

**ENJOY LIFE LIBERATED FROM THE INNER PRISON**

**Then the Outer Prison Won't Become the Real Prison**

**Lama Zopa Rinpoche**

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ENJOY LIFE LIBERATED FROM THE INNER PRISON

*Then the Outer Prison Won't Become The Real Prison*





*Lama Zopa Rinpoche*

Hello all of you, who are my brothers and sisters.

There is no reason to be unhappy.

A prison is just a label, another name,

One of the numberless labels.

Think that it is not prison.

It is your retreat house for liberation,

Where you can get enlightened

And enlighten numberless others,

Who are our precious mother sentient beings.

—LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

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*May whoever sees, touches, reads, remembers, or talks or thinks about these books  
never be reborn in unfortunate circumstances, receive only rebirths in situations  
conducive to the perfect practice of Dharma, meet only perfectly qualified  
spiritual guides, quickly develop bodhicitta and immediately  
attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.*



LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

# Enjoy Life Liberated from the Inner Prison

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Then the Outer Prison Won't  
Become the Real Prison

COMPILED AND EDITED BY  
Robina Courtin

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## Editor's Preface

SINCE THE INCEPTION of Liberation Prison Project, a social services project of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, FPMT's spiritual director, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, has received letters from people in prison, mainly in the USA.

The work of the prison project, named by Rinpoche in 2000, began in 1996 with a letter to *Mandala*, the foundation's magazine, from a twenty-year-old Mexican-American, Arturo Esquer, at Pelican Bay, a top-security prison in northern California where he was serving out his three twenty-five-years-to-life sentences. At the time he was in isolation in the Security Housing Unit, where he spent twenty-three hours a day locked in his cell. He wrote that in the SHU library's list of available titles he'd found a book by Lama Yeshe, the co-founder with Rinpoche of the FPMT. He said that he was moved by Lama's teachings on compassion and wanted to learn more. *Mandala's* address was in the book.

He explained that he'd been in gangs on the streets of Los Angeles since he was eleven years old and in prison since he was thirteen, first as a juvenile and then tried and sentenced as an adult at the age of sixteen. He received Buddhist books and spiritual guidance from the prison project. Word spread, and within a year forty inmates around the country were communicating with the project.

Many of the inmates, like Arturo, were serving long sentences and some were on death row. Some became serious practitioners and students of Buddhism, but all benefited from the friendship

of mentors through the prison project—and continue to do so—often their only support.

Over the years Liberation Prison Project has helped some twenty thousand inmates, most in the USA, but also in other countries, including Australia, Italy, Spain, Mexico, Mongolia and New Zealand, where local projects have been established.

Some of the prisoners, inspired by the teachings in Rinpoche's books or by what they'd read about him in the prison project newsletter, would write to Rinpoche personally—Arturo was the first to do so. Many requested him to be their spiritual teacher.

This book is a compilation of the one hundred-plus letters Rinpoche has written in response to the inmates over the years, integrated into a coherent narrative. Typically, he'd write three or four pages, but it was not uncommon for the letters to cover fifteen or twenty typed pages—one man received a letter of forty-five pages!

Rinpoche would spend a great deal of time dictating the letters, coming back to them again and again over many days, choosing carefully the most suitable practices and books for each person, finding creative ways to present the advice, and always encouraging them to never give up and to use their time in prison in the most beneficial way possible—always in terms of their spiritual growth.

All of Rinpoche's advice is framed within the advanced levels of Mahayana Buddhism known as “mind transformation”—in Tibetan, *lojong*—the essential component of which is developing the brave attitude of welcoming the difficulties of life and interpreting them differently: seeing them as opportunities, advantages, not problems. Implicit in this approach to practice is the

ultimate view of reality, that nothing has an intrinsic nature as pleasant or unpleasant, as this or that, which is the logical basis for our ability to see things differently.

Why would we want to see unpleasant experiences as good? Because, according to Buddha, contrary to our instinctive belief, the main cause of our suffering and happiness is not the thing itself—the person, the event, the place—but our interpretation of it.

We're all driven by primordially deep attachment to getting only the nice things, addicted to the belief that they're the source of happiness. The moment attachment is thwarted, the result is aversion and the various other disturbing emotions that ensue. And even when attachment does get what it wants, the pleasure doesn't last, which again results in disappointment, anger, depression and the rest.

We thus spend our lives attempting to manipulate the outside world to make it just so, swinging hopelessly between the two extremes of happiness when the good things occur and unhappiness when they don't.

On the face of it, learning to see being in prison as good makes no sense. But the approach is practical, not punitive or moralistic. Buddha says if we can change something, please change it. But what if we can't? This is the point at which the practice of lojong starts. And this is very much the situation for people serving long sentences in prison or on death row. They don't have the luxury to change their situation. They can't escape from prison.

But, as Rinpoche points out, they *can* escape from their inner prison—we all can—the prison of attachment, the prison of anger, the prison of the other disturbing and deluded states of mind that are the source of our suffering.

The result of this practice isn't merely that we become less attached, less angry, less fearful, and therefore experience less suffering. It's not passive. As a result of practice, just naturally we become more content, more courageous, more wise—in other words, we also experience more happiness. We stop being pulled from pillar to post by the vagaries of life. We become emotionally stable, fulfilled and, crucially, in charge of our internal lives.

And not only that. Just naturally, we become more open to others, more empathetic: we realize that we're all in the same boat. Now, having helped oneself, we can help others.

The inmate's environment, Rinpoche says, is a precious opportunity to develop this marvelous potential, which in the long term brings the achievement of their own buddhahood: the utter eradication from their mind of all delusions and the development to perfection of all wisdom, all goodness—the very meaning of the word “buddha.”

This internal work does not imply not acting to bring about external change, to fight for one's freedom from prison, let's say, or to help others in prison. You don't become passive—on the contrary. Because you're not overwhelmed by anger or despair, you're capable of effective action. Arturo is a good example. As he developed his spiritual practice, he gave up his allegiance to gangs—the only world he'd known—got himself an education, and when the rules in California changed to allow inmates who, as juveniles, had been sentenced as adults the opportunity to apply for parole, with the help of a kind lawyer he was able to navigate the considerable bureaucratic obstacles and, after two-thirds of his life in prison, was released at the age of forty-one.

“No matter where you go in life, you bring yourself with you,” he wrote recently from Los Angeles, where he studied film pro-

duction and found work. “If you have transformed yourself, you can face life in an open-hearted and courageous way.”

### **Gratitude**

In the making of this book I'm grateful for the help of Geshe Thubten Sherab, Ven. Roger Kunsang, Ven. Holly Ansett, Ven. Jamyang Wangmo, Ven. Steve Carlier, Ven. Ailsa Cameron, Peter Iseli, Charmaine Hughes, Matt Bunkowski, Alessia Bulgari, John Castelloe, Nicole Mayo, Joono Repo, Tom Truty, Julie Cattlin, Gopa & Tedz and Nick Ribush and his team, including Sandy Smith, at Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive.

Robina Courtin





**PART ONE**

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**How To Think**



*Numberless beings who were just the same as us have transformed their minds. This includes Shakyamuni Buddha himself.*

## Prison Is Not the Real Prison

Living one's life under the control of ignorance is actually the heaviest prison—and everyone is living in it.

### **The inner prison**

People who are not in prison think that only people like you are in prison, but they have no idea about all the prisons they themselves are in. Ordinary people, those who are not practicing Dharma—including people from the courts, the police, kings and presidents—are actually living in prison. People who are free to travel around, going wherever they want, doing whatever they like, or billionaires who think they have everything, all the desire objects, are all living in prison. Your external prison, the building you live in, is nothing in comparison with their inner prisons!

It is very important to look at other sentient beings in this world and see how much they are suffering. They are the real prisoners. There are so many examples of this, people who are suffering so much, their inner life is so miserable, they are crying and unhappy. Wealthy people, for example, having so many things but still not having found satisfaction, can be more unhappy than people who have very little. Even if they're billionaires, trillionaires, zillionaires, living in a house made of diamonds, with billions of cars, swimming pools, millions of servants—they are not happy.

Some years ago, the most successful person of the year was on the cover of *Time* magazine—successful in making money, that

is. After he became rich he couldn't even go outside, because he was so scared that people would kidnap him. So he stayed inside his whole life, which means it was exactly like living in prison, mentally living in prison, and mentally suffering even more than a person in prison. So much suffering!

### **The prison of wrong concepts**

In fact, we are all in these inner prisons. We are trapped in the prison of wrong concepts: believing that impermanent phenomena are permanent; believing that samsaric temporal pleasure is happiness; believing that the body, which is only a container of dirty things, is clean. There are so many wrong concepts and views, and these prisons are from time without beginning.

### **The prison of attachment**

We are living in the most harmful prison, the prison of attachment, of desire. Normally we live just for this life's happiness. We look at *samsara* as if it's a beautiful park, but in reality it is suffering.

When we live with attachment—doing the things that attachment wants twenty-four hours a day, always working for attachment, always clinging to this life—all our actions become negative karma, the cause of *samsara*.

Attachment traps us like a fly trapped in the hot wax of a burning candle. It overtakes us like a giant tidal wave. The result is so many problems, one after the other. Our heart is filled with misery. There is no peace. There is only confusion and dissatisfaction.

I talk about attachment in depth in **chapter 9**.

### **The prison of anger**

And when we don't succeed in getting what our attachment wants, anger arises and we harm other sentient beings, thus destroying the causes of our happiness, our merit and good karma.

Our mind is wild, not only now but since beginningless rebirths. We are wild, out of control, like a mad elephant.

### **The prison of self-cherishing**

We live in the prison of self-cherishing, living our life with self-cherishing thought. We feel this self is the most important one, more precious than others, the most precious one among all sentient beings. Perhaps we think that we are the most important one even among all the holy beings, the buddhas and bodhisattvas!

When we follow the self-cherishing thought, whatever we do, all the actions of our body, speech and mind, become an obstacle to achieving happiness and, eventually, enlightenment, and an obstacle to liberating numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering and leading them to enlightenment.

### **The prison of karma**

And not only that. We are imprisoned in the heavy iron box of ignorance, our limbs fastened by the chains of karma. It is pitch black: there is no light, no sun, no moon, no stars, and we are being carried away by the strong, violent waves of the ocean of samsara, forced to create only nonvirtue. It is so difficult to practice renunciation and the other virtues, such as patience; so difficult to have compassion and loving kindness for others.

Since beginningless time we have been caught, locked, trapped in this prison of samsara, these aggregates, which continually cycle from one life to another, without a second's break, driven

by past karma and the various delusions—disturbing emotions, defilements, nonvirtuous thoughts—such as attachment, anger and the rest. Because of this we have experienced so many hell-realm sufferings, so many hungry ghost sufferings, so many animal-realm sufferings, so many human-realm sufferings, so many god-realm sufferings—from time without beginning.

I talk about suffering and its causes in **chapter 8**.

### **The prison of ignorance**

The heaviest prison of all is the prison of ignorance, the root of the other delusions. Even though there is no real self, no real I—there is only what is merely labeled by the mind—our self appears as real; it appears to our hallucinating mind as existing from its own side, as not merely labeled by the mind. Because of this ignorance, we believe that our self is truly existent. As a result, whatever we do with our body, speech and mind becomes the cause of samsara; we keep creating the cause to be in samsara.

Our mind is totally obscured by this ignorance, causing us to not know that there is no real I, that there is no such I in this body or on these aggregates, but we believe that there is. And not only do we believe that the I exists from its own side, as not merely labeled by the mind, we also believe that all phenomena exist like this.

Being trapped in the prison of this unknowing mind, this big, hallucinating ignorance, is the root delusion, the root of all suffering, the root of samsara. The suffering world came from this, was created by this wrong concept, ignorance.

This is the real prison. Being caught up in this hallucination becomes the basis for all other disturbing emotional thoughts to arise, such as attachment, anger and so forth. Living one's

life under the control of this ignorance is actually the heaviest prison—and everyone is living in it.

I talk about this in more detail in **chapter 11**.

### **All these prisons**

Now you can see that there are so many prisons people are living in, even if they are physically not living in the same building as you. All these inner prisons are the most terrifying. Because our aggregates are contaminated, full of delusions and karma, they are in the nature of suffering. Until we are free of these prisons, this samsara, we will take rebirth again and again, experiencing suffering without one second's break, continuously, life after life after life.

### **But samsara can end**

However, samsara can end. We can be liberated from these prisons by realizing the four noble truths: true suffering, true causes of suffering, true cessation of suffering and the true path. By realizing what suffering is, and its causes, we can achieve the cessation of them. We should try to be free from samsara right away, without delaying for even a second. See **chapter 8**.

Right now, our mind is under the control of delusions and karma. By disciplining our body, speech and mind—stopping creating negative karma by living in vows (see **chapter 14**) and purifying what we have created (see **chapters 15 and 16**)—we can conquer them. Then we become free, like the *arhats* and, especially, the Buddha.

Remember that numberless beings who were just the same as us—suffering from beginningless rebirths, totally wild from beginningless rebirths, totally controlled by delusions and

karma—have transformed their minds. This includes Guru Shakyamuni Buddha himself. We can be like them. By disciplining our body, speech and mind and living in virtue, we too can create the causes for not only temporal happiness but also liberation from samsara, as well as for buddhahood, when we can then liberate numberless sentient beings.

### REMEMBER

- ▶ Your prison is nothing in comparison with the inner prisons—
- ▶ The prison of attachment,
- ▶ The prison of anger,
- ▶ The prison of karma,
- ▶ The prison of ignorance.
- ▶ But these are prisons you can escape from by disciplining your body, speech and mind.



## Prison Can Be Your Hermitage

As far as being locked in is concerned, for you it can be exactly the same as for the yogis in their hermitages. Instead of “prison” you should label it “hermitage.”

### **Prison is how you label it**

For ordinary people, being in prison means being in a building in which you’re not allowed to do certain things and which you can’t leave. But this prison—where you are—is actually similar to the place where Tibetan hermits live in retreat. In Tibet, some of the mountains are full of holes, which are actually caves, hermitages. They are very small and have been sealed, except for a tiny hole in the wall for passing food through. So, you see, physically it is the same for you.

The yogis, the meditators, the great holy beings of the past, the present (and the future) spend many years, sometimes their entire life, in these isolated places. For years they do not meet people, do not speak to anyone.

The hermits don’t call their caves prison, but you say, “I’m in prison.” Therefore, it’s a question of how we label things. Physically, their situation is exactly the same as yours, but they are practicing Dharma and meditating in order to be free of suffering and its causes: the real prison, samsara—so they don’t call it “prison.”

Because they are on the meditational path, they don’t even think about leaving their cave. For them, being free from all the

external distractions—going out, meeting people, all the countless activities of normal life—is an incredible opportunity, which helps them to eliminate the internal distractions so that they can gain realizations on the path.

Even though their body never leaves the cave, even though they never see the outside world, they enjoy incredible peace and bliss because they are practicing Dharma.

From the point of view of ordinary people, especially in the West, this is worse than being in prison! But this is being in retreat, disciplining the mind, for the mind to be free. As Milarepa said:

I was afraid of death, so I escaped to the mountains.  
Now that I have realized the ultimate nature of the primordial mind, even when death comes, I have no fear.

### **Tibetans who were imprisoned used their time to meditate**

You must know that many lamas and laypeople were imprisoned by the Communist Chinese in Tibet after the events of 1959—and continue to be imprisoned to this day. Many achieved realizations in prison. They were able to put into practice in prison all the Dharma they had learned before. They used the time to meditate and develop their minds on the path. So many of them made their life so rich in prison, rich with realizations; their life became very meaningful. For them, being in prison was exactly the same as living in a hermitage and being in retreat.

There is one Tibetan lama who was put in prison for more than twenty years. During that time, he took the opportunity to meditate in strict retreat. He practiced *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga*

(I discuss this in **chapter 13**). (Lama Tsongkhapa is the embodiment of all the buddhas' compassion (Chenrezig; see **chapter 17**), all the buddhas' wisdom (Manjushri) and all the buddhas' power (Vajrapani)). He recited the four- or five-line *migtsema* verse, which is a praise to Lama Tsongkhapa as the embodiment of these buddhas. He saw Lama Tsongkhapa and his own guru as one. This lama's wisdom blossomed like a fully developed lotus. He became extremely learned in the teachings of Buddha, particularly in the Lama Tsongkhapa tradition.

When he got out of prison, he became very famous. When he was giving teachings in Sera Monastery in Tibet, other learned geshees who took teachings from him were astonished, so impressed by his profound, extensive teachings. One particular quality he had was that he was able to give the oral transmission of eight volumes of Buddha's scriptures in one day, reciting each word clearly. Each volume has many hundreds of pages and each page has many lines.

### **Many of the Tibetans in prison were starving**

For lunch the prisoners would be given just a small dumpling made of flour, the size of a chocolate, and thin soup, which was served in the same bucket that they used for the toilet.

The guards ate a lot of beans and the prisoners would search where the guards went to the toilet for undigested whole beans, and they would eat them. They would also search for bones, which they would chew or boil. It gave them strength, revived them, and helped them to survive a little longer.

Even though they had almost no food, some of the meditators looked radiant, their bodies glowing magnificently: their meditation was food for the mind. One time, when a lama passed away

and his body was thrown in the river, it didn't sink; it stayed in the meditation position, the back upright, floating. Things like this happened.

One Tibetan prisoner said that he got nourishment from just the smell of the food from the Chinese guards' kitchen. It's incredible. He showed that even just the smell of food can be so beneficial, can give strength.

After he got out of prison he practiced the offering of smells to the hungry ghosts, which involves burning flour mixed with butter, crushed jewels and some medicinal substances in a fire and then meditating. In your visualization you fill the whole sky with the smell, manifested as the five sense objects, the objects of desire. You make offerings first to the Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, then to all the hungry ghosts, to all the people in the intermediate stage who have died and are not yet reborn, to all the landlord spirits and to all the local *devas*. The practice, which involves many prayers, helps the beings.

After making charity to them, you teach them Dharma: to have a good heart, to not harm others and to practice bodhicitta. You imagine they are liberated from samsara, from karma and delusions, then you send them away to their places.

By doing this practice you hugely purify your negative karma and create extensive merit. It creates the cause in future lives to not have the karma to be tortured or to experience heavy, terrifying karmic appearances. It brings you success and enables you to be born in a pure land.

This prisoner did this practice of offering smells every day for many years. His experience in prison of benefiting from even the smell of the food when he was starving enabled him to understand the hungry ghosts, who cannot find food for hundreds of thousands of years.

## **Make prison your hermitage**

So now you can see that “prison” is just a concept: what you label the place and how you use it. As far as being locked in is concerned, for you it can be exactly the same as for the yogis in their hermitages. Instead of “prison” you should label it “hermitage” or “retreat house.”

And you even have food! In the cave, there is nothing! But for them it is like paradise, incredible, the best place to achieve all happiness: happiness in future lives, liberation from samsara and the highest happiness, enlightenment. It gives them everything they need to actualize the path.

### **REMEMBER**

- ▶ See prison as good.
- ▶ Everything appears to us according to how we label it.
- ▶ You can label prison as a hermitage.
- ▶ Imprisoned Tibetans used their time to meditate and get realizations.
- ▶ You can do the same.



*Buddha Vajrapani represents the power of all the buddhas.*

## Being In Prison Is an Incredible Opportunity

When you use this opportunity to practice, prison will become a place of happiness; there is so much to rejoice in.

### **Prison is a great place for great change**

In prison, you can use the Buddhism of the Mahayana tradition to see your bad circumstances as supportive circumstances, just like the Tibetans did. You can transform your suffering and problems into happiness through meditation and Buddhist psychology, especially with the approach known as thought transformation, or, in Tibetan, lojong—the brave attitude of seeing your problems as opportunities for practice—which includes meditations like “giving and taking” in **chapter 18** and which I discuss in **chapters 7 and 10**.

Prison is a great place for developing courage. It is a great place for great change. Compared to being behind the bars of the prison of rebirth as a hell being, a hungry ghost or an animal, your prison is a great place. It is a great place to cease the negative thoughts and actions, which are the cause of rebirth in the lower realms. Realizing this enables you to achieve a higher rebirth in the future by creating virtuous thoughts and actions.

As Nagarjuna said—Nagarjuna is like the second buddha—in his teaching *Letter to a Friend*:

Actions born from ignorance, anger and attachment are  
 nonvirtue;  
 From that, all the evil transmigratory beings arise.  
 Actions born from non-ignorance, non-anger and non-  
 attachment are virtue;  
 From that, all the happy transmigratory beings arise.

This means that all rebirths as hell beings, hungry ghosts and animals come from nonvirtue, and a perfect human body or birth in Buddha's pure land, where there is no suffering, come from virtue.

Prison is a great place to learn about samsara and liberation—to discover the causes of samsara, karma and delusions (see **chapters 8, 9 and 15**); and the causes of liberation, abandoning the delusions and realizing emptiness: realizing how everything is a dependent arising and therefore empty of inherent existence. See **chapter 11**.

Prison is a great place to not only achieve liberation but also to practice the Mahayana path: to develop patience toward sentient beings, compassion and loving kindness for them; and to develop the **special attitude**, the universal responsibility to free numberless sentient beings from all the sufferings and bring them to full enlightenment, all happiness, by yourself, alone. See **chapters 10, 12, 17 and 18**.

And then, finally, by practicing the tantric path one can achieve enlightenment within a number of years in this brief lifetime of these degenerate times. Then you are able to bring all sentient beings quickly to enlightenment.

Think: "This experience of mine, what is called 'prison,' is actually a teaching for me, showing me that I must purify the



negative karmas that I have collected, all the causes of sufferings, and from now on to not commit those negative karmas again, because otherwise I will experience the same problems again and again.”

Sometimes you can think, “This room is a room in which I can achieve enlightenment. This is a room for me to make my life most meaningful and productive, to prepare for death and to achieve happiness in future lives. This room is made for me to reach liberation from samsara and achieve enlightenment for sentient beings.”

You should look at your situation most positively like that.

All these stages of practice are included in the *lamrim*, which I explain in **chapter 13**.

### **You have woken up**

The essence of what I am saying is that you should regard prison as a very special place for you. You can think just like the yogis: “This is not prison; I am in retreat.” In fact, your life in prison can be much happier than an ordinary life outside prison.

Prison has woken you up. You’re now discovering your inner life. You’re seeing your past mistakes—and not just in this life, in your past lives, too. You’re beginning to develop wisdom and compassion.

Because of what you did, the illegal things in the past, now you are in prison, yes. But being in prison purifies the negative karmas collected from beginningless rebirths. Rejoice in that! So please think about that. You can tell this to others, to your friends, if appropriate.

It is said by the great meditator from Tibet, Kadampa Geshe Khamlungpa:

By experiencing this present small suffering,  
 The past negative karma is ceased  
 And there will be happiness in the future.  
 Therefore, rejoice, be happy in this present suffering.

It is great that you have woken up and realized that this perfect human rebirth is a one-time opportunity to practice Dharma and achieve the three great meanings: you can achieve the happiness in this life; the happiness of future lives; and the ultimate happiness, liberation from the oceans of samsaric suffering and the peerless happiness of full enlightenment.

Definitely it is a great thing that you have now met the Buddhadharmas. I am extremely happy that, by being in prison, you have opened your heart.

### **Be happy you're in prison**

I would like to tell you a story. When I first went to Australia, in the 1970s, in my mandala offering set there were some grains of rice from Nepal. The customs people in Australia are very strict. They asked me who packed my bags and so forth and then they opened my mandala and found the grains. They talked with the police and said they would put my name down, and then, with pointing fingers, they said, "Next time, don't bring grains!" When they wrote my name down, I thought, "I don't mind if I go to prison, as long as I can practice Dharma." This is what I thought as I stood in front of the police.

You can feel the same. Change your concept. Think: "Actually, it turned out for the best. What happened is the best thing that could have happened to me. Now I have all the opportunities to practice. If I were not here my life would be full of desire and distractions—parties, people, friends, work and so forth."

In other words, be happy about being in prison. As I said, normal people in the world, who haven't met Dharma and don't practice, look at being in prison only as suffering, only as unhappiness, because they're not with their family, they're not free to do what they want when they want—normally, “being free” is what is regarded as being able to do worldly activities whenever you want, with attachment and anger.

But now, for you, thinking in a different way, being in prison becomes Dharma. For others, there is so much unhappiness, but for you it's very positive. Your future will be like the sun shining in the world—and from this so many people and creatures and animals will benefit.

As a result of your practice, your mental continuum will achieve higher and higher realizations, until you are free from samsara, free from the oceans of samsaric suffering. And not only that, you will be able to cease all the subtle defilements and achieve enlightenment, the complete realizations.

### **When you practice, you're not in prison**

As long as you are practicing Dharma, you are not in prison. When you practice the entire path—renunciation of attachment to this life, to future lives and to samsaric happiness; the right view of emptiness, the very nature of phenomena; bodhicitta; and on this basis, tantra, which is the quickest path—you are bringing yourself to liberation and enlightenment. All this is covered in the lamrim, **chapter 13**.

By having this realization, you are no longer in prison. As you become free from all wrong views and concepts, you become liberated: you are no longer a prisoner. Even though ordinary people call you a prisoner because you are in that building, in reality you are not.

The main thing for you is to not see prison—not having freedom—as an obstacle. You should think that you have the best freedom, to free yourself and all beings from samsara by practicing the path. This is the best opportunity!

Every day that you practice virtue you are creating the cause of happiness, to be free from all the emotional negative thoughts and negative karma. Then you are not a prisoner, you are not in prison. But whenever nonvirtuous thoughts arise, and you follow them, you are putting yourself in prison—the prison of wrong concepts.

### **When you're not practicing, prison is suffering**

Those who don't see the positive side of prison and therefore aren't practicing Dharma are so miserable. They see nothing good in prison. Day and night, they are constantly wishing to be free from prison. That is exactly the feeling of never finding any comfort or pleasure in samsara.

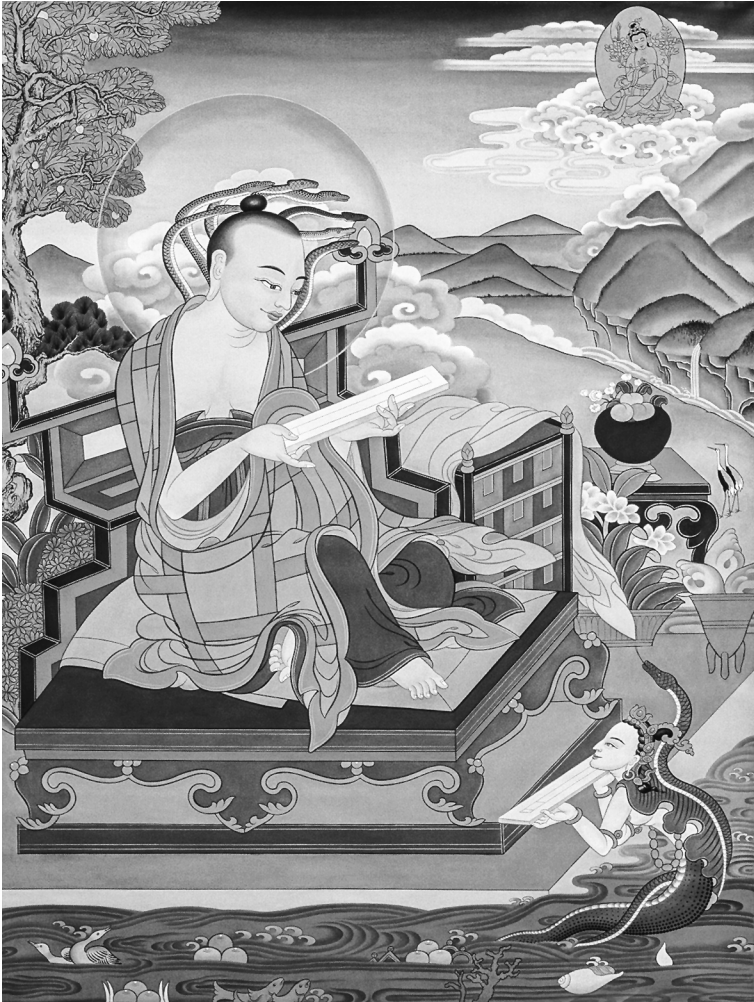
### **When you're practicing, prison is like a pure land**

So, what I'm telling you is to spend your time in prison practicing Dharma. Then it becomes a place of retreat. When you use this opportunity to practice, prison will become a place of happiness, like a beautiful island. There is so much to rejoice in. Develop your mind, transform the situation into happiness. For Christians it becomes like heaven and for Buddhists it becomes like a pure land.

### **REMEMBER**

- ▶ Develop courage: use this experience to change your mind.

- ▶ Prison is an opportunity to make use of your life.
- ▶ It's wonderful that you've woken up!
- ▶ When you practice, prison is like a pure land.
- ▶ When you don't practice, prison is such suffering.



*Second-century Indian scholar Nagarjuna, who is like the second buddha, said that actions born from non-ignorance, non-anger and non-attachment are virtue. From that all the happy transmigratory beings arise.*

## The Kindness of Those Who Put You in Prison

Now you can see that all these people who put you in prison are unbelievably precious. They have been unbelievably kind to you. It is their kindness that persuaded you to open your heart, to look for something meaningful in life.

If it were left up to you, you would never do retreat. Because of attachment, the clinging to this life, you make so many plans: “I want to do this, I want to do that.” Because of all the distractions in the mind—the delusions—and all the distractions outside, you would never have any interest in the Dharma, you would never seek it out, you would never be inspired to practice.

Because of delusions and karma, you have suffered in samsara since beginningless rebirths. From time without beginning you have died and been reborn, have been born and then died. Time and time again you have experienced the sufferings of the six realms, one after another like links in a chain.

Therefore you should realize that the situation you’re in is the best situation, and it’s given to you by all the people who’ve accused you, who’ve put you in prison. They are supporting you in the development of your mind in the path to enlightenment so that you can be free forever from the oceans of samsaric suffering and its causes—all those delusions that have been abiding in your heart from time without beginning.

Every day, think that your wife, your family, the judge, the

child welfare services, even your children—who you believe were manipulated to speak against you—are all helping you, not harming you. These people have put you in retreat. This is something to thank them for. Think: “How fortunate I am! This is an unbelievable, priceless opportunity.” Rejoice that you are in retreat!

### **Just because someone doesn't wish you happiness doesn't mean they're not kind**

For somebody to be kind to you, to help you, doesn't mean they have to have the thought of wishing you happiness. For example, the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, that which ceases directly the gross and subtle defilements, that which is the real Dharma, is unbelievably precious because of the benefit that you get from it. But it doesn't have the thought to benefit you, it is not concerned about your suffering and your happiness.

It is exactly the same here. The people who accused you didn't have the thought to benefit you—maybe they even had the wish to harm you. But look at all the benefits, the skies of benefits, that you are receiving from them!

Also, the positive parts of your mind don't feel hurt by being in prison. It is only the negative part of your mind that feels hurt: the wrong concept, the self-cherishing thought and your attachment to this life. It is not hurting your compassion, your loving kindness or your bodhicitta, it is not hurting your wisdom of emptiness.

### **You've been distracted by samsaric things since beginningless time**

Now you can see that if all these people hadn't put you in prison, you wouldn't have met the Dharma. Which would you prefer—having the Dharma in prison or being outside prison and never



having met the Dharma? Would you prefer having a life filled with distractions, engaging in actions driven only by attachment, such as the countless experiences of pleasure since beginning-less rebirths, nothing new? Would you prefer to spend your life racing around on a big motorcycle with a lot of noise in those black boots and all that black clothing that covers your head, hands and entire body? Would you prefer that? You can see—it is totally boring! Even if you'd had all these experiences only once, it would be totally boring to live your life in that way. But you've had these experiences numberless times since beginning-less rebirths!

Because of desire for pleasure in this life and all the endless distractions, there is no interest in Dharma. Attachment doesn't allow for it; desire doesn't give time for it. Even if there were interest, desire doesn't give time to practice meditation, to read the lamrim and other Dharma books, or to live in the vows.

### **They've helped you turn toward liberation**

All these people have been an unbelievable support. They have turned your life toward liberation and enlightenment instead of toward the lower realms and samsara. These people have made you wake up. From what? From a life that has been wasted so far, that has been used to create only negative karma and the causes for lower-realm suffering, a life in which you've been a slave to the delusions.

For you, it has all turned out to be for liberation! For you, their putting you in prison has turned out to be the opportunity to achieve ultimate liberation, freedom from the samsaric prison, forever. Isn't that joyful? Their putting you in prison has persuaded your mind to think deeply about your life; it has made you think really seriously. It has made you do something

meaningful, not just play with your life, not waste your life, not use your life like a duster, or like toilet paper to clean up poop. (This is my first time using this English-language word, this new word for *kaka*: “poop”!)

Now, being in prison, you’ve met not only the Buddhadharmā but the Mahayana Dharma: bodhicitta and the lamrim. This situation has made you turn your life toward enlightenment, the highest, perfect bliss, buddhahood—the cessation of all the mistakes of mind and the completion of all the qualities: this is the meaning of the word “buddha.” After this, there is nothing more to develop.

For all the points of the path to enlightenment, the lamrim, see **chapter 13**.

### **Even a sky full of diamonds can’t repay their kindness**

Therefore, you can see that all these people who put you in prison are unbelievably precious. They have been unbelievably kind to you. It is their kindness that persuaded you to open your heart, to look for something meaningful in life, to accept Buddhadharmā. Because of their kindness you are able to practice renunciation, the detachment of seeing that samsara is in the nature of suffering.

You are able to purify negative karmas collected from beginningless rebirths—see **chapters 15 and 16**.

You are able to create so many causes for happiness by living in the vows and thus collecting merit twenty-four hours a day, even when you are sleeping—see **chapter 14**.

You are able to create the causes for the happiness of future lives: a good rebirth, such as in a pure land.

And you are able to learn about bodhicitta (see **chapters 10 and**

12), meditate on emptiness (see **chapter 11**) and achieve liberation and enlightenment.

Now you can see that your family and all these people who put you in prison gave you all of this. Their kindness is limitless: skies of limitless kindness. There are no words to express what they have done for you. Even if the whole world were filled with jewels, dollars, gold and diamonds, even wish-fulfilling jewels (which, after having prayed to them, can bring you whatever you want), and you offered it all to them, you could not finish repaying their unbelievable gift.

You should meditate every day on their kindness.

#### **REMEMBER**

- ▶ Just because the people who accused you weren't trying to help you doesn't mean they're not kind to you—
- ▶ Be so grateful to them for this precious opportunity.
- ▶ Because of their kindness, you can now create the causes for happiness and to be of benefit to others.



*The Lawudo Lama, Kunsang Yeshe, a yogi who meditated in the Mount Everest region of Nepal, was the previous incarnation of Lama Zopa Rinpoche.*

## We All Have Many Lifetimes

This body disintegrating and dying doesn't mean that the mind, the consciousness, ceases; it continues and takes another life, based on our karma.

My name is Lawudo Lama. I bear the name of an incarnate lama. I guess this is from some merit, positive actions, done in past lives. I was born in the Himalayan mountains, in Solu Khumbu, near Mount Everest. Hopefully, one day you can visit there; it is a totally different world.

On one side of Mount Everest is Nepal and on the other side is Tibet. Since ancient times, many holy beings, great yogis, have achieved high attainments in caves in these mountains, as I mentioned before. They have meditated and achieved liberation there.

I try to help a little bit in the world, teaching meditation on the nature of phenomena. I also emphasize ethics, teaching about cause and effect, showing which causes bring which effects: from positive causes comes happiness and from negative causes comes suffering.

I also teach compassion, the wish to alleviate the suffering of living beings and to bring them ultimate, everlasting, peerless full enlightenment. Driven by this compassion, having achieved this completely liberated state ourselves, in which all the mistakes of mind, gross and subtle, have been eliminated and a complete understanding of reality has been realized, we are now able to do

perfect work for all the countless living beings and to lead them, in turn, to their perfect, peerless bliss and full enlightenment.

### **Reincarnation and remembering past lives**

We have a body and a mind, and we relate to them as the self, the “I,” which is merely imputed. This body disintegrating and dying doesn’t mean that the mind, the consciousness, ceases; it continues and takes another life, based on our karma. Today’s mind began at dawn, but it is the continuation of yesterday’s mind, just before dawn. So, like that, this year’s mind is the continuation of last year’s mind; it’s not the mind of a separate being. That is why we are able to remember what we did yesterday, where we went, the food we ate, the people we met and so forth. The child we were and the person we are today are not separate, they are the same. Again, this is why you can remember what you did as a child.

It’s similar with past lives. Even though most people don’t remember, our mind is a continuation of the mind before we were born. Your mind did not begin only after your body came out of your mother’s womb, nor when your consciousness entered the fertilized egg, which is when the association of body and mind started.

Even though most people don’t remember being in their mother’s womb and being born, there are many who do. I know someone who has a clear memory of it. These days there are many people, including children, who can even remember their past lives and describe them very clearly. This is not just the experience of Tibetan lamas; there are people in the West who are born with a memory of past lives. This shows that their mind is clearer, less polluted and obscured. Some people with this clarity of mind are able to see the future as well.

By cutting off attraction, scattering thoughts and sinking thoughts in the concentration meditation technique called calm abiding, which has nine stages, the mind becomes clearer and clearer. Then we can develop higher powers. One can see things happening that other people cannot see, as well as being able to see things in distant places. Those who meditate on a deity also can develop this clairvoyance. One can achieve this even just by reciting mantras such as OM MAṆI PADME HŪṂ. See **chapter 17**.

The great saints, the *arya* bodhisattvas who have achieved the first *bhumi*—one goes through ten bhumis to finally achieve full enlightenment—can remember hundreds of past lives and also can see the future. There is no question that as they reach higher bhumis, they discover and see a million times more past and future lives. This shows that there are past lives; this proves it. If there are past lives, then also there have to be future lives (see **chapter 12**).

### **My Mother's Reincarnation**

For example, after my mother passed away in the early 1990s, she was reborn as a boy to a family who lived close to where she had lived, in Lawudo. She lived there with my sister, and both became nuns. In Lawudo, there is a cave of the great eighth-century enlightened yogi Padmasambhava, who placed his holy feet there for a short time. It's also where I lived in retreat in my previous life as Lama Kunsang Yeshe, whose incarnation was predicted by many lamas.

From the time my mother's incarnation was two years old, he was able to remember many things from his past life. He could recognize clearly all the family members of that life. He was not shy with them, as he was with other people; he immediately bonded with them. Also, he was able to recognize the animals

that he used to care for. He could also remember many things that he had used when he was my mother and would look for them where she had left them.

My mother used to collect plastic buttons and keep them in a bottle. You see, when I was a child in Solu Khumbu in the 1940s and '50s it was a very primitive area. The people regarded such things as spoons and plastic buttons, which we normally didn't have, as very precious. When they got a shirt, even a torn one, they kept the plastic buttons as something very valuable. They'd even wear a spoon on a string around their necks, like people in the West wear necklaces. Also, there was no coffee, kerosene, gas or even candles. Now, Solu Khumbu has changed a lot and become modern.

When I was a child, rice was considered a very special food because it doesn't grow there; people had to transport it for many days from faraway places. I remember that I would eat rice only on special occasions, like when a lama visited or when people came for the *nyung nä* fasting retreats (see **chapter 17**).

One year, on the first day of a retreat, my alphabet teacher and attendant, whom I was doing the retreat with, brought lunch that was leftover food of rice and curd. This was so special, a very happy occasion that happened once a year. Now rice has become a very common food; coffee, too.

When I was a child, the only light you had after dark was the fire you cooked on, or a piece of wood that had sap on it or dried bamboo that you could light up and put in the wall so that you could see your food or use when you went outside. Now there is electricity in many parts of Solu Khumbu, as well as gas lights.

Anyway, after my mother passed away, my sister sewed my mother's buttons on her own shirt. My mother's incarnation first came to Lawudo when he was about two years old. When my



sister held him in her arms, the boy immediately pointed to the buttons and said, “They are my buttons!” He remembered them from his past life.

Also, in many respects his behavior was exactly the same as my mother’s. Whenever she went to Lawudo’s meditation room, she used to first circumambulate it seven times. Then, when she went inside, the first thing she did was prostrate to His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s throne and then take a blessing by touching her head to the throne. Then she would take a blessing from the small place where I would sit. Then she would take a blessing from the altar where there are buddha statues. When my mother’s incarnation first came there, he did exactly the same thing.

At the gathering of many local people where they first met my mother’s incarnation—monks, nuns, laypeople, including my brother Sangay, who lives in Kathmandu—everyone offered scarves, *khatas*, to him. This is a traditional gesture of respect and thanks that one shows to lamas, *thangkas*, statues and scriptures, as well as an offering of good wishes, and is a practice of collecting merit. After you offer the scarf to a lama, they give it back to you as a blessing by putting it around your neck.

My mother’s incarnation did this to each person who offered a scarf—except his own father of that life. You see, in his past life, when he was my mother in Lawudo, she had had problems with this man. The only water supply was a mile’s walk away. One time we managed to get lengths of pipe, which we connected to the water source that brought the water closer to Lawudo. The water source was near a hermitage and the family that lived there was not so happy about our pipe, so they blocked it with earth. My mother was very upset with them! The father of my mother’s incarnation was from that family. So, you see, the imprint from the boy’s past life as my mother of being very upset was still

there, and he didn't want to offer the scarf back to his present father!

Another story is about my mother's close friend, Ang Puwa, who lived in Kathmandu. He came with my brother to the first meeting with my mother's incarnation—who had no idea that Ang Puwa would be there. The parents of my mother's incarnation served tea and *chang*, a kind of wine, to the guests. My mother's incarnation saw Ang Puwa and immediately said, "Ang Puwa, please have some, please have some!" He grasped the child and cried because he could not believe the incarnation would remember him, even his name. He was speechless.

### **Everything comes from the mind**

In the West, people don't talk about imprints from past lives being the cause of why some children are angry and others have a more compassionate nature. You can see that in one family different children have different characteristics and different perceptions of the same object. Even from birth, we can see it's like this. One child is born with more compassion and patience, and one child is born very impatient; one child naturally engages in harmful actions, another child naturally does not. So, the reason, the very clear logic for this is the past habits, which leave negative and positive imprints on the mind.

In Western culture, this is not part of our education; there is not much knowledge about the mind. But knowledge of the mind in the East is very developed, profound and vast. The omniscient one, Buddha—who is totally liberated from ignorance; liberated from all the errors of the mind, the defilements, the hallucinations; who is totally free from impure views and all the negative imprints; who is beyond all this, totally liberated—explained very clearly and extensively in his teachings about the nature of

the mind, the function of the mind and all the different thoughts and mental factors.

Subjects such as how the world is created by the mind are not developed in Western culture. In Buddha's psychology and philosophy, it is clearly explained how everything comes from karma, which is created by the mind. We have had beginningless lives, and any undesirable thing, or suffering, comes from negative imprints in the mind, and anything desirable, or happiness, comes from positive imprints in the mind.

Whatever is bad comes from past negative habits and imprints, and whatever is good comes from past positive habits and imprints. If you have the tendency to commit negative actions, or if you have them done to you, such as the ten nonvirtuous actions—killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, slander, harsh speech, gossiping, covetousness, ill will and heresy—it is because you have done them in past lives. And it's the same with virtuous actions. See **chapter 15**.

This is not only philosophy; it is a reality that you can see. Somebody who has clairvoyance can see what kind of past lives we had, what kind of practice we did.

### REMEMBER

- ▶ Our mind is beginningless and endless.
- ▶ Therefore we have had countless past lives.
- ▶ What we do now determines our future lives.
- ▶ Negative actions ripen as suffering.
- ▶ Positive actions ripen as happiness.
- ▶ Everything comes from the mind.



*White Tara is a buddha of long life. It is like a miracle to receive a human rebirth, like a dream come true.*

## We Must Not Waste This Rare and Precious Life

It is so rare to achieve the human form because it is very difficult to create the main cause of it, the practice of pure morality. The vast majority of all beings haven't lived in pure morality, let alone taken vows of morality.

### **There are so many sentient beings in the lower realms**

Recently I went to a big lake near the border of Canada. We sat on a carpet on the grass and had a picnic. I noticed that there were so many tiny insects. When the sun was shining you could see them, so many, millions of them, and when you walked on the grass they would jump up, trying to escape.

Scientists say there are twelve thousand different types of ants in the world—and that's just the ants! So can you imagine all the beings in the entire animal realm! It is unbelievable.

Then think of the number of sentient beings who are reborn in the intermediate state: it must be as many as there are blades of grass in the world.

The number of beings in every second who are reborn as hungry ghosts is as many as there are grains of sand at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

Then you'll realize that the number of beings in every second who are reborn in the hell realms is as many dust particles as there are on this earth.

What causes one to take rebirth as a suffering transmigratory being is nonvirtuous actions motivated by a delusion: ignorance, anger, attachment or self-cherishing thought and so forth. We create these negative karmas so many times every day. If we look at our actions in just one day, we can see clearly that almost all of them are done on the basis of these delusions. Almost all actions come from nonvirtue and the result is only suffering. Once we are reborn in the lower realms, it is extremely difficult to come back as a human.

In this life, from the time of our birth—actually since beginningless rebirths—we have created so many negative karmas that we have yet to experience, which we must purify, as I discuss in **chapters 15 and 16**.

### **Being human is like a miracle**

However, the number of sentient beings is equivalent to the particles of dust on the earth, and those that are reborn as human beings, as Buddha explained, are as few as the dust particles that remain beneath your fingernails after having scratched the earth: so few.

It is even rarer to get a special perfect human rebirth—as rare as the number of grains of rice that would stick to a piece of glass; or as few as the grains of rice that would stick to the tip of a needle: that is how rare it is.

It is so rare to achieve the human form because it is so difficult to create the main cause of it, the practice of pure morality. The vast majority of all beings haven't lived in pure morality, let alone taken vows of morality. See **chapter 14**.

It is like a miracle to receive a human rebirth, like a dream come true. And not only that: we have met the Dharma. Our permanent home has been the lower realms—we have only just

come from there! Having this opportunity, then, is like a dream; it's an impossible thing to have happened.

### **As humans we have so much potential**

We human beings have so much potential. We can receive education, far greater education than animals and other beings are capable of, much deeper and subtler. During this perfect human rebirth you can free yourself from future rebirth in the lower realms and can instead create the causes to receive a higher rebirth in the human realm, or as a deva, or even in the pure land of Buddha. You can learn to have a happy life, happy death and happy rebirth by purifying negative karma and creating good karma, virtuous actions.

More than that, you can practice the Lesser Vehicle path that is revealed in the four noble truths, as a result of which you can achieve liberation from samsara. Then you can practice the Mahayana teachings, which reveal the path to full enlightenment by way of bodhicitta and the six *paramitas*, the perfections. Then you can practice the tantric path, Tantrayana, including Highest Yoga Tantra, which is much quicker than the Paramitayana path, giving us the opportunity to achieve enlightenment in one brief lifetime of this degenerate time.

Right now, you have the opportunity to achieve all this by listening, reflecting and meditating on the teachings. All this is described in the lamrim; see **chapter 13**.

### **No chance to practice in the lower realms**

If you look at animals—chickens, tigers, cows and the other creatures—you'll notice that their attitude is only desire clinging to this life, seeking the happiness of this life, nothing else. Therefore all their actions are only nonvirtue.

There is no way for them to meet Dharma, to understand it, and to practice. Having taken an animal body, they are blocked from understanding the words, the meaning of Dharma. Even if you explain to them that happiness comes from virtue and that the meaning of virtue is actions motivated by non-ignorance, non-anger and non-attachment; even if you explained it to them for thousands of years, billions of eons, there is no way for them to understand. They cannot learn how to practice Dharma.

Look at the nature of their life, their motivation and conduct. You can see that they create only negative karma. Because of that they will die and be born again in the lower realms. It will go on and on like that.

### **The purpose of this precious human rebirth is to help others**

So you should think, “I *must* put all my effort into developing my mind in the complete path and achieving enlightenment. Even if I don’t achieve it in this life, I will achieve it in my next life. Even if it takes hundreds or thousands of lifetimes, even it takes eons, I will do it!”

Deep down in your heart there should be this strong determination that I *will* do it. No matter how difficult it is, no matter how long it takes, I will do it. Why? Because if you don’t do it, you will suffer in beginningless samsara without end. Without doing it, you make your suffering in samsara endless. That is totally crazy. That is the craziest, the most foolish, most ignorant thing. There is nothing more ignorant than that, nothing crazier than that.

Think especially, “Finally, if I don’t put all my effort into developing my mind in the complete path and achieving enlightenment, I can’t liberate others, I can’t help others—those

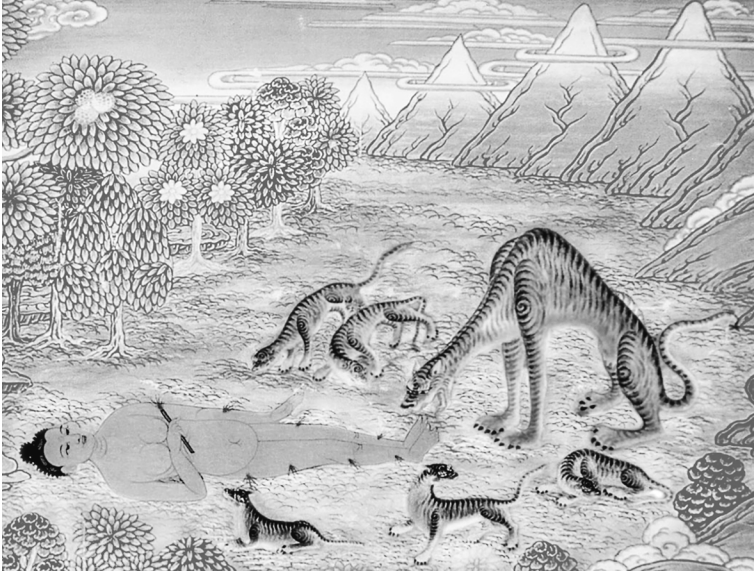


numberless sentient beings from whom I received all the past happiness of my beginningless rebirths, all my present happiness and all my future happiness, including liberation and enlightenment. Everything good comes from them, even the smallest pleasure in a dream. It is from these numberless sentient beings that I receive everything, so they are the most precious, most kind ones.”

In other words, the purpose of having taken this precious human body in this life is to benefit others. Any purpose other than working for sentient beings is not the meaning of life.

### **REMEMBER**

- ▶ To get a human birth is like a miracle, so rare.
- ▶ As a human being you have so much potential.
- ▶ It is a tragedy to waste this precious human life.
- ▶ Wasting it is using it to follow attachment and anger and harm others.
- ▶ The meaning of life is to use it to renounce suffering and its causes and to help others.



*In one of his previous lives, Shakyamuni Buddha offered his body to a starving mother tiger so that she wouldn't need to eat her own babies.*

## Even If You Have Only One Day Left to Live

Even if you have only one day left to live, you still have an incredible opportunity to make this human life most beneficial. Even if you have only one hour left, there are things you can do.

### **Our mind continues from life to life**

Death is when the mind separates from the body and it happens because we are under the control of delusions and karma. Then, after death, the mind takes another body, according to our past negative or positive actions, as we have discussed.

Sometimes we take a human body, but we can also take a different type of body. Sometimes it can be the body of a happy transmigratory being, besides that of a human, such as a worldly god. Or we can be born in a pure land, such as Amitabha Buddha's. Sometimes we can take a suffering body such as that of a hell being, hungry ghost or animal. We can also be reborn in the formless realm, where there is no physical body. The big question is: After death, which rebirth will our consciousness take? See **chapters 8 and 15**.

In reality, death can happen at any time, on any day. Even though you may have a date of execution, you could die before then. Death can happen at any moment, and there are so many things that can cause it.

It is very beneficial to think about this.

### Use this punishment

Our experiences of happiness and suffering depend on how our mind interprets them, which label we put on them, as I described in **chapter 2**. I also talk about it in detail in **chapter 11**. First, we label them and then we believe the label—it's then that they actually become suffering or happiness.

Because of this, what you would normally label suffering—such as your execution—can be transformed by you into great happiness, for yourself and others, not just temporal happiness but liberation from samsara and ultimate happiness, full enlightenment.

Training yourself to be able to transform your execution by seeing it as beneficial is such an incredible way of thinking. It is a great challenge, but by doing this you become a champion.

### How to get ready for death

Before death comes, I want to tell you how to make this life very meaningful, to ensure that you take at least another perfect human rebirth or rebirth in a pure land. You must prepare for death right now by practicing Dharma. There is no time to waste.

Even if you have only one day left to live, you still have an incredible opportunity to make this human life—which you have received just this one time—most beneficial. Even if you have only one hour left, there are things you can do.

(1) You can **take the five lay vows**: see **chapter 14**. In fact, you should do this as soon as possible; you can receive the vows—in person or on the phone—from someone at Liberation Prison Project. It is said in the teachings, “In this degenerate time, to keep even just one vow for one day has great advantage.”

(2) You could also **take the eight Mahayana precepts**, which are taken for twenty-four hours. In one commentary by a geshe

it says, “Even if one has only one hour left to live it is so beneficial, so meaningful, to take the eight precepts.” You can get the practice from the prison project.

(3) In **chapter 13** I give details about how to practice the **entire path to enlightenment, the lamrim**, precisely. The lamrim is the basis for subduing your mind and for receiving correct realizations. Please aim to achieve all four realizations of the lam rim—guru devotion, renunciation of this life, renunciation of the next life and bodhicitta and emptiness—or three realizations, or two or even one. Or aim to achieve close to a realization; then, in your next life you can get the realizations immediately.

(4) You must **purify negative karma** with the four opponent powers: see **chapters 15 and 16**.

Please make preparations for death by practicing every day.

### **What to do on the day of your execution**

On the day of your execution, the last thing to do before they execute you is to take complete refuge in the Compassion Buddha, Chenrezig. Think of Chenrezig, visualize him and totally rely on Chenrezig. Put your palms together in the mudra of prostration to Chenrezig and request to be guided by Chenrezig in all future lifetimes until enlightenment. This becomes your main refuge.

See **chapter 17** for a meditation on Chenrezig. Or you can use any other buddha that you feel close to.

Then think: “May I experience all the suffering of all the people who have the karma to be executed; and may I experience all the suffering of those who perform the execution. May I experience this by myself, alone. And because of this, may others be free from all sufferings and receive all peerless happiness up to enlightenment.” Continuously think this way, over and over again.

See **chapter 18** for the meditation on **giving and taking**, *tonglen*.

It's a method of exchanging yourself for others. It is incredibly powerful for you to die with the thought of wanting to experience the suffering of being executed for others—**taking** upon yourself their suffering—and of **giving** all your happiness to them.

### **Have compassion for those who execute you**

Especially feel strong compassion for those who have the job of executing you, as well as the people who have been involved in giving you this sentence: the prosecutors, the jury, the judge. By creating this negative karma, which comes from attachment, anger, ignorance and, particularly, the self-cherishing thought, they will have to experience the karma of being executed by others for five hundred lifetimes, just from this one action of killing you.

### **To die with compassion is incredible**

His Holiness the Dalai Lama says that dying with bodhicitta, the thought of benefiting others, is a “self-supporting action” and nobody needs to pray for you; you will be guided by yourself.

You are dying for others, which means you are not dying for yourself. In a previous life, Shakyamuni Buddha offered his body to a starving tigress and her five cubs; he gave up his life because he could not bear their suffering. And Jesus took on the suffering of all sentient beings when he died.

One great holy being, Geshe Chekawa, a Tibetan meditator, always made prayers to be reborn in the hell realms for the benefit of sentient beings—he would rather have the suffering than others have it. But as he was passing away, even though he had made those prayers, he instead had a vision of the pure land of Buddha, which meant he would be reborn there. In pure lands there is no suffering, no old age, no sickness, no death,

no thoughts such as anger, jealousy and so forth, and there are the most pure, perfect enjoyments—there is not even the word “suffering” in a pure land, which is why it is called pure. He was reborn there because of his compassion and his prayers to be reborn in the hell realms for the sake of the sentient beings, who are experiencing so much suffering.

If you die with compassion, you will never be reborn in the lower realms. It is so, so beneficial to die with the thought of benefiting other sentient beings. It is the best way to die, the best-quality death.

### **REMEMBER**

- ▶ Death can come at any time.
- ▶ Happy rebirths come from virtuous karma and suffering rebirths come from nonvirtuous karma.
- ▶ At the time of death, rely on the Compassion Buddha.
- ▶ Dying with compassion is the best way to die.
- ▶ If you're being executed, use this punishment to cultivate compassion for all the others being executed and, especially, for those who are executing you.



*We go from this life to the next life, and the next, and the next, continuously experiencing the suffering of gods and demi-gods, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts and hell beings.*



## Identify Suffering and Its Causes, Then Know How to End Them

Because we want the smallest happiness, even in our dreams,  
and the smallest comfort in our daily life, we should abandon  
even the smallest negative karma and practice  
even the smallest virtue.

### Three Levels of Suffering

There are three levels of suffering, and they are caused by (1) karma and (2) delusions.

#### 1. The Suffering of Pain

If we die with a nonvirtuous thought such as anger, or attachment or self-cherishing, we will be reborn in the hell, hungry ghost or animal realms. While we are in the lower realms we continually create more negative karma, which will result in our again being reborn in the lower realms. In just one day in the lower realms we collect so much negative karma.

The suffering experiences of this life as a human are also referred to as the suffering of pain—the suffering of being born, the suffering of old age, the suffering of sickness and the suffering of death.

Nevertheless, if you put together all the suffering in the human realm and compare it to the suffering in the eight hot hells and eight cold hells, there is no comparison. The suffering in the

human realm is actually great pleasure compared to the suffering in even the first hell realm, where the suffering is the lightest.

## **2. The Suffering of Change**

What most people in the world believe is suffering is very limited; there is so much suffering that they are not aware of. What they want to be liberated from is only the extremely gross suffering, the suffering of pain.

But there is a subtler level of suffering called the suffering of change, which refers to higher rebirths, such as humans. And while we are in the human realm (and even in the lower realms), the suffering of change also refers to temporary samsaric pleasures, such as the pleasure of food, the pleasure of sex, the pleasure of clothing, the pleasure of music, the pleasure of drugs and so forth.

When you analyze samsaric pleasures you will discover that in reality they are only suffering. They are in the nature of suffering because they do not last. They are just like a hallucination: because of our ignorance they appear as pleasure, even though they're not. This pleasure is labeled on the base, which is suffering. This is why our lives are continually drawn into suffering, from life to life. Our ignorance blocks us from seeing this. Our ignorance also blocks us from seeking the true path and recognizing the method to achieve the happiness we want.

Samsaric pleasures are in the nature of impermanence, decaying minute by minute, second by second, unlike Dharma happiness, which can continue and be completed. Samsaric happiness cannot continue and cannot be completed. Dharma happiness continues until we achieve liberation from samsara forever and, finally, the peerless happiness of buddhahood.

### **3. Pervasive compounding suffering**

Our aggregates, our body and mind, being under the control of delusions and karma are therefore pervaded by suffering. They come from delusions and karma and give rise to more delusions and karma, and therefore are in the nature of suffering.

Because these aggregates are in the nature of pervasive compounding suffering, they become the cause to experience both the **suffering of pain** and the **suffering of change** again and again.

We go from this life to the next life, and the next, and the next, continuously experiencing the suffering of gods and demi-gods, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts and hell beings; it goes on and on.

#### **The solution to the first level of suffering: the suffering of pain**

The answer, the solution to stopping the suffering of pain, is to stop taking suffering rebirths and to take happy rebirths. For this, we must not create the causes of it again, which is negative karma. We can accomplish this by living in vows. See **chapter 14**.

And we must also purify negative karma that we've already created, preventing it from ripening as further suffering. See **chapters 15 and 16**.

#### **The solution to the second level of suffering: the suffering of change**

In order to stop the suffering of change, we must **give up attachment**. See **chapter 9**.

### **The solution to the third level of suffering: pervasive compounding suffering**

In order to stop being born in samsara altogether we must **realize emptiness**. In other words, we must cut the root of all suffering, this samsara—self-grasping. First, there is the self-grasping of the person: holding the “I” as truly existent, as real, as existing from its own side; and, second, the self-grasping of phenomena, the aggregates: holding the aggregates as real, as existing from their own side, not as merely labeled by the mind. I talk more about this in **chapter 11**.

The wisdom realizing emptiness is the *only thing* that cuts the root of samsara and can remove, cease, all the delusions, including the seed or cause of delusions, the negative imprints in the mind.

When you experience the total cessation of suffering and all the causes of suffering, then there is liberation from samsaric rebirths, even the upper realms.

### **Liberation is not nothingness**

Liberation does not mean we become nothingness, it does not mean that we disappear. Not only does our body not disappear but our mind also does not disappear. It does not mean that our mind becomes non-existent; it is not like that.

Liberation means we achieve total control over our body and mind, not only the gross body and mind but also subtle body and mind. We are free from all the gross and subtle defilements, the wrong concepts, the delusions, as well as the actions (karma) that follow from them. We are liberated totally from the aggregates (the body and mind), whose nature is suffering, because they are contaminated by the seed of delusion. This seed is the foundation for the sufferings of change and pain.

 **REMEMBER**

- ▶ Give up the suffering of pain by living in vows (**chapter 14**) and purifying negative karma (**chapters 15 and 16**).
- ▶ Give up the suffering of change by renouncing samsara, in particular attachment (**chapter 9**).
- ▶ Give up pervasive compounding suffering and achieve liberation by realizing emptiness (**chapter 11**).
- ▶ Achieve bodhicitta (**chapters 10 and 12**) and, in general, create merit (**chapters 14 through 21**).
- ▶ It's all in the lamrim (**chapter 13**).



*Maitreya, the future buddha—maitri means “loving kindness”—said that bodhisattvas never get discouraged in helping sentient beings, even if it takes thousands of ten million eons.*

## There Is Nothing to Be Attached To!

Because of attachment you cling to the person's body. . . .  
But all you're doing is holding on to your own hallucination,  
you're attached to your own projection, the exaggeration  
made up by your own mind.

### **Attachment is a deep habit**

You mentioned in your letter the habit of attachment to sex, how difficult it is for you. Of all the delusions, you have to understand how unbelievably strong the habit of attachment is. The habit of attachment to sex, desiring sex, didn't begin in this life. It is from past lives. In fact, it didn't have a beginning; it is beginningless. From beginningless rebirths you have had this mind habituated to attachment to the opposite sex and to sexual pleasure.

Of course, it is not necessarily always the *opposite* sex; I am not including lesbians or gays. This is just a general explanation, and once you understand the reasoning, the basics are the same, whether you identify as heterosexual, gay or lesbian, etc.

Attachment to sex is a causative phenomenon. It arises in the mind because of the habit from having done it before. And then there is the condition, the object of attachment, in your case the body of the opposite sex. Every time attachment arises—attachment to anything—it leaves an imprint on the mental continuum, like planting a seed, and that causes attachment to rise again. That leads to the action. Then again, the same problem: that action leaves imprints on the mental continuum.

We become more and more familiar with the habit and end up engaging only in nonvirtue.

### **All our thoughts and actions are imprinted on our consciousness**

There are two things: imprints in our mind left by attachment and imprints left by ignorance. Because of attachment you cling to the person's body, and because of ignorance you hold on to it as real. I talk more about this in **chapter 11**. This is why it is difficult to separate from the person. But all you're doing is holding on to your own hallucination, you're attached to your own projection, the exaggeration made up by your own mind.

There are so many imprints in our mind; our consciousness records experiences like a camera does. The mental continuum is like a film that from beginningless rebirths has had countless imprints put on it by attachment. It is beginningless, like the chicken and the egg. Due to past imprints, attachment arises, which leaves further imprints. You see the opposite sex, then you project, then you believe. The imprint of attachment is actualized, and again attachment arises.

This habituation makes our future lives so difficult. "Future lives" means not just one life, but *all* the future lives. With these habits, our suffering of samsara has no end. It's endless—not only endless lower-realm suffering, but endless suffering in human rebirths as well.

Again and again you will engage in all those negative actions with attachment. There will be no end to other sentient beings complaining about you and no end to the police and the judge and others having to put you in prison. There will be no end. Why? Because of the habituated mind of attachment.

It is mentioned by Buddha in *The Sutra of One Hundred Actions*:



That with which we are habituated is always made  
familiar by nonvirtue.

Because of that, again, one relies on nonvirtue

And engages in nonvirtue

And follows nonvirtue.

Because of that, again, in the future, one relies on  
nonvirtue

And engages in nonvirtue

And follows nonvirtue.

Think about this quotation, remember it every day, again and again.

### **With attachment there is no wisdom, no compassion**

There is no freedom, no peace, when you are overwhelmed by attachment. The mind is so uncontrolled. It leads to sexual misconduct and other negative actions. Because the motivation is nonvirtuous, the actions become nonvirtuous, which causes suffering in the lower realms.

And because the mind involved in sexual attachment is totally unconscious, totally confused, there is no compassion. This means that the motivation is only self-cherishing thought, pleasure for oneself.

### **Analyze the body: there is nothing to be attached to!**

When we're attached to someone, we're usually attached to their body. Of course, it is not necessarily always the body. Sometimes we're attached to the voice, a singsong voice, let's say, or to their knowledge or intelligence. Sometimes we are attached to their personality, their sense of humor, even their smell.

When it's the body, attachment has a lot to do with the face.

You believe there is a truly existent face, not merely labeled by your mind. This projection exaggerates a beautiful hair style, beautiful nose, beautiful cheeks, nice this, nice that. But it's just your interpretation. Your mind makes up "beautiful."

First you exaggerate, then attachment arises, then you believe "this is beautiful." Not only does your mind label it that, but you *believe* it. Attachment clings to that view and it's hard to separate from it. This shows that, from the object's side, there is nothing to be attached to. It is a projection of your own mind.

The object your ignorance holds as real—the body you're attached to as beautiful—doesn't exist. Ignorance holds on to it as not merely labeled, then, appearing beautiful, it becomes the object that you're attached to and you sink into it like oil absorbing into paper.

Perhaps you think the skin is beautiful. But if you look at the skin under a microscope it will appear differently than without a microscope—it looks like mountains. There is no truly existent skin. It is just a collection of cells. There is no beautiful skin from the side of the skin, not even the slightest atom is there from its own side. How you see the skin is according to your view; it comes from your own mind; it is your own mind's projection.

Now, if you take off the skin, if the skin is separated from the body and put aside, suddenly, there is nothing to be attached to. Without skin, there is no way to be attached to the rest of the body. Without skin, it would be shocking, it would be incredibly shocking!

Let's say the body you are attached to smells of poop—the same body, the same shape, same style of hair, same nose, cheeks, lips, but it smells. You wouldn't be attached to it then, would you? Or let's say there is blood coming out of the body—there is certainly no attachment to that. In fact, you'd be frightened!

There is also attachment to the organ of the opposite sex. That is due to imprints from past lives, the imprint left on the mind by attachment to the opposite sex. This time you are a male with a penis, but in the next life when you become a woman, let's say, your karmic view of what you are attached to might now be the man's organ.

These are some of the logical reasons that prove that there is nothing from the body's side to be attached to. We need to understand that there is nothing coming from *there*.

### **The objects of our attachment change because our view changes**

Also, the object that we're attached to now does not always remain the object of our attachment. This happens for everybody, whether they have received teachings on meditation and have consciously practiced seeing the object differently or not. One day the object no longer seems attractive to us.

Another case to consider is this. For a person who isn't a lesbian, or isn't gay, there wouldn't be any attraction to someone of the same sex, would there? But if, let's say, they become gay or lesbian, now they have a view that they didn't have before. The mind changes its projection.

Or let's say you are not attached to a particular person. Then, after a while they are very kind to you, nice to you. They give you lots of gifts; whatever you like, they give you. Now, even though there was no attachment before, all of a sudden your view changes. Suddenly, they appear beautiful to you; they become an object of attachment. Now your view is totally different.

Before that, you see, the karma of seeing that person's body as beautiful, the imprint left by attachment projecting the person's body as beautiful, had not ripened. Now, suddenly, today,

the karma ripens. Suddenly, this unbelievably strong desire for that person's body arises. There is a sudden huge change in your mind. Now you have a different view of the same person, which you didn't have before. Attachment now exaggerates the beauty of their body, and you find it difficult to separate from the person.

### **Our mind makes things up, but we believe that what we see has nothing to do with us!**

It's clear, then, that there is no beautiful body from its own side. It is a total mind-creation; your own mind creates the object. It does not exist from its own side. It came from the negative imprint left by attachment from the past. It is just the view of your karma; what you are attached to is only your own karmic view; only what you think.

You are attached to whatever your mind labels, you are attached to your own view, but you believe, totally, that it has nothing to do with you, that nothing came from your mind, that it came from the object of your attachment. This is a total hallucination.

You need to see that there is nothing from the side of the object. There is nothing existing from its own side. It is your own projection, coming from your mind, labeled according to your own karmic view. It is a concept made up by your mind.

### **Always dissatisfied**

The other problem with attachment is the dissatisfied mind. You're not satisfied with the pleasure you had before, so you desire more pleasure or better pleasure. The mind is never satisfied with the previous sensation.

And the pleasure doesn't last, so you want to repeat the act again. There is always expectation, always looking for pleasure that will bring satisfaction. But no matter how many minutes,

hours, days, weeks, months or years you try for that, you will never get satisfaction.

If you follow attachment, even in one billion years you will never get satisfaction. Even if you owned the whole world, including the sun, the moon and the planets, even if you possessed them all, still you wouldn't get satisfaction.

This dissatisfaction is the heaviest suffering, the biggest problem in people's lives in the West. In fact, the more you have, the unhappier you are. There is only suffering inside, no inner peace, no happiness. All this comes from the nonvirtuous thought of attachment.

### **But attachment can be removed**

You can decide to see the body of the person as a dependent arising. Your view of the body is not something that is permanent; it's not something that you can't do anything about. It is not like that. Therefore, there is no question that with meditation on the teachings, you can stop attachment arising toward the object of your attachment, the body.

Then, when you reach the levels of the path to enlightenment such as the right-seeing path and the path of meditation (there are five paths: of merit, preparation, right-seeing, meditation and no more learning), there is no question that you can gradually cease the delusions altogether with the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness. Actualizing the right-seeing path removes the intellectually-acquired delusions, and then actualizing the path of meditation ceases the simultaneously-born delusions.

### **Recognize attachment when it arises in the mind**

When attachment arises, be aware of it. Be able to recognize what is happening while it is happening, knowing that it is your

own mind labeling, then believing in it. “This is my karmic view. What I am attached to is my karmic view.” This is helpful. Then you are aware of the problems you are creating in your life that you didn’t have before.

It’s kind of a shock to discover there is no such thing there to be attached to! This helps to kick the habit. Meditating in this way is the method to make your mind free from desire, free from this habit that has continued from beginningless rebirths. You need to keep your mind immersed in this by meditating on it every day. Remember it again and again.

### **REMEMBER**

- ▶ We make up the object of our attachment.
- ▶ Attachment comes from the habit of previous attachment.
- ▶ The object of attachment changes.
- ▶ Attachment dulls our mind.
- ▶ Because of attachment we are always dissatisfied.
- ▶ With attachment there is no compassion.
- ▶ Recognize attachment when it arises in the mind.

## Without Compassion Life is Meaningless

Not being in prison isn't the purpose of your life. You are in prison to develop compassion for other sentient beings.

### **So many sentient beings suffer for us**

When we realize that being caught up in samsara is the most frightening thing, we won't be able to stand it for even a second.

But not only that. So many sentient beings have to suffer for us, for our comfort, for our survival. So many sentient beings suffer so that we can enjoy shelter. So many sentient beings are killed so that we can have clothes. So many sentient beings have to die so that we can eat and drink. Think of just the chickens—millions and millions of chickens are killed in the world every day just for food. And so many sentient beings have to create negative karma by killing the chickens and all the other beings for our food and our clothes. So many beings get crushed and die when we drive a car. So many sentient beings suffer many hardships for us.

Therefore, you must listen, reflect, meditate on and practice the path that has been revealed by the wise, compassionate, kind, omniscient one, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Only by doing this can you be liberated from this samsaric prison so that other sentient beings don't have to suffer for you, don't have to create negative karma for you, don't have to harm others for you. And not only that. You also have the responsibility to liberate other sentient beings as well.

The purpose of life, therefore, is to be most beneficial for sentient beings. Not being in prison isn't the purpose of your life. You are in prison to develop compassion for other sentient beings.

### **Without compassion life is meaningless**

Even if a person lived for many eons, if they have no compassion, if they do not help other sentient beings, their life will be empty and meaningless.

If one has a lot of power but no compassion, the power is dangerous, for oneself and for others. Without compassion, power is used by the ego, by self-cherishing.

It doesn't matter how much education we have, if there is no good heart, no compassion, no thought to benefit others, life is empty and meaningless. All the education is used just to develop selfish ego and delusions. There is no meaning in having an education without a good heart, the thought of benefiting others.

Even if a person who is not in prison is able to travel the whole world, going wherever they want, doing whatever they want, if they don't have a good heart, the thought to benefit others, their life has no meaning.

It doesn't matter how much wealth a person has, life is empty if there is no compassion.

Without compassion there are only personality clashes because of anger, jealousy and the like. Without compassion we are overwhelmed by problems, like a mouse who's caught in a trap and dies, an elephant who's stuck in the mud and suffocates, a fly who's caught in a spider's web and is eaten alive or a moth who's attracted by a candle flame and drowns in the hot wax.

Without compassion in your heart, your life is enmeshed in problems that continue until you die. Without compassion, all



you have is ego, which harms numberless sentient beings, both directly and indirectly, including those in the whole world, in your country, your own parents, your partner, your children and yourself.

But with compassion you will become the source of peace and happiness, both temporary and ultimate, for numberless sentient beings, including those in the whole world, in your country, your own parents, your partner, your children and, lastly, yourself.

### **Experience problems with compassion**

As we discussed in **chapter 7**, you can use the situation of being in prison—even being executed—as a means to develop compassion by exchanging yourself for others: taking upon yourself sentient beings’ sufferings and the causes of suffering and giving your own merits and happiness to them. See the meditation on **giving and taking** in **chapter 18**.

You can decide to experience prison on behalf of all the sentient beings who are in prison now and who have the karma to be in prison in the future. Think, “I am experiencing prison on behalf of all sentient beings so that they don’t have to experience it. Let them have the happiness of enlightenment and all the happiness up to enlightenment. I am experiencing prison for all numberless other sentient beings.” From time to time, every day, think like that.

If you have cancer or AIDS, for example, you can experience your illness with compassion, for the sake of other sentient beings, to bring them all happiness up to and including enlightenment. Thus your sickness becomes part of your path to enlightenment.

Or, if you have a bad reputation, you can experience it for sentient beings.

In this way all your problems—being in prison, failed relationships, illness, business failure, unemployment, a bad reputation—become a special, heroic practice. Before, such experiences were something that you disliked and only wanted to get rid of. But now, with your practice of compassion, they become highly desirable, special, powerful, even necessary, for the development of your mind in the path.

### **Wanting happiness for others brings happiness for yourself**

Devoting your life to achieving happiness for others is also the best way to achieve your own happiness. The more you practice compassion, the greater the peace and happiness in your heart. When you sincerely practice kindness to others, even if you don't expect it, naturally the result is that they are kind to you, are happy with you, listen to you.

You become like the rising sun, illuminating all. In this way, you achieve happiness now, every day, every hour, every minute. By continuing to live your life like this, you go from happiness to happiness and, at the end of your life, you will have no regrets, not the slightest fear of dying, only incredible enjoyment, happiness.

### **Compassion can heal illness**

In recent times, in Seattle, one student had cancer that had spread throughout her body. The doctors were afraid to operate; they felt that it was too risky. So she did the practice of exchanging self for others, as I mention above. See **chapter 18**.

When she eventually went to the hospital for a check-up, they did not find any cancer. The doctors were completely amazed. She explained what she had practiced, but they could not under-

stand how this meditation could cure her cancer totally. This is one subject they cannot explain.

### **Compassion is the main cause of bodhicitta**

When someone achieves bodhicitta, they become a bodhisattva. In that second they become the spiritual heir of all the buddhas: they receive the name.

So much merit, unbelievable, unbelievable merit is needed to actualize bodhicitta, the root of which is compassion. This compassion fuels the skies of benefit that derive from bodhicitta, like rocket fuel powers a spaceship or electricity generated by a power station lights up an entire city.

It is compassion that has already brought numberless sentient beings to enlightenment in the past, is bringing numberless sentient beings to enlightenment at present and will bring numberless sentient beings to enlightenment in the future. It is compassion that makes numberless buddhas do perfect, unmitigated work for numberless sentient beings until they achieve enlightenment. And it is compassion that causes all buddhas to have omniscient mind and the perfect power to benefit all sentient beings.

Bodhisattvas are the supreme object of offerings of all sentient beings: we collect inconceivable merits when we make offerings to them. We collect so much merit just by seeing them, or hearing their voice, or even when they give us something, or touch us.

Even if we harm a bodhisattva, because of their realizations they only benefit us in return. They pray for good things to happen to us. There is a saying in relation to bodhisattvas: "If you can't make a connection with them by doing good things, then make a connection by doing harm." This is not saying you must

harm a bodhisattva, but if it does happen, it is worthwhile. In return you are guided by that bodhisattva from life to life; they only benefit you, only pray for you.

For example, when the Buddha was a bodhisattva he sacrificed his blood for five *yakshas*; they drank his blood. In return the bodhisattva prayed that in a future life they would be his direct disciples, receive teachings from him and, of course, that they would go forth to liberation and enlightenment. Due to that karmic connection, in the next life they became his disciples as human beings and received their first Dharma teachings from him at Deer Park in Sarnath, on the four noble truths, the first turning of the Dharma wheel.

### **The benefits of bodhicitta are unbelievable!**

With bodhicitta you can completely dry up the ocean of samsaric suffering and its causes and achieve liberation and enlightenment because it helps you gain the wisdom directly realizing emptiness, which eradicates both gross and subtle defilements.

Bodhicitta is what allows arya bodhisattvas to abandon the sufferings of samsara, including rebirth, old age, sickness and death, by achieving the right-seeing path (the third of the five I mentioned before).

Even if you have gained the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, the highest you can achieve without bodhicitta is liberation from suffering and its causes, *nirvana*. These arhats have many inconceivable qualities, but they still have the remainder of the suffering aggregates.

Bodhisattvas abandon the thought of achieving their own liberation from the ocean of samsaric suffering and its causes—delusions and karma—as one discards used toilet paper, having

not an atom of interest in it. They have only aversion to gaining the happiness of nirvana for themselves alone.

Bodhicitta is the door to the Mahayana path to enlightenment and the root of the limitless qualities of a buddha's holy body, speech and mind. Bodhicitta allows bodhisattvas to complete the accumulation of the two types of merit, transcendental wisdom and virtue; and is the cause of their achieving the two holy bodies, *rupakaya* (the holy body of form) and *dharmakaya* (the holy body of mind), which is the ultimate goal. The sole purpose of achieving these two holy bodies is to be able to do perfect work for all sentient beings.

Even though there are numberless sentient beings and it can take a bodhisattva three countless great eons to complete the accumulations that enable them to bring every single one to enlightenment, what gives them the determination to do so is bodhicitta. No matter how many eons it takes to get even one sentient being to generate a single virtuous thought, the bodhisattvas will try to make it happen without being discouraged. In the *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras*, Maitreya (the future buddha) said,

In order to ripen even one virtuous thought [in the mind of a sentient being], the bodhisattva, the Victorious Ones' heir, whose mind is stabilized in supreme perseverance for highly ripening sentient beings, does not get discouraged, even if it takes thousands of ten million eons.

The courageous bodhisattvas are able to bear all the hardships of working for sentient beings, no matter how great they are, even

if it costs them their life. Since bodhisattvas see how beneficial it is to bear hardship in order to work for others, they are not only able to bear it but they experience limitless joy as well. For bodhisattvas, even dying as a result of working for others is like drinking nectar, or like the delight of a swan when plunging into a cool pond on a hot day.

### **Your life belongs to others**

You ask what the best practice is for you. What all the numberless buddhas found when they checked for sentient beings was that bodhicitta is the best practice. My answer to your question is the same. I cannot answer differently from what all the buddhas have said in the past when they checked what was most beneficial.

The practice and realization of bodhicitta is the most important thing in life because it fulfills not only your own wishes for happiness but also those of all other sentient beings—each and every one.

With bodhicitta, you achieve all the happiness of this life, the happiness of all the coming future lives, the ultimate happiness of liberation from samsara and, finally, you attain full enlightenment. Then there is no limit to your ability to benefit all sentient beings.

Think of all the human beings in just one country, the many millions—you are able to cause happiness up to enlightenment for every one of them. You are able to cause all this happiness for all the human beings in this world and all the human beings in other universes. For numberless human beings you are able to cause all this happiness.

Imagine all the various types of animals and insects there are. The ants, for example, as I mentioned before: in one spot, under

one stone, in one ants' nest, there are so many ants, countless thousands of ants. Then in one field, or on one mountain, in one country, in all the countries of this world—we can't imagine how many there are. You are able to cause all happiness up to enlightenment for them.

Imagine all the numberless sentient beings you can see only through a microscope. Your bodhicitta is able to cause all happiness up to enlightenment for all these sentient beings.

From you, from your bodhicitta, the numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, gods and demi-gods can receive all levels of happiness up to enlightenment. Isn't that incredible?

You can't imagine what your bodhicitta can do! What else is there in life to enjoy? It doesn't matter whether you are in prison or at home. Wherever you are, by practicing bodhicitta you have the best life, the happiest life, the most meaningful life. It doesn't matter where you are, your mind can practice this.

### **Getting out of prison is not the purpose of your life**

Remember: getting out of prison is not the purpose of your life. Being rich is not the purpose of life. Being healthy is not the purpose of life. Having a long life is not the purpose of life. These things are not the meaning of life. The purpose of life is to be beneficial for others, useful for sentient beings. If you are able to make your life beneficial for sentient beings, to bring them happiness, then your purpose in life will be achieved.

Our life belongs to sentient beings. Therefore I advise you to live your life with a bodhicitta motivation, so that everything you do, as much as possible, is to free sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and for them to achieve enlightenment.

To accomplish this you need to achieve full enlightenment,

therefore do everything—study, practice, meditate, eat, walk, sleep, sit—with this motivation.

 **REMEMBER**

- ▶ So many sentient beings suffer just so that we can exist.
- ▶ Without compassion life is meaningless.
- ▶ Experience problems with compassion.
- ▶ Wanting happiness for others brings happiness for ourselves.
- ▶ Compassion can heal illness.
- ▶ Bodhicitta comes from compassion.
- ▶ Your life belongs to sentient beings.



## Everything Is Merely Labeled by the Mind

In reality, if you analyze, there is no real I *there* that has gone to prison. Nobody can put *that* I in prison, because that I, which appears to us as real, as existing from its own side, and is believed in, doesn't exist at all.

### The "I" cannot be found

Not only is the object of attachment a concept; the "I" is also a concept. First of all, there is the I that is merely imputed by the mind, because there is the base, the aggregates, the association of body and mind (if elaborated, there are five aggregates). When the body is kept in prison along with the mind—the mind is dwelling within the body—the mind simply labels, merely imputes, "I am in prison." The mind merely imputes that, then believes it; the mind believes, "I am in prison, I have been put in prison."

In reality, if you analyze, there is no real I *there* that has gone to prison. Nobody can put *that* I in prison, because that I, which appears to us as real, as existing from its own side, and is believed in, doesn't exist at all.

*That* I doesn't exist at all; nowhere can you find it. Neither the body is I, nor the mind is I. If you analyze, you will find that each of the aggregates is not that I. Even the collection of the five aggregates is not the I. That real I also cannot be found *on* the aggregates, which is the base. It cannot be found from the tip of the hair down to the toes. It cannot be found either outside the

body or inside the body. It cannot be found. It exists nowhere, not in the sky, nor in the ground; nowhere. It cannot be found.

By scientifically checking, you can see that it cannot be found—“scientifically checking” means using reasoning. With wisdom, scientifically, what you realize after analyzing is that the I is totally non-existent, it is totally empty. By logical reasoning, it cannot be found. That emptiness is the ultimate nature of the I, the very nature of the I, the reality.

### **How the mind projects**

How does labeling happen? For example, if you ask yourself, “What am I doing?” you think, “I am sitting,” or “I am talking,” or “I am meditating”—sleeping, eating, whatever.

First, the mind sees the aggregates and sees what action the aggregates are doing—the body is doing the action of sitting, the mind is doing the action of meditating—then, according to that activity, the mind makes up that label.

Then, second, right after that, because of the subtle negative imprint in our mind of grasping at true existence in the past, the mind projects, decorates. Even though “I am sitting” is merely imputed by the mind, the next second, when what the mind has merely imputed appears back to us, it does not appear as merely labeled by the mind; it appears as *not* merely labeled by the mind. It appears as something real, as existing from its own side. Then we believe it. It is not only that our mind labels it, we *believe* it.

First there appears a *real* I that is *really* sitting, talking, sleeping, meditating. Then the mind imputes “I am sitting,” “I am talking,” etc. And then the mind immediately decorates, projects true existence onto the action—not only the I appears as real, the action appears as real as well. The mind makes it real, as existing from its own side.

It is like this for all phenomena. We think everything is real because of the subtle negative imprint of grasping at true existence in our minds. But in reality, everything is empty. The I is empty, the aggregates are empty, the senses, the objects of the senses, the actions—everything is totally empty. There is no such thing as these phenomena. They don't have true existence at all. They don't have the slightest atom of true existence. All this is projected, false, a total hallucination. All this is totally non-existent.

This emptiness of true existence is the ultimate nature of all phenomena.

### **We create our own world**

Basically, we create our own world. As we discussed before in relation to attachment to a person's body, you believe that the beautiful body exists from its own side. But that is totally wrong. If the beauty existed from the side of the object, not projected by your own mind, that person's body should be seen as beautiful by everybody, by every living being.

When you compare different bodies, you will say that one is more beautiful than another; or this one is ugly compared to that one. This makes it very clear that "beautiful" and "ugly" come from your mind, they don't come from the object's side at all. If ugly and beautiful existed from their own side, every human being should have the same view, everybody should have the same appearance. But they do not.

### **We label things, then believe in them**

Let's make this point a little bit clearer. When you were a child, before you were taught the alphabet by your school teacher, you saw what was written on the blackboard as a drawing or a design;

you didn't see that this is A, this is B, this is C, etc. You didn't see those designs as those letters. At that time, all you saw was just a design. Once your teacher introduced you to A, B, C, D, your mind imputed A, B, C, D on those designs, then you believed in those labels. Only after that was there the *appearance* of A to you; only then did you see A. Your mind labeled A, then you believed in it.

Now you can see that the A that you are seeing came from your mind. Your mind imputed A and believed in it. It started with that. The whole process started with that; it came from your mind.

But when this A appears to you, right after the mere imputation by the mind calling it A, it appears as if it is *there* on those lines. Why is that? That is the big question. Why does it appear *there* on those lines—in other words, why does it appear as existing from its own side, as existing truly? Because of the imprint of past ignorance grasping at true existence.

### **The lines are not the “A”; they are the base of the label “A”**

Each line of the design is not A. Even all the lines together are not A, because all the lines together are the base upon which your mind imputes A. If that base, those lines, were already A, then the very first time you saw that design, before you were introduced to A, you would know that it is A. But the first time you saw it, you didn't see A, you just saw the lines. Only after you were introduced to it, and your mind made up the label A, called it that, only then was there the appearance of A—then you saw A. That very clearly proves that the whole design is not A. It is the base to be labeled A.

The question is whether it is labeled by mind or not. Yes, it is labeled by mind. Without the mind labeling A, A doesn't exist. A

is labeled by mind—what is called A is a name, and the name has to come from the mind, the name has to be imputed by the mind. Right from the beginning, what caused your mind to label A? You have to have seen some design first, then your mind labeled A.

### **The aggregates are not “father”; they are the base of the label “father”**

Before you label “father” you have to see those particular aggregates, that particular shape of body, that face and so forth. You recognize those aggregates, then your mind labels “father.” You don’t label “father” before seeing those particular aggregates—the shape of the body that performs the function of father for you; you don’t say, “Oh, father is coming into the house” unless you see those aggregates. First you see that particular body, that connection to you, then you label “father,” and only after that do you *see* “father.”

It is very clear, then, that you don’t see father before seeing the base, the aggregates. You don’t label “father” before seeing those particular aggregates, which are the base.

Nor do you label “father” at the same time that you see the base. Believing that it happens at the same time is totally wrong. This is already proven by experience. In order for your mind to label “father is coming into the room,” you have to first see the aggregates coming into the room. You see “father” only after seeing the base, the aggregates.

### **You label the body “beautiful” and then you believe it**

It is exactly the same with the body of the person you’re attached to—you are seeing a body as beautiful. The evolution is exactly the same. Your mind labeled “beautiful” and then believed in it. If your mind did not label it as beautiful and then believe that it

is beautiful in the first place, there would be no appearance of beauty, you wouldn't see beauty. It is clear with this explanation. It all starts from your mind.

### **The base and the label are not separate, but they are different**

So, same with the A. *First* you see the design, *then* your mind labels A, *then* you see A. Therefore, that design is not A. Rather, it is the base upon which we label A.

This point is very important. The base is not the label; they are different phenomena. The base and the label do not exist *separately*, but they exist differently. It is extremely important to differentiate the label and the base. Seeing the base and the label as indifferentiable—*that* is the object to be refuted. That is the wrong view. That is the false A. That is not the reality. Meditate on that.

You can see very clearly that you can't find the A on this base, on those lines. Not one part of the lines is A, nor is one of the lines A, even the whole group of lines is not A. You can't find A on those lines. If you look for it, you can't find it. This should be very clear. This is the reality.

### **Nevertheless, there is "A"—a merely labeled "A"**

Now, here is the point; you have to really pay attention here. Through this analysis, even though you cannot find A on the lines, it doesn't mean there is no A. There *is* A existing. Yes, there *is* A—because there is this design there on the blackboard, because there are these lines. There *is* A—but it is a merely labeled A. It's merely imputed by your mind.

You cannot find the merely imputed A on the lines, but A *can*

be found—it can be found on the blackboard, because there is the base: the lines on the blackboard.

But an A that is appearing to you *on* those lines as findable—which has the same meaning as a *real* A, existing from its own side—that is completely false. That is the object to be refuted as described in the philosophical texts. When we realize that *that* A is totally non-existent, empty as it is empty, then we are realizing the ultimate nature of the A, that which is emptiness.

### **The not merely labeled beautiful body does not exist**

It is exactly the same with the beautiful body. The beautiful body appears *there*, as if it is there on the base, the aggregates, after the mind has imputed it. It appears as a findable, real one, as existing from its own side, not merely labeled by mind. It even appears as if it *never* came from your mind, had nothing to do with your mind.

The object appearing as not merely labeled by the mind is the subtle object to be refuted, according to the Prasangika Madhyamika view. One of the four schools, the Madhyamika, has two sub-schools, the Svatantrika and the Prasangika, and it is the Prasangika view of the object to be refuted that we're discussing here.

Seeing the beautiful body as not merely labeled by mind is totally wrong, totally false. If you look, you cannot find it there on the base, the aggregates—that beautiful body not merely labeled by the mind. If you look for it, you cannot find it there on the base, nor anywhere. It is exactly the same as the analysis of "A."

So, seeing the body as *there*, appearing above the base, is totally false. In reality, if we analyze, we will realize that it is totally non-existent, empty right there. And that is the realization

of the ultimate nature of the body. It's the same for the person, for everything.

Now you can see there is no beautiful body existing that is not merely labeled by the mind. There is no real person not merely labeled by the mind. There is no such thing there. It is totally empty.

Mind exaggerates “beautiful this and that” and then attachment grasps onto it. But there is no such thing. Lama Tsongkhapa explained in the *Lamrim Chenmo* by quoting *Four Hundred Stanzas* by the great Indian pandit, Aryadeva:

On the basis of what ignorance holding true existence  
exaggerates,  
The mind exaggerates, “This is beautiful.”  
Then attachment arises on that.

This also applies to anger. On the basis of the person's body and so forth appearing as not merely imputed by mind, the mind exaggerates “bad, ugly,” then anger arises toward it. In reality, there is no such thing. There is no such object of anger, in reality. It is a total hallucination, false. There is no such thing. “On the basis of what ignorance holding true existence exaggerates”—in other words, on the basis of ignorance exaggerating the existence of, in this case, the body as truly existent—“The mind exaggerates, ‘This is ugly, undesirable.’ Then anger arises on that.”

You can clearly see the conclusion from this quotation. (I may not have given it completely. I have given the essence, but maybe not all the words.) What ignorance grasping as truly existent exaggerates is totally non-existent. The object of anger or attachment that you totally believe is *there* is totally non-existent.



### **Meditate on these points every day**

Meditate every day on all these points, the many different examples I have described, including the examples about attachment in **chapter 9** and the analysis of what is reality and what is false that we've just discussed, especially the quotation from Aryadeva.

Now you can see very clearly that the real I, that which appears and is believed as existing from its own side—*that* I is not in prison. You can't find it in the prison. And nor can you find it on the aggregates, the base.

You must do this meditation every day. This is very important, no matter how many hours it takes.

### **Delusions can be removed because they're impermanent**

There is no question that ignorance and attachment can be removed from the mind—because they are not permanent. They are causative phenomena and thus can be removed by the remedy path.

### **Delusions can be removed because they're dependent arisings**

In fact, all the defilements can be removed because they're dependent arisings. If they were independent, that would not be possible. But because they are dependent, they can be removed by other causes and conditions.

### **Delusions can be removed because we possess buddha nature**

Finally, we can be liberated totally from all the delusions because we have buddha nature. Every insect, every worm, every spider, every being in all the realms of existence, all have mind, and all their minds have buddha nature. The emptiness of their mind

is their buddha nature. There is no mind existing from its own side, even though it appears that way to us and, due to ignorance, we believe it.

That's why everyone can be free from the suffering of samsara, everyone can achieve buddhahood, the total cessation of obscurations and the completion of realizations—remember, this is the very meaning of the word “buddha.” Even the subtle negative imprint that projects the subtle dual view can be removed completely—by the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, with the support of bodhicitta; by completing all the merits of wisdom and the merits of virtue. Then your mind becomes a fully enlightened mind.

True cessation can be achieved because there is the true path. Lord Buddha has revealed and explained the true path in scriptures, and there are many great masters in whose minds the path exists as experience from whom we can learn. We can learn from them and practice.

This is how we can cease the defilements and be liberated forever from all suffering and its causes.

### **REMEMBER**

- ▶ The self-existent I that has been put in prison cannot be found.
- ▶ But there is a merely labeled I.
- ▶ We create our own world.
- ▶ We label the body beautiful, then believe it.
- ▶ The I and everything else is merely labeled.
- ▶ The aggregates and the I are not separate but they are different.
- ▶ The not merely labeled I does not exist.
- ▶ We all possess buddha nature, therefore we can change.

## **Buddhadharma Is Proven**

**How we know whether the path that was shown by the Buddha is right or wrong is that the pandits and the yogis of the past checked the teachings, practiced them and achieved exactly the same realizations as the Buddha.**

There is a path already explained by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, from his own experience, a path that he has completed. He has freed himself from the oceans of suffering in samsara and its causes, delusions and karma. Not only that, Buddha has eliminated even the subtle negative imprint—left in the mind as a result of grasping at true existence in the past—and achieved full enlightenment. As a result he has liberated countless sentient beings and brought them to enlightenment. He has done this in the past, is doing it right now and will continue to do it every second, until all beings have achieved enlightenment.

The Buddha has taught this entire path to enlightenment so that others can also achieve liberation from suffering—from samsara, the real prison—and achieve full enlightenment. There are so many great yogis and pandits from India, Tibet, Nepal and other places, as many as there are stars in the night-time sky, who by following the path correctly, as Buddha taught, have achieved liberation and enlightenment.

In this way, the Buddhadharma is well-proven. Up to now there is proof that people can actualize the path—people who know

Buddhism, who know the path and practice it. This not only happened in the past, it is happening now, in the present.

Therefore, you too can achieve enlightenment by following this path, by studying Dharma books and doing the practices. It is not a question of just faith, of mere belief: we can follow in the steps of Buddha himself by meeting the guru, receiving the teachings and correctly following them.

### **Countless buddhas have seen the same things**

There are no buddhas, no omniscient minds, who have found that what Guru Shakyamuni Buddha explained is wrong—and there are numberless other buddhas. This is clearly the proof that what he explained is correct. How we know whether the path that was shown by Buddha is right or wrong is that the pandits and the yogis of the past checked the teachings, practiced them, and achieved exactly the same realizations as the Buddha.

It would be a different matter if one of them, another buddha in other words, had found that what Guru Shakyamuni Buddha explained was incorrect. If another buddha's omniscient mind were to see the opposite of something that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha taught, then it would mean that what Guru Shakyamuni Buddha explained is incorrect. But numberless other buddhas have seen the same thing.

### **There are subtle phenomena that only buddhas can see**

There are subtle things, subtle phenomena, that only buddhas can see. Even the arhats cannot see them—those who have removed the sufferings of samsara; have removed the causes of suffering, karma and delusions; have removed even the cause of delusions, the imprints of delusions, so that it is impossible for delusions to arise again, impossible to experience suffering

again; and have inconceivable qualities and psychic powers, such as the power to make very small forms huge, as big as mountains, or the power to make huge things small. They have completed so many realizations, but there are still some phenomena they cannot see.

It's the same with bodhisattvas. At the first bhumi, they can manifest one hundred bodies to benefit others, to give different teachings to sentient beings and practice meditation, etc. At the next bhumi they can manifest one thousand bodies, and then the number of bodies they can manifest multiplies by ten with each bhumi up to the tenth.

These tenth-bhumi bodhisattvas, therefore, can manifest billions of bodies that can work for sentient beings. They can manifest bodies of water, rivers, bridges, mountains, trees. They can go to pure lands and take teachings. They can do anything for the happiness of sentient beings, unimaginable things, things that don't fit our minds. It is way beyond our imagination what these bodhisattvas can do.

They can see unbelievable, unimaginable distances of time and place. For example, on the first bhumi these bodhisattvas can see one hundred past lives and one hundred future lives of sentient beings. The second-bhumi bodhisattva can see one thousand lives past and future, and so on. It goes on like that, until the tenth level bodhisattva, who can see billions of past and future lives.

The whole world is in one pore of their body; the whole world pervades their holy body and they pervade the whole world. They have unbelievable, unbelievable qualities and psychic powers. These unimaginable, unbelievable things are explained by Lama Tsongkhapa in his commentary on the Middle Way. In the West, it's an impossible thing to understand.

All this is possible because of the power of a mind that has purified the defilements, the delusions. Their minds are free from limitations. (Our mind is very limited for benefiting others—we can't manifest even one more body to benefit others.)

Nevertheless, for even these bodhisattvas there is still one thing they cannot see: the subtle karmas of sentient beings. Even though they have skies of qualities, they cannot see the subtle workings of karma. *Only* a buddha's omniscient mind can see the subtle karma of sentient beings. They also cannot see the secret actions of a buddha. Only a buddha's omniscient mind can see that. And there are incredible distances and incredible lengths of time and lives that only a buddha's omniscient mind can see.

In other words, until one is a buddha, there are still obstacles to doing perfect work for sentient beings, especially the obstacle of not knowing the subtle karma of sentient beings.

### **The story of Householder Pälkye**

One common example is the story about Householder Pälkye. He lived at the time of the Buddha and was eighty years old when he began to practice Dharma. Nevertheless, in that one life he was able to actualize the path and became an arya being. He achieved the wisdom realizing emptiness and was able to cease the defilements.

He was fed up at home because all the children made fun of him every day, so he decided there would be more peace if he became a monk in the monastery. He went to see the abbot to request ordination. The abbot was Shariputra, one of the Buddha's heart disciples, who was the supreme one in wisdom among all of Buddha's disciples. Shariputra told him that he checked whether there was karma for him to be a monk and

could not see any. “You are old, you can’t read, so you can’t study in the monastery. You can’t even offer service in the monastery.”

The old man became very depressed, so unhappy. He laid his head on the lower crossbar of the gate of the monastery and cried. Then, still crying, he went to a nearby park. Even though the Buddha was elsewhere in India, he saw the old man and had compassion for him. The Buddha sees all sentient beings with his omniscient mind, and whenever there is karma for a sentient being to receive guidance, the Buddha arrives at that place, without even a second’s delay.

The Buddha appeared to Householder Pälkye and asked him what was wrong. The man explained his situation at home, all the difficulties, and how the abbot hadn’t accepted him for ordination. The Buddha said, “I have completed the merits of wisdom and the merits of virtue”—in other words, having ceased the gross and subtle defilements, he had achieved omniscience—“and because of that, I can see that you *do* have karma to become a monk.”

He explained that an unimaginably long time ago Householder Pälkye, as a fly, had followed the smell of cow dung around a precious stupa, thus inadvertently making a circumambulation. The Buddha could see that that small merit was the cause for him to become a monk.

You see, Shariputra had not completed the two types of merit—that is why he could not see that the old man had the karma to become a monk; he could not see that far back into the past.

Now the Buddha checked who could guide this old man. He saw that his other heart disciple, Maudgalyayana, who was the most excellent in psychic power among all the disciples and who was abbot of another monastery, was the best.

So Householder Pälkye became a monk at his monastery. But he was teased there too, by the young monks, so he got fed up with that too and ran away and jumped into the river. With his psychic power Maudgalyayana could see where the old man was and appeared right there and pulled Householder Pälkye out of the river. He was completely shocked—and embarrassed, because he had not been given permission to leave the monastery. Then he explained the problem to Maudgalyayana, who told him that it was because he didn't have any renunciation of samsara.

Maudgalyayana told Householder Pälkye to hang on to his robes. They flew up into the sky and over the ocean, eventually landing on a mountain of bones. “These are the bones of many of your countless past lives,” Maudgalyayana explained. The minute the old man heard this, the hair on his body stood on end and he achieved renunciation right then. He realized the shortcomings of samsara: that nothing is definite, that all the enjoyments of samsara are uncertain, that you can't get satisfaction, and that samsaric pleasures are only in the nature of suffering.

He immediately entered the first of the five paths, the path of accumulation. He realized emptiness and became an arya being in that very life; after you become an arya, you don't go down from there. He then became an arhat, achieving liberation from samsara. After some time, the Buddha sent light and inspired him to enter the Mahayana path. He then ceased even the subtle defilements that had not ceased before and became enlightened. Now, as a buddha, he does perfect work for sentient beings, liberating them from all the sufferings of samsara and bringing them to enlightenment.

All that perfect work for sentient beings comes from his becoming enlightened. Before that, he entered the Mahayana path;



before that, he was an arhat; before that he entered the Hinayana path; before that, he was a monk; and before that, unimaginable eons ago, he was a fly that followed the smell of cow dung around a stupa. It was not even intentional. There was no thought that this was a holy stupa and he would purify karma by circumambulating it. He didn't have that intention. Rather, with attachment, he followed cow dung—but it became a circumambulation. That small action became a virtuous action, not because of any motivation, but from the power of the holy object, the stupa.

### **The benefit of omniscience**

I have two reasons for telling you this story. One is that you can see that while arhats have incredible qualities—they are free from the oceans of samsaric suffering, free from delusions—still they do not have omniscience and therefore not everything they say is true. This story shows that. They cannot see the subtle karmas of sentient beings, so it hinders their ability to do perfect work for sentient beings. Only a buddha can see subtle karmas. Shariputra, as an arhat, had so many qualities, but he couldn't see that Householder Pälkye did, in fact, have the karma to become a monk.

Until we are a buddha, we cannot actually judge any sentient being. We can't correctly say what the situation is. We can't correctly say, "This is like this, this is not like this." Only what a buddha, an omniscient one, says is correct. That is the only one we can trust. Of course, there are so many things that people say that *are* correct, especially those who have completed the path to liberation; but not every single thing. Only what the omniscient ones say is correct: that such and such phenomena exist and such and such do not exist.

## **The power of holy objects**

The other purpose of my telling you this story is to show how holy objects are so powerful. Merely going around a stupa as a fly, without any motivation, creates merit. Holy objects such as statues, stupas, scriptures and pictures of buddhas, which represent Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, have incredible power and therefore give unbelievable, extensive benefit to sentient beings.

Creating merit in relation to these holy objects is the easiest way to purify our negative karma. Then our mind changes, transforms, and we are able to actualize the path, cease the gross defilements and achieve liberation and, finally, cease the subtle defilements and achieve enlightenment.

Therefore, even a picture of Buddha, a statue or a scripture is so important to have. It is extremely important that there exist in this world as many holy objects as possible, to make as many as possible.

In their houses, people should have as many holy objects and images as possible, both outside and inside—but not in a disrespectful way. You can't just put them anywhere, like on the floor, or in the bathroom where there is a bad smell, or outside on the ground.

You should know that the more merit you have, the easier it'll be to achieve the realizations of liberation and enlightenment, and you'll achieve them more quickly. Then the sooner it'll be that you can liberate the numberless suffering sentient beings who are relying on you, who have a connection with you.

More merit means that not only in future lives but even in this life your wishes for happiness get fulfilled without effort. You just think of something and then it happens on the same day, without effort. It will surprise you! This is how merit helps.

Therefore, if in your prison you are allowed, and the person

you are staying with is not upset by it, you can put many pictures of buddhas above your bed and on the walls.

### **Prove all this for yourself**

Of course, the best proof is for you yourself to enter the paths, and as you go through the paths you get the experiences yourself according to what is explained in the teachings.

### **REMEMBER**

- ▶ A buddha sees everything that exists.
- ▶ There are subtle phenomena that only buddhas can see.
- ▶ Only a buddha can guide us perfectly.
- ▶ We can all become a buddha.
- ▶ We create infinite merit in relation to powerful objects that represent Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.
- ▶ Prove the teachings for yourself.



## **PART TWO**

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### **What To Do**



*The Lamrim Chenmo of Lama Tsongkhapa, a fifteenth-century Tibetan scholar and meditator, lays out in an orderly way the entire path to enlightenment.*

## The Basis of All Practice: Study and Meditate on the Lamrim

The teachings on the lamrim show you how to make your life most meaningful, most fruitful, most happy and most beneficial for every single sentient being.”

Welcome to the journey to enlightenment!

The purpose of your life is to benefit other sentient beings and the greatest benefit you can offer them is to liberate them from their suffering and its causes. In order to do that you need to attain enlightenment. And to do that you need to achieve the lamrim, the graduated path to enlightenment.

To make that possible, you have to (1) **purify the negative karma and defilements** you have collected over your beginningless rebirths (see **chapters 14 and 15**) and (2) **accumulate extensive merit** (see **chapters 14 through 21**).

These are the conditions necessary for you to actualize the path.

### **Read and study every day**

Life is like last night's dream. Don't hold on to it as too solid or inherently existent. The following advice on practice is given with the intention of making your life—this most precious human life that you have received just this once—as meaningful as possible. In the past, you have sacrificed your life and died numberless

times creating the cause of suffering in samsara but have almost never sacrificed your life for the sake of Dharma, especially trying to bring other sentient beings to enlightenment. So, do as much as you can of what follows. And don't worry—be happy!

There are many texts to read and meditate on: reading them mindfully, slowly, becomes meditation. For example, there is *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, or *The Essential Nectar*, or Lama Tsongkhapa's *Middle Length Lamrim*, or his *Lamrim Chenmo*. They contain the essence of the entire Buddhadharmā. For a list of books, see **chapter 22**.

Even if there is no one to ask in prison to clarify things for you, the more you read the books, slowly, slowly, the more the understanding will come. Because of positive imprints in your mind from having met the Dharma in past lives, realizations will come.

The teachings on the lamrim show how to make your life most meaningful, most fruitful, most happy and most beneficial for every single sentient being. What ordinary people in the world think of as happiness is not pure happiness. It is suffering, but it is called happiness. As you read through the lamrim you will learn about what real happiness is and the different levels of happiness.

The lamrim is what you need to actualize, no matter how long it takes. Please put your effort into that.

### **The lamrim meditations**

First, read and study the complete lamrim—any of the above books or those in **chapter 22**—from beginning to end at least three times.

Then, for **effortful experience** of the lamrim, please spend three months, more or less, meditating on each of the topics in the four levels of practice, as listed below.



Go through the subjects slowly, meditating every day. Whatever meditation you did in the morning, continue with that mind during the day—in this way your mind is in the lamrim all day.

Then, for **effortless realization**, keep circling through the topics and spending about three months on each until you get stable realizations. Keep doing this, no matter how many months or years it takes, until you have realizations of the essential points of the four levels of practice.

### **Meditate on each topic in the context of guru yoga**

As I mentioned above, for success in your practice of the lamrim, you need to (1) purify the defilements and obstacles and (2) accumulate the necessary conditions, the merits.

And not only that: you also need to (3) **receive the blessings of the guru in your heart**. Without this, it is difficult to transform your mind. You can accomplish it by making requesting prayers to the guru, who is inseparable from all the buddhas, by **practicing a guru yoga meditation**.

On the basis of a guru yoga practice every morning and every evening you then meditate on the lamrim topics listed below. You can use *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga*, for example; I have written a commentary on it. Or you could use other practices, such as *Guru Shakyamuni Daily Meditation*, a small booklet I put together. See **chapter 22** for other recommendations.

Having done the guru yoga practice in the morning, you don't have to repeat the whole prayer again in the evening; you just visualize the guru, take refuge and generate bodhicitta, then practice whichever lamrim meditation you are up to.

## THE FOUR LEVELS OF PRACTICE

### Preliminary practice

#### 1. *Guru devotion*

Meditate on guru devotion by following the outlines in the lam-rim book that you choose to use, as mentioned above. The length of your session is up to you. The main thing is to do one every day, whether it is short or long—it could be fifteen minutes, thirty minutes, or one hour—whatever you like.

**Sign of success:** Train your mind in guru devotion, not only for a few days or hours, not even a few months or years, not even until you have an experience, but until the realization is stable: that all the buddhas are the guru and all the gurus are the buddhas. You realize this all the time from the bottom of your heart, that they are all one being, but with different names.

### Graduated path of the lower capable being

#### 2. *Renunciation of this life*

- ▶ perfect human rebirth
- ▶ death and impermanence
- ▶ the suffering of the lower realms
- ▶ refuge in the Three Rare Sublime Ones
- ▶ karma

You don't have to finish all the subjects in one session. Until you achieve the realizations—in other words when you have a total change in your mind—carry on with the meditations.

**Meditate especially on impermanence and death.** You should meditate mainly on impermanence and death—it helps you to achieve all the other realizations. Normally we think this life's

happiness is the most important thing, that future lives, liberation from samsara and enlightenment are not important.

Meditating on death and impermanence brings a total change of mind. Then, whatever happens, whether you are inside or outside that building you are in, the prison, whether there are unfavorable or favorable conditions, it doesn't matter, because in your heart you see that this life is very short.

**We always think only of this life.** When you don't have renunciation of this life, the first realization of the lamrim, you experience the eight worldly dharmas:

- ▶ when there is comfort you experience the suffering of attachment, and
- ▶ when there is discomfort you are unhappy;
- ▶ when you have a good reputation there is the suffering of attachment, and
- ▶ when you have a bad reputation you are unhappy;
- ▶ when you have material things you experience the suffering of attachment, and
- ▶ when you don't have material things you are unhappy;
- ▶ when you are praised there is there is the suffering of attachment, and
- ▶ when you are criticized you are unhappy.

Our lives are like this: either we feel down when we meet undesirable things or we feel up when we encounter desirable things. There is no stability. Life is always emotional, with negative emotions and delusions.

**We must think of our future lives.** For most of our life we seek the happiness of this life; we never think about the happiness of future lives. Here, the realization is to totally change that so

that our attitude is to mainly seek the happiness of future lives—which, of course, makes us create the causes for it, which is to practice virtue. Then the happiness of this life is unimportant.

Renunciation of this life is the first lamrim realization. It is the foundation of renunciation of future lives' samsara, the graduated path of the middle capable being, the next step.

**Sign of success:** You should continue the meditations from the perfect human rebirth up to karma, especially impermanence and death, until your mind has incredible peace, happiness, satisfaction and contentment; that whatever happens nothing bothers you.

## **The graduated path of the middle capable being**

### ***3. Renunciation of the next life***

Next, meditate on the sufferings of all of samsara:

- ▶ the general sufferings of samsara and
- ▶ the particular suffering of each realm.

And you should also contemplate the evolution of samsara as explained in

- ▶ the twelve dependent-related links.

Continue these meditations until you have the realization of renunciation of samsara; until you see only suffering everywhere, not just in the lower realms but in the upper realms as well: the **desire realm, form realm and formless realm**.

Think that being in any of those realms is like being in the center of a fire, like being in a poisonous snake's nest, like being in a thorn bush. In a thorn bush, wherever you step, thorns go into your flesh. There is only pain. There is no happiness even for one second while in the middle of a thorn bush.

Gain a stable realization of this, not just for a few hours or days. Meditate on how the whole of samsara is in the nature of suffering—the desire realm, including even the devas, besides human beings; the form realm; the formless realm—until you no longer have the slightest attraction to any of it.

**Sign of success:** When you have total detachment from samsara and wish to achieve liberation from samsara continuously, day and night, spontaneously—that is the realization.

## **The graduated path of the higher capable being**

### ***4a. Realize bodhicitta***

There are numberless universes and numberless beings. Realize how all sentient beings are suffering in samsara, just like us, and constantly creating the causes for more suffering. It is unbearable. Feel unbearable **compassion** for all of them, wishing that they could be free from suffering. Then develop the universal responsibility, the **special attitude** of wanting to free all sentient beings from suffering and its causes forever, by yourself, alone.

As a result, one generates bodhicitta, which is the wish to achieve enlightenment for all sentient beings. This combines the two thoughts of (1) **wishing to liberate all sentient beings** and (2) **wishing to achieve enlightenment**. Then you have entered the path to enlightenment.

When you have bodhicitta, these thoughts come naturally all the time (except when you are in equipoise meditation on emptiness). You experience the wish to achieve enlightenment for all sentient beings, with no exceptions, spontaneously, from your heart.

There are two techniques for training the mind in bodhicitta, according to Asanga, through Lama Atisha. One is the **seven techniques of Mahayana cause and effect** and the other is **equal-**

**izing oneself and others and then exchanging oneself for others.**

In the second method, you meditate on the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought and the benefits of cherishing others. The mind totally changes from cherishing oneself to cherishing others. Train the mind in bodhicitta with either method.

**Sign of success:** When you have the realization of bodhicitta you are like a mother whose beloved child has fallen into a fire. Even though other people can help, she wants to go into the fire herself to rescue her child. She can't stand even for a second that her child has fallen into the fire. She has unbearable compassion and must take the child out of the fire by herself, alone. She goes there, preparing everything, whatever equipment she needs.

This is the equivalent of getting enlightened: first you get enlightened, then you go and help. Whatever she is doing—eating, walking, whatever—in her heart she is constantly getting ready to run to rescue the child who has fallen into the fire.

This bodhicitta is so powerful. Whenever you see a sentient being, the thought to help them, to liberate them from suffering and its causes, by yourself alone, arises spontaneously, without any effort.

These are the signs of the realization of bodhicitta. You have to continue meditating until it is stable.

***4b. Realize emptiness***

**Everything is merely labeled.** As I discussed in **chapter 11**, everything that exists is merely labeled by the mind, relating to the base. Therefore, nothing exists from its own side. Everything is empty, including the I, the self. Everything exists but is empty; while it is empty it exists in mere name. This is the truth, as we discussed.

But this truth is not seen; this truth is always there but we

are not able to see it. For most people this truth doesn't exist; for them, this truth, which is there and is always functioning, doesn't exist.

I, action and object all appear as not merely labeled by the mind. In fact, this is false I, false action and false object. But the world truly believes one hundred percent that that which is false actually exists, that it is true. You can now see this.

Believing in the truly existent self is the root of samsara, from which all hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, gods and demi-gods come. Holding the I as real, while it is not, from beginningless rebirths—this ignorance creates the entire hallucination, the real hell, real enlightenment, real samsara, real nirvana, real happiness and real problems in everyday life.

I'm not saying there is no samara, no nirvana, no hell, no enlightenment: they do exist, but in mere name. While there is an I, that which performs the function of abandoning suffering and achieving happiness, it exists by being merely imputed by the mind.

But we believe there is an I that is not merely labeled by the mind, that exists from its own side, which can be found inside the body or on the aggregates. We believe one hundred percent that this non-existent I exists, and we hold onto it.

This hallucination is the root of all our superstitions and delusions, such as attachment and anger, as well as all the rest of the sufferings, including the cycle of death and rebirth and all the realms of existence.

**Meditate on emptiness.** To realize emptiness, do the four-point analysis; or meditate on the king of logic, dependent arising: that the I is not truly existent because it is dependent arising. These are explained in the lamrim books (see **chapter 22**).

Or, on the basis of the first part of the mahamudra medi-

tation—see **page 106** in this chapter—you can now go to the second part in which you look for the object to be refuted, the self-existent I; you investigate how you feel the I. And from that you meditate on the emptiness of that I. That's the mahamudra technique. In other words, while you are looking at the mind, you can now check on the one who is meditating: how you are seeing the I, how it seems to exist and whether you can find it or not. See **chapter 22** for books to read about mahamudra.

**Read verses on emptiness.** There are many different lam-rim prayers, such as the *Foundation of All Good Qualities*, which include sections on emptiness. In *Guru Puja* there are also two or three verses on emptiness. Or you can recite the Panchen Lama's mahamudra text in Lama Yeshe's commentary *Mahamudra: How to Discover Our True Nature* and meditate on that. See **chapter 22**.

**Recite sutras related to emptiness.** It is extremely good to plant the seed of the realization of emptiness by reciting the *Heart Sutra*, or the *Diamond Cutter Sutra* (see **chapter 22**), texts cherished by Buddha; both are a part of the precious *Prajnaparamita* literature. If they're recited every day and relied on, for sure things can change. Because their subject matter is emptiness, reciting them is incredibly powerful purification. Each reading leaves a positive imprint in your mind for realizing emptiness, bringing you closer to liberation and enlightenment.

**It's like an atomic bomb on negativity.** Reading any teaching on emptiness is unbelievable purification, like an atomic bomb. You purify negative karma not just to avoid problems like prison or problems of life but, the main thing, to be free from samsara, all the delusions and karma.

Therefore, it is extremely important to meditate on emptiness every day, or simply to recite some teachings on emptiness, even for five minutes. Even if you don't know what emptiness means,



merely reciting the words plants the seed to realize emptiness. And if you read the teachings without distraction you will plant even more seeds.

Sooner or later, in the future, without taking many lifetimes, you will be able to easily actualize emptiness. That is the main weapon to cut the root of all suffering, to liberate yourself from samsara.

When you've realized emptiness, then you can show others, reveal teachings on emptiness to others. And then you are able to liberate them from the oceans of samsara's suffering and its causes and bring them to enlightenment.

### **At least recite a lamrim prayer every day**

At the very least, if you cannot find the time for the in-depth approach above, do a direct meditation on the lamrim every day by reading one lamrim prayer straight through, mindfully, slowly, going over the meaning, such as the *Foundation of All Good Qualities*, the *Three Principles of the Path*, or *Hymns of Experience*. Or you can read and meditate on the long version of *Calling the Guru from Afar*. See a list of lamrim prayers in **chapter 22**.

### **And, of course, meditate with a bodhicitta motivation**

Whatever you do every day, including meditating on lamrim, as well as eating, walking, sleeping, doing a job, whatever, do it with a bodhicitta motivation. This makes your life the best, most fruitful, most meaningful and most beneficial for all sentient beings—which means it is also most beneficial for you. With a bodhicitta motivation, whatever you do becomes the purest Dharma and, especially, the cause of enlightenment. See **chapter 10**.

### **It's necessary to follow the correct instructions**

Of course, realizations won't come for those who don't know the path or who don't practice it correctly according to the instructions. This is why it is so important to learn the Buddhadharmā well, by reading the correct Dharma books; then you won't be confused. As I mentioned, there is a list of books in **chapter 22**.

If you have been practicing for a long time but no change is happening in your mind, this is because you are making mistakes and not rectifying them. This blocks attainments.

Even if you practice for billions of years, because of a lack of understanding of the whole path and not practicing correctly, no realizations will ever come. This is very important to recognize, to remember.

### **Some simple meditations to help you calm the mind before you do your lamrim meditations**

(1) **Watch the breath:** Sometimes your mind might be out of control. Or perhaps you've used drugs before going to prison and now you can't get any, so your mind becomes very agitated. Or you might feel paranoid sometimes. When the thoughts are overwhelming, although you can't stop thinking completely, at least you can calm them down. You can simply breathe out and breathe in, and just sit.

(2) **Watch the mind:** Another way to stop thinking of the past and the future is mentioned in the mahāmudrā teachings—it's the first stage of the meditation. Simply look at the nature of the mind, look at the mind, look at the face of the mind, that's it. The whole mind is watching the mind, no past or future; just watching the mind, just concentrating on the mind. At that time, when strong desire, anger, attachment, all those delusions arise, you distract the mind from them. The mind becomes neutral.

(3) **Another breathing meditation:** Another practice is based on the nine-round breathing meditation, which is a preliminary for mahamudra meditation.

When you breathe out, you imagine all the negative emotional thoughts—anger, attachment, the selfish mind and the negative imprints from these—are banished from this world, like dark smoke, disappearing into space.

As you breathe in, you can visualize Chenrezig or Buddha and imagine receiving all their qualities in the form of radiant light—omniscience, power and compassion. This goes into your heart and fills your whole body. Try to feel compassion for all living beings.

Think: “When I am buddha I will have the power and all the knowledge to do perfect work for sentient beings, to help them reach enlightenment.”

You can do any of these meditations a few times, then your mind will be calm and relaxed, ready to do your lamrim meditation.

### **After the lamrim, you can study philosophy**

Once you have read well *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* or any of the other lamrim books and have a feeling for those ideas as the background, it makes much sense to go more deeply in your practice and study the philosophical texts. You could study FPMT’s Basic Program and then the Masters Program. Contact Liberation Prison Project and they can connect you with the centers that teach them.

### **Eventually you can practice tantra**

Before you practice tantra, you must have a realization of bodhicitta. And in order to have bodhicitta, which is the practice of the graduated path of the higher capable being, you need a

realization of the renunciation of samara, which is the practice of the graduated path of the middle capable being. And in order to have that, you must have a realization of the renunciation of this life, which is the practice of the graduated path of the lower capable being.

Then you will be qualified to enter the path of tantra. For your quickest enlightenment and to be able to enlighten sentient beings most quickly, you need a deity of Highest Yoga Tantra to practice, and for this you need to receive a great initiation. Then you are permitted to practice, to receive the commentary, to practice the path of that deity and to do the retreat.

Whichever is your deity, practice the generation stage. You can try to achieve one-pointed concentration, calm abiding, as is explained in the generation stage commentaries. On the basis of that there is a gross and a subtle meditation, and later you can also practice the Six Yogas of Naropa in the completion stage.

Before you go to bed, make strong prayers to the Buddha, or Tara, to show you which deity you should practice for your quickest enlightenment, so that you can enlighten sentient beings quickly. You can ask for some indication in your dreams.

You should practice this deity day and night. Then, through this practice, you actually become the deity—which means enlightenment: your body, speech and mind become the deity's body, speech and mind—and then through this, you can enlighten all sentient beings. Through this practice, you bring all sentient beings to this deity's enlightenment. You are able to free all beings from the ocean of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment.

 **REMEMBER**

- ▶ The lamrim presents the entire path to enlightenment from A to Z.
- ▶ First contemplate guru devotion.
- ▶ Motivate yourself to practice by thinking about death and impermanence.
- ▶ Give up attachment to this life.
- ▶ Give up attachment to future lives.
- ▶ Realize bodhicitta.
- ▶ Realize emptiness.
- ▶ Read and study and meditate every day.



*The fourth-century Indian master, Asanga, is the source of the teachings on compassion and bodhicitta, having received them directly from Buddha Maitreya.*

## Living in Vows Is Incredible

When you live in vows, not only are you not harming others but for twenty-fours a day you are constantly creating merit—while you eat, talk, walk and do all your activities, and even while you're sleeping. This makes life so meaningful, so enjoyable.

### **Abandon negative karma and practice virtue**

We want the smallest happiness, the smallest comfort, in our daily life, and even in our dreams, therefore we should abandon even the smallest negative karma and practice even the smallest virtue. This should be done while we are walking, eating, talking, doing our job—twenty-four hours a day. As Lama Tsongkhapa explained in *The Foundation of All Good Qualities*, in the section on karma:

This life is as impermanent as a water bubble;  
Remember how quickly it decays and death comes.  
After death, just like a shadow follows the body,  
The results of negative and positive karma follow.

Finding firm and definite conviction in this,  
Please bless me always to be careful  
To abandon even the slightest negativities  
And accomplish all virtuous deeds.

A powerful way to accomplish this is (1) to **refrain from negative actions by living in the vows of individual liberation** and (2) to **purify karma already created** (see chapters 15 and 16).

There are three levels of vows:

- ▶ vows of individual liberation (in Sanskrit, *pratimoksha*)
- ▶ the bodhisattva vows
- ▶ the tantric vows

### 1. Vows of individual liberation: the five lay vows

As I mentioned before, there are as many sentient beings as there are particles of dust on the earth, but those that are reborn as human beings are as few as the dust particles that remain beneath your fingernails after having scratched the earth.

And this is because the vast majority of all beings haven't created the main cause of a human rebirth—the practice of pure morality by living in vows of morality.

Then if you look at the world you can see among the few who have received a human rebirth that there are so few living in vows, in precepts. If you compare those who practice morality and those who don't, you will see that the number of people who engage in negative actions is uncountable while those who engage in good actions by living in vows is so few. Even those living in one vow is so few.

Therefore, you should take vows, whichever you can, not only for your own happiness but for the happiness of all other living beings.

One set of the vows of individual liberation is the five layperson's vows. They are to not:

- ▶ kill
- ▶ steal
- ▶ commit sexual misconduct



- ▶ tell lies
- ▶ take intoxicants

### **The power of vows**

There is a huge difference between simply not killing, for example, and living in the vow not to kill. Without the vow, indeed you are not creating the negative karma of killing, but you are not collecting any merit, not creating any good karma. We need to create merit.

And not only that. When you live in vows, not only are you not harming others but you are constantly creating merit, twenty-fours a day—while you eat, talk, walk and do all your activities, and even while you're sleeping. Even if you are in a coma for years, you are collecting good karma continuously. And not only that, having taken vows, every day whatever merit you collect increases one hundred thousand times. This makes life so meaningful, so enjoyable. You create the unmistakable cause of happiness all the time.

Buddha explained in the *King of Concentration Sutra* that by keeping just one precept for one day in this degenerate time you collect far greater merit than you would if you were to offer umbrellas, banners, flags, lights, garlands of flowers and so forth to ten million buddhas, one billion times, for eons equaling the number of grains of sand in the Ganga River.

By the way, when it comes to talking about the benefits of keeping vows, or of practicing bodhicitta, or of hearing or reciting sutras, let's say, "Ganga River" does not refer to the Indian Ganges River; it refers to the Pacific Ocean.

And the grains of sand referred to are not just ordinary grains of sand—and even if they were, that would be amazing enough. It is explained in the notes of the great enlightened Pabongka Rinpoche that these grains are made of extremely subtle atoms.

There are seven kinds of subtle atoms—water atoms, earth atoms and so forth. These grains of sand are much, much finer than ordinary grains.

In other words, you can't imagine how much merit you collect by keeping just one vow—not the five lay vows, or the eight precepts or the thirty-six vows of a novice monk or nun—but keeping just one vow for one day. So much merit!

If you want to fly to another country, you need an airline ticket, otherwise you can't travel there by plane. Or if you want to start a million-dollar project, you need a million dollars. You need to create the causes. Well, living according to vows is like that: it creates the cause for happiness in future lives, as well as liberation and enlightenment.

If your living in the vow to not kill is performed with the motivation of renunciation of samsara, it will cause liberation from samsara. If it is performed with bodhicitta, it will cause enlightenment. You are causing these results all the time by living according to that vow.

When you live in vows, whatever merit you collect, either in relation to sentient beings or in relation to the Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, increases so much. The more vows you take, the more merit you collect.

### **Living in the lay vows helps achieve world peace**

Living in vows is something that you can do for world peace every day. You might not be one of those high leaders of the various countries going to meetings here and there, giving talks for world peace. But living in vows is one practical thing that you can offer for peace; you can do it immediately. Many people can talk words, but words alone can't do much for peace. We need action.

First of all, you don't give harm to yourself. If you engage in those negative karmas, you yourself receive harm. You stop giving harm to yourself by living in these vows.

If you want to benefit others, then living in vows is essential. Living in vows means that you stop many negative karmas that harm others, directly or indirectly. You stop because you made a vow.

By living in vows you stop giving harm to your family, to the people around you, as well as to animals. You stop harming them.

You stop giving harm to all the people in your country. You stop giving harm to the billions of people in this world. The absence of harm is peace—that is what they are receiving. You are giving peace, first to yourself, then to others—to your family, to those around you and to the rest of the sentient beings.

The greater the number of vows you take, the less the harm you give to others and the greater the peace and happiness they receive from you. Living in vows is a real source of peace and happiness for yourself and for other sentient beings.

### **Living in vows helps the environment**

Living in the lay vows also helps the environment. The more people there are living in vows, the more it helps to bring prosperity and enjoyment to your country. It helps stop scarcity of food or crops, the rains come at the right time, the crops grow, etc. This is such a practical thing you can do to help the environment.

### **Take the vows for life or for as long as you are in prison**

Normally you take these vows for life. But if you cannot do that, you can take them for as long as you are in prison. Even though there is less chance to kill in prison, still, by living in even just

the vow to not kill, you collect merit day and night, every hour, every second.

Of course, by taking that one vow until death you create such good karma, the cause of happiness, every second, continuously—therefore you are making your life meaningful continuously. And, as I mentioned, taking a greater number of vows is unbelievable.

During the time of the Buddha, an arhat called Arya Katiyana gave vows to a butcher. The butcher couldn't take the vow to not kill during the daytime, when he had to kill animals, so he took the vow to refrain from killing just at night-time. He didn't collect the merit of living in the vow during the day, only at night. All those nights in his lifetime he was collecting so much good karma. Even though he created negative karma during the day, there was also good karma.

The arhat also gave a prostitute the vow to abstain from sexual activity in the daytime. During the daytime it was easier to live in the vow to not commit sexual misconduct, even though at night-time she couldn't live in the vow. Even though she had a lot of negative karma, she created so much merit by making the daytime so meaningful.

### **The vows of individual liberation are the basis of success in all practice**

Because of the state of our mind—the habituation with delusions from beginningless rebirths and, in particular, habituation with attachment—it is very difficult to keep even one vow of morality purely.

First of all, not having met Buddhadharma, we do not accept reincarnation or karma. Then, when we do hear Buddhadharma, it is not so easy to accept; we don't understand, don't have faith. Then finally, due to the imprints of some merit created in the

past, we are able to have faith and accept, but still it doesn't mean we are able to practice.

To be born as an ordinary human being, you need pure morality from living in vows as the preliminary cause. Without that, it is impossible. To have a perfect human rebirth, which is even rarer, you need each of the eighteen preliminary causes.

And then, having this perfect human rebirth, to take the lay vows and follow the path to liberation, this is extremely rare—you need so much merit.

Even rarer than that is to take the bodhisattva vows, to practice the Mahayana path to achieve enlightenment. And rarer still is to receive a great initiation to follow the tantric path, as a result of which you can practice and achieve enlightenment in one short life instead of in three countless great eons, which is how long it takes if you follow just the sutra Mahayana path.

So, this opportunity to achieve enlightenment in a brief lifetime of this degenerate time with Highest Yoga Tantra, which depends upon having taken highest tantric vows and the lower tantric vows, which in turn depends upon having taken the bodhisattva vows—all this comes from having taken the vows of individual liberation, such as the lay vows.

You can see how incredibly important it is that you take the lay vows. It is the foundation of your enlightenment. As I said, just to become a human being in the next life you need pure morality gained from living in vows. For your spiritual development, the development of your mind in the path to liberation and enlightenment, you need to take the lay vows.

## **2. The bodhisattva vows**

Having taken the five lay vows, you can now take the eighteen root and forty-six secondary bodhisattva vows. Ask Liberation Prison Project about this.

### 3. The eight Mahayana precepts

Within the Mahayana path there are also the eight Mahayana precepts, which are taken for twenty-four hours. You don't need to have taken the bodhisattva vows to take them.

For twenty-four hours you vow not to:

- ▶ kill
- ▶ steal
- ▶ have any sexual contact
- ▶ tell lies
- ▶ take intoxicants
- ▶ eat food after noon (including not eating meat, garlic, onions, radish or eggs)
- ▶ wear jewelry and perfumes, etc.
- ▶ sit on a high seat.

You could take them several times a month. This makes your life most meaningful; you create so much merit. Taking the eight Mahayana precepts creates the cause to have a good rebirth in your next life, to be free from samsara and eventually achieve enlightenment. And because these precepts are taken with the mind of bodhicitta, they become a cause for happiness and ultimately enlightenment for all sentient beings.

Before taking them, you need to receive the lineage. You can get that from someone at the prison project. Once you have received it one time, from then on you can take the precepts from your altar.

There are books explaining these vows, which you can get from the prison project. See **chapter 22**.

### 4. The tantric vows

And then, when you are out of prison, you can take the tantric vows when you receive a Highest Yoga Tantra empowerment.

 **REMEMBER**

- ▶ Living in the five lay vows is incredible!
- ▶ With vows, you create merit and purify your mind twenty-four hours a day.
- ▶ With vows, you help achieve world peace.
- ▶ With vows, you help the environment.
- ▶ Vows are the basis of all success in your practice.
- ▶ With the lay vows you can then take the bodhisattva vows.
- ▶ With the bodhisattva vows you can then take the tantric vows.



*Reciting the mantra of Buddha Vajrasattva, combined with the four opponent powers, purifies negative karma from beginningless lifetimes.*



## There's No Karma that Can't Be Purified

Reciting the Vajrasattva mantra is such a powerful practice. It purifies not only that day's negative karma, but also the karma created from the time you were born and in all your previous lives as well.

### **You must recite the Vajrasattva mantra every day**

Every night, before you go to bed, in order to prevent whatever negative karma you created that day from multiplying, you should recite the Vajrasattva mantra. If you don't purify in this way, your negative karma will keep doubling and re-doubling day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year, up to the end of your life. Even one day's negative karma will become as huge and heavy as a mountain—in time, even one atom of unpurified negative karma can swell to the size of the Earth.

Even though you may not necessarily create particularly heavy negative karmas, since unpurified negative karma increases exponentially, even one small negative action can cause you to be reborn in the lower realms and experience great suffering for many eons. And because in the lower realms you continually create more and more negative karma, it is extremely difficult to be reborn back into the upper realms, thus making it almost impossible for you to practice Dharma. So, you *must* purify your negative karma every day.

Vajrasattva is such a powerful practice. It not only purifies that day's negative karma, thus preventing it from multiplying, it also

purifies the karma created from the time you were born and in all your previous lives as well. This means you won't have to experience again and again without end the four suffering results (see **page 124**) that arise from each unpurified negative karma. Purifying negative karma therefore makes it so much easier to attain liberation and actualize the path to enlightenment.

In the short term, it makes your life very light and easy and keeps you happy and peaceful—in your heart, your inner life. It decreases your suffering and any obstacles that might arise.

The conclusion is that even if you have completed the preliminary practice of reciting one hundred thousand Vajrasattva mantras, you can't just stop, relax, and say, "I've finished my Vajrasattva preliminary practice. Now I don't have to recite that mantra anymore." You need to keep doing the long Vajrasattva mantra at least twenty-one times or the short one at least twenty-eight times every day in order to keep purifying your negative karma and prevent it from multiplying.

## **How to purify negative karma with the four opponent powers**

You can practice Vajrasattva at the end of the day in the context of the four opponent powers.

### **1. The power of reliance**

When you think about the negative actions you've done in the past, the teachings say you'll feel as if you have swallowed a deadly poison. If there's poison in your stomach, you'll immediately do everything you can to get rid of it, so you need to rely upon a doctor and a nurse. We also call this the **power of reliance**, or the **power of the object**.

**(a) Rely upon Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.** By relying upon the doctor and nurse, you can recover from your suffering and the danger of death. In this sense you rely upon and take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

We have accumulated negative karma in relation to the holy objects of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, so we purify those negative karmas by relying upon Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

**(b) Rely upon sentient beings.** The second thing is to generate loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta for the sentient beings you have harmed, thus purifying the negative karma that you have accumulated in relationship to sentient beings.

When we fall down onto the ground, that is the very ground that we depend on to stand up. We create negative karma with sentient beings, so we purify by relying upon sentient beings.

## 2. The power of regret

When you think about the suffering results of the poison, you'll immediately regret having taken it. In the same way here, you'll deeply regret all the negative actions that you've done in the past—today, yesterday, earlier in this life, in past lives—and you won't want to wait even one second to purify them because you do not want the four suffering results—**(1) lower realm rebirth, (2) the habit to keep doing the action, (3) the experience of the action happening to you and (4) the environmental result.**

Since death can happen at any moment, you *must* purify your negative actions; it's unbearable to delay for even a moment.

## 3. The power of the remedy

Reciting the Vajrasattva mantra, while visualizing Vajrasattva, is the medicine you take as the antidote to the poison, the **remedy.**

As the patient in danger of death, you are so happy to take the medicine, you enjoy the remedy. By seeing the benefits, you enjoy reciting the mantra.

In Tibetan we also call it the **power of always enjoying** or the **power of always conducting** or **doing**.

Or you can do other practices such as prostrations or reciting the holy names of the Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession. Generally, any virtue that you accumulate is this power of the remedy, this power of always enjoying.

#### 4. The power of resolve

Having taken the poison and having strong regret because we realize all the problems and suffering that we'd experience, we now **resolve**, make a strong determination, to never take that poison again, to not do those negative actions again.

This is the most important point. If you don't make the decision to not take the poison again, taking all the medicine in a pharmacy won't help. If you are not careful in your actions, if you don't stop creating those negative actions, the suffering will go on and on.

### Each of the four opponent powers purifies one of the four suffering results of negative karma

#### 1. The power of reliance purifies the environmental result

The **environmental**, or **possessed**, **result** of killing, for example, is to be reborn in an undesirable place, a dirty place where there are a lot of diseases, or where there are many problems. You will be harmed by the elements: fire, floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, avalanches and so forth. There will be a lot of danger

to your life. Germs, bacteria and even medicines and food that are meant to help you will cause death or make you sick. Or the building you live in, which is meant to protect you, can collapse and kill you.

**The power of reliance, the power of the object**—relying upon both the Three Rare Sublime Ones (by taking refuge in them) and sentient beings (by having compassion for them and wishing to benefit them)—stops the **environmental result**.

## 2. The power of regret purifies the experience of the action happening to you

With this result, the **experience similar to the cause**, you will now experience yourself the actions you have done to others in the past. From killing, for example, you will be killed by others, or have a short life, or you will be harmed by people or animals or by the elements.

Even when you are born as a human being, which is the result of virtue, you will experience these suffering results.

With the **power of regret**, you purify them.

## 3. The power of the remedy purifies lower realm rebirth

The result of a complete negative action—the **ripened aspect** or **fully ripened result**—is rebirth in the lower realms, such as animal, *preta* or hell being. The **power of the remedy** particularly stops this result.

By strongly practicing Vajrasattva, for example, you will not be reborn in the lower realms—you will not need to experience those heavy sufferings.

If you are born in the lower realms, you will also continue to create the causes for all four suffering results again and again by killing and so forth. The suffering goes on and on without end.

#### **4. The power of resolve purifies the habit to keep doing the action**

The **power of resolve**—making the determination to not create negative karma again—particularly stops the habit of doing the same negative action again and again, the **action similar to the cause**.

This is the most terrifying result. If you don't purify the negative habits—killing, stealing, lying etc.—if you just leave them, you will continue to kill, steal and lie, thus creating complete negative actions again and again, which again brings the four suffering results. It causes endless sufferings, endless hells, endless human beings' suffering, all these problems—which, of course, you don't want!

So, you can see, from one negative karma you experience *endless* suffering results. This is what happens if you don't purify that negative karma as quickly as possible and well, with the practice of the four opponent powers.

As I mentioned, this is the most terrifying result. If you stop the habit, you stop all the four suffering results.

#### ***The Wheel of Sharp Weapons***

You could read *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*—the sharp wheel to cut your self-cherishing thought. Read it again and again—you can even make a song with it! Do this over and over. This is the best practice for you. It is exactly what you need.

#### **Be happy to purify!**

Even though you may feel upset and repentant thinking about how you have lived your life, creating so much negative karma, you should feel great happiness when you think that there is such an extraordinary method of purification.

Think: “I have the opportunity to purify so that I don’t have to experience this negative karma at all. I am very fortunate. I should not waste my time; I should not waste my life. I must take this opportunity.”

### The long Vajrasattva mantra

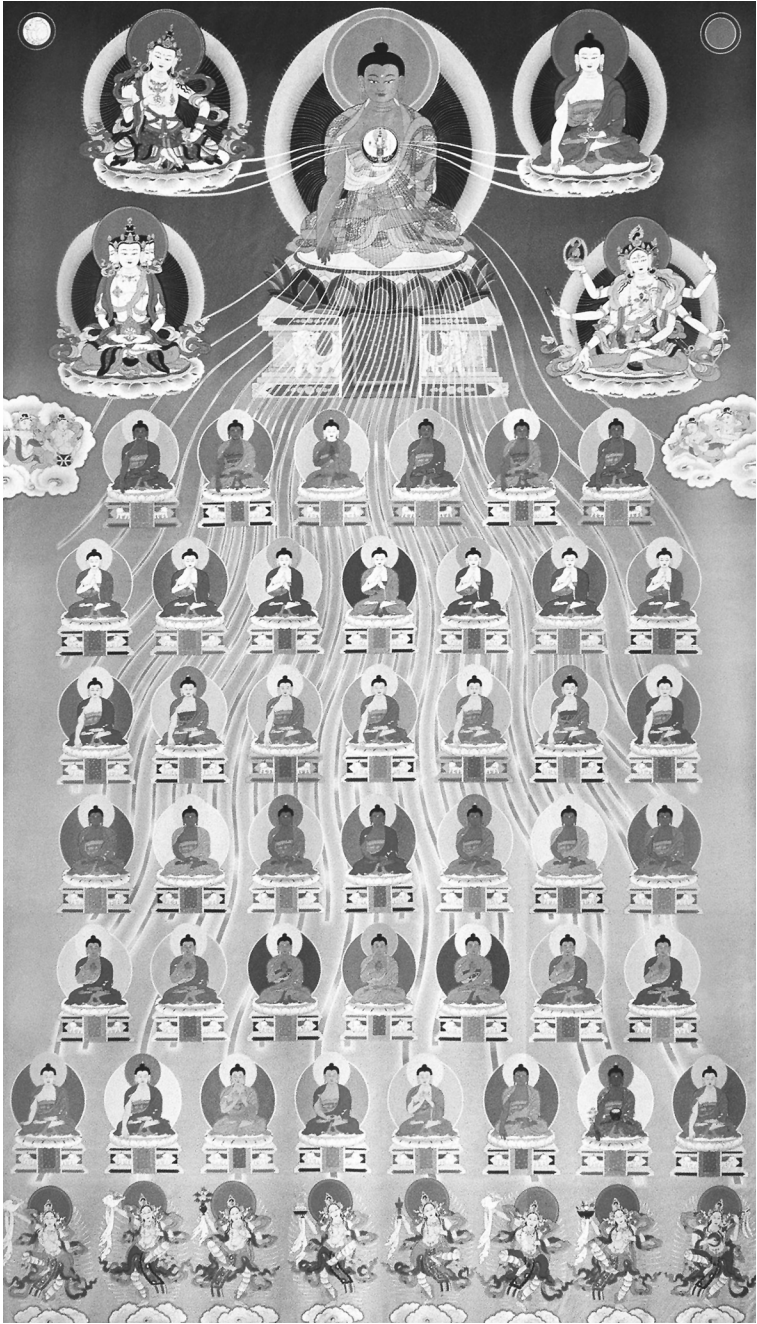
OM VAJRASATVA SAMAYA / MANUPĀLAYA / VAJRASATVA  
 TVENOPATIṢṬHA / DRIDHO ME BHAVA / SUTOṢHYO ME  
 BHAVA / SUPOṢHYO ME BHAVA / ANURAKTO ME BHAVA /  
 SARVASIDDHIM ME PRAYACCHHA / SARVA KARMASU CHA  
 ME / CHITTAṀ ŚHRĪYAṀ KURU HŪṀ / HA HA HA HA HOḤ /  
 BHAGAVĀN SARVATATHĀGATA / VAJRA MĀ ME MUÑCHA / VAJRĪ  
 BHAVA / MAHĀ SAMAYASATVA ĀḤ HŪṀ PHAṬ

### The short Vajrasattva mantra

OM VAJRASATVA HŪṀ

### REMEMBER

- ▶ Reciting the Vajrasattva mantra every day stops negative karma from multiplying.
- ▶ Without purification, negative karma multiplies hugely.
- ▶ Practicing the four opponent powers purifies the four ways that karma ripens.
- ▶ In the short term, purification makes our life peaceful.
- ▶ In the long term, purification makes it easier to achieve liberation and enlightenment.



*Reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession while prostrating is such a powerful practice of purification*



## Recite the Names of the Thirty-Five Buddhas of Confession

The practice of the Thirty-five Buddhas is an atomic  
bomb on delusions and karma.

Reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession is like an atomic bomb on negative karma and the defilements. I will be so happy if you can memorize it. It is unbelievably powerful. You are helping everyone to not be reborn in the lower realms and to quickly be liberated from delusions and karma. You are helping every ant, every cockroach, every rat, every single fish, every single fly, every single mosquito, every one of the numberless animals, every hell being, every hungry ghost, every human being, including your dearest family, those who accused you, the dearest judge, everyone.

If you can do the actual prostrations as well, that is best; it is two very powerful things combined—reciting the names and doing the prostrations. It is explained that however many atoms that your body covers, measured from the tip of your hairs to the tip of your toes, you create that many causes, multiplied by one thousand, to be born as a wheel-turning king. Of course, to be born as a wheel-turning king just one time you have to create unbelievable, inconceivable merits; the Buddha is just giving an idea by using this example of how much merit you collect by doing one prostration.

If you can't prostrate, then at least put your palms together as

you recite the names. As you recite, visualize that you emanate numberless bodies, as big as a mountain range, and all these bodies are prostrating from all directions, from all corners of the earth, toward the buddhas on the altar.

Visualize nectar beams coming from the buddhas into your body and mind, purifying all negative karmas collected by you and all sentient beings since beginningless time.

Of course, you dedicate the merits to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. You also pray that they have happiness, that they be free of all suffering, and that they achieve the ultimate happiness of enlightenment. It is unbelievable. Because of the kindness of the Buddha, the compassion of the Buddha, we have this easy method for helping sentient beings.

## ❖ THE PRACTICE

Contemplate: The purpose of my life is to free the numberless sentient beings—who are the source of all my past, present and future happiness, temporary as well as ultimate, including all the realizations of the path, liberation from samsara, as well as enlightenment—from all the oceans of samsaric suffering, including the causes: delusions and karma.

To do this, I must achieve full enlightenment. Therefore I need to actualize the path. Therefore I need to purify negative karma and delusions.

Samsara has no end.

Not only that, karma increases: from even a small negative action huge suffering results can come. From just one negative karma, I have to experience the results over and over for many hundreds of lifetimes.

And karma is certain to be experienced, so every negative action I have created will definitely bring its result, no matter how long it takes, until it is purified.

Understanding this, how can I stand to live life without purifying myself and getting rid of all these negative karmas, just as I would try to rid my body of a deadly poison?

Not only that, I'm going to die. Death can come at any moment, even today.

Therefore I must purify all my negative actions this second. To do that, I am going to do these prostrations with the practice of confessing downfalls.

And I'm doing this to develop myself in order to work for the happiness of all sentient beings.

### **HOW TO MEDITATE DURING THE PRACTICE**

Visualize in the space in front of you your guru in the aspect of Shakyamuni Buddha, with Thousand-arm Chenrezig, the Compassion Buddha, at his heart.

At the heart of Chenrezig is the syllable HRIH, and from this syllable thirty-four beams of light emanate, forming six rows in the space beneath Chenrezig.

At the end of each beam is a throne supported by elephants and adorned with pearls, and on each throne is seated one of the other thirty-four buddhas of confession.

In the *first row* are six buddhas, blue in color and in the aspect of Akshobhya, with the exception of the third buddha, King Lord of the Nagas, who has a blue body but a white head.

In the *second row*, there are seven buddhas, white in color, in the aspect of Vairochana.

In the *third row* are seven buddhas, yellow in color, in the aspect of Ratnasambhava.

In the *fourth row* are seven buddhas, red in color, in the aspect of Amitabha.

In the *fifth row* there are seven buddhas, green in color, in the aspect of Amoghasiddhi.

These are the Thirty-five Confession Buddhas.

In the *sixth row* are the seven Medicine Buddhas.

Think that each one of these buddhas is the embodiment of the Three Rare Sublimes Ones of the three times and ten directions, as well as all statues, stupas and scriptures. The essence of all of these is the guru. Have complete faith that each one has the power to purify all your negative karmas and imprints accumulated since beginningless time.

### INCREASING MANTRAS

Recite the following mantras as you imagine prostrating, which increase the merit of making prostrations one million times.

CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG  
DAG PAR DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ RIN CHHEN GYÄL TSHÄN  
LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO (7X)

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE RATNAKETURĀJĀYA /  
TATHĀGATĀYA / ARHATE / SAMYAKSAMBUDDHĀYA /  
TADYATHĀ / OM RATNE RATNE MAHĀRATNE RATNA  
VIJAYE SVĀHĀA (7X)

OM NAMO MAÑJUŚHRIYE / NAMAḤ SUŚHRIYE / NAMA  
UTTAMAŚHRIYE SVĀHĀ (3X)

**REFUGE: THE POWER OF RELIANCE**

I, [say your name], throughout all times, take refuge in the  
Guru,

I take refuge in the Buddha,

I take refuge in the Dharma,

I take refuge in the Sangha. (3x)

**RECITE THE NAMES OF THE BUDDHAS: THE POWER OF THE REMEDY**

Now imagine that you emanate numberless bodies in all directions. As you prostrate (or imagine that you are prostrating) visualize all these bodies also prostrating along with you, covering every atom of the earth.

Visualize nectar beams coming from the buddhas into your body and mind, purifying all negative karmas collected by you and all sentient beings since beginningless time.

Recite each buddha's name several times. It is the recitation of the name of each buddha that causes the purification, so it makes a big difference whether you recite just a few times or many.

**HOMAGE**

Homage to the *Confession of the Bodhisattva's Downfalls!*

**SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA**

1. To the Founder, Bhagavan, Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly Completed Buddha, Glorious Conqueror Shakyamuni Buddha, I prostrate.

**FIRST ROW, BLUE, IN THE ASPECT OF AKSHOBHYA**

2. To Tathagata Thoroughly Destroying with Vajra Essence, I prostrate.
3. To Tathagata Radiant Jewel, I prostrate.
4. To Tathagata King, Lord of the Nagas, I prostrate.
5. To Tathagata Army of Heroes, I prostrate.
6. To Tathagata Delighted Hero, I prostrate.
7. To Tathagata Jewel Fire, I prostrate.

**SECOND ROW, WHITE, IN THE ASPECT OF VAIROCHANA**

8. To Tathagata Jewel Moonlight, I prostrate.
9. To Tathagata Meaningful to See, I prostrate.
10. To Tathagata Jewel Moon, I prostrate.
11. To Tathagata Stainless One, I prostrate.
12. To Tathagata Bestowed with Courage, I prostrate.
13. To Tathagata Pure One, I prostrate.
14. To Tathagata Bestowed with Purity, I prostrate.

**THIRD ROW, YELLOW, IN THE ASPECT OF RATNASAMBHAVA**

15. To Tathagata Water God, I prostrate.
16. To Tathagata Deity of the Water God, I prostrate.
17. To Tathagata Glorious Goodness, I prostrate.
18. To Tathagata Glorious Sandalwood, I prostrate.
19. To Tathagata Infinite Splendor, I prostrate.
20. To Tathagata Glorious Light, I prostrate.
21. To Tathagata Sorrowless Glory, I prostrate.

**FOURTH ROW, RED, IN THE ASPECT OF AMITABHA**

22. To Tathagata Son of Noncraving, I prostrate.
23. To Tathagata Glorious Flower, I prostrate.

24. To Tathagata Pure Light Rays Clearly Knowing by Play,  
I prostrate.
25. To Tathagata Lotus Light Rays Clearly Knowing by Play,  
I prostrate.
26. To Tathagata Glorious Wealth, I prostrate.
27. To Tathagata Glorious Mindfulness, I prostrate.
28. To Tathagata Glorious Name Widely Renowned,  
I prostrate.

**FIFTH ROW, GREEN, IN THE ASPECT OF  
AMOGHASIDDHI**

29. To Tathagata King Holding the Victory Banner of Fore-  
most Power, I prostrate.
30. To Tathagata Glorious One Totally Subduing, I prostrate.
31. To Tathagata Utterly Victorious in Battle, I prostrate.
32. To Tathagata Glorious Transcendence Through Subdu-  
ing, I prostrate.
33. To Tathagata Glorious Manifestations Illuminating All,  
I prostrate.
34. To Tathagata All-Subduing Jewel Lotus, I prostrate.
35. To Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly Completed Buddha,  
King, Lord of the Mountains Firmly Seated on Jewel  
and Lotus, I prostrate. (3x)

**SIXTH ROW: THE SEVEN MEDICINE BUDDHAS**

1. To the bhagavan, tathagata, arhat, perfectly completed  
buddha, Renowned Glorious King of Excellent Signs, I  
prostrate.
2. To the bhagavan, tathagata, arhat, perfectly completed  
buddha, King of Melodious Sound, Brilliant Radiance of  
Skill, Adorned with Jewels, Moon and Lotus, I prostrate.
3. To the bhagavan, tathagata, arhat, perfectly completed

buddha, Stainless Excellent Gold, Illuminating Jewel  
Who Accomplishes All Conduct, I prostrate.

4. To the bhagavan, tathagata, arhat, perfectly completed buddha, Glorious Supreme One Free from Sorrow, I prostrate.
5. To the bhagavan, tathagata, arhat, perfectly completed buddha, Melodious Ocean of Proclaimed Dharma, I prostrate.
6. To the bhagavan, tathagata, arhat, perfectly completed buddha, Clearly Knowing by the Play of Supreme Wisdom of an Ocean of Dharma, I prostrate.
7. To the bhagavan, tathagata, arhat, perfectly completed buddha, Medicine Guru, King of Lapis Lazuli Light, I prostrate.

#### **CONFESSION PRAYER: THE POWER OF REGRET**

All you [Thirty-five Buddhas] and others, as many tathagatas, arhats, perfectly completed buddhas as there are existing, sustaining and residing in all the world systems of the ten directions; all you buddha bhagavans, please pay attention to me.

In this life and in all the states of rebirth in which I have circled in samsara throughout beginningless lives, whatever negative actions I have created, made others create or rejoiced in the creation of;

Whatever possessions of stupas, possessions of the Sangha or possessions of the Sangha of the ten directions that I have appropriated, made others appropriate, or rejoiced in the appropriation of;

Whichever among the five actions of immediate [retribu-



tion] I have done, caused to be done or rejoiced in the doing of;

Whichever paths of the ten nonvirtuous actions I have engaged in, caused others to engage in or rejoiced in the engaging in;

Whatever I have created, being obscured by these karmas causes me and sentient beings to be born in the hell realms, in the animal realm and in the hungry ghost realm; in irreligious countries, as barbarians, or as long-life gods; with imperfect faculties, holding wrong views, or not being pleased with Buddha's descent.

In the presence of the buddha bhagavans, who are transcendental wisdom, who are eyes, who are witnesses, who are valid, and who see with omniscient consciousness, I am admitting and confessing all these negativities. I will not conceal them nor hide them, and from now on in the future I will abstain and refrain from committing them again.

All buddha bhagavans, please pay attention to me. In this life and in all other states of rebirth in which I have circled in samsara throughout beginningless lives,

Whatever roots of virtue I have created by generosity, even as little as giving just one mouthful of food to a being born in the animal realm;

Whatever roots of virtue I have created by guarding morality;

Whatever roots of virtue I have created by following pure conduct;

Whatever roots of virtue I have created by fully ripening sentient beings;

Whatever roots of virtue I have created by generating bodhicitta;

And whatever roots of virtue I have created by my unsurpassed transcendental wisdom:

All these assembled and gathered, combined together, I fully dedicate to the unsurpassed, the unexcelled, that higher than the high, that superior to the superior. Thus, I completely dedicate to the highest, perfectly complete enlightenment.

Just as the previous buddha bhagavans have fully dedicated, just as the future buddha bhagavans will fully dedicate and just as the presently abiding buddha bhagavans are fully dedicating, like that I too dedicate fully.

I confess all negativities individually.

I rejoice in all the merits.

I urge and implore all buddhas to grant my request: may I receive the highest, most sublime transcendental wisdom.

To the conquerors, the best of humans—those who are living in the present time, those who have lived in the past and those who will likewise come—to all those who have qualities as vast as an infinite ocean, with hands folded, I approach for refuge.

### **VISUALIZATION AT THE END OF THE PRACTICE**

Think that through the force of reciting these names of the Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession and Medicine Buddhas, through the power of their pure prayers and vows, through the power of generating regret and the other opponent powers and through the power of having made these prostrations, nectars and light rays descend from the holy bodies

of the buddhas, completely purifying all negative karmas, defilements and imprints collected on your mental continuum since beginningless time.

Generate strong faith that your mind has become completely pure.

### **DETERMINATION TO CHANGE: THE POWER OF RESOLVE**

At the end of the confession prayer, pause to make the determination not to commit these negative actions again in the future. Make this promise realistic, even if you are promising simply not to do the negative action even for just the next five minutes or seconds. This is to make sure you that you do not tell a lie to the merit field.

### **REFLECT ON EMPTINESS**

Then reflect on the emptiness of each of these negative actions, remembering that even negative actions do not truly exist from their own side. They arise in dependence on causes and conditions and are merely labeled by the mind.

You can think either that they are completely nonexistent from their own side, or that they are merely labeled by mind, or that they are hallucinations.

Whichever method you use to understand emptiness, the conclusion that should come in your heart is that each of these negative actions is completely empty, not existing from its own side, even the slightest atom.

In emptiness there is no I, the creator of negative actions.

In emptiness there is no creating of negative actions.

In emptiness there are no negative actions created.  
Even though there are infinite phenomena, in  
emptiness nothing exists at all.  
There is no this and that, no me and you, nothing.  
In emptiness everything is one taste.  
From this emptiness, everything comes into  
existence.  
Whatever exists is the manifestation of emptiness.

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 **REMEMBER**

- ▶ Reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession is an atomic bomb on delusions and karma.
- ▶ The practice contains the four opponent powers.
- ▶ Have confidence that you have purified.
- ▶ Meditate on the emptiness of the creator of negative karma, the action and the karma itself.

## Recite the Mantra of the Compassion Buddha

Reciting the longest mantra just once brings the same benefits as reciting the short mantra one hundred million times.

It is unbelievable, unbelievable!”

### **Your life practice**

In order to develop compassion, you need to understand the Buddha’s teachings on how to develop it, which is explained in the lamrim (see **chapter 13**). But even if you can recite the teachings on compassion by heart and know how to meditate on them, that alone is not enough for you to realize them. For this you need the support of the blessings of Chenrezig, the Compassion Buddha.

Chenrezig completely embraces all sentient beings and knows directly all sentient beings’ minds, all the methods to guide them perfectly, with perfect power, perfect wisdom and perfect compassion.

Everyone should practice Chenrezig. Do this not just for yourself but for numberless sentient beings—everyone; every small ant, every tiny insect. They all want happiness and do not want suffering. This practice brings all happiness: temporary (the happiness of this and all future lives) and ultimate (the happiness of liberation and enlightenment) to the numberless sentient beings, yourself included.

You can use your time in prison to practice as much as possible, to purify negative karma, to purify all the defilements and to

collect extensive merit. In order to receive these blessings, with faith in Chenrezig please chant his mantras, as many as possible, and practice meditating on him. Reciting the Chenrezig mantra brings skies of benefit, especially if you do it with bodhicitta. You could recite OM MAṆI PADME HŪṀ or the longest Chenrezig mantra, which is at the end of this chapter.

I am in the process of writing a new book about the benefits of reciting the Compassion Buddha mantra and this will include many different prayers to Chenrezig. When it is done you will get it. The idea of this book is to spread it throughout the whole world, so it will be translated into as many languages as possible.

By studying *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* or the other lamrim books, you will understand how much suffering sentient beings are experiencing and the urgent need for them to be liberated. By reciting the mantra for all sentient beings, you are taking responsibility for each one of them, not only for their temporary happiness, this life's happiness, but for the happiness of future lives; and not just that, but also for their ultimate happiness, the blissful state.

Recite as many as you can. Actually, don't worry about the number, that is not the point. Recite each mantra for all sentient beings, to free them from samsara and to bring them to enlightenment.

### **The fifteen benefits of reciting the short Compassion Buddha mantra**

Depending on how qualified you are, depending on your motivation and depending on how perfectly you recite, recitation of OM MAṆI PADME HŪṀ brings benefits as infinite as the sky. You collect so much merit—more merit than there are drops of water in

the ocean, of snowflakes in a snowfall, of drops of water in rainfall, of grains of sand in the Pacific Ocean. The Buddha explained that the benefits are such that you cannot finish explaining them.

It is said in the teachings that whichever deva or human being recites the Chenrezig mantra with compassion will receive fifteen benefits.

- ▶ In all your lifetimes you will meet a virtuous or religious king or leader, such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama.
- ▶ By being born where they are, you will always have the opportunity to practice Dharma. In those places there will be a lot of temples in which there are many holy objects such as statues and stupas, and there will be many people practicing. This will inspire you to practice Dharma, the cause of happiness. These holy objects give you the opportunity to practice, to accumulate merit.
- ▶ You will always be fortunate and meet good conditions, which helps your Dharma practice. Many good things will happen and this inspires you to practice, to receive teachings, to meditate.
- ▶ You will always meet a virtuous friend, a spiritual teacher.
- ▶ You will always receive a perfect human body.
- ▶ Your mind will always be familiar with the path, with virtue.
- ▶ Your vows, your morality, will not degenerate.
- ▶ The people around you—your family, Dharma students, people in the office—will always be harmonious with you.
- ▶ You will always have enough means to live.
- ▶ You will always be protected; you will be served by others.
- ▶ Your possessions, your wealth, will not be stolen.

- ▶ You will succeed in everything you wish.
- ▶ You will always be protected by the virtuous nagas and devas.
- ▶ In all your lifetimes you will see the Buddha and be able to hear the Dharma.
- ▶ By listening to the pure Dharma, you are able to actualize the profound meaning of emptiness.

Besides the benefits mentioned below or other benefits, such as being healed of disease or protected from many harms, at least remember these fifteen.

### **There are other amazing benefits**

By reciting one thousand mantras every day, for example, **your body becomes blessed**. Therefore, the **air that touches you is blessed**, and wherever you are the air that touches your body purifies whoever else is touched by it, human or animal, preventing them from being reborn in the lower realms.

The **water that touches you is blessed**, so that the many billions of sentient beings in any river or ocean you go into are purified, and whoever drinks the water gets purified. You save the animals from the most unbelievable suffering of the lower realms.

Even the smoke from the cremation of a body that had been blessed by the recitation of the mantra purifies the negative karma to be reborn in the lower realms of whoever is touched by it or whoever smells it.

It is written in the *Casket Arrangement Sutra* that any “men, women or children or any other sentient being” who simply look at the six-syllable mantra “written by hand on rocks or stone walls” will “become bodhisattvas of the end of samsara.”



## Reciting OM MAṆI PADME HŪṀ purifies heavy negative karma:

- ▶ **It purifies broken root vows of a fully ordained monk:** Reciting OM MAṆI PADME HŪṀ just once can purify the negative karma of a fully ordained monk who has broken the four root vows—killing a human being, engaging in sexual intercourse, taking things not given and telling the biggest lie (that one has realizations)—negative karma that would otherwise result in being born in the hell realms.
- ▶ **It purifies the five heavy negative actions:** Reciting OM MAṆI PADME HŪṀ can purify the five heavy negative actions without break, which are karmas that are created by deeds so heavy that they ripen immediately as a rebirth in the hell realm. They are: killing one's mother, killing one's father, drawing the blood of a buddha, killing an arhat and causing disunity among the Sangha.
- ▶ **It purifies eons of negative karma:** Reciting OM MAṆI PADME HŪṀ seven times purifies one hundred lifetimes of negative karma. Reciting it twenty-one times purifies four thousand eons of negative karma and you are able to have bodhicitta realizations. If you recite it one hundred and eight times it purifies forty thousand eons of negative karma.
- ▶ **It purifies the karma of animals:** If you recite OM MAṆI PADME HŪṀ in the ears of animals, after their death they will be reborn in the human realm; they will not be reborn as hell beings, hungry ghosts or animals.

## The longest mantra is unbelievable!

If possible, recite the longest Chenrezig mantra—there are incredible benefits.

**It liberates from prison:** It is said in the texts that if you recite the longest mantra, suddenly the king of the land (the president, etc.) generates compassion for you and liberates you from prison. Things like that can happen; suddenly change can happen.

Reciting the longest mantra just once brings the same benefits as reciting the short mantra one hundred million times. It is unbelievable, unbelievable!

So much heavy negative karma that has been collected from the past gets purified and in future lives you will always be with buddhas and bodhisattvas and will go toward enlightenment.

In the beginning it may take time. Recite it three times at the beginning, then after some months you can recite it seven times or more.

The longest one is the best, most precious.

## ❖ MEDITATION ON THE COMPASSION BUDDHA

At the moment you can't generate yourself as Chenrezig, because you haven't received a great initiation. So **visualize Chenrezig in front of you.**

He is in the nature of light and is huge. See him as an actual living being, alive. He is looking at you and all sentient beings with so much loving kindness and compassion, seeing how much suffering there is.

He is white in color and has one face and four arms. The first two hands are joined together at his heart holding a wish-fulfilling gem. His second right hand holds a crystal rosary while his second left hand holds a white lotus. He is

seated in the cross-legged vajra posture, clothed in fine silk garments and is adorned with precious ornaments.

From the white OM at his brow, the red AH at his throat and the blue HUM at his heart light goes out to all the directions, inviting actual Chenrezig from his natural abode. He melts into your visualization, becoming one with it.

**First, purify yourself:** As you recite one mala of the mantra—one hundred and eight—imagine that Chenrezig is sending compassion to you, in the form of beams of nectar. The beams enter your body and mind.

When the beams are received by you, your mind becomes unbelievably blissful and peaceful and your body becomes totally clear, in the nature of light. You are purified of all negative karmas and obscurations collected from beginningless rebirths. Think that you are completely purified—immediately, instantly purified.

**Second, purify others:** As you recite another mala, Chenrezig sends beams to all the sentient beings—numberless hell beings, numberless hungry ghosts, numberless animals, numberless human beings, numberless gods, numberless demi-gods and numberless intermediate state beings—from whom you receive all your beginningless past happiness and all the collections of goodness, as well as ultimate happiness, liberation from the oceans of samsaric sufferings.

Think that they are totally purified of their specific sufferings as well as the causes, their karma and delusions.

As much as possible, try not to be distracted or to think of anything else as you meditate.

**Third,** while reciting the next mala concentrate on **receiving all the qualities** of the Compassion Buddha in the form

of nectar pouring into you: all the limitless skies of qualities of Chenrezig's holy body, speech and mind, especially compassion for all sentient beings, but also omniscience and the perfect power to do perfect works for all sentient beings.

If you want to recite more mantras, for example ten malas, for half of them think you are being purified and for the other half imagine that sentient beings are being purified.

As you recite, think all the qualities of Chenrezig are received by you and all sentient beings.



### **Combine the practice of Chenrezig with the eight Mahayana precepts and a two-day fasting retreat**

From time to time, please practice the two-day fasting retreat called nyung nä, especially, if you can, on the solar eclipse or the special buddha days, when the merit increases one hundred million times. You can ask the prison project to send you a Tibetan calendar, which shows the dates.

To do nyung nä on those days is extremely good. Of course, it doesn't mean that you can't do it at other times too. Sometimes you can do it a few times in a row, sometimes one at a time, depending on what is more convenient.

This practice combines many, many powerful practices such as prostrations, mantra recitation, the eight Mahayana precepts, meditation on the Compassion Buddha and bodhicitta.

It is an unbelievable way of creating merit, skies of merit. The practice involves quite a lot of prostrations as you recite the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas, also to Chenrezig. You also

recite OM MAṆI PADME HŪṂ, which creates unbelievable merit as well as unbelievable purification.

On the first day you take only lunch and on the second day you fast completely, including no drinking. You totally fast for sentient beings, to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, to purify sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering.

It is very good to do a few of these retreats every year. Especially for a busy person this two-day retreat is very, very good; it's such powerful purification, a very quick way to purify and the best way to go to a pure land after you die, to not wander endlessly in samsara.

Of course, it is not so easy to do while you are in prison, but as I mentioned, if you can, try to do it on the solar eclipse or on the special buddha days when the merit increases one hundred million times.

Just fit the sessions in however you can, according to your schedule. You can discuss with the people at Liberation Prison Project how to do it in a flexible way.

## The short Compassion Buddha mantra

OM MAṆI PADME HŪṂ

## Chenrezig name mantra: the longest Compassion Buddha mantra

NAMO RATNA TRAYĀYA / NAMA ĀRYA AVALOKITEŚHVARĀYA /  
 BODHISATVĀYA / MAHĀSATVĀYA / MAHĀKĀRUṆIKĀYA /  
 TADYATHĀ / OM SARVA BANDHANA CCHHEDHANA KARĀYA /  
 SARVA PĀPA SAMUDRO CCHHOṢHAṆA KARĀYA / SARVA  
 VYĀDHI PRAŚHAMANA KARĀYA / SARVA ITYU PADRAVA  
 VINĀŚHĀNA KARĀYA / SARVA BHAYEṢHU TRAṆA KARĀYA /

TASYA / NAMAS KṚITVĀ / IDAṂ / ĀRYA AVALOKITEŚHVARĀYA /  
 TAVA / NĪLAKAṆṬHA NĀMA PARAMA HṚIDAYAṂ / ĀVARTA  
 YIṢHYĀMI / SARVA ARTHA SĀDHANĀṂ / ŚHUBHA CHETAṂ /  
 SARVA BHŪTĀNĀṂ / PĀPA MĀRGA VIŚHODHAKAṂ / TADYATHĀ /  
 AVALOKITE / ŚHVARYĀ / ĀLOKE / ADHIPATI / LOKĀTI KRĀNTE / EHI /  
 EHI / MAHĀBODHISATVA / HE BODHISATVA / HE MAHĀBODHISATVA /  
 HE PRIYA / BODHISATVA / HE MAHĀKĀRUṆIKA / MAHĀSMARA  
 HṚIDAYENA / EHI / EHI / ĀRYA AVALOKITEŚHVARĀYA / PARAMA  
 MAITRI CHITTA KĀRUṆIKA / KURU KURU / KARMA SĀDHAYA  
 SĀDHAYA / VIDYAM / DEHI / DEHI / ME ARAMAṂ GAMAṂ GAMA /  
 VIHAṂ GAMA / SIDDHA YOGĪŚHVARA / DUHU / DUHU / VIRYANTE /  
 MAHĀVIRYANTE / DHARA / DHARA / DHARENDRĒŚVARA / CHALA /  
 CHALA / VIMALA MŪRTE / ĀRYA AVALOKITEŚHVARA / JINA KṚIŚHṆA  
 JAṬĀ MUKUṬA / ALAṂKṚITA ŚHARĪRA / LAṂBA / PRALAṂBA /  
 VILAṂBA / MAHĀSIDDHA VIDYĀDHARA / BALA / BALA / MAHĀBALA /  
 MALA / MALA / MAHĀMALA / CHALA / CHALA / MAHĀCHALA /  
 KṚIŚHṆA VARṆA / KṚIŚHṆA PĀKṢHA / NIRGHĀTANA / HE / PADMA  
 HASTA / CHARA / CHARA / NĪSHCHAREŚHVARE / KṚIŚHṆA  
 SARPA KṚITA YAJŅOPAVĪTA / EHI / EHI / MAHĀVĀRĀHA  
 MUKHA TRIPURA DAHANEŚHVARA / NĀRĀYAṆA RŪPA  
 VEṢHADHARA / HE / NĪLAKAṆṬHA / EHI / EHI / MAHĀHALA / HALA /  
 VIṢHANIRJATA / LOKASYA / RĀGAVIṢHA VINĀŚHANAM / DVEṢHA  
 VIṢHA VINĀŚHANAM / MOHAVIṢHA VINAŚHANAM / NIRMOKṢHANA /  
 HULU / HULU / MUŅCHA / MUŅCHA / MAHU / MAHU / RĀHULA /  
 RĀHULA / HALA / HALĀ / HĀRE / MAHĀPADMA NĀBHI / SARA /  
 SARA / SIRI / SIRI / SURU / SURU / BUDDHYA / BUDDHYA / BODHAYA /  
 BODHAYA / BODHAYĀTAVA / NĪLAKAṆṬHA / EHI / EHI / NĪLAKAṆṬHA /  
 EHI / EHI / VĀMASTHITA / MAHĀSIṂHAMUKHA / HASA / HASA /  
 MUŅCHA / MUŅCHA / MAHĀṬṬĀṬṬA HĀSYA / EHI / EHI / BHO  
 BHO / MAHĀSIDDHA YOGVIŚHVARA / BHANA BHANA / VĀCHANA /  
 SĀDHAYA / SĀDHAYA / VIDYĀṂ / SMARA / SMARA / TVAM / HE /

BHAGAVAN / ALOKA VILOKATVAṀ / TATHĀGATĀNĀṀ / DAHI DĀHI  
 ME / DARŚHANA / KĀMASYA / DARŚHANAṀ / PRASĀDHAYA ME  
 SVĀHĀ / IDADHAYA SVĀHĀ / MAHĀSIDDHĀYA SVĀHĀ / SIDDHA  
 YOGĪŚHVARĀ SVĀHĀ / NĪLAKAṆṬHAYA SVĀHĀ / VĀRĀHAMUKHĀYA  
 SVĀHĀ / MAHĀVĀRĀHAMUKHĀYA SVĀHĀ / NARA SIṀHAMUKHĀYA  
 SVĀHĀ / MAHĀNARA SIṀHAMUKHĀYA SVĀHĀ / VAJRA HASTĀYA  
 SVĀHĀ / MAHĀ VAJRA HASTĀYA SVĀHĀ / SIDDHA VIDYĀDHARĀYA  
 SVĀHĀ / MAHĀSIDDHA VIDYĀDHARĀYA SVĀHĀ / PADMA HASTĀYA  
 SVĀHĀ / MAHĀPADMA HASTĀYA SVĀHĀ / KṚIṢHṆA SARPA KṚITA  
 YAJÑOPAVĪTĀYA SVĀHĀ / MAHĀMĀLA MUKUṬA DHARĀ SVĀHĀ /  
 CHAKRĀYUDHA DHARĀYA SVĀHĀ / ŚHAṀKHA ŚHABDA NIRNĀDANA  
 KARĀYĀ SVĀHĀ / BODHANA KARĀYA SVĀHĀ / VĀMASTHITA  
 SKANDHA DEŚHA KṚIṢHṆĀ JINĀYA SVĀHĀ / VĀMAHASTA VYŪGHRA  
 CHARMA NIRABHASANĀYA SVĀHĀ / LOKEŚHVARĀYA SVĀHĀ /  
 MAHĀLOKE ŚHVĀRĀYA SVĀHĀ / SARVA SIDDHEŚHVARĀYA SVĀHĀ /  
 RAKṢHA RAKṢHA MĀṀ SVĀHĀ / KURU RAKṢHA MUDRĀṆĀṀ SVĀHĀ /  
 NAMO BHAGAVATE / ĀRYA AVALOKITEŚHVARĀYA / BODHISATVĀYA  
 MAHĀSATVĀYA / MAHĀKĀRUṆIKĀYA SIDDHYANTU ME MANTRA  
 PADĀNI SVĀHĀ

## REMEMBER

- ▶ Remember the fifteen benefits of reciting OṀ MAṆI PADME HŪṀ.
- ▶ Reciting the mantra can purify eons of negative karma.
- ▶ Reciting the long mantra is one hundred million times more powerful than the short one.
- ▶ Combine the recitation with meditation on the Compassion Buddha.
- ▶ Combine the recitation with a two-day fasting retreat.



*Everyone should practice Chenrezig, the Buddha of Compassion!  
Do this not just for yourself but for numberless sentient beings—  
everyone; every small ant, every tiny insect.*



## Practice Giving and Taking

You could practice taking upon yourself all the negative karma others have created to be in prison, all their suffering of being in prison.

There is a very special meditation on bodhicitta called *tonglen*, giving and taking. You meditate on **taking** upon yourself other sentient beings' sufferings and the causes of suffering, thus destroying the ego, and then **giving** them your happiness, your merits.

As we have discussed, it is so beneficial for you to use your situation of being in prison to develop bodhicitta, to train your mind in bodhicitta. You could practice taking upon yourself all the negative karma others have created to be in prison, all their suffering of being in prison, and even the unpleasant place of the prison itself.

You generate compassion for all the people who have the karma to be in prison; you take all of that suffering and all the delusions and karma that caused it, including even the imprint of the subtle obscurations in the mind—you take all that upon yourself and give it to your self-cherishing ego.

As you meditate like this, you will purify so many eons of negative karma and defilements: in that second, like an atomic bomb exploding, it all becomes totally non-existent.

## **You purify so much negative karma and create so much merit**

Earlier, I mentioned a woman who healed her own cancer by practicing compassion. Here is another example. A man who had AIDS was advised by his guru to do tonglen. The student practiced this meditation. When he went to the hospital for a check-up, they could no longer find any sign of the AIDS virus.

When I heard about this, I thought he must have practiced the meditation for a while, but he told me that he'd practiced it for just four minutes each day for four days. He felt unsurpassable compassion for others, especially for those who had AIDS. He experienced such compassion that he cried. He didn't have the slightest concern for himself, only compassion and concern for others.

This meditation is like fuel for a rocket. What healed his AIDS so quickly was his powerful practice of bodhicitta, letting go of his self and cherishing others. This purified the negative karma and delusions that had resulted in his AIDS.

In *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life* (ch. 1, vv. 13–14), the great saint bodhisattva Shantideva says:

By relying upon a hero (a powerful person), great fear  
 can be ceased,  
 But by relying upon bodhicitta one can be liberated  
 quickly from a very heavy, powerful negative action  
 [the results of which] are inexhaustible.  
 So mindful people depend on this bodhicitta.

Bodhicitta burns great heavy evil deeds in one instant,  
 Just like the conflagration at the end of the world burns  
 rocky mountains, even impenetrable things, instantly.

You create limitless skies of merit by taking all this suffering and its causes upon yourself.

It is the same when you give away your body, with loving kindness, to numberless beings: you collect numberless merits. When you give all your wealth, you create numberless merits. When you give away your happiness, which includes enlightenment, you create numberless merits. When you give away all your merits of the past, present and future, you collect numberless merits.

Each time you do the meditation of taking and each time you do the meditation of giving, you get closer to liberation and enlightenment, closer to being able to enlighten all sentient beings.

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## ❖ THE MEDITATION

Generate compassion by thinking of how living beings constantly experience suffering even though they have no wish to do so, because they are ignorant of its causes or because, although they know the causes of suffering, they are too lazy to abandon them.

Think: “How wonderful it would be if all living beings could be free from all suffering and the causes of suffering, karma and delusions.”

Think: “I myself will free them from all their suffering and its causes.”

### 1. TAKE UPON YOURSELF THE SUFFERING OF OTHERS

#### TAKE THE SUFFERING OF ALL HUMANS

As you breathe in, focus first on all the numberless other people who are in prison. Then think of all the other problems experienced by all living beings, as well as their causes.

As you slowly breathe in, imagine you take in all this suffering and its causes through your nostrils in the form of black smoke. Like plucking a thorn out of their flesh, you imagine immediately removing all the suffering from the numberless living beings.

### **TAKE THE SUFFERING ENVIRONMENTS OF SENTIENT BEINGS**

Take from others all the undesirable environments that they experience. In particular think of all the prisons throughout the world. Breathe in through your nostrils in the form of dark smoke all the undesirable places that sentient beings experience.

For example, imagine that you are breathing in the red-hot burning ground of the hot hells, the ice of the cold hells, the inhospitable environments of the hungry ghosts and animals, the dirty places of human beings, as well as all the prisons.

### **DESTROY SELF-CHERISHING AND IGNORANCE**

The dark smoke comes in through your nostrils and down to your heart, where it sinks into your self-cherishing and completely destroys it. You receive all that suffering as dark smoke onto that wrong concept, onto the self-cherishing thought, the great demon, the enemy, the self-cherishing thought and, like a bomb, destroys it.

Then think you receive all this suffering and obscurations onto yourself, into your own heart, onto your root of samsara, which is the ignorance that is holding the I as real, while it is not.

(Self-cherishing is based on the ignorance that holds to

the concept of a truly existent I. Even though no truly existent I exists, we cherish this false I and regard it as most precious and most important among all beings.)

At the same time as your self-cherishing becomes completely nonexistent, the false I that ignorance holds to be truly existent also becomes completely empty, as it is empty in reality.

### **MEDITATE ON EMPTINESS**

Meditate for as long as possible on this emptiness, the ultimate nature of the self. The real I becomes nonexistent—just as it is, in reality, not there at all. This purifies the actual cause of suffering, the ignorance itself.

## **2. GIVE EVERYTHING TO SENTIENT BEINGS**

### **GENERATE LOVING KINDNESS**

Next, generate loving kindness by thinking that even though living beings want to be happy, they lack happiness because they are ignorant of its causes or lazy in creating them. And even if they achieve some temporary happiness, they still lack the ultimate happiness of full enlightenment.

Think: “How wonderful it would be if all living beings had happiness and the causes of happiness.”

Think: “I myself will give them happiness and its causes.”

### **GIVE EVERYTHING YOU HAVE TO SENTIENT BEINGS**

Visualize your body as a wish-granting jewel, which can grant all the wishes of living beings. Then give everything you have to every living being. Give all your good karma of the three times and all the happiness that results from it up

to enlightenment. Give your possessions, your family and friends, and give your body, visualized as a wish-granting jewel.

Also make offerings to all the enlightened beings.

### **HUMAN BEINGS RECEIVE EVERYTHING THEY NEED**

Now imagine that all living beings receive everything that they want, including all the realizations of the path to enlightenment.

Those who want a friend, find a friend.

Those who want a guru, find a perfect guru.

Those who want a job, find a job.

Those who want a doctor, find a qualified doctor.

Those who want medicine, find medicine. For those with incurable diseases, you become the medicine that cures them.

And all those in prison find freedom from prison.

Since the main human problem is difficulty in finding the means of living, imagine that each human being is showered with millions of dollars from your body, which is a wish-granting jewel.

You can also think that the environment becomes a pure land—the pure land of Amitabha Buddha or of the Buddha of Compassion.

You grant all human beings everything they wish for, including a pure land with perfect enjoyments. All these enjoyments cause them only to generate the path to enlightenment within their mind, and they all become enlightened.

### **TRANSFORM THE ENVIRONMENTS OF HELL BEINGS AND HUNGRY GHOSTS INTO PURE LANDS**

Now imagine completely transforming the environment of the hell beings into a pure realm, which is as beautiful as possible, with perfect enjoyments and no suffering at all. All the iron houses of the hell beings, which are one with fire, become jewel palaces and mandalas. All the hell beings receive everything they want and then become enlightened.

Do the same for the hungry ghosts. Transform their environment into a pure realm and give them thousands of different foods that all taste like nectar. The hungry ghosts receive everything they need, but the ultimate point is that they all become enlightened.

### **GIVE THE ANIMALS PROTECTION**

Since animals mainly need protection, imagine protecting them from being attacked by other animals. They receive everything they want, and everything they receive becomes the cause for them to actualize the stages of the path and become enlightened.

### **FINALLY, REJOICE**

After everyone has become enlightened in this way, rejoice by thinking, “How wonderful it is that I have enlightened every single living being.”



### **REMEMBER**

- ▶ Giving and taking purifies so much negative karma.
- ▶ Giving and taking can purify illness.

- ▶ With compassion, take upon yourself the suffering of others.
- ▶ In particular, with compassion, take upon yourself the suffering of everyone in prison.
- ▶ With love for others, give them all your happiness, all your merits.
- ▶ With love for others, give them everything they need.
- ▶ The practice of giving and taking causes bodhicitta.



## Recite the Mantra of Buddha Namgyälma

Having the mantra in your cell, either inside a stupa or statue or on a banner, for example, purifies and blesses the people who live or visit there, as well as the animals and the insects.

Namgyälma is a buddha for long life and purification. The mantra has infinite benefits; unbelievable, unbelievable benefits. It is so powerful. The kind and compassionate Guru Shakyamuni Buddha taught the four guardians the benefits of reciting it.

Many years ago, Lama Yeshe and I went to south India to receive a teaching from His Holiness Ling Rinpoche. One day while we were there, we went to see His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche as well, at his house in Mundgod. Rinpoche, who passed away in 1981, was my root guru, and Lama's as well. Rinpoche was meeting with us, but at the same time he was doing his practice, doing meditation.

In the middle of the conversation, Rinpoche explained what he was doing. "I'm reciting the Namgyälma mantra. I have received requests and offerings from people in the ten directions, asking me to pray for people who have died and for those who are still living."

From then on, I began reciting the mantra for people who had died. Rinpoche told us that people think that this mantra is only a long-life practice, but it's also very powerful for purification and for those who've died.

### Some of the benefits of the mantra

The *Namgyälma Sutra* and *Giving Breath to the Wretched*, a text about how to help the dying, give some examples of the benefits.

- ▶ If you first wash your body, put on clean clothes and then, while living in the eight precepts, recite the mantra one thousand times, even if you are sick and in danger of death because your lifespan is due to end as a result of karma, your lifespan can be prolonged, the obscurations purified, and you will be freed from disease.
- ▶ If somebody who has a very heavy disease that doctors cannot diagnose recites the mantra, they will be cured. After death, they will be reborn in a blissful realm, a pure land, and they will not be reborn in the lower realms ever again.
- ▶ It is said that for a human being who simply hears this mantra, this will be their last birth in a womb.
- ▶ Reciting the mantra in the ears of animals ensures that this is their last animal rebirth.
- ▶ The mantra is so powerful that if you recite it twenty-one times, blow on things such as mustard seeds, sesame seeds, talcum powder or even water, and then throw that substance on the bones or dead bodies of very evil beings who have created many heavy negative karmas, those beings will be immediately liberated from the lower realms and will be reborn in a higher realm, such as those of the devas. The mantra affects the consciousness and purifies it.
- ▶ Having the mantra in your cell, either inside a stupa or statue or on a banner, for example, purifies and blesses the people who live or visit there, as well as the animals

and the insects. Or you could write the mantra on paper and stick it on the wall of your cell.

- ▶ If the stupa or banner is on a roof or a mountain top, the wind that blows on them is blessed and will purify the negative karma of the insects, animals and people touched by the wind; they will not reborn in the lower realms.
- ▶ Even passing in the shadow of the stupa or banner purifies the negative karma of sentient beings.
- ▶ Circumambulating a stupa that contains the mantra purifies the karma to be reborn in the hot hells.
- ▶ Having the mantra in a car—either stuck on the ceiling or elsewhere, or on the outside of the car—blesses and purifies the negative karma of all the people in the car as well as the insects who get crushed by the car. When you drive, so many insects are killed, but by touching the car they are blessed and their negative karma is purified.

There is no question about how much purification we accomplish by reciting this mantra, hearing it, touching it, seeing it, or keeping it on our bodies.

### **Creative ways to help sentient beings with the mantra**

A Chinese person from Hong Kong who was working for the Maitreya Project, whose entertainment was diving in the ocean, decided to put the mantra down on the seabed to bless the fish and purify their negative karma. A great idea! He had the mantra written out and brought it to me to correct. He then carved it on a huge piece of very hard material, bigger than a table, and put it in the ocean. He also wanted to make stupas and put them on the seabed as well for the fish to circumambulate.

What also could be done is to carve the mantra in wood or rubber—I think it is very good to make it large, but it could be any size—then make a hole in it, put a rope through the hole and drag it behind a boat while sailing in the water, thus blessing the water and purifying all the numberless sentient beings who live there.

These are just some ideas of how to benefit sentient beings, not only people but also animals—those living in the water, living in the ground, or living in the sky.

Remember to make sure that the mantra is correct; many texts include the mantra, but there are mistakes.

## The long Namgyälma mantra

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE / SARVA TRAILOKYA  
 PRATIVIŚHIṢṬĀYA / BUDDHAYATE NAMAḤ / TADYATHĀ / OM  
 BHRŪṢ BHRŪṢ BHRŪṢ / ŚHODHAYA ŚHODHAYA / VIŚHODHAYA  
 VIŚHODHAYA / ASAMA SAMANTA / AVABHĀSASPHARAṄAGATI /  
 GAGANA SVABHĀVA VIŚHUDDHE / ABHIṢHIÑCHANTUMĀṢ /  
 SARVA TATHĀGATĀḤ SUGATA PRAVACHANA / AMṚITA  
 ABHIṢHEKAIḤ / MAHĀMUDRĀ MANTRAPADAIḤ / ĀHARA ĀHARA /  
 MAMA ĀYURSSAṢDHĀRAṆI / ŚHODHAYA ŚHODHAYA / VIŚHODHAYA  
 VIŚHODHAYA / GAGANA SVABHAVA VIŚHUDDHE / UṢHṆIṢHA  
 VIJAYA PARIŚHUDDHE / SAHASRA RAŚMI SAÑCHODITE / SARVA  
 TATHĀGATĀ AVALOKINI / ṢHAṬPĀRAMITĀ PARIPŪRAṆI / SARVA  
 TATHĀGATĀ MĀTE / DAŚHABHŪMI PRATIṢṬHITE / SARVA  
 TATHĀGATĀ HṚIDAYA / ADHIṢṬHĀNA ADHIṢṬHITE / MUDRE  
 MUDRE MAHĀMUDRE / VAJRA KĀYA SAṢHATANA PARIŚHUDDHE /  
 SARVA KARMA ĀVARAṆA VIŚHUDDHE / PRATINIVARTAYA MAMA  
 ĀYUR VIŚHUDDHE / SARVA TATHĀGATĀ SAMAYA / ADHIṢṬHĀNA  
 ADHIṢṬHITE / OM MUNE MUNE MAHĀ MUNE / VIMUNE

VIMUNE / MAHÄVIMUNE / MATI MATI MAHÄMATI / MAMATI  
 SUMATI TATHATÄ / BHÜDHAKOṬI PARIŚHUDDHE / VISPHUṬA  
 BUDDHE ŚHUDDHE / HE HE JAYA JAYA / VIJAYA VIJAYA /  
 SMARA SMARA / SPHARA SPHARA / SPHÄRAYA SPHÄRAYA /  
 SARVA BUDDHA ADHIṢṬHÄNA ADHIṢṬHITE / ŚHUDDHE  
 ŚHUDDHE / BUDDHE BUDDHE / VAJRE VAJRE / MAHÄ VAJRE  
 SUVAJRE / VAJRA GARBHE JAYA GARBHE / VIJAYA GARBHE /  
 VAJRA JVALÄ GARBHE / VAJRODBHAVE / VAJRA SAṀBHAVE /  
 VAJRE VAJRIṆI / VAJRAṀ BHAVATU MAMA ŚHARÄRAM / SARVA  
 SATTÄNÄNCHA KÄYA PARIŚHUDDHIR BHÄVATU / ME SADÄ  
 SARVAGATI PARIŚHUDDHIŚH CHA / SARVA TATHÄGATÄŚH CHA  
 MAṀ / SAMÄŚHVASAYANTU / BUDDHYA BUDDHYA / SIDDHYA  
 SIDDHYA / BODHAYA BODHAYA / VIBODHAYA VIBODHAYA /  
 MOCHAYA MOCHAYA / VIMOCHAYA VIMOCHAYA / ŚHODHAYA  
 ŚHODHAYA / VIŚHODHAYA VIŚHODHAYA / SAMANTÄNA  
 MOCHAYA MOCHAYA / SAMANTA RAŚMI PARIŚHUDDHE /  
 SARVA TATHÄGATÄ HṘIDAYA / ADHIṢṬHÄNA ADHIṢṬHITE /  
 MUDRE MUDRE MAHÄMUDRE / MAHÄMUDRA MANTRAPADAIḤ  
 SVÄHÄ / OṀ BHRÜṀ SVÄHÄ / OṀ AMṘITA ÄYUR DADE SVÄHÄ

## The short Namgyälma mantra

OṀ BHRÜṀ SVÄHÄ / OṀ AMṘITA ÄYUR DADE SVÄHÄ

After reciting either mantra, say a few times:

OṀ AMITE / AMITOD BHAVE / AMITA SAṀBHAVE / AMITA  
 VIKRÄNTE / AMITA GÄDRE / AMITA GÄMINI / AMITA  
 ÄYURDADE / GAGANA KÄRTI KARE / SARVA KLEŚHA KṢHAYAṀ  
 KARIYE SVÄHÄ

 **REMEMBER**

- ▶ The Namgyälma mantra is for purification and long life.
- ▶ The mantra is also good to recite for people who have died.
- ▶ Reciting the mantra can ensure you won't get a lower realm rebirth.
- ▶ All beings who are touched by the wind that has been blessed by the mantra will be purified.
- ▶ You can wear the mantra on your body.

**Recite the Mantra from  
the *Sutra of Great Liberation***

If you hear this mantra or recite this mantra with devotion, even only once a day, you won't be born in the lower realms until enlightenment is achieved, and you will achieve enlightenment gradually.

This is the truthful advice of the unbetraying Victorious One.

NAMO BUDDHĀYA / NAMO DHARMĀYA / NAMAḤ SAṄGGHĀYA /  
ADANTI DHĀRAṆĪ / TADYATHĀ / AKAŚHANI VĀVĪNI / SARVA  
DHARMĀ NI VANĪ / IŚHAMANA / VIPAŚHANA / VIMALA SUPARI /  
DHARMA NI KHANA / VARUNI CHAYA TAMALE / CHALE / HULU  
HULU / ŚHIVITE / MANTRA MANTRA MANTRAḤ SVĀHĀ.

It is taught by 8,000 billion buddhas that if you criticize this mantra, you are criticizing all the buddhas, and enlightenment cannot be achieved.

 **REMEMBER**

- Reciting this mantra prevents you from being born in the lower realms.



*There is no question about how much purification we accomplish by reciting Buddha Namgyälma's mantra, or hearing it, touching it, seeing it, or keeping it on our bodies.*



## Recite the Sutras

You could read the *Golden Light Sutra* for all the prisoners in the world. Recite it with the thought to liberate them from prison; for them to have peace and happiness.

As I have mentioned many times, it is important to collect merit. One way to achieve this is by reciting the sutras. They are unbelievably precious. When we have merit, all our problems just naturally become less and all our wishes for happiness will succeed. You will see—even just the next day, suddenly, things happen. With merit, it's like this. And, of course, you also purify your negative karma.

There are various sutras that you could recite; below I discuss the benefits of just three: the *Golden Light Sutra*, the *Arya Sanghata Sutra*, and the *Diamond Cutter Sutra*. There is so much benefit from reading even just a page a day, half a page.

### **1. The *Golden Light Sutra* for world peace**

The *Golden Light Sutra* directs your mind toward enlightenment every time you read it. It has unbelievable benefits; all your negative karmas get purified and you never get reborn in the lower realms. It's unbelievable, unbelievably unbelievable.

This sutra is mainly for world peace. You can read it for all the prisoners in the world, not only for those in the place where you are. Recite it with the thought to liberate them from prison; for them to have peace and happiness, to change their minds

and develop the good heart; to be free from anger and selfish mind; to be kind-hearted toward others, to cherish others, benefit others.

Pray also that everyone becomes a source of peace and happiness for the whole world—not only for the whole world, but for all sentient beings, like the Compassion Buddha, Chenrezig. Dedicate your recitation not only for prisoners, although of course that is your main focus, but for all sentient beings to purify their negative karma and never be reborn in the lower realms, to purify the causes of samsara and be free from the oceans of samsaric suffering, and finally to achieve enlightenment quickly.

## **2. The benefits of reciting the *Arya Sanghata Sutra***

Each time you simply hear the *Arya Sanghata Sutra*, the merit you collect is equal to the merit collected by twelve times as many buddhas as there are very subtle grains of sand in the Pacific Ocean.

First of all, one buddha has completed the merit of wisdom and the merit of virtue—there is nothing more to collect. The merit that just one buddha has collected is beyond words. But the merit collected here by merely hearing this sutra is equivalent to merit collected by twelve times as many buddhas as there are grains of sands in the Ganga River.

This means that anyone hearing it—humans, birds, insects, even spirits—collects that much merit. Can you imagine? It is like an impossible thing to happen.

The very minute you hear this sutra, you purify the five uninterrupted negative karmas—the extremely heavy negative karmas that ripen immediately after death, without interruption of another life, as rebirth in the lowest hot hells, which have the heaviest suffering of the lower realms and which last for one

intermediate eon. Just by hearing this sutra, that karma is completely purified.

If merely hearing the sutra can purify these heavy negative actions, then no question about the ten nonvirtuous actions.

When I would drive in Washington, in the United States—the forty-minute drive to go shopping, for example—I would play the CD of the sutra in the car. I remember one time, when I was sitting in the front of the car and two nuns, Holly and Chösang, were sitting in the back. It was not sunny weather; it was a bit foggy and cold. I kept the window down so sentient beings could hear the sutra. The wind on the nuns was very cold! But if I had cared only for them, all the people living in the houses along the road and all the cows and animals would not have heard the sutra.

I played the sutra very loudly, just like the young people playing their music in their cars—those young people who have that strange hair that stands straight up on their head or who have a lot of rings on their ears or on their face, around the eyes . . . I'm just being descriptive!

In this way, even going shopping, just one way, benefits so many sentient beings. I remember there was a deer on the road, so we stopped and gave it the opportunity to hear some of the sutra as well.

And, of course, the people in the car also purify all the negative karmas and collect unbelievable merit as well. It is such an easy way to make life meaningful. You just put the CD in the car and you play it, that's it. As long as you are not deaf and can hear, you don't need to make any effort. It's the easiest way to purify negative karma, the easiest way to collect unimaginable extensive merit.

This makes it easy to realize the emptiness of the “I,” the

aggregates, phenomena; it is a quick way to eliminate the root of samsara, ignorance. And, of course, it's a quick way to actualize bodhicitta. You need so much merit, unbelievable, unbelievable merit to actualize bodhicitta.

That means it is the quickest and easiest way to achieve liberation from samsara, to finish all the oceans of samsaric suffering that one has experienced numberless times without beginning, and to achieve enlightenment.

### **Reading and writing out the *Arya Sanghata Sutra* creates even more merit**

Now, if you read the *Arya Sanghata Sutra*, you'd collect far greater merit than what you'd collect from hearing it. And if you write it out, you create even more: eight times more. In other words, by writing out the sutra you collect eight times more than twelve times—that is, ninety-six times—the merit collected by as many buddhas as there are grains of sand in the River Ganga.

During a recent visit to Malaysia, because of my little advertisement about how much more merit there is if you write out the *Arya Sanghata Sutra*, many people did so!

After they had written it out at the Malaysian center, somebody offered \$100,000 for a school. In New Zealand, a man at the Nelson center read the sutra just once. In the gompa, he thought, "Buddha wouldn't lie," and with that strong faith he read it. He won a lottery—a large house in Australia! His idea was to sell the house and to use the money for Dharma projects. Then, a lady at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa in Pomaia, Italy, who had been smoking her whole life and was unable to stop, after reading the sutra gave up smoking just like that! This means that, really, Buddha is working, blessing, through this text. Buddha is really in action.

With all this merit you are able to fulfill all the wishes of all

the sentient beings—you should realize that. You are able to help the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless humans, the numberless gods, the numberless demi-gods, the numberless intermediate state beings. You are able to bring them to higher rebirth, then liberation from samsara, and then to enlightenment.

If every day you could write even a few lines it would be extremely, unbelievably good. When you write it, of course, it is quite slow, but when you write you will also read it, so you could write a few lines and then read the whole text. Doing this every day, gradually you will finish writing it.

### **3. The benefits of reciting the *Diamond Cutter Sutra***

Then there is the *Diamond Cutter Sutra*. The merit you create by merely listening to it and not giving up faith is far greater than the merit you'd create by, for example, giving your body as charity to sentient beings in the morning, then again at noon, and then in the afternoon, and if you did this every day as many times as there are those subtle grains of sand in the Pacific Ocean, and you did it for eons.

Offering your body to sentient beings even just once is incredible, but here not only once, not only three times a day, but for as many times as there are grains of sand in the Pacific Ocean and doing it for eons. Those merits are unbelievable, but they would still be small in comparison with merely hearing, with faith, the *Diamond Cutter Sutra*.

It goes without saying, then, that if you keep this sutra, read it, memorize it, and study its meaning, the merit you would collect would be far, far greater than merely hearing it.

Besides the incredible merit you collect by reading the *Diamond Cutter Sutra* it is also a source of unbelievably powerful

purification of all the previous negative karmas you have collected since beginningless rebirth, even all the heavy ones.

Also, reading it plants the seed to realize emptiness. The more you read it, the more the imprints, making it easy to realize emptiness, and to realize emptiness quickly, in this life—and if not in this life, then in future lives.

Then you meditate on emptiness unified with single-pointed concentration and are able to derive the rapturous ecstasy of the body and mind. You will then achieve the direct perception of emptiness, which ceases the defilements, the disturbing-thought obscurations—first the intellectually-acquired delusions, then the simultaneously-born delusions. This is how you achieve liberation: by ceasing, completely the disturbing-thought obscurations, including the imprint, the seed.

Then, combined with bodhicitta, that direct experience of wisdom ceases even the subtle defilements and you achieve omniscient mind.

Now you are able to do perfect works for sentient beings; you are able to enlighten all sentient beings, bring them to enlightenment. To bring sentient beings to enlightenment is the goal of our life.

### REMEMBER

- ▶ Reciting sutras, the words of the Buddha, creates so much merit and purifies so much negative karma.
- ▶ Recite the *Golden Light Sutra* for world peace, for the peace of all people in prison.
- ▶ Merely hearing the *Arya Sanghata Sutra* purifies so much negative karma.
- ▶ Reading and writing out the *Arya Sanghata Sutra* purifies even more negative karma and creates infinite merit.

- ▶ Reading the *Diamond Cutter Sutra* creates the cause to realize emptiness.
- ▶ When you've realized emptiness you can then, combined with bodhicitta, become a buddha.



*The works of renowned seventh-century Indian scholar, Dharmakirti, are studied extensively in the Tibetan monastic universities.*



## Read and Study the Right Books

It is good to read not just any book on meditation, but authentic books, especially the lamrim.

You need to learn the Buddhadharma well by reading the correct books, such as books by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. It is good to read not just any book on meditation or what is called “spiritual,” but authentic books, especially the lamrim. If they are correct Buddhadharma texts, you won’t be confused.

Here are a few that I recommend. You can ask Liberation Prison Project for them.

### BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

*The Awakened One: A Life of the Buddha*, by Sherab Chödzin Kohn

*Big Love: The Life and Teachings of Lama Yeshe*, by Adele Hulse

*Freedom in Exile: The Autobiography of His Holiness the Dalai Lama*

*The Lawudo Lama*, a biography of both Kunsang Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche, by Jamyang Wangmo

*The Life of My Teacher: A Biography of Ling Rinpoche*, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

*Like a Waking Dream: The Autobiography of Geshe Lhundub Sopa*

*The Magical Play of Illusion: The Autobiography of Trijang Rinpoche*

*My Life and Lives: The Story of a Tibetan Incarnation*, by Khyongla Rato

*My Spiritual Autobiography*, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama  
*Reincarnation: The Boy Lama*, a biography of Tenzin Ösel Hita,  
the reincarnation of Lama Yeshe, by Vicki Mackenzie  
Any of the biographies of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

### **BODHICITTA**

*Becoming the Compassion Buddha*, by Lama Yeshe  
*Bodhichitta*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Eight Verses for Training the Mind*, by Geshe Sonam Rinchen  
*A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*, by Shantideva, translated  
by Vesna A. Wallace and B. Alan Wallace  
*Vast as the Heavens, Deep as the Sea: Verses in Praise of Bodhichitta*,  
by Khunu Rinpoche  
*The Six Perfections: The Practice of the Bodhisattvas*, by Lama  
Zopa Rinpoche  
*The Thirty-seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*, by Geshe Sonam  
Rinchen

### **DEATH AND DYING**

*How to Face Death Without Fear*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Mind of Clear Light: Advice on Dying and Living a Better Life*, by  
His Holiness the Dalai Lama

### **EMPTINESS AND DEPENDENT ARISING**

*Essence of the Heart Sutra*, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama  
*Emptiness*, by Geshe Tashi Tsering  
*Insight into Emptiness*, by Khensur Jampa Tegchok  
*Introduction to Emptiness*, by Guy Newland

*Practicing Wisdom: The Perfection of Shantideva's Bodhisattva*

*Way*, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

*Tsongkhapa's Praise for Dependent Relativity*, by Losang Gyatso

and Graham Woodhouse

#### **THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS**

*The Four Noble Truths*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

#### **GURU DEVOTION**

*The Heart of the Path*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

#### **GURU YOGA**

*A Daily Meditation on Shakyamuni Buddha*, by Lama Zopa

Rinpoche

*The Guru Puja*, by Panchen Lama Losang Chökyi Gyältsen

*Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga*, by Dulnagpa Paldan Zangpo, translated by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

#### **KARMA**

*The Meaning of Life: Buddhist Perspectives on Cause and Effect*, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

*The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, by Dharmarakshita

*Steps on the Path to Enlightenment, Volume 2*, by Geshe Lhundub Sopa (see below)

#### **LAMRIM COMMENTARIES**

*The Door to Satisfaction*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

*The Essential Nectar: Meditations on the Buddhist Path*, by Geshe Rabten

*The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment:*

*Lamrim Chenmo, (Vols. 1–3)* by Lama Tsongkhapa

*How to Practice Dharma*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Illuminating the Path to Enlightenment*, by His Holiness the Dalai  
Lama

*Lamrim Year*, by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, by Pabongka Rinpoche  
*Nagarjuna's Letter to a Friend*, with commentary by Kangyur  
Rinpoche

*The Perfect Human Rebirth*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Practicing the Path: A Commentary on the Lamrim Chenmo*,  
by Yangsi Rinpoche

*Steps on the Path to Enlightenment: A Commentary on the  
Tsongkhapa's Lamrim Chenmo (Vols. 1-5)*, by Geshe Lhundub  
Sopa

*Teachings from the Mani Retreat*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Teachings from the Vajrasattva Retreat*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Wisdom Energy*, by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche

#### LAMRIM PRAYERS

*Calling the Guru from Afar*, by Pabongka Rinpoche  
*A Direct Meditation on the Graduated Path Containing all the  
Important Meanings*, by Vajradhara Losang Jinpa  
*The Foundation of All Good Qualities*, by Lama Tsongkhapa  
*A Hymn of Experience*, by Lama Tsongkhapa  
*The Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, by Lama Tsongkhapa

#### THE MIND AND MEDITATION

*Becoming Your Own Therapist & Make Your Mind an Ocean*,  
by Lama Yeshe  
*Buddhist Psychology*, by Geshe Tashi Tsering  
*How to Meditate: A Practical Guide*, by Kathleen McDonald  
*Mahamudra: How to Discover Our True Nature*, by Lama Yeshe

## PURIFICATION

*Becoming Vajrasattva*, by Lama Yeshe

*Purification in Tibetan Buddhism: The Practice of the Thirty-five  
Confession Buddhas*, by Geshe Jampa Gyatso

## SUTRAS

*The Arya Sanghata Sutra*

*The Diamond Cutter Sutra*

*The Golden Light Sutra*

*The Heart Sutra*

## TANTRA

*Introduction to Tantra*, by Lama Yeshe

## THOUGHT TRANSFORMATION

*Advice from a Spiritual Friend*, by Geshe Rabten and Geshe  
Dhargyey

*Bodhisattva Attitude*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (ebook only)

*The Door to Satisfaction*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

*The Seven-Point Mind Training*, by B. Alan Wallace

*Transforming Adversity into Courage and Joy*, by Geshe Jampa  
Tegchok

*Transforming Problems into Happiness*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche



*Buddha Tara is for success. If you put effort into meditating on the path, even the difficult realizations you believe won't happen will happen within a few years.*

## Finally, Think Long Term, Think Big, and Relax!

With a long-term plan to learn and practice Dharma, your mind can completely change and you can achieve realizations.

Throughout your life, follow this advice from the great Kadampas:

Look far ahead.

Generate a vast mind.

Don't squeeze yourself.

### **Think long term**

The first piece of advice is *mig gyang zig*: “Look far ahead.” Since your objective is to achieve enlightenment, you have to look far ahead, just as when you're traveling to some very distant place or like climbing Mount Everest: you have to have a strong determination to go there; you keep your eye on what you want to achieve. So, extend the mind that way.

The goal of enlightenment in the heart: this is the purpose of practicing meditation and the entire path.

### **Think big**

The second advice is *lo gya kye*: “Generate a vast mind.”

For example, you could be a small child in kindergarten, but your final objective might be gaining a university degree. You

have to look far ahead and generate a vast mind, thinking that you are going to do all the preliminary study in primary school and high school and finally study in university and get your degree. With a broad mind, a vast mind, you make a plan to study all these things.

Or let's say you have a plan to build something—like an airplane, a boat, a house, a shopping center, etc.—you have to plan the many rooms and parts and all the things needed to build it.

It's the same in terms of achieving enlightenment. You study all the different subjects: all of the lamrim, the Basic Program, the Master's Program, tantra: everything. You should have a vast mind, planning to study and learn everything about the whole path to enlightenment, as well as to practice it and actualize all the realizations.

### **Relax!**

The third advice is *kong sang lhö*: “Don't squeeze yourself.”

So, while you have that plan, you also have a relaxed mind. Don't allow yourself to become stressed out, thinking, “Oh, I have to do all this!” With a vast, brave mind, think, “No matter how long it takes, I'm going to do it. I'm not going to give up.” You have the plan inside your heart, but at the same time your mind is calm and relaxed. “I'm going to do all this. Even if it takes many, many years, I'm going to do it.” When you do follow this advice, your mind naturally relaxes. Your mind is not stressed, not uptight.

### **You can become enlightened**

These are essential pieces of advice from the Kadampa geshe about how to go about achieving enlightenment. And if you fol-



low these instructions you will definitely achieve enlightenment, even though you might think it's impossible.

As Kadampa Geshe Dölpa said:

If you collect merit, purify your obstacles, and practice  
guru devotion,  
Which causes you to receive blessings in your heart,  
And put effort into meditating on the path,  
Even the difficult realizations you believe won't  
happen  
Will happen within a few years.

This can happen because your mind is only temporarily obscured; your obscurations are not oneness with your mind. All your negative emotional thoughts are temporary, not permanent. Since they happened because of causes and conditions, they can be changed by other causes and conditions, by purifying negativities, collecting merit, practicing guru devotion and meditating on the path. With a long-term plan to learn and to practice Dharma, your mind can completely change and you can achieve realizations.

This is how the Kadampa geshes planned.

### **Dedication prayers**

Just as the great Kagyu Yogi Choje Gotsangpa said, you too can think:

By my experiencing this problem of being in prison  
May all sentient beings immediately be free from dis-  
ease, spirit harm, negative karma, delusions

And from being in all the prisons—  
 Not only the outside prison, but the inside prisons—  
 Which contain all the sufferings and have no beginning,  
 And may they achieve enlightenment.

Due to all the three-time merits collected by me, num-  
 berless sentient beings and buddhas,  
 May the precious bodhicitta mind be developed in my  
 heart and in the hearts of all my family members,  
 In the hearts of all the leaders of the world,  
 As well as in the hearts of all the people who follow dif-  
 ferent religions,  
 As well as in the hearts of all sentient beings.  
 Whatever bodhicitta has already been developed,  
 May it not decrease, but increase forever more.

Due to all the three-time merits collected by me, num-  
 berless sentient beings and buddhas,  
 By having generated bodhicitta in my heart every day,  
 May everyone in the world live their life only to benefit  
 others,  
 May no one harm another,  
 And may whatever they do with their body, speech and  
 mind  
 Cause only enlightenment and happiness to all sentient  
 beings.

May no one experience war, famine, disease, torture,  
 sickness, dangers of earth, water, tsunami, wind,  
 As well as may no one experience dangers when  
 traveling.

May they always be safe when traveling, including in the airplane.

Due to all the three-time merits collected by me, numberless sentient beings and buddhas,  
Who exist but who are empty from their own side,  
May the I, which exists but which is empty from its own side,  
Achieve complete buddha's enlightenment,  
Which exists but which is empty from its own side,  
And lead all the sentient beings,  
Who exist but who are empty from their own side,  
To full enlightenment, which exists but which is empty from its own side,  
And may I actualize this by myself alone.



## Glossary

*aggregates*. See *five aggregates*.

*Akshobhya*. One of the five buddha families; a purified aspect of *anger*.

*Amitabha*. One of the five buddha families; a purified aspect of *attachment*.

*Amoghasiddhi*. One of the five buddha families; a purified aspect of *jealousy*.

*anger*. Aversion. A *delusion* that exaggerates the unpleasant qualities of a person, object, event, etc., which arises when *attachment* doesn't get what it wants. See *motivation*; *nonvirtuous thoughts*.

*arhat* (Skt; enemy destroyer). Here referring to a practitioner of the *Lower Vehicle* who, having ended their *suffering* and its causes, has achieved *liberation* from *samsara*. See *emptiness*.

*arya bodhisattva* (Skt; superior awakening person). A *bodhisattva* who has achieved a nonconceptual *realization* of *emptiness*. See *meditation*.

*attachment*. Desire, craving, clinging, grasping. On the basis of the *root delusion*, *ignorance*, the main cause of *samsara*, a *delusion* that exaggerates the pleasant qualities of a person, event, action, object, etc., including the self and one's own body, based on the assumption that the having or doing of it causes *happiness*, thus giving rise to expectation, possessiveness and fear of losing it. See *anger*; *nonvirtuous thought*; *nonvirtuous karma*.

*aversion*. See *anger*.

*Bhagavan* (Skt; Blessed One). An epithet for *Shakyamuni Buddha*.

*beginningless*. All minds as well as the four elements that constitute the physical world, being governed by the law of cause and effect—this moment of *mind* or matter being the product of a previous moment of that mind or matter—necessarily cannot have a causeless first moment, a beginning. See *karma*; *mental continuum*.

*bhumi* (Skt; ground, or level). There are ten *bhumis* on the *bodhisattva* path to buddhahood.

*bodhicitta* (Skt: Awakening *mind* or attitude). The effortless and continuously present attitude in the mind of a *bodhisattva*, driven by great *compassion*, characterized by the aspirations to (1) liberate every single sentient being from suffering and lead them to *enlightenment* and (2) become a *buddha* as quickly as possible in order to accomplish that. See *Mahayana*.

*bodhisattva* (Skt; awakening person). One who has accomplished *bodhicitta*. See *arya bodhisattva*; *Mahayana*.

*bodhisattva vows*. See *three sets of vows*.

*buddha* (Skt). Enlightened being. A person who has achieved *enlightenment*; when capitalized, refers to *Shakyamuni Buddha*. See *bodhicitta*; *deity*; *Mahayana*.

*Buddhadharma*. See *Dharma*.

*buddhahood*. See *enlightenment*.

*calm abiding*. See *concentration*.

*circumambulation*. The activity of walking in a clockwise direction around a *holy object* such as a *stupa*, which, because of the power of holy objects, creates virtuous *karma*.

*compassion*. Empathy with the *suffering* of others and the wish that they be free from it, which gives rise to the wish, “I myself will free them from suffering,” known as great compassion,

the unique characteristic of the compassion of the *bodhisattva*; this, in turn, gives rise to *bodhicitta*.

*completion stage*. See *Highest Yoga Tantra*.

*concentration*. Calm abiding, one-pointed concentration, single-pointed concentration. When accomplished in *meditation*, a deep state of focus at a level of *mind* far subtler than the level of consciousness of the day-to-day mind—both conceptuality and sensory consciousness have ceased: a type of cognition not posited in contemporary psychology. The fifth of the *six perfections* of a *bodhisattva*. See *form and formless realms*.

*consciousness*. See *mind*.

*defilements*. See *delusions*.

*degenerate times*. Periods of time—from the Buddhist point of view of beginningless time—when *delusions* and *suffering* are rampant. It said we are in such a period now.

*deity*. A buddha. A term used in the *tantric* teachings for an enlightened being such as Vajrasattva, the Compassion Buddha, and Amitabha.

*delusions*. Defilements, disturbing emotions, disturbing-thought obscurations, negative thoughts, nonvirtuous thoughts. Within the categories of positive, negative, and neutral states of mind, or *mental factors*, that constitute the *mental consciousness* (as opposed to sensory consciousness), negative states driven by the *root delusion, ignorance*, that necessarily (1) disturb the mind and (2) distort, exaggerate or embellish whatever they cognize. Because they are not an integral part of the mind, they can be removed. With *karma*, the cause of *samsara*. See *anger; attachment; five sense consciousnesses; liberation; suffering*.

*dependent arising*. Because every phenomenon exists in dependence upon various factors—(1) causes and conditions

(impermanent phenomena only), (2) its parts, and, most subtly, (3) the *mind* labeling it—it is therefore empty of *existing from its own side*; the way things exist conventionally. See *emptiness*; *karma*.

*desire*. See *attachment*.

*desire realm*. A realm of *rebirth* within *samsara*, which, in turn, includes six realms: those of *gods and demi-gods*, humans, animals, spirits (often referred to as *hungry ghosts*, one category of spirit), and hell beings. See *form and formless realms*; *lower realms*; *samsara*.

*deva*. See *gods and demi-gods*.

*Dharma* (Skt). Buddhadharmā. Refers here to Buddha's teachings; the second of the *Three Rare Sublime Ones*. See *refuge*.

*dharmakaya* (Skt; truth body). Enlightened *mind*. See *rupakaya*.

*disturbing emotions*. See *delusions*.

*disturbing-thought obscurations*. See *delusions*.

*emptiness*. Because everything that exists—a self, the mind, a thing, an event, an action, etc.—is a *dependent arising*, it is therefore empty of *existing from its own side*; the absence in everything of this impossible way of existing. See *arya bodhi-sattva*; *ignorance*; *liberation*; *meditation*.

*enlightened being*. See *buddha*.

*enlightenment*. Full enlightenment, buddhahood. In the *Mahayana*, the state of a *buddha*, of having removed all *delusions* and their *imprints* from the *mind* and having accomplished all virtues, forever; characterized by three essential qualities: (1) omniscience, (2) *compassion* for all *sentient beings* and (3) the power to do whatever needs to be done to benefit them; according to the Mahayana, every *sentient being* has the potential to achieve it.

*existing from its own side*. Existing inherently, self-existent, truly



existent. The way everything appears to exist, that is, without depending upon (1) causes and conditions (impermanent phenomena only), (2) parts and, most subtly, (3) mind labeling it; an impossible way of being that the *root delusion, ignorance*, grasps at as real, which gives rise to *attachment* and the other delusions and causes the *sufferings* of *samsara*. See *dependent arising; emptiness; liberation; meditation*.

*five aggregates*. All impermanent phenomena can be divided into these; here refers to the impermanent phenomena that make up a *sentient being*: (1) form: the body; (2) feeling: either pleasant, unpleasant, or indifferent: one of the fifty-one *mental factors*; (3) recognition or discrimination: another of the mental factors, which distinguishes one thing from another; (4) compounding aggregates: other impermanent phenomena, such as non-associated compounded phenomena, as well as the remaining forty-nine mental factors; also referred to as karmic formation or compositional factors, as well as, especially among Tibetan lamas, volition or intention, one of the always-present mental factors, because of its central role in sentient beings' experiences; and (5) consciousness: known as primary or main consciousness. See *five sense consciousnesses; mental consciousness*.

*five heavy negative actions*. Five *negative karmas*. (1) Killing one's mother, (2) killing one's father, (3) killing an *arhat*, (4) maliciously drawing blood from a *buddha* and (5) creating a schism in the *Sangha*.

*five sense consciousnesses*. Of the two ways that *mind* functions—sensory and mental—the cognition of the objects of the senses in dependence upon the five physical organs: eyes, ears, tongue, skin, and nose. See *mental consciousness*.

*form and formless realms*. Two of the three realms of existence

within *samsara*—the third being the *desire realm*—which are achieved as a result of deep meditative absorption. See *concentration; meditation*.

*four guardians*. The protectors in the form of kings of the four cardinal directions always found at the entrance of monasteries and temples in China and Tibet: Dhritarashtra of the east, Virudhaka of the south, Virupaksha of the west and Vaishnavana of the north.

*four opponent powers*. See *purification*.

*FPMT*. Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition. The name given by *Lama Yeshe* in 1978 to the growing network of Tibetan Buddhist centers worldwide, established with Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Its head office, FPMT, Inc., is a non-profit corporation in Portland, Oregon, with which more than 160 centers and projects worldwide are affiliated.

*full enlightenment*. See *enlightenment*.

*Gelug* (Tib). One of the four main traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, founded by *Lama Tsongkhapa* in the early fifteenth century; the others are Nyingma, Kagyu, and Sakya.

*generation stage*. See *Highest Yoga Tantra*.

*geshe* (Tib; spiritual friend). The title conferred on graduates of the ten-to-twenty-year program of philosophical and psychological studies at *Gelug* Tibetan monastic universities. See *Lama Tsongkhapa*.

*gods and demi-gods*. Occupants of two of the three upper realms in the six realms of the *desire realm* (the third being humans), whose experiences are blissful and whose bodies are made of light; the result of *virtuous karma*. Occupants of the *form and formless realms* can also be “gods.” See *samsara*.

*grasping*. See *ignorance*.

*great compassion* (Skt: *mahakaruna*). See *compassion*.

*guru* (Skt; heavy with knowledge; Tib: *lama*). A person's spiritual teacher. See *guru devotion*.

*Guru Buddha*. One's *guru* seen in the aspect of a *buddha*. See *guru devotion*.

*guru devotion*. Confidence that the *guru* is the *buddha*, the *deity*, expressed in thought and action. See *guru yoga*.

*Guru Puja* (Skt; Tib: *Lama Chöpa*). Offering to the *guru*; a practice popular in the *Gelug* tradition, composed by the First Panchen Lama Losang Chökyi Gyaltzen, in which the central figure of devotion is Lama (one's *guru*) Losang (*Tsongkhapa*) Thubwang (*Shakyamuni Buddha*) Dorje Chang (*Vajradhara*, the tantric aspect of *Shakyamuni Buddha*). See *guru devotion*.

*guru yoga*. The practice of seeing one's *guru* as oneness with the *buddha*, formalized in such practices as *Guru Puja*.

*Guru Three Rare Sublime Ones*. *Buddha*, *Dharma*, and *Sangha* personified in the *guru*. See *refuge*.

*happiness*. The result of *virtuous karma*. See *karma*; *motivation*; *suffering*.

*hell*. See *lower realms*.

*Highest Yoga Tantra*. The fourth and supreme class of *tantra*, consisting of *generation* and *completion stages*. See *initiation*.

*His Holiness the Dalai Lama* (b. 1935). The current Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is the fourteenth in this line of reincarnated *lamas* and is revered as the manifestation of the Compassion Buddha; the spiritual and, until 2011 when he resigned, political head of Tibet.

*holy object*. An object that contains the energy of the Buddha, *Dharma*, and *Sangha*, such as a stupa, a text, a statue, a prayer wheel.

*hungry ghost.* See *lower realms*.

*ignorance.* Basic ignorance, self-grasping. The main or root *delusion* that grasps at everything, including the self and everything else, as *existing from its own side*, gives rise to *attachment* and all the other delusions, is the root cause of the *sufferings of samsara*, and is eradicated by realizing *emptiness*. See *dependent arising; liberation; meditation*.

*imprints.* Karmic seeds, or potential, left in the *mind* when actions of body, speech and mind are done, which ripen as future experiences. See *karma; purification*.

*inherent existence.* See *existing from its own side*.

*initiation.* Empowerment. The transmission from a *guru* to a disciple of the practice of a particular *deity*, which empowers the disciple to engage in that deity's *sadhana*.

*intermediate state* (Tib: *bardo*). A state of existence that a person takes after their mind leaves the body and before taking rebirth in another body, lasting anywhere from a moment to forty-nine days; said to be similar in experience to a dream. The intermediate state body is subtle, has no resistance to matter and is similar in appearance to the body of the next life. See *reincarnation*.

*Kadampa geshes.* Disciples of *Atisha* in eleventh century Tibet, such as Dromtönpa and his followers, renowned for their practice of *lojong*; forerunners of the *Gelug* tradition of *Tsongkhapa*.

*karma* (Skt; action). The mental action—the *mental factor*, intention—to think or do or say something, underpinned by a *motivation*, that impels an action of body, speech or mind, which leaves *imprints* or seeds in the mind that will result in the future as (1) a type of rebirth in *samsara*, (2) the habit to keep thinking or doing or saying it, (3) an experience similar

to it and (4) an environmental result. Used loosely to refer to the natural law of cause and effect—that *negative karma* produces *suffering* and *virtuous karma* produces *happiness*—that plays out in the minds and lives of all *sentient beings*. See *negative karma*; *purification*; *reincarnation*; *samsara*; *virtuous karma*.

*karmic appearances*. The way things, people, events, etc., appear to *sentient beings*—as pleasant, unpleasant, etc.—according to their past *karma*.

*Kopan Monastery*. The monastery established in 1970 by *Lama Yeshe* and *Lama Zopa Rinpoche*, in Nepal, five miles north-east of Kathmandu, where now some 350 monks study the full range of topics of the main *Gelug* monastic universities, such as *Sera Je*, one of the colleges of *Sera Monastery*, with which it is affiliated. Its sister monastery of 350 nuns nearby, *Khachoe Ghakyil Ling*, follows the same course of study, with a newly established branch of twenty nuns in *Sarnath*, India. *Kopan* also holds courses throughout the year for visitors from other countries, including the annual *November Course*, the first of which was in 1970, taught by *Lama Zopa Rinpoche*.

*lama*. See *guru*.

*Lama Asanga*. The fourth-century Indian master who is the source of the lineage of teachings on compassion and *bodhi-citta*, having received them directly from *Maitreya Buddha*.

*Lama Atisha*. The eleventh-century Indian master who spent the last years of his life in Tibet and whose *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* was the main source for *Lama Tsongkhapa's lam-rim* literature.

*Lama Tsongkhapa* (1357–1419). Scholar, *yogi*, and teacher, founder of the *Gelug* tradition of Tibetan Buddhism; author of many texts, including *Lamrim Chenmo*.

*Lama Yeshe* (1935–1984). Lama Thubten Yeshe; the *guru* of Lama Zopa Rinpoche since he was fourteen. Born in Tibet and educated since childhood at the Je college of *Sera Monastery* in Lhasa; escaped into exile in 1959 and settled in Kathmandu, Nepal, in 1967; founded, with Lama Zopa Rinpoche, the *FPMT* after they started teaching Dharma to Westerners at *Kopan Monastery* in 1970.

*lamrim* (Tib; graduated path [to enlightenment]). *Shakyamuni Buddha's* sutra teachings, presented as a course of study and practice according to three levels of motivation: the wish (1) to not be reborn in the *lower realms*; (2) to not be reborn in *samsara*; and (3) to become a *buddha*. See *Lamrim Chenmo*.

*Lamrim Chenmo* (Tib). *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*. The most extensive of *Lama Tsongkhapa's* commentaries on the *lamrim*.

*landlord spirit*. A type of sentient being.

*Lawudo Lama*. Lama Zopa Rinpoche is the recognized reincarnation of the first Lawudo Lama, Kunsang Yeshe (1864–1945), a meditator in the Solu Khumbu region of Nepal.

*Lesser Vehicle* (Skt: Hinayana). The path that leads to *liberation* from *suffering* and its causes, often referred to as the path of individual liberation. See *arhat*; *lamrim*; *Mahayana*; *Perfection Vehicle*.

*liberation*. (Skt: nirvana.) Liberation from *samsara*; liberation from *suffering* and its causes. Achieved when the *delusions* and their *imprints*, the obstacles to liberation, have been removed from the *mind*, thus eliminating the causes of *samsara*; the goal of the *Lesser Vehicle* practitioner. See *arhat*, *emptiness*.

*Ling Rinpoche* (1903–83). The Senior Tutor of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and one of Lama Zopa Rinpoche's gurus.

*lojong* (Tib; thought transformation). An approach to practice in

the *Mahayana* that emphasizes using difficulties as part of the spiritual path.

*lower realms*. Three realms of rebirth among the six of the *desire realm*: those of (1) the animals, (2) the spirits, often referred to as hungry ghosts (Skt: *preta*), one type of spirit, and (3) the hell beings; the result of *negative karma* and each characterized by its own particular *sufferings*. The vast majority of all sentient beings are said to exist in the lower realms. See *reincarnation*; *samsara*; *upper realms*.

*Mahayana* (Skt; Great Vehicle). The path of the *bodhisattva*, the goal of which is the *enlightenment* of a *buddha*; includes *Paramitayana* and *Tantrayana*.

*mandala set*. A handheld representation of the universe according to Buddhist cosmology, used in a practice called offering a mandala.

*mantra*. A series of Sanskrit words and/or syllables often recited in conjunction with the practice of a particular *deity*; the verbal expression of the qualities of that deity.

*meditation* (Tib: *gom*). A process of familiarizing the mind with (1) that which is virtuous and (2) that which is true. There are two types of formal meditation techniques (taught in the *Mahayana* as the fifth and sixth of the *six perfections*): the goal of the first, calm abiding, is to gain single-pointed *concentration*; and the goal of the second, special insight (or wisdom), is to gain a *realization* of *emptiness*, which is induced by the concentrated mind precisely and logically analyzing, for example, *dependent arising*. In *tantra*, concentration by the *yogi* or *yogini* on themselves as the *deity* is combined with insight into emptiness. Realizations of any of the points of the path to *enlightenment* can be gained by combining concentration and analysis.

*mental continuum*. Mindstream. The *beginningless* and endless continuity of *mind* of individual beings.

*mental consciousness*. Of the two ways that *mind* functions—sensory and mental—refers to the various conceptual states of mind, or *mental factors*, as well as the subtler states of non-conceptuality experienced by accomplished meditators in *meditation*. See *five sense consciousnesses*; *mental continuum*.

*mental factors*. States of *mind* such as *attachment*, *anger*, love, intention, *concentration*, etc., that are divided into the three categories of positive, negative, and neutral. A person has thousands of such states of mind, although traditionally fifty-one are mentioned. See *five aggregates*; *five sense consciousnesses*; *mental consciousness*.

*mind*. Consciousness. Defined as that which is formless, or clear, and which can cognize or know; includes both *mental consciousness* and the *five sense consciousnesses*. See *beginningless*; *concentration*; *meditation*; *mental continuum*; *sentient being*.

*motivation*. Usually refers to the attitude that underpins an intention to think or do or say something; a negative motivation causes the *karma* to be nonvirtuous and the result *suffering*; a positive motivation causes the *karma* to be virtuous and the result *happiness*. See *negative karma*; *virtuous karma*.

*naga*. A type of sentient being.

*Nagarjuna*. The Indian scholar and yogi who around the start of the first millenium explained the actual meaning of Buddha's teachings on *emptiness*.

*negative action*. See *negative karma*.

*negative karma*. Negative action, negative karmas, nonvirtuous action, nonvirtuous *karma*. With *delusions*, the main cause of *suffering*. See *purification*.

*nirvana* (Skt). See *liberation*.



*nonvirtuous thought*. See *delusions*.

*omniscience*. See *enlightenment*.

*Padmasambhava*. Guru Rinpoche. Invited to Tibet from India by the Tibetan king Trisong Detsen in the mid-eighth century; revered among Tibetans as the founder of Buddhism in Tibet.

*Pabongka Rinpoche* (1871–1941). An influential Gelug lama of the Me College of *Sera Monastery* in Lhasa, Tibet; the main guru of *Ling Rinpoche* and *Trijang Rinpoche*, the Senior and Junior Tutors of *His Holiness the Dalai Lama*.

*Paramitayana* (Skt; Perfection Vehicle). Mahayana sutra teachings. See *Lesser Vehicle*; *Tantrayana*.

*puja* (Skt; offering). A religious ceremony.

*pure land*. Pure realm. Subtle, blissful states of existence that are the worlds, the abodes, of *buddhas*, where, motivated by *bodhicitta*, highly realized *sentient beings* can be reborn and receive Dharma and quickly achieve realizations.

*purification*. The weakening of *negative karmas* and *imprints*, often accomplished by doing practices such as Vajrasattva and the Thirty-five Buddhas in conjunction with the four opponent powers: (1) reliance, (2) regret, (3) the remedy and (4) resolve.

*Ratnasambhava*. One of the five buddha families; a purified aspect of pride and miserliness.

*realization*. An understanding of any of the points of the path to *enlightenment* gained through the union of the two kinds of *meditation*.

*realms*. See *samsara*.

*rebirth*. See *reincarnation*.

*refuge*. Heartfelt reliance upon the *Three Rare Sublime Ones* for guidance on the path to *enlightenment*.

*reincarnation*. Rebirth. The natural process of continuous birth and death within the various realms of *samsara* that all

*sentient beings*, propelled by the force of their past *karma*, have been going through since *beginningless* time and will go through until they achieve *liberation*. *Buddhas* choose to be reborn in the various realms for the benefit of others, for as long as *suffering* exists.

*renunciation*. The wish to be liberated from *samsara*, based on the understanding that the happiness that comes from *attachment* is in the nature of *suffering*, and that suffering is caused by *karma* and *delusions*.

*Rinpoche* (Tib; Precious One). An honorific when addressing or referring to reincarnated lamas and one's own *guru* or other lamas.

*root guru*. One's main *guru*.

*root delusion*. See *ignorance*.

*root ignorance*. See *ignorance*.

*rupakaya* (Skt; form body). Bodies that enlightened minds manifest in to benefit *sentient beings*. See *dharmakaya*.

*sadhana* (Skt; method of accomplishment). The step-by-step set of meditations and prayers related to a particular *deity*.

*samsara* (Skt; cyclic existence). Being caught up in the process of death, the *intermediate state*, and rebirth in the desire, form and formless realms, propelled by past *karma*. Also used to refer to the aggregates of a person going from one life to the next in the various *realms*. See *ignorance*; *liberation*; *lower realms*; *reincarnation*; *upper realms*.

*Sangha* (Skt; Spiritual community). The third of the *Three Rare Sublime Ones*, specifically a group of at least four fully ordained Buddhist monks or nuns; often refers to Buddhist monks and nuns in general or, more loosely, to one's own spiritual community, lay or ordained. See *refuge*.

*seeds, karmic*. See *imprints*.

*self-cherishing*. Selfishness. The attitude of putting oneself before others, the main obstacle to achieving *bodhicitta*.

*self-existent*. See *existing from its own side*.

*self-grasping*. See *ignorance*.

*sentient being* (Tib: *semchen*: literally, mind possessor). Refers to all beings other than *buddhas*.

*Sera Monastery*. One of the three great *Gelug* monastic universities near Lhasa, Tibet; founded in the early fifteenth century by Jamchen Chöje, a disciple of *Lama Tsongkhapa*, and now also established in exile in south India; the monastery of Lama Zopa Rinpoche. See also *Kopan Monastery*.

*Shakyamuni Buddha* (c. 563–483 BCE). The fourth of the one thousand founding *buddhas* of this present world age, Lord Buddha was born a prince of the Shakya clan in north India, renounced his kingdom, achieved *enlightenment* at the age of thirty-five, and then taught the paths to *liberation* and *enlightenment* until he passed away at the age of eighty.

*six perfections*. Final stages of the *bodhisattva* path: (1) generosity, (2) morality, (3) patience, (4) perseverance, (5) *concentration*, or calm abiding and (5) wisdom, or *realization of emptiness*, or insight.

*Six Yogas of Naropa*. A *completion stage* series of *Highest Yoga Tantra* practices.

*spirit*. See *lower realms*.

*stupa*. A reliquary of *relics* of the *buddhas* and other holy beings; representative of the enlightened *mind*.

*suffering*. The various levels of experience of *sentient beings* in the three realms of *samsara*, caused by *karma* and *delusions*: (1) the suffering of suffering, (2) the suffering of change and (3) pervasive compounding suffering. See *ignorance*; *liberation*.

*sutra* (Skt). The *Lesser Vehicle* and *Paramitayana* discourses of Buddha; a text and the teachings and practices it contains.

*tantra* (Skt). The teachings and practices of the *Tantrayana*; a text containing those teachings.

*Tantrayana* (Skt). Tantra. The more advanced of the two stages of the *Mahayana* path to enlightenment. See *Lesser Vehicle*; *Paramitayana*.

*tantric vows*. See *three sets of vows*.

*Tathagata* (Skt; One Who Has Gone Beyond). An epithet for a *buddha*.

*ten nonvirtuous actions*. The actions of (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) sexual misconduct, (4) lying, (5) harsh speech, (6) divisive talk, (7) idle talk, (8) craving, (9) ill-will, (10) wrong views.

*thangka* (Tib). A painting, usually on canvas, of deities, etc. See *deity*.

*three principles of the path*. *Renunciation*, *bodhicitta*, and *emptiness*.

*three sets of vows*. The vows of individual liberation, *bodhisattva* vows, and *tantric vows*, taken formally in the presence of a spiritual teacher: decisions to refrain from various types of behavior; crucial for the development of *realizations*. See *Lesser Vehicle*; *Mahayana*; *Tantrayana*.

*Three Rare Sublime Ones*. *Buddha*, *Dharma*, and *Sangha*, the three objects of *refuge* of a Buddhist. See *Guru Three Rare Sublime Ones*.

*transmigratory being*. See *sentient being*.

*Trijang Rinpoche* (1901–81). The Junior Tutor of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and *root guru* of Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

*true existence*. See *existing from its own side*.

*twelve dependent-related links*. Twelve links of *dependent arising*. A *sutra* that describes the process of how sentient beings create *samsara*.

*upper realms*. Three of the six of the *desire realms*: *humans*, *gods* and *demi-gods*. See *lower realms*.

*Vairochana*. One of the five buddha families; a purified aspect of ignorance.

*virtuous karma*. Positive *karma*. An action of body, speech, or *mind* driven by a positive *motivation*, which causes *happiness*.

*virtuous thought*. Positive thought. A virtuous state of *mind* such as love, *compassion*, etc. See *delusions*; *motivation*.

*vows of individual liberation* (Skt: pratimoksha). See *three sets of vows*.

*yaksha*. A type of sentient being.

*yogi and yogini* (Skt). Accomplished *Tantrayana* male and female meditator respectively. See *meditation*.



## Picture Credits

- Page ii: Photo of Lama Zopa Rinpoche taken at Kurukulla Center for Tibetan Buddhist Studies in Boston in 2018 by Ven. Lob-sang Sherab.
- Page 2: Painting of Buddha Shakyamuni by Peter Iseli.
- Page 14: Painting of Buddha Vajrapani by Peter Iseli.
- Page 22: Painting of the scholar Nagarjuna by Peter Iseli. Nagarjuna taught the nagas, who appear half human and half snake, and received from them a copy of Buddha's Perfection of Wisdom teachings that they had for safekeeping.
- Page 28: Painting of the Lawudo Lama, Kunsang Yeshe by Ven. Jamyang Wangmo.
- Page 36: Painting of Buddha White Tara: artist unknown.
- Page 42: Painting of Buddha Shakyamuni in a previous life offering his body to the starving mother tiger: artist unknown.
- Page 48: Illustration of the Wheel of Life published with permission from *The End of Suffering and the Discovery of Happiness*, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Hay House, India. **Inner circle:** the three poisons: the pig, ignorance; the snake, anger; the rooster, attachment. **Second circle:** the beings going down on the right represent negative karma; the beings going up on the left represent positive karma. **Third circle:** the six realms of rebirth in the desire realm of samsara: from the top, clockwise: 1. god realm; 2. demi-god realm; 3. animals; 4. hells; 5. hungry ghosts; 6. human beings. **Outer circle:** the twelve links of dependent arising: top clockwise: the blind man with a walking stick: 1. ignorance; followed by: 2. karma,

3. consciousness, 4. name and form, 5. the six sense bases; 6. contact, 7. feeling, 8. craving, 9. grasping, 10. becoming, 11. birth, 12. old age and death. The Buddha of Compassion, top left. Top right: Buddha pointing to the moon, which represents the cessation of suffering and its causes.

Page 54: Painting of Buddha Maitreya: artist unknown.

Bottom: top row: left: Lama Atisha; right: Lama Tsongkhapa; bottom row: left: Trijang Dorje Chang; right: Geshe Rabten Rinpoche.

Page 94: Painting of Lama Tsongkhapa: artist unknown.

Page 110: Painting of Lama Asanga by Peter Iseli.

Page 120: Painting of Buddha Vajrasattva: artist unknown.

Page 128: Painting of the Thirty-Five Buddhas of Confession based on a painting by Peter Iseli: artist unknown. Top left and right, Buddha Vajrasattva and Buddha Mitrukpa; below them, left and right, Buddha Kunrik and Buddha Namgyälma; below the Thirty-Five Buddhas, Buddha Shakyamuni and the Seven Medicine Buddhas; and, finally, eight offering goddesses.

Page 152: Painting of the Compassion Buddha, Chenrezig: artist unknown. Left bottom: Buddha of Wisdom, Manjushri; right: Buddha of Power, Vajrapani.

Page 168: Painting of Buddha Namgyälma: artist unknown. Top, left to right: Jetsun Milarepa, Buddha Shakyamuni, and unknown yogi; at the bottom, left and right, Buddha Amittayus and Buddha White Tara.

Page 168: Painting of the scholar Dharmakirti by Peter Iseli.

Page 182: Painting of Buddha Green Tara by Lama Zopa Rinpoche.



## LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE

The LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE (LYWA) is the collected works of Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche. Lama Zopa Rinpoche, its spiritual director, founded the Archive in 1996.

Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche began teaching at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, in 1970. Since then, their teachings have been recorded and transcribed. At present we have well over 12,000 hours of digital audio and some 90,000 pages of raw transcript. Many recordings, mostly teachings by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, remain to be transcribed, and as Rinpoche continues to teach, the number of recordings in the ARCHIVE increases accordingly. Most of our transcripts have been neither checked nor edited.

Here at the LYWA we are making every effort to organize the transcription of that which has not yet been transcribed, edit that which has not yet been edited, and generally do the many other tasks detailed below.

The work of the LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE falls into two categories: archiving and dissemination.

*Archiving* requires managing the recordings of teachings by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche that have already been collected, collecting recordings of teachings given but not yet sent to the ARCHIVE, and collecting recordings of Lama Zopa's on-going teachings, talks, advice and so forth as he travels the world for the benefit of all. Incoming media are then catalogued and stored safely while being kept accessible for further work.

We organize the transcription of audio, add the transcripts to the already existent database of teachings, manage this database, have transcripts checked, and make transcripts available to editors or others doing research on or practicing these teachings.

Other archiving activities include working with video and photographs of the Lamas and digitizing ARCHIVE materials.

*Dissemination* involves keeping up with evolving technology and making the Lamas' teachings available through various avenues including books for free distribution and sale, ebooks on a wide range of readers,

lightly edited transcripts, a monthly e-letter (see below), social media, DVDs and online video, articles in *Mandala* and other magazines and on our website. Irrespective of the medium we choose, the teachings require a significant amount of work to prepare them for distribution.

This is just a summary of what we do. The ARCHIVE was established with virtually no seed funding and has developed solely through the kindness of many people, most of whom we mention and thank sincerely on our website. We are indebted to you all.

Our further development similarly depends upon the generosity of those who see the benefit and necessity of this work, and we would be extremely grateful for your help. Thus, we hereby appeal to you for your kind support. If you would like to contribute to help us with any of the above tasks or to sponsor books for free distribution, please contact us:

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#### LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE MEMBERSHIP

In order to raise the money we need to employ editors to make available the thousands of hours of teachings mentioned above, we have established a membership plan. Membership costs US\$1,000 and its main benefit is that you will be helping make the Lamas' incredible teachings available to a worldwide audience. More direct and tangible benefits to you personally include free Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche books

from the ARCHIVE and Wisdom Publications, a year's subscription to *Mandala*, a year of monthly pujas by the monks and nuns at Kopan Monastery with your personal dedication, and access to an exclusive members-only section of our website containing the entire LYWA library of publications in electronic format. Please go to [LamaYeshe.com](http://LamaYeshe.com) for more information.

#### SOCIAL MEDIA AND MONTHLY E-LETTER

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Google Plus and every day read gems from our online teachings, view amazing images, and keep up to date with our latest offerings. Also, each month we send out a free e-letter containing our latest news and a previously unpublished teaching by Lama Yeshe or Lama Zopa Rinpoche. See our website for links.

## FOUNDATION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE MAHAYANA TRADITION

The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) is an international organization of Buddhist meditation study and retreat centers—both urban and rural—monasteries, publishing houses, healing centers and other related activities founded in 1975 by Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche. At present, there are more than 160 FPMT centers, projects and services in over forty countries worldwide.

The FPMT has been established to facilitate the study and practice of Mahayana Buddhism in general and the Tibetan Gelug tradition, founded in the fifteenth century by the great scholar, yogi and saint, Lama Je Tsongkhapa, in particular.

Every quarter, the Foundation publishes a wonderful news journal, *Mandala*, from its International Office in the United States of America. To subscribe or view back-issues, please go to the *Mandala* website, [www.mandalamagazine.org](http://www.mandalamagazine.org), or contact:

FPMT

1632 SE 11th Avenue, Portland, OR 97214

Telephone (503) 808-1588; Fax (503) 808-1589

[info@fpmt.org](mailto:info@fpmt.org)

[www.fpmt.org](http://www.fpmt.org)

The FPMT website also offers teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lama Yeshe, Lama Zopa Rinpoche and many other highly respected teachers in the tradition, details about the FPMT's educational programs, an online learning center, a complete listing of FPMT centers all over the world and, especially, those in your area, a link to the excellent FPMT Store, and links to FPMT centers—where you will find details of their programs—and other interesting Buddhist and Tibetan pages.



## OTHER TEACHINGS OF LAMA YESHE AND LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

### BOOKS FROM WISDOM PUBLICATIONS

*Wisdom Energy*, by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Introduction to Tantra*, by Lama Yeshe  
*Transforming Problems*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*The Door to Satisfaction*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Becoming Vajrasattva: The Tantric Path of Purification*, by Lama Yeshe  
*The Bliss of Inner Fire*, by Lama Yeshe  
*Becoming the Compassion Buddha*, by Lama Yeshe  
*Ultimate Healing*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Dear Lama Zopa*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*How to Be Happy*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Wholesome Fear*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche with Kathleen McDonald  
*When the Chocolate Runs Out*, by Lama Yeshe  
*How to Enjoy Death*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Mahamudra*, by Lama Yeshe  
*The Four Noble Truths*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Bodhichitta*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*The Six Perfections*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Patience*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

About Lama Yeshe: *Reincarnation: The Boy Lama*, by Vicki Mackenzie

About Lama Zopa Rinpoche: *The Lawudo Lama*, by Jamyang Wangmo

For more information go to [wisdomexperience.org](http://wisdomexperience.org).

### TRANSCRIPTS, PRACTICES AND OTHER MATERIALS

Go to [LamaYeshe.com](http://LamaYeshe.com) and [fpmt.org](http://fpmt.org).

### VIDEO OF LAMA YESHE AND LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

Go to [youtube.com/user/LamaYeshe](http://youtube.com/user/LamaYeshe) or [youtube.com/user/fpmtinc](http://youtube.com/user/fpmtinc).

## WHAT TO DO WITH DHARMA TEACHINGS

The Buddhadharma is the true source of happiness for all sentient beings. Books like this show you how to put the teachings into practice and integrate them into your life, whereby you get the happiness you seek. Therefore, anything containing Dharma teachings, the names of your teachers or holy images is more precious than other material objects and should be treated with respect. To avoid creating the karma of not meeting the Dharma again in future lives, please do not put books (or other holy objects) on the floor or underneath other stuff, step over or sit upon them, or use them for mundane purposes such as propping up wobbly chairs or tables. They should be kept in a clean, high place, separate from worldly writings, and wrapped in cloth when being carried around. These are but a few considerations.

Should you need to get rid of Dharma materials, they should not be thrown in the rubbish but burned in a special way. Briefly: do not incinerate such materials with other trash, but alone, and as they burn, recite the mantra OM AH HUM As the smoke rises, visualize that it pervades all of space, carrying the essence of the Dharma to all sentient beings in the six samsaric realms, purifying their minds, alleviating their suffering, and bringing them all happiness, up to and including enlightenment. Some people might find this practice a bit unusual, but it is given according to tradition. Thank you very much.

### DEDICATION

Through the merit created by preparing, reading, thinking about and sharing this book with others, may all teachers of the Dharma live long and healthy lives, may the Dharma spread throughout the infinite reaches of space, and may all sentient beings quickly attain enlightenment.

In whichever realm, country, area or place this book may be, may there be no war, drought, famine, disease, injury, disharmony or unhappiness, may there be only great prosperity, may everything needed be easily obtained, and may all be guided by only perfectly qualified Dharma teachers, enjoy the happiness of Dharma, have love and compassion for all sentient beings, and only benefit and never harm each other.

## LIBERATION PRISON PROJECT



LIBERATION PRISON PROJECT offers spiritual advice and teachings, as well as books and materials, to people in prison interested in exploring, studying, and practicing Buddhism. A Tibetan Buddhist organization and social services project affiliated with the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, since 1996 LPP is active mainly in the USA, Australia and Italy, with branches in England, France, Mexico, Mongolia, New Zealand and Spain.

If you're in prison and would like to receive books and advice, please write to LPP at:

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**Email:** [infooz@liberationprisonproject.org](mailto:infooz@liberationprisonproject.org)

**Website:** [liberationprisonproject.org](http://liberationprisonproject.org)

**ENGLAND**

Jamyang Buddhist Centre  
43 Renfrew Road  
London SE11 4NA

**Email:** liberationprisonprojectuk@gmail.com

**FRANCE**

Institut Vajra Yogini  
Chateau d'en Clausade  
81500 Marzens

**Email:** reception@institutvajrayogini.fr

**ITALY**

Via Poggiberna 15  
56040 Pomaia PI

**Email:** segreteria@liberationprisonproject.it

**Website:** liberationprisonproject.it

**MEXICO**

Eje Central Lázaro Cárdenas 734, Int 302  
Col. Postal A. Benito Juárez  
03020 Ciudad de México, CDMex

**Email:** coordinacion@fpmtmexico.org

**MONGOLIA**

FPMT Mongolia  
Post Box 219  
Ulaanbaatar 13

**Email:** info@fpmtmongolia.org

**NEW ZEALAND**

PO Box 56145  
Auckland 1446

**Email:** liberationprisonproject.nz@gmail.com

**SPAIN**

Avda. de Pedro Diez, 21 bis, 1º 1ª  
Madrid  
28019

**Email:** coordinacion@fpmt-hispana.org



LAMA THUBTEN ZOPA RINPOCHE was born in Thangme, Nepal, in 1945. At the age of three he was recognized as the reincarnation of the Lawudo Lama, who had lived nearby at Lawudo, within sight of Rinpoche's Thangme home. Rinpoche's own description of his early years may be found in his book, *The Door to Satisfaction*.

At the age of ten, Rinpoche went to Tibet and studied and meditated at Domo Geshe Rinpoche's monastery near Pagri, until the failed uprising against the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959 forced him to forsake Tibet for the safety of Bhutan.

Rinpoche then went to the Tibetan refugee camp at Buxa Duar, West Bengal, India, where he met Lama Yeshe, who became his closest teacher. The Lamas went to Nepal in 1967, and over the next few years built Kopan and Lawudo Monasteries. In 1971 Lama Zopa Rinpoche gave the first of his famous annual lamrim retreat courses, which continue at Kopan to this day. In 1974, with Lama Yeshe, Rinpoche began traveling the world to teach and establish centers of Dharma.

When Lama Yeshe passed away in 1984, Rinpoche took over as spiritual head of the FPMT, which has continued to flourish under his peerless leadership.

More details of Rinpoche's life and work may be found in *The Lawudo Lama* and on the LYWA and FPMT websites.

In addition to many LYWA and FPMT books, including transcripts and practice booklets, Rinpoche's other published teachings, from Wisdom Publications, include *Wisdom Energy* (with Lama Yeshe), *Transforming Problems*, *The Door to Satisfaction*, *Ultimate Healing*, *Dear Lama Zopa*, *How to Be Happy*, *Wholesome Fear*, *How to Face Death Without Fear*, *The Four Noble Truths*, *Bodhichitta*, *The Six Perfections and Patience*.

ROBINA COURTIN was ordained in the late 1970s and has worked full time since then for Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche's FPMT. Over the years she has served as editorial director of Wisdom Publications, editor of the magazine, *Mandala*, executive director of Liberation Prison Project, and as a touring teacher of Buddhism. Her life, including her work with prisoners, has been featured in the documentary films *Chasing Buddha* and *Key to Freedom*.

