learning, we are learning labels. The whole of education is learning the labels. Somebody introduces us to a label, and we learn all those labels and we believe in this. The whole of university or college is like that. Somebody introduces us to a label, we learn the labels and we do the examination! The examination is on how much we can remember the labels. Then, we get the degree, the merely labeled degree that appears as the real degree!

What I am saying is, in reality it is not there. The real degree is not there. If we look for it, we can't find it. It's not there; it's totally empty, it's totally empty there. From A to Z, the real A to the real Z, all this appears from there, but it is all totally empty there. That is the reality.

After the mere imputation, what makes us believe there is a real one appearing from there? What makes us have that appearance? Our ignorance.

As I mentioned, that example is similar to the I. In daily life, there is the I, action, object. Again, the real I is projected, then the real action of eating real food, not merely labeled by mind, from there. The real I is empty, the real action appearing from there is empty, the real food appearing from there is empty, the real action of walking is empty, the real road appearing from there is empty. We walk on the real road—not railroad—which appears truly existent, but the real road is not there; it is empty.

The real I appearing from there is not there. The real car appearing from there is not there. The real driving appearing from there is not there. The real office appearing from there is not there. The real job appearing from there is not there. We earn real money but real money appearing from there is totally nonexistent; it is not there. Then we do real shopping, which is not there; it is empty. The real shop that appears from there is not there. The real shopkeeper who appears from there is not there. Real goods, whatever we are buying, appear as real ones but they are not there.

If we analyze it, it is like that. That is the reality of life. But what appears to us and what we believe, that is totally something else.

The whole story, the real life, is a total hallucination. We get married and the real marriage is not there! The real husband is not there, the real wife is not there, the real children are not there. They've all disappeared! They are projected by our ignorance. All this is made up as real by our ignorance, everything. Nothing is there. Then, divorce! The real divorce is not there. That person left us! This separation is something real. But it's not there. There is no such real separation, existing from its own side. It is just a projection of our ignorance, projected or made up by the mind.

There are all these worries, fear and anger because that person left us. There has been that real separation, but in reality there is no such thing. We get angry, we are hurt, we hold a grudge—not the garage! Not where we keep the car! A grudge. We hold the grudge in our heart for years. The pain in our heart doesn't go away for years. Because our ignorance has projected a real separation, because the whole situation has been made real by our ignorance and we believe in the projection as true, we are angry and depressed and hurt for years and years.

We go to see billions of psychologists, but it's for something that our mind made up. The anger and the pain have come from our own mind because our ignorance has projected all this as real and we have held onto it as true, this real separation, this real problem, bringing us depression and anger.

So, you can see. Who is the creator? It's our mind. Who is the creator of our anger and our pain? All the pain! You can see now very clearly. It all comes from us; it all comes from our ignorance. That is the root; it comes from that. The whole thing has been created by us, by our mind. But once we realize it is empty, even just meditating on emptiness, it helps cut the attachment, it helps cut all the years of pain, all the grudges.

There is a Tibetan saying: "You are your own guide and you are also your own enemy."



## THE FOUR VITAL POINTS

Sorry, my talk went on and on and on. We were supposed to recite one stanza and then meditate on it, but it became a whole commentary on the first line, *kar ma rab rib* ... [A star, a defective view, a butter lamp flame].

A star, a defective view, a butter lamp flame,  
An illusion, a dew drop, a water bubble,  
A dream, lightning, a cloud:  
See all causative phenomena like this.

Everything I said was a commentary of the first line. Then ...*mar me dang / gyu ma zil pa chbu bur dang / mi lam log dang trin ta bur* ...

...a butter lamp flame,  
An illusion, a dew drop, a water bubble,  
A dream, lightning, a cloud ...

A dream ... So many of these are talking about emptiness and introducing the object to be refuted, according to the subtlest view, Prasangika. Many of these terms refer to that. Some are about impermanence. This is a very important subject to really destroy the delusions, the wrong concepts. We destroy that by thinking about the reality, which is opposite to the delusions.

I made one mistake before. When I was describing the object “without depending on the parts, existing alone.” For example, the I exists depending on causes and conditions. It exists, but it is empty of independence, existing by its own power. Because the I exists depending on causes and conditions, the I is empty of independence, existing under its own power, with its own freedom.

Then the next one is self-sufficiency. The I exists by depending on the aggregates and on the continuation of the aggregates, therefore the I is empty of self-sufficiency. For example, when we think of a king or a president, that wrong view is to think the king exists without depending on the population. The king exists by depending on the population. But there is a wrong view or wrong concept of existing with its own freedom, of having self-sufficiency. That is an example we can relate to the I.

I think I'd better do the *lung* and then finish. The *lung* [oral transmission] or the *rlung* [wind disease].

When the I appeared, after the mere imputation, there is a projection on that from the ignorance leaving a negative imprint on the mind, the projection of truly existent, existing from its side, or by its nature or not merely labeled by mind. Then, we let the mind hold onto that as true and we trust in that. At that time, we create the ignorance and that wrong concept, because there is no such thing; such an object doesn't exist. The object we apprehend—that I—doesn't exist in the way that ignorance apprehends it. Therefore, it is a wrong concept.

By looking at that object as empty, by recognizing that [wrong concept] as the object to be refuted, the object of ignorance, we then meditate with reasonings, analyzing whether that exists or not, using the king of logic, dependent arising, or the four analyses, the analysis of the four vital points, which is usually explained in the lamrim. There are so many other ways to meditate on emptiness but in the lamrim the normal one is meditating on the analysis of the four vital points.

First is recognizing the object to be refuted, which is the object of ignorance. Then generally, for any phenomenon to exist, it has to be either one with the aggregates or it exists separately from the aggregates. We discover this real I as the object of ignorance, then, with the second vital point, we analyze whether it is one with them or separate. In Tibetan, the term sometimes sounds like “one or many.” Anything that exists has to be one with the aggregates or to exist separately. That is the second vital point of analysis.

Then, with the third point, after discovering the real I is not one with the aggregates, we analyze whether it exists separately. Whenever we talk about the I, it is always in relation to the aggregates—what the body does, what the speech does, what the mind does, relating it to the aggregates, what function it does. We always relate what the I is doing like this. That is the reality. There is no I that exists and functions without depending on the aggregates.

Even in the formless realm, where there is no body, there is still the aggregate of consciousness. Even though there is no body, there is consciousness. So, the I exists because there is the aggregate of consciousness. The I is labeled because there are aggregates. There is always the continuity of mind; the continuity of mind has no beginning and no end. Therefore, there are always aggregates; the aggregates never cease. Even though those other schools like Vaibhashika and Sautrantika believe in the cessation of the aggregates, in reality there is no cessation of the aggregates. The consciousness, the continuity of the mind, never ceases; it is always there. Even when we achieve enlightenment, there is always continuity of the mind, forever. Therefore, the I, that which is merely labeled related to that, always exists.

So, there is no danger of the I becoming nonexistent; there is no danger of that. We don't have to worry about the I becoming nonexistent. We can relax. That is impossible. Even if when we meditate on emptiness, we might feel like that, in reality the I ceasing, becoming nonexistent, is impossible because there are always aggregates. Even if there is no body, there is consciousness all the time, so we don't have to worry about that.

We should know that when we meditate on emptiness and get the experience, that I becomes totally lost. That I that we have been cherishing so much, holding on to as something real—not only from birth, but from beginningless rebirths—we now see it as totally empty. Only now, we discover it doesn't exist! There is nothing to hold on to, it doesn't exist, it's not there! It didn't go to Tibet or to the United States or to Africa or Iraq or somewhere, not through the door or the window. What we have been trusting, holding onto a hundred percent, we realize is totally nonexistent. The I is totally lost. This experience can happen.

## **THE SUBTLETY OF HOW THINGS EXIST**

We must go through this experience; we must complete it. We mustn't stop because of the fear of losing the I. If we are not introduced beforehand to what is going to happen when we realize emptiness, we can be confused, not knowing what is happening when we actually experience it. We are having great success, we are just about to realize emptiness and we become unbelievably scared, so confused. We don't know what is happening and we think we are falling into nihilism. We are so worried about that it makes us stop the meditation and lose this one chance we had for liberation. You see, from there, by realizing emptiness, we go to liberation after we have the experience that the I is totally empty, nonexistent. That is the cause and the result is we realize conventional truth. We realize absolute truth and after that, as a result, we realize conventional

truth. There is an I. The I is not nonexistent; it exists, but it exists in mere name, merely imputed by the mind.

As I mentioned when we talked about John, there is something unbelievably fine, subtle. John doesn't *not* exist, but how John exists is unbelievably fine, extremely subtle. What I mentioned before was this. There is no I *from* the aggregates but there is an I *on* the aggregates, but this is something very strong. Now here, we can have an experience that is much finer, our understanding of the way the I exists is much finer, subtler. That was still gross, so now we can have an extremely subtle experience, but it is still not nonexistent.

Compared with holding the real I, it is *like* it is nonexistent but it is not nonexistent. It is so extremely fine, so subtle, that it is *like* it is nonexistent.

We must know that because the continuity of the consciousness is always there, the merely labeled I is always there, the self is always there. We must go through the fear; we must complete the experience. We must cross the river and go through that complete experience. Otherwise, we block this incredible opportunity, and we won't have this experience for years. We will be unable to come back. After we have had this realization, we will have definite faith that we can achieve liberation.

Then, through this development, the wisdom realizing emptiness, we achieve shamatha, calm abiding, unified with that. We achieve great insight. That is the preparation. Then we achieve the direct perception of emptiness, the arya path, and then we directly cease the gross defilements, the disturbing-thought obscurations. Then, if we have the realization of bodhicitta, which collects unbelievable merit, skies of merit, with the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness we are able to cease even the subtle defilements. So, we need a lot of merit, which we achieve with bodhicitta. We need bodhicitta.

That is how we are able to achieve full enlightenment. Then, we achieve our ultimate goal, to liberate numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to enlightenment.

## **THE ORAL TRANSMISSION OF THE LAMA TSONGKHAPA GURU YOGA**

Think, "I am going to take the oral transmission of the *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga*, to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all my kind mother sentient beings." OK?

[Rinpoche and students recite the refuge prayer]

Refuge and bodhicitta, now before the oral transmission, the four immeasurables.

[Rinpoche and students recite the prayers]

If you concentrate on these words, with the bodhicitta attitude to benefit all sentient beings, you collect limitless skies of merit. Listening with bodhicitta, each word that you hear leaves a positive imprint on your mental continuum; each word that you listen to definitely brings you to enlightenment. You get skies of benefit from each word of a Dharma teaching, even an oral transmission. First, you understand and then you actualize the meaning, the path, within you. And that ceases all the oceans of samsaric suffering. Each word you listen to has that power, even an oral transmission, so it is extremely precious.

[Rinpoche give the oral transmission]

Some lamas recite *Päl dün tsa wäi la ma rin po chbe* [*Request to Abide at the Heart*], the guru descending from the crown to the throat and the heart, but His Holiness Zong Rinpoche used to scold, saying “Oh, please don’t come immediately into my heart. First stay on my head!” Rinpoche used to scold like that. According to Rinpoche, you do everything in the heart.

[Rinpoche give the oral transmission]

## DEDICATIONS

Now we do the dedications together.

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me and others, may I and all my family members, all the students here and all the rest of the students and the supporters of this organization, those who give up their lives to the organization doing service for sentient beings, and all those whose names I promised to pray for, and all sentient beings, may Lama Tsongkhapa be the direct guru in all their lifetimes. May we never be separated from the pure path highly admired by all the victorious ones, the buddhas, for even a second.”

We not only pray that for ourselves, but we include all sentient beings. Whenever we do dedications we should include all sentient beings, then that becomes the bodhisattvas’ deeds and practice. Whatever practice we do, we dedicate to all sentient beings, making it much more meaningful. It becomes useful for the happiness of all sentient beings.

[Rinpoche chants]

According to His Holiness Zong Rinpoche, after this dedication is done, we are able to live in pure morality and to extensively listen to the Buddhadharma and train the mind in bodhicitta, learning how to live in pure view and conduct and to spread and preserve Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings without corruption.

[Rinpoche chants]

So, we dedicate all our merits and the merits collected by others. We put them altogether and dedicate: “May I able to offer limitless skies of benefit to sentient beings and the teachings of Buddha in all the lifetimes. In every second may I be like Lama Tsongkhapa by having the same qualities within myself as Lama Tsongkhapa has. From now on, in every second in all the lifetimes, may I be like Lama Tsongkhapa.”

Then, particularly dedicate again for bodhicitta. “May bodhicitta arise in my heart, in the hearts of my family members, in the hearts of all sentient beings, in the hearts of all the leaders of the world and in the hearts of all those who are called terrorists. Whether they are called terrorist or not, all those who have thoughts to harm the world, may bodhicitta especially be generated in all their hearts without delay of a second.” That one is the most urgent prayer.

[Rinpoche chants]

As I mentioned yesterday, every single word of the Buddhadharmā that we learn every day is most precious; it is wish-fulfilling. Every purification we are able to do every day here, during this course, every single merit we collect today, is the cause of enlightenment, the cause of liberation from samsara and the cause of happiness in all future lives, including the happiness of this life. All this is by the kindness of His Holiness Dalai Lama, the Compassion Buddha, the one object of refuge for all of us sentient beings and the source, the originator of all sentient beings' happiness. So, we dedicate for His Holiness' long life and that all his holy wishes succeed immediately.

[Rinpoche chants]

Please dedicate all the merits for the quickest possible success for the building of the five-hundred-foot Maitreya statue and for all the Maitreya statues and all the holy objects, for the Sangha serving in the monasteries, for all those who wish to become monks and nuns, for all the various social services in the different parts of the world and for every center to be most beneficial for all sentient beings, to generate faith in refuge and karma, to actualize bodhicitta in all their hearts, and to spread Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings in the hearts of all the sentient beings. And may whatever project each center has be actualized by receiving all the needs, people's help or whatever.

Now a very important dedication, my hobby. "Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me and three-time merits collected by others, which exist but which are empty, may the I, who exists but who is empty, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment, which exists but which is empty, and lead all the sentient beings, who exist but who are empty, to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment, which exists but which is empty, by myself alone, who exists but who is totally empty—or who is the *only* phenomenon that is truly existent!

"I dedicate all the merits to be able to follow holy extensive deeds, just as Buddha Samantabhadra and Manjugosha realized. I dedicate all the merits in the same way as the three-time buddhas dedicate their merits. And due to the three-time merits collected by me and others, may Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings spread in all the directions. May they flourish forever in this world by completely actualizing them within my own heart, in the hearts of all my family members and of every one of us here, and in the hearts of all the rest of the students and the supporters, those who give up their life for this organization doing service to other sentient beings, and then in the hearts of everyone in this world in this very lifetime.

[Rinpoche chants]

So, sorry! My bad habit is talking on and on and on and never finishing. Thank you. Once I am here it's like this. I destroy your entire program, especially with no sleep! So, thanks so much. Good night.

## Lecture 3: The Cause of Samsara

### DELUSIONS DISTURB AND OBSCURE

[Rinpoche chants prayers in Tibetan]

If you have the text you can read in English.

[Rinpoche and students chant in English]

A star, a defective view, a butter lamp flame,  
An illusion, a dew drop, a water bubble,  
A dream, lightning, a cloud:  
See all causative phenomena like this.

By these merits, may transmigratory beings  
Attain the state of all-seeing, subdue the enemy of faults,  
And be freed from the ocean of samara  
Disturbed by the waves of aging, sickness, and death.

I made many long hours of noise last night talking about emptiness! Many hours of blah, blah, blah. It was to introduce a meditation on the meaning of this stanza, *kar ma rab rib* ... [A star, a defective view...] That explanation took time; it took all last night.

To be able to meditate the first one, “a star,” looking at the phenomena as like a star, to be able to understand that is very deep. That meditation has a very deep meaning. Of course, what I mentioned last night was the very essential introduction, but I haven’t studied it in the way that the monks study it. I spend time sleeping, eating, going to toilet, eating, sleeping. The monks in monasteries, even here at Kopan Monastery, study those Madhyamaka subjects for many years, memorizing the root texts and commentaries and doing analytical meditations and debating in groups and person to person.

By studying these Buddhist philosophical texts extensively, those very large monastic universities preserve the Buddhadharma in a very extensive way, preserving the understanding. That means preserving in such depth what the Buddha explained and the commentaries the pandits wrote, the fully enlightened great scholars, the highly attained ones, including the great Tibetan pandits. The monks memorize them and then debate on them day and night for many years. In the philosophical teachings, there are many volumes to study, with many different ways of reasoning. So actually, these texts are very profound, very extensive.

Before giving or listening to teachings, these are essential to cleanse the mind, to clean away the garbage of the mind, to cut attachment and ignorance. And, if there is anger, to also cut that, and to cut the delusions, the negative emotional thoughts, the obscuring, disturbing negative attitude, those thoughts. In Tibetan is called *nyon mong*. It is a mental factor. Generally speaking, there are six principal consciousnesses and fifty-one mental factors. This is the mental factor that has the function of disturbing our mental continuum, the opposite to bringing peace to our mental continuum. Instead of making the mental continuum peaceful, it kind of disturbs us. It’s the mental factor which does that function. But here I add one more word so you have deeper feeling. Not only disturbing, but I add the word “obscuring.”

So, there are two things. There is this mental factor that does the function of obscuring our mind from being able to see the reality of phenomena, as I mentioned yesterday—the ultimate nature, what is the reality of the I, the emptiness of the I. It also obscures us from seeing as impermanent the I and causative phenomena, which are in the nature of impermanence. This mental factor apprehends as permanent causative phenomena that are in the nature of impermanence, such as I; it holds onto them as permanent.

### **THE SUFFERING OF CHANGE**

Samsaric pleasure, the suffering of samsara that is unnoticeable to us, only becomes noticeable when it increases, when it becomes very gross. Until that time, while it is smaller, unnoticeable, the mind labels it “pleasure.” The mind makes up the label “pleasure” and we believe in that. Then, it appeared as pleasure from its own side, it appears as pleasure which is not merely labeled. That pleasure appears back to the I as that.

So here again, this pleasure that is not labeled by mind is totally false. It is not only not *merely* labeled by mind, it is not even *labeled* by mind. It appears as very gross, as truly existing from its own side, but it is not there, it doesn’t exist at all. So, it is just a total hallucination. We have not realized that this is false, that this is a hallucination, that it is empty. We believe that what appears as not merely labeled by the mind (or not even labeled by the mind) completely exists from its own side. All these gross wrong views are all hallucinations. Then, we get attached to that; we grasp onto that something which is not there.

That is the reality of our life. That describes the life of us samsaric beings continuously creating the cause of samsara, continuously going through the cycle of death and rebirth, over and over, experiencing all the sufferings in the realms of the hell beings, the hungry ghosts, the animals, the human beings, the suras and asuras—over and over. Like that, there is nothing new; there is nothing we have not experienced numberless times from beginningless rebirths. This is because of not having realized that this pleasure is suffering and instead believing it is pure happiness.

As I mentioned yesterday, these things appear back like this, not only not merely labeled by mind, but not even labeled by mind. They seem to have never come from mind; they seem to exist from their own side. We then hold on to that and attachment arises, the thought attached to that, grasping onto that. That way, it becomes the cause of samsara. We continuously create the cause of samsara, and also the cause of the lower realms.

I mentioned attachment the other night, on the first night of talking, and I gave a few examples of how attachment is the foundation of our life’s problems. We are not angry all the time, day and night, but attachment is there day and night, all the time, the attachment clinging to this life, to worldly concern. We live much of our life with that.

For we ordinary beings who haven’t realized the first lamrim, the graduated path of the lower capable being, especially the realization of impermanence and death, we cannot live our life free from this. As I mentioned the other day, when the four desirable objects and the four undesirable objects are equalized, they don’t bother us. When we have a realization of impermanence and death, our mind is free from worldly concern. If the four desirable objects and the four undesirable objects for worldly beings, for us as meditators or Dharma practitioners, are equalized, then whatever situation happens doesn’t bother us.

## THE NEED FOR POWER COMES FROM ATTACHMENT

As I said that first night, when we are free from worldly concern, which is full of expectations, we have great peace. [As a worldly person], when we experience these four undesirable objects our life is up and down. When we meet those four desirable objects, there is attachment, grasping onto them, and when we encounter the opposite, there is dislike. We are unhappy and sometimes anger and those other negative thoughts arise.

When we are not practicing Dharma, that means our mind is the friend of the eight worldly dharmas. We become a friend to the attachment clinging to this life. We develop that, we become a friend with it, supporting it. We become a slave of the attachment clinging to this life. We constantly follow it day and night, as if we are oneness with it. Anyway, these are just different ways of expressing it.

Sometimes in the West, people think that if we don't have attachment, we don't have a life! Without attachment how can we survive? There is no life! How can we live without attachment? We can understand that this kind of thinking is because people don't have the real education of the mind, how the mind creates happiness and creates suffering. The whole thing is about the mind. Their education is very limited in that.

I think the full explanation of the mind is only in Buddhism. Lama Yeshe, the great master, who is kinder than all the three-time buddhas, said that just by learning the sutras, we don't get the full understanding of the mind. Only if we learn tantra can we learn very extensively about the mind, especially the subtle part of the mind. Then, we get the whole idea of the mind, not just what is explained in the sutra teachings, which are [comparatively] gross, only explaining some parts. Lama used to say that only by learning tantra do we learn everything about the mind, especially the very extensive teachings on the subtle mind.

Due to limitation of actual knowledge of mind, or (you can say) the lack of Dharma understanding, because of that, people live their life with attachment day and night, all the time. So of course, they will explain that without attachment there cannot be a life, it is impossible to survive. It is like without attachment you have no mind, you are dead. You are dead without attachment; you have no mind! You're a zombie! I am just joking.

Anyway, I lost my road!

That's right. As I mentioned the first night, this attachment clinging to this life, the eight worldly dharmas, the eight worldly concerns, this attachment is the foundation of all our life's problems. On that first night I gave some idea of how all our problems come from that; they are based on that.

Countries try to take over other countries based on attachment. When they can't get them, they make war, killing many millions of the people in the other countries. This is because of attachment. Killing many millions of people who do not have blonde hair or blue eyes. All those other people were killed, right? It's similar to that, to killing those who don't have blue eyes and blonde hair or blowing hairs! All this is due to the attachment.

In the world, wanting power especially comes from attachment. Starting with the power of an individual person who wants control, then the leader who wants more power, more control, who wants to control other countries, the whole world. They end up killing so many people, making so many people suffer, torturing them. On TV it was shown that during Hitler's time so many



babies were thrown in the fire. And this is without talking about the animals killed. Usually the number is only about human beings; the animals are never counted. Like in the water, when you throw bombs that explode in the ocean, numberless fish are killed, the water is polluted. And then of course on the land, the numberless other beings, the animals, are not counted; it is normally just human beings. They not only kill the people of other countries, they also kill their own people. Numberless lives are lost because of that.

This project of controlling another country or making war with another country originally came from attachment. When people don't get what they want in a political way, they use violence, weapons.

## **UNDERSTANDING SUFFERING INSPIRES US TO DEVELOP ON THE PATH**

You can see that attachment is very harmful; it is extremely terrifying. Delusion is extremely terrifying, very horrifying. That is a very important meditation.

We don't even want to think about the hell realm. It is unpleasant for us; it is utterly terrifying. We don't even want to look at drawings or paintings of the hell realm; we don't want to think about it or hear about it. But that doesn't help! I mean, to not think of hell doesn't help us to not go to hell. Not thinking about it, blocking it from our thoughts, rejecting it, doesn't help at the time of death to not be reborn in hell.

In Buddhism, by learning about the sufferings of other realms, we reflect on them, and then that inspires us to abandon the cause, negative karma, which causes us to be reborn in the hell realm. The cause doesn't come from outside but from our own negative thoughts, the delusions, the nonvirtuous thoughts of ignorance, anger, attachment and the actions done out of these, which become nonvirtue, negative karma.

Why negative karma? Because one thing is the motivation—the ignorance, anger and attachment—and the other thing is that the only result is suffering. It can never be happiness. That's why it receives the name “negative karma.” Knowing this inspires us to abandon negative karma. It makes us strong so we're able to defeat our enemy, the delusions; we're able to control them, to stop them arising. And then, by actualizing the path, to cease them entirely.

This is especially true of the wisdom realizing emptiness, the direct perception of emptiness. First, we realize emptiness but with an image, a conceptual realization of emptiness. Then, through developing that, by meditating on emptiness unified with shamatha, we attain great insight, which becomes a preparation to have direct perception of emptiness, the transcendental path, the arya path. Only that is able to directly cease the delusions.

And then, having removed the intellectual delusions to the doctrine, we then remove the simultaneous-born delusions, including the cause of the delusion, the seed that is in the nature of an imprint. We are able to completely remove the cause of the delusions from the mental continuum. When that happens, we have achieved liberation, total cessation.

Then, as I also mentioned, with the bodhicitta realization we collect inconceivable skies of merit all the time. With this great heap of merit, we are able to develop on the path and, with the support of the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, we are able to cease the subtle defilements. At that time, our mental continuum becomes omniscient, we achieve the fully knowing mind.

When we have a fully knowing mind, we also have perfect compassion—there is nothing more to develop. With compassion toward each and every single obscured suffering sentient being, we also have the perfect power to reveal any method that fits the karma of the sentient beings. So, we are able to do perfect work for sentient beings without the slightest mistake and bring them from happiness to happiness to full enlightenment.

By reflecting on those sufferings taught in Buddhism, those realms, we are inspired to renounce negative karma and delusions. This gives us courage, so we are gradually able to completely defeat the inner enemy, the delusions.

Also, by meditating on the sufferings of the hells and the other realms, including the suffering of the human realm, by listening to the teachings and then reflecting and meditating on them, it makes us enter the path through generating renunciation, as I mentioned before, and it makes us be totally liberated from suffering.

And the other thing is that we are able to generate compassion for others, not only for sick or poor people but even for rich people. We are able to generate compassion for all those human beings who are under the control of karma and delusions and who constantly suffer, either the suffering of pain, the suffering of change—the samsaric pleasure which is only suffering—or pervasive compounding suffering, the foundation of those two other sufferings. One meaning of pervasive compounding suffering refers to the aggregates that are caused by karma and delusions. That's why the body and mind is in the nature of suffering. Then also, the body and mind is contaminated by the seed of delusion, that is another meaning of pervasive compounding suffering.

### **THE THREE REALMS ARE ONLY SUFFERING**

From this pervasive compounding suffering, which means the aggregates that are in that nature, the other two sufferings arise, like water bubbles, like waves coming from the ocean. Understanding that, we are able to generate compassion. If our understanding of suffering is only poor people who have no shelter or food, our compassion is extremely limited. That means we don't have compassion for the rest of the human beings, and we get especially angry at rich people because we are not wealthy. If our understanding of suffering is only the suffering of pain, we don't have compassion for those experiencing the other types of sufferings, the suffering of samsaric pleasure and pervasive compounding suffering.

If we can understand the second type of suffering of samsara, how the samsaric pleasure is only in the nature of suffering, the compassion we are able to generate is much wider. Not only that, if we can also understand pervasive compounding suffering, we feel compassion for all those human beings and all those sentient beings who are suffering the samsaric pleasure and experiencing pervasive compounding suffering. We have compassion like the sky, covering all those suffering sentient beings. We even have compassion for the devas of the form realm who don't have the suffering of pain. Our compassion is much wider. According to Geshe Sopa Rinpoche, they also have the suffering of change. Even those pleasures they have through meditation are the suffering of change. And they have pervasive compounding suffering because their aggregates are caused by karma and delusions and they also have the contaminated seed of delusion.

In the formless realm there is the pervasive compounding suffering. Because the beings of the formless realm have pervasive compounding suffering, they are not free, even if they reach the

highest part or realm of samsara, the top of the formless realm—there is limitless space, limitless consciousness, nothingness and the tip of samsara.

The procedure of going from the desire realm to be born in the form realm is by meditating on how the desire realm is only in the nature of suffering, with a short life and full of problems, sicknesses and so forth. Like those places where there are a lot of epidemics and disease, very unhygienic and very dirty and we are very scared to go there. Or like some places where they have some heavy sicknesses, where you can die of some disease in a short time.

In Mongolia we tried to go to a holy place where there are a hundred stupas. I have been to Mongolia a few times, but I never made it to the place with a hundred stupas. It's a little bit far and it takes a little bit of time to get there. We tried to go once but there was a disease that was extremely dangerous. Once you got it you died. I don't know the name of the disease but I think it happened in the past and people thought it might be happening again, so everybody there was terrified.

Anyway, by meditating on how the desire realm is in the nature of suffering, we see that the form realm beings have a long life, something wonderful, and there is much greater happiness. Looking at that as much better, by doing analysis we see how the desire realm is totally in the nature of suffering, so disgusting. So, we have total renunciation, total detachment to the desire realm. When we compare it to the form realm, all the pleasures we thought of as great seem completely disgusting. How much we thought of the human being's pleasure, the desire realm pleasure, as incredible, when we do the analysis we see it is totally disgusting; it is only suffering. So, we generate renunciation and achieve calm abiding meditation. Through analysis like this, we achieve the first level of the firm contemplation, it is called *sam t̄in dang po*, firm contemplation. There are four levels of firm contemplation. This is the procedure.

Within that also we look at the next realm as having better quality, with a longer life and more happiness than the previous one, which has comparatively more suffering. Through meditation, there are what might be the six apprehensions. In Tibetan it is called *yeshe drug*, maybe the six apprehensions, but it needs to be analyzed. I just have to name it something, to put some label on it, but you can analyze it later. The six apprehensions—the translation has to be analyzed. Through meditation we achieve the second level, then again we do the analysis through the meditation of the six apprehensions, then we go to the third and fourth, like that.

We get bored with even the pleasure that derives from this meditation, so again we do the six apprehensions, and with analysis we see the formless realm is better than the form realm. Then, we go through the six apprehensions again and [analyze] getting reborn in the formless realm. Again, there are four categories of formless realm so again, through meditation, we go through the six apprehensions. All this is through meditation, looking at the next as even better.

At the very end there is the tip of samsara. The highest realm of samsara is the formless realm, and among the four categories, the highest one is the tip of samsara. The being who achieves the tip of samsara has total renunciation, not only for the suffering of the desire realm but even for the pleasure of the form realm, seeing the form realm as totally disgusting, only suffering. They can't find any attraction for even one second. Then, even in the formless realm, they see the other three levels as only in the nature of suffering; they can't find attachment for even a second.

Now the problem is this. With all these procedures, looking at the previous realm as having more suffering and the next as being better, the being can achieve the tip of samsara. But there is no other higher samsaric realm to compare it with, to analyze and see if the fourth formless

realm, the tip of samsara, is also only in the nature of suffering. There is no higher samsaric realm to compare it to.

Therefore, they can have total detachment, total renunciation, for all the other samsaric realms *except* the tip of samsara, which they cannot realize is in the nature of suffering. They lack renunciation for that and are therefore unable to enter the path. They also lack a direct perception of emptiness.

So, when that karma to be in the tip of samsara finishes, they are again reborn in the desire realm, even in the lower realms. Because they don't have renunciation for the tip of samsara, they are unable to enter the path and unable to have a direct perception of emptiness, which directly removes the delusions, including the seed of delusion. So, again they must reincarnate.

We have all gone through the shamatha meditation, we have had the realization, achieving that which is the foundation, the four levels of firm contemplation regarding the form realm and the formless realm. We have gone through those realms numberless times; we have been born in those realms numberless times from beginningless rebirths. This is nothing new.

By explaining this, I want to emphasize that even the tip of samsara is only in the nature of suffering. We have to realize that. Without the total renunciation of samsara, we cannot enter the path to liberation. From hell up to the tip of the samsara, all of samsara is in the nature of suffering, like being in the center of a fire. Being in samsara, up to the tip of samsara—everything, the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm—is like being in the red-hot center of a fire or like our naked body is sitting on a thorn bush, or like being in the nest of poisonous snakes or being in a septic tank—*inside* the septic tank, not on top of it! Inside the septic tank with all those interesting things! We are totally drowned in it, with all the germs, all the smell and all the gas, all the stuff. It is only in the nature of suffering; we can't find attraction there for even a second. We need to generate renunciation like this, to enter the path so that we can remove all the disturbing-thought obscurations. Then we are able to achieve liberation and ultimate happiness, enlightenment.

## **EVERYTHING BECOMES MEANINGFUL WHEN WE CHERISH OTHERS**

What was I saying? I'm losing my point! I'm wandering around, everywhere. What I was saying here is that by learning about the sufferings of the various realms we can generate compassion. Then, our compassion covers everybody; it covers all the beings of the desire realm, those who are suffering from the suffering of pain and the suffering of change, as well as the beings of the form realm—our compassion covers all of them—and our compassion also covers the formless realm beings who are experiencing the pervasive compounding suffering, even if they don't experience the other sufferings. Our compassion covers all suffering beings, with nothing left out.

Mahayana compassion is not only wishing that they are free from suffering and the cause of suffering. It's not only that, not just the wish for them to be free from suffering and its causes where we don't do anything else, where we just have a good time and go for a holiday. I'm joking! With our mind of compassion, on the basis of wishing them to be free from all the suffering and its causes, we take the responsibility on ourselves, thinking "I myself will free them from all the suffering and its causes." We take on the responsibility ourselves. That is Mahayana compassion. Generating compassion, we then do something for them; we take on the

responsibility to liberate them from all suffering and its causes and bring them to liberation and to full enlightenment by ceasing the subtle defilements.

So here, you can understand the benefits of learning about true suffering and the true cause of suffering, not only for our own liberation, but it is also unbelievably important to know about other sentient beings' suffering. That's why we have to meditate on the suffering of the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm and the animal realm, as well as the sufferings of the suras and asuras, the sufferings of the beings in the form and formless realms. That's why we have to study the sufferings of all the realms. The ultimate thing is that we take full responsibility. We develop our mind on the path to enlightenment and then we are able to liberate them from oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to enlightenment. That is the ultimate goal of our life; that is the object of our life.

Why do we spend so much money for this body to survive? Why is it so important to survive? Why do we spend so much to have shelter? Even just for shelter, for a house, for comfort, why do we spend so much money? Why do we spend so much money on food? And clothes! There are winter clothes, summer clothes, autumn clothes, spring clothes; then there are nighttime clothes, daytime clothes, morning clothes, breakfast clothes, day clothes, bedtime clothes, party clothes, special clothes! There are hundreds of shoes! When I stay in somebody's house, I often see hundreds of shoes—so many different shoes to wear at different times.

Then, we have so much expense making sure we won't get sick in the future, making preparations, taking medicine before we get sick. We don't have an operation before we get sick. No, maybe not that one! Anyway, we do things for prevention, having checkups, having x-rays, taking tablets for prevention, in case we are going to get a disease. We spend so much on treatments. We even spend so much time and money on exercising, learning exercises, buying exercise machines and all the equipment for exercising.

We spend so much money for this body. How many meters are there, how many inches, from the feet to the head, for this one body. We take care of it unbelievably, and all the time there is so much worry and fear about what is going to happen to this body.

Now, if we change our attitude, if instead of seeking happiness only for ourselves, only working for ourselves, if we change our attitude from that into cherishing others, seeking happiness for others, working for others' happiness, freeing others from suffering, if we do that, all these expenses—all these comforts, the shelter, the house, the clothes, the food, the medicine, all this effort that we put into taking care of this body—it all becomes meaningful. It gives meaning to everything, to taking care of this body and obtaining all these needs. We are obtaining all these needs for others.

Having shelter, food, clothing—the main aim of everything we do becomes in our heart for the happiness of other sentient beings. And others are numberless. This is not just for one person, not just for an animal, not just for our pet, our cat or dog! Or for our pet lizard or snake! It is for numberless sentient beings: [the numberless hell beings,] the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless suras and asuras, the numberless intermediate state beings. In each of the realms there are numberless beings. This is for everyone's happiness, to give them freedom from suffering. It becomes beneficial for every single suffering sentient being. Just by changing the attitude into compassion and bodhicitta, our whole life becomes transformed, like transforming *kaka*, poopoo, into gold.

It becomes the best life, the happiest life, the most meaningful life. And with this compassion, with the thought of cherishing others, with bodhicitta, everyone is in our heart, whichever country they live in. Even our enemy is in our heart. Even somebody who harms us, criticizes us, gets angry with us, even that person is in our heart. Everybody is in our heart, like how a mother feels for her beloved child, cherishing them the most and doing everything best for them—giving them the best food, the best clothing, whatever, doing everything for her child to have the best happiness. Whatever happiness the mother can think of, whatever she knows, she does the best for the child. This is how she feels for her beloved child, who is more precious than her life, like her heart. With the change of attitude to compassion, to bodhicitta, that is how we feel. There is no barrier between us and others, no wall. Everyone becomes like one family. We are close to everybody and they are close to us.

Today there is no tea?

[Rinpoche and students do the tea offering]

### **ALL FORMS ARE LABELED BY OUR SUPERSTITIOUS MIND**

Today again, while we are having tea, we can recite the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras*.

[Rinpoche and students chant the *Praises*]

I am going to continue what I had planned to explain yesterday. My secret plan was to talk about thought transformation from the hundreds of thought transformation texts, looking at how to use delusions on the path to enlightenment. That was the secret plan! But it didn't happen yesterday. Today my plan has changed!

With the practice of thought transformation, whether we experience suffering or we experience happiness, we utilize it on the path to enlightenment. Whatever happens in our life, we utilize it on the path to enlightenment. Maybe I change from that—the second change—and go back to explaining the meaning of that stanza, to be able to finish that, so that you have some idea how to meditate on that.

Actually, this stanza that is recited before the teaching is a very powerful meditation. When we meditate on the meaning, it immediately brings our attention back. If we are distracted, we are able to bring our mind back to reality, to think about the reality of life. Instead of creating the cause to continuously circle in samsara, which is what we were doing before with our body, speech and mind, now we bring the mind back to the reality of life and phenomena, and we create the cause of liberation and enlightenment. This is what happens when we meditate on these verses.

I want to mention a quotation from the Seventh Dalai Lama, Kelsang Gyatso. In Tibetan it is [Rinpoche recites the verse in Tibetan.] That is the stanza; it is a very profound teaching. It says, “Every single phenomenon of samsara and nirvana ...” That also includes enlightenment, not just liberation from samsara but even the cessation of the subtle defilements. And it includes the true path, the true suffering and the true cause of suffering. “Every single phenomenon of samsara” includes all these.

The first thing [he says] is the same as I explained yesterday. You will get a clear idea because I explained that basis yesterday. “Your own superstitious thought first merely imputes everything.”

Everything is merely imputed: the I, the action, the object, the aggregates of body and mind, all the senses—form, sound, smell, taste, tangible objects, all these, like in the *Heart of Wisdom* that we recite in the morning. The sense bases and their objects, the eighteen elements, the twelve dependently related limbs, the four noble truths—our superstitious mind merely imputes this and that, this and that.

We can see this when we look at form: at the light, the ceiling, the pillars, at any person we see, the carpets, the floor, all the holy objects here, the statues; and when we go outside: the trees, the sky, the roads, the houses, the mountains; and all the things we see when we go to the supermarket: all the hundreds of different vegetables and sixty, seventy different cheeses. I am not talking about Kathmandu! “Blue cheese” here means fungus growing on cheese! When we go to the supermarket, there are all those billions of things we see, and in the department store there are billions of clothes for children, adults and old people, all the different dresses and coats for summer and winter, for all the different seasons. Then there are all the billions of types of makeup and billions of pens.

All these forms, first our superstitious mind merely imputes that. Then, after the mere imputation, we believe in that, and then, the next one, it appears back. We need to understand the first one, how it appears back. As I mentioned yesterday, from A, B, C, D, up to Z, remember? Before we are educated, before we are introduced by somebody what label to put on the different lines, because we don’t know the labels, we haven’t labeled them A or B or C—that hasn’t been done yet. Therefore, there is no appearance that this is A, this is a B, this is a C, or a D, up to Z. We don’t have all this appearance of this and this and this. OK?

Because we don’t have all these things, because we don’t have all this appearance that this is an A, this is a B, up to Z, we don’t see it as that. We don’t see that this is an A, this is a B, this is a C, this is a D. We see the design but we don’t see that this is an A, this is a B. Until we are educated, until we are taught the label by somebody, we don’t see that this is this.

I’ll give you another example. Say there is somebody that we met somewhere, in Tibet or Africa, or Madagascar, or we spent some time with the person but then, after a long time, after many years, one day you meet them somewhere but we forgot. We see the person’s body but we can’t remember the name, the label. But then slowly, hearing the voice or seeing how their nose looks, either up or down, hearing the voice, seeing the features, seeing the behavior, suddenly we remember the name. We know we met somewhere, we had a pizza or something, we had a coffee or a fight! At the beginning, we see the aggregates, but our mind hasn’t labeled them “Robert” or something. We see the aggregates, but our mind hasn’t yet labeled them “Robert.” Not robbery, Robert! The mind hasn’t labeled them “Robert,” so we don’t have the appearance that this is Robert and we don’t see that person as Robert at that time. After some time talking, watching, seeing his behavior, his way of speaking, or maybe he says, “I am your friend. Remember? We did this in the past. I am Robert.” Then suddenly, our mind labels him “Robert.” That label “Robert” is merely imputed by the mind, it is a merely imputed Robert and then we believe that. We have the appearance of Robert. Then, after that, we see that this is Robert. So, you see now, this is our mind’s creation. It’s clear here.

The whole thing here is similar to A, B, C, D. It is exactly the same how all forms come from our mind, our mind merely imputes them, creates them. They are merely imputed, they appear as that and then we see [them as that]—this is this, this is this, this is light, this is a flower, this is a statue, this, this, this, like that. It’s the same in the department store. Everything is like that. When we go to a department store, when we go shopping, in each section there are billions of things and it’s all like this. Our mind merely imputes them all and believes in that; they appear

that this is this. All the billions of things in the different sections, everything is like that. When we go to supermarket, there are so many different types of food and they are all like that, all created by the mind, merely imputed by the superstition.

So now, as I mentioned yesterday, Robert, who is merely imputed, does not appear back to the mind as not merely imputed by mind. That is the *gag cha*, the object to be refuted according to the Prasangika school. That real Robert is false, a hallucination, real in the sense of existing from its own side. That is decorated by our ignorance on the mere imputation. As I mentioned yesterday, our ignorance made it real. It made the real Robert, the Robert that exists from its own side. Then, we hold onto it, we let our mind trust that, believing this is true, there is such a real thing. There are the two things. First, our superstitious mind creates it and, second, it makes it real, existing from its own side, which is false, which is not there.

Everything is like this; everything is made real by ignorance. Everything is projected by ignorance, making it appear as real. Then, we hold onto it. So, there is a third thing. We trust it and we hold onto it as true, which creates the hallucination of true existence. So, there are actually these three things there: everything appears as real, which is a projection of ignorance, then we let our mind hold onto that as true, and then we create ignorance.

Everything is exactly the same as this—when we go to the supermarket or department store, when we go sightseeing in the cities or mountains. Whatever sightseeing we are going to see—when we go on a pilgrimage, sightseeing waterfalls, whatever—it is all like that; it is all our mind's creation.

This is a very good meditation to do when we go sightseeing, if we can use the trip to meditate on emptiness by remembering this teaching. We prepare for the sightseeing trip but determine we are going to use the sightseeing to meditate on emptiness, to meditate on how everything is created by our mind. What we see, what appears to us, everything that appears to us comes from our mind. We need to remember these three things and continuously meditate on that. First, the mere imputation; second, projecting true existence; and third, holding onto it as true.

Now, here you should pay attention! This is the remedy, looking at that which is empty—which is everything—as empty. Seeing that, first, our superstitious mind merely imputes; second, our ignorance, by leaving a negative imprint on the mind, projects or decorates true existence; and third, we let our mind believe that it is true; we trust in that.

If we don't have the remedy, when we do that, after the third one where we let our mind hold everything as true, believing that what appears as real is real, then attachment arises, anger arises, more ignorance arises. Jealousy arises, pride arises—all these negative emotional thoughts arise. We let our mind hold onto these false views of true existence, this appearance, and on that basis, we believe that this is real then we create the ignorance. On that basis, it is believed by ignorance. Then all those other negative emotional thoughts arise, and that makes us unhappy; that tortures our own mind. And the self-cherishing thought also arises.

This I that appears, which is made real due to projection by the ignorance, we let our mind hold onto it as true. Then the selfish mind cherishes it as so precious, as the most important thing. And yet, this real I is not there. Remember? It cherishes this real I that is not there. Do you get the idea? But it is not there, it doesn't exist at all. To the selfish mind, this is the most important thing. "I am the most important. I am more important than all the sentient beings, including the buddhas and bodhisattvas. I am the most important." That is the selfish mind, the self-cherishing thought. Do you understand?



## BECAUSE OF SELF-CHERISHING WE HAVE NOT ATTAINED ENLIGHTENMENT

The self-cherishing thought doesn't cherish the merely labeled I. I don't know about arya beings, but for us, what the self-cherishing thought cherishes, this I we feel is the most important thing, this I is the false I. Through ignorance leaving the negative imprint, the hallucination of the truly existent I is projected. And then we let our mind believe it is true, and the self-cherishing thought cherishes that as the most important thing.

Here, please pay attention. Because of this self-cherishing thought, from beginningless rebirths up to now we haven't achieved enlightenment, we haven't even achieved liberation from samsara for ourselves. Until now, we haven't been liberated from the suffering of samsara. Because of this self-cherishing thought, we haven't achieved any of the lamrim realizations, even of the first lamrim, the graduated path of the lower capable being. Even the realization of impermanence and death didn't happen. All this is blocked by the self-cherishing thought.

The self-cherishing thought has made our life totally empty from beginningless rebirths. Even though the continuity of the consciousness is beginningless, we have still not achieved any realizations. Our heart has been totally empty up to now. This is all due to the self-cherishing thought.

If we don't eliminate this demon, this enemy, this self-cherishing thought that is dwelling in the heart, we will never be able to achieve enlightenment. Then, we will be unable to liberate the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering. We won't be able to enlighten all sentient beings, we won't be able to accomplish the goal of our life. The meaning, the purpose of life won't be achieved.

As the great bodhisattva Shantideva said,

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.<sup>1</sup>

For example, a person who is very egoistic, with a very selfish mind, never gets along with the family. Even when they are living with the family, they never get along. Everybody finds problems with them, with their manners, with their way of behaving, their way of thinking. So, they are unable to find any happiness, even in the works of this life. In the office it is the same when somebody lives their life cherishing the I, with a selfish mind. Many problems arise. Their boss gives them a job to do, but they make mistakes and they become unpleasant to others. In short, they are disrespectful, not pleasant to other people, and even the boss gets upset. Then the boss, who gave them the job, who paid them, gets upset and kicks them out.

I am sure you have many examples, so I don't have to give more, but I just remembered an example! There was a Tibetan boy, I think in the United States, in Madison. His mother was very religious, taking teachings from Geshe Sopa Rinpoche, a learned teacher from Tibet, outstanding even among the many thousands of learned Tibet teachers, so there is no question about nowadays.

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<sup>1</sup> *Bodhicaryavatara*, Ch. 8, v.131.

There were many Tibetans who joined the pujas at Geshe-la's center, Deer Park, but most didn't go the teachings, only for His Holiness's birthday celebrations. Of course, when His Holiness went, most of them would go because that was a different thing, but normally they didn't go. It was kind of strange, but anyway! This Tibetan lady went to pujas, the *tsog* offerings and so forth and she tried to do a retreat in America. She was a nurse and every day she always did her practices morning and evening. She was very sincere, very dedicated. Anyway, her son didn't find a job for many years. At one time, one of Geshe-la's disciples, an ex-monk, tried to help him find a job. He had a good personality; people liked him, so this boy finally found a job.

Then, after about a week at work, the boss was giving a party and had cookies prepared on the table. I think this boy came along and ate the biscuits without waiting for the party to start, even though the boss had told him they were not to be eaten. I think the boy had not yet learned. I guess the family didn't teach him how to behave, and because he hadn't been taught, even though the boss said they had to wait one or two hours, the boy didn't wait and ate them. Then, instead of apologizing, as he should have done, instead of being humble, he showed a little bit of arrogance. Due to self-cherishing thought, he was disrespectful, not even saying sorry. That would have fixed it, but the next day he lost his job and didn't find another one for many years.

This is what I was talking about. Even the works of this life don't succeed because of the self-cherishing thought. As I was talking, I remembered that story. I'm sure you can find many examples in your life, situations that have even happened to you.

I am using this to show how the self-cherishing thought is the big enemy even to achieving the happiness this life. Nobody likes a person with a selfish mind, even in the office, because with that attitude their behavior is different. There is no respect when speaking. So many problems arise because the person becomes unkind to others. The result is most people in the office don't like them. Wherever the person goes, even to different parts of the world, they always find problems with people. They are constantly unhappy because people don't like them, and then they are always very depressed, very sad and angry because of all those problems.

So, with the self-cherishing thought, we become alone. Nobody loves us, nobody likes us, nobody wants to help us. Nobody invites us to parties; nobody takes us for outings. We might be working in a busy office or living in a family, with many people around, but we are alone. Even though physically there are many people around, we are alone. That is the shortcoming of the self-cherishing thought. People don't come to see us. They don't even like to greet us when we are on the road. If they see us coming, they cross to the other side or take another road, until we go away.

The person who is selfless, who has a good heart, who thinks of others, who cares about others, who cherishes others, the compassionate person, the good-hearted person—when that person is with the family everybody is happy; they enjoy that person's company. Everybody in the office is happy to see them, to have them working there. Inside the house or outside, wherever they go, others enjoy their company; they can feel the compassion or the warm heart of the person.

For example, Lama Yeshe took care of me, not only as guru but as a father for thirty years. Everybody could feel his warm heart and how he respected everybody, how he was humble with everybody. Everybody wanted to meet him. Even outside people who didn't know him enjoyed seeing him. And another one, of course, is His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Concerning Lama Yeshe, everybody was so happy to be with him, to meet him, to talk to him; they could feel his warm heart.

Even my attendant or secretary, whatever, the key person in the organization, Raja [Roger], when we travel, at the airport, people have no idea who he is. People might not know him at all but they suddenly stop and shake his hand; they want to talk to him. They don't do that to me! Because they feel my self-cherishing thought, they don't feel that! With him, this unknown person, people really want to shake his hand and talk to him because they can see his gentleness, they can see his warm heart. From the expression on his face, they can see the soft heart, the gentle mind, how he is good-hearted. Even when we travel, people want to talk to him because they need happiness, they want to enjoy time with him. They feel his sincerity, his soft heart, his gentleness. Through the expression on his face, they know he is a good human being.

I just want to end this now. With a bad attitude we cannot even obtain happiness in this life. This ego, this self-cherishing thought has not only been harming us from beginningless rebirths up to now, it has especially been harming numberless sentient beings, directly and indirectly, from beginningless rebirths up to now. If we don't do something in this life to eliminate this self-cherishing thought, if we don't eliminate this enemy, this mara, this devil, the ego, the self-cherishing thought, then it will continuously harm numberless sentient beings directly or indirectly. That is much more terrifying [than just harming us]; that is the most terrifying thing.

Because of the self-cherishing thought, desire and anger arise, and then the many other negative emotions arise, harming other sentient beings in many different ways—killing, stealing and so forth. Because our self-cherishing thought harms numberless sentient beings, this is much more terrifying.

Therefore, we can't wait even a second without doing something to destroy this self-cherishing thought right now, in this life. We can't stand it even for a minute, even for a second; we have to eliminate it. Not only for our own happiness, for liberation and enlightenment, but most importantly for the happiness of the numberless sentient beings, for their temporal and ultimate happiness, for their liberation and enlightenment. This can't wait. We can't stand having it for even a minute, a second; we need to eliminate it. The shortcomings of self-cherishing are vast, like the limitless sky. That is how the ego is harmful.

Now, the I that self-cherishing cherishes is the *truly existent* I; it does not cherish the merely labeled I. We don't think, "I am going to cherish the merely labeled I." Maybe you do. I have never thought that! So, the I that we cherish is not even there. This is the "emotional I," according to the psychologists' term, the ordinary people's term. It is called the real I in Buddhist philosophical texts describing the truly existent I, the I that exists from its own side or that exists by nature. That is the object to be refuted. It is the I that appears as not merely labeled by mind, which is not there at all.

To cherish something that is not there is even more ... how do you say it? [*Student: Ironic?*] Yes, that's right. Cherishing something that is not there as the most important thing is unbelievably foolish. Then, besides harming ourselves from life to life, we harm all the sentient beings.

### **GRASPING AT TRUE EXISTENCE IS THE CAUSE OF SAMBARA**

Anyway, the little talk on the introduction to the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought went by the way! I am going back to my road like the horse pulling [against the rider]. It is running everywhere!

So, do you remember what I told you before about what basis all the negative emotional thoughts arise from? They are the last thing. First, ignorance makes everything appear real, existing from its own side, not merely labeled by mind. Then, we let our mind hold onto that as true; we believe it to be true. On that basis, anger arises, attachment arises, all these negative emotional thoughts such as pride or jealousy arise, harming us, torturing us and harming other sentient beings. All the negative emotional thoughts come from the self-cherishing thought, as I mentioned before.

On this basis, we exaggerate things, labeling them good or bad, beautiful or ugly. When we exaggerate something as bad, anger arises; when we exaggerate something as good or beautiful, attachment rises. And then there is friend or enemy. Friend and enemy are built on the basis of the hallucination; they are projected by the hallucination, by the ignorance holding as true that which is not there, which is totally nonexistent.

How can objects of anger and attachment—which are total hallucinations—exist? If their foundation doesn't exist, how can the object of anger or attachment exist? How can what anger apprehends or what attachment apprehends exist? This is totally false; there is no such thing there. What attachment holds onto as friend or what anger apprehends as enemy is not there. It is all a total hallucination. There is no such thing.

I don't remember the exact words, but Lama Tsongkhapa explained that on the basis of ignorance seeing a thing as truly existent, as something real, not merely labeled by the mind, then it exaggerates [the qualities of the object]. We believe it to be good or bad, beautiful or ugly, and then attachment or anger arises. Sorry, I don't remember every single word, but that is the conclusion. When we see this, we can realize there is no such thing as the object of anger or attachment. As well as the ignorance that grasps the object as truly existent, we can realize the object apprehended by that is empty. By abandoning that, by realizing that does not exist, we can realize that it is empty. I don't remember every single word, but that is used as a reasoning to overcome delusions and achieve liberation, the cessation of suffering and its causes. Realizing that what our ignorance believes to be real does not exist allows us to be able to achieve liberation.

This is the analysis we should meditate on. It is what we should do when our life is disturbed, when in our day-to-day life our mind is tortured by anger and attachment all the time. It is very helpful doing the analysis on how these objects of the wrong concepts do not exist as we believe them to exist; that there is nothing there.

So, going back! All these other negative, emotional thoughts arise, appearing as something real. They have been made real by our ignorance. These disturbing, negative emotional thoughts obscure our mind from seeing the emptiness, the ultimate reality of I and phenomena, from seeing the reality—as I mentioned before but didn't finish—of seeing it as impermanent. It obscures the mind from seeing things as impermanent, and from seeing samsaric pleasure, which is in the nature of suffering, as suffering. Instead of realizing that which is suffering is suffering, we think it is real happiness. It projects not only this but many wrong views. Disturbing our mental continuum, these delusions interfere with us achieving liberation and enlightenment. They obscure our mind and disturb our mind's function.

For example, when the mind is occupied by the self-cherishing thought, there is no space for compassion to help others. Similarly, when our mind is filled with attachment, there is no space to really think of others' happiness, of others' needs. Pure loving kindness for others is blocked. Pure loving kindness without expectations, helping somebody without any conditions,

unconditional loving kindness, doesn't happen. It blocks us opening our heart to others, to really caring about others and benefiting them. Even if we are doing something for others, actually in our heart, it is for our own happiness, to get something back from that person. If we do something for others with attachment, with self-cherishing, it is like that.

The Seventh Dalai Lama mentioned that all things—action, object, phenomena—are made real by ignorance, by the mind projecting true existence on them, and then trusting, holding onto that as true, but in reality there is nothing there. He compared it to a magician with mantra and substances who illusions the audience, so they see a jeweled palace or a beautiful man or woman. The magician makes so many things appear like that, making the audience believe that there is such a thing there. However, in reality there is no such thing; it is an illusion. It is exactly like that in our daily life—the I, action, object, all these phenomena, as I mentioned before. When we go sightseeing or on pilgrimage or when we go into the city for shopping, everything appears as truly existent, as real, and we believe it.

The Seventh Dalai Lama said that, like the example of the illusion, all these truly existent things are projected by ignorance and our ignorance holds onto them as true. By holding all that is totally nonexistent as true, it cheats us, it deceives us constantly. Our whole life we are constantly deceived by this ignorance holding onto things as true, trusting that. As I mentioned before, it not only cheats us but it causes negative emotional thoughts to arise, which then create so many negative karmas, the cause of samsara, the cause of the lower realms. All the oceans of samsaric suffering come from that. It is a huge cheating, the greatest cheating in life.

Here, the Seventh Dalai Lama is showing us how to not be deceived by this ignorance. There is a solution. In our daily life, we don't cling to the I, the action and all the phenomena that appear as truly existent. We don't hold onto them, we don't grasp onto them, we don't trust in them. We look at them as empty. The way we stop trusting in them, grasping onto them is by looking at all phenomena as empty. That which *is* empty in reality, we look at it as empty.

So now here, here is the conclusion. We'll stop there tonight. I'm not going through the verse again. Maybe tomorrow, maybe next year! *Here*, we should not just say the words. We don't hold onto things; we don't grasp onto things. All these things that appear as truly existent, that are made real by ignorance, we no longer grasp onto them. We don't hold onto them; we don't trust them.

Now here pay attention! This is the conclusion. *Every time* we let our mind hold onto that which is projected by ignorance, trusting this, grasping onto this as something real or truly existent—*that* is the cause of samsara. Every time we do that, that is the root of samsara. You have already been meditating on samsara these last few days, on each realm's suffering and general suffering, so you have some idea. Every time we hold onto this as true, we create the cause of samsara, the root of samsara.

I can say this. This is the biggest mistake in life. To express it another way, it is the biggest cheating, the greatest mistake, because the result is only suffering. What we want is happiness, liberation, enlightenment; what we don't want is continuous suffering, to reincarnate again. Even reincarnating once in samsara is utterly disgusting, utterly unbearable. From beginningless rebirths up to now we have been reincarnating in the six realms, continuously suffering, so to reincarnate again is most disgusting, most unbearable.

Now, you see, we should not just recite the words, “emptiness,” but really in our life we must stop holding onto [things as true], stop grasping onto them. That is the meditation on emptiness.

When we don't hold onto things, when we don't grasp onto things, when we don't trust things, that is the meditation on emptiness. At that time, we are meditating on emptiness.

We might believe we have been meditating on emptiness for many years or we might be doing a retreat on emptiness, but our mind is constantly holding onto this notion, allowing everything to be made real or appear truly existent by our ignorance. And then, even in sessions or in break times, we believe we are meditating on emptiness but actually in our heart, we are constantly holding onto things as true, so *that* is not meditating on emptiness. We might be meditating on the words of emptiness but not actually meditating on emptiness. To not cling or trust, to not hold onto that as true, *that* is the meditation on emptiness.

Here, we have liberation. This is the antidote to samsara, to ignorance. From this, we achieve liberation, the total cessation of all the suffering and its causes. And then, with bodhicitta, we also achieve enlightenment. The way to do that is by looking at that which is empty as empty. Or by looking at that which is a hallucination as a hallucination. Or by looking at that which is false as false—the I, action, object, all these things that appear as truly existent.

### **PRACTICING EMPTINESS MINDFULNESS**

Another method is to do the practice of mindfulness. While we are walking on a road, we are aware of the merely labeled I, the merely labeled walking and the merely labeled road. While we are driving a car, we are aware of the merely labeled I, the merely labeled driving and the merely labeled car. While we are eating, we are aware of the merely labeled I, the merely labeled eating and the merely labeled food.

We can either practice mindfulness in this way or look for the *gag cha*, the object to be refuted. By seeing how everything appears to be *not* merely labeled by mind and looking at that as the *gag cha*, looking at it as hallucinated or false, seeing how that which is empty is empty. We can do it either way. That is how we should try to practice mindfulness.

When we go shopping from our house—we don't live at Kopan all the time—when we go shopping from home, when we go sightseeing or to parties or whatever, from our room we should think, “I am going to meditate on emptiness.” We should use the time when we are going shopping, driving, being in the shop, coming and going, to practice mindfulness, to look at dependent arising or to look at that which is empty as empty, looking at that which is a hallucination as a hallucination. Like that is very good. Before we go for a walk, we should plan that we are going to use that walk for a meditation and, like that, meditate on emptiness.

We can similarly do it with bodhicitta, impermanence and death, or another lamrim topic. When we go for a walk, we can look at impermanence and death or renunciation, we can meditate on bodhicitta or right view. Shopping, sightseeing, travelling, going to the office to do a job, whatever, we use everything like that for meditation. While we are doing our job, our mind is meditating on the lamrim. We don't need to sit with crossed legs and closed eyes. We don't need to do that. It could be an even more effective meditation while we are working in the office. We plan to meditate the whole way from home to the office, for our mind to be constantly in lamrim meditation. Then, our life becomes so meaningful and so enjoyable. Then, things around us don't bother us, nothing is important. People praising us or criticizing us, whatever, nothing bothers us. Integrating our working life and meditation like this, our life becomes very profound.

I'll stop here Sorry, again it has become crazy! Talking for a long time.

## DEDICATIONS

[Rinpoche and students chant prayers in Tibetan]

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, may the bodhicitta which is the source of all the happiness and success for all sentient beings be generated in my heart, in the hearts of my family members, in the hearts of all us here and in the hearts of all the students of this organization, all the supporters, and especially in those who give up their life to this organization, doing service for other sentient beings, the teachings of the Buddha, in all their hearts and in those who rely on them, and in the hearts of all the sentient beings without delaying a second. And in whose heart bodhicitta is generated, may it be increased.”

[Rinpoche and students chant prayers in Tibetan]

“Especially may bodhicitta be generated in the hearts of all the leaders of the world and in particular may it be generated in the hearts of all the people who are called “terrorists” or anyone who has harmful thoughts for other sentient beings in this world. May bodhicitta be generated in all their hearts without delaying even a second.”

[Rinpoche and students chant prayers in Tibetan]

I mentioned yesterday and the other night about the kindness of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Every single bit of Dharma we learn every day here and every single negative karma purified, every single merit we collect, every single imprint we leave on the mind to achieve enlightenment every day, is totally by the kindness of the Buddha of Compassion, His Holiness Dalai Lama, the one object of refuge for all us sentient beings and the originator of us sentient beings’ happiness. So therefore, “I dedicate all my merits that I have collected today and by taking the Mahayana precepts, by doing all the practice, by listening to the teachings, including doing this course, I dedicate the three-time merits that His Holiness’ holy wishes succeed immediately.”

[Rinpoche and students chant prayers in Tibetan]

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

“Due to the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, by me merely being in this universe, in the world, in this country, this place, this house, just by that, for all the sentient beings living in this universe, this world, this country, this area, this place, this house, may it cause their negative karma to immediately get purified. May they never be reborn in the lower realms forever. Just by me being in this universe, this world, this country, this area, this place, this house, may I be able to benefit naturally, spontaneously, not only all the sentient beings living in this universe, this world, this country, this area, this place, this house. May I be able to free them from all the sicknesses and cause them to take refuge and understand karma and to actualize bodhicitta in all their hearts. And may they actualize bodhicitta in all their hearts, may all their wishes be fulfilled immediately. May they achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. Not only that, may the wars, famine, disease, torture, poverty, sicknesses and dangers of fire, water, earthquakes, wherever it is happening, all these

things, may they be stopped immediately and may nobody in this world experience all these undesirable things forever. By me living in this world, may I naturally be able to benefit like that.

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me and by all other sentient beings, may all the projects of this organization be actualized as soon as possible. May they receive everything they need, including the funding. May all the individual centers, which are about 143, all the different meditation centers, the social service projects, those schools or all the different centers doing different social services, be actualized and may they be most beneficial to all sentient beings. May all the social services be the cause to generate compassion in the hearts of those who receive those social services.” That is the most important. “May every individual center be of most benefit for sentient beings, to bring sentient beings to enlightenment as quickly as possible by spreading Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings in their hearts, in the hearts of all sentient beings. May whatever projects they have in every center succeed immediately without any obstacles.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, which exist but which are empty, may the I, who exists but who is empty, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, which exists but which is empty, lead all the sentient beings, who exist but who are empty, by myself alone, who exists but who is empty.

“I dedicate all the merits to be able to follow the holy extensive deeds just as Samantabhadra and Manjugosha realized. I dedicate all my merits in the same way as the three-time buddhas dedicate their merits. May Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings spread in all the directions. May the teachings flourish all over this world, being completely actualized in all of our hearts and in the hearts of all students, in the hearts of all the supporters as well as those who sacrifice their lives to this organization doing service for others, in all their hearts and in the hearts of everyone in this world.”

[Rinpoche and students chant prayers in Tibetan]

So good night, good morning!



## Lecture 4: Living in the Dharma

### WITH AN OBSCURED MIND WE CANNOT REMEMBER PREVIOUS LIVES

[Rinpoche and students chant prayers in Tibetan]

[Rinpoche is having a conversation with somebody] ... I believed Karen was there, but suddenly I looked and she was not there. She'd disappeared into something else. Maybe she had manifested somewhere else!

The heart of the Buddha's advice is this.

Do not commit any unwholesome actions.  
Engage in perfect, wholesome actions.  
Subdue your mind thoroughly.  
This is the teaching of the Buddha.

Although this is just four lines, one stanza, this is a very extensive subject.

[Noise of a plane going overhead.] Now, it's time to practice patience! That plane is giving us an opportunity. Before the [one-month] courses started, many, many years ago, Kopan was very primitive. Now the course is an eight-star course! Or a nine-star or ten-star course. Before, maybe it was a two- or three-star or something like that. Where you go down, now it doesn't look like there is much space there, but before I think there was quite a bit of space. The roof was tin sheets, this side of the hill was covered with some very cheap Nepalese cloth sheeting, and bamboo poles were put around. Then, the young monks did the painting, making mountains or people, putting lots of patches on the bamboo.

Maybe about ten courses were done under that sheet. The main door was this side, with another door over there, so that people came in this side, the other people—those who wanted to leave the session, either because they get bored or tired, went out there! So, before the course was done, was there space behind the monastery? [Ani Karen responds]

It was just there but I couldn't remember it very well! My mind is like that, very obscured. It was just there, but I could not remember. Can you imagine? That shows the defiled obscurations.

Those of us who can't remember past and future lives, it is like that. It is just there, but I can't remember. It's similar to people who do not remember their childhood, how they came out of their mother's womb. They have no idea. They can't prove this is their mother because they don't remember coming from her. It's just what people have said. They also can't remember being in their mother's womb for nine months, and they don't remember the life before this one, where the consciousness came from. That shows how the mind is defiled, obscured.

When the mind is too obscured, we can't remember many things that we have done even today, even in the morning. When the mind is very clear, it is different. As the mind becomes clearer, we remember many things. When the pollution or obscurations are more cleared away, we are able to remember many things of this life, of our childhood, even the time when we came from our mother's womb.

This has happened among students I have met who can remember. Not Tibetan but others, including a student from Saudi Arabia. She remembers coming from her mother's womb. In the early times, when we began the courses, this subject was very new. Maybe talking about hell was not new. The name was probably not new, hearing about hell, because Christianity talks about hell, so that title was not new, but karma, reincarnation, all these things, were not taught in Western culture or colleges. They were not the main subjects in Western culture. Now, so many years later, we hear people often using the term "karma," sometimes even people interviewing on TV.

In the early times, in those early courses, we explained about the nature of the mind, things like that. We did not go into details about the different types of mind and the mental factors and so forth, not in that way, but just in general, just a general introduction. We did meditations on that and discussed the mind, doing a three-day brainstorm, like the hailstorm—a brainstorm on the mind, discussing the mind and reincarnation. There was a lot of noise talking about the mind! Then, with more and more understanding, it gradually got more relaxed or more settled!

In those times, we did a very simple meditation like this, meditating that today's mind or consciousness is the continuation of yesterday's consciousness and yesterday's is the continuation of the previous day's mind. Like that, then from the past year's, going back to childhood, down to the consciousness as a baby, and then going back to the mother's womb, trying to trace the memory back to the mother's womb and the time of conception.

One person who had a clear mind, a mind less obscured, less polluted, could remember that time. Because their mind was very concentrated, remembering the time of conception, they then tried to go back further, tracing before the mind took place on the fertilized egg. At that time, they could remember that they were in Tibet. They could even remember the room and the wooden tea container, the thing you put butter and salt in to churn. They even remembered that and some other things in the room. I've met that person but there may be others. I didn't meet everybody during that course, so I think there may be other people with clear minds who could remember.

Therefore, because we don't see something doesn't mean it doesn't exist. Because our mind doesn't see it doesn't mean it doesn't exist at all for others in the world. That is illogical. We can't use our own limited logic, thinking something exists only if we know it exists, but if we don't know then it doesn't exist. We can't define whether something exists or not using this criterion. Subjects like reincarnation, all the new subjects you haven't come across before coming to this course, you are now discovering, those things which are not taught in Western culture, in education. There are so many things to learn.

By being here, doing the Kopan course, we see our life in depth. Our mind is not limited; the capacity of our mind is not limited. We discover that the potential of our mind is unbelievable, what it can do is unbelievable. Discovering this, we discover our life is not hopeless. Our life is not hopeless. Our life is not just what we have known until now, not just that.

There is so much to learn about our own mind. There is so much to understand. Because of our mind's potential, the happiness we can achieve is unbelievable. Our mind has the potential to achieve every happiness, not only in this life but every happiness from life to life, up to enlightenment.

As I mentioned before, many people who have a clear mind can remember their own [previous lives] and those of others. I had a picture of a small Indian girl from Punjab. Feeling it was

important to have that picture, I kept it for a few years but now I've lost it. This happened quite a number of years ago. The girl, a little daughter [of a Punjabi family], who was maybe eight years old, could remember the town of her past life and her previous parents. She alone led this life's parents to the next town, guiding them to the road where her past life's parents lived, where she met them. The picture I had was of her with her present life's parents and her past life's parents. Of course, her past life's parents were much older and this life's parents were younger (and maybe a little bit fat)! I don't know how I got the picture, but it was a wonderful picture. Somebody had given her some toys, and she was standing, holding a toy. I had this picture for a few years, but now I don't know where it has gone, maybe in the garbage, I am not sure. I think that story became quite famous. His Holiness Dalai Lama sent somebody to that place with a gift, to meet the daughter. This happens to those with a clear mind.

### **RINPOCHE'S MOTHER AND FAMILY**

In the case of my mother, who I mentioned quite a few times during the teachings, my mother's incarnation can remember many things. It's amazing. I think maybe she was late eighties or ninety, something like that. She was ordained with quite a number of Western Sangha, nuns and monks from His Holiness Ling Rinpoche, His Holiness Dalai Lama's tutor. His Holiness Ling Rinpoche also passed away, now the reincarnation is in South India, but in his past life, he taught His Holiness in Tibet.

So, my mother became a nun. I don't know at what age, but she was already old when she became a nun in Bodhgaya, where Guru Shakyamuni Buddha achieved enlightenment and where one thousand buddhas of this fortunate eon descend and show the same holy deeds, achieving enlightenment. From the one thousand buddhas, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is the fourth one. There have already been three, and the rest of the thousand buddhas will descend there, showing the holy deeds and achieving enlightenment. Bodhgaya is the center, the most important holy place. It is *the* blessed place. Because going there to practice and get a blessing from the place blesses the mind, practicing there is very powerful. His Holiness said that whatever practice we do there multiplies eight times.

She was ordained there with many Western monks and nuns. She was extremely devoted and very compassionate. Even when we went by car, if she saw Nepalese people on the road, walking without shoes, she would feel unbearable pity for them because they didn't have shoes, even though she was from Solu Khumbu, near Mount Everest, where I was born. Now, in the last few years, it has changed, becoming modern, but it is still an extremely primitive area. Even though she was from there and from a very poor family.

I was born in a very poor family, poor even in comparison to others in the village. Even so, she had so much compassion—compassion for the people around who took care of her, so much compassion for the people both near and far away, in other countries. I think that's not easy to have compassion for people around you. It is easy to have compassion for someone in Africa or very far away! But around you, in everyday life it is difficult to have compassion.

I'm not going to talk too much. She passed away. Once, when she went to Tushita retreat place in Dharamsala, she went down every day to circumambulate His Holiness Dalai Lama's palace or house. There is a whole hill where His Holiness' office is, which people circumambulate, going right around the residence, the temple and the mountain. My mother was there for months and she used to go every day. For breakfast she would pack a pancake in her pocket and go down to

where there were many beggars in the road. Then, she would give her morning breakfast to them. She had a very compassionate nature.

I talk words of compassion but have hardly any compassion in my heart, but my mother had compassion in her heart. Her heart *was* compassion; she was living compassion.

When we went on pilgrimage, many families stopped on the road to make their own food. My mother made food and gave it to the other people, so in the end my family didn't have food! We didn't have food because she gave it to other people! Then, in the house, I didn't see my father because he died while I was in my mother's womb or maybe when I was small, while I was still in the very small bamboo basket where the baby is kept. I have no recollection of what my father looked like. It's only when people described him, how he had a beard, how he was very tolerant. That didn't mean he didn't get angry but that he didn't get upset immediately. After my father died, since the family owed a lot of money to many other people, I remember when I was three or four, people used to come to get money from my mother. So, it was only her and my sister, who is still at Lawudo, the cave. She was the only one who could help a little bit, taking the animals out (they lived downstairs) in the early morning after the sun rose, putting them on the mountain, and bringing them back. That is what she could do. My mother did all the rest, the cooking, everything. Many children happened after my sister, but they all died. One child was born with a pinnacle like the Buddha but didn't last. And between her and me there were also other children. Many children died, even before my sister, who is still alive, a nun, living at the hermitage in Solu Khumbu, near to Mount Everest.

When my sister was born they gave her the nickname, Ngawang Samten, which means "blacksmith." A blacksmith is regarded as kind of low or something, so giving her that nickname was one method to help her survive. She survived and became a nun. Because she was the elder, my mother wanted her to stay at home and hold the family, but from her side she desired to be a nun, [taking ordination] from this great lama, Chogye Trichen Rinpoche, who is also my guru, one of the great Tibetan lamas who had all the qualities to guide sentient beings. Chogye Trichen Rinpoche is now living in Kathmandu. My sister took ordination from him and became a nun.

After me, I think there was one daughter born when I was four or five years old, but she died. She had a small tail. I think she died after I had moved to an even more primitive place called Rolwaling, the hidden place of Padmasambhava. I lived there for seven years to learn reading and to memorize texts with my uncle who was a fully ordained monk at that time. After me, there was also a brother who lives in Kathmandu, between Boudha and Kathmandu.

When I was there, one of my sisters could take the animals onto the mountain and bring them back, otherwise everything was done by my mother. We completely relied on our mother for food, for everything. Every day she had to go into the forest to get firewood. It was not easy; there was no car or motorcycle to carry things, and it was very steep. She had to go very far into the forest to get the firewood, mostly going up or down.

I remember one night, my mother didn't come back early. We were all very small. Nobody could make food or make a fire, so there was no fire in the nighttime. We all sat at the door, lined up like birds on a wire, waiting for our mother. The moon came up and we still sat there, chatting and waiting for our mother for food. Many hours later she came alone with a huge load of firewood, and then made the fire. I remember that night.

I also remember once she was sick. She was in so much pain, she was calling out, making a noise, calling her mother, "Ama, Ama!" like that. There was a kind of fixed place we all sat at by the

stove—I would normally sit here, my brother there, and my sister and mother on the other side. This time, she must have had so much pain we couldn't do anything, she was lying down there. There was no food, no fire. I went to her to look, but she was just crying out for her mother, my grandmother, "Ama, Ama!" I watched her but there was nothing I could do. Some of the things still stay in the mind with some impact.

Later, my younger brother became a porter for Western people who came to trek, going to the mountains, carrying luggage. For that, he got money which he gave to the family to buy food or whatever. But my mother gave it away! He obtained the things by carrying heavy loads as a porter, but as soon as he brought them home, my mother gave them away. So, then he said that there was no benefit in bringing anything home! I'm just giving you a rough idea how she was, before talking about the incarnation.

Anyway, she passed away and I built a stupa on the road, situated where you first see the hermitage, the cave, down below road. It helps everybody who goes to Tibet or comes back from Tibet, as well as the people in the different villages who have to pass by. It also benefits all the animals, the yaks and cows. They are all benefited, purifying negative karma and collecting extensive merit for a better life and, especially when they die, ensuring all their future lives are better and better, directing their lives toward enlightenment.

Right after the stupa was completed and consecrated, just as I arrived in Hong Kong, I heard the news that there was the reincarnation of my mother. The great lama, Kyabje Trulshik Rinpoche did a divination, from his realization, that showed this was definitely my mother's incarnation. But before that, another monk who does very accurate divinations divined this many times.

The incarnation's family lived at another hermitage called Genukpa, which is, I don't know, maybe fifteen minutes' walk or something from Lawudo, from our hermitage. When there are a lot of people at Lawudo, we have to get spring water from that hermitage. My sister went to see the incarnation, who was so happy to meet her, and she offered a traditional Tibetan offering scarf. He put the scarf on for seven days and never took it off, day and night! He could recognize all the family members, but with other new people he felt kind of shy or something. Any family member he recognized, he would tell them to sit here, like that. When he came to Lawudo, he behaved exactly as my mother did. He made three prostrations when my brother was there. My brother didn't get to go early to see him; he went much later. So the reincarnation was waiting for my brother, who was with my mother's best friend, called Ang Puwa. (Many Sherpas' first name starts with Ang.)

My brother invited the incarnation to the Lawudo monastery and made some celebration. The incarnation came, did three prostrations, then he paid homage to His Holiness' throne, which was carved when I was there many years ago, by a Tibetan expert carpenter who built many monasteries. He bowed down to that. Then there was my throne, a very low, small one, and he bowed down to that, then to the altar. He circumambulated the temple seven times. This is what my mother used to do in the past. He behaved in exactly the same way.

When people gave him a scarf as part of the celebration, he gave it back, except for two people, one of whom was his own father. Because in the past, there was some difficulty, I don't know what, maybe to do with the water, because we had to get water from there in the past. So, there was something there. This shows his connection with the past, how something happened in the past that left an imprint. Nobody explained it to the child but somehow he reacted to the person he had some difficulties with in the past.

During my mother's time, she collected plastic buttons. She used to take all the buttons from old shirts and save them in a bottle, because in the past, not now, those plastic buttons were very precious, and you couldn't get them in the country. People also tied spoons together to wear on a string like jewelry. That is a special Solu Khumbu spoon! Spoons, like plastic buttons, were also very precious because nobody made spoons in the country. So, my mother had saved buttons in a bottle and when the incarnation found my sister had made a shirt using those buttons, he immediately said, "These are my buttons." He could remember.

The Sherpa, Ang Puwa, who was a very close friend of my mother, went to Genukpa to meet the incarnation. As soon as he arrived and sat down, when the incarnation's mother offered wine or tea, the incarnation immediately mentioned Ang Puwa's name and said, "Please drink." The Sherpa was completely astonished, grabbing the incarnation by his leg and crying and crying because the incarnation could recognize him and remember his name. So, there were many things like this.

Many of her things that she used in her life, the incarnate looked for in the kitchen, looking behind things until he found them. There are many memories like that. It is very clear; there is no argument whether this is my mother's incarnation or not. He himself completely proved it from his own side, from his memory.

One reason this incarnation had such clear memory was because my mother used to recite Chenrezig, the Compassionate Buddha mantra, OM MANI PADME HUM, all day long. When she came here, Lama Yeshe was here. I think it was probably the year that he went to America for the operation and then passed away. When my mother was here, she used to go onto the roof and chant OM MANI PADME HUM. This is what she did all the time when she was alone; she spent her life chanting OM MANI PADME HUM to develop compassion for all living beings and to bring all the obscured suffering numberless sentient beings to enlightenment. She said, "I used to recite OM MANI PADME HUM 50,000 times every day." But that year she said she couldn't do as many. I think maybe she had some health problems at that time.

There was the Kalachakra initiation in Varanasi that I think we sponsored. She was there then, and she passed away during that time. In the morning she went to see His Holiness outside and received a blessing, and then maybe in the nighttime she passed away. She was cremated by the River Ganga at that place.

The main point is that she chanted OM MANI PADME HUM 50,000 times every day, but that year she said she couldn't do as much as before. That is why she had such a clear memory and why the incarnation had such clear memory. Reciting OM MANI PADME HUM has skies of benefit, like the atoms of the earth. Having a clear memory is one tiny benefit from the oceans of benefits that reciting Compassionate Buddha mantra has.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF RECITING OM MANI PADME HUM**

Since I brought up this topic, OM MANI PADME HUM, after waiting some time I would like to mention this here.

Anybody who wants happiness, who doesn't want suffering, must recite OM MANI PADME HUM, must do the Compassionate Buddha meditation and recitation. Anybody who wants happiness, who doesn't want suffering. I'm talking here for us ourselves, but on top of that, if we want to

help others, if we want to benefit others, if we want to bring happiness and peace to others in the world, there is no question, we must chant OM MANI PADME HUM.

I wanted to make a comment, to request or persuade you to do this. It has skies of benefit like atoms of this earth. But the most important purpose of reciting OM MANI PADME HUM is to develop compassion, not only for poor people but also for rich people, for anybody who is suffering, for anybody whose mind is obscured and suffering, unenlightened. To develop compassion for every single human being in this world, for every human being in all the other universes, and there are numberless universes. This is not only according to Buddhist philosophy, even scientists explain numberless universes. And there are human beings in other universes. To develop compassion for every single human being. Not only wishing them to have happiness and to be free from suffering but to take the responsibility on ourselves. This is not wishing happiness but doing nothing, not that, but taking responsibility on ourselves to free them from all the suffering and its causes and to bring them to not only temporary happiness but especially ultimate happiness, peerless happiness, liberation and full enlightenment.

And it is to generate compassion for every being: to generate compassion for the numberless hell beings and free them from all the suffering and its causes, to free them from all the suffering of samsara and bring them to ultimate happiness, especially full enlightenment. That is the purpose of reciting OM MANI PADME HUM.

Similarly, there are numberless hungry ghosts who have unbelievable suffering, the major suffering being hunger and thirst. The worst thirst that we feel is nothing; theirs is a billion times worse. How we feel thirst, if it was expanded a billion times, a million billion times, that's how much they suffer. There are numberless of them, so we recite OM MANI PADME HUM to liberate them from all the suffering and its causes and bring them to not only temporal happiness and higher rebirth, but to liberation and full enlightenment.

And same with the numberless animals, who have unimaginable suffering, suffering from being extremely foolish or being eaten by another one, being tortured and so forth. Even for animals living with human beings, there is so much suffering, no question if they live in the forest or in the water. We recite OM MANI PADME HUM to liberate them from those oceans of animal realm suffering, the general suffering of samsara and to bring them to liberation and enlightenment.

Then it's the same with the devas, the suras and asuras, those other sentient beings, they have so much suffering. As you are going through the suffering of samsara: the suffering of pain, the suffering of change—which is samsaric pleasure that is in the nature of suffering—and pervasive compounding suffering, even the sense pleasure they have is only suffering. So, we recite OM MANI PADME HUM to liberate them from all the suffering and its causes and bring them to enlightenment.

What I was trying to say is that if we are concerned, even wishing happiness for ourselves, wishing ourselves to be free from suffering, we must chant OM MANI PADME HUM, but especially if we want to benefit others, we must chant it to develop compassion. If we develop compassion, if we live our life with compassion for others, that itself is unbelievable purification. We purify many eons of negative karma when we generate strong compassion for somebody, for an insect or a human being. We purify so many eons of negative karma, of defilements, even if it is not strong compassion. There are many stories about this. Each time we generate compassion for somebody, we become closer to full enlightenment. And because we collect so much merit, it purifies the mind and helps us develop wisdom, by the way. It becomes so easy to develop the wisdom realizing emptiness, the ultimate wisdom, to have the direct perception of emptiness.

With compassion, with bodhicitta, the altruistic mind [wishing] to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, with letting go of the I and only seeking happiness for others, we collect limitless skies of merit every second, whatever activity we do with the body, speech and mind. With bodhicitta we collect limitless skies of merit all the time. *Without* bodhicitta, with only wisdom, even the wisdom directly seeing emptiness, we cannot cease the subtle defilements. We can cease the disturbing-thought obscurations, but we cannot cease the subtle defilements, therefore we cannot complete the qualities of cessation and cannot complete the qualities of realization, the works for others and for ourselves. Therefore, we need the help of bodhicitta. With it we collect unbelievable merit, skies of merit every second. With bodhicitta, whatever activities we do, we collect so much merit, and with the wisdom realizing emptiness with the support of bodhicitta, we are able to cease the subtle defilements. That is why arhats, even though they have removed delusions and the seed of delusion, the cause of delusion, even though they have completely removed that, without actualizing bodhicitta they cannot enter the Mahayana path and achieve enlightenment.

That's why it is so important to practice the meditation of the Compassion Buddha and recite OM MANI PADME HUM. Normally, I say because they want happiness even the crocodiles, the dogs, the pigs and even the mosquitoes should recite OM MANI PADME HUM. But they can't, because they don't have a human body; they are unable to learn how to, but they should, even mosquitoes and cockroaches.

The other thing is that Medicine Buddha, by purifying, is unbelievably powerful for success, fulfilling all our wishes to actualize the path or any activities to help others. So, for these two reasons, it is very, very important to do this practice in daily life. I wanted to pass on that message.

[Rinpoche and students chant the tea offering]

[Nepali music is playing outside. Rinpoche has a conversation about the Nepali wedding season, how the bride and groom are carried in palanquins.]

The purpose I brought up this issue is that, after [you have been carried for] your marriage, the next time you will be carried is when your body is carried to the cemetery! That is the nature of life. At our wedding we are carried, and then the next time is when we die and our body is carried to the cemetery, near the river whenever that happens. And death can happen at any time, so that will be the second time we are carried. Maybe sometimes when a villager is sick they might be carried, but usually it is marriage and then death. However, [for the bride and groom] it might be difficult for them to remember that their next carriage is to take their body to the cemetery! I am not sure, but at that time, I don't think they have music, unless you are an official or leader or something. I don't think there is music at that time for common people.

## **PRAYER TO COMPASSION BUDDHA**

There is a prayer to Compassion Buddha composed by the root guru of Kyabje Trulshik Rinpoche, whose monastery is just behind Mount Everest in Tibet. When he was fifteen or sixteen years old, he wrote this prayer to Compassion Buddha.

[Rinpoche recites a verse in Tibetan]



I don't remember the verses, but the essence is that, first it talks about the lower realms, the animals and so forth, how they have to experience the most unbearable sufferings without choice, no matter how unbearable it is. Once the karma has ripened, once rebirth has happened in that realm, no matter how unbearable it is, they have to experience it.

[Rinpoche recites a verse in Tibetan]

The next verse relates to human beings. I don't remember every single word, but it is very moving. Relating to human beings, it says how life goes, how it is just suffering, just hardships, how life is spent just suffering. The work never finishes, whether it is doing business or doing farm work, whatever different lifestyle it is, the work never finishes. We are busy, and then, while we are going through this, suddenly death comes. I don't remember the whole verse. One after another, we do the samsara activities, specifically working for this life—not samsaric activities for our future lives' happiness, which is still Dharma, but work for this life's happiness, which is only for a few years at the longest, or a few months, or a few weeks, or a few days; we are just not sure. We do this never-finishing work, one thing after another.

Then, while we are so busy doing that, suddenly death comes, life is gone, and there is no time to practice Dharma. There is no time to purify the negative karmas causing us to reincarnate in the lower realms and suffer. There is no time to create the cause of a good rebirth in the next life. Besides that, there is no time to practice Dharma to be free from samsara, and no time to practice Dharma to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, nothing. While we so busy like this, while the mind is totally occupied working for this life's happiness, for our happiness alone, while we are so busy, suddenly death comes and the precious human life is finished.

Before mentioning that, I remember that before that the verse says that not only does life finish by suffering, by while we are alive, there are so many hardships, so many problems. Our mind is always full of worry and fear and our body must face so many hardships.

Even here in Nepal, for the farmers, the villagers, there is no peace. Their lives are so full of hardship; there is so much suffering. They are unable to create any virtue, any peace. And it's the same in the West; the work for this life never finishes. People doing business are totally involved, working for this life's happiness, with attachment, with worldly concern, which is only nonvirtue. Their motivation is only nonvirtue, which makes all the activities of body, speech and mind negative karma, twenty-four hours a day. Any action done with this motive, with worldly concern, with attachment clinging to this life, becomes negative karma. Whatever different style of life they have, working so hard, all the travelling they do, building things or whatever, they face a lot of hardships and mental worry and fear. Then, not only does their life finish with problems and hardships, with physical and mental suffering, but whatever activities they do become negative karma because they are done with a motivation that is nonvirtue, mostly with attachment but it can also be with anger.

As I mentioned the other time, with attachment clinging to this life's happiness, for our own happiness of this life, not future lives, not to achieve liberation from samsara for ourselves, because the motivation is nonvirtuous, all the activities become negative karma. Nothing becomes virtue; nothing becomes the cause of happiness. When the attitude is only like that, our life finishes with so many problems, one after another. We are exhausted by mental and physical problems, with suffering. And not only that, we continuously create negative karma, which does not result in a higher rebirth but only in rebirth in the lower realms. Then, for an inconceivable time, for eons, depending on the karma, we can't really tell when we will come back to the human realm. And having been born there, there is no opportunity to practice Dharma. If we are

born as a cat, a dog, a pig or a chicken, even as an animal living with human beings, there is no opportunity to practice Dharma. With that body, we cannot learn Dharma so we cannot practice it, and we create only negative karma during that life and the next, one after another. In that way, we continuously wander in the lower realms, never sure when we can come back. And this is even just to create enough good karma to be a human being, let aside one with the eight freedoms and ten richnesses, with the opportunity to practice Dharma.

The work of this life never finishes and then suddenly death comes, without the opportunity to practice Dharma, to use this most precious human body that has all the opportunities to meet the Dharma, to learn Dharma, where we can achieve every happiness: the happiness of future lives, liberation from samsara and enlightenment. And on top of that, to cause all the numberless other sentient beings every happiness up to enlightenment: the happiness of this life, the happiness of future lives, liberation from samsara and enlightenment, all these four levels of happiness. We have no opportunity to do that. Only with this human body do we have that opportunity, but we have missed out.

Then, [in the prayer] the lama makes the request to Compassion Buddha to please pay attention with his compassion. The Tibetan used is *nying me*<sup>2</sup>, which means “heartless.” We are heartless in that we go to the next life without having created any virtue in this life, without any realizations, without having practiced any Dharma. We haven’t even made preparations for the happiness of future lives, for a good rebirth, to make it better and better from life to life, to go to enlightenment.

I was translating the *Three Principal Aspects of the Path* with Jon Landaw, who is very good. He said there is a difference between wise and thoughtful, because in the translation, in the beginning Lama Tsongkhapa says,

The essential meaning of the Victorious Ones’ teachings,  
The path praised by all the holy victorious ones and their sons,  
The gateway of the fortunate ones desiring liberation –  
This I shall try to explain as much as I can.

In the beginning he promises to explain as much as possible. He is being humble; he is not saying he knows everything and can do anything. It’s the opposite to this. Even though Lama Tsongkhapa knows everything, he is humble, which is a sign of being wise, learned. He is humble, without arrogance or pride.

I don’t exactly remember the point, but some translations say “wise” whereas Jon said there is a difference between being wise and thoughtful. He said thoughtful is more being thoughtful with your life, with what you are doing, your attitude, your actions. Wise does not necessarily mean thoughtful. You can be wise in some subjects but not necessarily thoughtful about your life, how it is happening and which direction it is going. Whether you are doing the right thing or the wrong thing. I think he is very good. I think I put both wise and thoughtful together, like putting a patch on top. I think it is the section on bodhicitta in the *Three Principals of the Path* where it says “...the wise generate the supreme mind of enlightenment.” I think that means wise and thoughtful, something like that.

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<sup>2</sup> This could be an abbreviated form of *snying rje med pa* (Wylie).

So here, *nying me*, heartless, means we should be mindful, thoughtful, in what we do so we don't waste our life. We must abandon the wrong things that harm us and harm others and engage in what is beneficial to us and to others.

Basically, if we live our life with attachment, with the worldly, nonvirtuous thought clinging to this life, whatever we do in our whole life becomes negative karma, only creating the cause of suffering. That is "heartless," engaging in all the ten nonvirtuous actions, like having no heart. In daily life we say "mindless" to refer to somebody without compassion, who doesn't have any sense of other people's needs, who doesn't care for others and does terrible things to them. It suggests somebody who doesn't care, who is very selfish, without the tiniest feeling of compassion or concern for others, who is heartless.

## **LIVING IN THE DHARMA**

On the other hand, when we live in the Dharma, by having a realization of impermanence and death and so forth, based on the perfect human rebirth that we have achieved, we can achieve the three great meanings in life. We are able to see how life is in the nature of impermanence, how death can happen at any time, and how the Dharma is the only thing that can help. Keeping awareness of this and having a realization of this, there is no question that we can free ourselves from the painful mind of attachment to worldly concern, of the clinging grasping to this life. With this worldly mind, we have all these worries and fears, and when our expectations do not happen, we become confused—there is all this stuff. But with our mind living every day in this meditation, we are free from this attachment.

As I mentioned the other night when I talked about the four desirable and four undesirable things, whatever happens doesn't bother us; we have equalized them in our mind, so there is stability in our life. There is great peace in our heart, whether we are alone on a mountain or in a city with many people around, even in the middle of a war. Our mind is continuously in virtue, in the Dharma, and all our actions become Dharma. Whatever we do with our body, speech or mind—doing a job, meditating, eating—everything becomes the Dharma. Even the many hours we spend sleeping—eight or twenty-four—becomes the Dharma! We might do nothing but eat, sleep and go to the toilet—I guess you have to eat and go to the toilet—but in this way we do it mindfully, wisely.

Then of course, if we can do this in a higher way, even more mindfully, more wisely, we live our life with the renunciation of samsara. Then, whatever we do becomes the cause to achieve ultimate happiness, liberation, the cessation of all suffering and its causes. Whatever we do, not only meditation, whatever activities we do with this pure mind, detached from samsara, from samsaric perfections, from samsaric pleasure, everything becomes the cause of liberation from samsara. Even doing a job, eating, walking, sitting, sleeping—whatever we do. That is being an even more thoughtful being, an even wiser one, with more heart.

In the same way, if we can, we should live our life in the meditation on emptiness, looking at everything as empty, looking at that which appears as truly existent, as not merely labeled by mind, looking at those phenomena as empty. We meditate on the I, action and object, which exist by arising dependently, by being mindful of their nature, how they exist being merely labeled by mind, existing by depending on the base and the thought that labels. They exist in mere name, merely imputed by the mind, which is subtle dependent arising.

Or we can look at the things that appear false. Instead of looking back at them as true, we look back at them as false as they actually are. We meditate on that which is false as false and that which is empty as empty. Again here, this requires a very wise life, a very thoughtful one, with more heart.

We should especially live our life with the attitude of compassion and loving kindness for others, with the thought of cherishing others, with bodhicitta. Whether it is the actual realization of bodhicitta or created bodhicitta, effortful bodhicitta, when we motivate in that way with effort, that is the best life. Living our life with the thought of benefiting other sentient beings is the best life. Then, everything we do—not only meditating and saying prayers but even doing our job, walking, sitting, sleeping—everything becomes the cause to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. That means everything we do becomes the cause of happiness for all the numberless sentient beings. Besides meditation, with the bodhicitta motivation, whatever activities we do becomes the cause of happiness for the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless sura beings and asura beings, the numberless intermediate beings—for all sentient beings. Eventually that will become the cause to bring them all to full enlightenment.

In our day-to-day life, when we live our life with that attitude, whatever we do only benefits others, even if we don't have a realization of bodhicitta, of uncreated [effortless] bodhicitta that naturally cherishes others day and night, seeking happiness for others, without effort. With uncreated bodhicitta, that is how we feel every day, twenty-four hours a day, very stable.

This is like how a mother feels with her beloved child. The only thing for her to cherish is that child, day and night. The only thing she thinks of is that child; whatever she does is for that child, to free her child from problems and to have happiness. Whatever she does is constantly with that attitude, wishing only for the best thing, the best happiness, to happen for the child.

We are exactly like that here for the numberless sentient beings. That covers the numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, suras, asuras and intermediate state beings. We have this attitude, this motivation, for all the obscured suffering sentient beings, cherishing them all and only working to free them from suffering and to cause them to have happiness. In our day-to-day life, we have this attitude every moment of our life. We never do actions that harm others; we only do what is of benefit to others.

## **DEVELOPING BODHICITTA**

Then gradually, that leads to the actual realization of bodhicitta. We become a bodhisattva, where our intention is to bring everyone to the peerless happiness of full enlightenment, the cessation of all the mistakes of mind and the completion of all the qualities, the realizations. This is our motive; this is where our life is totally directed, this is our goal—to free the numberless sentient beings from all suffering and its causes and bring them to full enlightenment. When our life is totally dedicated to this, we have an incredibly joyful mind. It is not a burden but an incredible joy.

No matter how much bodhisattvas suffer while working for sentient beings, because they cherish sentient beings so much, because they feel sentient beings are so kind, so precious, whatever hardships they have to go through is great joy. Even if they have to be born in the hell realm and suffer in hell for the benefit of other sentient beings, for them it is like a swan that feels hot and then enters a cool pond. For a bodhisattva it is like that.

Even if the bodhisattva knows they will get killed working for other sentient beings and have to experience the most unbearable suffering for eons, no matter how long they have to be born in the hells and suffer for the benefit of sentient beings, it is an incredible joy for them.

There was a bodhisattva, Metog Datse (Beautiful with a Flower and Moon) who lived in the forest with many other disciples, meditators. He knew that if he went to the king's palace and taught Dharma to the many sentient beings there, he could save them from the lower realms and liberate them, bringing them to liberation and enlightenment. He saw the benefit but he also saw that he would be killed if he went to the king's palace to teach. But, because he could see the benefit, he went to the palace and gave the teaching. Without sleeping, he circumambulated the Buddha's relics all night and in the daytime he gave them teachings. Then, after some time, the king killed him. For the bodhisattva, even though he was killed by the king, because he could benefit those sentient beings, because he was able to liberate them, that was an unbelievable joy.

Even if, to benefit sentient beings, a bodhisattva has to spend eons in hell realm equaling the number of the drops in the Pacific Ocean, they don't get upset. For them it is an incredible joy. But to achieve liberation for themselves, to achieve the cessation of all the suffering and its causes, for the bodhisattva it is disgusting. In the teachings it is said it is like spitting your snot in the dust. Anyway, it's like used toilet paper. For the bodhisattva, the incredible bliss that can come from achieving liberation for themselves is so disgusting; it is like used toilet paper, something we would never want to touch or put in our pocket! The attitude of a bodhisattva is like that.

I don't remember the words, my memory is not good but in the sutra *Do dé gyen* [*Ornament of the Mahayana Sutras*] Maitreya Buddha mentioned that a bodhisattva with very strong compassion will never be discouraged even if it takes hundreds of eons to generate one positive thought in the heart of one sentient being. The bodhisattva won't get discouraged but will tirelessly work for that. This is the example we should take as an inspiration for our practice, to benefit other sentient beings.

So, going back to what I was talking about before. Even though there is no actual realization of bodhicitta, just the motivation of created effortful bodhicitta, by thinking of the reasons, when we live our life like that, whoever puts all their effort in their daily life like this, this is the wisest person, the most thoughtful, the most heartfelt person. I don't know if there is such a word in English, but a heartfelt person. Anyway, it doesn't matter. We are a heartfelt or mindful person. This is the best life, the best practice.

If we think in business terms, this is the way to make the most profit for ourselves and for the numberless other sentient beings. From this attitude, this bodhicitta, we can achieve all the happiness for ourselves up to enlightenment, and we can cause all the happiness up to enlightenment for all sentient beings.

There is no comparison. Bodhicitta is the most wish-fulfilling thing. It is incomparably more valuable than the whole sky filled with billions of dollars, with gold and diamonds, whatever we think of is precious in our life. Maybe for some people it is not necessary gold or diamonds but old bones or antiques. Maybe old bones are more precious than diamonds for some people! Or some necklace or something, some wings of birds or pearls. Anyway, the sky filled with all that is nothing in comparison.

Among all material possessions, the most precious thing is the wish-granting jewel. By praying to one, we get any material comfort or enjoyment we want, what the wheel-turning kings can get. Even if we could have the whole sky filled with wish-granting jewels, just by having that much wealth, that alone could not stop rebirth in the lower realms. The sky filled with billions of dollars or wish-granting jewels can't do that, but with bodhicitta we can achieve all the happiness up to enlightenment, and we can cause all the happiness to numberless sentient beings. From our bodhicitta, from our good heart, comes the most precious treasure that is the source of everyone's happiness.

Bodhicitta doesn't come just by saying the word. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] We have to develop it every day, little by little. Every day, we have to practice compassion, the good heart; we have to develop it little by little, becoming better and better each year. Then, we will see that, compared to some years back, our mind is better, less self-centered. Some years before, we were very selfish, our mind was a source of problems for us and others. But now, after some years, our mind is much easier, much softer, with a more compassionate nature, with more thought to benefit others. We have to do it this way.

Whenever we are able to practice compassion to a person, to an insect, to a fish, to a mosquito—even if not to all mosquitoes—each time we practice compassion, that is so precious. That gradually leads to compassion for all sentient beings and that leads to bodhicitta. And from there come all the realizations of the Mahayana path, the five Mahayana paths: the path of merit, the path of preparation, the right-seeing path, the path of meditation and the path of no more learning, then full enlightenment. Every day, whenever we can practice some compassion, that leaves a positive imprint on the mind. Then, as a result, we are able to practice more compassion. That will gradually lead to full enlightenment, with all the perfect qualities, with the cessation of all the mistakes of mind and all the realizations. Even some small compassion we practice for somebody, for some insect or person, is very, very important.

I didn't want to destroy the program, but I think I've already destroyed it!

[General conversation]

What is the time? My watch says "OM MANI PADME HUM." It's seventeen minutes after PHAT! This watch was a present from Geshe Sopa Rinpoche, my teacher, a very outstanding teacher from Tibet, one of the most learned. He has been a professor for twenty years at Madison University. Many of the learned monks who are geshe, abbots and ex-abbots in the monasteries are Geshe Sopa Rinpoche's disciples. Why many of our Kopan monks have a good education in the Dharma is because of those learned teachers who are disciples of Geshe Sopa Rinpoche. So, this was a present from him.

Who is leading Vajrasattva? You can do Vajrasattva now and then have dinner. Is that alright? Vajrasattva first? Whatever you think. So, do Vajrasattva first and then offer dinner to Vajrasattva!

[Mandala offering]

[Rinpoche chants dedication prayers.]

Thank you very much. Please enjoy the nectar of dinner.

## Lecture 5: Taking Refuge

### SPIRIT POSSESSION

[Rinpoche chants prayers]

*Rinpoche:* Only one question?

*Student:* Rinpoche, why should we take refuge?

*Rinpoche:* That is a very big question, a huge question! What other question, other than that?

*Student:* About exorcism, there have been a lot of cases where people have been taken over by beings from other realms.

*Rinpoche:* Uh? Are you thinking of doing retreat?

*Student:* Exorcisms to get rid of those demons?

*Karin:* You mean being possessed by a spirit?

*Student:* Yes. Under what circumstances would that happen?

*Rinpoche:* Yourself or other people? Are you talking about yourself or other people? Possessed by a spirit, huh?

*Student:* Other people.

*Rinpoche:* You are asking, how to do that or how to get the spirit out?

*Student:* Under what circumstances would they come into a human body?

*Rinpoche:* Oh, I see. I might have that also! Maybe I haven't got rid of it! The main ones are ignorance, anger and attachment.

No, I just remembered one thing. Some years ago, there was a nun from Ladakh. She came from Ladakh, which is part of India. She got possessed by a spirit. I don't remember very clearly, but there are so many methods, both wrathful ways and peaceful ways, to prevent that possession. I guess this was maybe a wrathful way probably, that makes the spirit uncomfortable. You tie these two fingers with thread because the consciousness of that being enters from there. There is the tip of the central channel, the upper tip is here, so they enter from there. When they leave, they leave from here, so when the spirit who entered the medium or those higher Dharma protectors, when the oracles come, when the spirit leaves, they check these two fingers, when it leaves, it leaves from there. So anyway, they tie these two fingers and cover the hand and then you talk to the spirit. I think it depends on the healer, the meditator or the lama, it depends on their power, how much quality that person has who is doing the healing. Sometimes later on you can ask where it is from, why it came, why it entered and harmed this person. You can ask the spirit and the spirit talks. By creating a difficult situation, they talk.

I don't remember if it was that time or another time, but anyway the spirit explained to the nun that in the previous life [as a human] she was the nun's friend and was very attached to this nun. She died and was born as a spirit. That's why she entered the nun, due to attachment, because when she was a human being she was very attached to this nun. I think that may often be the case, why a spirit enters a person. I think this happens many times, many times, many times, not necessarily every time but many times.

But then, from the nun's side there was negative karma, because she was receiving harm. The cause of that has to be a negative action, not a virtuous action. A virtuous action only results in happiness. So, from the nun's side, there was some negative karma created to receive that harm. I don't think there is one fixed karma; there can be different negative karmas, according to different people. Sometimes it is possible that a person took vows and then didn't practice; maybe some mistakes were made in their relationship with the guru, they broke the samaya or something. Basically, in the past you harmed other people, and because of that in this life you experience the karmic result of your past action. There can be different reasons why this spirit attacked the nun. From the spirit's side it is because when it was a human being it was so attached to this nun. But from nun's side, why she received harm, that explanation is to do with karma, and it can be different reasons, like that example I mentioned before.

## **REFUGE AND USEFUL FEAR**

I think you have gone through the eight benefits of refuge? Taking refuge, not just reciting the refuge prayer but having refuge in the heart, one of the benefits is that if we have refuge we don't receive harm from human beings and nonhuman beings, which means spirits; they cannot give us harm. That is not the major benefit; it comes by the way. The greatest benefit is, having refuge in our heart, we are able to develop intelligent fear, useful fear, not only of the suffering of the lower realms but of the suffering of the whole of samsara: the suffering of pain, the suffering of change—how samsaric pleasure is in the nature of suffering—and where those two come from, the foundation, pervasive compounding suffering. We know that and have a useful fear of that.

Why is that fear useful? By understanding with wisdom, by discovering the suffering of samsara, that we are not free from that, of course there will be fear, but that fear is useful because that fear persuades us to look for a solution, for a method. And that method is to generate renunciation for samsara, total detachment to the whole of samsara. The other night I mentioned desire realm suffering and form realm suffering. Desire realm suffering is where we are, which means we experience the suffering of pain, the suffering of change—the temporary samsaric pleasures—and pervasive compounding suffering, which means this body and mind, these aggregates, have that nature.

In the form realm, there is no suffering of pain. And in the formless realm, there is only pervasive compounding suffering; there are not the two other sufferings. So even with those higher realms of samsara, we realize they are only in the nature of suffering, like being in the very center of the hottest fire, like being in a nest of poisonous snakes, as mentioned in the texts. If we found ourselves in the center of a nest of poisonous snakes, we wouldn't have any attraction to enter the nest, not even for a second; we would want to be far away from there. We wouldn't have any attachment to being in the center of a blazing fire for even a second; there would be no attraction. We would feel like that for the whole of samsara: the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm.



Having this fear persuades us to look for a solution. That is entering the path. There are five paths to achieve liberation: the path of merit, the path of preparation, the right-seeing path, the path of meditation and the path of no more learning. Then we achieve liberation from samsara.

When we achieve the second path, the path of preparation, at that time we have great insight into emptiness, being able to analyze emptiness unified with calm abiding. This is the perfect meditation, free from the two obstacles: attachment scattering thought and sinking thought. That is the foundation. Then by continuing to develop that, when we achieve the right-seeing path, at that time we have wisdom directly perceiving emptiness. That is the stage where we directly cease the defilements, the delusions. The wrong concepts cease, the intellectual defilements cease.

Then with the path of meditation, the fourth path, the simultaneous-born defilements cease, including the seed of delusion. By developing the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, all that ceases. When it has totally ceased, we achieve liberation.

That is why I call this fear “useful fear,” because it makes us look for the solution and engage in the path. Then, we gain the remedy by actualizing the path, by ceasing the karma and delusions and we are free forever from the suffering of samsara. Relating to human beings, that means we are free forever from the suffering of rebirth, the suffering of old age, the suffering of sickness, from all those sufferings: being unable to find the desirable object, being unable to find satisfaction even after we have found one, and then the suffering of death. We are free from all the oceans of human beings’ suffering.

Then, there are the oceans of the suffering of the devas, the suras and asuras, as you went through. The heaviest one, how their mental suffering is greater than the hell beings when they experience the signs of death: the five major signs of death or five nearing signs of death. Then, there are many other sufferings, such as being killed, the jealousy of the asuras and miserliness.

By completing the path, because we completely remove the cause of suffering, karma and delusions, we are free forever from the oceans of suffering of the deva realm, the oceans of suffering of the hell beings, of the hungry ghosts, of the animals.

This is one-time work. The Dharma practice to overcome delusions, to cease the karma and delusions, is just one-time work, it doesn’t come back. Why doesn’t suffering come back? Because there is no longer the cause, karma and delusions. Why don’t delusions come back? Because there is no cause for delusion, the imprint, the seed that is in the nature of imprint. Once it has ceased completely, it cannot come back. So, Dharma practice is one-time work. Whereas working for samsaric happiness is endless. We have been working for samsaric happiness from beginningless rebirths and it still has not ended. We still haven’t finished the work; we still haven’t ended the suffering. We are still continuously suffering because, in reality, we are still continuously creating the cause of suffering. So far, we have never been able to be free from that.

Working for samsaric pleasure, the attachment seeking only the happiness of this life, is endless, and because of that the suffering is endless. Whereas Dharma practice is just one-time work. As I mentioned before, after achieving liberation, suffering never comes back. We are liberated from all suffering. It is not that we then have to practice Dharma again because the suffering has returned; there is no such thing. Therefore, it is extremely worthwhile, it is the wisest thing, to attempt to practice the Dharma. And the same thing, working for enlightenment is just one-time

work. After we achieve enlightenment, there is no such thing as becoming unenlightened, as becoming ignorant again.

As I was saying before, with that useful fear of not only the suffering of the lower realms but also of the suffering of the whole of samsara, we go for refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha by understanding all their qualities, how they have all the qualities to protect us from these oceans of samsaric suffering, including the cause, karma and delusions. They have the power. With that understanding, there is faith, devotion, in them.

These are the causes of refuge. There are two: useful fear of the suffering of samsara and devotion to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The mind is qualified with these two causes of refuge.

Then, with our whole heart, we rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. “Buddha, Dharma and Sangha” is a Sanskrit term, so when you hear the Sanskrit, it might feel like something specific but if you think of the English, “Buddha,” which means the fully enlightened being who is perfect in all the qualities, who has achieved the cessation of all the mistakes of mind, not only free from suffering but all the causes, karma and delusion, and all the subtle negative imprints left by the delusion, ignorance, the concept of true existence. These are the subtle negative imprints that project the dualistic view, the hallucination that makes everything appear real, truly existent, seeming to be something real from its own side while it is not, while it exists in mere name, merely imputed by mind. This is the hallucination [the Buddha is free from].

The subtle negative imprints are totally ceased. Then the dualistic view—all these hallucinations—is totally ceased; the view is totally pure. And the Buddha has completed all the qualities of realizations as well, all the direct understanding of all the past, present and future phenomena; the Buddha can see everything. With omniscience, the Buddha can see all the past directly, and at same time the future and the present, because there is no resistance, there is no blockage.

### **THE MIND CAN BE THOROUGHLY CLEANSED**

For us, if we are sick but don't know what is wrong, we have to go to the hospital and have x-rays and many blood checks, relying on the doctor. We can't discover what is wrong, we can't see inside things, without relying on machines or other people. As His Holiness Zong Rinpoche said, at the moment we can't even see our own back. So, our understanding is very limited.

We cannot tell what is going to happen tomorrow, even what is going to happen in an hour or a minute. Our mind is totally blocked due to obscurations; we just cannot see. If death is going to happen tomorrow, we cannot see it. If death is going to happen tonight, or after an hour, we cannot see it. If something is going to happen like a heart attack after an hour, we cannot see it. We are totally obscured.

But our mind has the potential. By collecting the necessary conditions, the merit, and by purifying the obstacles, all the defilements, then by actualizing the path that removes the delusions, the obscurations, if from our own side we do this, then this mind can be completely separated from the defilements. We can become fully enlightened, totally pure.

This is like a dirty cloth, which it is not oneness with the dirt. It can be washed by different methods, not only with water but by using soap and other things. By using those extra methods

to clean the cloth, we can make it very clean. And the same thing with a mirror, which is not oneness with the dust covering it. Because it is not oneness with the dust, by cleaning it with a duster, it should be able to give a very clear reflection. And the same thing with the sky, a very clear sky that has sunshine, because it is not oneness with the fogginess. Therefore, when the wind and those other conditions clear away the fog, the sun shines. We can see and enjoy the very clear sky.

Similarly, our mind is not oneness with delusion; it is not oneness with ignorance, anger and attachment; it is temporarily obscured. Because of that, by meeting the qualified guru and receiving the teachings, and by putting the teachings into practice and actualizing the path, we are able to remove the sufferings; we are able to separate the mind from the defilements.

A gong [has the potential to produce a sound], but there is the need for a stick to hit the gong and a person to use the stick. When these conditions happen, you have the sound of the gong. Just as the gong has the potential to produce that sound, the mind has all the potential, but it needs to meet the conditions, the perfectly qualified guru and the teachings. Then, by putting that into practice, the realizations come from within, all the way up to enlightenment. From guru devotion, the root, up to enlightenment, it happens because there is all the potential there.

#### **UNLESS WE ARE ENLIGHTENED, WE CAUSE OTHERS SUFFERING**

So, the useful fear of our own samsara—how it is in the nature of suffering—along with devotion—understanding that the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha have the qualities and power to protect us, to liberate us from the oceans of samsaric suffering, including the cause of samsara. This mental factor that totally relies upon the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is the refuge. Then, for the Mahayana way of taking refuge, on this foundation, which is also the Hinayana way of taking refuge, on the basis of these two—the useful fear of samsara and devotion to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha—there is compassion for other sentient beings. By using our own suffering in samsara as an example and then seeing how the numberless other sentient beings are in a similar situation, also suffering in samsara, we generate the compassionate wish to free them from all suffering and its causes. Compassion is the third cause of refuge.

With the Mahayana way of taking refuge there are three causes, and the last one is compassion. Our mind becomes qualified with these three. With that and the other ones, which I mentioned before, we single-pointedly rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, not only for ourselves but for all sentient beings to be free from all the suffering and its causes. That mental factor is the Mahayana refuge.

As I was saying before, this benefit, that others—human beings as well as nonhuman beings—are unable to harm us if we have refuge, comes by the way. The main thing here is to be free from the cycle of death and rebirth, from all the sufferings: from the suffering of pain, from the suffering of change, meaning the temporary samsaric pleasure, and from pervasive compounding suffering, the foundation of those other sufferings.

And we ourselves can then not only liberate numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering, including its cause, but also from the subtle defilements that they have and even their causes, bringing them to full enlightenment. We bring all sentient beings equaling the limitless sky to full enlightenment. We ourselves do that. All these accomplishments are the benefits of having refuge in the mind. All that comes from that root. By completing the path

ourselves we are able to liberate each and every single sentient being from the oceans of samsaric suffering, from even the subtle defilements, and bring them to full enlightenment.

The purpose of taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is like the limitless sky. To develop the path to liberation and enlightenment within ourselves and do perfect work for sentient beings, it is the foundation.

What I was trying to say before was that when we hear the Sanskrit “Buddha, Dharma and Sangha,” it looks like something very narrow, something very specific, but actually it refers to the fully awakened being, the fully enlightened one who has all the qualities, who is perfect in omniscience, whose holy mind has completed the mind training in compassion toward sentient beings, who is perfect in compassion, who is perfect in the power to reveal all the methods, whatever methods that fit sentient beings exactly without the slightest mistake and who can bring everyone from happiness to happiness, to enlightenment. Such is this omniscient one or fully enlightened being.

Normally, if we want to become trained as an expert doctor, we have to rely on an expert doctor; we have to learn from an expert doctor. That is a universal fact. It’s understandable. We have to rely on an expert doctor who has more knowledge than we do. If we want to be a professor or something, if we learn from somebody who is an expert then we can become an expert. That is why people go to Harvard University or Oxford University in England. If we have studied there, people regard us as very brilliant. Right? Something like that. So anyway, this is very similar. Even in a worldly way, if we want to become an expert in something, we must learn from somebody who is already an expert; we have to rely on them. That is refuge. We don’t say, “I take refuge in this person.” We don’t say that! As we go into class, we don’t say, “Today I am going to take refuge in my school masters.” But in reality it is taking refuge in those teachers! We want to have that education to get a degree so we can get a good job, so that we can teach others, therefore if we can, we go to a better school where there are better teachers.

Here, we want to be liberated totally from the oceans of samsaric suffering, from all those three types of sufferings and their causes, karma and delusions, by actualizing the path. That’s what it is. How important is it for us to get out of suffering, to not have to experience the cycle of death and rebirth with all the sufferings? Isn’t that important? Do we want that or not? It is a simple question. Why we take refuge is a very simple question. Do we want to be free from suffering or do we want to stay in suffering? Do we want to die continuously?

I have seen many times on TV in the United States how much suffering a mother goes through giving birth. When the baby doesn’t come out, they have to cut her stomach and take it out. The mother has to suffer so much. If we didn’t have to reincarnate, our mother wouldn’t have to suffer! We wouldn’t give other people trouble and so much pain. Because we have to reincarnate continuously, we cause so much suffering for others. This is one example. Unless we stop reincarnating, even just from this one thing, sentient beings have to suffer so much pain.

There are so many kinds of harm others have to suffer for us. When we build a house, so many insects, like worms, ants, mice, have to be killed to have this comfortable house. It didn’t come into existence from its own side. So many sentient beings had to suffer and be killed, so many people had to work very hard in the hot sun for this house. Even to get money to buy it, we had to work very hard and bear so much hardship.

And then think of clothing, about how the clothes we wear are made. So many sentient beings have to suffer and die. So many animals die when silk is made, and for leather, which is animal

skin, so many animals are killed. In the whole evolution [of clothing manufacture] numberless sentient beings are killed, creating so much negative karma, harming others.

It's the same with food. As I often say, that one grain of rice came from a field. Of course, farmers don't only plant this one grain in the field! So many sentient beings are killed when the fields are plowed. In Nepal, the animals [pulling] the plough have to suffer so much and the hot sun burns them. And they have to do these things so many times, not just one time. For food, there are so many things needed for it to be produced, so many different processes. People have to work so hard and so many sentient beings get killed just for that one grain of rice. And that one grain of rice came from another grain, and again so many have had to suffer for that.

If we think about the evolution of that one grain of rice, we can see how for that grain to get on our plate, an unbelievable number of sentient beings, numberless, have died, have been killed, have created negative karma by harming others. And that one grain of rice is the continuation [of countless grains before it.] So, how dare we eat that grain of rice for our own happiness without thinking of the happiness of others. Can you imagine how those numberless sentient beings suffered for the continuity of this one grain of rice, how they suffered, how they died, how they created negative karma. How would it look from their side? We would look so unbelievably selfish, not having any thought to do something to repay their kindness, to help them, to benefit them. Can you imagine that? We would seem totally selfish, very cruel.

I was talking about just one grain of rice, but in front of us is a whole plate of rice, not just one grain. We dare not eat only for our own happiness, for this one person's happiness, even if that that one person is ourselves, not somebody else.

From this explanation you can understand why we should benefit others, why we should think of others, why we should live our life benefiting others. At least we should do something for these numberless beings who have died for this food in order for us to survive as a human being, giving us the opportunity to practice and become free from suffering and its cause, to achieve ultimate happiness, liberation and enlightenment. This is by the kindness of these sentient beings who have suffered and died, these sentient beings we got the food from. At least we must do something to benefit them. We must think of some way we can help them. We have no choice.

Also, there are so many sentient beings in the water that we don't see with our eyes, only with a microscope. So many have to die to make the water in the bottle.

I am talking about this for two purposes. One is, even when we go on the road, driving a car, there are so many beings that we either see or don't see, who get killed. They have to die when we drive a car. That's an example. Even in the West, when we walk there are so many ants and worms on the road that die. More or less whatever we do seems to depend on other sentient beings having to suffer. So many beings not only have to work very hard but they also have to suffer, being killed, dying, creating negative karma by harming others. This is how we human beings survive every day, totally by the kindness of all those numberless beings. Without thinking of our house and our clothes, other things, we just have to think of the food we eat every day, the beings are numberless.

I am losing my point!

Before I forget, I must mention two things. The first thing is that if we don't practice Dharma, if we don't actualize the path and remove the cause of suffering, karma and delusions, if we always stay in samsara by following karma and delusions, always reincarnating, if we live like that, we

will continuously cause so many sentient beings to suffer for our happiness. It is unbelievable how much they will have to suffer. On the other hand, if we do practice Dharma and actualize the path, if we do remove the cause of suffering, karma and delusions, we don't have to reincarnate, and this stops all this suffering for others.

I started from how much pain a mother must go through and it sort of expanded from that, how numberless sentient beings have to suffer for us. We have to stop causing so much suffering for others. We have to make sure it doesn't happen, That's one thing. That's why we need to actualize the whole path to liberation, and the basic foundation is refuge.

### **TO FREE SENTIENT BEINGS QUICKLY WE NEED TANTRA**

Then, the second thing is that we need to do something to benefit other sentient beings from where all our everyday survival, our everyday comfort and happiness, comes. Our survival as a human being, every day, every minute, every second, comes from the kindness of sentient beings. Every second we are a human being, we have an incredible opportunity to practice Dharma, to achieve happiness, to receive good rebirths in all our future lives, and most importantly to achieve liberation from samsara. Every second we can create the cause for that. And every second, by practicing bodhicitta, we can create the cause of enlightenment, becoming enlightened for all sentient beings.

Within one day, we have such an incredible opportunity with this human body, it is so precious. Within an hour, even a minute, even a second, as I mentioned before, we can do that. We have this incredible opportunity because of all these numberless sentient beings who have died, who have suffered and created negative karma by harming others for us. Because of that, we have this human body and all these comforts. We have received all this from numberless sentient beings. Therefore, if we live our life only thinking of our own happiness day and night and nothing else, if we abandon all the other sentient beings, that is not healthy at all. How can we be really happy, enjoying life? There is no way. Dharma practice, and especially bodhicitta, never harms; it only benefits.

There are many other realizations but with bodhicitta we can achieve enlightenment and enlighten all sentient beings. On top of that, if we practice tantra, sentient beings will not have to suffer for so long, for many eons. If we only practice the sutra method and not tantra, only the Paramitayana path, we have to collect merit for three countless great eons to achieve enlightenment. That means sentient beings who are dependent on us to learn and practice Dharma, to achieve liberation from samsara, to achieve enlightenment, the numberless sentient beings who have a karmic connection with us have to suffer for many, many eons. In order for them to not suffer for so many eons, to bring them to enlightenment more quickly, we ourselves need to achieve enlightenment more quickly. If we practice the tantric path, it has the greater skills where we can achieve enlightenment within one life, without taking three countless great eons to collect merit. We can complete the whole path within one life, so the sentient beings don't have to suffer for many eons.

Even within tantra there are four classes, and if we practice the highest tantra, the fourth one, we can achieve enlightenment within a few years, without the need to prolong our life, to achieve immortality and live for a thousand years. Without the need to do that, within a few years within this brief lifetime of degenerate times, we can achieve enlightenment. This Maha-anuttara Yoga Tantra [Highest Yoga Tantra] has the greatest skill; it is the quickest means to achieve

enlightenment. With this way, we can enlighten sentient beings much quicker. That is the reason why not only sutra exists but also the four levels of tantra revealed by the Buddha.

### **TO BE LIBERATED WE NEED REFUGE IN ALL THREE JEWELS**

The question he asked was why we take refuge, why we put our palms together like this. What is the cause of taking refuge and why do we take refuge?

Normally I say it like this. Even if we have a trillion dollars or we own all the possessions in the world, when we die, that alone cannot protect us. It cannot save us from reincarnating in the lower realms and experiencing those eons of sufferings. We might have all the knowledge of Western science, we might have studied and learned all the technology, but with that knowledge alone, when we die, what is the connection? We can't see any connection; we can't protect our mind from reincarnating in the lower realms and suffering. All that knowledge doesn't purify negative karma. It doesn't purify the negative karma collected in the past, all the killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, telling lies, all that. It is clear it cannot purify that.

When we die, at that last moment before the breath stops, before we lose the sense of hearing, even if we just hear the name of Buddha, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's name or Amitabha Buddha's name, we are saved. By remembering the name of the Buddha, we are saved from the lower realms. Even if we remember the *Heart Sutra* text at the time of death, we will never be reborn in the lower realms. And at the time of death, before the breathing stops, if we remember a monk or nun, a member of the Sangha we have devotion for, we are saved! There is no danger of rebirth in the lower realms.

All that technology, all that development and education is good; of course, it is good. But here I am talking about usefulness at the time of death. When we compare, there is no real comparison. There is nothing in science that can protect us, that can save our life, that can purify our negative karma. I am comparing that with just remembering or hearing the Buddha's name or even remembering a text or mantra, and no question of recalling a member of the Sangha we have devotion for at that time, we are completely saved. We don't need all three, the Buddha Dharma and Sangha, just one can help.

You are now here in retreat, so I can beat you up about this! Before I was just talking about the lower realms but we need to be completely free from the whole of samsara, along with its cause, karma and delusions. For that we need all three, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The actual refuge is the Dharma, the teachings and the realizations, the true path and the true cessation of suffering. We need that. That is the actual refuge, which are the realizations within our mindstream, saving us, protecting us from the karma and delusions, the cause of suffering, and all the oceans of samsaric suffering. Understand?

For *that*, somebody needs to reveal the path, which is the Buddha. So naturally we take refuge in the Buddha. Since we rely upon the teaching to actualize the path, we need somebody to reveal the path, and that is the Buddha, so we take refuge in the Buddha. Then, we need those who support us in actualizing the path, and that is the Sangha, those who inspire us, who help us to actualize the practice. We can use the venerable Sangha members here doing the course as an example. They are those who inspire us, who explain to us how to practice the Dharma and actualize the path.

I think you have been going through many details in the refuge section of the lamrim. In the philosophical texts there are many qualities to study about the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

It is like being a patient with a very severe illness. The medicine, the actual thing that cures the illness is not enough. The doctor has to diagnose the illness and give us the prescription for the right medicine. For that we need to rely upon the doctor. Then, that is not enough; we need a nurse to help. That's why in hospitals they not only have doctors and medicine but also nurses. Similarly, here, to be free from the whole of samsara, from the whole of suffering and its cause, karma and delusions, we need to rely upon the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, just as a patient with a very serious illness needs to rely upon the doctor, medicine and nurse.

So, instead of saying "Buddha" we can say "fully enlightened being," or "omniscient one," or "the one who has perfect qualities to benefit sentient beings." OK? Without using the Sanskrit word "Buddha." Then for "Dharma," we can say it is the method that protects us from suffering, from the negative emotional thoughts, from ignorance, anger and attachment, all those delusions and their action, karma. Without using the word "karma" we can say "action." So, you see, it becomes universal. Without saying "Dharma," we can say it is "the method that protects us from suffering," because it protects us from death, rebirth, old age, sickness, and all the negative, emotional thoughts, such as ignorance, anger and attachment, and their actions. You see, in that way, it becomes universal.

Instead of saying "absolute Sangha," we can say "those who have attained the path," who have the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, the ultimate reality of I, the aggregates and so forth. That is absolute Sangha. And instead of saying "Sangha," we can say "the helper who helps us attain the path," who helps us develop our spiritual path, our realizations, who helps protect us from suffering. In that way, it becomes universal. Sometimes using the Sanskrit, "Buddha, Dharma and Sangha" might make it kind of narrow. Maybe it creates a different feeling, but if we put it in English, it becomes universal. So, the label makes a difference. "Buddha, Dharma and Sangha" sounds something Eastern, maybe from Thailand or Sri Lanka, but if we put it in English, as I gave a rough idea before, it becomes universal.

I want to tell you this. In Singapore many years ago, we liberated animals. It helped them and of course we also collected merit. At that time, there were three snakes—not *snacks*, snakes—long ones that were bought the previous night from the market. The next morning, we went to the reservoir to liberate them. I think this was Singapore. There were also a lot of frogs, and they knew we were helping them, so when we liberated them, the frogs didn't immediately jump into water and go away; they turned back and looked at us. As I was walking through the water, one frog followed. Well, it didn't have legs so it couldn't stand up! But as I took a few steps in the water the frog followed a few steps. I think animals can feel that a person is helping them be released. I think they can feel that.

Anyway, there were three snakes we had bought the night before who were there when we arrived, maybe between eight and nine in the morning. When they were released, after spending the whole night in a sack, they couldn't get out immediately. It was like they were drunk or something. Then, they slowly left.

As we were releasing them, the thought came in my mind that if we released them, they could eat mice. Releasing them is harmful for other animals, for the mice and the frogs, because they eat others. If we didn't release them, because their body was very long, they would be cut all the way through and sold for food. Usually they are cut up while alive and they suffer unbelievable pain. So, what to do? If we liberated them, they would harm many other beings; if we didn't liberate



them, they would suffer so much and get killed. This came to my mind while I was still there, freeing them.

How can we help this situation? In Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and maybe mainland China, the restaurants have a representation of meat. It's not actual meat but food made to look and taste like chicken or something. So, we could make frogs like this for the snake to eat. We could make vegetarian frogs and vegetarian mice, with tofu, soybean frogs, soybean mice! If we made them look real, I don't know what the snakes would do. Maybe they would smell them and abandon them, or eat them and vomit them out.

Anyway, what to do? That question came. My conclusion was only the Dharma, nothing else. There is no solution other than the Dharma. If we practice Dharma, if we actualize the path and remove the cause of suffering, karma and delusions, and if we ourselves are liberated from suffering, we don't have to be reborn like tigers or snakes and cause all that harm to other sentient beings becoming our food. If we actualize the path and are free from samsara, we don't have to do that; we don't have to continuously harm other sentient beings by eating them. And then, after we are liberated, we can liberate other sentient beings. We are able to do perfect work for sentient beings, especially leading them to enlightenment.

Even before enlightenment, even as an arhat, who has skies of qualities such as psychic powers, clairvoyance, we can benefit others so much. Then, when we become an arya bodhisattva, with each bhumi there are unimaginable qualities. When we achieve the first Mahayana bhumi, we can manifest into a hundred different bodies and give a hundred different teachings to sentient beings. We can go to a hundred different pure lands and do prostrations and make offerings, collecting unbelievable merit. There are a hundred meditations we can do and about eleven other things we can do.

Then, when we achieve the second bhumi we can do everything a thousand times: manifesting into a thousand bodies, revealing a thousand different teachings to sentient beings, and so forth. We can offer unbelievable benefit to sentient beings.

When we achieve the eighth, ninth and tenth bhumis, even before we become enlightened, the benefit to sentient beings is unbelievable. It is unimaginable what capacity the bodhisattvas at this level have. It is explained in the Madhyamaka commentary. I don't remember exactly, but for those bodhisattvas, before they even become buddhas, what they can do is unbelievable, amazing, mind-blowing. It is very difficult for us to imagine because we are new. On their pores are many worlds. I don't remember the whole thing, but they are amazing things. They can manifest as a bridge or as water; they can manifest as all sorts of things for sentient beings; it's just mind-blowing. This is before becoming a buddha. The benefits sentient beings receive are like the sky, unbelievable. And especially, after achieving enlightenment, we can offer deeper and deeper ways of benefiting sentient beings.

When we ourselves practice the Dharma and actualize the path, we can reveal the Dharma to other sentient beings, showing them the path, liberating them from karma and delusions, the cause of samsara. In that way, they don't have to reincarnate as all those different beings that harm others.

So, the conclusion is two things. First, we ourselves have to actualize the path to liberation and enlightenment; and second, we can then educate others in the Dharma, reveal the path to others. In this way, we liberate others from the cause of suffering, karma and delusions, and from the

oceans of samsaric suffering. That is the only solution that will help. That is why the refuge practice is fundamental.

I think that's enough, otherwise sooner or later we might take refuge in our dreams!

It is mentioned in the texts that if the benefits of taking refuge materialized then there wouldn't be enough space, even the three thousand galaxies would be too small a container. There are unconceivable benefits in taking refuge. Whenever we begin prayers, whenever we begin practice, it always begins with refuge. As Kyabje Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche explained, if you begin the practice with refuge the merit increases hundreds of times.

### **THE BUDDHA TALKING ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF REFUGE**

The Buddha explained the benefits of taking refuge in the Kangyur, the hundred volumes of Buddha's teachings. In Tibetan language, this text is called *The Mahayana Sutra "Going for Refuge to the Exalted Three Precious Sublime Ones: the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha."* Maybe I'll just quickly read through it! I don't remember if I received the oral transmission of this or not.

[Rinpoche reads in Tibetan]

"I pay homage to three precious sublimes."

[Rinpoche reads in Tibetan]

I think this refers to the Buddha's attendant Shariputra or maybe Kungawo [Ananda]. It is whoever remembered this teaching that the Buddha gave.

"Like this, one time I heard..." Because during the Buddha's time there was no writing, so I think later on all the disciples gathered and remembered all three baskets of teachings—one is the Vinaya teachings, one is the Abhidharma teachings and one is the Sutra and Tantra teachings. They remembered all those teachings that the Buddha gave at different times, and when they recited them by heart they started, "The Buddha said like this, like this, like this."

The Buddha was at Shravasti, in the park of the king, the Buddha's benefactor. The Tibetan says "park," but it might also mean a place where the holy objects, such texts, are kept. So that might mean something like that.

"The Buddha was abiding in one method with one thousand, two hundred and fifty bhikshus." They are all arya beings, they are all great Sangha.

"At that time Shariputra..." That's the Buddha's heart disciple. There are two heart disciples, one is Shariputra and the other is Maudgalyayana. Shariputra was excellent in wisdom and Maudgalyayana was excellent in psychic power.

"Meaningful Life Shariputra was alone in an isolated place at that time when the thought came, 'Since I can see the Buddha directly, I will go in front of the Buddha to ask how much benefit a person collects who takes refuge. How much merit anyone, any type, boys or girls who have

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<sup>3</sup> See *The Noble Great Vehicle Sutra "Taking Refuge in the Three Jewels"* at <https://84000.co>, a digital library of Buddhist sutras.

devotion, collect by taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.” To request the Buddha, he thought that.

“Then, Meaningful Life Shariputra,” I think in the afternoon, “rose up from his meditation and went to where Buddha was. Then, he prostrated with his head at the Buddha’s seat and sat down in one direction [to one side]. Then Meaningful Life Shariputra requested the Buddha.”

“He said: ‘Pure One, I myself am alone in this isolated place, keeping the mind inside, meditating.’” I am not sure how to say this next bit. “My mind made this thought: How much benefit is there for any type of girl and boy who has devotion, taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha?’ Then Shakyamuni Buddha proclaimed this to Meaningful Life Shariputra. ‘Shariputra, that you request this is in order to benefit so many sentient beings, for so many sentient beings to have happiness and to have compassion and loving kindness to the world, to benefit many devas, human beings, for the sake of most of the assembly of people, for the happiness and panacea of devas and human beings, that you request this.’” Then the text says *lek she* which means yes, yes in Tibetan. “You came in the presence of the Tathagata,” which means in front of the Buddha, “to request this, to understand this meaning. So now I am going to show you by example. Anyone ...”

If you keep the continuation of this, you will understand. It is a little bit long so you might lose track! The example is quite long, so I think later you will understand how to connect if you get lost!

“The Buddha said, ‘I will show you by example. Any capable being ...’”

[Rinpoche reads in Tibetan] I am sure you can understand that! You don’t need a translation!

“Any person who has such a psychic power, in this Dzambuling,” this continent. There are the four main continents; east, west, south and north, as well as small ones to the left and right sides. Our continent is Dzambuling which measured as seven thousand *paktse* [*yojana*].<sup>4</sup> There are different ways of counting *paktse*, either according to the Kalachakra tantra or according to Abhidharmakosha. I’m not sure, my memory is not so good, [?] is one fathom, and eight of those is one *gyangta* and eighty *gyangta* is one *paktse*. Do you remember? There is a difference in the definition of *paktse* in the Kalachakra and Abhidharmakosha. Dzambuling measures seven thousand *paktse*.

“If all the creatures living in this world transferred to another world, this world would equal a *tang*, equaling the seven precious jewels, gold, silver, *baidurya*.” I am not sure about this; maybe it’s sapphire? It needs to be checked. I’ve been translating it as lapis lazuli, believing it to be that, but actually lapis lazuli is very cheap. An expert Tibetan doctor I met said he has seen *baidurya* only once in his life, how it is something deep blue, like sky blue, radiating. He said he saw it once but it’s very rare. So, I’ve been translating it as lapis lazuli but I think that’s wrong. I’m sure there are different qualities. We know it is blue and shining but inside there is some silver or gold sometimes. You can see a little bit of that, so that is not a good explanation of *baidurya*. So I found out this doctor is correct, that it is not lapis lazuli. *Baidurya* is more expensive than lapis lazuli. It could be a sapphire or something like that. Do you know the translation of *baidurya*?

*Ven Fedor*: I thought it was sapphire but I am not sure.

*Rinpoche*: Yes, so maybe it’s a sapphire, something very expensive and rare.

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<sup>4</sup> One *paktse* is said to be between six and fifteen kilometers (four to nine miles).

So, “Crystal, red pearls, heart of the stone...” I’m not sure what jewel that is, then *pook*, not poopoo! It’s also some kind of jewel, I’m not sure. “If you fill the whole world with all these jewels and build a stupa the same height as the width of Dzambuling...” How wide our world is, that is the height of the stupa. So it reads, “The whole world is the stupa,” or “The whole world is covered by the stupa.” I’m not sure; it could be either way! “Then the top of the stupa reaches the deva world of Brahma. Then if to that stupa you make offering of the deva’s incense, the deva’s flowers, those worldly gods’ garland of flowers, deva’s umbrella and banner, the flags, *partin* ...” This is an example. It is not telling a story that happened, it’s first giving an example.

“Besides that, this person performs a miracle and puts all the oceans of this world into another world and then fills it up with butter, instead of ocean water. Maruka ...” Maruka is the name of a country, I don’t know which. “And, *til mar*, *til* is this plant that produces oil, it grows in Nepal. [Student: Rape.] Yes, “That oil and butter fill the four oceans, and then you put a Mount Meru of wax inside, and you light it so that it lasts for so many eons, and you offer that.”

“Then Buddha asked Shariputra, ‘What do you think about that example? Did this person collect so many merits or not?’ And Shariputra replied, ‘Yes, yes Buddha, this person would collect many merits, merits beyond those of the hearer listeners...’ The Hinayana hearer listeners. “And the solitary realizers. This is beyond them. This is the object of those who have gone to bliss,” which means the Buddha, “this is the object of the tathagatas.”

“Then the Buddha proclaimed, ‘Shariputra, any type of girl or boy who goes for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, their pile [collection] of merit is much more. Even a hundred times more doesn’t become close to the merit the previous person collected, that person who has great miraculous powers and did all those things...’ Which I am not going to repeat again! “That person with those miraculous powers, who did all those things, equaling the world, putting all the creatures in another world and levelling them with all those seven jewels, then building a stupa that covered the world, whose height touches Brahma’s world. Then making all these offerings and putting all the water of the oceans in another world and making it butter, and then putting Mount Merus of wax inside and lighting it and offering the light for many, many eons to the buddhas, compared with those who take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, that person’s pile of merit is not even a hundredth as great.”

So, the amount of their merit collected by any type of boy or girl who takes refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha... Sorry, listen! That other person who had the miraculous power, who did all those things, who made unbelievable offering, his merit was not even a hundredth of the merit of somebody, a boy or girl who has gone for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Theirs is far greater than that other person who has such incredible miraculous power, who could do all that, who could build a stupa that reaches the Brahma world and make offerings of light for many eons. Even if his merit could be increased a hundred times it would not come close to the merit of the person who takes refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Now you have a little bit of an idea.

So it says, “The person who has miraculous powers, who did all those things, making the stupa of many different jewels at that height, and making all those light offerings for many eons, Mount Merus of light offerings, even if it were increased a thousand times, it still doesn’t come close to this person who takes refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.”

I think it's like that. The last repetition is a thousand, so it's a thousand or a hundred, but anyway it never becomes even close to this merit of somebody who takes refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

[Rinpoche reads in Tibetan]

“When the Buddha explained this teaching, talking about the benefit of bodhicitta, the whole worlds of the great thousands of three thousand galaxies shook.” The expression [Rinpoche reads in Tibetan] is the term referring to the whole world shaking like this or that. “Then, at that time, continual great lightning also happened. In the deva world, the devas beat drums in celebration, celebrating that a good thing had happened. Then Meaningful Life Kungawo...” The Buddha's attendant, Kungawo, is called Ananda in Sanskrit. “...asked the Buddha, ‘What is the name of this Dharma? How do we practice this?’

“Then Buddha proclaimed, ‘Kungawo, you should keep this, which is called *This Number of Teaching is Obtained with Infinite Doors*,<sup>5</sup> and look at it this way, the meaning of that.’ The Buddha said. ‘Keep it like this, preserve it.’ The Buddha proclaimed like that.

“Then Meaningful Life Shariputra and the other bhikshus highly praised what Buddha proclaimed.”

This *Mahayana Sutra Called “Going for Refuge to the Exalted Three Precious Sublime Ones: the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha”* comes from the more than a hundred teachings of the Buddha in the Kangyur. It talks about the benefits of refuge, just to get some idea. We should rejoice, discovering how fortunate the person who takes refuge is. We should rejoice in how much merit we collect by taking refuge ourselves and by others taking refuge as well.

## **REFUGE VOWS MOTIVATION: THE FOUR SUFFERING RESULTS**

Please do three prostrations. Do you need to go *pipi*?

Has the advice on refuge already been read? The three principal practices and the general? [*Ven. Fedor*: Yes.] OK. So, you already have an idea.

So, do three prostrations to the Buddha statue as though it is the actual living Buddha, then three prostrations to the Lama who is giving the refuge vow.

Then, if you can, kneel down in the same position as taking the eight Mahayana precepts. If you can't, then sit. Put two palms together at the heart, like this.

Maybe before we repeat the prayer, I must mention this. You can take just the refuge upasika vow,<sup>6</sup> without taking all or any of the five lay vows. That is called “only refuge upasika vow.” [Rinpoche says it in Tibetan] That is how it is called in Tibetan. You can take just that, or along with the refuge you can take the five lay vows. Or if you can't take all the five, you can take four, three, two or one, whatever you think you can take. You can include that.

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<sup>5</sup> Also translated as *Accomplishing Limitless Gateways*. See <https://84000.co>

<sup>6</sup> The five lay vows are often called “upasika” vows, but more correctly upasika is a female lay follower of the Buddha (upasaka for male).

Here, I must tell you what happens if we don't live in the vow of morality, abstaining from killing. For example, if we killed one insect, from that one negative karma of killing, that killing becomes negative karma because of the motivation of killing, the self-cherishing thought, which makes the action negative, negative karma. Then, there is anger, attachment and the other nonvirtuous thoughts that make the action negative, transforming it into negative karma. If we kill one sentient being, even an insect, because karma is expandable, from that one negative karma we get killed in five hundred lifetimes. In future lives, again and again we will be killed by others for five hundred lifetimes. It is mentioned in the texts, maybe in the commentary *Four Hundred Stanzas*.

It is also mentioned there that if we cheat one sentient being, as a result we will be cheated because karma is expandable. The nature of karma is that, even if we do something only once, the experienced result is to suffer, as the problem will recur many, many times. So, if we cheat one sentient being, we will be cheated in a thousand lifetimes by others as a result of our karma, from that one karma of cheating one sentient being. We cheated once but from that negative karma we experience the result, in a thousand lifetimes we will be cheated by others. Creating one negative karma has the result we will have to experience in many lifetimes.

That means that when somebody cheats us in this life, when somebody insults us, when somebody steals our things, when somebody kills us—all these were caused by us. Somebody who doesn't know about reincarnation and karma cannot realize this. To them, it looks like the other person did it to them, harmed them, but in reality, once we understand reincarnation and karma, that is just a condition. Because we harmed that being in the past, we are harmed now. Why that specific sentient being harmed us is because we have a connection with that being, having harmed them, cheated them, killed them, or whatever. That's why we receive harm from this specific sentient being. So, in reality, whatever harm others give us comes from us. It has come from our past negative karma of harming others. When somebody abuses us, basically, the real evolution comes from us, because in the past we did the same thing; we treated that sentient being in the same way in the past.

“Why did that person treat me like that, instead of like this?” It is because we treated that person that way in the past. It could have been billions of eons ago or in the life before this; it could have been any time, but unless the karma has been purified, the karma will still be there, and that's why it has ripened in this life.

Not thinking about reincarnation and karma, the continuity of consciousness, is a very short-sighted attitude. Immediately we are harmed we think, “This person did this to me! I didn't do anything! I am completely pure, perfect, but this person did this to me.”

I heard from Venerable Fedor that you have gone through the meditation on karma quite extensively, so I don't have to mention much. But because we are talking here about the precepts, because you have opportunity to take precepts with the refuge, I was just bringing up the point of karma.

Since we don't want to suffer, we don't want to receive harm from others, it is very important to abandon even one negative karma of killing. You can see how important it is to stop this.

When we complete one negative karma of killing, we have to experience the four suffering results. The ripening aspect result is rebirth in the lower realms. If the action is a heavy one, it may be in the hell realm. Then, the three other suffering results we experience are in the human realm. Experiencing the result similar to the cause is one; others kill us, harming our life. The

possessed result is to do with the place; we are born in a place where there is a lot of danger to life, with diseases that are contagious or very dangerous. There are also many harmful things to life. Even the food that is meant to be for a long and healthy life produces side effects, or we can't digest it. A lot of people have digestive problems. This is a result of the past negative karma of killing. That's explained very clearly in the text.

Even though the doctor gives us the correct medicine, while it doesn't produce any side effects for others, it does for us. We have to understand this. For others it has no side effects, but for us it has side effects—that is the result of the negative karma of killing. Like that, it becomes the cause of sickness and death.

Now I have diabetes, I can eat some things but there are many things I can't eat because it would cause the diabetes to increase. So, I think that's similar to this. It's a result of the negative karma of killing.

That is the possessed result. Then, creating the result similar to the cause. Later, in a future life, when we are born a human being due to another good karma, we kill again due to the negative imprint left on our mind by the power of the previous negative karma of killing. We engage in the negative karma of killing, and again that completed negative karma produces four suffering results. Three of those we experience in the human realm. One of those is creating the karma of killing *again*, and *again* that produces four suffering results. So, unless we purify, if we don't practice purification at all and we don't actualize the path that removes karma and delusions, actualizing the exalted right-seeing path and the path of meditation, then nothing gets done, and from this one negative karma of killing we have to experience the suffering results from life to life. It goes on, becoming endless. From one negative karma, the suffering result is endless.

This is the nature of karma, the nature of the action. When we plant a small seed such as a bodhi tree seed, a huge tree grows with many thousands of branches, which produces thousands and thousands of seeds. There is a bodhi tree in India that came from a very small seed but it is so huge that five hundred horse carriages can stay in the shade of its branches. That is the nature of that seed; the seed has all that potential. All this happens because it is a dependent arising, depending on many factors, many causes and conditions. In the same way, it depends on the base and the thought that labeled it.

All this exists in mere name, merely imputed by mind. All this functions in mere name. It is empty but it exists. It is empty of independence, empty of true existence, but it exists. Its function is existing in mere name; it is born in mere name, it exists in mere name and it dies in mere name.

Similarly, here, the inner factor, karma is like that. If we don't purify with the remedy of the four powers, if we don't generate the remedial path that eliminates karma and delusions, we have to experience the suffering result of that one negative karma endlessly.

How many negative karmas of killing have we done in this life? Maybe not human beings but other living creatures, insects? Then we think of our past lives, from beginningless rebirths, there are so many negative karmas that we haven't purified, that we have not finished experiencing.

Conversely, if we live in the morality of abstaining from killing, if we live in the vow abstaining from killing, this has four happy results. The four happy results are totally opposite. Instead of the ripening aspect of rebirth in the lower realms, we take rebirth in a higher realm. Even the

possessed result—the food and medicine—is all very healthy. The crops, the food, what we eat has protein, whereas from the negative karma of killing, the food that grows has no protein.

So, you can see now, this all came from our mind, from karma. Everything comes from the mind, all these sufferings, everything. You can see very clearly, all our problems come from our own mind. Even if someone is harming us, it comes from our mind.

This shows how important it is to live in the vow, even this one vow to not kill. You can see very clearly that that is the solution. Living in the vow, there is happiness from life to life, and liberation and, when it's done with bodhicitta, there is enlightenment.

Now, one complete negative karma of sexual misconduct has four suffering results. The ripening aspect result is rebirth in the lower realms and the other three are experienced in the human realm. With the possessed result, when we are born as a human being, it is in a dirty, unhygienic place, filled with poopoo, with bad smells. Even though we don't normally live in such a place, if we have to cross such a terrible, dirty place for a few minutes, even that is the result of past negative karma [of sexual misconduct]. Everything has a reason. Whatever we experience has a reason, and that filthy, smelly, unhealthy place is the result of the past negative karma of sexual misconduct. We are experiencing the possessed result, to do with the place.

Then, experiencing the result similar to the cause. This is an interesting one, experiencing the result of the past negative karma of sexual misconduct. The way our wife or husband thinks is against our mind, against our wishes; they are competitive, so we don't get along. Even though we are physically living together, we are not happy because our way of thinking is totally the opposite. Because of that, we fight, we quarrel, we hold a painful grudge in our heart for many years and we finally separate. All these problems come. Even our family members are not happy with us; their minds are not harmonious with us. And in the office, our colleagues' minds are not harmonious with us and they are always going against our wishes. And, being unhappy, many problems arise. This is experiencing the result of sexual misconduct.

Creating the result similar to the cause, we commit sexual misconduct again because of the past negative imprint. We are habituated, so in that life we commit the negative karma of sexual conduct again. Then again there is the complete negative karma which has four suffering results, one of which is doing the same thing again, and then *that* complete negative karma has four suffering results. So, it goes on without end as long as we don't purify that negative karma of sexual misconduct from where all this endless suffering comes, if we don't purify it or actualize the path that removes karma and delusions.

Now here you can see how important it is living in the vow abstaining from sexual misconduct. The main thing is not having a harmful relationship with others, one that creates problems in so many people's lives and in our life, causing so much negative karma of body, speech and mind. Stopping that, when we live in the vow abstaining from sexual misconduct, brings peace to us and to many people.

You can see that what the Buddha advises is very practical; it brings so much peace and happiness in the world and in our own life. And not just in this life but from life to life, and of course it leads to liberation and enlightenment, so we should always dedicate the merits we create to achieving enlightenment with the thought of bodhicitta.

If we live in the vow abstaining from sexual misconduct, there are four happy results that are totally the opposite [of committing sexual misconduct]. In the office, in the family, everybody



thinks in the same way, thinking exactly as we wish; everybody is so supportive. We have to understand the details. These are the result of the past good karma of living in the vow abstaining from sexual misconduct. These are the four happy results we can experience from life to life from one good karma, from abstaining once from sexual misconduct.

Now you can see why it is important to live in the vow, in morality, why you need to bother to practice morality. You can see how it is the most unbelievable, the most practical method for happiness for us and for other sentient beings. It brings so much peace and happiness for us and other sentient beings and this world. Living in the morality of abstaining from these negative karmas, of avoiding these negative karmas, whether we take one, two, three [or all five], becomes the best contribution to world peace. It becomes an incredible means of happiness for us in all our lives up to liberation. And then to enlightenment, when we dedicate for that. This becomes our best service, our best contribution to the happiness for our family, for others, for world peace. If we don't practice this, others receive a lot of harm from life to life. In this life, so many people receive harm from us; there is so much confusion. We suffer and others suffer. We create so much negative karma with our body, speech and mind and from life to life we cause so much harm to sentient beings.

If we wish for world peace, we must abandon negative karma that harms others and ourselves. To be able to do that, we take a vow from the lama or guru and we make sure we engage in this. We not only think, "I am not going to do that," we make it a serious practice by taking the vow.

Whether we are able to take one, two, three—however many from these five lay vows—living in these vows is our best contribution. Whatever ones we can take from these five, this really brings world peace. We bring peace and happiness to sentient beings from life to life.

I just wanted to mention this.

The other one is telling lies. The complete negative karma of telling lies has four suffering results. The ripening aspect result is rebirth in the lower realms.

Then, experiencing the result similar to the cause. This one is important to know. If we are running a hotel we never receive guests; all the rooms are empty. If we are running a restaurant, all the chairs are empty. We see people on the road but nobody comes into the restaurant; all the chairs are empty like this. We are unsuccessful at work. All these things are the results of the past negative karma of telling lies. We are experiencing the result similar to the cause. If we are a taxi or bus driver, we don't get passengers. Other companies get lots of passengers but we don't. Even if we go on the same road, on the same spot, somebody gets lots of passengers but they never come to us. It's the same with a Dharma center. If you run a Dharma center, nobody comes to receive teachings. All the meditation cushions are empty! These are examples of experiencing the result of the past negative karma of telling lies. We should understand this specifically. Then we come to know how karma works specifically. I think this might be the possessed result of the negative karma of telling lies.

With experiencing the result similar to the cause, other people cheat us, telling us lies. Also, even if we speak the truth, other people don't trust our speech; they think we are telling lies. No matter how much we tell the truth, others don't believe us. Sometimes we have to go to prison without choice because they don't believe us. These things happen. I heard that in the United States one person stayed in prison for twenty years before they found out he was innocent.

Experiencing the result where other people cheat us and tell us lies actually comes from our mind, from our negative thoughts and then our actions.

Creating the result similar to the cause means we tell lies again. When we are born as a human being in the future due to another good karma, we do the same thing in that life. And again experiencing those four suffering results goes on and on, unless we purify that one negative karma from where all this endless suffering comes or we actualize the path which removes the karma and delusions.

Therefore, you can see how important it is to live in morality, abstaining from telling lies.

Then alcohol makes our mind uninhibited, totally uncontrolled; we act shamelessly. All our secrets come out, all the bad things we say about other people come out. And then we fight each other, we kill each other. Alcohol is the source of so many problems, such as car accidents. It causes so many problems for us and for our family: debt, fighting with our partner and children, destroying things. It creates so many problems and so much disharmony. I think many of the people in the streets of New York and other places are there because they are alcoholics, and they can't stay with their family. They have to stay in the street. You see many like that.

With alcohol, we can't do our job. Even what is called a "normal" life in the world, such as having a job, becomes impossible. We can't do our job, so we lose it. Anyway, there are so many problems. We can't even do those normal things, and then we become uncontrolled and careless and engage in so much negative karma with our body, speech and mind.

I'll mention a story and then stop. A woman bought a goat and a container with alcohol. There was a monk, and she asked the monk which he preferred, to kill the goat or drink the wine or have sex with her. To the monk the easiest thing looked like drinking the wine. So he drank the wine and of course then his mind became uncontrolled and he had sex and then killed the goat [for dinner]! So all three! That is just one example of what alcohol does. OK, that's enough.

With this very heavy negative karma, we have to be reborn in the hot hell realm, in the hell of great crying, where there is an iron house oneness with the fire, with no door or window. We have to suffer there for eons, in that iron house oneness with the fire. Even when the karma of the hell of crying is finished, there is another one outside, the hell of great crying, where again we have to suffer for eons.

I think these hells are the results for the person who actually drinks alcohol, and even for the person who gives alcohol to somebody, they get reborn in the hell of crying and great crying, even in the life after this. This is explained in the teachings. It's regarded as very heavy.

## **REFUGE VOWS**

So, along with taking refuge, you can take however many of the five lay vows you think you can keep: five, four, three, two or one, you choose. If you are taking any of those vows it is called upasika one vow, two vows, so you say, "I am going to take the upasika one vow," or "the upasika two vows" and so on, like that. If you are taking all five, then think it's all five. OK? That means incredible, unbelievable peace and happiness for you and incredible peace and happiness for your family, for the country, for the world and for all sentient beings. This is what you are offering.

Now think: “Until I am liberated from samsara, I will be constantly tormented by the suffering of pain and the suffering of change—the samsaric pleasures—and pervasive compounded suffering. Therefore, because this time I have received a perfect human body, have met the Buddhadharma and have met the virtuous friend, at this time I must achieve great liberation and full enlightenment for sentient beings. Therefore, I am going to take the Buddha as founder of the refuge, the Dharma as actual refuge and the Sangha as helpers to actualize refuge within me.”

Now put your palms together in prostration, like offering a jewel at your heart, not with empty hands. If you can kneel down then kneel down and if you can't it doesn't matter, then please repeat the prayer.

[Rinpoche confers the refuge ceremony]

There is a story that in the past in Tibet somewhere, during an initiation the lama said, “Whatever you visualize, you will visualize receiving this now.” Then, somebody in the audience called back, “Lama, even if you visualize receiving *momos!*”

Now take refuge in the Dharma: the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, the true path and true cessation of suffering.

Just as the Buddha has two: the absolute Buddha, the dharmakaya, which is the Buddha's holy mind; and the conventional Buddha, the rupakaya or form bodies, the sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya, the Dharma has the absolute Dharma and conventional Dharma. The absolute Dharma is the true path and true cessation of suffering; and the conventional Dharma is the scriptures, the three baskets of teachings, the Tripitaka. When we take refuge, we take refuge in both.

[Rinpoche continues the refuge ceremony]

The Sangha also has two: the absolute Sangha and the conventional Sangha. The absolute Sangha doesn't have to be four people; it can be one and that person can also be lay. The absolute Sangha refers to anyone who has realization of the true path and cessation of suffering. Conventional Sangha refers to at least four fully ordained people, either male or female, who are living in full ordination purely, who don't have actual refuge Dharma, true path and true cessation of suffering. That is the conventional Sangha. When we take refuge, we take refuge to both.

[Rinpoche continues the refuge ceremony]

Those of you who are living in the higher vows, like the thirty-six vows, you can take refuge, that's OK, but you can't think, “I am taking upasika vows,” which is a lower vow. While you are living in higher ordination, if you take a lower vow it is said that you will lose the higher vow. But in the case of the eight Mahayana precepts, because it is taken with a bodhicitta motivation, that is exceptional. That one can be taken by anybody, even those fully ordained ones who are living in the two hundred and fifty-three vows, the bhikshunis. Anybody can take the eight Mahayana precepts. Otherwise, with the lower pratimoksha vows, while you are living in the higher vows, if you take the lower vows such as the five lay vows, you lose the higher vows. You can just do the refuge part, but not the other part, taking the lower vows.

[Rinpoche concludes the refuge ceremony]

Now it is done. Now three prostrations to the lama. Now we have to dedicate the merits.

## DEDICATIONS

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me and all the three-time merits collected by others, may I and all sentient beings be able to complete the paramita of morality by keeping it without mistake, keeping it purely and keeping it without pride.”

If you have pride, it makes the merit weaker. It is not only anger that harms the merit; it is also pride. If you have pride, when you practice virtue it makes it weaker. Also, ill will makes merit weaker, so there are other things. Of course, the most destructive is anger but these other things make the merit weaker.

[Rinpoche recites in Tibetan]

Dedicate the merits as I mentioned before. Then please dedicate the merits to generate bodhicitta, the source of all happiness for you and all sentient beings, within your own heart and in the hearts of your family members, in the hearts of all the students in this organization and in the hearts of all the supporters and benefactors, especially those who give up their lives to the organization, doing service for sentient beings and for the teachings of the Buddha. “May bodhicitta be generated in all their hearts and in the hearts of all sentient beings. And in whose heart bodhicitta has been generated, may it be increased.”

[Rinpoche recites in Tibetan]

Please dedicate the merit to generate bodhicitta in the hearts of all the leaders in the world. This way many millions of people in this country will have so much peace and happiness and will be led in the correct path to peace and happiness.

[Rinpoche recites in Tibetan]

Please dedicate the merits particularly for bodhicitta to be generated in the hearts of all those people who have the thought to harm others in the world, those who are called terrorists, whether they are called terrorists or not, anyone who has harmful thoughts to harm others, may bodhicitta take the place [of those harmful thoughts] in their heart. To generate bodhicitta in the hearts of the leaders of the world and in the hearts of people who harm others, this is the most urgent prayer.

[Rinpoche recites in Tibetan]

All this incredible opportunity we have had at this time, during this course—we have taken the eight Mahayana precepts, which brings unbelievable merit, limitless skies of merit, because they were taken with bodhicitta, and today we have taken refuge and the five lay vows—all this is due to the kindness and compassion of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. That I myself have been able to do this and that you have had the opportunity to take this, is only by the kindness of His Holiness. Because His Holiness exists in this world, due to his guidance, we have all this freedom to learn and practice the Dharma.

As I mentioned in the past, every single merit we collect by practicing the Dharma, every single understanding of the Dharma, every single purification, every single karma we have purified and

every single positive imprint we have left on our mental continuum to achieve the whole path to enlightenment—all this is by the kindness of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. So, we dedicate for His Holiness to have a stable life and for all his holy wishes to succeed immediately. We should dedicate the merits from the bottom of our heart.

[Rinpoche recites His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s long-life prayer.]

Then particularly, after that, there is Lama Yeshe, whose holy name is extremely rare to mention, who is kinder than all the three-time buddhas. Kopan exists because of Lama’s kindness. Again, all these benefits we have received in all this time are also by Lama’s kindness, actualizing the place and all that. So, we dedicate that whatever wishes Lama had are actualized, and that his incarnation, Lama Ösel Rinpoche, is able to benefit the world and all sentient beings like Lama Tsongkhapa.

[Rinpoche recites in Tibetan]

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me and 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. And may I be able to cause all this to happen by myself alone.”

[Rinpoche recites in Tibetan]

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me and by all the three-time buddhas, may any sentient being, whatever connection they have made with me, harming or helping me, may anyone who sees me, touches me, remembers me, thinks of me, dreams of me, or even just sees photos of me, merely by this, may it cause them to immediately purify all their negative karma. May they never be reborn in the lower realms and immediately heal all their sicknesses and may they be free from spirit harms, purify all negative karma, actualize bodhicitta and then achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. After achieving bodhicitta may all their wishes succeed immediately.

“May everyone actualize bodhicitta in this world and may all war, famine, disease, torture, poverty, sickness, dangers of fire, water, air, earthquakes, may all this be stopped immediately, wherever it is happening. May nobody in this world experience all these undesirable things forever.” Please dedicate this.

[Rinpoche recites in Tibetan]

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me and all buddhas and bodhisattvas and others, may the five-hundred foot Maitreya statue be completed, as well as all the Maitreya statues to be built in this world to shorten the period of eons of war, the dangers of weapons, the eon of sickness and the eon of famine in this world that is going to happen everywhere, much worse than what happened in the past. May all these projects, building Maitreya Buddha statues and the other holy objects in different parts of the world, succeed immediately and help shorten this extremely heavy suffering period in the world. And may there be continuous offerings to the monasteries and the Sangha. May all the Sangha of this organization be able to do all the social services in different parts of the world: the hospices and universal education, the Loving Kindness Peaceful Youth and those various different social services that help young people with special education, as well as giving food, shelter and medicines, and eye operations in hospitals in Tibet—may those various social services succeed and may they also hopefully start in Nepal.”

Medicine is also given at the bottom of [Kopan] hill, but also in the near future we hope to start a place for people who have cancer, and a place to die or an old folks home—we're not yet sure what, but hopefully something very good, where they can come, which not only provides shelter and equipment but most importantly gives them the chance to practice. For those who are Buddhist, to help show them what to pray for, what to practice, what to meditate on, to make their life very meaningful rather than living their lives just worrying. To do something not only for the cancer but up to enlightenment—a place where we can introduce practice. I think that's the most important thing. Of course, shelter and everything is very important, but the most important thing is the psychology, the thought transformation or the meditation practice. At least taking refuge in the unmistakable object who has all the qualities and power to liberate, to protect. That makes a huge difference in their life, by having an unmistakable object of refuge to hold on to, one who has all the qualities. If that is done it makes a huge difference to the person's life from now on, leading them to enlightenment. Introducing refuge makes a difference like earth and sky in the life of that person. They can see that the person they hold onto has no mistakes; that they have all the qualities and power. There's no cheating, no deceiving. That's very important.

So hopefully, there will be a hospice to help those people. When I was here last, there is a Nepalese man whose mother was dying. I don't remember whether he asked me or not, but I went. They had a small place which two or three Nepalese doctors serve. There was somebody from the village lying down outside, and inside the Nepalese man's house there was his mother. I chanted many of the powerful mantras and lamrim prayers to the mother, and I think I left blessed water to drink. I think she passed away after a few weeks.

I think Nepalese people generally don't have a guide to explain meditation, refuge, thought transformation, what to think and so forth, so doing something like this came out very, very helpful, very good, to help at such a critical time near death. Besides the Buddhists, who know how to do things, Nepalese people have no idea about life. Even if they just chant mantras, while chanting, by thinking of the Buddha, it's perfect. It completely saves them and they don't need to have any worries. They will have a good future and go to a pure land or whatever.

For all these things to succeed we need funding. Then, each individual center has so many projects, so many things—teaching the Dharma, doing social service, doing many things to help others—so we dedicate for all those to succeed. Many of them have financial problems, so we dedicate for them to receive whatever they need to benefit others immediately, and to succeed without difficulty.

Many of these centers were not started by wealthy people; they were mostly started by young people with good hearts, after coming to the Kopan course here, in India and Nepal. They got benefit in their life from the teaching in the course and meditating on the lamrim, and so they wanted to start the same thing in their countries to benefit others. They wanted others to receive the same benefit in their lives. Those young people who have nothing are the ones who start serving others; [the centers] are not started by wealthy people with much funding. That's why it is not easy for them to pay the rent and so forth. Many have not had extensive business experience, experience in the material world. They have experience in different fields. Therefore, pray that they may receive whatever they need to most benefit sentient beings.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me and the three-time merits collected by other sentient beings and buddhas, that which exist but which are empty...” (Here, meditate on emptiness.) “... may the I who exists but is empty, achieve Guru Shakyamuni

Buddha's enlightenment, which exists but which is empty, and lead all the sentient beings, who exist but who are empty, to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment, which exists but which is empty, by myself alone, who exists but does not exist from its own side.

"I dedicate all my merits to be able to follow the holy extensive deeds, the same as the bodhisattvas Samantabhadra and Manjugosha actualized. I dedicate all the merits in the same way as all the three-time buddhas dedicate their merits.

"Due to all the three-time merits collected by me and by others, may the general teachings, particularly Lama Tsongkhapa's stainless teachings of unified sutra and tantra, be spread in all the directions of this world and may they flourish forever in this world by completely actualizing in my heart and in the hearts of my own family members, in the hearts of all the students and supporters of this organization and in the hearts of all those who sacrifice their life to the organization, doing service to sentient beings and to the teachings of Buddha, and everyone in this world.

[Rinpoche recites in Tibetan]

Inside here are five-colored Buddha's relics, which I received from Thailand, to put on the head. There is a very special mantra and when you touch it, it purifies very heavy negative karma: killing one's father and mother, harming the Buddha, killing an arhat, causing disunity among the Sangha, which causes you to be born right after death in the lowest hot hell, the inexhaustible hell, which is the heaviest suffering in samsara and lasts for one intermediate eon. That means there is no question about purifying those other karmas, the ten nonvirtuous actions and so forth. So, take the blessings on the head.

There is also this refuge booklet that explains, by taking refuge, the three things to abandon and the three things to practice, the refuge precepts, and the general advice regarding refuge. There are about eight or something. I think you have gone through some things. In the back, there is also Saint Francis' prayer. This is to clarify so as to not become contradictory.

Each person can come and I can sign the refuge book.

## Lecture 6: Cherishing Others

### WHAT RENUNCIATION MEANS

... to not engage any unwholesome action, any negative action, which not only results in the problems in this life and rebirth in the lower realms but also produces samsara and all the sufferings of samsara.

So, here we have to think of all the delusions, to not engage in any negative emotional thoughts and negative actions that cause problems in everyday life—on the same day, in the same hour as we generated the negative thoughts and the negative actions. Not only that, they cause problems at the time of death and in the life after this. Here we are not just talking about the lower realms but the whole of samsara, the general suffering of samsara, you can think like that.

The only result unwholesome actions produce is suffering, which is very extensive. That means every day of our life we need to not follow the painful mind, the negative emotional painful mind of attachment, which makes us engage in many negative karmas, harming ourselves, harming others, creating great confusion instead of bringing peace in many others' lives. Then also in our daily life it brings another suffering, anger.

We need to abandon the dissatisfied, painful mind of attachment by practicing contentment, renunciation. For those who understand it, the word “renunciation” means something joyful; it refers to happiness and peace for ourselves and others. For those who understand exactly what it means, this is the meaning. But for those who do not understand “renunciation,” there could be a kind of fear, thinking it's like putting ourselves into prison or torturing ourselves or sort of like losing something. That could be the connotation when we hear “renunciation.” If we don't know what it really means, it could have a different effect.

Those who really understand “renunciation” understand that what has to be renounced is the cause of suffering, the negative emotional thoughts and actions that bring all the problems, all the confusion in this life and cause so much harm to others. For those who really understand, that is great joy; that is liberating ourselves from problems, from troubles. We renounce the negative emotional thoughts that bring so much confusion, disturbing our mental continuum and obscuring our mind. They do these two things that harm us: besides disturbing our mind, instead of enlightening us, awakening us, they obscure us. They obscure us from developing our mind and from seeing the reality of our own life, of our own mind, the ultimate nature of our mind, of the I, of phenomena and so forth. They only cause us to hallucinate more.

I think some translate renunciation as “emerging.” It has some meaning, like the lotus emerging from the mud. We were discussing the translation of the *Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, where sometimes they translate *nge jung* as “emerging.” There is some meaning, because after we let go of the attachment, we get liberation. We let go of our emotional, painful mind, the negative emotional thought, and by letting go, immediately, right there, wherever we are—sitting in the office or at home or on the meditation cushion, walking or eating—whenever that happens, immediately there is peace and contentment. We achieve satisfaction. We give ourselves freedom right there; we find peace and happiness in our heart right there, wherever we are.

Even in the middle of so much confusion with people, when our mind practices Dharma, we suddenly let go. We find peace right there, even though a lot of people are in chaos, even though there is mental war! People are completely confused, but we have found peace because we



immediately practiced Dharma in the middle of that confusion. And, having found peace and happiness, we don't have a problem.

### **THE SHORTCOMINGS OF ATTACHMENT AND OTHER DELUSIONS**

By letting go of the eight worldly concerns, the painful mind of attachment to this life, there is immediate peace and happiness right at that moment. And from there we go to liberation. Our mind achieves freedom from obstacles, this mind that is sticky like glue. That is another way of expressing attachment, like flies being attached to light and getting stuck when they jump into the candle wax. Their body is completely wrapped up with the hot wax. Like that example, that is what happens with attachment, the trouble we get into; we get attracted to the flames or the fire; we are drawn to it, not knowing its reality. I'm not talking about the flies not understanding emptiness, I am not talking about not understanding emptiness of the fire, but not understanding that the fire is so hot it burns. Hallucinated, they jump into it and get burned, and that's the end of their life.

There are many examples like that illustrating the shortcomings of attachment. These are very good to meditate on. You should write down as many examples as possible and make a book of them! All the examples show how with attachment, we are trapped; we get completely—what is the word—consumed? We get consumed. Our whole life is like that. It's like the fish which is so attached to the food that it doesn't know there is a hook there and so it gets caught because of its attachment to the food. There is attachment to the food on the hook, it grasps at it, gets hooked and can't get away. No matter how much it moves, it can't get away. Then its body is cut into slices, even before it is dead. It happens many times like that because it is very important to have fresh fish.

We have a center in Italy, Muni Gyana Center. Is there an Italian here? I don't think you would know the center. Do you? The Muni Gyana Center, a nice place, in Sicily or somewhere? [*Student*: Pisa.] Not Pisa. Anyway, it is a nice place.

There was a family I stayed with. The son used to sail a boat to catch and eat fish. He was talking about how he can get fresh fish. I don't eat fish, I'm normally vegetarian, so I didn't have any. Anyway, he was talking about how people don't like old fish, only fresh ones. They should not even be completely dead. You just cut them and fry them or whatever, even when they are not completely dead.

Anyway, what I am saying? We are cheated by attachment; we have problems all day long. There is also an example explained in the teachings of catching an elephant. They put a male elephant or a female elephant there and it attracts the elephant they want to catch. I don't remember very clearly. Anyway, that's just an example from the teachings of the Buddha. There are many examples we can use in this life, for human beings, how attachment cheats us. We could make a whole book, even from our own experiences.

That would be very good. It would be a sort of very encouraging lamrim teaching, giving us inspiration to overcome attachment by seeing all the mistakes and shortcomings of attachment. Like if somebody tells us how another person is bad, we think of all the ways they harm us, and as we think more and more of that person we feel more and more aversion for them, instead of more attachment. When somebody we know has been cheating us our whole life, harming us so much, we feel more and more aversion and we don't follow that person. Similar to that example, this is how we overcome attachment and the other delusions, such as anger. We need to

meditate as extensively as possible on the shortcomings of those delusions. I think you probably have done some meditation on that.

Meditating as extensively as possible, as deeply as possible, on all the shortcomings of attachment and anger, we really feel disgusted, as I mentioned, like used toilet paper or like kaka, poopoo, or like a poisonous snake. We don't go near it; we run as far away from it as we can. Those poisonous snakes or poisons or whatever, those external things, might cause death, but that just separates the consciousness from this body; it doesn't mean we go to the lower realms. We could still go to a pure land where we can become enlightened. We never ever get reborn in the lower realm after we have been born in Amitabha's pure land; we can develop the mind there and achieve the bhumis, and then be of unbelievable extensive benefit for sentient beings. We can come back in the world with total control, benefiting so many sentient beings in the suffering world. Or again we can take a perfect human rebirth and practice the Dharma continuously. So, even if it causes death, that just separates the consciousness from this body. That's it. It doesn't cause us to be reborn in the lower realms. But these negative emotional thoughts such as attachment are nonvirtue. Clinging to this life is pure nonvirtue.

As I mentioned the other day, all activities done with body, speech and mind clinging to this life become negative karma. In every twenty-four hours, whatever is done which is possessed by that mind, all activities of body, speech and mind. I wouldn't translate the term as "accompanied" but "possessed" or "stained" by the attachment. Some translators use accompanied but that doesn't make it clear. It comes over as a little bit strange—then you can't transform nonvirtue—but with possessed, because they are stained by attachment, all the activities become negative karma, nonvirtue.

If our activities are possessed by non-anger, non-envy, non-ignorance, non-attachment and especially based on bodhicitta, compassion, of course whatever activity we do becomes the cause of enlightenment.

[Doing activities] with these negative, emotional thoughts is pure nonvirtue, which throws us into the lower realms. If the action is heavy, we can go to a hell realm, which we will have abide in and experience for what could be many, many eons, like billions and billions of years in the human realm.

So, when we meditate, it is very important to think of all the shortcomings of attachment. If we have problems with anger, it's also similar. Or if our problem is jealousy or pride, in the same way, we can analyze the shortcomings, seeing all the problems they cause, how they obscure our mind from having realizations of guru devotion, the three principal aspects of the path and the two stages [of Highest Yoga Tantra], how they block us from actualizing the path.

Pride, for instance, has its own negative results, many things. It is said in the Buddha's teachings that we will be reborn in poverty, as a lower caste being, lower than everybody, and we will have very little freedom. Everybody puts us down. We can be born blind or with little power, little capacity; we can have a bad color. Pride is a big obstacle for us to progress mentally, even to getting a general education, not only a Dharma education. It becomes a big obstacle for attainment. Pride doesn't even allow us to become a better person. We don't want to learn from others because of pride. Because of pride, we don't want to respect others who are more educated, more experienced than us, and we don't respect those on the same level or lower than us. With pride, we are so arrogant, which also disturbs others.

In this way, each delusion has its own problems. We can meditate on the many shortcomings of the delusions from not only the texts but also from our own experience and from seeing others, how they must suffer and experience all the shortcomings of those delusions. It is very good to write down these shortcomings when we do the meditation. In other words, we should research the shortcomings to be as clear as possible. This is very useful, very inspiring to develop patience and to be able to overcome anger.

Similarly, with compassion, doing very sharp and profound analysis of all the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought inspires us to have aversion to it, which means we can overcome it and develop loving kindness, compassion and the thought of cherishing others by seeing all their benefits.

This is like following a friend with many mistakes, who engages in many negative karmas, and becoming like that friend. By following a good person with lots of qualities like wisdom and compassion, who engages in positive actions, who practices contentment, who benefits other sentient beings, we are very inspired by their positive example and we become like that, a good human being.

In Tibet, there is a story of two people, one who was an alcoholic and one who didn't drink alcohol. Both of them went to Lhasa and the one who didn't drink at all met a friend who drank, who was an alcoholic, and he became an alcoholic, whereas the other one who drank alcohol met a friend who didn't drink and he stopped drinking alcohol; he became a non-drinker. This shows the influence of friends.

Just to conclude, meditating on the shortcomings of the negative emotional thought of attachment and being able to see it as disgusting, we develop aversion for it; we are able to let it go. Then, as I mentioned before, there is such great peace in our day-to-day life. The profit we get is that in that moment we have so much peace and happiness, on that day, in this life and then in future lives. That positive imprint left on the mind affects our future lives and from life to life we go from happiness to happiness, closer and closer to liberation and enlightenment. This is the benefit we get.

If none of these negative emotional thoughts are there, by cutting the attachment scattering thought and sinking thought, there is no obstacle for meditation, no obstacle for achieving shamatha, calm abiding. This is true of general meditation but especially this one. It is very easy to achieve this.

### **WITH ATTACHMENT SHAMATHA IS IMPOSSIBLE**

Once we are able to overcome worldly concerns, attachment to this life, with a realization of impermanence and death—with a meditation on these three basic things—this is the method to overcome attachment and we are able to practice pure morality. Our morality doesn't degenerate; our mind is always kept pure, so it is very easy to achieve this perfect meditation. Then, after we achieve this perfect meditation, shamatha, it is very easy to keep our mind in virtue in our daily life, without much effort at all. Then, it is very easy to achieve the realizations because we have perfect concentration with anything we meditate on.

Not only the Buddhist path has shamatha, *zhi nā*, calm abiding; even Hinduism has it, and not only a similar method but even a fully characterized one. When Hindu meditators go through

this, they can be reborn in the form and formless realms through using these meditations as the basis.

In Hinduism, they can go to the form and formless realm through meditation but here, as a Buddhist, the experience becomes very special. Why? Because it is done with refuge, with reliance on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. That makes the meditation on that very special and it makes the experience of it very special. And also, if it is done with bodhicitta, it becomes the cause to achieve enlightenment, or if it is done with renunciation, it becomes the cause to achieve liberation from samsara, so there is a huge difference between this and the Hindu meditation.

Even though it is the same meditation, it is how it is used, how it is done, with these other mental qualities—renunciation, bodhicitta and refuge—which are not there in the Hindu meditation. It becomes the antidote to cut the root of samsara if it's done with right view. That helps very much to achieve great insight, derived from the extremely refined virtuous ecstasy of the body and mind, while analyzing in equipoise meditation, like a fish swimming in the water without disturbing the surface. Meditating on emptiness unified with the shamatha, derived from those experiences, leads to the direct perception of emptiness, the exalted arya path, which ceases the defilements, the gross, disturbing-thought obscurations. Then, if it is done with bodhicitta, it also ceases the subtle obscurations as well. Continuing that direct perception of emptiness with the support of bodhicitta, we are able to achieve full enlightenment.

We cannot achieve this perfect meditation, shamatha, if we have a mind full of expectations and worldly concerns, seeking the pleasures of this life. I can use the example of thinking about getting married. If we are meditating, trying to achieve *zhi nā* in a very isolated place, but at the same time we are thinking about getting married to somebody, our life becomes very confused. We are trying to achieve this perfect meditation to achieve shamatha, where we need to cut off all these things, but at the same time we are engaging in these distractions as well, distractions that won't allow that. It's like trying to walk with our two legs but putting one leg in one direction and one leg in the other! When we try to achieve *zhi nā* in an isolated place but at the same time we are thinking about all the things we want, what happens with that kind of thought is that we get *lung*. We get *luuuuuuuung!* That's probably a new term for those who have come for the first time. The Tibetan term *lung*—today is the day to hear about *lung*, wind disease.

Our mind becomes very confused and we cannot achieve shamatha; we cannot achieve perfect meditation at all. We get *lung* and we get angry with the guru who told us to do the calm abiding meditation; we develop heresy and anger with the guru who gave us the instruction, because our mind is clinging to some other things of this life's pleasures, which disturbs us from achieving this realization. This is not what we want! We have some other goals but what guru said was opposite to our goals. It becomes like that. We can't have both.

Another example a Kadampa geshe uses is a two-pointed needle, one with two points but no eye. Such a needle can't sew! I am using this as an example so you can understand clearly. Then, we get angry at the guru or we develop heresy because what we wanted was [*zhi nā*] and also the samsaric pleasure of this life, both those things. Clinging to that, we create the very heavy negative karma of heresy and anger, which becomes an obstacle, blocking us from achieving realizations. Then, we can get *lung* and then many things happen, and we have to stop the meditation. I have heard quite a number of stories like that.

I am talking here about the shortcomings of attachment to this life. We let go of worldly attachment by thinking of its shortcomings. Thinking of it as a spear stabbing us powerfully, we

feel disgust, aversion for it, and that encourages us to abandon it. It's like having eaten poisonous food; as soon as we feel the pain of the poison inside us, we want to get it out. Or like a fire spark jumping onto our body—when we feel the pain, the shortcomings, we immediately want to throw them away. I think these examples are used in Nagarjuna's *Letter to a Friend*. He used those examples of how to let go of the delusions when they arise.

Without them, we are able to go from happiness to happiness. It is so easy to achieve the realizations of the path, including shamatha and pure morality. With pure morality we are able to practice without any difficulties. Then, we can have a good rebirth in our next life and go from happiness to happiness. We are able to achieve liberation, the total cessation of the oceans of samsaric suffering and its cause, karma and delusions. This helps us to achieve that huge goal. Then, even more important than that, we are able to attain enlightenment for sentient beings.

This is what we get by letting go of the negative emotional thoughts. What we get is like skies of happiness up to enlightenment. We have happiness from life to life; we have all the realizations, pure morality, perfect meditation, all this success, all the realizations of the path to liberation and enlightenment. This is what we get. If we think in a business way, by letting go of attachment this is what we get.

We have to remember that all the time; we have to remember it every day, otherwise our mind will be full of delusions, delusions that are so powerful, like a waterfall, like a hailstorm. They are so strong and we are so weak. If we don't think of this every day, even we don't achieve liberation now, even if we cannot control delusions now, immediately, we have to continue every day. We might miss but we have to put effort into this; we have to continue and try.

### **DON'T BE SHORTSIGHTED**

My teacher Geshe Sopa Rinpoche told the Sangha, the monks and nuns, that our morality can degenerate so easily, like rocks falling down a mountain. He advised [maintaining our morality] is like pushing a heavy rock up a mountain; we have to push a little bit and then a bit more, then gradually, little by little, we can get it to the top! We have to try like that. It is not easy because delusions are so powerful. That is why so far, from beginningless rebirths up to now, we haven't become totally liberated from the suffering of samsara.

But if we put effort in like Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, we can gradually change the mind into bodhicitta from self-cherishing thought. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha put effort and collected merit for three countless great eons, practicing the six paramitas. He worked so hard for us sentient beings. For three countless great eons he sacrificed his life. Even when he was born as a king, he gave up his life, his family, his children, his wealth. He gave it all up for us, making charity to other beings, even making charity of his family members and wealth to others, not just during one life but in many lifetimes. He made charity to many sentient beings in many millions of lifetimes, giving even his whole body to ants and tigers. At Namu Buddha in Nepal, the Buddha gave his holy body as charity to the tiger. It is still a holy place we can go to see.

He sacrificed his life like this for three countless great eons for us sentient beings, for every one of us here. The Buddha worked so hard to complete the two types of merit—the merit of fortune and the merit of wisdom—and achieved the two kayas, to be able to reveal the Dharma, the path to us sentient beings without any mistake. With perfect compassion and the power of omniscience, he revealed to us the unmistakable path to liberation and enlightenment. Even

though we cannot see the Buddha, we can see his teachings. We can study his teachings that he himself experienced, that he himself went through and proved they worked.

As I have mentioned at other times, there are numberless sentient beings who have achieved enlightenment in different countries. We can read their life stories that tell how they practiced, how they achieved realizations, stories like Milarepa's life story, like Lama Tsongkhapa's. There are many life stories from the four Tibetan Mahayana traditions, stories of the many great pandits who achieved realizations.

I must bring my talk back to the original topic!

Already numberless sentient beings, not only Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, have become enlightened. They were the same as us; they all had delusions, difficulties, problems, but they continuously put effort into developing their mind in the path from life to life, just as the Buddha had for eons.

We should plan in the same way. Instead of thinking that by doing some meditation we will achieve enlightenment within few years. Or after a one-month's meditation course we will become enlightened! At the end of his teachings to Tibetans, His Holiness the Dalai Lama specifically often advises Western students that we shouldn't be shortsighted, thinking that we will achieve enlightenment after practicing for a very short time. We shouldn't think like that; we must plan for many hundreds of lifetimes. I don't remember what he said word-for-word, but it is something like if we plan to practice Dharma for a long time, if we put effort in for a long time, then it is possible to achieve enlightenment in a short time, without taking much time. But if we don't have a plan like that, if we are shortsighted, thinking it is very easy and quick to have realizations and achieve enlightenment, that becomes an obstacle. When we can't, we get disappointed and we give up. This is more or less what His Holiness said.

Therefore, as Geshe Sopa explained, if the rock is heavy but we push it up little by little, by continuing every day, after some time we will be able to reach the top of the hill. Then, when we achieve the exalted arya path, by achieving the path of meditation, we are able to remove even the seed of delusion, making it impossible for karma and delusions to arise. After that, there will be no more rebirth, no more death, no more suffering forever.

It needs continual effort. Because our mind is habituated to anger, attachment, delusions, being under their control from beginningless rebirth, it is not easy. We have to understand why it is not easy to practice patience. It is even difficult to remember when a delusion is about to arise. Even though we might know every Buddhist text very well by heart and all the meditation techniques, when we encounter a situation that causes a delusion to arise, it is still hard to remember the meditation technique at that time. Totally overwhelmed by delusion, besides applying the technique, we can't even remember it. It's not easy but we have to put effort. Then the mind becomes more conscientious, more thoughtful; then we are able to remember more and more of the meditation techniques and are able to apply them more and more. Even though we do miss sometimes, we are also able to practice sometimes, and if we continue we will be able to practice more and more. We won't miss so much, we will be able to practice even more, and then we will win over the delusions more and more.

## THE MIND CAN BE TRAINED

The whole thing is that we need mind training. From beginningless rebirths our mind has been trained in the delusions, and now we have to put in so much effort to train our mind in the path, in virtue, in the Dharma.

It is said in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* by the bodhisattva Shantideva,

There is nothing whatsoever  
That is not made easier through acquaintance.

That is the nature of the mind. The mind can be changed because the mind is a dependent arising; it is dependent on causes and conditions. Dependent on negative causes and conditions, the mind becomes deluded, angry, and all those poisonous minds arise due to self-cherishing. And dependent on positive causes and conditions, the mind becomes positive. Instead of ignorance, there is wisdom, contentment, renunciation, patience, bodhicitta and so forth. Because the mind is a dependent arising, depending on causes and conditions, it can change. If it was not a dependent arising, if it didn't depend on causes and conditions, it would be permanent, it would be unable to change. Because it is impermanent, it can change, it can be made better—all the way up to omniscience.

As I am mentioning this part, I think there is another extremely essential advice. What we have to remember is that our mind has been habituated not just in this one life. The continuity of our mind did not begin with our birth; it has no beginning, so it has been habituated with delusions from beginningless rebirths. Therefore, how can we expect it to be easy to have realizations or even to change the mind? We must train for eons, for many hundreds of lifetimes, to work for it to become better from life to life, and then to achieve liberation and enlightenment.

With continual effort, even though we might miss some practice, doing the commitments or doing those lamrim practices, transforming the mind, if we miss sometimes, we must try to continue. I think that is the most important thing. Our mind can be so easily affected and then we can become discouraged. Then we become so weak and depressed and we can't do anything. We cannot let ourselves put ourselves down like that. That is not wise. We need continual effort.

I'm not sure whether there is a good example. Do you see a flea here? Anyone who has seen a flea here is very fortunate! I am joking. Anyway, a flea jumps all over the place but doesn't reach [its destination], whereas a turtle goes very slowly, but it can climb over the mountain. It goes slowly but it can make it by going continuously, whereas the flea jumping all over the place can't make it! It's similar to that.

What is the time now? My watch says it is after HUM! Twenty-three minutes after HUM!

[Rinpoche speaks to someone in Tibetan]

Exactly like that! This is the same!

How I see it, I think to progress, we need continuity. That is another extremely important instruction, something that we have to keep in mind and remember. It helps us to not get discouraged and depressed, to not feel we are hopeless. Through continual effort we can overcome (the delusions). As I mentioned before, not only Shakyamuni Buddha, but numberless

sentient beings have achieved liberation and full enlightenment, even though they were same as us with all the delusions, all the problems.

### **THE SIGNS ON RINPOCHE'S CAR**

Do you remember, I put these labels on the bottom part of one of the cars we have in America? Remember? Not the front. "By letting go of desire you achieve happiness." I can't remember now but I put this label around for advertising! One of the cars has this. There are many messages around the car. "The source of happiness is cherishing others" is one message on the car. Another one is what His Holiness said, "My religion is kindness" but I added the words, "to all," "kindness to all." That means without discrimination against animals, human beings, any other being, whoever they are, kindness to all. And on the back of the car, "Anybody who sees, touches, remembers or thinks about this car, may they be free from hardship, may they be free from all the sufferings and may they achieve full enlightenment." That's how it's dedicated.

I heard at the airport, after seeing that, an elderly lady touched the car and copied down the whole thing. I think many people have copied the signs. On the road, while they are driving, they see it from behind and become very curious about who the driver is. Then, they come this way to check the driver. Many times it is Roger. They are very curious; maybe they think Mickey Mouse is driving the car!

And at the front there are lots of mantras—I think it might look like another toy—all for education on how to benefit sentient beings. It is not a waste of time to put a lot of mantras there and also inside. We drove to Wisconsin to take teachings from Geshe Sopa Rinpoche. As soon as Geshe Sopa Rinpoche retired from university, he started giving courses every year. Not every time, but I went to a course there a number of times from California.

At certain times, day and night—of course, at nighttime there are more flies at the farm places—many insects crashed onto the windshield and died, even in the daytime. The first time that happened, there was another monk there, Roger Munro, who did a three-year Heruka retreat and then a three-year Yamantaka retreat, reciting many hundreds of thousands of mantras and a hundred thousand fire pujas. He has done many other retreats, but these were the two major retreats he has already done. Now, he wants to do a Guhyasamaja three-year retreat. He was there with us, and sometimes Roger would drive and sometimes he would drive.

At night in the hotel, we lit a lot of candles and he did a self-initiation to help all those insects who died. I did other prayers for those who died, to purify the negative karma, but I didn't get the self-initiation done.

We were discussing what could be done. Roger suggested putting something in front of the car, like plastic, but it didn't seem to help much. Anyway, we sometimes tried to visualize the wind going from the car or from Chenrezig, sending wind to the insects to keep them away! It looked like sometimes it could help. I'm not sure; it might be my superstition.

So, the idea came to put those very powerful mantras for purification on the car so when the wind touches the mantras and then touches those beings, their negative karma gets purified and they get a higher rebirth. I think we had maybe eleven different mantras printed on the car. When we were in Wisconsin, we wrote the mantras and somebody put them into a computer [file] and we gave it to the shop. The mantras of all these deities, Buddha, Tara, Chenrezig and so forth, were put in different places around the outside of the car. It was a shop in Madison that



did all this work, and I heard that the lady in the shop said that this was the only time they had done something meaningful. I heard that through Roger Munro, Paula or somebody who went to pick up those things from the shop. The shop lady said this was the only meaningful thing she did in her life. That's quite interesting; I think maybe it benefited her too.

The pictures of the Buddha and other deities were placed around to purify other sentient beings when we drove in the city. When the car went to many places, others got the chance to see the buddhas and the holy objects, purifying their minds and planting the seed of enlightenment on their minds. It purified their defilements and created inconceivable merit and planted the seed of enlightenment for those other sentient beings who saw it. It has unbelievable skies of benefit just seeing enlightened beings, the holy objects, even pictures.

## **GURU DEVOTION AND PURIFICATION**

I think maybe I should tell you this. It is important to understand. I want to mention two things, so you get to understand the importance of the practice of offerings when you do a sadhana or a meditation, when so many different offerings come. You have to understand why it is so important. It also becomes an explanation about good karma, how it creates the most powerful, most extensive good karma, or merit, or good luck or whatever you want to call it. It is very important to not only know the negative side, the negative karma, but also to know the positive side as extensively as possible. Life has incredible opportunities for us to change for the better. I think it is very important to know these values, otherwise we just think, "Oh, I am going to meditate." We sit like this, trying to concentrate on something, but it doesn't get us anywhere; nothing much happens. Then, sometimes in our meditation we get discouraged. Not knowing how to meditate, our mind becomes dull; we lose our intelligence. If we don't know how to meditate, the mind spaces out, staying in that state for a long time, and we lose the sharpness of wisdom. The mind becomes duller, more forgetful, when we meditate on nothingness, when we meditate on stopping all the thoughts. We stop the intelligent path, analyzing, we meditate on nothingness, we stop thinking, and we think that is the dharmakaya or something. Then, we have achieved nothing, and many other mistakes arise. Then, we can take rebirth in the animal realm; the result is we are reborn as a very foolish animal.

My guru, His Holiness Zong Rinpoche, who has already passed away, was a great scholar and a highly enlightened being. He has now reincarnated and is studying in the monastery. Rinpoche said that meditating like this, you get born as a foolish animal or the best thing that you can achieve is the formless realm where there is one realm called "nothingness." You can get born there.

So anyway, just meditating on words, we neither collect merit nor do any purification, so we cannot really progress; we cannot really change the mind. To even plant a seed in the ground, we need the right soil, we need water, we need many conditions so the seed can sprout when everything comes together. It's the same here. To have realizations, because it has all the potential, like the seed, we need to receive the blessing of the guru in the heart, therefore we need to develop guru devotion. From that, we receive the blessing of the guru, and from *that* we receive the realizations of the path to enlightenment.

So, guru yoga is a very, very essential thing. And the other one is purifying the obstacles, the defilements, negative karma, by practices such as Vajrasattva. Tonight, I am supposed to give the permission to practice Vajrasattva. Vajrasattva is a purification practice to pacify all defilements

and obstacles and the means of collecting the necessary conditions, the means to collect merit. These methods are usually mentioned with the mandala offerings and those things.

Here, I want to say, if we can keep it in the heart. I will mention this first. First is guru devotion, one-pointedly requesting the guru to grant blessings, realizations. Second is purification, purifying the obstacles and defilements, the negative karma, as well as collecting merit, which are necessary conditions. Then third is the actual body of the practice, meditating on the path.

The actual body, meditating on the path, becomes successful if we do the practice to receive the blessing of the guru, with guru devotion single-pointedly requesting for blessings to attain the path. That is the cause to receive the blessing of the guru in our heart, like pouring water on the seed planted in the ground. Then, our mind becomes soft. Our heart becomes softened, given a chance to change, by the wetness, by the blessing of the guru. Then, there is the purification and collecting merit. So then, even if we do very little of the actual body of the meditation, we make great progress. We go very fast and have great success; we achieve many attainments. If we do these other things, if we then put effort into the actual meditation on the path, the actual body, even if very little of that is done, it has great effect to make great progress.

Since I brought up this issue, even though there are so many practices to purify and collect merit, what I would like to mention is where you should focus your mind, which has the greatest benefit for all this—purifying defilements, collecting extensive merit and helping us have quick realizations. What has the greatest profit? Maybe you haven't heard much about the subject of guru devotion, I am not sure. It might be new to those who are here for the first time.

### **CHERISHING OTHERS IS THE CAUSE OF ALL HAPPINESS**

The one thing is compassion, bodhicitta, the thought of cherishing other sentient beings, as is mentioned in the *Guru Puja* text:

LC 92: The mind that cherishes mothers and places them in bliss  
Is the gateway leading to infinite qualities.  
Seeing this, I seek your blessings to cherish these transmigratory beings  
More than my life, even should they rise up as my enemies.

That includes all the realizations up to enlightenment, the qualities of cessation of all the wrong concepts, all the defilements, and the qualities of all the realizations up to omniscience. From the root, the realization of guru devotion, up to the state of omniscience. The quality of cessation is having ceased the negative thoughts, from the thought of mistakes toward the virtuous friend, from there up to subtle dual view, the last defilement.

So “cherishes mothers and places them in bliss is the gateway leading to infinite qualities” means all that. It means all the happiness including day-to-day peace and happiness—from there, everything, the happiness of all the future lives, up to liberation and enlightenment. Cherishing others, the thought of leading others into happiness, is the door to receive all this happiness.

“Seeing this, I seek your blessings to cherish these migratory beings more than my life, even should they rise up as my enemies,” means not only in our family but everybody, even those who become our enemy, at home or in the office, somebody who harms us, abuses us, whatever, not just our whole family becoming our enemy, which would be so sad; but the whole neighborhood, the whole country, however many millions of people there are. Even if they are

all angry with us, even if they are all our enemies—everyone in this world—this prayer is that we are able to cherish them all more than our life. This is the prayer we do in the *Guru Puja*.

When we do prayers such as those in the *Guru Puja*, we should meditate on the meaning, not just recite the prayer, because of the benefits. As I explained before, no question if we cherish all sentient beings, if we cherish one person, one insect, the thought of bringing that sentient being into happiness is the door to receive infinite qualities and all the happiness up to enlightenment.

That means that we get this from each sentient being, by cherishing each of them with the thought of leading them into happiness. Therefore, the benefit we get from just the thought to cause happiness to somebody is the door to receive infinite qualities and all the happiness. So, you can see here, that being becomes the most precious one, the most precious one. That being becomes wish-fulfilling for us, bringing us all our wishes, all our happiness. This includes the being we call the enemy, the one who abuses or criticizes us, who dislikes us or whatever. Therefore, here the practice is to ask for these blessings.

To harm or hurt that most precious sentient being, that kindest sentient being who fulfills all our wishes for happiness, to take revenge or to hurt that being is most foolish. We are harming the root of our happiness, where we get all these qualities, all this happiness up to enlightenment; we are harming that foundation or that root. That is most foolish, most ignorant.

So here, requesting the blessing of the Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, it makes sense when we say we should cherish sentient beings more than our life, even if they should rise up as our enemies.

With the self-cherishing thought we renounce all these most precious sentient beings. To be happy ourselves we renounce them, we harm numberless others of these most precious sentient beings. With the self-cherishing thought it is like that. It is what prevents us causing all the happiness up to enlightenment for sentient beings with bodhicitta. And also achieving all happiness up to enlightenment for ourselves is blocked by the self-cherishing thought, cherishing the I and renouncing others. That is the opposite to this prayer.

There is another prayer in the *Guru Puja*,

LC 94: Cherishing myself is the doorway to all loss,  
While cherishing my mothers is the foundation of all qualities.  
Hence, I seek your blessings to make my heart practice  
The yoga of exchanging myself for other.

There are so many practices but this is the *heart* practice.

As I was saying, in order to develop the mind in the path to liberation and enlightenment, and then to liberate numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to enlightenment, which is the purpose of our life and our goal, we need to purify the defilements, the obstacles, the negative karma and we need to collect merit. There are so many practices we can do for that, but I want to mention the one thing is bodhicitta. It is the most important thing to concentrate on in our life. That is the one thing; cherishing others, the thought of seeking happiness for others is that which does everything.

As I mentioned before, there is no question about cherishing numberless others, even cherishing one sentient being, one insect, the advantage we get from that—the happiness and qualities—is

like the limitless sky. So, doing this practice becomes incredible purification; it purifies many lifetimes of negative karma and collects extensive merit.

## **GURU DEVOTION**

That is one thing I wanted to say that we should concentrate on. There are so many practices but the most profitable thing we can concentrate on, the one that allows us to achieve all other things, is bodhicitta. The other one is the guru devotion practice. This is just very short, just the essence.

Looking at the guru devotion practice from the disciple's side, first we need to analyze the guru. Then, after we have found our guru, we need to make a Dharma connection by receiving any teachings, whether it is oral transmission or commentary or the vows or initiation, whatever. Now, a good way to practice is by looking at our ordinary mind, the mind that sees the guru and the Buddha as separate beings. We prove to that ordinary mind through reasoning and quotations what Buddha Vajradhara has said, in many quotations, such as,

I will work for sentient beings by manifesting as Indra and Brahma and sometimes in the form of a mara, but people in the world will be unable to recognize me. I will also manifest in the form of women and even in the animal realm. Even though I don't have attachment, I will act as if I have attachment; even though I do not have fear, I will act afraid; even though I am not crazy, I will act crazy; even though I am not blind, I will act as if I am blind. With various forms, I will subdue sentient beings. To sentient beings with strong anger, I will manifest as having strong anger. To sentient beings with great attachment, I will manifest as having great attachment in order to guide them. Like this, I will manifest in whatever form fits sentient beings.

There are so many quotations like this. And then we should analyze our own experiences and prove to ourselves that they are one. When we see this, we see the guru only has qualities, having no mistakes. Then, the pure mind of devotion arises. As I mentioned before, that becomes the cause to receive blessings and from that we receive realizations of the path to enlightenment.

After we achieve the perfect quality of cessation of all the mistakes of mind, all the delusions—from the thought of mistakes toward the guru up to the subtle dualistic view—and we achieve all the qualities of realization, then we can do perfect work for sentient beings, freeing them from all the suffering and its causes, bringing them to enlightenment, just as when the sun rises it is naturally reflecting on wherever there is water, in the ocean, the streams or rivers, on dewdrops on plants. The sun reflects everywhere without any motivation, without any effort. Like that, [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] we are able to work for sentient beings spontaneously, until every single suffering being is brought to enlightenment.

This is the main reason to practice guru devotion. This is the point we have to understand. This is what we have to practice for the success of all the realizations of the path to enlightenment.

We don't need to practice guru devotion if this is not our goal. If it is not to benefit other sentient beings, if this is not the object of our life, to be free from samsara and actualize the path, to achieve ultimate happiness, then we don't need to actualize the path, we don't need to practice guru devotion. This is something I want to clarify. It is important to understand why this meditation has to be done.

It is a process. To be able to complete a function, even for a machine, there must be a process. Even if we are making a painting, there is a process. First, we have the base, then we take a pencil and draw the outline, then we complete it [by coloring it]. There is a whole process. Like that, for the mind to be enlightened, there is a process. That is how it works.

The mind of pure devotion protects us from all those wrong concepts, from heresy, anger and so forth toward the virtuous friend, who is the most powerful holy object in our life. The person we have received the Dharma connection from is the most powerful object, more powerful than our parents, than an ordained person, than the arhats, than the bodhisattvas, than the buddhas, more powerful than even all the numberless bodhisattvas and buddhas. If we obey the guru's advice even a little and please the holy mind, or we do a little service or pay a little respect, because it is the most powerful holy object, the good karma we create is most powerful, the result is unbelievable; the happiness that results is the greatest. Then, if a little negativity is done, the negative karma is also so powerful; we have to endure the suffering for an incredibly long time.

It is not like the Christian way, that even if we don't believe in God we are in hell forever. Here in Buddhism we can change, we can purify. The difference is that, because this is all to do with our mind. We can purify, we can achieve enlightenment. All sentient beings can achieve enlightenment.

I also want to mention, it is said in the teachings that those practicing Buddhadharma at this time—taking the eight Mahayana precepts and so forth—will become enlightened. There are a thousand buddhas of this age, and those who practice will become enlightened during these times. Of course, we have to put effort in from our side, that means to practice. Then it can happen. This is mentioned in texts by some great lamas. We are unbelievably fortunate. There are so many things we have yet to discover to show us how we are so fortunate. We have met Buddhadharma in general, and especially Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism, and specifically the lamrim, the heart of the Buddhadharma. There are so many things to discover, showing how we are so fortunate.

Coming back to what I am saying, whether we need to practice guru devotion or not depends on our objective. If those are the objectives of our life, we need to do it. As I mentioned before, there are many processes, even making a painting or using machines, so it's similar here. Inside the process for the mind, the way our mind develops up to liberation and enlightenment, we need that. It works like that; this is how we can remove all the sufferings that I mentioned and achieve all the qualities and attain omniscience. Whether we need this process or not depends on our objective, the goal of our life, the purpose of our life.

One thing. To concentrate our life so there is the practice of guru devotion every day, by following the guru's advice with guru devotion and offering the guru service, whatever, this is the most powerful thing in life we can do.

This is important to understand. Normally, we feel that this life's parents are more powerful than outside people; those who gave us this body are more powerful objects than others, so to show them some small respect or give them some small service is very powerful good karma. Because of that good karma we can see the result of happiness in this life. You might have gone through this in the teaching on karma. In Tibetan it says, "You create the cause in this life and you see the result in this life." We will not see other results until our next lives; it may be only after many billions of eons that we experience the results. So, our parents are powerful, and even a small

disrespect or small harm, hurting our parents of this life, that negative karma is so powerful that we will experience the suffering result, the problems, in this life.

A more powerful object than our parent is an ordained person; it doesn't have to be an arya being, just an ordained person. Similarly, every small harm or whatever, any disrespect we show, that negative karma is very powerful and we receive the suffering result in this life. That doesn't mean only this life, we will experience it in many future lifetimes, but we start to experience it in this life because the karma is so powerful. And even a small, good thing, doing service, making an offering with respect or whatever, the good karma is so powerful that we start to experience the result in this life, and then for many eons, for many hundreds of thousands of lifetimes.

Of the numberless arhats and one bodhisattva who has just generated bodhicitta, that new bodhisattva is more powerful than all the numberless arhats. It is said in the lamrim teachings, if we look at one bodhisattva with... I always have difficulty with this... looking at one bodhisattva piercing huh, huh? [*Student: Piercingly.*] Looking at one bodhisattva piercingly. When we are angry at somebody, we look at them like this, piercingly! If we glare at a bodhisattva like this, this is more powerful negative karma than taking out the eyes of all the sentient beings of the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm. Looking at one bodhisattva like this, piercingly, disrespectfully, in anger, is much heavier than taking out the eyeballs of all the three-realm beings, and in each realm there are numberless sentient beings. It is that heavy because of the bodhicitta of the bodhisattva, who is therefore very holy and very powerful. Looking at the bodhisattva with respect, with a devotional calm mind—I don't know how to do that look!—creates far greater merit than making the charity of the eyes to all the three-realm sentient beings. It is extremely powerful.

Then, of all the numberless bodhisattvas and one buddha, one buddha is far more powerful, because of having ceased all the mistakes of mind and completed all the qualities of realizations.

Now, between the numberless buddhas and one guru, one guru is more powerful.

That power is not truly existent; it is a dependent arising, existing by depending on causes and conditions. The minute we think of somebody as a guru, with the recognition of them as guru, and we receive even three syllables of mantra or a stanza of an oral transmission or commentary or vows, whatever—with that recognition of guru-disciple when the Dharma connection is made, at that time that person becomes the most powerful one. The teacher becomes our guru and they are the most powerful person in our life. It is a dependent arising, dependent on causes and conditions, not independent, not truly existent from its own side. Understand?

Therefore, what I am saying here, following even a small advice of the guru or offering a small service, done with guru devotion, with that positive mind, becomes the most powerful good karma. It has more merit than having made offering to numberless buddhas. I didn't get to explain! I was going to explain before the power of making offering to Buddha, even seeing the Buddha's pictures, but I got started on the car and was distracted. My mind went some other way!

However, with devotion, following even a small advice, doing a small service or offering—even a small offering—is more powerful than having made offerings to all the numberless buddhas, the numberless Dharma, the numberless Sangha, the numberless statues, the numberless stupas, the numberless scriptures in all the directions, not only in this universe but also other universes. Even offering perfume to one pore of the guru, a drop of perfume, the merit we collect is like having made offering to the numberless buddhas. As I mentioned before, it is more merit than

having made offerings to numberless Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the numberless statues, stupas and scriptures. Even a drop of perfume on the pores—not the money *purse*, the *pores*!—even one drop offering on one pore. There is a quotation in the teachings, I am not just making it up. It is a quotation from the major tantra text.

Therefore, this is the easiest way to collect the most extensive merit and receive the greatest purification.

With this devotion, the main thing is following the advice. It doesn't mean to be physically with the guru and doing service. The main thing is following the guru's advice with body, speech and mind, always pleasing the virtuous friend. The next one is service, respect. The last one is to make offerings to the guru if we have offerings we can give, but that's not so important. Milarepa, who didn't have anything, said, "I don't have any material possessions to offer but I offer my practice as an offering, repaying the kindness of the guru like that."

So now here, I already mentioned bodhicitta, which is what we should concentrate on in our daily life for great success. The other one for great success for all this is purification and collecting merit in order to achieve realizations and attain enlightenment, to be able to do perfect work for sentient beings. Another one is guru devotion. There are many other practices but I want to say what is the most profitable, the heart practice.

With guru devotion, everything else happens. We are able to accomplish everything, gaining the most extensive merit, doing the most purification. It's the quickest way to have the realizations of the path to enlightenment. There are many stories of the yogis in the past, the lineage lamas of the lamrim, who had great realizations from the guru devotion practice.

When somebody has very strong devotion, everything they do is guru yoga. With very strong guru devotion, everything they do is according to the guru's wishes, according to the holy mind of the guru, not according to their own self-cherishing thought but only according to the guru's wishes, dedicated to that. Whatever that person does—eating food, sleeping, whatever they do—everything is guru yoga. It becomes like that.

That is part of the subject at the moment. I think I'll stop here. I am not going to continue about the car, about the buddhas, all the benefits. Another time maybe. But it is important, very important; we should all know how important it is, otherwise we become ignorant. There is something in our life we can do which is so unbelievably easy, the greatest way to create the cause of happiness. It is so easy to achieve realizations, so easy to achieve enlightenment, so easy to benefit other sentient beings. If we don't know that we can do this, if we don't know about this great opportunity and we don't get to practice; this life is not long, we don't have this precious human body all the time. Death can come at any time. If we don't know this, we miss out on this incredible opportunity.

## DEDICATIONS

[Rinpoche chants in Tibetan]

“Due to all the three-time merit collected by me, the three-time merit collected by others, may the gurus have long and stable lives, especially His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Buddha of Compassion, and may all their holy wishes be actualized immediately.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, that which exists but which is empty, may the I who exists but who is empty, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, which exists but which is empty, and lead all the sentient beings, who exist but who are empty, to that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, which exists but which is empty, by myself alone, who exists but who is empty.

“Due to all the merits, may I be able to follow the holy extensive deeds of the Buddha Samantabhadra and Manjugosha as they realized them. I dedicate all the merits as the three-time buddhas dedicated their merits.”

[Rinpoche chants in Tibetan]

Thank you very much. Please enjoy the nectar.



## Lecture 7: Vajrasattva Initiation

### VAJRASATTVA INITIATION MOTIVATION: GURU DEVOTION

Tonight, we will do the Vajrasattva *jenang*, the permission to practice. That has graduated activities to be performed from the side of the lama: the sadhana, the self-generation, the front generation, the blessing of vase. Then, there are graduated activities to do from the side of the disciple: washing the mouth, prostrations, the distribution of flowers, and then offering mandala. Before that there is the tormo offering from the side of the lama, giving tormo to the interferers who interfere with granting or receiving the blessing of Vajrasattva.

As I mentioned this morning, Lama Tsongkhapa asked Manjushri what is the quickest way to realize the path to enlightenment and to achieve enlightenment. I don't remember the words exactly. Manjushri answered: practicing purification and creating necessary conditions for the realizations, collecting the merits, then single-pointedly requesting the guru. That was already explained this morning with guru devotion. Then, there are the stages of the path to enlightenment, which is the actual body. Those three things Manjushri answered. I was explaining this morning on the basis of what Manjushri advised Lama Tsongkhapa.

As I mentioned this morning, there are so many practices for purification but what you should concentrate on, what has the great advantage like the skies, with the benefit of purification or collecting extensive merit is to always keep the mind in bodhicitta in your daily life. Whatever lifestyle you are living, put all the effort into bodhicitta. No matter how busy a life you have, you must rely on bodhicitta, no matter how busy you are or what obligations you have. Of the many practices for purifying and collecting merits, bodhicitta is the one that is the most profitable practice, which includes many things. That should be the main refuge in a busy life with a family, children, business, work, with so many things. That should be the main refuge in your heart, in your life. If you do that, whatever you do becomes the cause of enlightenment, the highest success in life, the highest among the happiness. Whatever you do, it becomes the cause for that, to be able to liberate numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to full enlightenment.

And it is said by the Kadampa geshe, in daily life if there is no bodhicitta, there are so many things to purify, the purification never finishes. If there is no bodhicitta motivation in daily life, your purification is unending. There is always so much to purify. Life becomes like that, engaging in many heavy mistakes, many heavy negative karmas.

For example, even if you have taken the bodhisattva vows and tantric vows, with a selfish mind you can't keep them. The bodhisattva vows are based on the attitude of cherishing others, on the thought of benefiting others. Therefore, you can understand why the Kadampa geshe say that if in daily life, unless you are focused on bodhicitta, there will always be so much to purify, there will be the need for unceasing purification.

I mentioned this morning about correctly devoting to the virtuous friend after you have analyzed them and made the Dharma connection with them. As I mentioned this morning, with the recognition of guru and disciple, even with the three-syllable mantra, an oral transmission or even one or two stanzas of the teachings—therefore, no question about having taken vows, initiations or commentaries from them—with that recognition, the relationship of guru and disciple is established from that time.

I thought just to add a few words to what I mentioned this morning and then that's it.

The great scholar, the great enlightened being, Panchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyaltzen said,

You should not follow the guru who reveals the Dharma as easily as a dog seeking food in the road. You should examine the guru well; then take them [as guru] and follow them.

What he is saying is that when street dogs see food, they don't analyze it; they immediately run to it and eat it. [Rinpoche makes a gobbling sound] They immediately eat it without analyzing whether it is harmful or what the quality of the food is like. They immediately run to it and eat it. If we do that [with a guru], there is great danger that we can be completely misled and our life is taken on the wrong path. Instead of gaining the right realizations, we develop wrong concepts, wrong views. Totally deceived, we make mistakes and take the wrong path. Even if from our side we are taking the path to liberation, and enlightenment is what we are looking for, without examining, there can be danger of being misled. Therefore, we must examine the teacher well before we take them as our guru.

His Holiness used to advise this. His Holiness didn't say this but I have added that, like at university, we can study Buddhism from professors that we don't regard as gurus. They are just teachers but not gurus. However, after studying for quite some time and taking the teachings and then analyzing, if we really feel that we can be devoted to them, that we want to devoted to them, [then we can]. This way is more careful.

But after we have established a Dharma connection, having devotion to the guru is vital. In the guru devotion teachings, there is a quotation that says that even if we didn't develop heresy or anger or have any negative thought but after having made a Dharma connection we forgot to have devotion for the guru, we will be reborn as a dog for hundreds of lifetimes.

The great enlightened being, Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo, commonly uses this quote, as does one of my gurus, His Holiness Zong Rinpoche, who was a great scholar and a highly enlightened being I received many initiations and teachings from.

I don't remember the exact words. It is something like, "If you have made a Dharma connection with the recognition of guru and disciple and you have received even one verse of the teaching, if you then fail to regard them as a guru, you will be reborn as a dog for hundreds of lifetimes." There are two ways of explaining this. The Tibetan *me se chen*, which Pabongka Rinpoche in his teachings calls "lower caste," meaning we will be reborn as a human being but in a lower caste. In the countries where there is caste system, as a lower caste person, there is very little opportunity; everybody puts us down, nobody listens to us. We can't really benefit others because we don't have much power. But according to His Holiness Zong Rinpoche, the Tibetan *me se chen* means "scorpion." According to Rinpoche's commentary, after a hundred lifetimes of being born as a dog, we then get born as a scorpion. So, there is a different meaning of that term.

If we have received even one verse of the teachings and we have a guru-disciple relationship, if after that we don't have devotion for the guru, these shortcomings happen. Therefore, we shouldn't look for a guru like shopping for food. In regard to taking teachings, we should just go everywhere to whoever gives teaching, but don't practice guru devotion with them, don't have devotion for them. We can shop around and not do the practice, [but if you take a guru-disciple relationship] and we don't have devotion after that, there are these shortcomings. This is what is explained.

There are some Kadampa geshe who take teachings from anybody, anybody who is giving teachings on the road. Some other Kadampa geshe don't do that. They listen to very few teachers; they have very few gurus. There was one particular Kadampa geshe—I don't remember clearly—who would sit and listen to anybody giving teachings while he was traveling on the road. He would just sit down and listen. So, there is a question. Which is better, taking as a guru anybody who gives teachings or just a few? There is a question of which one is better! Anyway, that depends on devotion. If we have a very pure mind, we can see everybody as pure, without superstitions, without lots of doubts and negative thoughts arising. With a very pure mind, we can see everybody as pure, and then we can get teachings from billions of teachers; we can have billions and zillions of gurus! There is no problem. But if it is not like that, if our mind is very difficult, with lots of superstitions, lots of impure thoughts, then it's better to have fewer gurus. With this, we correctly devote, otherwise it is very difficult, with many superstitions seeing many mistakes, we create many negative karmas with many gurus. If the mind has a lot of superstition, we can't practice pure view with anybody, having stable and strong guru devotion. That was the conclusion and answer of the Kadampa geshe.

If it is our first time, if we are just starting on the path to enlightenment, that is the right time to study, research and find out how to practice guru devotion. In the lamrim teachings such as *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, there are very clear outlines on guru devotion for meditation. And although there are not so many outlines in Lama Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo*, how to practice, how to devote, is clearly explained, especially the nine attitudes, which is the heart teaching, the essential answer on how to devote.

Every lamrim topic comes in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*. Of course, we can read many other lamrim teachings that give different ways of presenting guru devotion. If there is something we don't find clearly [in one book], there are many other lamrim texts with valid teachings we are able to study. However, the section on guru devotion in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* and the condensed teaching in Lama Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo*, where he presents how to practice with the nine attitudes, these two texts are so powerful.

When we have difficulties in some matters [related to] the guru, if we read these nine attitudes, it is like an atomic bomb to destroy this superstitious, difficult mind. It is so very powerful to read the nine attitudes. It is like pouring cold water on boiling water. You know, there is a lot of noise when water boils [Rinpoche imitates the bubbling sound of boiling water], but when we pour cold water in, it becomes peaceful! So, these nine attitudes immediately cut the difficult thoughts that bother us, creating very heavy negative karma.

The outline is from *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*. With Lama Tsongkhapa's teaching on the nine attitudes, these two are very, very good.

With the outline in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, first of all there are all the mind-blowing benefits and the inspirational stories about those who correctly practice guru devotion. It shows what incredible benefit having guru devotion is, how we can easily achieve realizations with the stable pure mind of guru devotion. There are so many stories of the experiences of the many practitioners. There are also stories of the many shortcomings [of not devoting correctly], of those who experienced great obstacles and who were unable to achieve realizations. There are stories of practitioners getting stuck, going down, having so many sicknesses and so many heavy things happening to them through making mistakes devoting to the virtuous friend. This is not just mere belief; it has been proved.

Of course, if we have made mistakes and we can also see the shortcomings, we can use the teachings to identify within ourselves, seeing how through our life's experiences we made mistakes and then experienced all the shortcomings, such as how the mind has degenerated. Even though we might have had some realization or experience before, it has degenerated. Or though we even had some intellectual understanding of the Dharma, because we made mistakes in regard to devoting to the virtuous friend, with negative thoughts arising and making mistakes in our actions, we degenerated the experience that was built up in the past; it does not happen any more. The mind becomes like a stone; nothing happens, nothing benefits. We become very stubborn, very thick-skulled. Even the intellectual understanding we had before is gone; we no longer remember it.

There are many other shortcomings [of not devoting correctly], such as easily receiving harm from spirits. We become venerable—that's not the word! I make a mistake, not venerable. [*Student: Vulnerable?*] Vulnerable, yeah, thank you very much.

We become vulnerable; it becomes very easy to receive harm from human beings and nonhuman beings, from spirits. There are many problems, many disasters, mentally and physically. I am not going to go on and on with this subject! I just want to mention this because this is the end of the teachings. It's just a warning by mentioning a few points.

In *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* there are quite a few stories, as well as in other lamrim teachings, about those who correctly practiced. It is so easy to achieve realization, to realize emptiness and so forth. There are many stories there.

For example, when Lama Atisha went to Tibet, invited by the Dharma King of Tibet, Lha Lama Yeshe Ö, he had a disciple and translator, Dromtönpa. Lama Atisha took the aspect of old age and then took the aspect of sickness, having diarrhea. He showed that aspect. Without any hesitation of it being dirty, with a totally pure mind of devotion, Dromtönpa saw Atisha as the Buddha and with pure devotion cleaned him—not with a broom or anything but with his hands. Lama Atisha took that aspect of having diarrhea, with pipi and poopoo, but without any thought of it being dirty, Dromtönpa cleaned it with his hands, serving day and night with single-pointed devotion.

While Dromtönpa was doing this service, sacrificing his life to his guru, Lama Atisha, he suddenly achieved clairvoyance. He was even able to read the minds of insects for a distance of what would take an eagle eighteen days to fly or a human a month to walk. He could read the minds of all the creatures within that distance.

As I mentioned before, obtaining the guru's advice and offering service becomes such a powerful means of purification. As I explained this morning, because the object is the most powerful, so many obscurations are purified. The mind has all the potential. With this purification, Dromtönpa could read the mind of every insect, even ants, up to the distance it takes eagles eighteen days to fly.

There are quite a number who are incomparable in the practice of guru devotion, such as Kadampa Geshe Chayulwa and the great yogi Milarepa. Kadampa Geshe Chayulwa's guru was Chengawa. Even while he is doing his practice, offering mandala and so forth, if his guru called, even in middle of his practice, he immediately stopped and ran to offer service. Even if he was writing a syllable, such as the Tibetan syllable *nga*, as soon as he heard Chengawa calling him, he would immediately stop in the middle of writing the syllable and totally offer his body, speech and mind in service. That is how dedicated he was.

Every day, he cleaned Kadampa Geshe Chengawa's room, putting the dirt in the fold in his robes in his lap and carrying it outside to get rid of it. One day when he was doing this, as he carried all the dust and garbage in his lap, when he reached the third step of the two-story house, his mind transcended and he achieved the first Mahayana path, the path of merit.

I translate this path as the "path of merit." I don't say "path of collection" because the first way is correct. If it was collection, we would have to translate it as "collect the collection." But it means collecting the merits: the merit of transcendental wisdom and the merit of *so nam*, can be translated as either "fortune" or "virtue." The two collections are the merit of transcendental wisdom and the merit of virtue, although you can also say "fortune" but that might sound a bit funny. *So nam* can also be "fortune."

So, while he was carrying the garbage down to dispose of it, when he reached the third step, his mind suddenly reached the great path of merit; he achieved that concentration. When we achieve that level of the great path of merit, with the mind that is purified, we are able to see numberless buddhas in the nirmanakaya aspect. When Kadampa Geshe Chayulwa reached the third step while going down to dispose of the garbage, his mind suddenly reached that level and he saw numberless buddhas just there. When the mind is purified, no matter where we are, we see buddhas there.

Because the guru is the most powerful object, as I mentioned this morning, we do such powerful purification even by doing service with the single-pointed mind of devotion.

Another example is the bodhisattva Always Crying One. even though he saw many buddhas he was not satisfied, he wanted to see his guru, Bodhisattva Choepa, who he had connection with in past lives. Usually the teachings of the guru you have karmic connection in the past are very effective for the mind. He wanted to meet his guru, Bodhisattva Choepa, who he had connection with in the past, but Bodhisattva Choepa was in retreat and he could not see him. So, he waited, I don't know how long but a certain number of years. As he waited, he cleaned outside the temple that Bodhisattva Choepa was inside. The day Bodhisattva Choepa was able to come out, Bodhisattva Always Crying One requested his guru to give teachings.

That day, he prepared the ground for other people to also come and receive teachings. He cleaned the ground but there was no water to clean away the dust so it would not rise because the maras had stopped the water, so he took blood from his body and sprinkled it so the dust would not rise. Then he prepared the throne and all the other things in order to receive teachings on the *Prajnaparamita*, the *Perfection of Wisdom*. He performed everything well. Like this, he offered service, cherishing his guru more than his own life.

Collecting merit to achieve enlightenment in the Paramitayana path without practicing the tantric path, to achieve enlightenment we have to collect merit for three countless great eons. He completely finished the first countless great eon of merit within seven years because of such strong guru devotion, sacrificing his life, cherishing the guru more than his life and offering service. Even though he was only practicing sutra, with such strong guru devotion practice, he was able to complete the first countless great eon of merit within seven years.

Then, in one story, Lama Atisha had a disciple, Kadampa Geshe Gönpawa, who was always meditating. He thought because he was always meditating, he had to have higher realizations than Dromtönpa, who was always busy translating for Lama Atisha. And because he was always

meditating, he had to have higher realizations than the cook, Amme Jangchu, who was always busy cooking. He thought he had to have higher realization than them.

With his psychic power, Lama Atisha knew what Kadampa Geshe Gönpawa was thinking, so he called Dromtönpa and the cook Amme Jangchu and the meditator, Kadampa Geshe Gönpawa and asked all three to sit in front of him so he could check who had the higher realizations. Lama Atisha saw that Dromtönpa's realization was much higher even though he was so busy translating. Gönpawa's realization was nothing to compare to Dromtönpa's. Even though Dromtönpa was so busy, his realization was so much higher. And even the realization of Lama Atisha's cook Amme Jangchu, was higher. He didn't have time to meditate like Gönpawa had, he was always busy serving Lama Atisha, but when he checked their realizations, Amme Jangchu's was higher. Sorry! I had the wrong understanding before. I thought it was a nun, Ani Jangchub, but actually that was mistake. Kyabje Ribur Rinpoche, one of my gurus, always calls Ven. Roger, the main attendant, Amme Jangchu. I had misunderstood before. I thought it was a nun, Ani Jangchub, but later I realized it was the monk, Amme Jangchu!

So, even though Kadampa Geshe Gönpawa always meditated, his realizations could not compare to even the monk cook, Amme Jangchu, who never had time to meditate, who was always busy serving, cooking. I don't know, maybe they had to bear more hardships, always busy cooking and translating.

There is another story. The great enlightened Pabongka, the author of *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, had an attendant who didn't know the Tibetan letters at all. He could not read prayers, he did not study, but Pabongka Rinpoche predicted that he would be able to read *Guru Puja* text by himself one day, without being taught by anybody. When this attendant escaped from Tibet, he went to Buxa where I lived for eight years. Buxa was a concentration camp, where Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi were imprisoned. Where Mahatma Gandhi was imprisoned became a nunnery for some nuns who escaped Tibet. The building looked exactly the same as a prison; there was no change from the time when Mahatma Gandhi lived there, imprisoned during the British time.

Jawaharlal Nehru's prison became Sera Je and Sera Mey, the two colleges of the Sera monks from Tibet who were able to escape. They lived and studied there. The many monks of those two colleges lived there, outside in the corridor and inside, on the verandah. The same place they slept was also the gompa, the hall where they did pujas; there was no other place. They were prison buildings; nothing had changed, with barbed wire outside and the halls exactly the same.

After this monk, Pabongka Rinpoche's attendant, Jamyang Thinley, had been in Buxa some time, one day, without anybody teaching him, he was able to read the *Guru Puja* text by himself. His mind just awakened or was purified, and he was able to read. How can Western scientists explain that? Unless they say some atoms came from the parents who read the *Guru Puja*! It would be interesting to see how they could explain it. Pabongka Rinpoche, the great enlightened being, predicted in Tibet that his attendant who served him would be able to do that. Through offering service with devotion to a great being like Pabongka, the effect of that is that all the defilements, the obstructions disappeared and he was able to read without anybody teaching him.

There are so many proofs of those who did correct practice that was incredible purification, how correctly devoting to the virtuous friend is the quickest way and most powerful way to purify and collect most extensive merit. It is the quickest way to achieve enlightenment, as I mentioned this morning.

I want to add one more story! I'm not going to spend the whole night telling stories but I'll tell this story and you should keep this in your mind for your practice. I think this happened to the Seventh Dalai Lama. I'm sorry, my memory is not so good. There was a geshe who had a nickname that meant to really like joking. He liked making people laugh. He was very sincere and straightforward. The Seventh Dalai Lama liked this geshe very much.

This geshe asked the Seventh Dalai Lama what his future rebirth would be, something like that—maybe something like will he be born in a buddha's pure land. The Seventh Dalai Lama answered that immediately after death he would be immediately born as an elephant or, I am not sure, maybe an ox! Probably an ox! He would immediately be born as an ox. The geshe said "That is not possible! How could it be possible to be reborn as an ox immediately after death? How is it possible, because after death, you are born in the intermediate stage. You have to go through this before taking rebirth. The father and mother ox have to have contact, and then you are conceived, so it is not possible *immediately* after death to be born as an ox. It's not possible!" Then, His Holiness laughed and laughed and laughed, and the geshe asked again.

Then His Holiness said, "Now, you will be born in the pure land." So the geshe asked again, "How is *that* possible? You are telling lies because before you said I would be born as an ox, and now you say I will be born in a pure land." His Holiness the Seventh Dalai Lama said that it was possible because the geshe had made him laugh so much. He had made him happy and he, the Seventh Dalai Lama, was a special being—in fact he is Chenrezig—and having been made happy, the geshe's negative karma was immediately purified and he could be born in a pure land.

Do you understand? Within that minute, everything changed. Do you understand the point? Before, this geshe was going to be born as an ox—that's right! It was an ox with blue horns! I just remembered—but then he made those comments that made His Holiness the Seventh Dalai Lama laugh. I don't remember but I think he asked again and then His Holiness said he would now be reborn in a pure land, but the geshe challenged him, saying he was lying because he had said he would be born as an ox and then in a pure land and it is not possible to suddenly change. But His Holiness explained that because he was a special person and the geshe had made him happy, he had purified negative karma and could now be born in a pure land.

I am telling it as a story but it contains important advice. That's why it should be kept in mind. Even though we have created very heavy negative karma in this life and in other lifetimes, with the relationship with virtuous friend, by correctly devoting to and pleasing the holy mind, all those very heavy negative karmas are so easy to purify. Then enlightenment becomes very easy to achieve.

I am going to mention two quotations then I'll stop.

Just by making His Holiness laugh with his comments, making him happy, all that heavy negative karma was purified in that minute! And he got the chance to be born in a buddha's pure land.

### **SEEING THE GURU AS PURE**

It is mentioned in the teaching by a lama, maybe Jangba Lhundrup Dakpa,

Until your mind is free from karmic obscurations, even though every single buddha came in front of you with the thirty-two holy signs and eighty holy exemplifications, you wouldn't be able to see them. There is no fortune to see them in the aspect of the

Buddha having the holy signs and exemplifications, only in the present view, which is impure.

What is that impure view? They are enlightened but the way you see them is in the present view, the impure view, as projections of the impure mind, the obscured mind, the deluded mind, the mistaken mind. They are enlightened beings but we see them as having delusions, as having physical suffering and making mistakes in their actions. That is the view of our own mistaken mind. If we have a dirty face, with black marks on it; when we look in a mirror, we see the same thing there.

That is a very important quotation for the meditation on guru devotion. A very important quotation to write in your notebook or your diarrhea book, to remember in daily life.

The Fifth Dalai Lama mentioned much the same thing. This again is a very important quotation, a very important practice. The Fifth Dalai Lama said,

Whatever mistake you see in the guru's actions, that is your own mistake appearing in the actions of the guru.

It's like if we have a black, dirty face and we look in the mirror, it appears like that in the reflection. Like that, we should realize that all our own mistakes appear in the guru's actions. He continues,

By realizing that what you see is your own mistake, abandon it like poison.

That means abandoning the negative thought that believes it to be a mistake; abandon that wrong thought like poison. That is similar to the previous quote.

Again, this quotation is extremely important to remember in our daily life, to apply it, to remember it, to bring it up whenever these negative thoughts arise. If the thought of mistakes in the virtuous friend arises, we should bring up the Fifth Dalai Lama's advice. In that way, the ordinary thought believing in the mistake doesn't arise. And what we see in the actions of the guru is that it is our own misunderstanding that is the mistake, like in the example of the mirror. If we didn't have mistakes—if our face was clean—what we would see in the mirror would be clean. It's similar to that. If our mind was pure, what we would see would be pure. Because our mind has mistakes, because we have defilements, we see them in the action of the guru.

Meditating on what the Fifth Dalai Lama said, even though a mistake appears to us, there is no thought of believing it. There is only a pure thought. Because we have pure mind, there is no need of a thought of mistake in the virtuous friend. We just see it as our own mistake appearing there.

In reality, [the guru] is a totally enlightened being. The holy mind is the dharmakaya, free from all the mistakes. Because we have that understanding, whatever delusions or mistakes in action there seem to be, whatever suffering, whatever appears to us, it doesn't disturb our mind; it doesn't make us lose our devotion in this way. We are able to develop our devotion. Our mind is stable in devotion, which causes us to achieve all the realizations of the path to enlightenment, from perfect human rebirth up to enlightenment.

According to Lama Tsongkhapa's teaching, this is one technique—using mistakes we see in the guru to develop devotion within us. There are two techniques and that is one: seeing mistakes of



the guru as a support to develop devotion within us. These two techniques are extremely important to protect ourselves from this heaviest negative karma, which is an obstacle to achieving the realizations of the path, liberation and enlightenment, which is the great obstacle to being able to do perfect work for sentient beings.

The other one is this. Leaving aside being able to see the guru as a buddha ... As I mentioned the other day, we cannot even see the sicknesses we have in our body; we have to rely on a doctor, x-rays, checking the blood and many things. There are so many things within us that we cannot see. They are there but we don't see them. It is like His Holiness Zong Rinpoche said, we cannot see what the back of our head looks like; we are so ignorant, so obscured. In the same way, we cannot see what is going to happen tomorrow. It is totally dark. We cannot even see what is going to happen in an hour. It is totally dark. We can't even see what is going to happen in the next minute; we can't tell. Our mind is totally dark, so obscured and filled with all the delusions. This superstitious mind has so much ignorance and negative emotional thoughts and attachment. It is filled with so many wrong views.

We have all the wrong views that the four schools of Buddhist philosophers talk about. Whenever we look at anything, when we think of the I, any object we look at is covered with all these wrong views. The wrong views mentioned by the four schools of Buddhist philosophers are what is opposite to what they mention as reality. We all have that. The mind is so heavily hallucinated.

Our own self, our own life, form, sound, smell, taste, tangible objects, causative phenomena—they are impermanent in nature; that is the reality but we don't realize this. We hold on to them as permanent. That which is impermanent we hold on to as permanent. Samsaric pleasure is only in the nature of suffering but we believe it to be pure happiness. We have totally wrong view, seeing it as pure happiness and clinging onto that.

The I exists by depending on the aggregates and the continuity of the aggregates. It does not exist as being self-sufficient but our mind holds onto it as self-sufficient, existing without depending on the aggregates and the continuity of that.

Not only that, this I is empty of existing from its own side, existing in mere name, merely imputed by mind. That's the reality. The total hallucination is that it exists from its own side, not merely labeled by mind. Our mind believes that totally; it completely holds on to it as true.

There are so many things here that are reality but that we don't discover. We have the totally wrong projection. Leave aside seeing the guru as Buddha, there are so many other things. So, first we start from this, recognizing all these mistakes that we have, how the mind is so mistaken, how it is so ignorant.

I'll just finish this part. Normally I mention this: when we have compassion for somebody, we want to help them. We want to help the animal or the person. If we have compassion, we want to help that being, we want to do something. That should be the example to start with.

To make it short, in this world, for example, even in this area, there is somebody who has greater compassion than anybody else. In this whole world, there is somebody who has greater compassion than the majority of the people. That means there is somebody whose mind is totally developed in compassion, with nothing more to learn, nothing more to develop. Their mind is fully developed, fully trained in compassion; they have compassion for every single living being who is obscured and suffering. That is logical.

Similarly, even in this area there is somebody who has greater knowledge than most people. It's the same thing in the world, there is somebody who has greater knowledge than most people. Like this, there is somebody who has omniscience, who knows everything directly, all the past, present and future. And similarly, there is somebody who has perfect power, with nothing more to develop.

There is somebody whose mind is free from all the mistakes, from all the defilements. Without that, we cannot have omniscience and the mind completely trained in compassion and perfect power. That is very logical. That is the Buddha. The Buddha has great compassion for us, for all sentient beings including us. There is omniscience, knowing all the methods, knowing all our problems, defilements, all our needs, and there is the perfect power to reveal all the methods, because the Buddha is bound with infinite compassion to us and to all sentient beings. Therefore, definitely there is no question that the Buddha will guide us, no question. For example, when we ourselves feel compassion for somebody very strongly, we take responsibility to help them. We can use this as an example for the Buddha.

Because there are numberless buddhas, not just one, we can expand this. There is Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and there are numberless buddhas. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha himself promised, he made five hundred prayers in the past when the other thousand buddhas of this age chose to discount this quarreling time, choosing not to take care, not to guide sentient beings who are in this quarreling time, which is now, our time. Because we sentient beings of this time are so difficult to tame, the other buddhas left us out, but Guru Shakyamuni Buddha particularly chose this quarreling time, this most difficult time, to guide us sentient beings, to subdue us, to tame us. He made many prayers. He made a vow to guide us sentient beings. Like that there are many quotations that show how the Buddha chose to guide sentient beings in these degenerate times, in our time.

There are numberless buddhas who definitely guide sentient beings, including us, but we are so obscured, so full of mistakes, that we cannot see the guru in the aspect of the Buddha. If they manifested in their pure form, in the aspect of the Buddha, we could not see them; we could not communicate with them. We could not receive guidance directly from the guru in the aspect of the Buddha because we could not see the guru in that aspect. We could not see all these deities at the moment, because our mind is defiled. And if they were to manifest as animals, as lower beings, we could not recognize them and it would be difficult to guide us. Therefore, the only way to guide us sentient beings is by manifesting in an ordinary form, not in the aspect of the Buddha. They can only manifest in an ordinary form. That is the only way we can receive direct guidance from them, the only way they can communicate with us, only through this ordinary aspect.

What does "ordinary aspect" mean? His Holiness Dalai Lama explained this during the *Guru Puja* commentary that we requested many years ago in the Dharma Celebration. His Holiness said the definition of ordinary aspect is "having mistakes." That is the ordinary aspect. Therefore, to guide us they have to manifest in an ordinary aspect, which means having delusions, having mistakes, having sufferings.

If they didn't manifest in this ordinary aspect for us, we would have no guide. Our life would be totally lost. We would be totally lost in samsara without a guide. We would be like a baby left in the hot desert, with nobody looking after it, or in a forest surrounded by tigers, by all these vicious animals at night, without light, with nothing. We would be so pitiful, totally lost.

Therefore, manifesting in this ordinary form is unbelievably kind, unbelievably precious; it is the most kind, the most precious. That we are able to see and communicate [with the Buddha] showing this ordinary aspect becomes the most important thing in our life, the most precious thing. Every second of showing this ordinary aspect to us is more precious than the whole sky filled with jewels, filled with billions of dollars or gold, diamonds, even wish-granting jewels. The whole sky filled with wish-granting jewels is nothing in comparison.

Showing this aspect in every second is unbelievably precious. This aspect reveals the path to us and brings us to a higher rebirth. With this ordinary aspect, the guru shows the path and guides us to liberation from samsara; then they show us the path and guide us to enlightenment. This is most precious. How kind they are.

First, by showing an ordinary aspect that can communicate with us, they can guide us. Second, they guide us to future lives with all the happiness, and then to liberation and enlightenment. In that way, they liberate us from the oceans of samsaric suffering, from the oceans of each realm's suffering.

The kindness of guru is explained in *The Essential Nectar*. The points from that are very good to bring here. "Like a boat." The guru is like a boat that helps us to cross the samsaric ocean. "Like a doctor," healing our sickness, all the delusions. In *The Essential Nectar* there are quite a number of these analogies, which are very good for contemplating the kindness. All those are very good to count, like reciting OM MANI PADME HUM, how this ordinary aspect helps.

After this, we do the analysis. Without being able to communicate with us, what would happen to us? The lower animals cannot recognize them and so they cannot be guided. It is mentioned that this is exactly according to karma. We can be guided, so this is most precious. Think, how kind this is, how precious this is, how kind this is, how precious this is. By focusing on this, how kind and precious this is, it is very good to repeat this for twenty-one or fifty malas. The guru devotion meditation develops strong devotion by realizing the kindness. Then, by analyzing all the guidance, thinking how it is so kind, we count the repetitions, focusing on that single-pointedly.

This is extremely good. It leads to the realization. The more we do that, the more our guru devotion is stabilized. In that way, we are again fully protected from all negative thoughts such as anger and heresy and we gain successful realizations of the path to enlightenment. Our merits are not destroyed. All the merits that are the cause of all happiness and all realizations are not destroyed. Our realizations are not put off for many hundreds—many thousands—of eons through having heresy or anger arising. That doesn't happen to us.

One split second of heresy or anger arising can cause us to be reborn in the hell realm for thousands of eons—it's explained as a thousand eons in Lama Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo*, and it's even greater if it is a bodhisattva. If a thousand eons of merit are destroyed getting angry at a bodhisattva, it is so much heavier here. Anyway, none of these problems, these shortcomings, happen. We don't experience them; we have successful realizations. Then, the purpose of our life—to achieve enlightenment and to liberate numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsara and bring them to enlightenment—this goal of our life happens.

I'll just say one quotation then I'll finish. This is the last one! The very last of the last one!

That is a very important quotation. I think it is by Gyalwa Ensapa, who achieved enlightenment in a brief lifetime, like Milarepa but much easier.

[Rinpoche quotes in Tibetan]

This is how to practice.

May I be able to keep this instruction of how to look at the true or the valid guru, who is originator of all realizations. Reflect only on the qualities of the guru; do not look at the guru as having mistakes. Keep this instruction as the heart practice. This is the most important practice in daily life. May I be able to complete such a commitment.

Gyalwa Ensapa himself practiced like this and achieved enlightenment. That is why it is a very special guru yoga practice. Because he was devoted to his guru more than his own life, he achieved enlightenment so easily in that life, within a few years. This came from his own experience.

Anyway, I'll stop there otherwise the Vajrasattva initiation will be in a dream!

Do you need a pipi break?

## **VAJRASATTVA INITIATION**

[Rinpoche chants in Tibetan]

I have mentioned this in the past. In this organization, the FPMT, there are many teachers that I have made connections with. After doing a lot of checking, divinations and so forth, I made a Dharma connection with the many teachers that I have. I have more than twenty-five gurus. I did a lot of analysis before I made the Dharma connection. Usually, the teachers who guide this organization, the gurus I have received a Dharma connection from, are all fully qualified teachers, with all the qualifications to reveal the paths of the Lesser Vehicle, the Mahayana Paramitayana path and the tantric path. Therefore, they are invited to teach in the organization. Many may have already passed away, but those living are invited to give teachings in the organization.

This way, there is protection for the students, there is guidance, to meet the perfectly qualified guru who doesn't mislead at all, who can correctly reveal the Buddha's teachings, both sutra and tantra. There is no danger of misleading or cheating. Although I myself have no quality, nothing, I feel this is of benefit to others. Therefore, I feel I have been of some benefit because I have introduced all those incredible great masters to the many students so they can follow them, receiving teachings of sutra and tantra. I think in that way I have maybe been a little bit of benefit, I have been able to make a little contribution to the students in the various parts of the world.

I myself have nothing; I have been hardly any benefit to others, but I think through this I have made a Dharma connection to these teachers and then introduced them to others to follow them and receive teachings. I feel that is a great protection for the students. It is a real benefit because of their realizations of sutra, tantra—vast like the sky—and their experience of the path, how they are learned, pure and good-hearted, all those qualities.

I thought to mention that just by the way, since I made quite a bit of noise about guru devotion!

Venerable told me that you have gone very extensively through the meditation on karma. I'm very happy with that; that is so important. The fundamental teaching of the Buddha is karma, so it is very important. We came here to learn what is right and what is wrong. To make it simple, right is that which brings happiness to yourself and to others, which benefits yourself and others; and wrong is that which brings suffering to yourself and to others. We came here to learn about that so that we can help ourselves and help others in the correct way. For that we need to learn about karma.

Now here is the Vajrasattva *jenang*.

As I have explained during the past days, first, we don't always live our life with anger, only sometimes. I mean, some people have a more angry nature, so of course, for them anger arises quite often. But what arises most of the time is attachment clinging to this life. Many of us live our life with that, with the nonvirtuous thought, attachment clinging to this life. Then, all our activities from morning to night, twenty-four hours a day—eating, walking, sitting, sleeping, even when we try to practice Dharma, doing meditation or something—even that becomes service to attachment, so it becomes nonvirtue. Even meditating, studying Dharma or doing prayers, if it is done just for this life's happiness, to get power, to get reputation, to become famous as a meditator or so that other people know, again all these activities become negative karma. So, done with that attitude, our twenty-four hours' activities become negative karma, and then like that weeks, months and years go by, from birth up to now, from beginningless rebirths. We collect so many negative karmas with this attitude, with the ten nonvirtuous actions.

I told you last night during refuge, that each complete negative karma has four suffering results, and with creating the result similar to the cause, it goes on and on, and because of creating the result similar to the cause, the four suffering results are endless, unless we purify that negative karma by actualizing the path that can remove karma and delusions.

There have been so many of the ten nonvirtuous actions, so many complete negative karmas committed from beginningless rebirths, such as gossiping or covetousness. Each time we go shopping, if our mind is not living in the lamrim when we go shopping, if our mind does not have renunciation, bodhicitta, right view, then there is only attachment, covetousness. Then, when we come back home from shopping, we have big piles of the negative karma of covetousness, *huge* piles of the negative karma of covetousness.

There are many things we haven't finished experiencing, which we haven't purified from beginningless rebirths, and on top of that, we have taken the bodhisattva vows and broken them and taken the tantric vows and broken them. Then, there is the particularly very heavy negativity of harming the holy body of the guru, breaking the guru's advice or disturbing the holy mind. All these we have been doing from beginningless rebirths. There are many harms like that. These are obstacles for happiness, not only temporary happiness but ultimate happiness, liberation and enlightenment, and obstacles to causing all the happiness for sentient beings, up to enlightenment. We need to purify these negative karmas. That's why there is a great need for the Vajrasattva practice. For that, we need the *jenang*, the permission to practice.

It is mentioned in Pabongka's teachings that for an ordained person to be careless and commit even the small vices—not even breaking the root vows, the four root falls—and thinking it doesn't matter, the karma is heavier than a lay person killing human beings or a hundred horses. I don't know why Pabongka uses horses. Anyway, a hundred human beings or a hundred horses. That's how heavy the negative karma is for an ordained person being careless of even small vices, like a lay person killing a hundred horses or a hundred human beings.

In Mongolia there are many millions of horses, three times more than the number of human beings. I think there are only two million people but many millions of horses. Tibet has a lot of horses as well.

There is another example, but I don't remember exactly, something like being heavier than a lay person engaged in the ten nonvirtuous actions for a hundred years, something like that. I don't remember well. Once we come to know [we have broken a vow,] we must purify it immediately, otherwise the negative karma increases day by day.

It is said that if we kill a tiny insect today, if we don't purify, it becomes double the next day and then increases four times the next day, and then eight times, and so forth. Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche explained it in that way, but I don't remember a hundred percent. However, Pabongka explained that the negative karma of having killed an insect or whatever, after fifteen days, if we don't purify, it multiplies day by day and becomes as heavy as having killed a human being. After eighteen days it increases one hundred thousand times, then thirty-one thousand, then seventy-two. I have been saying that for a long time! For many years, and it still hasn't changed. From what I saw in Pabongka's teachings, having killed an insect today, after eighteen days it increases a hundred thousand and thirty-one thousand and then seventy-two.

Anyway, at the time of death it becomes like an atom increasing to become like a mountain, like the size of this earth, so huge. Then, in future lives, no matter unbearable it is, we have no choice; we have to experience the result. Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche explained that the way it increases is to always double. I think, that means maybe on the second day it's double, on the third day it's eight times, something like that. Anyway, the practice of purification becomes so important. We need the help of Vajrasattva so much.

By reciting the long Vajrasattva mantra twenty-one times or the short one, OM VAJRASATTVA HUM, twenty-eight times at the end of the day, we purify any negative karma [done in the day] and stop it multiplying the next day. This is explained by Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, my root guru.

The short one is OM VAJRASATTVA HUM, but there is also OM VAJRASATTVA AH. However, Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche said it is better to recite OM VAJRASATTVA HUM. If we are going to recite the short one, by reciting it twenty-eight times we purify today's negative karma and stop it multiplying the next day. Even reciting a small number like that has power to purify, if it is done with the four remedial powers, not only to stop it multiplying the next day but also to purify today's negative karma and also our past negative karma. So, it is very, very important.

[Rinpoche speaks to the Tibetan monks and nuns in Tibetan]

According to Theravada, the Hinayana tradition, the way of devoting to the virtuous friend is that we don't look at them as the Buddha but we treat the abbot as the Buddha and we obey them. We respect them and treat them like the Buddha but we don't look at them as the Buddha. In the Mahayana tradition, we look at the virtuous friend as the Buddha, but in tantra, the basis of tantra practice is practicing pure thought and pure appearance. Everything is pure; the place is the mandala, we ourselves are the deity, others are deities, and there is pure action and pure enjoyment, like when we actually become a buddha, there is pure place, the pure deity's holy body, pure action and pure enjoyment. The deity we will achieve when we become enlightened, we visualize that now, as if it is happening now. We look at it as pure. That's why it becomes secret mantra, the mantra that protects the mind. When we look at everything as pure, those negative emotional thoughts that cause negative karma do not rise. Without practicing pure

appearance, having impure appearance, all the many superstitions, the many negative emotional thoughts arise.

That's how tantra protects us. Looking at everything as pure protects our mind from engaging in negative karma, the cause of samara. The great skill of looking at everything as pure becomes the quick path to enlightenment. Therefore, the secret mantra protects the mind, because if we practice it secretly, without exposing it to those who are not suitable, keeping it away from them, keeping it secret, it has more power and we achieve the realization more quickly. That is why it is secret mantra.

Therefore here, it involves not only looking at the lama who gives the jenang as Buddha Vajrasattva but also in the aspect of Vajrasattva. We have to visualize the lama in the deity's aspect. I'm not saying I am Vajrasattva, but this is part of the practice, to visualize that way. It has the special purpose for the disciple to achieve enlightenment. Then, we offer our body, speech, mind and merits. We transform the various offerings that decorate the entire mandala, the entire universe. We offer like that.

Short mandala.

[The students offer the short mandala]

The place where you take the jenang is also not an ordinary place but the celestial mansion of Vajrasattva. Think like that. Also visualize where the tormas are as the actual Vajrasattva, as it was visualized during the preparation time. Think of the lama as Vajrasattva and the tormas as Vajrasattva. Above the lama there are all the lineage lamas of this Vajrasattva initiation. I have received this from His Holiness Zong Rinpoche at Vajrapani Center in America. I think I maybe also received it from Lama. This is Lama Yeshe's text.

Vajrasattva is not Kriya Tantra but Maha-anuttara Yoga Tantra, Vajrasattva with the wisdom mother. Some people have difficulties understanding why the aspect is like that. For some people it is very easy, but some have difficulty understanding it, seeing the statue like that and visualizing like that. I think there is a Chinese girl living in Los Angeles who went to Vajrapani and took some initiation, Guhyasamaja, I think, but had this difficulty visualizing Guhyasamaja father and mother. She had a lot of difficulty with that, so I phoned her to clarify its purpose, why it is like that. To develop the essential path of highest tantra, Maha-anuttara Yoga Tantra, there is the transcendental wisdom of nondual bliss and voidness, which is like an atomic bomb; it is the quickest, most powerful way to cease the defilements, the dualistic view. To develop that experience, you need this meditation, the father and mother in union. Actually, it is one being, not two separate beings, not a couple, but it manifests in this form.

The Buddha's holy mind, the dharmakaya, is bound with infinite compassion; it embraces all sentient beings. Therefore, for the quickest enlightenment, to achieve the enlightenment in the quickest time, it should be done with development of this experience. For that, you need this condition, the meditation on father and mother. The deity is one being, it just manifests like that for the practitioners of Maha-anuttara Yoga Tantra, those who have the greatest good luck, the most merit and intelligence. In this method, the dharmakaya, the holy mind of the Buddha, the absolute guru—these are all synonyms—manifests or takes the form of male and female aspect like this. So, doing this meditation helps you to experience the path and be able to cease defilements in the quickest time.

The whole idea is to achieve enlightenment in the quickest time so that you can liberate the sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to enlightenment in the quickest time. That is the main goal; this skill is done for that. Of course, the person who practices has to be fortunate, having high intelligence, great merit, otherwise it cannot fit the mind.

OK, so above [the lama in the aspect of Vajrasattva] there are all the lineage lamas, then buddhas, bodhisattvas, dakas and dakinis, with the Dharma protectors around, like clouds gathered in the sky. Then you make request like this thinking, “I am taking the bodhisattva vows.” Those who have taken bodhisattva vows in the past, by taking them again, it makes them pure; it revives them. Those who have not taken the bodhisattva vows in the past, if you cannot take them now, the bodhisattva vows have two aspects: the entering vows and wishing vows. With the entering vow, you abstain from the eighteen root falls and sixty-six vices.

Those who can't do the entering vows can do the wishing vows which is avoiding four black dharmas and practicing four white Dharmas. What is that? It is not telling lies, not deceiving sentient beings, opening the heart to the Guru, praising the bodhisattvas and sentient beings, people who rely on you, inspiring them to engage in the Mahayana path to achieve enlightenment. These are four things to practice. Four black dharmas to be abandoned are telling lies to the guru, deceiving sentient beings, criticizing bodhisattvas, and the other one is when you see other sentient beings practicing Dharma—collecting merit, learning the Dharma, where they are actually able to learn more than you, or able to do more retreats than you or able to practice Dharma better than you—you feel unhappy; you regret it. That is the fourth black dharma to be abandoned.

Even if you are unable to take the wishing vows, what I normally suggest is those who can't take any of those vows, you should think, “From now on I am going to be a better person; I am going to practice more compassion toward others.” This is normally what I say in order to be a worthwhile basis for receiving this blessing.

[Rinpoche confers the jenang]

Those who are taking the vow, whatever vow you are taking, think you have received it and feel *great* happiness. If you have taken the entering bodhisattva vows, every second you collect limitless skies of merit as explained in the benefits of bodhicitta, in a *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. Collecting limitless skies of merit, all the time makes life most productive, most meaningful. After having taken the bodhisattva vows, every day when you collect merit, when you engage in good karma, it increases millions of times, so again your life becomes so meaningful, so beneficial for sentient beings.

Then, the last thing you think, “The vow I have taken is my contribution to world peace, for all sentient beings' peace and happiness, particularly in this world. This is my offering, my contribution, my dedication.” Thinking that is very good. Not only now but every day you should remember what you are doing with life. The best way of living is living in the bodhisattva vows, creating limitless skies of merit every second. Whatever merit you collect is increased millions of times. It makes it so easy, so quick to achieve enlightenment. You are living in the bodhisattva vows, the practice of compassion, for the peace of all the sentient beings in this world, including your family, those who are near you. So, feel great happiness.

[Rinpoche confers the jenang]



Now, chant a short mandala, offering thanks for having received the jenang of Vajrasattva father mother.

That's it.

[Students chant a mandala]

The commitment is to recite Vajrasattva twenty-one times every day. I mean you can recite it more; it is up to the individual. Those who have taken any great initiation, it also becomes a sadhana, so at least reciting twenty-one Vajrasattvas a day becomes a daily practice. Those who can't do that every day, the other way is to do a Vajrasattva retreat. Of course, the best way is to do both.

[Rinpoche and students chant in Tibetan]

## DEDICATIONS

Please dedicate the merits to bodhicitta being actualized in the hearts of all of us here, in the hearts of your own family members and in the hearts of all the students and supporters and those who give up their life for this organization, doing service for sentient beings and the teachings of Buddha and in the hearts of all sentient beings. Then second, may bodhicitta be actualized in the hearts of the leaders of the world, and third is in the hearts of all the terrorists all over the world, those who have harmful thoughts to harm others.

Please dedicate all the merits to all the projects in the organization, for them to be actualized, whatever is planned and those particular projects that I mentioned a few times. May they receive all they need—the support, the funding, people's help—everything. Each center has so many projects spreading the Dharma and other social services. May they have the opportunity to buy houses to expand. Quite a number of centers have these projects. And building the hundred thousand stupas, like Land of Medicine Buddha, and also building temples, things like that. In Bendigo in Australia there is a very large stupa, the great Gyantse Stupa, and there are many stupas, a hundred thousand stupas, and prayer wheels. Also in Australia, on Kangaroo Island, there is a stupa. Many places are building holy objects. Also here in Kopan, there is expansion of the nunnery, building their hall and things like that. And there are projects in Tibet, such as the eye operations in Kham and other projects. In Mongolia there are many projects, those that have started and those that haven't yet started. So, dedicate for those to succeed immediately, by receiving everything they need.

Then, there are those various social services, like hospices in different parts of the world, and giving medicine to sick people, and food or schools, especially universal education, and the projects like Loving Kindness Peaceful Youth and the project to establish Buddhist drug rehabilitation. Within that, there are all these important things to help young people, to educate them, to protect them from problems and make their lives meaningful and useful for the world, to bring peace to the world and to their minds as well. There are many others. So, please pray for their success.

“Due to the three-time merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, which exist but are empty, may the I, who exists but who is empty, achieve Vajrasattva's enlightenment, which exists but which is empty, and lead all the sentient beings, who exist but who are empty,

to that Vajrasattva's enlightenment, which exists but which is empty, by myself alone, who exists but who is empty.

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

Then, dedicate for the teachings to be spread in all the directions, especially for Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings to flourish in this world, to spread the complete teaching in your heart and then to everyone in this world.

[Rinpoche and the students chant in Tibetan]

So, good night and good morning!

Thank you so much all those who are leaving. Thank you very much for all your dedication, all your learning and all your patience and for all the merit and purification you have done during this course, for all the preparation for enlightenment, the preparation to enlighten all sentient beings. I would like to thank you very much.