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BY  
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LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE

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# Lecture 1

*Please note: As the tapes were not dated, the dates here are approximate.*

**November 25, 1999**

## **THE PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH MAKES THE MOST OF THIS TIME**

So, good afternoon! Before the talk, I want to pay homage to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and the Triple Gem. Therefore, today I would like to do the requesting prayer to the lineage lamas of the path to enlightenment,<sup>1</sup> the lamrim teaching of the steps of the path to enlightenment that has been handed down with realizations. I thought to recite the requesting prayer to the lineage lamas today, beginning with a strong request to Shakyamuni Buddha, who is the founder of the present Buddhadharmā, to bless our mental continuum.

In this life, this is the one time we have opportunity to stop suffering, whose continuation has no beginning but which we can end by actualizing the remedy within our minds, the path to enlightenment. It is very special to develop the mind in this way. Until now we have been doing external development, so this development, the development of the mind, is a very special development; it is an internal one, developing ourselves. Therefore, this is a very special occasion. This life we are living now, among all the lives, *this life* is very special, and *now* is a very special time.

Growing crops depends on many things. We need to plant the seeds in the ground; we need the right soil, water and so many conditions. We also need the crops to be free from obstacles, free from the seeds being burned by fire, eaten by worms or stolen by mice. Mice can steal the seeds that we plant and take them away to their place, to their home! The seeds that are planted, as well as having all the right conditions, need to be free from all the many obstacles.

This is the same with our mind. To have realizations, to really to be able to transform our mind at this time in this life, [needs many conditions]. Why our problems are endless, one after

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<sup>1</sup> See the *FPMT Retreat Prayer Book* for the *Requesting Prayer to the Lam-Rim Lineage Gurus (from Jorcbö)*. See also the *FPMT Essential Prayer Book* for an abbreviated *Request to the Lineage Gurus*.

another from life to life, even in this one life, is because we have never transformed our mind. The whole question lies there in the mind. The whole answer lies there in the mind. It can be said both ways.

At this time, even if it is not possible to completely eliminate the cause of suffering, karma and delusions—the obscuring disturbing thoughts including the negative imprints left by these on our mental continuum that gives birth to the delusions again and again—even if it is not possible to achieve this total liberation in this life, at least to be able to become close to that is very, very good. If we can make the achievement in this life to become closer to the total liberation, the cessation of suffering including the cause, there is no question the benefit it will bring us, and no question the benefit to others, especially for the benefit of numberless other sentient beings. *Numberless* is my special word! I don't know if the term is in the common vocabulary but you will hear it a lot as I speak. You will hear “numberless” so many times. Because we also have numberless thoughts! Thinking this way and that way.

Anyway, [we are transforming the mind] especially for the numberless sentient beings who want happiness and who do not want suffering, especially for them.

[Rinpoche chants the praise to the lineage lamas.]

## **VISUALIZATION OF THE MERIT FIELD**

Those who are familiar with the meditation that goes with this requesting prayer, you can do that meditation. For those who are not familiar, what you can do is visualize the merit field in one aspect, as Shakyamuni Buddha, who incorporates all of the Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Everything is included in that one aspect.

And then nectar beams are emitted [from Shakyamuni Buddha], purifying all the defilements. If you can do it this way, that's good. However, think that all the defilements, all the wrong concepts, are purified. You can concentrate like that.

Then, a replica of the Buddha descends to your crown, melts into light and absorbs into you. Think, “I have achieved all the realizations.”



You have already gone through the lamrim subject of refuge, meditating on the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Since you have gone through that and heard the qualities of Buddha more extensively than is normally explained in the simplified lamrim texts, remember what you have heard during that time. Then, think, “I have received all those qualities.” That’s good. And think, “All the realizations of the path to enlightenment, from guru devotion up to enlightenment, are generated in my heart.” You can think like that.

Those who are able to do the visualization according to the prayer, think that the root guru is seated over your crown, as your supporter, like when you have a very important project or something to accomplish, you ask some powerful, high person to help you succeed, maybe paying baksheesh! I’m not sure. Anyway, I’m joking. Normally, it is explained that this person is good and they are able to give help. Something like that. So, the root guru is seated above your crown, [and you ask] the merit field to grant you blessings, realizations.

So, that’s one thing, making requests in Tibetan.

With the first request, think that nectar beams are emitted from the guru, purifying all the defilements that are obstacles to realizations. Then, with the second request, as the replicas are absorbed in you, think, “I have received all the qualities that the root guru has.”

So here, the meditation is done with single-pointed recognition or understanding from your own side that the guru is oneness with all the buddhas. From your own side, you have that recognition, that understanding. This is the way to do the meditation. Otherwise, even if you make a prayer, there won’t be any feeling in your heart related to the words. But with this way, with this meditation, you can feel comfortable to do this meditation, thinking the replicas have absorbed and you have received all the qualities of the guru within you.

After that, similarly with the first request to the lineage lamas, including Shakyamuni Buddha, then nectar beams are emitted, purifying obstacles, defilements, and in particular, the self-cherishing thought and the impure appearances, the concepts. Purifying impure views and impure concepts is the main practice in tantra.

The replicas absorb within you and you receive all the qualities. Think, “I have received the qualities, the realization of bodhicitta, and the pure appearances and pure thought.” Whatever

appears to your own mind is pure. Everything is pure, a manifestation of the deity—the Buddha, the mandala, the deity itself, living beings, all appear pure to you, including yourself, your own body, which appears as the deity’s pure body, the buddha’s holy body appearing as yourself.

Whatever appears, everything is pure; everything is a manifestation of the deity that you practice. You have achieved the realizations of the extensive path. The ultimate result, the goal, is the rupakaya, the holy body of the deity.

The whole of Buddhism is divided into base, path and goal. The base is the two truths, conventional truth and absolute truth; the path is method and wisdom; and the aim or the goal, that which is to be achieved, is the dharmakaya and rupakaya.

To put it simply, there are two things: the buddha’s holy body and holy mind, the rupakaya and dharmakaya. That is the goal to be achieved. So, here you can think, “I have achieved the Buddha’s holy body.”

That’s how you do the meditation when you do the requesting prayer to the lineage lamas of the extensive path. Then you start again from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, requesting to the lineage lamas of the profound path, the path of profundity.<sup>2</sup>

At that time, when you do that, with the first request, the purifying nectar beams are emitted, purifying the obstacles, the defilements, and in particular, ignorance, the concept of inherent existence.

### **BELIEVING THE HALLUCINATION OF I, ACTION AND OBJECT IS THE ROOT OF SUFFERING**

While the I, action, object and so forth, all phenomena, while they exist in mere name, being merely imputed by the mind, while they are empty of inherent existence, they appear to us as inherently existent. And not only do all merely labeled phenomena appear to us as inherently existent, which means not merely labeled by the mind, on top of that, we let our mind believe this hallucination. We believe this inherently existent appearance is true, that is the reality. We let our mind believe that *is* the reality.

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<sup>2</sup> See *Requesting Prayer to the Lam-Rim Lineage Gurus (from Jorcho)*.

While phenomena are merely labeled by the mind, they do not have even the slightest atom of inherent existence, but all these phenomena appear inherently existent to our hallucinated mind, and on top of that, we let our mind believe that hallucination is the reality, that the truly existent appearance is the reality of the phenomena.

This belief we hold about the reality of the phenomena is totally the opposite to reality. What we believe is the reality of phenomena—including I, action, object, and all phenomena—is something *totally* the opposite to the very nature of phenomena, that which exists.

We let our mind believe in the appearance, the inherently existent appearance, like when we are having a dream. Say, in a dream we have found a million dollars, a billion dollars, we win the lottery or something. We have found or somebody has given us a billion dollars and we have bought a Mercedes car, or the other one, a Rolls Royce—and there's another one, a limousine—anyway, we have a Rolls Royce limousine, (not a rosary! A Rolls Royce) and a limousine and a Mercedes, and we have bought a very beautiful apartment, with many swimming pools. And then we have found a friend. So, in our dream, we have all those things. But when we wake up in the morning, we don't have the slightest thing. The minute we wake up, it's something else.

Except during the times when we recognize that the dream is a dream, we believe in those appearances. When we know we are dreaming, even though we have the appearance of things, we don't believe the things are real, that they exist; we don't have that concept. The mind that recognizes the dream is a dream can recognize that the vision is not true, that it is an illusion, that the object we have doesn't exist. There is that understanding there.

But usually our mind in the dream has these appearances, all these objects—the friend we have found and this and that—and we believe that they exist, that this appearance is true. It is exactly like that [in our life]. In reality, all phenomena, including the self, the I, are totally empty. That doesn't mean they do not exist. That doesn't mean the I doesn't exist; it doesn't mean that. All phenomena are totally empty of existing from their own side, of not being merely labeled by the mind, of not coming from the mind. They are empty of being *truly* existing.

However, they appear like that and we let our mind believe that they are true, that all these appearances are true, not hallucinations. The inherently existent I, the inherently existent action,

the inherently existent object, all the inherently existent phenomena, we let our mind believe that this is the reality, that this is the truth, that this is how they actually are. This is not so; all these appearances are totally nonexistent, totally empty.

Anyway, this is just to inform you, because I was saying how ignorance, the wrong concept of inherent existence, is a very important obstacle. This ignorance, this unknowing mind, is the root of all suffering.

By using the example of the dream, I'm trying to give some idea of how the concept we have is totally hallucinated. Anyway, think that this is purified. When we do the requesting prayer to the lineage lamas of the path of the profundity [*Lineage of Profound View*], think that all the defilements are purified by receiving the nectar beams within you.

What is specifically purified is that ignorance, then the obstacles to wisdom are purified and you can actualize the tantric path, thinking the ordinary impure wind and mind is purified and you achieve the goal—the dharmakaya. You can think like that.

Then, it must be also your tea-time! Chai time.

We can do the requesting prayer to the lineage lamas, maybe tomorrow! I think time's out, so the lineage lamas have to wait [until tomorrow] to grant us the blessings! Maybe they can have some transit.

## **THE ESSENCE OF BUDDHISM IS COMPASSION**

Recently when I came from the United States and stopped in Madrid, we did a Mitukpa great initiation. Mitukpa is a very, very powerful buddha for purification. I thought we'd done Vajrasattva so far for purification, particularly in these other traditions within Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism, the Kagyü, Nyingma and Sakya, who do it very much. In this organization, FPMT, within the Gelug tradition, Vajrasattva is very much practiced due to Lama Yeshe's kindness. He started this very powerful practice of purification, which purifies negative karmas, those obstacles that mainly [block us] from realizations.

Of course, negative karmas cause us to have problems and sufferings, they cause us to be born in the lower realms and so forth, but here it is mainly purifying obstacles to having realizations of the path to enlightenment, so that we can be of better help to others. The more realizations we have, the more deeply we can help, and we can be of more benefit to others. So, I thought to spread the practice of Mitukpa more. This is another very powerful buddha.

You must have quite good karma for that. I think there were maybe less than four hundred at the initiation. So, I guess there must be quite good karma for this practice.

Anyway, this is becoming a long talk again. I just mentioned it briefly.

When I came from Spain, this time I had to stop a day and night in Bengal, in transit on the way to Nepal. Now it's becoming an even *longer* talk! The lineage lamas will have to wait! They'll have to wait in transit! Anyway, what I would like to say is that, of course the more we know the Dharma, the Buddha's teaching, the more we understand how important it is to practice meditation, to have realizations.

The essence of Buddhism is compassion. Compassion not only for the poor, not only for the sick, not only for children, not only for the homeless, but compassion for all human beings who are suffering, who are devoid of happiness—the poor, the rich, all those whose minds are defiled, deluded, who having sufferings—compassion for all human beings.

Buddhism is not just having compassion for human beings but no compassion for animals. It's not like that. Buddhism is also compassion for all the animals, for all the living beings, and not only the living beings that we see with our naked eye, but even those we cannot see now, all other sentient beings whose minds are deluded, who are suffering, even though we cannot see them with our naked eye now.

Buddhism means compassion for *every* obscured, suffering living being without exception, without discrimination. That is what's special about Buddhism—*every* being, anyone whose mind is deluded, who has ignorance, anger, attachment, negative imprints, delusions and who is suffering.

The emphasis in Buddhism is to not harm and to help, and that means everyone. It means any living being who is suffering, who does not want to suffer and who wants happiness but who is devoid of happiness. Therefore, the attitude of practicing Buddhism is to abandon harm. Even though there are so many different practices to do—so many different preliminary practices, so many mantras to recite, so many different meditations to do, so many forms of different practices to do—the essence is to not harm. [That means correct] conduct. The whole foundation is twofold: to not harm others and to benefit them. On top of not harming other sentient beings, we should benefit them. So, the essence of Buddhism is compassion for all living beings without any discrimination. This is especially so for Mahayana Buddhism, where there is great emphasis on that.

This is utterly the most important thing in the life. It is the most precious thing in life. Having compassion in our life is the *most* precious thing, because from that we achieve day-to-day peace and happiness, tranquility, peace of mind. Especially, we achieve fulfillment. If we have compassion for others in our daily life, there is not only satisfaction and peace of mind, but there is also fulfillment. We make our life meaningful. We not only have happiness, we also don't have problems, such as relationship problems. Our life is worthwhile because we did something worthwhile for others, we make our life beneficial for others, and this gives us fulfillment in our heart.

With even today's compassionate attitude for others, we stop giving harm to others, hurting others, and on top of that, we benefit others. This benefits us now, bringing peace and happiness to us not only in this life, but from life to life, for all our future lives. For hundreds of thousands of future lives, it brings us so much peace and happiness. And there's not only temporary happiness, there's also ultimate peace and happiness, including the highest happiness, enlightenment. Our compassion becomes the source of peace and happiness for numberless other living beings. Remember, I mentioned "numberless" before? Numberless other living beings. Our compassion becomes the source of peace and happiness for numberless other living beings, the cause of all the temporary and all the ultimate happiness of *all* living beings.

So, our compassion becomes the source of not only peace and happiness for ourselves, but also the source of peace and happiness for our friends, for our companions, for our husband or wife, for our children, for our parents. Our compassion becomes the source of peace and happiness for our whole family. Our compassion becomes the source of peace and happiness for the

people in the country, for the nation. Our compassion becomes the source of peace and happiness for all living beings in this world, human beings and animals.

If we think of this example, we can understand the need for compassion and how important our compassion, this one person's compassion, is. There is an incredible need for it. The incredible need is a billion times more than when we have a heart attack or some disease and need to be rushed to the emergency hospital. The need for compassion within our heart is billions of times more important than the emergency hospital. That's how important it is.

### **UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY**

For example, historically it has happened so many times in this world, where one person with influence did not practice compassion and, because of that, children were burned in fires and so many millions of people were tortured in so many different, unbelievable ways. It has happened in different countries, in both East and West.

Just one influential person who did not practice compassion for others, lacking the education and the practice, without even talking about the realization of compassion, just the practice, without even that. Because of this one person who had enormous influence and power, how many human beings were tortured or killed? Normally, we only talk about human beings, but we don't count all the animals harmed. How many animals died in the ocean due to atomic bombs? How many animals in the ground died due to weapons, bombs, pollution and so forth? Uncountable numbers, far more than the human beings.

This has happened so many times in this world, in both East and West. Therefore, if we don't practice compassion, if we don't have the realization of compassion from life to life, in other lifetimes we could be like those people who have appeared in history, full of the self-cherishing thought, the selfish mind that can harm and destroy the world.

From life to life without compassion, with the self-centered mind, we will harm others. Without compassion, when there is the self-centered mind, numberless other living beings will be harmed by us from life to life. Therefore, it is extremely dangerous if even one person—ourselves—has no compassion within us. There's great danger that numberless other living beings will receive harm from us from life to life.

For that reason, it becomes billions and billions of times more urgent to have compassion in our mind for others, without the delay of even a second. That way, the numberless other sentient beings don't receive harm from us, and, on top of that, by developing compassion, the numberless other living beings receive help and benefit from us. All the peace and happiness they receive from us is in our hands; it is completely in our hands.

That's how every one of us here has universal responsibility. We all have the responsibility for the peace and happiness of every sentient being. The peace and happiness of each of the numberless other sentient beings is the responsibility of every one of us here.

If we can live our life with this attitude of compassion, of caring for others, of feeling the responsibility for the happiness of other sentient beings, then while we are working for the obligations we have to the family, leading a generally busy life with many responsibilities, this is how to make our life worthwhile, beneficial, meaningful. This attitude of compassion gives us fulfillment; it is how to stop our life from being wasted, empty. So, we should try to maintain this compassionate attitude twenty-four hours a day, in everything we do, in whatever lifestyle we are living, whatever job we are doing.

Then, whatever we do, we are doing it for others. If we are working, if we are doing a retreat or meditating at home, we are doing it for others. The best way to do meditation is for others, with the thought of benefiting others, with bodhicitta. That's the best way to do meditation.

The best way to be a truck driver is to do it for others. Even if we are doing a job carrying passengers back and forth all day long, back and forth, or staying in a lift all day for twenty-four hours, taking people up and down in the lift, always opening the door all day long and letting people in or out—whatever job we are doing, cooking, sweeping, as a secretary or government official or politician—the best way is to do it with compassion for others. The best way to be a politician, to run the government, is with compassion. Then, whatever we do, because our aim is only to benefit, we won't harm others. So, if we are in politics, what we are doing is for long-term peace and happiness.

Then, no matter how much power we have, even infinite power, it doesn't become harmful to others. With this attitude of compassion, of universal responsibility, however much power we



have only allows us to do more good things for others. We can bring more peace. The more power we have, the more peace and happiness we can bring to the world, to other sentient beings.

In the same way, the greater reputation we have, the more peace and happiness we can bring to others. Then, the millions and millions of other people can do good things and create good karma, the cause of happiness, so that they can enjoy the result of peace and happiness now and in the future.

Living our life with this attitude, whatever our lifestyle or job, everything becomes a service for others, which is good karma, the cause of happiness.

### **THE LEAST WE CAN DO IS STOP KILLING**

In the past I have seen how the meditation courses go at the various centers, including this one-month course here in Kopan and at the other meditation centers in the West. So, I'll just mention this and then stop.

For the people who attend even a two-day course, even for such a short course on the teachings of Buddhism and in particular Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism, what is the minimum practice that person should do? Even if they cannot do many prayers or many different practices in their daily life, since attending the teaching on Buddhism, particularly Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism, where, as I mentioned before, they will know that the essence is compassion, not harming others, as well as karma—not creating negative karma, the cause of problems and sufferings; and creating positive karma, the cause of happiness. Therefore, from the time of attending that course, that person should try to stop giving harm to others. At least, as a minimum, from then on they should stop killing. Besides *not* killing human beings, they should try to stop fishing and hunting, they should try to *not* kill anything, even insects. I had to put the “*not*” stronger. Besides *not* killing human beings, then *not* killing any beings, even insects.

Which means, if we see an insect on the road, we should not be careless and step on it. We can just as easily walk around it, but instead we purposely step on the floor, we purposely put our gigantic foot on top that tiny, pitiful, very fragile insect. Anyway, not killing is the very minimum change somebody who has attended a course can make. This is a very important commitment.

Even if it's just that commitment, the change that takes place within us is so important because we don't want to be killed by somebody, we don't want to die.

We do all these billions of exercises for health, to have a long life and because we don't want to die. Those many different types of exercise are for health; the purpose is for a long life. Nobody wants to die, everybody wants to be healthy and have a long life. It is exactly the same for those insects, those pitiful living beings.

This is how I see in the past, how after people have attended a course, after having listened to the teachings, especially on Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism, if they can make even this one change in their life and determine to stop killing, to stop giving that harm, to stop killing, this is so good, so great! If they give up fishing, many thousands and thousands of fish are saved from the danger of being killed by this person. Of course, there are so many other animals and human beings attacking and eating them, but at least not by this one human being. Their lives are saved by this. So, the lives of many thousands and thousands are saved from danger, from the suffering of being hooked, killed, sliced up and cooked, because this one person changed their attitude and their actions and stopped harming others. This includes mosquitoes or other insects. Since they are numberless, by this one person changing their mind and action, even in just one practice to stop killing, it brings so much peace to others, to the world.

That is how even one person coming to the course and listening to the teachings, especially on Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism, and from that, making just this one change in their life gives so much peace and happiness to the world, to the numberless of other sentient beings. Again I'm using the term "*numberless!*"

Because it's not only this life but also in other lives, when we change our life to practice compassion, which is a positive karma complete with the four aspects, this leaves a positive imprint on our mental continuum, so that in our next lives, the same result happens and we are able to stop harming others more, able to live in the vows, and able to give more peace and happiness to others in all the coming future lives.

This life can affect all the coming future lives, whether it's good or bad. Even this one practice, to stop killing, affects so many lives. For thousands of billions of lifetimes, it can bring so much peace and happiness, and also bring so much peace and happiness to others in other lifetimes.

And it can bring about even more change in our mind, causing us to have an even better good heart.

Because of that, this life has a big responsibility for how all future lives are going to turn out, how the next life, and then the next life, and then all the future lives are going to turn out. It all depends on how we live this life, what we do with our mind, with our attitude and actions. It even depends on how we live our life today, today's attitude and actions, at this moment. How the future lives are going to turn out—how much suffering we cause others or how much peace and happiness we give to others—depends on what we do today; it depends on the attitude and actions of each moment our life.

### **THE NEED FOR COMPASSION**

Therefore, as I mentioned before, compassion becomes the most important thing in our daily life. There are so many things to think about, and this attitude of compassion, the good heart thinking of others, is the first thing to think about in our life. The good heart is the first thing to take care of; it is what we should most cherish.

For example, in the United States these days there is so much discussion going on and on about whether to allow people to have guns or not, about making regulations to have special gun licenses, and only those people with them can have guns. It has happened quite a few times where small children, teenagers, very little, have killed many people in schools. Because it has happened quite a few times, there's a lot of talk about controlling guns and how to handle them.

I didn't listen to all lectures that the senators have given. However, of those I listened to, I have never heard them talking about compassion; I have never heard them talk about the need for education on compassion in the country, in the society. I have never heard any emphasis on having a good heart, on changing the mind. That education of a good heart is so important; it should be given in schools, and parents should teach their children and practice it themselves, but you never hear it. You never hear how we should change our minds, only about maybe making rules, externally making rules. However many more rules are made, there will always be problems, unless people change their minds, but if people tamed their mind, if they practiced compassion, the good heart, nobody would need to make rules. By practicing a good heart, they would stop giving harm to others; they would make rules by themselves.

If we practiced a good heart, nobody would have to make rules. We would be compassionate by nature and we wouldn't harm others but instead benefit them. If the good heart, compassion, were generated in the world, no matter how many weapons, how many atomic bombs, there were, nothing would become harmful to others, to the world.

If there were no compassion in the mind, if there were no good heart, even our beautiful hand brings harm. Our hand is not like the paw of the tiger, whose paws are to grab and eat. Our hand is by comparison peaceful. I remember in a lecture in Sydney, Australia, His Holiness said that our hands are actually meant for peace, not for harming, not for violence. Tigers have paws to harm, but our human hands are for peace.

Anyway, if there's no good heart, even with this beautiful body without weapons at all, these hands, these limbs, these legs, these lips might not look harmful but they can harm the world. They can kill not only insects but other human beings; they can destroy the world.

What I'm saying is that we therefore must rejoice. You must realize that your decision at this time, coming here to do a meditation course, to learn Buddhism, that's best. As I mentioned before, this is vital not only for your own peace and happiness, for your liberation, it becomes the most important thing for the world. What you're doing here, what you're learning, the meditation you are doing, is the most important thing the world needs, for world peace, as an opponent of all these wars, all these problems, for all sentient beings. Therefore, we should all rejoice.

Sorry, when I come back your entire timetable went! Your whole schedule disappeared! It's ruined!

But I will try my best to not do it again. I'll see if I can try. I'll stop here.

## **DEDICATION**

“Due to all the past, present, future merits collected by me and the three-times merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas, all the sentient beings, may the source of all the happiness, success

for myself and for all sentient beings, bodhicitta, be generated within my own mind and in the mind of all sentient beings without delay of even a second.

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

“Due to all the past, present, future merits collected by me and the three-times merits collected by buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the other sentient beings, which are merely imputed by the mind—put it this way, which exist but do not exist from their own side—may the I who exists but doesn’t from its own side, which is empty, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, which exists but doesn’t exist from its own side, which is empty, and lead all sentient beings, who exist but do not exist from their own side, to that enlightenment, which exists but does not exist from its own side, by myself alone, who exists but does not exist from its own side.

“I dedicate all the merits to be able to follow the holy deeds of the great bodhisattvas Manjugosha, Samantabhadra, Ksitigarbha and so forth, with the dedication that the three-time buddhas and bodhisattvas admire the most.”

[Rinpoche chants in Tibetan]

So goodnight. Thank you very much.

## Lecture 2

November 26, 1999

### THE LINEAGE LAMA PRAYER IS TANTRA

[Rinpoche chants praise before teachings to Shakyamuni Buddha]

Since you have done the *Heart Sutra*, the *Essence of Wisdom*, already this morning, I'm not going to go over that, just to recite the mantra.

[Rinpoche chants the *Heart Sutra* mantra]

Yesterday, when I was explaining about the visualization that goes with the requesting prayer to the lineage lamas, I think I left out one! With the second visualization, the lineage lamas of the profundity, the lineage lamas of the profound path, what is to be actualized after the merit field. After each merit field, the lineage lamas of the profound path are absorbed into you. Then, think you have received all the realizations of the path of wisdom, realizing emptiness, from the sutra [path]. Then, from the tantra [path], there is the subtle wisdom, the clear light mind, which is explained in Vajrayana but not in Sutrayana.

In Vajrayana, it is explained that there are three types of mind: the gross mind, the subtle mind and the extremely subtle mind. There are three types, like that. Similarly, there are three types of body: the gross body, the subtle body and the extremely subtle body.

It is mentioned and we can understand from our own experiences that, after having heard some basic teachings of Sutrayana, we will only learn the total education of mind, the complete understanding of all the details about what the mind is, when we learn highest tantra. Not until we then understand the Highest Yoga Tantra will we have a much more extensive knowledge of the mind based on the understanding of Sutrayana. To understand all the details about mind, we have to study tantra and especially Highest Yoga Tantra. Even by having the realization of the whole Sutrayana, the Paramitayana, we can only learn about the gross mind.

## **OUR DELUSIONS ARE NOT ONE WITH OUR BUDDHA NATURE**

Of course, the complete education of mind only happens when we become enlightened. Then we complete the education of mind with our own experiences, when we achieve an omniscient mind, which means after having ceased all the gross and subtle defilements that are left on the mental continuum by the delusions, by the concept of inherent existence, which is called simultaneously born. It is the ignorance that has been there even from birth, when conception took place, when our consciousness took place in the mother's womb on the fertilized egg. When we were born, we were born with this ignorance of not knowing: not knowing the ultimate nature of the I and the aggregates such as the mind. We were born with this ignorance and the continuity of that ignorance existed before this life. From time without beginning, our mental continuum has never separated from it, not for even a second.

Problems or suffering did not end in the past. That is why from the time we were born until now we have never been separated from problems and suffering. That is how the life has been, up to this second.

You have already heard about the nature of the mind, buddha nature, the nature of the mind that is clear light, which is buddha nature. You have already heard quite a bit about that.

Like a mirror, it has potential to reflect the whole city, with all its billions and billions of objects—all the things in a shop, like in a department store. Something, even a small mirror, can reflect a whole city. The mirror itself has potential to do that. It can do that anytime that the dust that covers the mirror is cleared away. It's a question of that.

Dust interferes with the mirror reflecting the whole city or all the millions of billions of objects in the shop. But because the mirror is in that nature, the more we clean away the dust, the more clarity comes. Just by taking the action of cleaning away the dust, the mirror can reflect back everything perfectly because it already has that potential there. The more we clean, the brighter the reflection, and when it's completely cleaned, it can give a very clear reflection.

Just like that example, our mind has buddha nature, the clear light, which is not oneness with the mistakes, with defilements; it's not mixed.

In the past, when we did the [Kopan] course, it wasn't in this place. I'm a little bit confused, but it was certainly outside. There is a three- or four-story building, so we did the course at the side of that.

It was on this side of the hill, just covered with simple cloth, some ancient cloth, and then surrounded by, I think, bamboo, around the wall. I think it was bamboo, then pieces of cloth, patched, and there was a small door on one side and another door on the other side. Anyway, in the past I was a little bit less lazy, so I used to teach in both the morning and the afternoon! I think I did most of the course then. Maybe, for a few days at the beginning it was done by one of the senior Sangha, a nun or monk, and occasionally there was also an elder lay student who guided it.

I'm not going to make the story long again. Then it goes on and on.

So anyway, I don't remember exactly but I think I used to start the course with a discussion on the mind. Whenever it was possible, for quite a number of years, we spent about five days, especially the beginning five days, discussing the mind and reincarnation, including this part, the nature of the mind.

In the early courses, even up to the sixth or seventh meditation courses, as well as the discourses I also guided meditations. Not every session on meditation, but I think some of the sessions were on guided meditation besides the discourse, along with the many coughs. Sometimes there was more coughing than discourse! Then I collected more and more medicine from students, then more coughing and I collected more medicines as a result of that! I was doing fundraising for medicine by coughing during the teaching.

Anyway, during those days I had quite a bit of energy, but I think since then my energy has gone to bed or left for somewhere else! Compared to before, I have become much lazier. It's supposed to be less lazy, but I think it went the other way around.

Anyway, what I was going to talk about was this, sorry. It's probably the same because it has now been a long time since I have come in the morning, but during the morning discussion, around eleven o'clock or something, an airplane came. Sometimes [as it flew over] the noise was intense,



and it became a little bit kind of irritating. We were discussing something important, and then the airplane came!

But it is recognized that it is a very good opportunity for patience! So I have to thank the pilot, in fact all the pilots.

### **WE CAN DEVELOP THE INFINITE QUALITIES OF A BUDDHA**

Anyway, what I wanted to say, like that example of the mirror, the nature of the mind itself is not oneness with the defilements; it's not oneness with attachment, anger, ignorance, the self-cherishing thought, all these. Because it is unstained by inherent existence, its own nature is pure.

Therefore, this clear light nature of the mind, the buddha nature, has all the potential to give rise to all these realizations from guru devotion all the way up to enlightenment. The mind can attain all the realizations, becoming more and more profound, bringing more and more benefit, finally achieving the infinite qualities that the Buddha's holy body has. Even one atom of the Buddha's holy body, even one pore of the Buddha's holy body, has infinite qualities. Even one pore of the Buddha's holy body can do the function of the Buddha's holy speech, holy mind and holy body. Even one pore can do all these activities.

Our body is greatly limited. It cannot do the function of the mind; and the mind cannot do the function of the body. But when we become enlightened, there is no limitation in the capacity [of the enlightened body/mind]. When we achieve the path of unification in the highest tantric path, when we become a buddha, there's no limitation. Each pore of the holy body itself can function as the holy mind and holy speech. Each beam that comes from a buddha's holy body is something beyond our imagination. Each beam can benefit sentient beings. We ordinary people can't imagine the many buddha fields and how a buddha's holy body covers every existence without limitation and, because of that, a buddha's holy mind covers all the existence. A buddha sees all of existence, not like looking down on a city from the top of a high mountain, not in that way, but because a buddha's holy body covers the whole existence, his holy mind covers the whole existence; there is no place where there is no buddha.

All these inconceivable, infinite qualities that a buddha's holy body, holy speech and holy mind has, all these are in our nature. There is all this potential within our mind now, including the realizations of the whole path from guru devotion up to enlightenment, everything.

What blocks us from realizing all this are the defilements. But by meeting the external conditions, the virtuous friend who reveals the unmistakable path to us, by showing us the light, the path of method and wisdom, and by us listening, reflecting and meditating from our own side, we can purify these defilements, or reduce or make them thinner. As we do, the realizations come; they manifest from within our mind.

It's like the seed already planted under the ground that becomes the stem sprouting above ground when the conditions of water and everything are put together. Like that, as more of the defilements are purified, more realizations come from within, all the way up to enlightenment, including all those infinite qualities that a buddha's holy body, holy speech and holy mind has. It all manifests out or comes out from within our mind, from that buddha nature.

It's like how a bell has the power to make a sound, this nice sound, *ting*. There is the potential in the bell. To come out, it just needs to meet the right condition, such as somebody hitting it with what is called the *tang*. What do you call this thing inside? [*Student*: Donger.] Somebody shaking it so the "donger" hits the side of the bell. That's all that is needed.

Similarly, a gong, like the gong the monastery has, has the potential to produce this nice sound. It's just a question of a person striking it with a stick. It's just a question of the gong meeting the stick. If the gong meets the stick, there is that nice sound. The potential is there, so then it just comes out.

Similarly, with enlightenment, for our mind to become fully awakened or enlightened it is a question of meeting this external condition, meeting the virtuous friend who shows the path of method and wisdom, and then, by doing the practice, as the defilements become less and less, the realizations manifest out, just as the mirror can reflect more and more as it is being cleaned, until, when there is finally no dust, it can give the complete reflection. In the same way, this mind is able to become fully awakened or enlightened; it is able to see directly. While it is seeing the past, it can see the present and it can also see the future. It can see everything—this mind can see directly all the past, present and future phenomena without any resistance, without any obstacles.

There is no knowledge that it does not have; there is no phenomenon that the mind cannot see, that it does not see.

This is one meditation that is very helpful to overcome our depression. This meditation is a very useful psychological technique. Thinking of our buddha nature inspires us, encouraging us to think more of our potential, how the nature of our mind is clear light and how it has all the potential.

Generally, depression is thinking that we are hopeless, looking at ourselves as totally black and our life as dark. We don't look at all at our good side, at all our good qualities, only at our negative side. Then, only thinking of our negative side, our mistakes, we only think how we are unable to succeed in anything. Because we think only of that, in our view our life appears completely black. We see ourselves full of mistakes, without any qualities. We can't see any qualities. With that way of thinking, our mind never wakes up. We never give any freedom to ourselves. It only brings depression.

Also, when our mind is not opened, we have no method to use the antidotes. Without that education, the mind is not open to look for new methods, to learn new things in life, new methods so that we can be free from this sickness, this depression that brings us down every day. Because of that, we are unable to do a job, we are unable to do anything, unable to make and eat food. We are even unable to get up from bed. Anyway, general depression is that, thinking we are so bad, that we are only negative and hopeless, the main thing is a feeling of hopelessness.

We don't have to think like this. Whatever problem we have in life—relationship problems, having been heavily abused or tortured by somebody, living in a prison or whatever—thinking in this way helps. It can also help [to know that] the problem is temporary: “This problem that I'm going through is not forever. It is just for a short while; it's just temporary.” We can then think, “This has an end, this is temporary. It can be eliminated.” Thinking like that eases our mind; it gives it a rest, making our life more relaxed or easier. It gives more peace.

So, going back to what I was saying, we can only learn the extensive detailed explanation when we learn highest tantra, especially Highest Yoga Tantra. In the second request [to the lineage masters], the wisdom is the wisdom realizing emptiness, which is a gross mind, whereas the wisdom from the highest tantra is the extremely subtle mind, which is the clear light. I forgot to

mention yesterday about the extremely subtle mind, the clear light. In the visualization, when the lineage lamas absorb from above, the realization that is achieved is the wisdom from highest tantra, the clear light, the extremely subtle mind. Then, the result is the dharmakaya.

So, I thought to do the oral transmission of two things. One is the Thirty-five Buddhas, which is extremely powerful for purification practice. I will do the oral transmission of that and maybe go over the benefits. The other thing is the Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, this yoga meditation. So, maybe I'll do the oral transmission of that too.

### **ATTACHMENT TO THIS LIFE BRINGS DISSATISFACTION**

The purpose of having put this book together is to have the subjects for people who want to meditate every day, who really want to do something every day. It is for people who want something simple, more condensed, and yet which has the essential practice. It becomes a guideline for how to meditate, making it possible to have realizations by having the essential points of the practice. It is for those who want to begin meditation, who want to practice something in everyday life.

The other thing is, at the end of the course, whether for a month or a week, after having done the course, having learned some teachings and felt it has proved beneficial in your life, that it's something extremely worthwhile to practice, the other thing is to dedicate your life to that which is really needed in your life. How to continue after the course, what to do with your life after the course, how to continue the practice, is a very common question.

So, this [book was written] as an answer for those beginners who have those questions. After feeling that this is a very worthwhile thing to do in the life, these Buddha's teachings, how do you go on to practice in daily life? This is to answer that question.

There can be other books, there are other books, meditation texts, that you can use in your daily life to practice, to continue the inspiration, to continue awakening that you started during this course. You can discover others that give you the inspiration, the courage to continue.

If you think of the definition of negative karma—that action which only results in suffering—that is sufficient. In short, that covers everything. Every negative karmic action only results in suffering, never in happiness.

Now, to make it clearer, on the basis of that, there are actions motivated by ignorance, anger or attachment, and of attachment there are two types: attachment to this life and attachment to future lives' samsaric happiness. From those two attachments, with attachment to this life, with that motivation, any action results only in suffering.

To make that clearer, the emphasis is the motivation, then any action done with ignorance, anger or attachment to this life is nonvirtuous.

While, for some people, anger may arise many times, even in one day, the main thing here that we should analyze is the attachment clinging to this life's comfort, happiness, how that attitude is nonvirtuous, how the effect we get on our mental continuum from that attitude is not peace; it is disturbing, unpeaceful. It is the opposite of satisfaction. What it does is it makes us dissatisfied. That is the main suffering we have to recognize.

I heard a song from the famous singer, Elvis Presley, who sang for his guitar, "I don't get satisfaction." He made that song. What? [*Student: The Rolling Stones.*] Oh, sorry, I made a big mistake! Not Elvis Presley, those guys, the Rolling Stones, rolling the heavy stone. Anyway, I'm joking.

"I tried but I can't get satisfaction," which is very true. There are many lamrims in the West. The Beatles? In many Beatles' songs, there are many lamrims!

I saw on video or on TV, when Elvis Presley was singing his very last song, when he came in the theater, the young people there were in ecstasy. This was his last song in his life. While he was singing, tears were flowing out at that time. I don't remember, but maybe he mentioned in the song that he wouldn't live long. I think within him there might have been some feeling like that, and that is why his tears were flowing during his last song.

Even though he had achieved everything that worldly, common people think of as a successful life, having money and reputation, well-known by the people in the world, and I guess having

friends, adding one more, having friends, anyway he had everything common people thought of as a successful of life, he had everything, but I guess he didn't find satisfaction in his heart. So, near the end of his life, he saw his heart was empty and maybe he also felt that he was not going to live long. That might have been what was causing his crying. Anyway, that was why he was so sad.

There would have been no cause of sadness if his mind had been free from this emotion, if his mind had not been attached to this life. Even though he had obtained all the things that common people in the world think of as success, if his mind had been detached from them, there would have been nothing to be upset or sad about. Emotional minds like this sadness are caused by attachment. If there is attachment, grasping, clinging to this life, to friends, reputation, comfort, wealth and so forth, if the mind grasps onto these things, clinging, then when we feel separation from them, because our attachment doesn't want this, we feel sad.

While attachment doesn't want to separate from them, when we have to leave, sadness comes, and it comes from this attachment. Therefore, being detached from all this makes the mind free. Whether we have all these things or we don't, if the mind is detached from this life, we make our mind free, free from this obscuring emotion, from this attachment, this disturbing emotional thought. Then, we have satisfaction in our heart, we have peace in our heart. There's nothing that makes us upset. Nothing bothers us.

In other words, when we free our mind from these emotions, from desire, there's nothing in our life that bothers us, that causes us pain in our heart, because there is no clinging. We have freed ourselves from all that. Then, whether we have all those friends, all this wealth, all these things around us or we don't have them, there's nothing that bothers us, that hurts us, because we have freed ourselves from the emotional mind, the attachment, the desire that clings to these things.

#### **WITH ATTACHMENT TO THIS LIFE EVERYTHING IS NONVIRTUE**

So to go back. For example, if we examine what kind of mind we had this morning when we got up, what was our motivation? I mean, being here, because we're doing a meditation course, maybe it's not the same as in normal life. Maybe this time's it's different, not exactly the same as a whole day in our normal life. But normally, what motivation do we have when we get up in the morning? Is it with the motivation to benefit others every morning?

Some people have that motivation. There are people who live their lives constantly, twenty-four hours a day, with a very pure mind, without ego, without self-centeredness, only thinking of benefiting others, while they are doing their job, eating, walking, sitting, sleeping—doing everything only with the thought of benefiting others. Not only in the East, definitely there are people in the West too, living a life with the purest mind, with bodhicitta.

But for ordinary common people, like me, every morning we get up with the motivation not only thinking of our own happiness but with attachment to this life, with worldly concern, with the thought of the eight worldly dharmas. We get up with this clinging, grasping mind. Then, that attitude creates nonvirtuous actions, negative karma.

When we are getting dressed, what is the motivation? Normally, again, besides the self-cherishing thought, there is the thought of the eight worldly dharmas, worldly concern, attachment clinging to this life. The motivation is that. So, we get dressed with that mind, with that nonvirtuous thought. In that way, the action of dressing becomes nonvirtue.

Then drinking coffee the first thing in the morning, or eating chocolate, it's usually with the same attitude, with ego, and not only that, if we are seeking happiness for ourselves, then there's the thought of the eight worldly dharmas, the attachment clinging to this life, and so that becomes another nonvirtuous action. And the same when we eat breakfast; it becomes another nonvirtuous action, a negative karma.

Then, when we go to work, what's the motivation? What motivation is there in the heart when we go to work? Again, it's normally the self-centered mind, the self-cherishing thought, the thought of working for our own happiness, even if it's meant to be serving others. Even if it's called a public service, still the motivation is the self-centered mind, seeking happiness for ourselves, and then, besides that, the nonvirtuous thought, the thought of the eight worldly dharmas, the attachment clinging to this life. Going for a job and working for many hours, all those eight hours or however many hours we work, day or night, where so much of our life goes—I guess almost half our life goes—all those actions of working become nonvirtuous.

And the same thing, having lunch, having dinner, eating, drinking, usually because of that same attitude, all those actions, all that twenty-four hours of drinking and eating, become nonvirtuous,

negative karma. And it's the same with walking, sitting and talking. With the same attitude, all those activities become nonvirtuous because they are done with a nonvirtuous motivation.

The last thing is sleeping at the end of the day. It's even more difficult for sleeping to become virtuous, Dharma. It's more difficult to think, "I'm going to sleep to benefit for other sentient beings," with the purest attitude. That's even more difficult because, at that time of night we are usually exhausted. With that same attitude, with the self-cherishing thought, seeking only our own happiness, then the thought of the eight worldly dharmas, the attachment clinging to our own comfort, to this life's happiness, however many hours we sleep, even though sleep can be transformed into virtue, because we did not make the motivation for sleeping virtuous, because we didn't transform it into Dharma, but we fell asleep with no thought of benefiting others, just the opposite, with ego, with the self-cherishing thought, all those hours of sleeping—however many there were, eight, ten, twelve or even twenty-four hours—all become nonvirtuous.

Even if we are studying in a school, a college, a university and so forth, if much of our life is spent there, again, if we analyze what is the motivation we have every day while we are studying, usually it's the same, the self-cherishing thought seeking happiness for ourselves, and then after that, the thought of the eight worldly dharmas, the attachment clinging to this life's happiness, to reputation, to the comforts of this life. Therefore, it all becomes nonvirtuous.

When we do business, again because the attitude is the same, doing business does not become the cause of happiness. Even though the business might have made a profit, that doesn't mean the actions we do transacting that business necessarily become the cause of happiness if our attitude is the same. With this attitude, it all becomes nonvirtuous.

Even if we are doing a retreat, saying prayers, if the attitude is the self-cherishing thought seeking happiness for ourselves, the thought of the eight worldly dharmas, the attachment clinging to this life, even though the subject of the prayers is Buddhism, the Buddha's teaching, the Dharma, our actions do not become the Dharma but become nonvirtuous because the motivation is nonvirtuous. Then, the retreat becomes nonvirtuous because our motivation is nonvirtuous.

This is the way to analyze; this is how to define negative karma, which actions become negative karma. But here, during this course, most of the emphasis is on the motivation, and especially on bodhicitta, therefore even though some actions become negative during these days, there will still



be many good karmic actions, because our emphasis here, our practice, is to pay attention to our mind, to guard our mind, to be careful of the motivation. That's the main subject of the course.

Even though there are so many things to explain, that's the essence, that's the foundation, that's what Dharma is and how to practice Dharma, how to create the cause of happiness and to abandon the cause of the suffering. That's the main topic, how to ensure our actions do not become the cause of suffering but only become the cause of happiness.

If we think about our life during just one day, by analyzing the motivation for our actions during those twenty-four hours, what we discover is this. And this has been happening, not just for this one day, or for one week, one month, one year, but, if you are somebody like me, from the time we were born.

But now here, we are only talking about this life, and because there is a continuation of mind before this—as you already discussed with reincarnation at the beginning of the course—this is how our mind has been habituated from beginningless rebirths. This is the way it normally has been.

This tells us why it's not easy to have realizations on the path to enlightenment, why it takes time, why we need to put so much effort from our side. The realizations don't come from outside, so we need to put so much effort into trying to attain them. We have to be so strong, we have to be very strong. We have to continuously put so much effort to practice the Dharma, to continuously keep our mind in virtue—positive, peaceful, happy, it's all the same. A peaceful mind, then a happy mind; it comes together.

#### **ATTAINING REALIZATIONS TAKES A LONG TIME**

That's why we should put so much effort into practicing the Dharma, not just for a few months, not just for a few years, but from life to life. We have to plan to put effort from our own side, to overcome and defeat the delusions. Even though we might [sometimes] miss and our mind becomes nonvirtuous, we must still put effort into our everyday life for it to become virtuous, to become the Dharma, the cause of happiness as much as possible.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama often emphasizes to Western students to plan to practice for many eons, for hundreds and hundreds, to collect merit, to purify, to actualize the path.

It is said in lamrim teachings that, if we practice correctly and all the conditions are gathered, after having found the guru, the guru devotion practice keeps our mind pure. With devotion, we can see the guru from our own side as a buddha. That is guru devotion and that is what causes us to receive blessings in our heart. And the blessing that we receive causes us to gain realizations on the path to enlightenment. That's the mechanism of the mind. That's how the mind works, how the realizations happen.

There are external mechanisms, different machines that depend on other machines, even a simple watch. Many machines work only by relating to each other, by depending on each other. Similarly, this is the inner scientific mechanism, that [depends on] all the numberless buddhas. The numberless sentient beings practice the path by following what the Buddha explained, experiencing how to achieve realizations. All the yogis, the pandits, those who have completed the path, have had realizations by practicing correctly as the Buddha explained, under that guidance.

For those who do the practice, there is scientific proof that all the realizations [are possible]. Those who don't practice won't have scientific proof experience because they haven't done the practice, they haven't done the experiment. When we talk about scientists, it doesn't only have to be Western scientists. There are Buddhist scientists as well. The great yogis are scientists of the mind, having realizations that are basically about the mind. Scientists don't only have to be Western scientists or Einstein!

Anyway, Einstein said what? After he made the atomic bomb? He was the founder of the atomic power, right? He made a bomb or somebody else made a bomb? Somebody else?

*Student:* It was his theory, but he banned the bomb.

*Rinpoche:* Oh, I see, that's right. So, what was the question that somebody asked Einstein?

*Student:* How do you think humanity will survive now that the atomic bomb has been created?

*Rinpoche:* Then what did he say?

*Student:* He said the only way humanity will survive is if everybody became a Buddhist.

*Rinpoche:* Boo-dhist! That's a special one.

Anyway, I did have his book, which I have kept for many years. Like many of my Dharma books, I haven't read it completely! I did have his book but somehow I am also interested in reading it, just turning some pages and reading, but not completely. But I would say I have interest somehow.

### **KARMA: THE FOUR SUFFERING RESULTS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

Anyway, to go back. For example, that one negative karma, for example, sexual misconduct, becomes negative karma due to the motivation, the self-cherishing thought seeking only happiness for ourselves, and then, besides that, the attachment clinging to this life, the nonvirtuous thought. Due to the motivation, that action becomes nonvirtuous. That complete action has *four suffering results*.

The *ripening aspect result* is rebirth in one of the lower realms, the realms of the hell being, the hungry ghost or the animal.

Then there are three suffering results, three problems, we have to experience if, after some time, we are reborn in the human realm due to another good karma ripening. The cause to be born as a human being is good karma, having lived in pure morality, having lived in a pure vow, not just living in a vow but having kept it purely. And that is just to be born as a human being, the cause has to be pure morality. If we then attain another human birth, because of not having purified the previous negative karma, such as sexual misconduct, in that life we experience many problems.

With *experiencing the result similar to the cause*, the way of thinking, the wishes of our husband or wife, or another companion, are completely contradictory to our wishes. The family and those surrounding us are all against us; they become our enemy. Other friends or companions become competitive. They don't have the same attitude, the same wishes; they don't listen to us. That is

experiencing the result similar to the cause for the previous negative karma of committing sexual misconduct in another life.

Then there is the *possessed result*, which is to do with the place. In that human life, we have to experience places that are filthy dirty, very smelly, very muddy places, very unhygienic. Even though we might not have to live our whole life in such a place, there are some people that somehow have to.

For example, even for us, if at some time we have to experience being in a dirty, filthy place, one which has a very bad smell and is very muddy, if we have to experience a rough time, why these things happen at that time is the result of having committed that particular karma in the past.

The fourth one is *creating the result similar to the cause*. Because of the negative imprint left by past negative karma of sexual misconduct, in this life we want to do that again, we want to repeat the same thing, we want to engage in the same negative karma again and again and again.

Even if we make a vow to not engage in it again, even if we make a decision to not commit it again, the past negative imprint left by sexual misconduct is so strong, the mind becomes so uncontrolled. Due to sexual misconduct done in the past, our mind is habituated to it, and then we do it again and again, even though because of it we have to experience so many relationship problems, disharmony in the family, and so many things such as court cases, but it happens again and again.

Here I'm talking about one negative karma, one negative karmic action of sexual misconduct, how it harms our life and our lives, from life to life, what effect it has on us. I've just explained these four suffering results, but this fourth one, engaging again in sexual misconduct, this completed negative karma again produces four suffering results.

Now this part is very important to understand. That which is a *result*, engaging again in sexual misconduct, now this complete karma produces four suffering results *again*, and one of them is creating the result similar to the cause, engaging in the same negative karma again. And *that* complete negative karma produces four suffering results *again*. So, like this, it goes on and on and on and on, from life to life. It goes on and on, with no end.

This is the result of one negative karma, such as the example of sexual misconduct, that is done once, *because it is not purified*, because we haven't managed to change our mind to not commit the action again. So, there are these two things. The first is because we have not purified the past seed, the imprint, and the second one because we have not changed our mind, therefore we cannot stop engaging in the same negative karma. By living in the vow, however, we can stop engaging again in this negative karma.

When these two things have not been done—purifying and changing our attitude and actions such as when we take the eight Mahayana precepts, living in the vow to not commit these things again—when those two Dharma practices are not done, the suffering result from one negative karma goes on and on and on, without end.

Just as fruit comes from the trees, from which come seeds that then go in the ground and again produce trees and fruit, which produce more seeds and more trees, just like that, one negative karma that is done and not purified, when we don't make vows, controls our mind and action, then there is suffering that goes on from life to life without end.

And here we are just talking about one negative karma, just one negative karma.

### **HOW OFTEN EACH DAY DO WE COMMIT THE TEN NONVIRTUES?**

On the basis of the definition of these particular negative karmas that I explained, on top of that, how many times do we engage in the negative karma of killing? Even if it's not killing a human being, but other animals, how many times have we taken lives with intention? How many times have we stolen in this life, engaging in the negative karma of stealing? How many times have we engaged in sexual misconduct? How many times have we told lies? How many times have we hurt others with words, creating negative karma? Whether we speak in a sweet or a harsh way, that can still hurt others when our motivation is nonvirtuous. It's the same negative karma [whether we say it sweetly or harshly].

How many times have we done that? And how many times have we slandered, causing disunity in others, disharmony? How many times have we committed the negative karma of slandering? And gossiping, talking in a way that leaves no positive imprint in the mind, that results only in suffering? Besides being motivated by the self-centered mind, doing it with attachment clinging

to this life, with the thought of worldly dharma. How many times have we engaged in the negative karma of gossiping, one of the ten nonvirtuous actions, in this life?

And then the three negative karmas of the mind, like covetousness, such as when we go shopping. If our motivation is not in the lamrim—either without renunciation, the detached mind, or without bodhicitta, the thought of benefiting others—when we are shopping we have no thought of benefiting others. “I will buy these clothes or this food so that I can serve other sentient beings, so that I can make my life useful to serve others.” In that way we are going shopping for others, what we are buying is for others. In that case, there is no ego, no self-centered mind. We are shopping just to survive, just for health, so that we can serve others. With this pure mind, there is also no attachment clinging to this life, to our own happiness of this life. The main motivation is for others. Buying this food, clothing and all these things, our main aim is not for ourselves but for others, not for our own happiness, but for others.

Without that thought of benefiting others, without that right view, as I mentioned yesterday, without the right view of looking at the subject, ourselves, the buyer, at the things we are buying and at the action, by looking at these three spheres as merely labeled by the mind, without that, all these things appear to us as something *not* merely labeled by the mind, as something inherently existent. [We need to] look at these things like a dream, but they all appear as inherently existing—a real *me*, a real shopper, real things and the real action of buying. They all appear inherently existent. These phenomena appear to our mind as something totally the opposite of how they exist.

With that awareness at that time, [we need to] look at all these phenomena as a hallucination, *as* they are hallucinations. From our side, we look at them as hallucinations *as* they are hallucinations. They are *not* true, so we look at these things that are not true as being not true.

[We need to] see them as like a dream or think that all these things are merely imputed so all these things are empty. With either awareness, we go shopping and this protects the mind from attachment. Attachment cannot overwhelm us. We are protected by practicing awareness, emptiness, dependent arising. It protects our mind from attachment taking us over, invading our mind, overwhelming us.

However, if we go for shopping without this awareness, if we are not practicing lamrim at that time, we don't have any protection for our mind. That means we don't have any protection in our life. What happens then is all these negative emotional minds arise, completely covering us, completely controlling us. That includes the self-cherishing thought. Everything we do, including shopping, we do for them, for attachment, for the self-cherishing thought. We become a slave to them. All our shopping is done for them, all the clothes we buy is for attachment, for the lord of attachment, for the self-cherishing thought. Everything we buy is for them.

Therefore, without the lamrim, when we go shopping, covetousness and the other ten nonvirtuous actions come. As Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo explained, by going shopping in this way, when we return home, we come back with a huge load of the negative karma of covetousness. If it could materialize, there would be incredibly large trucks full of the huge negative karma of covetousness. How many times every day does the negative karma of covetousness arise?

And the same with ill-will and heresy? It depends on the individual person. For some people there is so much of one and less of the other; for others there is everything.

Now, even from these ten nonvirtues, we have to think about some basis examples that are recognized as negative karma.

We have done this so many times in this life. So, what about the results? Each of these has four suffering results and it goes on and on and on.

Before we were just talking about one negative karma, now there are so many. If we don't do purification, if we don't change our attitude and our actions at all, stopping them, if we don't live in the vows—and that doesn't necessarily mean becoming a monk or nun but living in a lay person's vows—if no change comes about, what happens is endless suffering, suffering that goes on and on.

We can't really say that karma has to be only like this. It can manifest as all sorts of problems. Negative karma manifests in all kinds of ways, in ways we cannot imagine.

This is one way to meditate on karma. First of all, define negative karma, then examining these examples of negative karma, we should be aware of the suffering results and how they go on and on, endlessly.

### **LIVING IN THE VOWS WE COLLECT MERIT CONTINUOUSLY**

Then, I would like to make this comment. A person who is living in the vows, whether they are the vows of a layperson or an ordained person, whatever number of vows they have taken and they are living within, even if they don't do any other practice—whether it's as an ordained or a layperson—if they do no other practices, not even preliminary practices or reciting mantras and prayers or the many other meditations to do, even if the person doesn't do anything, [from the time of taking the vows, they continuously collect merit.]

There are the five vows, the three vows or whatever for a layperson. And, of course, for an ordained person living in ordination, there are many different vows. But even a person living in one vow, abstaining from one negative karma, it is said in a sutra—I don't remember now clearly which. I've got mixed up with the two texts. One is called *Piles of Jewels* and the other is called *Sutra of Piles of Flowers*—but anyway, this sutra says from the time the vow is taken, the person collects merit every day, continuously, even living only in one vow. While eating, they continuously collect good karma, merit; while sleeping, no matter how many hours they sleep, eight hours, twenty-four hours, they are continuously collecting merit, making life meaningful, worthwhile.

That means there is no question that the more vows a person is living in, the more benefit, the more merit they collect, continuously, *all* the time until death, because that person has made a vow to keep this vow until death. Therefore, the benefit, the merit, is collected continuously. That much merit is received all the time. That is what makes life meaningful. And this is what is happening while we are walking, while we are eating, sleeping. Even if we are not doing any other practices, by just living in the vow, we collect merit continuously.



## THE MERIT OF KEEPING ONE VOW IS GREATER THAN MAKING OFFERINGS TO ALL THE BUDDHAS

The other thing is, in everyday life whenever we collect virtue, our virtue increases so much—hundreds, thousands, even millions of times it increases. The higher vows we take, any virtue we collect in everyday life increases so much. It increases so much due to living in that number of vows, in the precepts, in the ordination.

We should understand the two great advantages [of living in the vows]. It is said in the sutra that if all sentient beings of the three realms—the desire, form and formless realm—were to become a wheel-turning king—the wealthiest king with incomparable wealth and power [there would still be no comparison]. These kings manifest especially when the human age is I think 80,000. The human lifespan decreases, getting shorter, shorter, shorter, until it becomes ten years. Then, by changing the mind and creating merit with a positive mind, the lifespan increases again, becoming longer, longer, longer, longer, until I think it reaches 80,000 years. This is not talking about the same person, don't think that! So, I think this happens during those times when the human lifespan [is at its longest].

So, anyway, were all the numberless beings of the three realms to become wheel-turning kings, and then make oceans of butter and Mt. Merus of wax, to make light offerings to the Buddha, and if one person living in ordination were to make offerings to the Buddha using butter the size of a mustard seed and wax the size of a hair, because of living in the ordination, the merit that that person collected would be much greater than all those beings of the three realms becoming wheel-turning kings and making such huge light offerings to the Buddha, with oceans of butter and Mt. Merus of wax.

There is a *huge* difference. The merit is not by the amount we offer; it's by the power of living in the ordination. Even by number, that one person is only one, whereas all those other beings are numberless and powerful wheel-turning kings but they are not living in the ordination.

So, there are huge differences in our daily life when we create merit, virtue. It increases the cause of happiness unbelievably. This is the advantage of just living in the vow, even if we don't do any other practice, even if all we do is eat, sleep and make *kaka* and *pipi*, just these three things. Even if we just do these three things, doing no other practice, because we are living in the vow, it makes life unbelievably meaningful all the time, like the difference between sky and earth.

The other very important thing to understand is this. We should also relate this to the eight Mahayana precepts that we are taking during the course, during these weeks. We should relate those benefits to the eight Mahayana precepts as well as the vow we are now taking.

That's what's happening for us [here at Kopan]. So many more merits are increasing during these days rather than at other times. Even though you might do good things at other times, now, at this time by taking the eight Mahayana precepts, the merit is far greater for the virtuous action you do during these days. It's the difference between the sky and the earth, like atoms and the rest of the earth, compared to the other times without living in the vows.

Now the other thing to understand is that this lay person or ordained monk or nun living in the higher ordination has vowed not to harm others in ways that are against the vows. That means that all other sentient beings, including human beings of course, don't receive those harms from that person who is living in the vows. That means all other sentient beings receive so much peace and happiness from this person. In other words, other sentient beings receive less harm because this *one* sentient being living in the vows has stopped giving those five harms to others. The harm they receive becomes less because this one person took vows.

Then, what this person does—this lay person living in the five vows or eight vows or the monk or nun living in the higher ordination—having stopped that many negative karmas that harm numberless other sentient beings, directly or indirectly, besides not harming them, that person also stops giving harm to him or herself.

You can now understand that these people living in the vows give the most practical contribution to world peace. This is something we can do right now, we can offer. So, during these weeks, taking eight Mahayana precepts, this is what you have been doing, benefiting to the world, all sentient beings.

This is the most practical contribution you can give as a lay person living in the vows or those people who are taking high ordination living in the vows. You are giving most practical, you are contribub.... Now my lips have become like drunk on wine or taking drugs or LSD! Anyway, this is the best contribution to world peace, the most practical benefit from your own side.

I can say some words, but this is much better than billions of words. I'm talking about peace but blah, blah, blah, and then not doing anything. I'm talking just words, blah, blah, blah, peace.

This is the real, the best contribution! OK, I think I'd better stop here. My advertisement is finished!

## **ORAL TRANSMISSION OF THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS AND THE SEVEN MEDICINE BUDDHAS**

I think I'll just read the oral transmission of Thirty-five Buddhas today. What to do with all these negative karmas? One method. Remember, the other method is, if you can, as a lay person, take the lay vows, and for those who are living in higher ordination, there are a number of precepts. But the other solution is to purify. Therefore, I thought to give the *lung* today and maybe tomorrow I'll go over the benefits. Maybe, if you haven't gone through the prostrations, how to do them and all the benefits, maybe I'll also do that tomorrow.

So, think: "The purpose of my life is not just to achieve happiness for myself, the purpose of my life is to free all other living beings from all the sufferings and to bring them from happiness to happiness to enlightenment. That is the purpose of my life, and therefore, to do this perfectly, I need to achieve full enlightenment. First, for that, I need to actualize the path, for that I need to purify all the defilements. Therefore, I'm going to take the oral transmission of the *Confessing the Downfalls*, this prayer."

So, take the oral transmission, the blessing, the lineage of this blessing with a good heart, with the thought to benefit to all sentient beings.

[Rinpoche gives the oral transmission of the Thirty-five Buddhas]

So here I'm going to also to give the oral transmission of the Seven Medicine Buddhas. This is extremely precious.

By just reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas once, each of those Buddhas' names just once [it purifies so much.] For example, if you recite the first buddha's name, Shakyamuni

Buddha's name, it has power to purify 80,000 eons of negative karma, just reciting one time. It has so much power to purify.

And like that, it's the same with the other Thirty-five Buddhas. Reciting those names once has the power to purify so many eons—not just so many days of negative karma, not just so many years of negative karma, not just so many lifetimes of negative karma, so many *eons* of negative karma are purified by reciting these names once. In essence, the benefit is that.

Even animals benefit from hearing the Medicine Buddhas' names and mantra. The Buddha himself asked his attendant, Ananda, "Do you believe in the Buddha's explanation, talking about the benefits of such mantras as the Medicine Buddha and so forth, by reciting the name mantra? Do you believe?" Ananda said, "Yes, I believe because the Buddha has inconceivable qualities, so many skies of qualities, therefore I believe what the Buddha says." That includes not only the omniscient mind knowing everything, but also having compassion toward other sentient beings. Because the Buddha has the complete mind training in compassion, it is impossible to tell a lie. His compassion doesn't allow him to cheat sentient beings, only to benefit. Therefore, this contains these reasons.

Then Buddha explained to Ananda, his attendant, that even animals who hear the name of the Medicine Buddha or his mantra, from that time on won't get reborn in the lower realms, in the hell, hungry ghost or animal realms. The Buddha himself promised this to his attendant Ananda.

This is by even *bearing* the mantra, so if you actually recite it, there is no question. It's guaranteed that if you recite Medicine Buddha's name and mantra every day you won't get reborn in the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm or the animal realm.

This is not only for healing. Normally people think it's for healing, but it's also for all the success, for all your wishes for happiness to be achieved. It's very, very powerful to pray to Medicine Buddha, especially in times such as these degenerated times.

So I'm going to do the *lung* of that.

[Rinpoche does lung of Medicine Buddha mantra]

Then the rest of the prayer is here.

[Rinpoche continues the oral transmission]

Then, the Vajrasattva mantra, another extremely powerful mantra for purification.

[Rinpoche gives the oral transmission]

Maybe tomorrow I'll go into more detail about the benefits of practicing the Thirty-five Buddhas, and maybe also Vajrasattva.

The conclusion is that we have an incredible, unbelievable opportunity at this time. We are fortunate to have met the Buddhadharma, the whole path, not only the opportunity to create the unmistakable cause of happiness. To know how to create the unmistakable cause of happiness, even just that one is unbelievable.

Then next one is how to achieve liberation from samsara. That means how to cease all the suffering and its cause.

Studying and meditating on the path, that's just unbelievable. That is the unbelievable thing that has happened at this time. And the other one is the complete path to enlightenment. We are able to study and to meditate and we are able to turn our life toward enlightenment at this time. To be able to direct our life to enlightenment at this time, by listening, reflecting and doing meditation practice on the lamrim, that is like a dream. It's the unbelievable thing that has happened.

But this life doesn't last long because death is definite and death can happen at any moment. We have collected so much negative karma—not only today, not only in this life but from beginningless past lives. And death can happen at any moment. That means changing from this life. What we have now is a human body like this, living with other human beings around us, with family and whatever, with wealth. From that we will change into another unimaginable realm. If it's a hell realm, there will be nothing other than fire or weapons, or ice, utterly terrifying. The body will be in a whole mountain, the whole thing stuck in ice, like a nail under the shoe.

Or we might be an animal or a mosquito, or a very fragile spider with all those long, tiny legs or a tiger or a crocodile living in the mud. If we were born as a crocodile, a lion or a worm, we would have so many enemies around that eat us, and, on top of that, there are also human beings who would eat us. There are many enemies who would eat us wherever we go. Besides other problems, we would be unable to find food. Wherever we had to live, life would be completely filled with fear, no matter how long we lived.

Anyway, that's just one story!

I saw on TV, there was this huge animal, I forgot the name, that comes from the water and climbs the mountain to lay eggs. It's a kind of lizard. I've forgotten the name.

[Students come up with some names]

Iguana, I think that might be the one. That sounds a little bit familiar. [*Student*: They're very big.] Yeah, that's right. Anyway, one made contact with another animal to mate—not to meditate, to mate! What happened, she became pregnant, so to lay the egg, she went from the water and climbed a huge cliff. The person who was showing it on TV said it took fifteen days to climb the mountain. That's what he said. She was going up this cliff to lay the egg on the top of the mountain, going like this. Even just that was so difficult. Finally she reached the top. When she reached the top, she had to choose a very specific place to lay the egg. I think they go to lay eggs in the same place, so that's a problem. I don't know how they know that. The answer is *of course* karma!

So, when she finally reached the top, there was some kind of dry spot but there were many other similar animals who had laid their eggs and were protecting them. She tried to lay the egg but the others attacked her because she was on their territory or maybe they were trying to protect their eggs, I'm not sure. She fought so much.

Then, as she was coming down, the volcano erupted and rocks came down. Along with the rocks she came down. Then she went to another place where again there were animals, and again she was attacked. Then, after some time, from this one who wanted to lay the egg, blood came. I

think she managed to lay the egg somewhere after coming down, with the stones coming down. It is unbelievable how much they have to suffer just to lay their eggs.

I mean, that's just this one type of animal, how much they suffer just to lay eggs, so there's no question about other types of life. That stayed in my mind for a few days but didn't last! It got stuck in my mind. It was very helpful to see.

Death can happen at any moment; at any moment this life can stop. Then, we can change from this realm to the animal realm and be like those animals. That's because there are so many karmas from this life and past lives piled up, so many negative karmas not purified, that we have not finished experiencing. At any minute, life can change from this into that. Karma manifests into that world, and what we are and what our surroundings are become totally something else, something where there is only fear. Once the karma is experienced, there is nothing we can do, and this can happen at any moment.

Therefore, the immediate solution is to purify, to change our mind and actions. That is the solution. Therefore, we must practice Dharma and practice Dharma right now. That's what it means. That's why we must practice Dharma, practice the lamrim, right now.

The best Dharma, especially, is bodhicitta. That is the one we should practice all the time. It's the best to allow us to achieve enlightenment quickly. Then we are able to enlighten all sentient beings quickly. The stronger we can generate compassion for others, the quicker we can become enlightened and the quicker we can enlighten others. That's how it's the best one.

## **DEDICATION**

So I'll stop here and we'll dedicate.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of the sentient beings, may loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta, which results in all the happiness and success for myself and all the happiness and success for all the sentient beings, be generated within my own mind, and in the minds of my family members, all of us here and all sentient beings, without delay of even a second. May that which have been generated be increased.”

[Rinpoche and the students chant in Tibetan]

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

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of the sentient beings, may the Buddha of Compassion, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the only object of refuge for all of us sentient beings, the source of happiness for all of us sentient beings, have a stable life; may all his holy wishes succeed immediately as well as those of other holy beings, and may all my virtuous friends have stable lives and all their holy wishes succeed immediately.”

[Long-life prayer to His Holiness the Dalai Lama]

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of the sentient beings, may I be able to offer infinite benefit to all sentient beings, like Lama Tsongkhapa, by having the same qualities within me as Lama Tsongkhapa has, from now on in all my future lifetimes.”

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of the sentient beings, which are totally nonexistent from their own side, may the I, who is totally nonexistent from its own side, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, which is totally empty, totally nonexistent, empty from its own side, and lead all sentient beings, who are also totally nonexistent, empty from their own side—they exist, but they’re empty from their own side—to that enlightenment. May I lead them to that enlightenment, which exists but is totally nonexistent from its own side, by myself alone, who exists but is totally nonexistent from its own side.



“I dedicate all my merits to follow the extensive holy deeds of the bodhisattvas Manjugosha, Samantabhadra, Ksitigarbha and so forth, and dedicate the merits that the three-time buddhas and bodhisattvas admire the most. In that way I dedicate all my merits.

“May the Buddha’s teachings, may Lama Tsongkhapa’s pure teaching exist and spread in this world for a long time, in the minds of all the sentient beings. And due to that, may nobody experience war, famine, disease, earthquakes, the dangers of fire, water, air, earth. May nobody experience any problems but have perfect peace and happiness. May everyone live their life only benefiting each other with the bodhicitta.”

So, goodnight.

## Lecture 3

November 27, 1999

### LINEAGE LAMAS PRAYER COMMENTARY: THE KADAMPAS

This time I'm going to try something! What I have mentioned over last two days, I'm going to try today, the *Requesting Prayer to the Lineage Lamas!*

Those who have copies of that can read in English.

[Rinpoche chants this prayer]

The lama makes requests to the lineage lamas of the profound path.

[Rinpoche chants in Tibetan]

Now the prayer to the lineage Kadampas which began with all the extensive scriptures. Then, the next one is Män Ngagpa, those who achieved realizations and achieved enlightenment by the instructions, receiving the teachings orally from the guru, putting them into the practice and in that way achieving realizations and enlightenment. This group is called Män Ngagpa.<sup>3</sup>

This is how the Kadampa geshe, Lama Atisha's direct followers and their followers, developed their minds, some by studying the extensive words of all the scriptures, some by studying the essence of the lamrim, some by studying the meditation techniques, the instructions that they received from the guru and put into practice, making it possible to have realizations.

This is an example for us. It gives us an idea of what we can also do as far as developing the mind in the path to enlightenment. Not everyone has the karma to extensively study the entire Buddhadharma, the whole philosophy, all the scriptures, sutra and tantra. Not everyone has the karma, the capacity or intelligence to learn all that. Those of us who are unable to do that can try to develop the mind in the path to enlightenment by studying the lamrim, by trying to

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<sup>3</sup> See this verse: *To the Kadam Män Ngagpa Lineage (Pith Instruction)* in the *FPMT Retreat Prayer Book*.

understand not just some parts of the lamrim but the entire lamrim from beginning to the end, to have a complete understanding. Then to study the words and meanings well and put that into practice in order to transform our mental continuum into something different, different from the old mind that we have had from beginningless rebirths with all the old concepts. To have a change in this life to something new, that which not only liberates us from the entire suffering and its causes, but, with this new mind, with these realizations, we can create all the happiness up to enlightenment and be able to free all other sentient beings from all their suffering and its causes, even the subtle defilements, and bring them to the peerless, ultimate happiness, full enlightenment.

Then, even if we don't have intellectual capacity for the entire elaborate lamrim, we can practice something shorter, something that has all the essence—the instructions received from the guru, or the meditation techniques. We can learn them and put them into practice, and in that way try to have realizations of the path to enlightenment. So, we can also do like the Kadampa geshe, according to our own capacity, our own level of intelligence.

However, the essence is the extensive scriptures. Whether we are able to study the extensive scriptures or the extensive lamrim or just something that is the essence, the meditation instructions received from the guru, something shorter than the extensive lamrim teachings, whichever way we do it, the main goal is to have realizations of the path to enlightenment, to achieve enlightenment in order to do perfect work for other sentient beings without the slightest mistake, to be able to guide other sentient beings without any mistakes. That is the ultimate goal, the reason we meditate, the reason we practice the Dharma. The ultimate goal is to be able to help others, to be able to do perfect work for others by having completed the knowledge, not just intellectually understanding but especially having the realization that also includes having perfect power and having completed the mind training and compassion for others.

If our mind has mistakes, if we have defilements, we cannot help others, we cannot benefit others, we cannot do perfect work for others without any mistakes. If our mind has mistakes, when we try to help others, there's always the possibility of making mistakes. When we are not fully qualified with all the realizations, as I mentioned in brief, and we want to help others, without being an arya being with the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, we can make a lot of mistakes when we help others. We might think we are helping but actually we're harming them.

Different things can also happen, as we can tell from our past experiences. Therefore, if we really want to help others, there is no choice.

I'm not going to expand on this. I'll finish the prayer first.

### **ATTACHMENT IS EXPENSIVE**

As we just went through with karma, you can understand that of course we can help by giving money to other people, by giving a house, medicine, shelter, food, clothing to others. That's good but even the pleasure and comfort they get from that is just temporary, for a very short time. It doesn't really solve their problems, which are within their mind, because that help alone is external help. That we can do that, that alone is good because they are suffering—they are hungry, cold, hot or whatever, with many problems—but we cannot just be satisfied with that because it doesn't really solve the cause of the suffering, the cause of all their problems. That alone doesn't purify the cause of the problems now and in the future, which is their mind. The cause of their problems is within them; it is their mind, their wrong concepts, their wrong way of thinking.

There is ignorance, anger, attachment, self-cherishing thought, all these delusions. I think yesterday and this morning you went through the delusions, you went through the exhibition of the delusions! I think Venerable guided you in sightseeing the delusions! Normally, we only do sightseeing of the objects of delusions, but here, now, in the Kopan course, we do sightseeing of your mind, like we are making a pilgrimage of your mind. Anyway, this morning, we're doing a sightseeing of the delusions, which is extremely important.

We have a museum. Our mind is a museum of delusions! A huge museum, a very old museum; it has a lot of antiques, antiques from beginningless rebirths. Attachment is very antique, very precious, attachment is from beginningless rebirths, and ignorance, anger, jealousy, pride—all these delusions! It's a very big museum filled with antiques that have no beginning.

Other outside antiques have beginnings. No matter how old they might be, they began at a certain time. But these antiques, all these delusions, have no time when they began. These antique delusions and antique sufferings have continued from past lives, from time without beginning, so they are very, very antique sufferings.

These sufferings are very expensive. All these delusions are the most expensive because they have existed from time without beginning. From beginningless rebirths, they have been the most expensive, the most harmful. We think that antiques that have existed for many thousands of years cost more money. But here I'm saying delusions are the most expensive.

[A plane flies overhead] Again, the pilot is teaching patience.

Why is attachment very expensive? Because of attachment, there are so many things we need in life. "I want this, I want that, I want this...." There are so many things we need. The stronger the attachment, the more things we need in life. Buying all these things for our attachment is very costly, very expensive. Attachment creates problems in life, then that makes life very expensive. It causes sicknesses that make us have operations. Attachment causes us to do nonvirtuous actions and creates worries and fears, creating many negative karmas which result in many court cases and so much money. Court cases and operations make life so expensive.

Because it makes life so expensive, because there are so many things attachment needs, it makes life even busier; there are more jobs we have to do. All these things done for attachment are very expensive!

Anyway, maybe we'll stop there. There's the *Requesting Prayer to the Lineage Lamas*.

What I was trying to say was the way the three groups of Kadampa practitioners studied the Dharma and achieved realizations of the path was according to their capacity. Similarly, we can do it that way, according to our capacity.

I'll stop the prayer there, then do the refuge, the short mandala and the bodhicitta prayer with the meditation.

[Rinpoche recites the prayers]

## **HELPING OTHERS MATERIALLY IS NOT ENOUGH**

Regarding benefiting others, serving others, there are four levels. Before, when I was talking, I got lost. I was talking about this point, about helping others with food and clothing, money, shelter and so forth, those external things.

That is good. They need that because they have problems, but it doesn't do anything for the cause of life's problems which is within them, which is their own mind. It doesn't do anything to change their wrong concepts, that which causes all their problems, from where all these problems come. It doesn't reduce or change anything from where the problem comes.

Disharmony, such as relationship problems, where a person doesn't get along with others, where they always cause disharmony and problems for others through the self-centered mind, the ego, it doesn't change that, it doesn't do anything to that. That is always there. Anger is always there, jealousy, abusing others, killing others, destroying others' wealth, stealing and so forth—harming others is always there. That doesn't change.

It especially does nothing to change the negative imprint from where these delusions arise, the seed that is planted on the mental continuum. These external things might help somebody for a short time, bringing some comfort, some pleasure, but it does nothing to really change the root of the problem because it doesn't do anything to their mind to reduce their delusions, to reduce those wrong concepts. It doesn't do anything for the negative imprints that constantly give birth to the delusions, that produce delusions. It doesn't do anything to the negative imprint.

External help alone doesn't purify even their negative karma. As I mentioned last night, those external things alone don't purify their negative karma. As long as nothing touches the negative karma, as long as the negative karma is there, the problems, sicknesses such as cancer, poverty, no food, no water, drought, earthquakes—all these problems will happen again and again and again and again, because nothing is done to destroy the negative karma, the cause of the problems. Without talking about delusions, without talking about negative imprints, nothing is done to change the negative karma.

Even with cancer, somebody can recover from cancer this time through surgery or by somebody with healing power doing healing, but it will come back again, because the cause is still there. That person's negative karma to experience cancer is still there; it has not finished. Therefore, it

comes back again, if not in this life in a future life. That's why even though many people are completely cured of cancer through surgery or radiation or whatever, it comes back again and again. And that's only talking about this life, so if you think about other lives, it can occur in their next life.

As long as we don't do anything with the negative karma, the same problem will happen again and again, such as the floods that leave many homeless in places like Africa.

There's a very good example in America. There are many well-developed cities but one day the bad weather, a tornado comes, the result of negative karma. It might be happening in other countries but when I watch TV it shows a lot about America, about the bad weather in America. I'm sure it's happening in other places, but it seems to be happening so much in America. Those many well-developed cities are suddenly completely destroyed one day by a tornado or hurricane. What's the other one? [Students prompt] Cyclone.

Anyway, weather reporters cannot predict much ahead of time that there will be a tornado in this place to tell them to run away. So the people are there, and then [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] just one day all the houses are blown away and so many people have to hide under the cupboard or die.

Suddenly there's a total change in the city that looked so permanent, so inherently existent, so independent. It appeared like that but it's not true. Due to another cause and conditions, it becomes nonexistent. Then, even if they survive or just some die or are in hospital, all the families become completely scattered.

So, it's not only in Africa where these things are experienced; they're even experienced in the wealthiest countries. Change suddenly happens because there's a cause for it to happen, because there's a cause in the mind of the people, there's a cause on their mental continuum, because a negative karma—a cause—has not been purified. Now that it's ready, it's easy to experience, like a seed in the ground that is ready to sprout. Like that, it's experienced out.

When things have already happened and things have been destroyed, the government has to spend many billions and billions of dollars. All this is a result of negative karma.

We should attempt, wherever possible, to help by giving food and money, shelter, medicine and so forth. Giving to others, causing them the happiness of this life, is good and whatever we can, we should attempt. Happiness is what they need. They need happiness that is not only for today, not only for this life, but also in their future lives. In all their coming future lives, they need happiness. So, causing others the happiness of all the coming future lives is a more important service than the first one, only giving them the comfort of this life. Causing them comfort or happiness of all the coming future lives is a much more important service. This is the second way to make your life beneficial for others.

### **THE BEST HELP IS TO EDUCATE IN VIRTUE**

Then, the next one is to make it impossible for the sentient beings to ever experience suffering by ceasing completely the cause of the suffering, karma and delusion. To do that means causing them to attain ultimate happiness, everlasting happiness, because it involves ceasing completely the cause of the suffering including the seeds of delusion, the imprints. It becomes impossible for delusions to arise by ceasing the seed of delusions, the imprints. In that way, we can cause sentient beings to be free forever from the suffering, making it impossible for them to experience suffering again.

This service to others is extremely important; it is more important than even the second one.

Now, the most important service we can offer, more important than the others, is to bring sentient beings to full enlightenment, being liberated from even the subtle defilements and having completed all the qualities of the realizations—in other words, the completion of all the qualities of cessation and the completion of all the qualities of realizations. In that way, we bring all sentient beings to this peerless happiness, where there is nothing higher; there is no higher bliss or happiness to experience, it's completed.

Bringing sentient beings to full enlightenment is the most important service among all the services; it is the one that gives the highest bliss, the highest peace, the complete peace.

How can we make all this happiness happen for all sentient beings, from the happiness of future lives all the way up to liberation from samsara and full enlightenment? It involves dealing directly with their mind.



To do this, we must communicate with their mind. All this happiness comes from them changing their mind. Even the Buddha cannot transplant his realizations into others' minds. This is not the way the Buddha guides sentient beings. There is a saying,

The Great Ones do not wash away sin with water;  
They do not rid beings of suffering with their hands;  
They do not transfer realizations of suchness onto others.  
They liberate by teaching the truth of suchness.

He cannot liberate sentient beings by washing their negative karma with water, not in that way. Water cannot wash away the cause of sufferings, all the delusions, negative karma. And it's not like taking the thorns out of the body with the hands—the Buddha cannot liberate sentient beings from suffering and the cause of suffering in that way. He does not transplant his own realizations into others, like transplanting somebody else's heart into a human being's heart. The way the Buddha liberates sentient beings is by revealing the truth, only by revealing the truth, by showing the truth, by showing the path. Revealing the Dharma, teaching the Dharma to other sentient beings, that's the highest guidance.

All this happiness—the happiness of future lives up to enlightenment—must come from their minds. Therefore, how we do that is to cause them to stop their negative actions; we cause them to change their negative mind, their delusions, their wrong concepts, by giving them education, Dharma education, by helping them to understand. By teaching them karma, we teach them what is the real unmistakable cause of happiness and what is the real unmistakable cause of suffering, because sentient beings have totally the wrong idea of what the cause of happiness is.

With no understanding at all of what the real cause of happiness and suffering is, they have totally the wrong idea, the wrong philosophy of what the cause of happiness and suffering is. Because of that, they constantly create the cause of suffering, believing with that philosophy that they will achieve happiness, but what they experience is only suffering now and in future lives. The result is only suffering, only to be born in samsara and to die, continuously, causing them to circle all the time, non-stop. It has no beginning; its causes have been endless and because of that, they must experience all the sufferings again and again in each realm. As the sentient beings

reincarnate into each realm, they experience all the sufferings again and again. The philosophy they believe in as the cause of happiness is only the cause of suffering.

By giving them the education of the mind, by giving them the education of the Dharma, karma, by educating them in what is really the unmistakable cause of happiness and the unmistakable cause of suffering, from where all the problems come, by making them understand karma, the cause of happiness and the cause of suffering, the shortcomings of self-cherishing thought and the benefits of cherishing others—this is the basic education of the mind.

Then, we can cause them to live in the vows, in the precepts, which means not engaging in negative karmas, negative actions that harm others and that harms themselves. By living in the precepts, they engage in good karma that brings happiness to themselves, that causes happiness to others. And we can give them the education of the good heart, especially bodhicitta.

By showing them, by educating them in the whole path to liberation and enlightenment, by causing them not only to understand but practice and transform their mind into the path of method and wisdom, we are able to cause them happiness in all their coming future lives, we are able to cause them liberation from samsara, we are able to cause them to achieve enlightenment.

#### **WITHOUT POSITIVE KARMA THERE CAN BE NO HAPPINESS**

All this has to come from them. All this happiness has to come from their minds. That's why, as long as we don't educate them to change their actions and to change their mind, nothing happens. None of this happiness up to enlightenment happens, just as, from the ground where no seed has been planted, no seed has been cultivated, there are no conditions for anything to grow.

The crop that we want to enjoy doesn't come just by having the ground alone. It doesn't come without having cultivated the seed in the ground, fertilizing the ground, making the conditions come together. Then, we can get crops we can enjoy. We cannot get crops with just empty ground, without all this. Similarly, without dealing with their mind, without helping to change their actions and mind, none of this happiness of future lives up to enlightenment will happen.

For sentient beings to even receive help—to receive shelter, money, food, clothing, treatment and so forth—even to receive this help, to have these comforts, these pleasures of this life, even this has to come from their mind. Only if they have the merit, the good karma collected in the past to receive this help, will this happen. Only those who have created the karma will receive help because it depends on good karma. They receive that help because of their good karma, which is the positive intention, the virtuous intention they created in the past.

From their side, if they don't have the merit, good karma, there will always obstacles, no matter how much we might want to help them. For example, some years ago when there were millions of people starving to death in southern Africa, people from many countries wanted to help and flew so much food into that country to give to the people. But what happened, the poor people themselves got little because it was taken away by others, by the leaders and powerful people. Even though there was outside support, with many people wanting to give, and even though everything was taken there, there were still obstacles for the common people to get it.

And then also there was no water due to drought. I don't know which country this was, but airplanes brought water in, and by the time the airplanes arrived in that country, the water had become totally undrinkable. The water had completely changed, becoming totally smelly, undrinkable.

This is similar to the suffering of the hungry ghosts. From the distance, they see a waterfall or a water fountain, very nice water, blue or green. They feel so much desire because they have been unable to find drink, even a drop of water, even the wetness on the ground, for hundreds of thousands of years. The suffering of hunger and thirst is billions and billions of times worse than we could ever have. Due to their heavy negative karma, their suffering is much greater. This goes on and on and they don't die, because of heavy negative karma. Their karma is to live for such an incredibly long time and experience such heavy suffering.

So, when they see this water, their desire becomes unbelievably strong. But then the karmic guardians stop them, blocking them from going to where the water is. And even if there are no karmic guardians frightening them, blocking them, their bodies must endure so much suffering, like a very old man whose body has degenerated and finds it so difficult to walk. Even leaning on a stick it's extremely difficult to walk. His body feels very heavy; it's even difficult to get up or sit down, not like us where it is very easy.

The limbs of the hungry ghost are so tiny and their belly is so huge, like a mountain range, due to their karma, so every move is so difficult, so exhausting, like an old man trying to walk. The idea that I have tried to give is that it is so exhausting because their limbs are so tiny and weak, then even if they finally reach the place after all that effort, there is no water. And even if there is water, it's filled with garbage.

This has come from their mind. There is no inherently existent garbage or pus and blood; this has come from their negative karma; it's a projection of their negative karma, their untamed mind, delusion. That is similar to the people in the drought who got water from outside. As soon as it arrived at the airport, the water became completely undrinkable.

Because I talked about how all those other [situations] have come from their mind, by changing their actions into virtuous actions and changing their minds, such as living in the vows and abandoning negative karma, in that way all happiness up to enlightenment also comes from their own minds.

Because I mentioned that, I mentioned that even *this* life's happiness—even receiving support in this life and having pleasure and comfort—even that has to come from their own minds, from the merit, the good karma, collected from the past.

The reason I was telling this story is, from their side if they haven't created the cause, the merit to receive this support, to experience comfort and pleasure, if from their side they haven't the merit, good karma, then it doesn't happen. Even talking about receiving help and experiencing pleasure in this life, that has to come from the Dharma. Even this life's pleasure has to come from their virtuous actions, from good karma, from virtuous thoughts, which is the Dharma.

#### **FOUR THINGS NEEDED FOR SUCCESS**

In order to offer service to others, from the happiness of this life and of all the coming future lives all the way to liberation from samsara and full enlightenment, to do perfect work for other sentient beings without any mistakes, first we ourselves should achieve enlightenment. For that, we need to actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment.

For *that*, we need to do the listening, reflecting and meditating on the graduated path to enlightenment, and then to have the realizations of the path to enlightenment.

For all these to be successful, that depends on four things:

1. The practice of purification
2. The practice of collecting merit
3. The practice of guru devotion
4. The actual meditation on the path

First, we need to do the practice of purification, purifying the obstacles, the defilements, the negative karmas, that interfere with generating the realizations of the path to enlightenment. We need to purify these negative karmas, these defilements, that block the realizations from happening. The need for purification is vital.

Then, we need the practice of collecting merits, that are the necessary conditions for realizations.

Then, there is guru devotion, single-pointedly requesting the guru with guru devotion by looking at the guru as a buddha, from our own side seeing the inseparability of the guru and buddha. Guru devotion causes us to receive blessings within our mind and those blessings cause us to have realizations, to experience the path to enlightenment.

Then, there is the actual meditating on the path, that plants on our mental continuum the seeds of realizations, the meditation making us familiar, transforming the mind into the path.

Therefore, for all this success we need to do these four things: purifying, collecting merit, single-pointedly requesting the guru with guru devotion and the actual meditation on the path.

In our daily life we should practice guru yoga, whether it's a short version or a long one, a version that has all the important points of the practice. I think the Guru Shakyamuni Buddha Guru Yoga is excellent. I thought to give the *lung* of that today, but it's not here.

Condensed in the preliminary practice, there's a lamrim prayer that was composed by Lama Tsongkhapa, which has all the essence of the path. The guru yoga practice that is also lamrim

prayer has the essential practices that I mentioned, with these four things. We should practice at least something short like this every day. Based on something like this, we can elaborate our meditation on the lamrim by using other texts, other longer versions or commentaries, by using our understanding of the lamrim, our own experiences. We can use that to meditate on, to transform our mind into the path to enlightenment like that.

### **THE FIVE TYPES OF DEFEATS IN BREAKING VOWS**

Since the book is not here, I'll just advertise it! Maybe I'll go over the benefits of reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas' names and maybe give some talk on prostration.

I mentioned that even for the fully ordained person there are five divisions or defeats, which, when they arise, make you fall down. There are five divisions.

If you receive a lighter defeat or vice, it is said that one result is the first hell realm, Being Alive Again and Again, where whatever you touch becomes a weapon and then other sentient beings who see you all become your enemy and you attack each other. Many hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of weapons go through your body in just one day. So many pierce the body and you die, but again become alive. This happens many times like this. This is the first hell realm, if you receive this vice.

The next one is the vice that makes you fall down into the lower realm. If you receive that vice, you are reborn in the next hell realm, the black line hell or the gathered and crushed hell. Here you are crushed between the karmic appearance of two mountains in the shape of the heads of the animals, the sentient beings, you have killed. This happens so many times for an incredible length of time. As I mentioned, it is an unimaginable length of time that you have to suffer.

Then, individual confession [?], if this vice is received it causes you to be born in the hell realm called crying. Then, for the remainder, if you received that, that makes you be born in the hell realms called hot and extremely hot.

Then, if you break the root vows and receive the defeat, you are reborn in the lowest hell, the inexhaustible hell, which has the heaviest suffering among the hell realms in samsara, and then you have to suffer for an inconceivable length of time, for one intermediate eon.

Those who are living in the thirty-six vows don't actually receive the full defeat like that, but it is similar to that if they break the root vows. Breaking these vows, the result is the same in the hell realms.

And then, by having taken the bodhisattva vows, it is said that even if the secondary vows are broken, the negative karma is a hundred thousand times heavier than breaking the pratimoksha root vows. And if you break a secondary tantric vow, that is a hundred thousand times heavier than breaking the bodhisattva root vow. In regard to how heavy the negative karma is, it is like that.

It is mentioned that a person living in ordination, whether it's as a monk or a nun, being careless of the vows, thinking, "Oh, it doesn't matter," even with a small vice, it's much heavier than a lay person killing a hundred horses and a hundred human beings.

I think this is explained by Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo. It relates to countries like Mongolia where there are a lot of horses. Everywhere there are horses, probably more than people in Mongolia! I think in Tibet, too, people use a lot of horses. I think it is related to that. So, if a monk or nun living in ordination commits even a small vice, if they think, "Oh, it doesn't matter," if they are careless, this is heavier than a lay person killing a hundred horses and a hundred human beings. That is to give an idea of how heavy it is, after having taken ordination, if you are careless about those small vices, not feeling regret, not feeling sorry.

As I explained last night, for a lay person, by thinking of the definition of negative karma, and those particular negative karmas from the ten nonvirtuous actions, if we analyze how many of those we have committed, analyzing them one by one, even just what we can remember in this life, then there are so many we can't remember in this life and especially from past lives.

With a person living in ordination, by going over the vows and precepts that we have taken, we can understand how many of them we have broken and how many times they have been broken. Therefore, when we think about whether we will achieve a human rebirth in the next life or not, if we were to die now, if we were to die today, within this hour, would we definitely get a good human rebirth to practice Dharma to benefit others?

If we question ourselves, for many of us it becomes difficult to say that we will definitely achieve a human rebirth in the next life with full confidence in our heart. We cannot be fully confident that, were we to die now, today, this hour, we would definitely achieve a human rebirth. It's difficult to tell. It's difficult because it's difficult to find a vow that has been kept purely.

Therefore, besides realizations, just even to be a human being again, if death were to happen this hour, most of us would have no confidence, it would be difficult to say. I think there would be more the feeling that we would be reborn in the lower realms because of all those additional causes, those negative karmas collected, that are the cause of the lower realms.

Therefore, the practice of purification becomes extremely urgent. It becomes very important in everyday life.

### **THE BENEFITS OF PROSTRATING TO THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS**

It is said in the lamrim teachings composed by Geshe Gyaltzen that Lama Tsongkhapa, before he went to bed, recited the 'Thirty-five Buddhas' names thirty-five times. Then, with a very comfortable mind, he went to bed.

It is said in that lamrim teaching that if a very pure ordained person does this practice before the day finishes and then goes to bed, in this way they have already purified the negative karma collected that day; it doesn't continue into the next day. This is for a pure *gelong* practitioner, one living in the full ordination. Then the vows are pure.

Each year, in the hermitage cave in Wolka [Cholung] in Tibet, Lama Tsongkhapa did many hundreds of thousands of prostrations with this prayer, reciting the 'Thirty-five Buddhas' names, and due to this, he had so many realizations of the path to enlightenment. It is very common in Lama Tsongkhapa's tradition, in the lineage lamas' practices, that many gurus including my own gurus, do prostrations with recitation of the 'Thirty-five Buddhas' names, even when they have taken the aspect of old age.

Because this is very much the practice of the lineage lamas of Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings on the lamrim, we can understand from the benefit of prostrating and reciting the 'Thirty-five Buddha's names, how important this practice is, how extremely beneficial it is in our life.



In Lama Tsongkhapa's life story, I didn't see so much about practicing the Vajrasattva mantra, even though that is a very common practice in the four Mahayana traditions, but there is so much mention of Lama Tsongkhapa doing prostrations by reciting the 'Thirty-five Buddhas' names. So I asked one of my gurus, Denma Locho Rinpoche, one of the high lamas who lives in Dharamsala, below His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Rinpoche said that's because if we do this practice of the Thirty-five Buddhas just once, reciting this prayer just once, it has the power to purify even the very heavy karma of having killed our father or mother and those who have been very kind to us in this life, particularly our parents who, according to the Dharma, are extremely kind, precious, objects of respect. We can even purify having killed our father and mother or having killed a holy being, an arhat, somebody liberated from the cause of suffering, karma and delusion, or having harmed a buddha, causing blood to flow from the body of a buddha, or having caused disunity among the Sangha—even those heavy negative karmas. If we split the Sangha group into two, causing disunity among them, that is very heavy.

Normally, if we commit one of these heavy negative karmas, right after death, we immediately experience the result of this negative karma in the hell realms, such as the inexhaustible hot hell, the heaviest hell realm. But just by practicing this well, even just by reciting it once, it has that power to purify all these very heavy five uninterrupted negative karmas. They are called uninterrupted because, without the interruption of another life, we are immediately reborn in the hell realm. This practice purifies this. Rinpoche explained that that is why in Lama Tsongkhapa's life story it says how he did this practice many hundreds of thousands of times.

### **THE MEANING OF THE NAMES OF THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS**

As I mentioned yesterday, it is said in the texts that by reciting the first buddha's name [Shakyamuni Buddha], it purifies 80,000 eons' negative karma. Some texts say 40,000 eons' negative karma. However, many eons of negative karma get purified by reciting the first buddha's name. I would rather choose a big number, so we can say 80,000 eons' negative karma are purified.

Then, by reciting the next one, *De zhin shog pa dor je nying pö rab tu jom pa la chbag tshäl lo*, [To Tathagata Thoroughly Destroying with Vajra Essence, I prostrate], it purifies 10,000 eons' negative karma.

Then next one is *De zhin sbeg pa rin chben ö thrö la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Radiant Jewel, I prostrate]. [One of the commentaries is by] Gyaltsab Je, Lama Tsongkhapa's elder disciple, who became the regent of Lama Tsongkhapa. With Lama Tsongkhapa's statue, usually on the left and right there are his two heart disciples, one is called Khedrup Je Rinpoche, and the other, looking a bit older, is Gyaltsab Je. According to his commentary, reciting *Rin chben ö thrö la* purifies 31,000 eons of negative karma.

Then, the next one is *De zhin sbeg pa lu wang gi gyäl po la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata King, Lord of the Nagas, I prostrate]. Reciting this purifies 1,000 eons' negative karma. There's one text that says 1,000 whereas another text, I think maybe Gyaltsab Je's, says eight eons' negative karma.

This one has so many benefits. I've seen in a sutra that this one has unbelievable benefits. Reciting this name twenty-one times, even the heavy negative karma that we are definitely going to experience in this life will be purified. The suffering that we will definitely experience in this life gets purified by reciting the name of the Naga King, *Lu wang gi gyäl po*, twenty-one times.

I don't remember the whole thing but there are so many benefits, especially [protection against] leprosy and any epidemics and contagious diseases, the infections that spread throughout the body, those ones that are to do with nagas, those sicknesses where there is the additional condition, where other beings are conditions for these sicknesses. Cancer is also to do with the nagas; it is conditioned by nagas. We get so much infection in our body. Any problem with the skin, such as ulcers inside or outside infections, is to do with nagas. And also many times problems with the bones, such as in the arms or the back, are also related to the nagas.

Reciting this Buddha's name is extremely powerful for healing because in the past, during the time [the Buddha was a] bodhisattva before he became enlightened, so many nagas were sick, and this bodhisattva benefited them so much; he healed so many nagas who were sick. Then, because of this truth that he benefited the nagas, he dedicated that when he became enlightened, anybody who recited his name could be cured of all these diseases caused by nagas.

Whether there is medicine or not, especially when there's no cure, when a disease is caused by nagas, reciting this Buddha's name, how much we get healed or how much we can heal others depends so much on how much faith we have. With full confidence, with trust in this Buddha,

we recite this to heal others. By praying, we are also telling the nagas that this Buddha benefited them so much in the past, therefore they should now help, they should not harm this person.

We can recite the Naga king's name, *Lu wang gi gyäl po*, many times. The person we are trying to help can recite—of course that is very good—but *we* can recite, in order to heal them. Of course, if the other person recites, that is very good, but here I'm talking about reciting the name of some sick person. It is explained in the teachings, in the sutra by the Buddha, that *Lu wang gi gyäl po* has so much benefit. It can definitely be used for cancer and all these life-threatening diseases, diseases like arthritis that change the whole body, that also have to do with nagas.

Next is *De zhin sheg pa pa wöi de la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Army of Heroes, I prostrate]. This purifies all the negative karmas collected with the speech, I think. One text says 1,000 eons of negative karma is purified.

And then, *De zhin sheg pa päi gye la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Delighted Hero, I prostrate]. One text says that reciting this purifies 2,000 eons of negative karma. In Gyaltsab Je's teaching, it says the negative karma collected with the mind is purified.

Then *De zhin sheg pa rin chben me la chag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Jewel Fire, I prostrate]. This next one purifies 2,000 eons of negative karma as well as the pollution of the Sangha, the negative karma of using the things that belong to the Sangha, such as their food and things.

Even for the Sangha, by living in the monastery, even if they keep the vows purely, or study hard or do whatever service the monastery requires well, it's OK; it doesn't become a heavy negative karma. But without any of this, especially not keeping their vows purely, such as taking food that belongs to Sangha and so forth, it becomes great pollution, it becomes heavy negative karma.

Reciting this name purifies this negative karma, this pollution. Whoever has received these negative karmas, ordained or lay, including negative karmas like killing one's father and mother or an arhat, or causing harm to the Buddha, even though that didn't happen in this life, these various negative karmas have happened in the past lives. We cannot remember what karmas we have created from beginningless rebirths. Even so, because there is a possibility we have created them in many other lifetimes, we need to purify them.

Then *De zhin shog pa rin chhen da ö la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Jewel Moonlight, I prostrate]. This purifies 8,000 eons of negative karma. One text says 8,000 eons and another says 1,000 eons.

Then the next one is *De zhin shog pa thong wa dön yö la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Meaningful to See, I prostrate]. Reciting this purifies the negative karmas of having criticized an arya being, which means those beings who have the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, who have the realization of the true path and the true cessation of suffering, those arya paths.

And also, since we don't have clairvoyance, we don't have full knowledge to be able to read others' minds, to be able to understand others' level of mind, we cannot tell who is a buddha and who is not a buddha, who is an arya being and who is not an arya being. Since we cannot see the realizations that are in others' minds, it is difficult to tell. So, there's always a possibility when we criticize other people, we are criticizing holy beings, even though to society they are not known as holy beings.

Then, the next one is *De zhin shog pa rin chhen da wa la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Jewel Moon, I prostrate]. In general this Buddha purifies all those very heavy five uninterrupted negative karmas and in particular having killed your mother.

*De zhin shog pa dri ma me pa la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Stainless One, I prostrate]. This one purifies not the actual five uninterrupted negative karmas but the five *near* uninterrupted negative karmas, which are a little less heavy, but it also purifies having killed your father.

And then next one, *De zhin shog pa päl jin la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Bestowed with Courage, I prostrate], purifies the negative karma of having killed somebody, particularly an arhat. It also says it purifies negative karmas created with anger.

Then next one, *De zhin shog pa tshang pa la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Pure One, I prostrate] purifies the negative karmas collected with attachment. Any negative karmas done out of attachment are purified. It says in the Gyaltsab Je's commentary that it purifies having killed an arhat, which was already mentioned in the previous Buddha's name.

Reciting *De zhin shog pa tshang pä jin la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Bestowed with Purity, I prostrate] purifies negative karmas collected with the attachment. In the commentary of Gyaltsab

Je, it says it purifies negative karmas that cause disunity among the Sangha. This is regarded as a very heavy thing to do.

In *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* it is mentioned that having criticized the Sangha or causing disunity among the Sangha is very, very heavy negative karma. It says that for whatever the length of time [you have created the negative karma], you have to be born in the hell realm due to these karmas created with the Sangha. Those who have read *Liberation of the Palm of Your Hand* [pp. 138–143] by Pabongka Rinpoche completely might remember. It's mentioned there.

Reciting this Buddha's name purifies misdeeds like using things that belong to the Sangha without permission, using them for your own purpose. An example is sometimes using even the ashes from the kitchen fire or brooms from the Sangha kitchen, using them for your own purpose without asking permission. So, there is no question about using money that belongs to the Sangha. This is talking about not using it for the benefit of the Sangha but using it for yourself without permission.

That's why when I do the refuge prayer—not every time but usually—I add an additional mala of taking refuge in the Sangha than in the Buddha and Dharma, because the karma is very heavy so during refuge practice we can purify by counting more “*Namo sanghaya*” or “*Ge diin la kyab su chhi o.*” The purpose is that.

Of course, anything negative done in connection to the Guru is the heaviest one.

I'll just go straight from here. *De zhin sheg pa chhu lha la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Water God, I prostrate] purifies 10,000 eons of negative karmas as well as the negative karma caused by harming a buddha, by drawing blood from a buddha. That gets purified.

*De zhin sheg pa chhu lhäi lha la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Deity of the Water God, I prostrate] purifies a particular heavy negative karma, talking about the mistakes of an arhat. It purifies 5,000 eons of negative karma and the particular negative karma of having killed a bodhisattva, those heavy negative karmas.

If we look at somebody who has a bodhicitta realization, who not even for one second has the thought of seeking happiness for themselves, but only ever has the thought of seeking happiness

for others, of working for others, only the thought of cherishing other sentient beings, who has that realization, constantly, naturally, spontaneously feeling it from the heart, who has totally transformed the mind, we call that person a bodhisattva. So, we can understand just how heavy the negative karma is of killing a bodhisattva.

If we look at a bodhisattva with a negative, disrespectful manner, what's the word, glaring—if we glare angrily at a bodhisattva like this, the negative karma is heavier than having taken the eyeballs out of all the sentient beings of the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm. I think that means looking with a negative thought, I don't think it's just in a joking manner but seriously doing it with a negative thought. Anyway, this negative karma of glaring at a bodhisattva in that disrespectful manner is much heavier than taking out the eyeballs of all the sentient beings of the three realms—the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm—so if we actually killed a bodhisattva, there is no question how heavy that would be.

Why is it so heavy? Because it is extremely rare to generate this bodhicitta, this selfless non-egoistic attitude that leaves behind seeking happiness for oneself. This attitude is something so precious; it is most wish-fulfilling. It gives happiness to all sentient beings.

The next one is *De zhin shog pa pääl zang la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Glorious Goodness, I prostrate]. This one purifies 5,000 eons of negative karma, particularly the negative karma of having killed the guru, your own spiritual master. There is no question how heavy having killed your own spiritual master is, but that very heavy negative karma is purified by reciting this Buddha's name.

*De zhin shog pa tsän dän pääl la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Glorious Sandalwood, I prostrate] purifies 7,000 eons of negative karma, it says.

I don't know whether I mentioned before or not but *chbu lha la* is 10,000; *chbu lhäi lha la* is 5,000 and *pääl zang la* is 5,000—all these numbers mean eons, not years.

*Tsän dän pääl la* purifies 7,000 eons of negative karma. The particular negative karma it purifies is that, if you are a manager of a monastery, a manager of the Sangha, you don't offer whatever people offer to the Sangha—offerings, food, money, clothing, whatever—due to miserliness. You stop the offerings getting to the Sangha. Say, somebody wants to offer something to the

Sangha, you tell them that they don't need it, that the Sangha are too rich, or you say something like, "This Sangha doesn't practice" or "This Sangha is lazy so don't make an offering," or something like that. Anyway, I'm just making up a story. The other person had already decided to offer something but you stop them. That is very heavy negative karma.

*Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* mentions that the benefactor is offering butter because in Tibet they make tea with butter. Tibetan tea means with salt and butter, so usually benefactors make lots of butter offerings to the monastery. Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo, the great enlightened being, used the example of the benefactor offering butter to the Sangha, then cutting one slice of the butter, like when you cut cheese, thinking, "Oh, they don't need this." The benefactor has already offered to the Sangha in their mind, but then you say, "This is too much. They don't need that much." Even stopping the benefactor offering one slice of butter they have already mentally offered to the Sangha becomes a very heavy negative karma.

Normally managers or the head of monasteries, if they don't know karma well, especially all these details in the section on refuge, how all these negative karmas can be created with the Sangha, for them there is great danger of committing so many heavy negative karmas, either wanting to take away [what belongs to the Sangha] or stopping benefactors making offerings to the Sangha they have already [mentally] offered. With this Buddha, these heavy negative karmas are purified.

With *De zhin shog pa zhi ji tha ya la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Infinite Splendor, I prostrate], 7,000 eons of negative karma are purified. The particular negative karma purified is destroying a stupa. Stupas represent the Buddha's holy mind, so whether it's big or small, making one stupa directs your life toward enlightenment. Building one stupa becomes unbelievable purification and you collect unimaginable merits. The particular negative karma of destroying this holy object is purified by reciting this Buddha's name.

Then *De zhin shog pa ö päi la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Glorious Light, I prostrate] purifies negative karmas collected with hatred. We get infinite benefit, merit.

Reciting *De zhin shog pa nya ngän me päi päi la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Sorrowless Glory, I prostrate] purifies negative karma collected with attachment. There are so many actions done out of attachment. That's where most of our life goes. We live our life with attachment and, because

of that, most of the actions are done with attachment, which create negative karma. Those negative karmas are purified by reciting this Buddha's name. Another text says it also purifies negative karma collected with ignorance.

*De zhin shog pa se me kyi bu la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Son of Non-Craving, I prostrate] purifies 10,000 eons of negative karma and, as well as that, the negative imprints are purified.

### **WHAT'S MORE TERRIFYING, HELL OR CREATING NEGATIVE IMPRINTS?**

I sometimes ask what is more terrifying, hell or creating negative imprints? From my analysis, the most terrifying thing is not hell, not the suffering of hell, but the negative imprints we have on our mental continuum. If this is there, hell comes from that. All the problems in the six realms, all the sufferings of samsara come from this negative imprint. All our human beings' problems come from this negative imprint.

If there's no cause, if there is no negative imprint, how is it possible in this life to experience the suffering result created in a previous life? How is it possible? No way.

Even though physically there's a break from the past life's body and this life's body, there's a continuation of the consciousness. Why do we have to suffer in this life? Why do we have to experience problems in this life? Since birth, why do we have to experience suffering, pain and undesirable feelings?

There are the negative imprints left on the mental continuum. A child can have a naturally compassionate attitude, without having been taught by anybody how to develop compassion. Without being taught by anybody, the child has so much compassion for people and animals. When somebody beats another person or kills an insect, the child can't stand it; they cry so much.

This happens because in their past life they practiced compassion. Their mind became habituated to it, it became trained in compassion. Then, the positive imprints left on the mental continuum mean that in this life, their mind naturally does the same thing, feeling compassion for others. Even from birth, from childhood, they naturally do that, without being educated by somebody to do it. It comes from the side of the child.



It's the same with a child who is so impatient or so selfish from early childhood, who immediately wants to kill when they see insects or who wants to harm others, who has a very angry nature or is very selfish. In their past life they have become habituated to that attitude and the negative imprints are left on the mental continuum. The mental continuum carries these imprints in this life, which are experienced out. From these negative imprints arise jealousy, anger, selfishness, all these things.

That's why I say that the negative imprints are much more terrifying than the hell realm. We experience the hell realm once and then it is finished. Its duration is according to karma; there's a certain amount of time, and then it is finished. It's not forever.

Even though Christianity mentions forever, logically it's not forever. We experience the karma, then by experiencing it, the karma finishes. When the karma finishes, we are over that suffering.

Then if another virtuous karma is stronger, we experience that. Then we have happiness. If another negative karma is stronger, we experience that, and another suffering is experienced. But if there are negative imprints on the mental continuum, that's what is produced, that's what is projected. That's what produces hell again and again, again and again.

With negative imprints, all the difficulties are produced from those negative imprints again and again. If the negative imprints are *there*, if they are not eliminated by the remedy, by the path, if they are not purified, [we must experience them]. That is why I say negative imprints are much more terrifying than the hell realm, whose name we can't even bear to hear.

This is a good technique that we can apply. For example, in our daily life, if we habitually do things with attachment or with anger, if we do nonvirtuous actions, if these delusions arise uncontrollably, then we will repeat these nonvirtuous actions again and again with the body, the speech or the mind. These delusions arise so strongly that no matter how much we dislike having this particular problem, somehow we go under their control, somehow we have to follow the delusion again and again. Then all these bad habits, these nonvirtuous actions, happen again and again, whether it's stealing, sexual misconduct or killing, whatever it is, we have to do it again and again.

So, taking the example of anger, we should think at that time, “I should not get angry because it leaves a negative imprint on my negative continuum, and that makes me become angry again in the future.” Leaving the negative imprint on the mind makes it possible for anger to arise again.

We should see this danger clearly, how by leaving the negative imprint even once on our mental continuum now, it is so harmful to us, to our life, how it is dangerous, destroying our happiness, our chance to attain good qualities, realizations, liberation and enlightenment. It harms us not only today, not only in this life, but in all our coming future lives. Becoming angry again and again harms us; it destroys us. And it is the imprint of anger that makes this arise.

If we think like this, it’s very helpful. It gives us some courage to not get angry or to not allow desire to arise, this strong desire that controls us by leaving the negative imprint again and again, so that in the future again and again it gives birth to desire. Desire arises again and that completely controls us. It takes us over and we have no freedom, no choice. We are completely overwhelmed by attachment, and so it goes on, polluting our mind, obscuring our mind from having realizations, from realizing emptiness, the ultimate nature of the phenomena, and so forth. Not only that, it causes so much confusion. It gives so much harm to other sentient beings.

Thinking of the harmfulness of the negative imprint, how even this one time it can harm us in so many lifetimes in the future, is a very good technique to defeat the delusions. Normally delusions defeat us, so this time we can defeat the delusions, we can control the delusions.

### **THE MEANING OF THE NAMES OF THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS (BACK TO)**

The next one, *De zhin sheg pa se me keyi bu la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Son of Non-Craving, I prostrate], purifies 10,000 eons of having created negative karma.

Then *De zhin sheg pa me tog pääl la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Glorious Flower, I prostrate] purifies 100,000 eons of negative karma.

It also says this buddha’s name purifies the negative karmas of body. And if you recite it twenty-one times and you have flowers and you offer them, sprinkling them on stupas and holy objects, all your wishes get fulfilled.

Then, *De zhin shog pa tshang päi ö zer nam par röl pä ngön par khyen pa la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Pure Light Rays Clearly Knowing by Play, I prostrate] purifies a thousand eons of negative karma. One text says a thousand eons of negative karma and another one says it purifies negative karmas collected with speech.

By reciting *De zhin shog pa pä mäi ö zer nam par röl pä ngön par kyen pa la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Lotus Light Rays Clearly Knowing by Play, I prostrate], this purifies seven eons of negative karma and the negative karmas collected with the mind are purified.

*De zhin shog pa nor päi la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Glorious Wealth, I prostrate] also purifies negative karmas, negative imprints. Another text says when the mind is contaminated by pollution of the Sangha, which means using the Sangha's things, it purifies this. With devotion people offer things to the Sangha—food, clothing, money and whatever—and you receive this from the Sangha.

*De zhin shog pa drän päi päi la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Glorious Mindfulness, I prostrate] purifies negative karmas of body. In Gyaltsab Je's commentary, it says it purifies negative karmas collected with the body and in another text it says it purifies negative karmas of having criticized other people. Maybe sometimes also criticized *for* other people! I'm joking a little bit!

*De zhin shog pa tshän päi shin tu yong drag la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Glorious Name Widely Renowned, I prostrate] purifies the negative karma collected through jealousy. Another text says that one particular negative karma that it purifies is being unhappy that the Buddha has descended to this world, the mind disliking that. If we have collected those negative karmas they are purified.

With *De zhin shog pa wang päi tog gi gyäl tshän gyi gyäl po la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata King Holding the Victory Banner of Foremost Power, I prostrate], Gyaltsab Je's commentary says the negative karmas collected through jealousy are purified, whereas another text says the negative karmas collected with pride.

The next one, *De zhin shog pa shin tu nam par nön päi päi la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Glorious One Totally Subduing, I prostrate], the negative karmas collected from slandering are purified.

Another text says causing other sentient beings to commit negative karma, these negativities are purified.

Then *De zhin shag pa yül lä shin tu nam par gyäl wa la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Utterly Victorious in Battle, I prostrate] purifies negative karmas collected with pride. Another text says all the delusions are purified.

*De zhin shag pa nam par nön pä shag päi päl la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Glorious Transcendence Through Subduing, I prostrate] purifies the negative karmas collected by slandering as well as causing others to create negative karma. According to Gyaltsab Je, it purifies slandering whereas another text says it purifies causing others to commit negative karma.

*De zhin shag pa kün nä nang wa kö päi päl la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Glorious Manifestations Illuminating All, I prostrate] purifies the negative karma of wrongly rejoicing. This is rejoicing in our own negative karma.

## **REJOICING IN NONVIRTUE AND IN VIRTUE**

For example, if we insult or harshly provoke an enemy, somebody we don't like, if we harm them and then afterwards we feel happy about it, that is wrong rejoicing. Or if we kill an animal or a human being we don't like, and we feel happy, that is wrong rejoicing. Also, if somebody we don't like has a problem, if they die or get sick or some problem happens, and we feel happy, that's wrong rejoicing.

This is also very important to know. Perhaps there's a country that we don't like. For example, in the case of Tibetans, it's the Communist Chinese, Beijing. When there is hatred there, say, somebody killed a million Chinese, whether it's in Tibet or in China, if the Tibetan person rejoiced while they were sitting on the meditation cushion, thinking how good that is and feeling happiness in the heart, even though they didn't do the killing, even though they have never killed one person, by rejoicing that these million Communist Chinese were killed, that Tibetan person collects the *same* heavy karma as having killed one million people, exactly the same. So, this is very dangerous. If you don't know the details about karma, it's very, very dangerous.

Just while we are sitting on the meditation cushion, where we are supposed to be practicing virtue, we can create mountains of negative karma, the size of this earth. As much negative karma as there are atoms of this earth we can collect very easily.

So now the positive way! For example, let's say somebody comes to Kopan and whole-heartedly rejoices in this monastery and all these temples, thinking, "How wonderful this is, that these people who built this monastery collected so much unbelievable merit. How wonderful this is." If we rejoice that other people built these monastery buildings, thinking how wonderful it is, even though we didn't build them, we didn't put any effort into the building, in the sense of merit, if we simply rejoice in those people who built them, we collect so much merit just by thinking how wonderful it is building these temples.

Even though we didn't put in one single effort or offer one single rupee to build this monastery, we collect so much merit. If the level of mind of the person who is rejoicing is higher than the people who built this monastery, they collect even more merit than the people who actually built it. If that person's level of mind is the same as the people who built the monastery here, they get the same amount of merit. If their level of mind is lower than the people who built this monastery, they get half the merit of the other person who built this monastery.

For example, with the Boudha stupa, the huge stupa, if we rejoice, thinking how wonderful it is that this family, the mother and her four children, built this stupa, how they collected unbelievable merit; if we rejoice, thinking how wonderful is this, even though we didn't put one single effort or any money at all to build that stupa, we collect the same amount of merit that they collected.

It's the same if somebody has built a very large statue of the Buddha or something, we collect unbelievable, incredible merit. I'm not going into details, talking about the benefits of statues. If I'm going into that, then the sun might rise and it might be morning! Anyway, I'm not going to go on that trip! If we know the points, the practice of rejoicing is really the most profitable practice, in the case of collecting extensive merit within a minute, within a second, just like that.

When we see beautiful monasteries, statues or stupas, so huge, so beautiful, that have been built by somebody, especially when we make pilgrimage and go to see the temples, when we rejoice in

those people who built these, how they have collected unbelievable merit, how wonderful it is, in that minute, in those few seconds, we collect the same amount of merit.

Somebody else worked so hard to do the fundraising, to make the organization, so many people put so much effort for years to build this and to do fundraising and have so many worries and all these things. They went through so many hardships to build this to preserve the Dharma, to build these holy objects for sentient beings, to purify their minds, for them to collect extensive merit and allow their minds to have realizations, to be able to change their minds due to the existence of these holy objects, these temples, these monasteries, these facilities to learn the Dharma, for the Sangha and lay people to practice.

So many people put so much effort, they worked so hard and went through so many problems and hardships for so many years to build all these holy objects including the temples, monasteries and so forth. But here, if we rejoice in all the extensive merit they collected, thinking, “How wonderful that is,” in that minute, in that second, we collect that same extensive merit that they’ve collected by building these holy objects, this monastery. We collect extensive merit without any material expenses, without any effort.

So especially, when we go on pilgrimage or when we go to see temples, monasteries or holy objects, it’s very good to practice rejoicing. It’s one of the limbs of the preliminary practice of the seven limbs, which are how we can make our meditation successful, how we can make realizations possible. What seven-limb practice does is these three things: purification, collecting merit and increasing the merit collected by dedicating them, which is the last limb. Because this makes it possible to have realizations in our mind, it is very good.

Generally, in our daily life, we should practice rejoicing, not only when we do the prayer in the *Guru Puja*, or where the sadhana has the seven-limb practice. Even at other times, when we read a newspaper or watch TV, when we see people who are successful, who have a beautiful house, a limousine or any good thing [we should rejoice]. In daily life we should practice rejoicing, not only when we do prayers, sitting in meditation, but even at those other times. It’s very important, even if somebody has a lesbian—not a lesbian, a limousine!—we should rejoice, thinking, “How wonderful it is.” If somebody has a beautiful house we should rejoice, “How wonderful is this person’s beautiful house.” When somebody has found a wonderful, beautiful friend, we should

rejoice, thinking, “How wonderful that this person has found a wonderful friend, a very beautiful friend.” And if somebody has success in business, we can rejoice, “How wonderful is that.”

Any good thing that happens to others, we can rejoice, “How wonderful it is,” because this is part of the deeds of the bodhisattvas, those holy beings. They are always very happy at others’ happiness and they feel unbearable when others are suffering. When they see some good thing happening to others, they feel so happy. Just as a mother feels for her beloved child, when there’s even a small problem, the mother feels it is so unbearable, and when even some small good thing happens, she is so happy.

If we rejoice, besides the extensive merit we achieve, it does not just stop there. Say, somebody has built a very beautiful temple or something, and we rejoice. By rejoicing, we create the karma to build the same kind of thing in the near future, to do the same extensive works that the other person did to benefit others.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama gives peace and happiness to so many millions of people in the world, awakening many millions of people, giving light to the darkness in the mind and the darkness of ignorance. If we rejoice in His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s activities, in his qualities, we not only collect so much merit, but what happens is we become like that in the near future. We are able to benefit so many sentient beings; we are able to enlighten so many sentient beings.

When we see thankas of buddhas or bodhisattvas, when we put our palms together and rejoice, especially if we know their life stories, their deeds, their qualities, if we rejoice, thinking, “How wonderful it is”, and we pray, “May I be able to offer infinite benefit to all sentient beings like you by having the same quality within me as you have.” When we see statues or paintings of buddhas, like Lama Tsongkhapa and so forth, and we rejoice and pray like that, sooner or later we will become like that. We can offer skies of benefit to numberless sentient beings by having the same qualities. This is the way to create the cause.

It is said in the teachings that the whole Dharma is like the condition, it is up to the tip of the wish. That means, as we intend, as we generally wish, everything that happens is due to the power of the mind.

The heaviest suffering of hell is due to the power of the negative mind and, conversely, enlightenment, the greatest bliss, also happens due to the power of the mind, but the virtuous mind, the positive mind. Everything that happens in our life, everything that exists, happens due to the power of the mind. So, if we generate the wish like this prayer, that creates the result. It means the result will happen.

It is also mentioned that in the sutras that the wishes of a person who has merit will succeed; this destroys the multitudes of maras and will lead to enlightenment. For one who has collected extensive merit, because there's a cause, merit, all our wishes are fulfilled. The most important wish is that all the delusions are destroyed and we achieve enlightenment. That's the highest, most important achievement in life.

I'm talking about the benefits of collecting merit. Maybe, I won't go further than that.

Anyway, there is some emphasis on mind coming maybe tomorrow when I explain about prostrations.

### **THE MEANING OF THE NAMES OF THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS (BACK TO)**

Now there are only two or three names left.

*De zhin shog pa kün nä nang wa kö päi päi la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata Glorious Manifestations Illuminating All, I prostrate], This Buddha purifies the negative karma or wrong rejoicing.

By reciting *De zhin shog pa rin chhen pä mäi nam par nön pa la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata All-Subduing Jewel Lotus, I prostrate], it purifies the negative karma having abandoned the holy Dharma. This one is another heavy negative karma.

What is *avoiding the Dharma*? One way to understand is that, because we are practicing Mahayana Buddhism, we criticize the Hinayana teachings, saying that while they might be the Buddha's teaching, they are no good. That's avoiding the holy Dharma.

[Someone sneezes] Recently somebody asked me what we should say when we sneeze! I just remembered after sneezing. I think I said, "You can say, 'empty!'" That reminds us of emptiness.



When we say empty, it helps the other person. If they know the meaning of emptiness it is helpful; it reminds them of the emptiness of inherent existence. It becomes a meditation. Even if it's just a second, it's still a meditation, thinking of the meaning.

So anyway, while we accept that the Hinayana teachings were taught by Buddha, if we criticize them, saying they are no good, that's avoiding the holy Dharma.

Another example. We believe we are a Mahayanist, but we criticize the Vajrayana teachings, saying they are not Buddha's teaching. We look at them as negative, while they are the Buddha's teachings, taught by Buddha. The Vajrayana teachings are also part of the Mahayana.

In some places, like in Hong Kong or in Taiwan, Buddhism seemed to be divided into three: Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana. When you divide like that, the Vajrayana Tantra teaching do not seem to be Mahayana teachings. That is totally wrong. Within the Mahayana teaching taught by Buddha, there are Sutra and Tantra.

Therefore, in Singapore, Hong Kong and especially in Taiwan, when I introduce it, I always say "Mahayana Vajrayana." I always bring in the Mahayana when I mention Vajrayana or Tantra, to make people understand that it's Mahayana, that the tantric teachings are not separate from Mahayana.

While it's a teaching taught by Buddha, some abbots in Taiwan accept Vajrayana, but they also assert that there is pure Vajrayana and not pure Vajrayana. Maybe some don't have the knowledge. Maybe because it has the name "tantra" and Hindus also call it tantra, they think this is a Hindu practice and it's not taught by the Buddha. While the Mahayana Tantra teachings are taught by the Buddha, by thinking that they are not the Buddha's teaching and rejecting them, that is also avoiding the holy Dharma.

We must not avoid the holy Dharma. When we take refuge in the Dharma, that means any teaching. If we see even a torn page from a Dharma book, even a few lines of Dharma, if we see it on the floor, in the garbage, we should pick it up and think, "This is the actual Dharma. It will liberate me from samsara's sufferings." And then we respectfully put it on the head and place it in a high, clean place. This is a part of the practice.

Therefore, respecting the Hinayana teachings and the Vajrayana, teachings taught by the Buddha, of course, it becomes the basic refuge practice. Even though we are not doing that practice right now, we respect it.

For example, some Theravadin monks say the Mahayana teachings are not taught by the Buddha. They look at them negatively or think they have been made up by Tibetan lamas, or just made up by Nagarjuna. Some who are a little better say they came from Nagarjuna not from the Buddha. Looking at them negatively like that is also avoiding the Dharma.

Then there are certain scriptures, like philosophical texts, while they are the Buddha's teaching, we might think "These don't help my mind. What use are they?" That's also avoiding the holy Dharma. Some philosophical texts we don't understand, we find too difficult, when we think they are useless, rejecting them in that way, not respecting them, that's avoiding the holy Dharma. In that kind of case, what we should do is think that we don't understand them now, but we put them aside and determine that in the future we will understand them. We should respect them like that.

It's the same with the four Tibetan traditions: Sakya, Kagyü, Nyingma and Gelug. While they are all the Buddha's teachings, if we think one is bad because it doesn't come from whatever tradition we follow, we are also avoiding the holy Dharma.

So, reciting this name purifies this heavy negative karma.

The last name is *De zhin shog pa dra chom pa yang dag par dzog päi sang gyä rin po chhe dang pä ma la rab tu zhub pa ri wang gi gyäl po la chbag tshäl lo* [To Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly Completed Buddha, King of the Lord of Mountains Firmly Seated on Jewel and Lotus, I prostrate]. I normally try to recite this one—not in every case but normally—three times because it is very important. It purifies the negative karmas of criticizing the guru. If we have criticized the guru either verbally or mentally, not just the gurus in the world but our own guru, we have broken samaya with the guru, all these negative karmas get purified by reciting this last name.

This is the heaviest negative karma and the heaviest obstacle for realization, so normally I try to recite this three times, but not in every case.

Why does reciting the names of these Buddhas have so much power? Why do they carry so much power to affect the mind? This also comes from the mind of each of these Buddhas, from their intention, from their bodhicitta, from the compassion. All these powers basically came from the compassion they generated for us sentient beings before they became enlightened, when they were bodhisattvas following the path.

Lama Atisha said that when these Thirty-five Buddhas were bodhisattvas doing the bodhisattva deeds, they each made a prayer: “When I become enlightened, anybody who recites my name, who thinks of my name, and who does prostrations, may that sentient being purify such and such a negative karma.”

So, each Buddha dedicated himself so that when he became enlightened his name would be so useful, so beneficial. Remembering, reciting their names purifies all those different negative karmas. They made a prayer, “For anybody who recites my name and does prostrations, may this negative karma be purified.”

I think you have already gone through this, but one of the ten powers that buddhas achieve is the power of prayer. As they made the prayer before they were enlightened, achieving the power of prayer makes their names work like an atomic bomb. It has all the potential, all the power, to destroy the delusions the minute it is used. The minute we recite the name, with prostrations, it affects our delusion, it purifies our negative karma, just as an atomic bomb destroys the country or the world. Basically, the very root came from the compassion that they generated for all us sentient beings.

I think I’ll stop here tonight. Then maybe tomorrow I’ll explain how to do the meditation with the prostrations.

## Lecture 4

December 28, 1999

### THE REQUESTING PRAYER TO THE LINEAGE LAMAS

Yesterday, I tried to finish the requesting prayer to the lineage lamas but did not finish it, so hopefully today I can complete it!

Normally, how it is done is from the Lama's side, they also do some visualizations, the same visualizations as the disciple to absorb the lineage lamas. The meditation is done for the disciple to receive the Lama's qualities within, and also, from the side of the disciple, to do the meditation, the visualization as I explained.

As I mentioned the other day, those who are not familiar with the merit field, you can just visualize Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, then that is all the Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Then, beams of nectar are constantly emitted, purifying. The disciple receives all the realizations of the extensive, profound path, and all the qualities of the Buddha: the dharmakaya and the rupakaya. So, you can think again that you have been completely purified and have received [all the qualities].

Or, if you are not familiar with how to visualize the merit field with the lineage lamas in order, you can think that they are all there in front of you in space and they are all paying attention to you with their compassion and loving kindness. Then, beams of nectar are emitted from them, purifying you. Then a replica absorbs within you and you receive all the qualities. So, in essence, you can think like that.

For those who are familiar with how to visualize the merit field, it can be done as I explained the other time.

[Rinpoche chants the praise in Tibetan]

I didn't succeed in reciting all the lineage lamas prayer this time. I left out quite a few things. I hope some of those lineage lamas that I left out are not upset! I'm just joking! Maybe I'll try another time.

Not all the time but sometimes in the past I used this whole lineage lamas' prayer in the morning as a tea offering or a breakfast offering prayer. To do that, you change the words, "I'm requesting" to "I'm offering." Where it says, "I'm requesting", you replace with "I'm offering." *Chö* means "offering."

### **SERKONG DORJE CHANG**

His Holiness Tsenshap Serkong Rinpoche is one of the gurus I received so many initiations and many teachings and instructions from. He had so much hope for me and he cared very much all the time. He took care of me so much. Rinpoche passed away, and now there's a reincarnation studying in South India in Ganden Monastery.

This guru, His Holiness Tsenshap Serkong Rinpoche himself and another one, the incarnation of his father, His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang, both of them are the same as those ancient great yogis like Marpa, Milarepa, Naropa, Tilopa. Similarly, His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang, who is the incarnation of His Holiness Tsenshap Serkong Rinpoche's father, is actually the embodiment of Milarepa, the Tibetan yogi whose name became well-known in the world.

His guru, Marpa, caused Milarepa to become enlightened, not only within one life but within a brief lifetime of degenerated times, within some number of years. He did not become enlightened by extending his life, by achieving the undying realizations of immortality, by achieving those powers, like those siddhis who live for many hundreds of thousands of years and *then* achieve enlightenment. It was not like that, as it is explained in the lower tantras on how to achieve enlightenment, where it is still in one life, but that lifetime is lengthened by achieving the realization of immortality, where you can live for many hundreds of years or thousands of years, and then you achieve enlightenment in that life.

But here, it's highest tantra and what practicing highest tantra offers is enlightenment. You can achieve enlightenment within a few years, in a brief lifetime of degenerated time. Marpa is the one who made Milarepa become enlightened within a few years.

Marpa himself is an enlightened being, Buddha Vajradhara or Hevajra. Similarly, His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang is the embodiment of the great yogi, Marpa, and I also regard His

Holiness Tsenshap Serkong Rinpoche as a great yogi. His Holiness Tsenshap Serkong Rinpoche is also my guru.

I heard many stories of His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang when I was at Buxa, where I lived for eight years. This place was a concentration camp when India was under the control of the British. It was a place where so many people were put in prison and killed; this is the place where Mahatma Gandhi-ji was imprisoned. There was a very long hall there. When the monks from Lhasa, from Sera, Ganden and Drepung monasteries, escaped from Tibet to India in 1959, they wanted to continue with their studies. I guess maybe the official government heard the monks needed to live very far from everything. They must have had some idea that they needed a very secluded place. So the monks who wanted to continue their studies were put in this place. Then others went to work to make roads and to do different things.

It's already chai time! Time for chai.

Anyway, this very long building, which was the building where Mahatma Gandhi-ji was imprisoned, became the nunnery because they put the nuns there. Before that time, it was a prison, but during the time of the Tibetans, it was not called a "prison." They lived in the same style of building with bars on the windows and completely surrounded by barbed wire, so it was the same; there was no change.

Then, there was a very long building where Prime Minister Nehru was imprisoned which became our Sera Monastery, with Sera Je, the college Lama Yeshe and I belonged to, and Sera Mey, the other section. Sera is one big monastery, and within that there are two sections.

This long building where Prime Minister Nehru was imprisoned, which became Sera Monastery, housed maybe sixty to seventy monks. They lived inside with the beds lined up throughout. It was very long, not wide like this, and with many windows. Then, outside there was a verandah and then there were barbed wire walls and a ditch. Monks' beds were all lined up along the verandah, so it was very crowded.

This was the house where the Sera monks stayed but they also lived in other buildings. This is where they lived and where all the Sera monks gathered to do their puja or meditation.

During the years I lived there, there were supposed to be 1,500 monks. They did extremely intensive study on the five major sutra texts that contain the subject of all the sutra teachings. They also studied tantra there, but it was basically these five major sutra root texts and the various commentaries by Indian pandits as well as by those great highly attained Tibetan lamas, pandits. They memorized all these and studied their meaning; they debated as well as practiced. On the basis of the Vinaya practice, living in the vows, they practiced morality, and on the basis of that, they did all this extensive study and practiced sutra and tantra.

I had some opportunity to have some imprints left during that time, receiving teachings from Lama Yeshe and from other teachers in Buddhist philosophy, the extensive scriptures. Some positive imprint was able to be left during that time. I spent most of the time playing; I didn't really study. It was just a child's study. I did some debating but it was just children's debating. Anyway, that's how I spent my life there.

So, that is an abbreviated story of my life in Buxa!

During that time I heard many amazing stories of this great yogi, His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang, who was in Nepal.

His previous life was as a monk and he completed study in Ganden Monastery as a lharampa geshe. It's kind of like a doctor's degree, extremely learned. Not only that, at the same time as living in the monastery and doing extensive study and giving teachings to others, he practiced. Even though he was living in the monastery and associated with many thousands of monks, mentally it was like he was living in the cave, in an isolated place.

After finishing his extensive philosophical study, he went into a hermitage and did a retreat, where he achieved very high tantra realizations.

Serkong Dorje Chang was one of the lamas that the Thirteenth Dalai Lama had great respect for, and His Holiness very happily permitted him to complete his tantric path in order to quickly achieve enlightenment, to be able to quickly liberate or to enlighten other sentient beings. He was one lama that the Thirteenth Dalai Lama regarded as having reached very high tantric realizations and he happily accepted that he could practice with a consort or Wisdom Mother.

Many lamas, even though they were high realized yogis were not accepted by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama to practice with a Wisdom Mother.

Anyway, I heard many stories at Buxa about His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang, not the past life, the one who was in Tibet but the incarnation, who escaped from Tibet and lived in Nepal. So, when we arrived in Nepal, I had a strong wish to meet His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang after I heard the stories. Two or three years after arriving in Nepal, one day we went to see him. He was living on the top of the Swayambhunath mountain, close to the stupa. Three of us went to see him, Lama Yeshe, Zina and me.

Zina was the very first Western student. Her name is Princess Zina Rachevsky. Her father was a king, I think, in the past in Russia. The family escaped from Russia to live in France during a revolution, so I guess she was born in France but she spent the middle part of her life in America and many other countries such as Greece. She lived in many places and traveled to many countries. She had all different kinds of life experience in the West and in all the different places.

So, one day the three of us went to see His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang. At that time, there was a small house next to the stupa and he was staying there. As soon as we got to the door, there was a very simple monk coming down to the steps, so I asked, "Where is His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang?" He told us to wait a bit.

I think he went down, but he didn't come through the door but through another door. I don't remember if he came back or not. But when we went upstairs to see His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang, we saw that that monk we met coming downstairs *was* Serkong Dorje Chang. That very simple monk was there, sitting on the bed.

Normally when we were living with her in India and in Nepal, Zina, this very first Western student, liked to visit very many high lamas, so we'd go together and she asked questions. Sometimes we helped her ask questions to the lamas and I used my few words of broken English to translate for her.

So, she asked His Holiness her question. I don't remember now but I think it was something on guru devotion. Then, His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang explained something extremely



profound, with a very deep voice. All I can remember was that was extremely rare that when somebody asked a Dharma question, His Holiness would give an explanation. That's not what usually happened.

What I can remember is that His Holiness said, "Even if the Guru is sitting on the floor down there, you think that the Buddha is sitting there." That's how you should meditate, that the actual Buddha is sitting there on the floor. This is what His Holiness explained. Among all the words, that's all I can remember, all I could understand at that time.

His Holiness had many Dharma texts piled up next to his pillow, and Zina asked him to read one text from there. His Holiness said, "No, no, no, I'm completely ignorant, I know nothing." That's a very normal answer. I think it seems quite a common answer.

So, that's the first time to meet Rinpoche. Then, maybe within the same year or the next, when we came to Nepal we stayed at the Gelugpa Monastery, maybe not the first one. The first Gelugpa Monastery is down in Boudha, near the stupa. While we were staying at this monastery, the Buddha's day of enlightenment happened, which is the special day to celebrate the Buddha achieving enlightenment, passing away in sorrowless state and his birth, the three special days of the Buddha combined. The monastery was going to do the two-day Compassion Buddha fasting retreat, called a *nyung nä*, abiding in the retreat.

During the two-day retreat, you need to take the eight Mahayana precepts, so the benefactor who sponsored these the *nyung näs*, the Compassion Buddha's retreat, wanted to invite a lama called Trulshik Rinpoche, who was living at Swayambhunath on the mountain where there is Manjushri's or Buddha's throne.

The benefactor wanted to invite that lama to give the eight Mahayana precepts, but the monks wanted Serkong Dorje Chang to be the lama to give the eight Mahayana precepts because they thought Trulshik Rinpoche was a Nyingma practitioner. They weren't sure because he was practicing the same deity that Sera Je Monastery practices.

So, what happened was that early in the morning of the retreat, His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang was invited to give the ordination, the eight Mahayana precepts. He sat down, opened the text and said, "If you really want to practice Dharma, then if the Guru says, 'You go there and

lick the hot kaka,' you should be able to immediately go and lick the hot kaka like this.” He did this with the tongue. “You should be able to go there and lick the hot kaka like this. That’s real Dharma.”

That’s all. Then he packed up and left! That was all the motivation for the ordination, nothing else. Then he packed up and left without even reading the prayer of the precepts. So, I think that was the very first time we met His Holiness there, that first day. And the last thing I heard from him was that instruction!

Just a few words but they were dynamic! It was a real teaching. I think in those few words, he gave a real instruction in what it takes to achieve enlightenment, to successfully actualize the whole path to enlightenment, from the perfect human rebirth, the graduated path of the lower capable being, the graduated path of the middle capable being and the graduated path of the higher capable being—the whole path to enlightenment. What makes us successful in all the realizations of the whole path to enlightenment is correctly devoting to the virtuous friend with guru devotion. It is, from the disciple’s side, looking at [the guru] as the Buddha, free from all the mistakes and having all the qualities, and with that, obeying the guru and obtaining his advice.

With that kind of pure thought, then obtaining the advice of the guru, that’s what makes everything successful. Then there is no obstacle and everything is successful from the beginning of the path, the perfect human rebirth—how this human body is qualified with eight freedoms and ten richnesses and is so precious—up to enlightenment.

This real heart teaching, the most important teaching that His Holiness gave in just a few words, I found very effective. Even though that’s all I heard, only those few words, I found it very effective, so I regard him as a guru.

### **SEEING THE GURU AS A BUDDHA**

What caused this story was thinking of His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang, this great enlightened being. I used to go to meet Serkong Dorje Chang, even if there was no particular reason, just from time to time to get a blessing. I was so fortunate. It was so precious just to meet him, just to see him, so I went from time to time, even if there was nothing particular to ask.

Every time I'm with His Holiness, there is no question in my mind, no slightest doubt, that this is a buddha. There's a deity called Yamantaka, who is the buddha of wisdom, Manjushri but in an extremely wrathful aspect. All the buddhas' wisdom is manifest in a deity called Manjushri, and that is manifested into the most wrathful aspect to quickly eliminate ignorance, the root of samsara, the root of our suffering, as well as all other delusions. Yamantaka shows wrath toward that ignorance, the root from where these wrong concepts come, from where all our suffering comes—birth, death, old age, sicknesses, all sufferings. He shows wrath toward all the emotional minds like attachment, anger and, so forth, the delusions that constantly make us to be born in samsara, to die and to experience all the sufferings.

Without question, I have no doubt at all. There is a hundred percent feeling that this is the actual living buddha, Yamantaka, even though externally for our eyes he appears as a human being and some people, who don't know that this is a great enlightened being or yogi, might very easily think that this is a very simple monk who knows nothing. People who don't know who he is, when they meet him on the road or around the stupa, when he circumambulates it, see him as a very simple monk who knows nothing. It's very easy for people who don't know who he is to judge him from external appearance, maybe thinking there is something wrong with his mind or something like that.

Also, in the latter part of His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang's life, before he passed away, I think for some years he showed the aspect of paralysis. Not paralysis, crisis? Anyway, suddenly bubbles come from the mouth. [Students prompt] Epilepsy. Yes, a kind of epilepsy. He showed this for some two or three years before he passed away. He showed it suddenly in a benefactor's house when the monks were doing a puja or maybe on the road.

Each year the Tibetan Government in Exile requested His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang to do a very powerful puja for the cause of Tibet, for His Holiness the Dalai Lama and to pacify obstacles. It is a very powerful wrathful puja where the lama who does it needs not only bodhicitta, the wisdom realizing emptiness and renunciation, but, on top of that, a very stable realization of generating highest tantra. I mean having tantric realizations, one-pointed concentration on the clear appearance, being able to meditate yourself as deity. This is the realization of the generation stage or, the best, the very high tantra completion stage realization. It means having a realization of clear light and illusory body. That is the best. I mean the highest

is being a buddha, but there are also those sentient beings who are the best healers, who have these high realizations.

This meditation practice is a very, very important puja, so they do a retreat for a few days, then on one day they do this very wrathful tantric meditation, this puja. A monk from the monastery requested His Holiness, “Please don’t take this sickness today, this epilepsy.” And that day His Holiness accepted, saying, “Yes, of course it won’t happen, I’m Vajradhara.” Being Vajradhara means being the Buddha Vajradhara. No ordinary person could promise they wouldn’t get sick on that day. When it happens, it happens; you don’t have control over it. Whereas because a monk requested His Holiness, he could respond like this, accept the request, and on that day he didn’t have any obstacle like this, and he did the wrathful puja extremely well. That shows these manifestations are not normal.

Anybody who went to see His Holiness, as soon as they stepped in the room, he knew everything about that person, about their past, present and future. Once, when I came back from Lawudo in Solu Khumbu, I had a dream about a very small girl with a kind of angry face, showing me a dark, black angry face. A few days later, I went to see His Holiness. His Holiness used dice to do divination but before he threw the dice he knew everything, so actually he didn’t need the dice. The dice and the texts were just for show, as if he were an ordinary being who didn’t have an omniscient mind or clairvoyance. It was just to make him look ordinary, similar to the others, similar to us. Before he threw the dice, he asked me, “Did you have a dream about a woman?” I said, “Yes.” Before he rolled the dice, he knew everything. Then he said there’s a protector called Palden Lhamo, and she was angry, upset.

Many times, if a person went to see him and the karma had ripened, if it was the right time, and I think also if the person had done something wrong, then he wouldn’t speak; he pretended not to know this person.

Sorry, this story’s becoming longer and longer.

There was a Tibetan benefactor in Kathmandu, I think from Khampa near Amdo. I think he became wealthy by doing business with holy objects, with statues and things like that. He was a major benefactor of His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang’s monastery. Every year he sponsored the monks to do a Tara puja for seven days in his house. The benefactor often went to the

monastery. One day, while there, he went to His Holiness but His Holiness just said, “Who are you?” After many years of being a major benefactor of the monastery, that was all he got, “Who are you?” Then the man tried to advertise himself to His Holiness, “Oh, I’m the benefactor of the monastery, blah, blah, blah.” But His Holiness said, “Oh, I don’t have anybody like that.”

Then, the manager of His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang tried to introduce them; he tried to explain. He was getting quite embarrassed and upset because the benefactor had been very kind to the monastery, sponsoring the monks, and His Holiness said he didn’t know him. I think this was near the end of the time before the benefactor got very, very heavily sick and passed away.

Now, going back, every morning before His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang drank his first tea, he had a big bowl and he offered tea to all the lineage lamas of the path by reciting each name as he offered the tea. Then, after that, he drank. That’s what His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang did. His Holiness used to recite all the lineage lamas’ prayer, by changing the words, “I’m offering” in the place of “I’m requesting.” In the morning, before Rinpoche ate breakfast, he made offerings to all the lineage lamas like that.

Some time ago I also tried to make offering like that, and it was very pleasant. It is very good from time-to-time to try to make offering like that, but not every day.

When I recite quickly, many times it works but sometimes it doesn’t. Sometimes it gets blocked; it doesn’t come out.

So that part of the story is completed!

Maybe it’s chai time. I think it’s break time. Today there’s a break! Today is crazy, like yesterday and the day before yesterday ... and all the other days!

#### **FOR ENLIGHTENMENT WE NEED THE WHOLE PATH**

As I mentioned the other day, the purpose of our life is not just to achieve happiness for ourselves, to solve our own problems. The purpose of our living is not just for that. The real purpose of our living is to free other sentient beings from all the sufferings and to cause them happiness.

We make our life beneficial by causing happiness to other sentient beings, causing the happiness of this life. Then, it is even more beneficial to cause other sentient beings the happiness of all the future lives. By doing that service to others, we make our life more beneficial than the first one.

Then, causing other sentient beings to have ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara, from the whole of suffering and its causes, that makes our life even more beneficial, more useful to others than the previous one.

Then, causing other sentient beings to achieve enlightenment, the state which is the total cessation of all the gross and subtle mistakes of mind, which is the completion of all the qualities of the realizations, causing other sentient being to have this peerless happiness, that makes our life the most beneficial. This is the service we can offer them that they need to achieve. By achieving full enlightenment, there is no higher happiness to achieve, no higher realizations to achieve; it's completed.

To cause all the sentient beings to have this, we ourselves should be enlightened. For that, we need to actualize the steps to the path to enlightenment. To achieve full enlightenment in order to liberate and enlighten all sentient beings cannot be achieved without a cause. And that cause we create to achieve enlightenment cannot be a wrong cause, a wrong path. If it's a wrong path, even if our aim is to achieve enlightenment, by practicing the wrong path, we cannot achieve the result that we wish for.

Even if the path that we are practicing is a correct path, if it's not complete, again we cannot achieve enlightenment. We must actualize the complete path. We must do listening, reflecting and meditating on the whole path to enlightenment. And even with the realizations of the path, they have to be generated step by step, as the teachings are arranged, the gradual practice as it is set up for one person to achieve enlightenment by Lama Atisha.

### **ATISHA BRINGS DHARMA TO TIBET**

Even though everything is contained in the Buddha's teachings, very extensively in all those hundreds of volumes of sutra and tantra, Lama Atisha was requested to travel to Tibet by Jangchub Ö, the nephew of the Dharma King of Tibet, Lha Lama Yeshe Ö. The king sacrificed

his life in prison near the border of Nepal because he went to look for gold to make offerings to Lama Atisha.

Lama Atisha was invited before but at that time he didn't succeed. Then, the second time, the king went to look for gold for offerings, because there was so much corruption in Tibet, so much misunderstanding. People didn't know how to practice sutra and tantra together. They thought that if you practiced sutra, you could not practice tantra and if you practiced tantra, you could not practice sutra. A lot of people thought that the two were opposites, like hot and cold. There was a lot of misunderstanding. Some pandits came from India wearing blue robes to spread many wrong views in Tibet and become rich. A lot of corruption was happening.

The king was very concerned and so he went to look for gold to make offering to Lama Atisha, to invite him from the great monastery that was like a university, Nalanda, where there were hundreds—maybe three or four hundred—pandits, all extremely learned, fully distinguished not only in Dharma but even in the other subjects such as art, logic and medical knowledge. They were highly attained beings, and Lama Atisha was the crown of all the holy learned beings in India at that time, especially at Nalanda.

So, in order to invite Lama Atisha to Tibet to make Buddhism pure again, the king went to look for gold. Then, an irreligious king captured him and put him in prison. The nephew of the Dharma King of Tibet, Jangchub Ö, requested the irreligious king to release the king, Lha Lama Yeshe Ö, but the irreligious king [demanded gold the size of the king]. When the nephew did that, gold the size of the head was still missing, so the irreligious king would not release the king from prison. When Jangchub Ö explained this to the king, Lha Lama Yeshe Ö told him to not give even a handful of gold to the irreligious king. He said, “Send all the gold to India to offer to Lama Atisha, to invite him to Tibet to spread pure Buddhism. It doesn't matter. I will sacrifice my life in prison to spread pure Dharma in Tibet for the sentient beings in Tibet. Pass this message to His Holiness Lama Atisha and request him, telling him, ‘May I be able to see him in future lives.’” So, he sent this message to Lama Atisha.

A translator was sent with all these offerings to Nalanda from Tibet. I don't think there were cars at that time, so he went on foot. He went to India and explained everything—all the problems they had that were happening in Tibet and how the king had sacrificed his life in prison to spread pure Dharma in Tibet for sentient beings there. Then Lama Atisha checked by

asking Tara whether it will be beneficial or not if he went to Tibet to spread the Buddhadharmā. Whatever decision Lama Atisha had to make, he always asked Tara for advice; he always checked with Tara, who is the embodiment of all the buddhas' holy actions, manifested into a female aspect. Tara said, "If you go to Tibet, it will be very beneficial for Tibetan people, but your life will be shortened." I think she mentioned by seven years or something like that.

Lama Atisha replied, "If my life is going to be very beneficial in Tibet to spread Dharma, then I don't care even if my life is shortened." So, then he decided to go to Tibet through Nepal because if the other pandits there knew, if the public knew, they wouldn't let him go to Tibet, because they also needed him in India. So, Lama Atisha very skillfully made as if to go for pilgrimage in Nepal. Then he went to Tibet.

When the king's nephew, Jangchub Ö, met Lama Atisha, he explained all the problems that were happening in Tibet, saying, "We Tibetans are very ignorant. Please give us very basic teachings on refuge and karma." That request made Lama Atisha very happy because Jangchub Ö had not asked for very high teachings or initiations but for very basic teachings. That made Lama Atisha very pleased.

Then Lama Atisha wrote this special text, *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. He integrated the Buddha's Hinayana teachings, the Buddha's Mahayana sutra teaching, everything integrated as a graduated practice for one person to achieve enlightenment.

He made it very simple, like a meal, a lunch, already made set up in a dish on the table, so that anybody can practice without any confusion. All these teachings from the Buddha—all the Hinayana teachings, the Mahayana sutra teachings and the Mahayana tantra teachings—can be practiced without any confusion. He made it very clear, setting all these teachings up as a gradual practice for one person to achieve enlightenment.

This is what is called *lamrim*, the steps on the path to enlightenment. The title "lamrim" started with Lama Atisha, after Lama Atisha had written this text. Before that, the meaning existed in a very vast way, in all these hundreds of volumes of the Buddha's teachings and the commentaries by pandits and so forth. In the lamrim everything is there.



## **THE LAMRIM SHOWS THE ENTIRE PATH**

Studying and understanding the lamrim makes it very easy. Then we know what makes life most meaningful, and what is the most important thing to do to benefit other sentient beings and how to do that.

We come to know how to go about enlightenment by having an understanding of the lamrim, which is the integration of the whole of the Buddha's teachings. We know where to begin. Having studied and understood the lamrim, whether we practice or not, at least we have a correct understanding of where to begin the path in order to achieve enlightenment and how to go about it. That's an unbelievable protection.

Otherwise, we spend our life just in one meditation, like watching the breath, and then one day our life is gone, finished, with nothing developed. Nothing has happened inside. We've done nothing to reduce samsara; nothing has become a remedy to samsara. It's even difficult to protect ourselves from the lower realms.

If all these meditations are done with the attachment clinging to this life, they all become nonvirtue, whether it's watching the mind or the breath or walking meditation, paying attention as we are walking. They all become negative karma, nonvirtue, if they are done with the attachment. They might be done with attachment to reputation, so that we can become a great master and teach meditation or something, reputation for the happiness of this life, to achieve some power, some mental comfort. Done with the attachment clinging to this life, all those actions of meditation become nonvirtue; nothing becomes special. Because it does not even become virtuous, it becomes the cause of lower realms, so it is difficult even to protect ourselves from the suffering of the lower realms with these meditations.

And especially when we meditate, if the motivation is never emphasized, if the motivation isn't explained by a teacher, if we don't know how to generate the motivation to meditate, that means we don't know how to meditate. How to meditate doesn't just mean breathing with the mouth, breathing in this way or breathing out that way. In and out is always there!

These instructions are not the real ones on how to meditate. How to meditate means knowing how to set our motivation before we meditate. That is the real way to meditate. Then, the next

one is the technique itself, whatever the visualization is, how to concentrate, to focus on an object.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF MOTIVATION: FOUR PEOPLE RECITE TARA PRAYERS WITH DIFFERENT MOTIVATIONS**

In *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, the enlightened being, Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo explained about four people reciting the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras*. That is one I often use.

The first person recites the Twenty-one Taras prayer with the motivation to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. That person's action of reciting the prayer becomes the cause to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings.

The next person recites the prayer with the motivation, not to get enlightenment, but just to achieve liberation from samsara, the mere cessation of suffering and its cause, delusion and karma. The motivation is to achieve that for themselves, just for themselves. That person's action, reciting the Twenty-one Taras prayer, does not become the cause to achieve enlightenment, only the cause to achieve liberation from samsara for themselves.

The third person recites the Twenty-one Taras prayer not for enlightenment, not even to achieve liberation from samsara for themselves, just to achieve the happiness of future lives, their own future lives. That third person's action, reciting the prayer, does not become the cause to achieve enlightenment nor the cause to achieve everlasting happiness, liberation from samsara, for themselves, it only becomes the cause of happiness of their own future lives.

Now the fourth person recites the Twenty-one Taras prayer not with the attitude to achieve enlightenment, not with the attitude to achieve liberation from samsara, not with the attitude to even achieve the happiness of future lives, but just to achieve the happiness of this life alone. That person's attitude is attachment, only seeking the happiness of this life, and that is a nonvirtuous thought, a nonvirtuous motivation. That transforms the person's action of reciting the prayer into nonvirtue, like a white cloth that can be dyed many different colors and can be transformed into a black color with black dye. With this nonvirtuous motivation, the action of reciting the prayer is transformed into nonvirtue. Since the action is nonvirtue that means the result is only suffering.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF MOTIVATION: THE TANTRIC PRACTITIONER WHO BECOMES A HUNGRY GHOST

That has also happened to meditators, to yogis, but not yogis who have realizations of highest tantra, the clear light and illusory body, and not even those who have the lamrim realizations, the renunciation of samsara, bodhicitta and emptiness. But it can happen to a yogi doing a tantric deity practice, doing sadhanas, meditating on the deity and reciting mantras. Lama Atisha said there were yogis meditating on Hevajra who were born in the hell realms. That has happened.

In Tibet, in a place called Pembo, there were two meditators who meditated for many years in their hermitage. One, who meditated on the deity Yamantaka, died. The story is that the other meditator who was still living did a special practice where you burn *tsampa*, barley flour, which is mixed with the butter and, if possible, crushed jewel powder and maybe some medicinal powder called *men chey*. Then, it is burned in the fire so the smoke coming from that makes charity to the spirits, to the pretas or hungry ghosts who live on smell. The practice is that this is offered to all the Triple Gem and to all the sentient beings, but in particular these spirits as well as sentient beings who have died but not yet been reborn, beings in the intermediate stage.

It's for somebody we have karmic debts with, somebody we owe something to, such as somebody who gave us food and clothing in the past and so we have karmic debts. By making this charity, we are able to fulfill that.

For example, mice or ants eating our food or destroying our crops in the field, or rabbits or worms eating crops or vegetables in the field, even the insects who are biting us, lice or whatever, if they are getting into the food and making a mess, like the mice stealing food, all these things happen because there's a cause. It's because in the past we used them or we received food and many things from them, so there are karmic debts we owe them. Why are these things happening? Because there's a karma that we owe them. As I was saying last night or the other night, if a karma has not been purified, there are karmic debts. We have karmic debts to them.

This practice is not the only means to pay those debts, but it is one way. By making charity to all these living beings, we can pay our karmic debts. This practice can make those sentient beings happy. They receive happiness from making the charity of the smell and this food. But this is not

only the smell. What we visualize is what is wish-fulfilling from all this smoke, the five desire objects, objects of the five senses, filling the whole sky. Making charity like this, it's not just the smoke from the food.

This practice also helps when we die. We can go to a pure land of a buddha, and not only that, it also then eliminates obstacles for our practice. If we have projects to benefit other sentient beings it helps to pacify obstacles. By making all those beings happy the country devas and the landlords and the many different beings, when they are happy, they naturally support us. So, it helps us be successful and prosperous, things that we need to practice Dharma, that we need to benefit others.

So, this has become a long talk *again!*

Back to the story, in the evening every day the other meditator did his practice, making charity to spirits. Then one day a very powerful spirit appeared, with many arms and heads, looking like the deity Yamantaka. It wasn't Yamantaka but it looked like that. He spoke to the meditator, saying that he was the person who did the deity retreat before, and now he was born like this, as a spirit. He spent many years in meditation but he didn't know how to meditate. He didn't practice the lamrim meditations. Even the tantric deity meditations he did were not done with the lamrim, not done with bodhicitta, not done with the right view, with emptiness, and not done with the renunciation of the whole of samsara.

Even though the subject was the Dharma, the Buddha's teachings, a very high tantric subject, his very root mistake was he didn't know how to meditate, how to practice. That's why his actions did not become virtue, so [rebirth as a spirit] was the result that happened. Instead of being reborn in the realm of happy migrator beings, he was born in the realm of the suffering migrator beings.

Therefore, the fourth person reciting the Twenty-one Taras prayer, even though the prayer itself is Dharma, the subject Dharma, the person's actions did not become Dharma because they were done with the motivation that was nonvirtuous. So, the action became nonvirtuous.

## WE NEED TO RENOUNCE ALL THREE REALMS

Even if we have renunciation, even if we are totally detached from the sense pleasures of the desire realm, from forms, sounds, smells, tastes and tangible objects like in our human realm, even if we have no interest at all in the desire realm's sense pleasures, all the sense objects that we use, even if we are totally detached from them, even if we have total renunciation, that's not enough.

We might still have attachment to the happiness of the form realm, which is not about sense pleasure but mental peace. Even if we are totally detached from this desire realm's sense pleasures, with no interest at all, but we are attached to the peace, the happiness, of the form realm, there's still attachment to that. That is what causes us to reincarnate in the form realm, which is another samsaric realm.

Samsara is divided into three realms: the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm. [Being born in any of these realms,] we continuously circle from one life to another. This is what is called the cyclic existence. It is these suffering aggregates under the control of karma and delusion, because of which we continuously circle from one life to another, having to experience all the sufferings again and again. So, there is nothing special about reincarnating in the form realm. It's just another samsaric realm.

Then, even if we are totally detached from the happiness of the form realm, we still have attachment to the formless realm, thinking it's better than the form realm. By thinking of the shortcomings of the form realm, we desire equanimity, with no inner pleasures. So, we think of all the qualities of the formless realm and how it is better than the form realm, how the form realm has more shortcomings.

If we are totally detached from the peace and happiness of the form realm but are attached to the formless realm, that makes us be reborn there. What makes us be reborn in all these states, the different realms within the form realm and the formless realm, is [the degree] of concentration, on the basis of the realization of *shamatha*, mental quiescence. Rebirth into all these realms happens on the basis of the realization of *shamatha*, calm abiding, mental quiescence. But even if we are reincarnated from the form realm to the formless realm, that is just another samsara.

There are four levels of the formless realm: limitless or infinite sky, limitless consciousness, nothingness and, the last one, the tip of samsara. The highest of the four levels in the formless realm is the tip of the samsara.

We approach those levels by thinking that [the person in] the form realm has a longer life and no sickness. Whereas the desire realm has a lot of sicknesses, a lot of problems, here there is more peace and happiness. We look at many qualities of that. By analyzing how the desire realm has many sufferings, many problems, we cut our attachment to this realm. We no longer have attachment to this realm, but we have attachment to the form realm and on the basis of shamatha realization, then we are born there.

Within the formless realm with the four levels of concentration, we get born in each level by looking at how the next level of concentration has more qualities than the previous one. We think of the shortcomings of the first level and how the second level of concentration has more qualities. That's how we approach the second level of concentration, by renouncing the attachment to the first level of concentration and thinking of the qualities of the second level of concentration. Then we get reborn there. We approach each of the levels like that.

There are six types of comprehension we have to go through in order to reach the first level of concentration, then from there, in order to reach the second level of concentration, there are six types of comprehension we have to actualize.

Then, thinking that the third level of concentration has more qualities, again, there are six types of comprehension we need to attain, so it's like that up to the tip of the samsara, by thinking of the disadvantages of the previous stages and looking at more qualities of the next stage.

Finally, we attain the highest realm of the three realms of samsara, the formless realm, and among the formless realm, we attain the tip of samsara. When we reach there, there's nothing higher. There is no next samsaric realm that we can compare it with. We can't see that the tip of samsara has shortcomings and the next, higher samsaric level is better, it has more benefit, more qualities, because there is nothing higher in samsara.

Therefore, even though we are totally detached from the desire realm, the form realm and the previous three stages of the formless realm, we are not detached from the tip of samsara because there is no next samsaric realm to compare it to.

Even if we have great renunciation for our world, the desire realm, for all the forms, sounds, smells and so forth, and we are totally detached from the form realm and the three levels of the formless realm, even if we have that much renunciation, we are not detached from the last realm because there's no other realm to compare it to, and that's what makes us unable to enter the path to liberation. We might have that much renunciation but we are unable to enter the path to liberation because we didn't generate renunciation to the *entire samsara*, which means even the *tip* of samsara.

Without talking about enlightenment, just liberation, we need to have total renunciation of the whole of samsara, including the tip of samsara, the last one. Unless we have that, it interferes with entering the path to liberation. By achieving the arya path with the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, only then can we cease all delusions including the seed. Only then can we be liberated totally from samsara, from all suffering and its causes.

Without this realization, when the karma of the being at that tip of samsara finishes, the same thing happens again. That being circles in the lower realms again, being born there again and going through this procedure again: [desire realm], form realm and formless realm.

Hindus have shamatha meditation and they can also achieve shamatha realizations, the perfect concentration free from gross and subtle scattering and sinking thoughts. Hindus and Buddhists share shamatha in common. So, they can also achieve this and go through the form realm and formless realm like that.

However, the important thing here is that we have been through this numberless times; we have been in the form realm and the formless realm numberless times in the past. It's nothing special. That is one thing to understand.

Why are we still suffering in samsara like that? From the lack of lamrim realizations, from not attaining total renunciation of the whole of samsara. We have never had that, or the wisdom

realizing emptiness or bodhicitta, these things. We have never developed these things in the past. That's why we are still suffering in samsara.

Therefore, it is not enough to have a motivation that simply wishes for a peaceful mind. All these levels of the form and formless realms have peace. If all we are talking about is a question of peace, if that is all we desire, then we can create the causes to achieve that within those samsaric realms.

Even if there's no wish for power or reputation—learning meditation we can teach it to others to gain some power, reputation and so forth—even if we don't have that attachment clinging to this life with this kind of expectation or desire, simply thinking about the mind, about having peace for ourselves, it is said even *that* we need to analyze. Perfecting the kind of meditation where we stop all the thoughts is more or less like being spaced out. Rinpoche used to say that it is generally the cause to be born as an animal, that the best thing we can achieve is the third level of the formless realm, nothingness.

We have to understand these things. There are many things to understand when we learn how to meditate; it's not just sitting and closing the eyes or staring straight ahead! Anyway, I'm joking! If we don't know how to meditate properly, meditation can *dull* our mind, it can make our mind dull. We can lose our intelligence if we spend too much time in this kind of meditation, making us more forgetful.

Therefore, it's unbelievably important to be educated about the motivation, to have the clarification about the motivation: what is Dharma, what is not Dharma; what makes virtue, what makes nonvirtue. What makes Dharma, what makes non-Dharma, that's the very first thing to learn before we start to meditate, before we do any actual concentration. We have to learn, to understand the correct motivation, the correct attitude for the concentration. Without that, we can waste our whole life. We believe we have been meditating for our whole life, "I've been meditating for thirty, forty, fifty years," but actually we have been wasting our whole life. Everything even becomes negative karma, nonvirtuous actions; nothing becomes Dharma.

[When we attend a meditation course,] if there's no mention about motivation in the whole course, not one single word of motivation, [nothing becomes the remedy to suffering]. I mean it's possible that some people naturally have a good heart, without the teacher introducing the



topic. From the student's side, some might think about enlightenment, liberation or the cessation of all the delusions even if they are not explained. It's possible. But generally speaking, it is very difficult for the actions during those weeks meditating in retreat [to become positive]. If there's no bodhicitta, nothing becomes the cause of enlightenment during all those weeks of meditation. If there's no renunciation, no total renunciation—including renunciation of the tip of samsara—nothing becomes the cause to achieve liberation from samsara. Without right view, nothing becomes the remedy to cut the root of the samsara.

That means that all those months and years, a lifetime's practice, all that meditation becomes just another additional cause of samsara. While every day, twenty-four hours a day, we are creating many causes of samsara. With each meditation we are creating another additional cause of samsara due to not knowing how to meditate.

#### **AS HUMANS WE CAN UNDERSTAND THE CAUSE OF HAPPINESS**

Therefore, the lamrim becomes *so important*, so important. The three principal aspects of the path become so important, not only in the attitude we adopt while meditating, not only at that time, but even in daily life. In daily life, the motivation becomes *the* most important thing.

I gave an example the other day of shopping, how even with shopping, if we shop with renunciation or bodhicitta or right view, it does not become harmful; it doesn't become negative karma. In a similar way, we have to do all the other activities in our daily life.

Practicing the lamrim in our daily life means living in this attitude. Our attitude of life should be the lamrim. Our attitude becomes bodhicitta, renunciation and right view—the lamrim; we live our life with the lamrim, with the attitude of the three principal aspects of the path. If not all three, even just one, renunciation or bodhicitta or whatever—this tells us how to live our life; this is the education in how to live our life, which only causes happiness and doesn't cause suffering.

To do that, we need to constantly watch the mind, to spy on our own mind. That's how we have the opportunity to keep the mind in the lamrim. When it goes the wrong way, we can bring it back into the lamrim. The lamrim is what helps, what inspires us in daily life to always practice,

to always watch the mind, to keep the mind in virtue, to keep the mind positive, healthy, peaceful. A mind kept in the lamrim is a happy mind.

We can do that by thinking of impermanence and death, how death can happen even today, at any moment, even within this hour, even within this minute. Thinking that death can happen today, at any moment, relates to the idea of karma.

If we don't relate impermanence and death with karma, death just seems to be separation and nothing else, separation from this body, separation from our family and possessions. But with impermanence and death and, behind that, the idea of karma, because we have created so much negative karma in this life and in past lives, from beginningless rebirths, that makes us aware there is great danger. The minute death happens, we will fall into the suffering realms and we are not sure when we can come back again. We are not sure how many eons it will take there, because if we are born there, there's no opportunity to collect virtue in that life.

We have received a human body now, a human body that can understand the meaning of the teachings, can understand the Dharma words. If something is explained to us, we can understand it. When we have explained to us what is the cause of happiness, the actions that result in happiness, motivated by non-anger, non-attachment, non-ignorance, within a few seconds, we understand what is the cause of happiness. And then, with this understanding, we have complete freedom to create the cause of happiness by ensuring any action we do is not possessed by anger, attachment or ignorance. With this understanding, we have incredible freedom to practice virtue, the cause of happiness in everyday life, as much as we want, even in one day.

Animals, even cats and dogs that live with us human beings, and cows, sheep, goats, even these animals, even if we tell them for a hundred eons that the cause of happiness is actions that result in happiness, motivated by non-anger, non-attachment, non-ignorance, even if we repeat that in their ears for one hundred eons—the cats and dogs, you remember the cats and dogs, maybe the cats left at your home!—and the sheep, goats, cows and horses, there's no way they can understand, *no way*, even if it is repeated for a hundred eons to them.

Now look at the differences. You can see how this human body that we have now, *today*, at this hour, is so precious. It's more precious than all those numberless other beings' bodies. Even in the god realm it is very difficult to practice the Dharma because they are overwhelmed with so

much sense pleasure, so much unbelievable wealth, sense enjoyments, their life is so full of distractions. Because of that, it's extremely difficult to think of the Dharma, extremely difficult to have realizations, the renunciation of samsara. And then no question about the lower realms. So, in just a few words we can now realize how we are so fortunate having this human body that gives us all this opportunity.

When we die we cannot be sure where we will end up. It could be a place where there is no opportunity to practice Dharma at all. We just can't be sure. And not only that, we might have to create negative karma so much. For example, birds must constantly kill. We can see them eating worms one after another all day long, except when they are taking a rest. But while they are taking a rest they are also cleaning insects from their body. It's unbelievable suffering. We think those small birds are really beautiful, so happy or something like that, but actually they are full of tiny insects that are eating them, making them uncomfortable.

When I was at Geshe Sopa's place in Madison, in my room, a girl brought a small bird. I think it had fallen down somewhere. It was not dead but she brought it in to pray for it. It was left for just a very short time on the carpet. I touched not the actual body but the container the body was in, and so many tiny insects ran over my fingers, just by touching it a little bit. They were even on the carpets. Because I carry the Buddha's relics, and many photos of the Buddha and the merit field and stupas, as well as some statues, I asked her to take the bird around the room, to carry it around in circumambulation. She did that quite a number of times.

Anyway, you can see how animals create so much negative karma, harming others, all day long. But we human beings, even though we might create negative karma, we can also create good karma and we can purify the negative karma we have created. They are not like that.

What inspires us to practice in everyday life, to keep the mind in the lamrim, is using that method to spy on our mind all the time. And what gives us energy to do that, what supports it, is thinking that death can happen to us even today, that it can happen in any minute. But we should study the lamrim, we should meditate on karma, otherwise just thinking about death doesn't mean much; it only means separation from things.

The awareness of the lower realms, karma, all this may not come. So, it's not just death we need to think about; there are many things that make us aware. That's the main point. One thing is

karma and another is the lower realms. And even if we are thinking of our own future lives' happiness, liberation and ultimate happiness, the other reason we practice Dharma *now* continuously is that, with this life, because we have this precious human body, especially this perfect human body, this is the best time to benefit other sentient beings. When we meditate on the usefulness of the perfect human rebirth, we see we can enlighten other sentient beings. As I mentioned, we can cause other sentient beings to have all these four levels of happiness, including highest enlightenment, by developing our mind in the path. This perfect human body gives us this incredible opportunity.

It doesn't last a long time. It is not forever that we have this perfect human body; it can be stopped at any time. Like a water bubble on top of the water, it can pop at any time. Like the flickering light or the candle flame in the wind, it can be stopped any time.

Now, going back to where I came from, to achieve enlightenment ourselves in order to benefit other sentient beings, we need to do the practice of listening, reflecting and meditating on the complete path to enlightenment without missing anything, otherwise this cannot happen.

So, what I was trying to say before was that even if the path that we practice is correct, if it's not complete, if it's just a part of the path to enlightenment, again we cannot achieve enlightenment, we cannot cease all the gross and subtle defilements.

As I mentioned the Kadampa geshe's example, even if we cannot do extensive study of the entire Buddhadharma, studying the whole path in a very extensive way, at least we must study the essence of the whole path, and then, with a correct understanding, we can practice. We can have a correct unmistakable practice, and then we can have a correct unmistakable realization. That way will lead us to enlightenment.

### **MEDITATION ON MIND AS CREATOR**

What I would like you to do is a meditation, but this is one to especially practice at break time. It is to practice awareness, especially during these three days. If you can put more effort into this, that helps in two ways: one is the basic philosophy of Buddhism that you are the creator, your mind is the creator. There is no separate being who is the creator of your life; you are the creator of your life.

This is the principle of the Buddhist philosophy. It's not just Buddhist philosophy, it's your daily life experience. If you check, if you analyze, you see that you are the creator; nobody else is the creator of your life, you are. I just want to mention that one thing for you to meditate on. This is especially to practice awareness in break time.

I would also like to mention during these three days of practice to really practice mindfulness. It's very good; it opens many things. Basically, it shows how things come from the mind.

Normally in our daily life, we don't see this. Even though that is the real evolution—things come from the mind, anything that exists comes from the mind. Even though that is the reality, in our daily life we don't think that way. We either don't know this or we know it intellectually but we are not aware of it in our daily life, and so problems come.

We are not practicing mindfulness on this point, therefore we still believe everything comes from outside, all our problems come from outside. When we encounter a problem, such as a relationship problem, in our daily life we believe it comes from outside, it comes from other people. Then that disturbs the mind; that makes anger arise and all the emotional, disturbing thoughts. Then that makes us engage in negative karma, where we harm ourselves and we harm others. And that makes samsara endless.

#### **MEDITATION ON EMPTINESS: WE LABEL AND BELIEVE THE LABEL**

This meditation also helps us realize emptiness because it can really help us recognize the object to be refuted, the false object, the thing that doesn't exist. It helps us to recognize what appears inherently existent, how that is false, and that realization then makes us realize emptiness.

For example, when we are not introduced by anybody to this statue—this statue, cross-legged, with the pinnacle on the head and hands held—when it is not explained that this is a buddha statue, because nobody has educated us, nobody has introduced this as a buddha statue, our mind doesn't label “buddha.” Because our mind doesn't label “buddha,” we have no belief that this is a buddha. Because of that, we have no appearance of this as a buddha. It is just a statue, cross-legged; we just see that as a statue or painting, that's all.

Now, after somebody introduces us, pointing to this statue or painting, saying “this is a buddha statue,” or “buddha painting,” labeling it as that, we then follow that. Our mind also makes up the label, “buddha” “buddha statue” “buddha painting.” By following that person’s words, our mind also labels it as that and we believe in that. Now we have the concept, “this is a buddha statue” or “buddha painting.”

That’s very important. When we know nothing about it, there are no labels, “buddha,” “buddha statue,” “buddha painting.” There’s nothing about a buddha in our appearance and also in our concept. After that, then there’s the projection, then there is the appearance of the buddha statue, the buddha painting. So, to have this appearance that this is a buddha statue, this is a buddha painting, there’s a whole procedure, an evolution. The painting of buddha, the statue of buddha, the appearance that this is a buddha statue, that this is a painting of buddha, now we can see this came from our mind.

It is exactly the same, when we were a child, before we were introduced to numbers—number one, two, three, four, five—before we were educated by somebody... maybe letters might be easier. If you find this difficult, you can use other letters like “Z” or different things.

However, before we were introduced to anything, before we were taught that “this is number one,” what we saw on the blackboard or on the paper was just this line. At that time, our mind had not labeled it “number one,” and there was no belief in that. We didn’t have the appearance that this was number one at that time. It was just a line like this. Then, on a certain day, on a certain hour, on a certain minute, when somebody explained that this is number one and we follow that, our own mind also labels it “number one” and we believe in that.

Then after that, we project the appearance of number one; it appears as number one, that this is number one. You can now see that this appearance of number one came from our mind a hundred percent because from the beginning we didn’t have this; we didn’t know it is number one.

The whole alphabet is like that. The whole alphabet from “A” to “Z” is like that. The whole appearance, “A,” “B,” “C,” “D,” through to “Z” comes from our mind.

All the forms we see are the same. I see pillars, I see light, I see a floor, I see flowers, I see Tibetan incense, I see people, I see statues and paintings, I see other forms, all these things, “I see this and that.” All these appearances that we see, all come from our own mind. All these forms, colors, whatever we are looking at, all come from our own mind, including the “I.” I’m not saying that the I is form, but it is similar. The I, the body, the mind, all of these, even these things that we believe, come from our own mind completely. It is the same as I mentioned with the example of number one and the statue. All these appearances come from our mind.

It’s the same when we are outside. When we look at the sky, the appearance of sky also comes from our own mind. “That is sky,” but it comes from by our mind labeling it that. After we label it, we have the appearance of sky, that this is sky. And when we look at water, oceans, rivers, at the appearance of water, “this is water” comes from our mind, because [the appearance] happens after the label.

And the same thing with trees. When we look at trees, the tree that we see in our view, this appearance that there is a tree, that comes from our own mind. It happened after the label. Our mind labeled it and we believed in that. And similarly when we look at a road, that there is a road comes from our own mind. And the same with a car. And in our view, that this person is a friend and this person is an enemy, that all comes from our mind. That is easy to understand. That enemy and friend come from our mind is easy to understand because it depends on what kind of concept we build. It all has to do with the concept.

So, practice the mindfulness of this. There’s form and similarly there’s sound. Sound also comes from the mind. All the sounds of people coughing, dogs barking, the sound of paper, these all come from our own mind. Forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects; do the meditation on how everything comes from the mind.

Especially in break time when you are outside, walk around and do this meditation. Keep the awareness of how everything comes from your mind.

As I mentioned before, this meditation leads to a realization of emptiness. It helps a lot to see the inherently existent appearance, the inherently existent object, that all these things appear there on the base as something real from there. This helps us to see how they appear back to us

as totally opposite to [how they actually exist]. They come from our mind but they appear to us as if they exist from their own side, as if they never came from our mind.

Practicing awareness in this way, by analyzing according to the evolution, helps us see what appears back to us as existing from its own side is false *there*; it's empty *there*, it doesn't exist.

The other one is that this meditation also becomes a very powerful meditation for patience, for tolerance. Because everything comes from our mind, we don't find any excuse to get angry at a person.

## DEDICATION

“Due to all the past, present, future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the sentient beings, may loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta, which is the source of all the happiness, the success for myself and for all sentient beings, be generated within my own mind and in the minds of all sentient beings without delay of even a second. May that which is generated be increased.”

Please dedicate the merits to the Buddha of Compassion, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the source of all the peace and happiness for all sentient beings. “May His Holiness have a stable life and may all his holy wishes succeed immediately, as well as that of all the other holy beings and all my virtuous friends.”

[Long-life prayer to His Holiness the Dalai Lama]

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the sentient beings, from now on whatever action I do, whatever life I experience—ups and downs, healthy or unhealthy, having cancer or not having cancer, all those sicknesses happening or not happening, being poor or rich, gain or loss, receiving criticism from others or receiving praise from others, bad reputation or good reputation, even living or dying—whatever happens in my life and even reincarnating in the lower realms, even the hell realm, may all this experience and all the actions that I do from now on become most beneficial, causing all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. Whatever I do now, whatever actions I do or whatever life I experience from now on, the most important thing is, the main



thing is not so much whether I have a long or short life or I am healthy or unhealthy, I have sicknesses or don't have sicknesses, the main thing, the most important thing is to be beneficial for others. That's the most important thing; that's the main purpose of life. Whatever happens to me, whatever life I experience—even being born in the hell realm with its heaviest suffering—may all my actions and experience be most beneficial for all living beings; may it cause all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.” So, dedicate like this.

When you pray, when you dedicate, the other thing is normally you visualize your own root guru, oneness with all the buddhas, then you pray.

Or the other way is you can visualize Medicine Buddha, who is very powerful for success, and then you dedicate, you pray. Or you can visualize Compassion Buddha or any buddha that you want to feel close to, that you are practicing. You can also pray like that, thinking they are oneness with the guru, with a guru yoga mind, you can also do that. Besides dedicating the merits, it's very powerful to do it with the object of refuge if you pray.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of sentient beings, may I be able to offer infinite benefit to all sentient beings like Lama Tsongkhapa, by having the same qualities within me from now on, in all my future lifetimes.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of the sentient beings, which exist but do not exist from their own side, may the I, who exists but doesn't exist from its own side, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment, which exists but does not exist from its own side, and lead all the sentient beings, who exist but do not exist from their own side, to that enlightenment, which exists but does not exist from its own side, by myself alone, who exists but does not exist from its own side.

“I dedicate all the merits to follow the holy deeds of the bodhisattvas Samantabhadra and Manjugosha, Ksitigarbha and so forth, and I dedicate the merits in the way that the three-time buddhas and bodhisattvas highly admire.

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me, by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of the sentient beings, may Lama Tsongkhapa’s stainless teachings of sutra and tantra be actualized completely within me in this life without the delay of even a second, as well as my own family members and all the students and benefactors in the organization and in the minds of sentient beings. May Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s teachings and Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings exist, flourish and spread in all directions, and may I be able to cause all this to happen.”

[Rinpoche chants in Tibetan]

Thank you so much. Goodnight.

*Student:* Can I ask a question?

*Rinpoche:* Oh, yes, yes.

*Student:* When I look at something, does anything exist from its own side or is it all coming from my perception?

*Rinpoche:* The appearance that you see comes from your mind.

*Student:* Everything?

*Rinpoche:* Yeah, all the appearances you have come from your mind. Everything, yes, yes, yes. Your view comes from your mind, yes.

## Lecture 5

November 29, 1999

### **WE ARE ONE, OTHERS ARE COUNTLESS**

The purpose of our life is not just to achieve happiness for ourselves, not just for that; the purpose of living is to benefit other sentient beings. There are two reasons we should work for others.

It's difficult to come up with the two reasons! I got stuck!

However, one reason is because we want happiness, that's one thing. The other one is because what other sentient beings want is happiness and what they do not want is suffering. So, others also need happiness. These are the two reasons.

As I mentioned at the beginning, the meaning of our life is to benefit others. Generally, in the world in democratic countries, unless the leader is a bodhisattva, [it can be dangerous]. If the leader is a Dharma leader whose main aim is to benefit others, with no thought of seeking happiness or power for themselves, with only the thought of seeking happiness for others, that is different. Their attitude is seeing themselves as a servant to the people, only seeking the happiness of others. Unless the leader is a buddha or bodhisattva with those qualities and skills and wisdom, it can be dangerous for the country. Instead of benefiting the country, the leader can be harmful to the country. For a democracy to work, to protect and help the population, the decisions have to be correct, and there is always the danger of making wrong decisions.

We ordinary people don't have an omniscient mind, clairvoyance, so we judge things depending on what most people like. Without an omniscient mind, clairvoyance, with an ordinary mind, we can't see into the future and so forth, so how we can make decisions about what most people like? There is no way to judge what most people like. But we can use that as a definition of whether that person is capable or that person is good or beneficial.

What do you call people you vote for? [*Student:* Candidate.] Candidate. There are a few candidates, and the public votes for the one they like the most, deciding who will be the leader of the country, the prime minister or president. As I mentioned before, because the public cannot

see the future, their decision is not necessarily the best decision, the correct decision. Only when the future becomes the present and when the problem arises, you can see that, not before.

Here's the main part of what I want to say. Whichever candidate the most people vote for is elected. Why? Because the decision of the majority of people is considered more important than the decision of the minority. The minority's decision is not regarded as so important; the majority's decision is regarded as more important. I'm not sure that this means it is the most correct decision but generally because more people choose that person, that decision is officially accepted.

Similarly, we ourselves are just one person, whereas others are numberless. Just as the vote of the minority is not as important as the vote of the majority, we are one person and all other living beings are numberless. Our wishes are exactly the same; we all want happiness and do not want suffering or problems, not even unpleasant dreams, not even discomfort in a dream. And we all have an equal right to obtain happiness; we want happiness and do not want suffering. This is in the nature of the mind, it's within us, but we are one and others are numberless, therefore no matter how important we think we are, that is nothing. Even if we achieve ultimate happiness, total freedom from all the suffering and causes for ourselves, we are just one person. Even if we are able to achieve this, we are just one person. It's nothing surprising.

### **THE HEAT OF THE HELLS**

We might be in the hell realm. The reason I'm using hell, although some people might be happy in hell, they might enjoy hell, thinking hell is like a park, anyway, the reason I'm using hell is because there we experience the heaviest suffering, the greatest problems. Compared to the suffering of the hell realm, all the problems of human beings are nothing, they are great enjoyment in comparison. No matter how many problems there are, the life of a human is still great enjoyment compared the life of the animals, the hungry ghosts or the hell beings, especially the hell beings. The worst, the most terrible suffering we have is nothing compared to the suffering of those other lower realm beings.

For example, if we were to compare the combined energy of all the fire of the human realm to one tiny spark of the hell realm, to how unbearable it is, it is nothing. It is mentioned in the teachings that all the fire energy in the human realm that at the end of the world, when the world

is disintegrated, when all the rocky mountains melt and get destroyed by this intensive fire which comes when the world starts to end, that is sixty or seventy times hotter than all the energy of the fire that is now in the human world. But one tiny fire spark of the hell realm is seven times hotter than the fire energy of the end of the world. Compared to the hell realm fire, the fire of the human realm is as enjoyable as a cool breeze; even a tiny fire spark of the hell realm is unbelievably hot.

Normal fire cannot melt rock but fire from a volcano can, turning the rock into saliva. No, not saliva! Lava! I said “saliva.” Maybe the lava running out of the volcano is somebody’s saliva! Anyway, the lava that runs down the mountain is liquid that is oneness with the fire. No other fire in the human world melts rock, but this particular fire, which is oneness with liquid, when it flows down the volcano and touches the rocks, those rocks, those very hard things, are melted because it’s so hot.

I remember, I went to where a volcano was erupting in Hawaii. A student who started a center there (which has now disappeared) took me to see the volcano. It was so hot and you could see the rocks that had melted. Things like that intensity of fire exist. That is one logic we need to understand.

There are eight immeasurable hot hells and eight immeasurable cold hells, and then there are the neighboring hell realms, sometimes counted as four and sometimes as six.

One of the neighboring hells is called the uncrossable torrent, *chuwu rapme* in Tibetan. *Chu* is water, but this is the same as lava, fire when it’s liquid. This is still not a major hell; it’s just a secondary, smaller hell surrounded by the major hells.

This is what we can see happening in some places in the world. It gives us an idea, allowing us to understand the suffering of the hell realm, of how the energy of fire can be so hot due to the karma of the sentient beings.

I saw on TV, (on TV not TB), I don’t know which country it was, maybe Africa, a volcano erupted, and stones and fire flew out the mountain and flowed down, pervading the forest. All the animals and insects living in the forest had no choice. It’s unbelievable how much they suffer when this happens.

Compared to the heat in the hot hells, contacting the hottest fire in the human world is like experiencing a cool breeze. So, no matter how many problems there are in human life, it is nothing. It's great happiness if we compare it to the unimaginable sufferings of animals, hungry ghosts and especially hell beings.

### **USING PROBLEMS TO GENERATE BODHICITTA**

These are good to compare to others who have much more suffering. When we compare our problems to others' sufferings that are so much bigger, ours seem nothing. Ours is a life of incredible freedom, of great enjoyment.

Thinking this way also helps us to not be depressed. Usually, when the mind is so unhappy, we cannot practice Dharma, we are unable to meditate. And when we are too excited, when life has too much luxury, again we are unable to practice Dharma. If we don't practice meditation to keep our mind stable, to always keep our mind in a state of peace and happiness, then whenever these two extremes happen, we are unable to practice Dharma. Both extremes become an obstacle.

Therefore, we can use various meditation techniques, such as thought transformation, so that whenever we encounter problems, we can use that problem to make our mind more aware of the sufferings of others, to generate compassion and loving kindness for other sentient beings, those who are devoid of happiness. Whenever we encounter a problem, we can use the experience of the problem to develop bodhicitta, the altruistic mind to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings.

By experiencing the problem to develop compassion and loving kindness for others, to develop bodhicitta, it becomes a path to enlightenment. We transform our experience of the problem into the path to enlightenment. Using the problem to develop loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta for other sentient beings becomes the path to enlightenment and helps us cease the defilements, the negative karma, that block us from achieving enlightenment.

By experiencing the problem for others, whether it's for one sentient being or for numberless sentient beings—even if it is just for one sentient being—whatever problem we encounter

becomes a very powerful means of purifying countless lifetimes' negative karma. And experiencing the problem for others, whether it's one sentient being or many, becomes an unbelievably powerful means of collecting extensive merits.

Using the problem to develop bodhicitta for others within ourselves, we are making it most profitable because what we achieve by using the problem in that way is enlightenment. What we achieve from it is the cessation of all the gross and subtle defilements and the completion of all the Mahayana realizations, the ultimate goal being full enlightenment. That is what we get from that business of experiencing suffering for others.

This is the best way to transform problems into happiness. In that way, we are achieving the highest profit in our life. Among all the profits in the world, we are achieving the highest profit. We are making our life most beneficial with that.

By this thought transformation practice of using problems that we encounter to develop bodhicitta, by experiencing them for the benefit of others, we are making our mind most satisfied, most fulfilled, most happy. Deep inside our heart we have peace and happiness. It gives us incredible satisfaction knowing that we are doing the most worthwhile thing in our life, the best thing in our life.

Even when we are leading a luxurious life, experiencing comfort and pleasure, we use that to develop the two bodhicittas—conventional bodhicitta, the altruistic mind to achieve enlightenment, and absolute bodhicitta, the wisdom realizing emptiness. Even having comfort becomes the path to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings.

We use both ways, experiencing problems and experiencing comfort. We experience problems for others, and we dedicate our happiness for others. We share or we dedicate, we make charity of our comfort and happiness for other sentient beings.

Using happiness to develop the two bodhicittas, whatever experience happens to us, everything is transformed into the path to achieve full enlightenment, the cessation of all the mistakes of mind and the completion of all the realizations.

That means we don't stay there being spaced out! After enlightenment we are not just stuck there being spaced out or blissed out. After that, we do perfect work for the numberless sentient beings equaling the limitless sky naturally, effortlessly, spontaneously. In that way, we can gradually bring the numberless sentient beings to enlightenment. Those whose minds are obscured, who are suffering and devoid of happiness, we gradually bring everyone to full enlightenment. Through this thought transformation we make the best use of our life, we make it the most productive.

### **WE ARE ONE, OTHERS ARE COUNTLESS (BACK TO)**

What was I saying before this extra thing just came out?

So, even if we, this one person, is born in the hell realm, it's just one person. When we compare the numberless other sentient beings born in hell, we are just one person, so there is nothing much to be upset about.

And even if we achieve ultimate liberation for ourselves, that is no great surprise.

Because others are numberless, they are more important than us. Our own importance is nothing. By number, it is lost when we think of how others are numberless. How we are important is nothing, it's lost, because others are numberless.

That's one type of logic. That is normally how people in the world decide what is most important, and this is similar to that.

### **RINPOCHE AND MONTANA FISH**

But maybe we still feel that we are very important, that we feel something here that makes us very important, maybe in this. [Rinpoche shows something] I don't think this thing, anyway, but here. Anyway, we naturally feel we are very important, we are the most important, we are more important than others.

If the thought comes that we are important, when we analyze it, when we question it, what is the reason? When we look for the reason why we are more important than the numberless others,



what is the reason? Is there a reason? Is there? Did you find some reason? Do you find some reason why you are more important than others?

Maybe you found some reasons during this course! Maybe you didn't find a reason before but now you have! Has somebody found a reason? I think maybe *you* found a reason. Did you find a reason?

*Student:* Yes.

*Rinpoche:* Where are you from?

*Student:* Montana.

*Rinpoche:* In Montana, are there many people who found reasons?

*Student:* Yeah.

*Rinpoche:* I think you might be the first one who discovered the reason.

*Student:* The reasons or reason? I guess, I don't know, not really, I'm also part of the ecology. I trout fish though. I fly fish, I trout fish.

*Rinpoche:* Oh I see, you fish. Now is the perfect time to look for a reason.

*Student:* Like when I was in Montana? I have a close affinity to trees!

*Rinpoche:* Closer to trees!

*Student:* I dedicated my life to protecting trees.

*Rinpoche:* I think besides the trees, you are already very close to the pillar! I think this is a very important analysis, to decide whether the Montana fish are more important or you are more important. Now is the real best time to look for the reason, the best meditation.

*Student:* I see, my real reason? Because I think I have a special mission or dedication to protect forests, the trees, but I don't know if it makes me more important than other people.

*Rinpoche:* I'm talking about the fish, the Montana fish. Now it's a very good time, the Montana fish and you. Analyze whether they are more important or you. What's your name, please?

*Student:* Daniel Honey.

*Rinpoche:* Daniel Honey. So, are all those Montana fish more important or is Daniel Honey more important than those Montana fish?

*Daniel:* Well, I like to eat them!

*Rinpoche:* Did you ever think what the fish like and what they don't like?

*Daniel:* I let a lot of them go!

*Rinpoche:* After the hook or before the hook? You let a lot of the fish go, meaning after the hook or before the hook?

*Daniel:* I take out the hook. After I catch them, I let most of them go.

*Rinpoche:* But they will go through a lot of pain though, so much pain.

*Daniel:* It might hurt them a little.

*Rinpoche:* In any case, let's say you are swimming and somebody makes a mistake and thinks you are a big fish! And you get a hook in your mouth. Do you think that would be a lot of pain or very little pain?

*Daniel:* I don't think fish have many nerves in the mouth.

*Rinpoche:* You don't have many nerves?

*Daniel:* It probably would hurt, yeah, right.

*Rinpoche:* So, that research is very important. What happens to the fish, if somebody did the same thing to you, how would you feel? I think that's very good research. There is so much research in the West; this is very important research.

*Daniel:* What about a barbless hook where you cut off the barb. The hook alone doesn't hurt as much.

*Rinpoche:* I don't have much idea. It's barbless? It goes in without a hook?

*Daniel:* Yeah, right. Just the metal.

*Rinpoche:* I see, without this bit, with just the sharp point. Anyway, what's your name, please? Of course, Daniel. Wouldn't you dislike even a small discomfort, something stuck there like that? Right or not? Or would you enjoy it?

*Daniel:* Probably not.

*Rinpoche:* Anyway, thank you very much. Thank you for the good research. I'm very happy for the Montana fish. I think they will clap their hands! Anyway, they don't have hands, so maybe they will move their fins. When you return to Montana, they will all do like this! "Now Mr. Daniel will free us. After coming back from the Kopan course, he won't catch us. Now he won't catch us" They will all be so excited, maybe they will make a big party when you return to Montana! Thank you so much.

### **THE DICTATOR OF SELF-CHERISHING TELLS US WE ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT**

What I was saying before was that we feel like that constantly. Twenty-four hours a day, we feel we are more important than all other sentient beings. Among all sentient beings, we are the most important; among all the buddhas and all the bodhisattvas, among all sentient beings, we are the most important.

Spontaneously, we feel like this all the time. But if we make the research, if we ask the question, “Is that true?” If we question like that, whether our feelings are true, whether they are logical, we cannot find a single reason why we are more important than others.

Also, not just others but even with one sentient being, comparing ourselves with another person, who is more important? From our side, if we analyze, if we question ourselves, “Am I more important or is this person more important?” we cannot find a single reason why we are more important than that person, not one single, logical, valid reason.

Of course, we may be able to say, “Blah, blah, blah, blah,” but then all the blah blahs are not necessarily a valid reason. So, there’s no one single valid reason that we are more important than even one person. But this is exactly the way we feel, twenty-four hours a day. Thinking we are more important than the other is *exactly* the reasoning of the dictator who thinks they are more important than the entire population. “My happiness is more important than all the people in the country, than the population, than all the people in the world.” There is not one single, valid reason that proves that the dictator is more important than the whole population, than all the human beings in this world.

That is exactly the same as the feeling we have all the time, that we are more important than others. In that way, it’s like a dictatorship. The mind which feels like that is the egocentric mind, the self-cherishing thought. The self-cherishing thought is exactly like the dictator that people hate, the one everybody protests about. This ego, this self-centered mind we have is exactly like that.

A dictator is a dictator of one country, but this is the dictator of *all* sentient beings, thinking, “I am more important than all sentient beings, than all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, than anybody.” The self-cherishing mind is like a dictator to all sentient beings.

If others look at us and think of us, they feel that we only think of ourselves. Our survival comes from others. This precious human body, this perfect human body is due to the kindness of others. All the enjoyments, all the comfort, the shelter, clothing, food, drink, everything—every single comfort happens due to the kindness of other sentient beings, it is received from others. All this enjoyment, this comfort, every single thing we have received by the kindness of numberless other sentient beings who have worked for this, suffered for this, died for this, killed

for this. Numberless sentient beings have died, some have killed and created negative karma and borne so much hardship and suffering for these enjoyments we have, for all this food and clothing, all this shelter, all these things, that we have received.

Our survival every day, every hour, every minute is totally dependent on the kindness of sentient beings, including this life's parents. Our peace, enjoyment, comfort—everything comes from numberless other sentient beings. We have received [the enjoyments] due to the kindness of their existence, the kindness of their having suffered for this, having died for this, having borne so much hardship for this.

Now, these sentient beings look at us and they see that we are only thinking of ourselves, twenty-four hours a day. We are only thinking of our own happiness; we are only working for ourselves. For our whole life, we are doing the same thing, only cherishing ourselves, only working for ourselves. In the view of other sentient beings, it's very sad; it's something very ungenerous.

So, what I want to say is that it is the self-cherishing thought that controls us like a dictator, overpowering us, making us think that we are the most important, while there is not the slightest reason to prove that. Even comparing ourselves with one other person, there's not the slightest reason to prove that we are more important than them. This selfish feeling is totally wrong.

Therefore, since other sentient beings are numberless, who we should cherish is others. Who are more important are others, not ourselves. Whom we should cherish is others; who we should work for is other sentient beings. Their happiness is more important than our happiness. For them to achieve happiness is more important. Therefore, who we should work for is other sentient beings.

### **WORKING FOR OTHERS IS THE DOOR TO ALL HAPPINESS**

Now, let's look at even one sentient being. Do we work for ourselves or do we work for this person? Do we cherish ourselves or do we cherish this person? Even one sentient being, whether it's animal or a human being. Before I was talking by number, but now, even in this case, should we cherish this one sentient being?

Before I mention that, if we cherish this person, we can achieve enlightenment, we can achieve all the realizations of the Mahayana path, method and wisdom. We can achieve all that if we cherish this one person, this one sentient being. We can complete the two types of merit—the merit of wisdom and the merit of virtue—and we can achieve enlightenment, whether it’s an insect or a person, whoever it is. Cherishing even one sentient being is opening the door to skies of happiness.

That thought of wishing one sentient being to have happiness, even just one sentient being, is the door to all happiness. It is the door to all temporary happiness and to ultimate happiness, including enlightenment for ourselves.

Remember I mentioned the four happinesses that we cause other sentient beings: this life’s comfort and happiness; the happiness of all the coming future lives; liberation from samsara and full enlightenment. Our thought to bring one sentient being to happiness becomes the door to all this happiness: to this life’s success and happiness, to all our future lives’ happiness, to the cessation of the whole of suffering and its causes and to the highest liberation, enlightenment. Our thought to bring even one sentient being to happiness becomes the door opening all this happiness.

This thought cherishing this one sentient being, the wish to bring one sentient being to happiness, is the cause for us to have the infinite qualities of a buddha, a buddha’s holy body, holy speech, holy mind, besides having all the qualities of Dharma and Sangha. With our thought to bring even one sentient being to happiness, the benefit is like the limitless sky.

It’s a simple thing. This is just to give an idea, but we can go into great detail, looking at all the realizations and qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, as well as all the temporary happiness and enjoyment we get from that.

With all this achievement that we get from our thought of bringing even one sentient being to happiness, with all the realizations and with enlightenment, we are able to cause numberless sentient beings happiness in that life and happiness in future lives as well as bringing them the cessation of all suffering and its causes and even bringing them to the highest happiness, full enlightenment. From this thought that we generate to one sentient being, as a result we are able

to cause all this happiness for numberless other sentient beings. Just this is unbelievable. There is no greater profit we can achieve in life.

Now listen! Pay attention. All this benefit we get from the thought to bring one sentient being to happiness, and what we can offer numberless other sentient beings, all *this* we get from this person, from the thought to benefit this person, to bring this sentient being to happiness. We get all these skies of benefit from this sentient being, by practicing bodhicitta on this sentient being. In other words, this sentient being is giving us skies of benefit, and with that we can benefit all sentient beings. This one sentient being is giving us this opportunity.

Now we can see these sentient beings are the most precious ones in our life, whether it's one insect or one human being. They are the most kind, the most precious ones in our life.

We think money is very precious. Nobody needs to explain how important money is, OM MANI PADME HUM, money! Everybody likes money; nobody needs to explain how important money is. Everybody knows money is precious, we all cherish it. We can see the benefits because of what we can do with it. We can have many chocolates or biscuits! Anyway, I'm joking! We understand the benefits of money, therefore everybody cherishes money.

People sacrifice their lives for money because they see its benefits. They give up their life for money. I'm not saying that is correct, but I'm saying they do this because they see the benefits of money, how money is precious.

It's exactly the same here. Since I brought up this example, money, we can compare the value of one sentient being and mountains of diamonds. Diamonds are more precious than gold, when rocks and stones become diamonds. Maybe at that time something else would be more precious.

Anyway, one sentient being and mountains of diamonds, mountains of dollars. Even if every bill is a million dollars and there are mountains of it. And then there's one sentient being. Which is more precious in our life?

The example can be anything that we like so much. It can be cars. It can be piles of antiques, it can be piles of broken cups or piles of old bones, if somebody likes bones very much! The example doesn't have to be dollars or diamonds but anything that we like most; it can be

mountains of chocolate or anything. So now, those great mountains of many millions of dollars, or diamonds, and this one sentient being, which is more precious in our life?

Without mountains of diamonds alone, even if we own that much, by depending on the existence of the suffering sentient beings, we can make the vow to not harm sentient beings. Because sentient beings exist, we can practice morality, which causes us to achieve not only the peace and happiness of this life, but a good rebirth in all the coming future lives and also liberation from samsara, as well as, by practicing morality with bodhicitta, that causes us to achieve enlightenment. By practicing morality with this suffering sentient being, we can achieve all this. We get all this benefit from this sentient being.

Even if we don't have one single dollar or diamond, we can practice morality on this sentient being and, from that, we can achieve all this happiness up to enlightenment. Whereas even if we own that much wealth—mountains of diamonds or mountains of millions of dollars—there's no way to practice morality on that, but because sentient beings exist, we can make charity and the same again, we can achieve all the happiness from that. And the same with patience and perseverance. All this is the same. With money alone there is no opportunity to practice charity to achieve every happiness. Like that, it's same with the other perfections.

Even if we don't have even a dollar or a diamond, we can practice loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta on the object, sentient beings, the obscured suffering sentient beings, and we can achieve enlightenment. Sentient beings give us all these benefits, all the realizations of the path and enlightenment. We get all this benefit.

Without depending on these sentient beings, even if we have that much wealth—mountains of diamonds or mountains of million dollars—there's no way to generate compassion, no way to generate loving kindness, no way to generate bodhicitta, so there is no possibility to achieve enlightenment. Without depending on the kindness of sentient beings, even just the existence of suffering sentient beings, just this alone, even if we have that much wealth, with that alone we cannot stop rebirth in the lower realms and achieve a good rebirth in the next life. And then no question, we cannot attain liberation from samsara. With that much wealth alone we cannot achieve enlightenment without depending on the kindness of sentient beings.



Therefore, all this wealth, no matter how valuable it is, is nothing. Even though before we analyzed it appeared more precious and the sentient being seemed nothing, now, after analyzing, the value of those mountains of diamonds and that many millions of dollars is nothing when we compare it to one sentient being, whether it's an insect or a human being. The benefit we get from this one being is like the sky; it is so unbelievably precious. That much wealth is nothing.

There is no valuable material that can compare to one sentient being, that is of the same level as the value of a sentient being. Among all material things, a wish-granting jewel is the most valuable. This is the jewel that in the past wheel-turning kings with great merit got from the ocean. After cleaning them in three ways, they are put on top of a banner on the roof of a house, and on the fifteenth day, on those special days, by praying to them, a sentient being receives whatever enjoyment, whatever material possession they need. This is basically due to their merit and the power of the material thing, the wish-granting jewel.

This is the most precious thing among all material possessions, but, even if we had mountains of wish-granting jewels, even if the sky were filled with wish-granting jewels, it could never compete, it could never compare to the value of one sentient being. Even that many wish-granting jewels filling the whole sky is nothing when we compare the value of one sentient being, the benefits we can receive. All those wish-granting jewels are nothing compared to the value of one sentient being in our life.

The reason they use wish-granting jewels is because it's the most precious thing among all material objects, and if we can find one, it is very easy to feel how precious it is.

Sorry, this is to get the feeling that even one sentient being is the most precious one, the most important one. When we compare ourselves and the other sentient beings, whether it's an insect or a human being, they are the most important.

#### **THE DISADVANTAGES OF SELF-CHERISHING**

I'll mention this, then I stop there. I'm not going to continue. I think I jumped without bringing in the beginning!

What happens without cherishing other sentient beings, when we are only cherishing ourselves? For example, even in one day of our life, what makes one day of our life completely empty is this ego, the self-cherishing thought.

If this ego, the self-cherishing thought, is there, it doesn't allow us to have bodhicitta; it blocks bodhicitta, the thought of cherishing others, the thought of benefiting others, from arising. It blocks us seeking enlightenment for others.

Then, in all the activities within twenty-four hours, nothing becomes the cause of enlightenment. The ego, the self-cherishing thought, doesn't allow any of our activities within twenty-four hours to become the cause of enlightenment, even if we are meditating, reciting prayers or doing a retreat, because it doesn't allow bodhicitta to arise, the thought of benefiting others, of cherishing others. When everything is done with the self-centered mind, nothing becomes the cause of enlightenment.

Because of the self-cherishing thought, because of cherishing the I, attachment to samsaric happiness arises. Cherishing the I doesn't allow us to have the thought of renunciation, to be free from samsara, from the whole of suffering and its cause, karma and delusions. Renunciation doesn't arise.

Every activity we do twenty-four hours a day with attachment just becomes the cause of samsara. And not just that, because of cherishing the I, the particular attachment—the attachment clinging to this life—this nonvirtuous thought arises. Then, all the activities we do twenty-four hours a day, even the actions of meditation, retreat, saying prayers, everything becomes nonvirtue. Cherishing the I doesn't allow any of those actions to become the Dharma. What happens is that everything becomes nonvirtuous. Every action only results in suffering.

If we live our life cherishing the I, this is what happens. Not only is this one day completely empty, but, due to the self-cherishing thought, we use this perfect human life only to create negative karma.

And not only *that*, due to this self-centered mind, attachment arises, which doesn't allow us to take vows, it doesn't allow us to practice morality, which is the main cause to have good rebirth in our next life. Because of self-centeredly cherishing the I, it doesn't allow us practice morality,

to take the precepts and therefore to have a good rebirth right after this one. It doesn't want us to. It's scared, it doesn't want this.

Even if we try to practice morality and have a good, pure, ethical life, by cherishing the I, attachment arises, causing us to break the vows. If we are trying to do something good, the self-centered mind interferes, not allowing us to live in pure morality, blocking us from achieving a good rebirth and liberation from samsara.

And as I mentioned before, self-cherishing doesn't allow bodhicitta to arise; it blocks compassion for others. That's how it doesn't allow us to complete the two types of merit and achieve enlightenment.

Even if we do fifteen or ten minutes of meditation, because of cherishing the I many other delusions arise, especially attachment. The objects of attachment come into the mind, interrupting the meditation. It doesn't allow us to have a perfect meditation. Even during one mala of OM MANI PADME HUM, it disturbs our mind.

And other delusions arise due to cherishing the I. Even though we have plenty of time to meditate on the lamrim, to do sadhanas and to do commitments, mantras and so forth—those very precious mantras that purify so much, that collect so much merit and bring enlightenment—even though we have plenty of time, because all the other delusions arise due to cherishing the I, we are put off our practice. Attachment makes us think something else is more important, some work for this life, something to do for the happiness of this life, and we are put off our Dharma practice.

It puts us off doing a retreat, it puts us off studying the Dharma, it puts us off our daily practice, our meditation on the lamrim. Even fifteen or ten minutes of meditation, even five minutes, we find something else we think is more important, something happening in this life, not enlightenment, not liberation from samsara, not a good rebirth in a future life, or the happiness of other sentient beings, but the happiness of this life.

Every day, like that, our practice doesn't get done. One day goes by, one week goes by, one month goes by, one year goes by. We have time to practice. Besides time for the job, we have time to do things in the morning or the evening. But even if we have no obligation, the practice

still doesn't get done; somehow something else becomes more important, some comfort or happiness of this life. Because of attachment, we think the pleasures of this life are more important than Dharma practice.

Cherishing the I, miserliness and attachment arise, which don't allow us to make charity to other sentient beings, to make offerings to the Triple Gem. That's how it interferes with achieving even the happiness and prosperity of this life, as well as the happiness of future lives, so no question of liberation and enlightenment.

We all know it is more difficult to get along with somebody who is very strongly selfish, and when we are more selfish, we find more problems with others. It's not a problem coming from others but because our own self-cherishing thought is stronger, then we find conflicts. We have more disagreements with others, we have more emotional problems, more anger. The stronger the self-cherishing thought, the more anger. There is more disagreement because our attitude is only for our own happiness. Because doing what we like is the only thing, we are unable to accept others having it their way, we are unable to accept others' happiness, others' wishes.

There are personality clashes, like throwing dynamite onto a rock. We can see with our own lives that, when we are more selfish, we find more difficulties. We become more disharmonious with others, we find more difficulties with people.

But the times when we think more of others, we have better relationships, more harmony, more peace, less emotional clashes. There is less worry, less fear; we are happier, more peaceful, with a more open mind.

Wherever a selfish person is, even staying at home with the family, there is fighting every day, fighting with their husband or wife, with the children, with the parents. It is not a happy life; there is no peace or happiness. Not only is there so much unhappiness and anger in that person's life, the people who are around that person are unhappy. It's the same wherever they go, to the east or west, they never get along with other people.

This is because of self-centeredness. The result of self-cherishing is that so many people become their enemy. Wherever they go, when their behavior or way of speaking is done out of the self-cherishing thought, they do not think of the other person's happiness or wish, so it becomes

confusion. Just by seeing or by talking a little, they become the other person's enemy, they are disliked. Maybe in the beginning others are nice to them, but after talking for one or two hours, they lose interest, they get bored or they dislike them.

A selfish person has more enemies. Whether they stay at home or go outside, there is no peace and happiness, neither in the daytime nor at night. When the person goes to bed, there is no happy mind, no peaceful mind; they cannot relax. Even when they get up in the morning, it's the same; they cannot get up with a peaceful mind. There is so much tension with all this self-centeredness.

For the good-hearted person who puts others first in their daily life, it is just the opposite. This is not necessarily having a realization of bodhicitta but being a generally good-hearted, kind person. If that person is living at home, in the family, they make everybody peaceful and happy. Not only is there so much peace and happiness at home, wherever that person goes, even the people they meet in the street can feel that warm-hearted attitude. People want to see them, even unknown people. They feel the warm heart and they are happy to see the good-hearted person.

In daily life, it is very easy for that person to get help from others because everybody likes and respects them. Others feel that person's kindness, warm-heartedness, and everybody wishes that person to be healthy and successful and to live long. When that person gets sick or has some difficulties, others are very concerned and help without even asking.

But for the person who is very selfish, self-centered, impatient, when other people hear they have problems, they feel happy, they rejoice. Instead of praying for them to get better, instead of helping, they rejoice in that person having problems. No matter how much that person needs help, other people don't come to help. It is very difficult for that person to find a friend; they can only find enemies.

With this good-hearted person, everyone wants to help them; they find a friend so easily. People become friends with them wherever they go. At night, when that person goes to bed, they have a very happy, relaxed and peaceful mind, and when they get up in the morning it's the same; they can get up and start the day with a very peaceful, happy mind.

I gave some examples during the session on karma how due to the self-cherishing thought we experience many problems in this life—relationship problems, disharmony, sicknesses and so forth. There are many problems we experience in this life related to the presence of the self-cherishing thought. Today's problems relate to today's self-cherishing thought, including sickness. Many problems arise from this life's self-cherishing thought, as well as problems and difficulties that we experience that come from the self-cherishing thought, from past negative karmas.

Bodhisattvas who have the direct realization of emptiness do not have sicknesses. They are free from the sufferings of rebirth, of old age, sicknesses and death. Although ordinary bodhisattvas don't have the self-cherishing thought, they can experience sicknesses and so forth because of past lives' karma. It's not related to the present life; it's not caused by the present self-cherishing thought because there is no self-cherishing thought for the new bodhisattva. But in their past lives, out of self-cherishing, attachment arose, and then anger, and then they committed nonvirtuous actions such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and so forth. Then, they experience the result in this life. So, the problem is not connected directly to the self-cherishing thought in this present life because, for a bodhisattva, there is no self-cherishing thought. The problem comes from past lives' self-cherishing. There are also problems that we experience in that way caused by self-cherishing thought.

Those actions—killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, telling lies, slandering, harsh speech, gossiping—can become virtuous if the motivation is strong compassion, bodhicitta for others. But because of the self-cherishing thought, those seven actions are transformed into negative karma.

Now you can understand what happens if you cherish yourself. It only brings suffering, only obstacles, even to our day-to-day life.

### **THE MINUTE WE CHERISH OTHERS THERE IS PEACE**

An example I often give is this. While we are at home or in the office or even at the meditation center, while we are sitting next to a person or an animal or something, the minute our mind cherishes that being, thinking that they are more important than we are, the minute we are able to do that, we have peace in our heart, we have happiness, peace, tranquility in our heart.

If we cherish the I instead, there is no peace. The effect of cherishing the I is that there is a lack of peace, and when it becomes stronger the mind becomes quite uptight. We are not really happy, no matter what. Even though we might have some success, with a selfish mind there's never really any peace in the heart.

So, while we are at home, in the office, in a restaurant, walking in the street, the minute we think, "I'm here to serve others; I'm here to bring happiness to other sentient beings," the minute we think that, our heart is opened to others. With an open heart, we can smile at others; we are more relaxed. Before that, while cherishing the I, our happiness [was all the mattered]. We go on and on with, "*My* happiness, *my* happiness, *my* problem, *my* problem. *I* have this problem, *I* have that problem." There is nothing else but our problems, like chanting, OM MANI PADME HUM, OM MANI PADME HUM! "*My* problem, *my* problem, *my* problem, *I* have this problem," or "*My* happiness, *my* happiness." Before we change our mind, there's so much tension in our heart and it is difficult to open our mind to others. We can't even smile at others because this self-centered mind is so tight.

Now... now the conclusion comes! Now, we can pack up the box, the suitcase. We should cherish others, benefit others, work for others. We should work for the happiness of all sentient beings because they want happiness and they do not want suffering, so we are working for the happiness of all living beings.

Remember, I mentioned the four levels of happiness, starting from our daily life's happiness all the way up to enlightenment. For that reason, we must cherish and benefit others. We must do this with a good heart even for our own happiness, for our day-to-day peace of mind and all the success and prosperity of this life.

I'm not going to repeat this again because I have mentioned it before.

The self-cherishing thought is an obstacle to even achieving the happiness of this life. We can all think of many examples in our life and in others' lives how the self-cherishing thought is an obstacle for that.

The best way to have day-to-day peace of mind, happiness, success and prosperity in this life, as well as long life and health, is to have a good heart for other sentient beings. This is the best way to achieve all these various happinesses; this is the best way to be healthy and have a long life.

The self-cherishing thought creates many negative karmas, and from these negative karmas come the various sicknesses and problems. And there is no question about our future lives' happiness, all the way up to enlightenment. The best way to achieve happiness up to enlightenment is having a good heart, cherishing others. The best way to achieve even our own happiness is by cherishing others.

You can understand from what I introduced before about the self-cherishing thought, how if we don't cherish even one sentient being, there's no enlightenment. You can understand that.

This is the conclusion! For those reasons, for the happiness of the numberless other sentient beings and even for our own happiness, up to enlightenment, we must cherish others, we must benefit and work for others.

The other simple way to understand it is like this. How we think and behave, our manner of speech, our mental attitude, has an effect on the people around us, whether we are outside or inside. Depending on how we think, how we speak, how we behave, it has a positive or negative effect on others, making them happy or unhappy. But it doesn't stop there. When they are happy or unhappy, that affects us, making us happy or unhappy. Do you understand? This is not talking about karma or reincarnation; this is just simple dependent arising.

Now *here* comes the conclusion! If we want to be happy, the simple thing is we have to make others happy, we have to have love and compassion for others, we have to benefit others. What that attitude contains is not harming others. One way of saying not harming others is benefiting others. We must do this if we want to be happy.

And because others' happiness depends on us, on what we think of them, whether we respect them or not, whether we have compassion for them or not, we are responsible. We should practice a good heart, only benefiting others.

My previous explanation took many, many words but this one is very simple.



Actually, I meant this motivation for some other subject, but all the time went on the motivation, so the other subject didn't happen.

## **DEDICATION**

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me and the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of the sentient beings, may bodhicitta, which is the source of all the happiness and success for myself and all sentient beings, be generated in my mind and in the minds of all the sentient beings without delay of even a second, and may the bodhicitta that is the source of all the happiness for myself and for all sentient beings, that which has been generated be increased.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of the sentient beings, may the Buddha of Compassion, His Holiness the Dalai Lama—the source of all the happiness and success of all sentient beings, the object of refuge for all us sentient beings—have a stable life and may all his holy wishes succeed immediately, as well as all those of the other holy beings and all my virtuous friends.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of the sentient beings, in whichever universe, world, country or area I am or will be, just by my being there, may all the sentient beings who are in that universe, in that world, in that country, in that area never ever be reborn in the lower realms from the time that I am there, and may they immediately get liberated from all the disease, spirit harm, negative karma and all the defilements. May they actualize the whole path, especially bodhicitta and clear light, and may they achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“And just by my being there, in that universe, in that world, in that country, in that area, may those sentient beings who are deaf, unable to hear; those who are blind, unable to see; those who are mental disturbed, possessed by spirits and so forth, may they immediately be free from these sufferings. May all those who are suffering from much depression immediately recover and may all those who are in a coma immediately recover. May all those who have cancer recover; may all those who have AIDS immediately recover. May all those who are always fighting and quarreling

become harmonious; and may wars and all these things immediately stop. May all those who are experiencing poverty immediately have wealth and may all those who have obstacles to practicing the Dharma immediately be free from obstacles. May those who are devoid of a guru, a virtuous friend, be able to meet a perfectly qualified virtuous friend; may those who need teachings be able to receive teachings. May everyone receive the things they need, the things they want, even if they don't know that they need such things as a guru and the teachings, the wisdom of Dharma and so forth. Even if they are not aware of what they need, may they receive the things they need. May everyone have perfect peace and happiness, just through myself being there in that universe, in that world, in that country, in that area.”

Like the compassionate white lotus that grows at that time, pray for yourself to become wish-fulfilling for all sentient beings.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of the sentient beings, may I be able to offer skies of benefit to all sentient beings like Lama Tsongkhapa, by having the same qualities within me as Lama Tsongkhapa has, from now on in all my future lifetimes.”

So, now my favorite dedication, my hobby, hopefully: “Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of the sentient beings, which exist but don't exist, which appear real from there but which are totally nonexistent, empty, may the I who exists, but does not exist, which appears real from there, from its own side, but which is totally nonexistent, empty, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment, which exists but doesn't exist, which appears to me inherently existent, real one from there, but which is totally nonexistent, a hallucination, totally empty from there, not even the slightest atom exists from there, and lead all sentient beings, who exist but do not exist, who appear real to me from there but are totally a hallucination, not even the slightest atom [exists from there, to that enlightenment, which exists but doesn't exist, which is totally empty, by myself, who exists, but does not exist, which appears real from there, from my own side, but which is totally nonexistent, empty.]”

[Break in tape]

Even in break times, as you are walking around, seeing people and animals, whatever, mainly focus on that mindfulness, the bodhicitta practice, practicing the mindfulness of the kindness of other sentient beings, how they are precious.

If there are different meditation sessions, maybe one or two sessions could be that, and then also at break times practice that awareness. In this way, it's very, very good.

You can also do a walking meditation with this bodhicitta meditation, with a mindfulness on bodhicitta, thinking how other sentient beings are so precious, so kind, how all happiness comes from them.

While you are doing a sitting meditation (but you can also do it as a walking meditation) you can maintain a mindfulness of karma, how everything comes from your own mind. It's the same meditation as when you are sitting but as you walk be aware of how everything around you—all the scenery, the forms, sounds, smells, tastes, everything—comes from your mind. This way, you not only hear the words but it's something that goes in your heart. Meditating like that makes it something deeper than mere intellectual understanding, so that's good.

Thank you very much.

## Lecture 6

30 November 30, 1999

### THE FIVE PATHS

[Rinpoche chants *Praise to Shakyamuni Buddha* before the teachings]

We can do the same as yesterday, request using just the one aspect, Lama Tsongkhapa, which is all the Guru, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and all the lineage lamas. Then nectar beams are emitted to purify all the obstacles, all the defilements. The replicas absorb into you and you actualize all the realizations of the profound and extensive [paths], the dharmakaya and rupakaya. Those who are familiar with the extensive merit field can visualize in that way.

[Rinpoche chants]

So the first two lines:<sup>4</sup>

*Sang gyä chhö dang tshog kyi chhog nam la  
Jang chhub bar du dag ni kyab su chhi*

I take refuge until I am enlightened  
In the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Supreme Assembly.

The first two lines are taking refuge and the last two lines are generating bodhicitta. The first two lines contain the two types of refuge: causal refuge and resultant refuge.

Resultant refuge is the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, and the cessation of suffering and its cause, the defilements. This is the absolute Dharma. There is the thinking path to enlightenment, the path of merit, and the joining path to enlightenment, the path of preparation, the preparatory path, the second one.

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<sup>4</sup> See *Taking Refuge and Generating Bodhicitta* verse, *FPMT Essential Prayer Book*.

Within the path of merit there are three categories: small, middle and great. Within the path of preparation or the joining path, there are four categories: heat, tip, patience and sublime Dharma. So there are four categories within the second path.

Then third path is the right-seeing path, the fourth is the path of meditation and the fifth is the path of no more learning. That is when everything is finished! There is no more learning.

The third path, the right-seeing path, entails equipoise, devotion and subsequent or post-meditation. Then, there is that which is wisdom within the equipoise, and there is the uninterrupted path and the liberated path, and the path which is neither of those two. When we achieve [the early stages of] the path of meditation, some of the details are the same as the right-seeing path.

When we actualize the second path, the joining path or the path of preparation, we have the realization of the attainment of special concentration, which is the unification of shamatha, calm abiding, and special insight. *Samadhi* is concentration; *shamatha* is calm abiding, which has nine levels in order to complete that realization. The special concentration that is the unification of shamatha and great insight has to be achieved through these two meditations. That is preparation to achieve the arya path, the right-seeing path, where we directly perceive emptiness. This is the means to directly cease the defilements.

Before the flame comes and burns things, there is heat. Heat needs to be generated before the flame comes from the wood. The path of preparation is like that, and the right-seeing path, where we attain the wisdom directly seeing emptiness, is like the flame coming from that. But instead of burning things, it burns the delusions, it ceases the delusions.

During this time, on the right-seeing path, the uninterrupted path becomes the remedy and with the liberated path the 112 delusions are ceased. I think my memory is bad! When we achieve the path of meditation, the sixteen delusions cease, the intellectual concepts due to doctrines. The concept of inherent existence ceases during the right-seeing path, and the simultaneously born concept of inherent existence, this ignorance, ceases by actualizing the path of meditation, the fourth path.

That is according to what is called in Tibetan, *nyön drib*, disturbing-thought obscurations. These are the gross delusions or defilements that mainly interfere with us achieving liberation from samsara. The subtle defilements (*she drib*), the obscurations to knowledge, mainly interfere with our mental continuum becoming omniscient. They obscure the mind from directly seeing the past, present and future, all the three times' existence at the same time.

As I mentioned before, on the Mahayana path to achieve enlightenment, of the five Mahayana paths, the right-seeing path ceases the 112 delusions, and the path of meditation ceases the sixteen delusions. But concerning the subtle defilements, the right-seeing path ceases the 116 delusions and the path of meditation ceases the 116, the same.

On the Hinayana or Lesser Vehicle path, within the two paths of the Hearer-Listener and the Solitary Realizer or Self-Conqueror, the right-seeing path and the path of meditation do not cease the subtle defilements, only the gross defilements. They are the same as I explained before.

The point here is to give an idea that achieving liberation from samsara is attained on the Mahayana right-seeing path and the Mahayana path of meditation. When we achieve this and we directly perceive emptiness, during that time, as I mentioned before, a certain amount of delusions cease.

When we have these realizations within us on the right-seeing path and the path of meditation, whether it's Hinayana or Mahayana, with the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness and the cessation of suffering, the defilements, we have the experience of the absolute Dharma. When the absolute Dharma becomes our own experience, that is the main one that directly ceases the defilements.

Then, the Mahayana path ceases even the subtle defilements, whether by only practicing sutra and following the five paths and the ten bhūmis, or by practicing Mahayana tantra, the Mahayana right-seeing path and the Mahayana path of meditation; we cease all the defilements, gross and subtle. Then our mind becomes omniscient and we are called "buddha," the enlightened being. We receive the label "enlightened being." We receive the label "buddha."

That is the resultant refuge, Dharma and Buddha. When we have the resultant Dharma refuge, the absolute Dharma, when those paths are in our mind, when those paths become our experience, our realization, we become the Sangha, the resultant Sangha refuge.

#### **AFTER NIRVANA AN ARHAT IS AWAKENED TO BODHICITTA**

Even without entering the Mahayana path from the beginning, if we were to enter the Hinayana path, progressing through those five paths to achieve liberation from samsara, even if we were to achieve that total liberation, the cessation of all the delusions, including the seeds of the delusion, which is the nature of imprints, even if we were to achieve total liberation from the entire suffering and its cause, the delusions, after some time, we will have to enter into the Mahayana path.

Abiding in that blissful state of peace for ourselves for an inconceivable number of eons I guess is the same as going to the beach! When we don't have to work, we put a surfboard in the back of the car and go to the beach. When we have spare time or when we don't have a job, we take a friend to the beach with a surfboard in the car and we go to the beach. So I think for people in the West, achieving nirvana is like going to the beach for ourselves.

We abide in that blissful state of peace for ourselves for inconceivable eons. The mind is heavily bound to that; it is absorbed in that bliss. Then, as it says in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, if you can remember, those who have read it, after that, even when we enter the Mahayana path by actualizing bodhicitta, our bodhicitta is still not very strong, because of so much experience of bliss before. There is compassion but it is not strong.

I think what the great enlightened being Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo was implying was that, by describing that with this human realm, we beings who are born in the human realm can see so much suffering and we ourselves can experience so much, and that starts us generating strong compassion and then strong bodhicitta, and that makes us achieve enlightenment quickly. The strong compassion we can generate for others helps us generate strong bodhicitta, and that makes the collection of extensive merit happen more quickly and it purifies the mind more. And that means we achieve enlightenment more quickly. I think that is what Pabongka Rinpoche was implying here.

Attaining nirvana for themselves, however, the arhat spends inconceivable eons in this sorrowless state, being distracted by the bliss, the state of blissful state of peace for themselves. Then, after a long time, the buddhas send beams of light to the arhat and say a word or a stanza from the Buddha, I don't remember which, and that persuades the arhat to enter into the Mahayana path by generating great compassion for other sentient beings and actualizing bodhicitta.

If we were to follow the Lesser Vehicle path and we became totally liberated from the whole of samsara, from all suffering, with no more rebirth, no more death, no more old age, no more sickness, no more problems, if we were to cease the delusions, including the seed of delusion, even though we were not suffering, the numberless other sentient beings would still be. With the Mahayana path, there are all these qualities to be achieved to attain full enlightenment.

So, in our case, [were we to achieve liberation,] we would have still not completed the works for ourselves and the works for others. Completely distracted by this blissful state of peace for ourselves, it would take inconceivable eons to generate great compassion and great loving kindness for others, let alone bodhicitta. That means it would take inconceivable eons to achieve enlightenment. If it takes so long to generate great loving kindness, great compassion, bodhicitta, and then enlightenment, that means it takes an incredible length of time, so many eons, to liberate others from suffering and the causes and bring them to enlightenment. That means sentient beings must suffer in samsara for an inconceivable number of eons, for such a long time.

The sentient beings who have a connection with us are numberless. There are numberless sentient beings who are depending on us to free them, to liberate them from suffering and its causes and bring them to enlightenment. Those sentient beings have to suffer in samsara for an inconceivable number of eons, longer than it takes us to generate great loving kindness, great compassion, bodhicitta and enlightenment.

## **THE KINDNESS OF OTHERS**

As I mentioned yesterday, the purpose of our life is to benefit others. And I mentioned two reasons. The most important reason is that other sentient beings are numberless. It can also be said the other way around, that even looking at us and one other sentient being, that sentient



being is more important. They are the most precious one in our life. Even that one sentient being is the most important, the most precious one in our life.

Even one sentient being is the most precious one in our life. We can understand that there are numberless sentient beings and each is the most precious one, the most important one in our life. This gives us a reason to work for others and to achieve full enlightenment. In order to do perfect work for others, we ourselves need to achieve full enlightenment.

The reason to follow the Mahayana path, to generate great loving kindness, great compassion and enter the Mahayana path and complete all the realizations and achieve full enlightenment, the reason becomes of utmost importance. It is the most important thing we need to do in our life; it is the most important thing for the numberless sentient beings.

Thinking of this one sentient being, how they are most precious, most kind, even the Buddha cannot see the beginning of that one sentient being's kindness to us; it is limitless like the sky. We could never be finished explaining the kindness that one sentient being has shown us from beginningless rebirths.

They want happiness but they are devoid of happiness, even temporary happiness, even samsaric pleasure. Even if that sentient being has been able to attain a little temporary pleasure, they are still devoid of ultimate happiness, real liberation and enlightenment.

And what that sentient being does not want is to experience suffering, but being ignorant of the cause of the suffering and the cause of happiness, they are constantly suffering and constantly creating the cause of suffering. They have totally the wrong view, that which causes only suffering, although they believe it to be the cause of happiness. Because that sentient being has so many wrong views, the method they are applying to achieve happiness only becomes the cause of more suffering.

Their life goes on and on like that, on and on, life after life. Even though what they desire is happiness and what they do not want is suffering, they totally mistake the method they must apply, totally misunderstanding the cause of happiness, totally misunderstanding the cause of suffering. They have totally the wrong view. That's why there is such confusion; that's why they constantly experience what they do not want.

Because of that, there is nothing else in our life we must do but work for others, cherishing other sentient beings, working for other sentient beings. Other than that, life has no meaning. Working for anything other than that has no meaning; it's empty, meaningless. It's not just an empty life but, on top of that, there's great danger we will use our precious human life only to create nonvirtue, the cause of suffering, of samsara, particularly the lower realms.

If there is nothing else to do except to think of others and work for others, the numberless other sentient beings, this is the best life, the healthiest life. That brings real fulfillment in our life, in our heart; it is the most satisfactory life.

Therefore, there is the utmost need to achieve the realizations of the path to enlightenment. Benefiting others is the most important project in our life, in this life and in all future lives until that happens.

Sorry, I got distracted. I'll go back.

### **RESULTANT REFUGE DEPENDS ON CAUSAL REFUGE**

What I was trying to say was that by our own realization of the absolute Dharma, we become the Sangha, we become the Buddha. That resultant refuge is contained in the line, "Until I achieve enlightenment." That is practicing the resultant refuge.

To succeed in that depends on causal refuge. Causal refuge is the intelligent fear, the useful fear. Let me give an example. Understanding that if we put our finger in the fire we will feel pain and our finger will get burned, we have a fear of that. That understanding and that fear of experiencing the pain of being burned keeps us from putting our finger in the fire (or putting our whole body in the fire). It protects us from that.

If we didn't understand, if we were ignorant and without fear, we would step into the fire and be killed. Our body would be burned and we would die. But understanding this and fearing it protects us from being burned by the fire. That fear comes from understanding—put the body in a fire and it will burn and maybe we will die—so that fear is a useful fear.

In the same way, we need to understand that samsara is only in the nature of suffering. The fear that comes from that understanding, and particularly understanding the sufferings of the lower realms, helps us; it persuades us to free ourselves from samsara, to be liberated from samsara. It inspires us to be free from samsara.

This useful fear of the suffering of samsara, by understanding how samsara is in the nature of suffering, and particularly the lower realms' sufferings, is one cause of refuge. The other cause is the devotion that comes by understanding the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. With these two causes, with our whole heart, we single-pointedly rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. That's what "taking refuge" means. It means having refuge in our heart.

Relying on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha that are separate from us, separate from our mental continuum, that is causal refuge. So, the line "I go for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha" contains the causal refuge, and "Until I achieve enlightenment" contains the resultant refuge. So here, we are practicing both refuges: causal refuge and resultant refuge.

What is the purpose of resultant refuge? The ultimate aim is to benefit sentient beings, to be able to serve sentient beings, and ultimately to bring them to enlightenment. The ultimate benefit is to bring them to enlightenment. For all this, that depends on causal refuge.

When we recite this prayer, if we can meditate on the meaning of practicing the two types of refuge, that is very good.

#### **REMEMBER THE WHEEL OF LIFE WHEN WE RECITE REFUGE**

Then the last two lines, "Due to the merits of having practiced charity and so forth, may I achieve full enlightenment in order to benefit the transmigratory beings."

*Dag gi jin sog gyi päi tshog nam kyi  
Dro la phän chbir sang gyä drub par shog*

By my merits of generosity and so forth,  
May I become a buddha to benefit transmigratory beings.

When we recite these two lines, it's good to remember the entire Wheel of Life. Especially, when we recite the words “transmigratory beings,” within that term is the whole explanation of the Wheel of Life, what the drawing of the Wheel of Life shows.

The three poisons, ignorance, anger and attachment, are signified by the three animals in the center. Then, due to the cause, the three poisonous minds, karma is created, signified by the black and white paths around the hub. Then, the beings are reborn in samsara, reborn in the six realms; they transmigrate between the six realms.

I don't think we're in all six realms now! Anyway, it doesn't matter.

Due to the cause, the delusions, the three poisonous minds—ignorance, attachment [and anger] signified by three animals in the center—there is karma signified by the black and white paths around, then the samsaric beings continuously transmigrate within the six realms, one after another, one after another.

In samsara, transmigratory beings experience suffering: the suffering of pain, the suffering of change—which is samsaric pleasure, pleasure that is only temporary, not everlasting happiness—and pervasive compounding suffering. They experience the three types of suffering.

Transmigratory beings constantly have to transmigrate due to the cause, the delusions—ignorance, attachment and anger, signified by these animals—then they create karma signified by the white and black paths leading up or down, causing them to be reborn in one after the other of the six realms, one after another, non-stop, where they are tormented by the three types of suffering.

### **THE SUFFERING OF CHANGE**

Even though at times there might be no suffering of pain, there is the suffering of change, the temporary samsaric pleasure, the feeling that seems to be happiness but when it is analyzed can be seen to be only suffering. When we don't analyze it, it appears as pleasure to our hallucinated mind. But if we scientifically analyze it, we discover that feeling is only suffering, not pleasure, not happiness, not peace.

When we let our mind remain hallucinated and we see that feeling as pleasure, it appears pleasure to that mind, so why doesn't it last? The reason we can't develop that happiness to a greater and greater degree, minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, week by week, month by month, the reason we can't increase the happiness that we experience at the beginning, why it doesn't become bigger and bigger is because the nature of that feeling is not real; it is not real happiness, it's suffering. That feeling is suffering by its nature.

It is a feeling that is suffering but, because it is not gross but small, it is unnoticeable. Because of that, we label it "pleasure." Our mind makes up the label "pleasure," and then after we have made up the label "pleasure," after our mind has put the label, we believe in it. It looks like there is pleasure from its own side.

That false happiness is the object to be refuted; it is a false object, one which is a total hallucination. It is nonexistent, totally empty. There is not even the slightest atom of that existing there. However, our mind makes up the label "pleasure" because of that feeling, that suffering which is at that moment unnoticeable.

Having made up the label, there's the hallucination of pleasure and we believe in that pleasure, that independent pleasure that never came from our own mind but is something real from the side of the feeling. We believe it is an independent, inherently existent feeling.

We have that feeling that we don't recognize, which is suffering but unrecognizable at the moment; it seems to be a pleasure, therefore we make up the label "pleasure." And after we label it, we believe that label. In our view, there is pleasure on that feeling. That is the object to be refuted. The real pleasure there on that feeling is a total hallucination.

However, this is the subject that involves an analysis on emptiness, on the ultimate nature of what we call the temporary samsaric pleasure. The label "pleasure" is placed on the suffering. That's why it doesn't last. That's why the more we continue, the more it decreases instead of increasing. We get bored or whatever. In that way, all these sufferings happen.

As I often say, Lama Tsongkhapa has explained in *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path (Lamrim Chenmo)* that after feeling so hot while being under the sun, when we enter the cold water ... Today the chai time is different! I'm joking!

I'm using Lama Tsongkhapa's example to explain the essence. By understanding this one example, we can understand all others. After feeling so hot under the sun, when we go into the cold water in the river or the sea, in the beginning, there is pleasure in feeling the coolness.

As it is explained, the suffering feeling of hot is stopped by changing the action from being under the sun to being in the cold water. Then, with the first minute of being in the cold water, the discomfort already starts, right after the action of entering the cold water. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] Right after that action, the discomfort of being in the cold water begins; it has already started but because it's small, the discomfort is unnoticeable. For the duration that feeling of discomfort is unnoticeable, it is called "comfort" or "a pleasure."

Then as we continue the action of being in the cold water, gradually that action compounds a sense of discomfort, and more and more the discomfort increases.

That is because the pleasure we experienced in the beginning is temporary, it is changeable, it cannot last; it cannot increase as we continue being in the water. Then, as discomfort becomes noticeable, we perceive it as suffering. It becomes the suffering of pain.

Similarly, when we are very hungry, at the beginning when we take some food, the suffering of hunger is stopped by changing the action from not eating to eating. The moment the action of not eating stops and the action of eating begins the feeling of discomfort [from having food in the stomach] is there already in the body, but it's unnoticeable. Because the discomfort of eating is unnoticeable and the suffering of hunger has stopped, we label it "pleasure." But again, by continuing the action of eating, the discomfort increases. Even though there seems to be pleasure at the beginning, it is temporary. It cannot last. But by continuing the action, again it becomes the suffering of pain.

Like this, when we buy a car, at the beginning there's pleasure. The problem or suffering of not having car is stopped by buying the car, so there's pleasure. That excitement, that pleasure, is the same again, but it doesn't last. After some time, we get bored with the car. It becomes boring. There was some excitement or some kind of pleasure at the beginning, but sooner or later we get bored. Then we see another newer car advertised, or we see other people driving it. Our old car seems even more boring! The unhappiness or the boring feeling we have with the old car is

stopped when we buy another car, but again it's the same. At the beginning it looked like there was pleasure, but it didn't last. The pleasure we believed in at the beginning didn't last. It doesn't last to the same degree every day. It decreases and again it becomes boring. Then we decide we must look for a new car.

Here, I'm using the example of the car, but it could also be the same with a friend.

Until we get liberated from samsara, the continuation of these aggregates caused by karma and delusions, which is in the nature of suffering, causes us to circle from one life to another. What circles is the continuation of these aggregates. Who circles is us. We are like a driver; we make this continuation of these aggregates that is caused by karma and delusions, that is in the nature of suffering; we make this samsara, we make it continuously circle. It is we ourselves who circle in the six realms.

Until we break the continuation of these aggregates that circle from one life to another, whatever style of life we have, whatever actions we do, we are always in samsara, we are always suffering. When we are under the sun, it's suffering; when we are in the water, it's suffering; when we are not eating, it's suffering; when we are eating, it's suffering. Not sleeping is suffering; sleeping is suffering.

Whatever lifestyle we have, it is suffering. Being a farmer is suffering; being a businessperson is suffering. Whatever the lifestyle, it's all suffering. Whatever we do in samsara, it's all suffering. If we analyze it, this is what it is, and it will continue like this until we break the continuation of samsara, the continuation of these aggregates circling from one life to another.

What is not suffering is practicing Dharma. Not giving up attachment is suffering; giving up attachment is peace. I'll use that example. Not giving up attachment is a problem in our life, it is suffering. Giving up attachment is peace, bringing us satisfaction, real peace of mind, real inner peace.

When we separate our mind from attachment, when we free our mind from attachment, all the problems that are connected to attachment, like a spiderweb, are stopped. There are so many things we no longer need. All the fear, worry and expectation are stopped. We are totally free of all that. We become a totally free guy!

A life that's filled with expectations, a life that's filled with fear, a life that's filled with worries is a life with so much unhappiness and depression, with so many problems. Things don't happen as we like, as the selfish, self-cherishing mind wants, as attachment wants. We have so many problems; life is filled with problems. Without attachment, we are totally free from that; we have total peace in our heart.

Dharma is renouncing ignorance, anger, attachment, avoiding the cause of the sufferings, the delusions. This is real Dharma and it has no suffering. We can develop this inner peace. It can be increased, it can be developed, it can be completed and it leads to total liberation and to enlightenment.

The happiness of Dharma can be increased and it can be completed. But samsaric pleasures can never be. Samsaric pleasures are temporary; there is no end to the work we need to do for them. They can never be completed; they can never last. There's no end to the work for samsaric pleasures. We have to repeat that work again and again, again and again, without end. That is another example of how the suffering of samsara is endless.

Practicing the lamrim, the three principal aspects of the path, is not suffering. Living in pure morality, abstaining from negative karma, is not suffering. It brings not only peace and happiness now, it also brings us to liberation and enlightenment when practiced with the bodhicitta. Practicing Dharma is not suffering.

### **PERVASIVE COMPOUNDING SUFFERING**

The third type of suffering is pervasive compounding suffering, which refers to these aggregates that are caused by karma and delusions, that are under the control of karma and delusions.

Not being free from karma and delusions, being under the control of karma and delusions, that is the main suffering. Because of that, this body and mind experiences problems: heat and cold, hunger and thirst, pain, so many sicknesses, as well as the mental sufferings: fear, worry, depression and all these problems. Because these aggregates are not free from karma and delusions, because they are under the control of karma and delusions, the body experiences so



many sicknesses, old age, all these things. Because of that, this body and mind is in the nature of suffering.

Why are we not born with a body and mind that experiences only bliss? Without any worry, without any fear, only with bliss, with no suffering at all? Why can't we be blissed out from the time of conception? Maybe there are some people here who are blissed out! Maybe when you were conceived in your mother's womb you were blissed out!

Anyway, why we are born with a suffering body and mind and not with bliss is because of the impure cause of these aggregates, this association of body and mind, karma and delusions. If the cause were not karma and delusions, it would be OK. If that were possible, we could have aggregates that don't experience any suffering at all. That would be possible.

But because this body and mind comes from an impure cause, caused by karma and delusions, even just that itself is suffering. And because of that, this mind experiences so many problems and this body experiences so many problems, such as old age and so many sicknesses that are difficult to recover from nowadays.

Being under the control of karma and delusions, this body and mind is in the nature of suffering; it is pervaded by suffering.

As it's mentioned in the text, and as His Holiness the Dalai Lama has also said, these aggregates are not only the container of all this life's problems, they are also the foundation for all the future lives' problems. Unless we can cease the continuation of these aggregates, of this samsara, before the next life, then all the next life's sufferings will certainly happen. If we are able to stop that, there will be no future suffering, no future rebirth and death and all the other sufferings. That's how these aggregates become a foundation for the future lives' sufferings.

This type of suffering is "compounding" because these aggregates are contaminated by the seed of disturbing thoughts. What I normally mention is that, in our daily life, when we meet objects—beautiful objects, ugly objects, indifferent objects—at that time if we do not apply meditation, there is no protection to our mind and to our life. Because the seed is there, because it was not purified in the past or in this life, the seed of delusion is still there, so by meeting these conditions there is no protection; the seed gives rise to delusions, to attachment, anger and

ignorance—attachment to beautiful objects, anger to the ugly objects and ignorance to the indifferent objects.

Then, that produces karma, which then leaves an imprint on the mental continuum. Then, this imprint, this seed, throws us into our future samsara, our future rebirth, so this imprint compounds our future samsara. Therefore, these aggregates are pervasive compounding suffering, because what they do is compound the future samsara by compounding the cause, the imprint.

This is the fundamental suffering of samsara. The very important thing that we must understand is that what we need to achieve is not just liberation from the suffering of pain—heat and cold, hunger and thirst, sicknesses, the suffering of rebirth, old age, death and so forth—even the animals do not want to experience hunger and thirst, heat and cold and all these pains and so forth, the suffering of pain. And not just the suffering of change, what is temporary samsaric pleasure. The liberation that we need to achieve is from pervasive compounding suffering, the cessation of this third type of suffering. That is the real liberation.

If we achieve that, we will never experience the other two sufferings, the suffering of change and the suffering of pain. Once we are totally liberated from pervasive compounded suffering, we will never experience any of those other sufferings. That is real liberation. What I'm saying is we must understand what we are looking for is this liberation.

As long as we don't achieve the cessation of pervasive compounding suffering, liberation from that suffering, we will have to experience those other sufferings: the suffering of change and the suffering of pain. We will have to experience them again and again and again and again. They will manifest all the time.

Even if we don't have pain now, in a few hours or less, maybe we will have lots of pain. Anyway, what I'm saying is, even if there's no pain now, at any minute pain could happen because there is pervasive compounding suffering, because there is samsara there. Pain can happen at any time; those other sufferings can happen at any time, just as when there is water, from that water, a bubble could come out at any time.

What I'm trying to say is that in order to show all the suffering of samsara we have to experience, it has been condensed into the three types of suffering: the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering. Then, there are the three lower realms shown in the Wheel of Life drawing, as you can see in the gompa there, which shows the suffering of pain. That doesn't mean there is no suffering of pain in the human realm or deva realm. It doesn't mean like that. To show the suffering of change, the deva and human realms are shown. And in order to show pervasive compounding suffering, where there is no suffering of pain or suffering of change, in the Wheel of Life the form realm with the seventeen categories is shown above the wheel. Because it's above, that doesn't mean it's free from samsara, it's not saying that. It's within samsara, but the drawing is done that way, showing it above the wheel. In some drawings of the Wheel of Life there are thirteen lines and in some there are seventeen, showing the different realms within the categories.

Even though there is no suffering of pain or suffering of change, that doesn't mean there is freedom from samsara because there is still pervasive compounding suffering. To show that, they make the drawing like that.

And to show how we get involved in all this, how we reincarnate in this and experience these sufferings, there are the twelve dependent related limbs, *ten drel yen lag chu nyi*. This shows the evolution of samsara.

## **WE GET ENLIGHTENED FOR ALL SENTIENT BEINGS**

Now, when we say, "Due to the merits of having done charity and so forth, may I achieve enlightenment in order to benefit all the transmigratory beings," what causes sentient beings to transmigrate and experience the three types of sufferings in all the realms of samsara and how they transmigrate, is shown by the twelve links that surround the Wheel of Life drawing.

When we say, "to benefit all the transmigratory beings," that means the numberless sentient beings who are suffering in samsara. We are generating the thought to achieve enlightenment to benefit all the transmigratory beings. That thought is amazing. If we really think well about what it means, it is unbelievable because it covers every transmigratory being; we want to achieve enlightenment to benefit every single transmigratory being.

We should recognize how extensive this thought is. We are going to achieve enlightenment for every human being who is here—every human being in Kathmandu, every human being in Nepal, every human being in all the countries of this world. However many billions there are in this world, we are making the decision to achieve enlightenment for them, and not just on this planet. There are not only the human beings in this world but in other universes as well, in the numberless other universes, where there are numberless human beings.

We have made the decision to achieve enlightenment for every single human being. And not just human beings. It includes every hell being, and there are numberless hell beings, who are suffering unimaginably now. And there are numberless hungry ghosts, spirits. It covers everything. Maybe it's easier to understand animals because we can see them. Maybe not these flowers here, but on the flowers outside, even on one flower, there are many tiny insects. If we look closely at one flower, there are many tiny insects there, of the same color. Their consciousness took place there and then they were born there, kind of a similar color.

That is just one flower but if we think of all the insects on all the numberless flowers, in this universe and in all the other universes, all the insects, just on that kind of flower, if we think about it, it's an unbelievable number. We want to achieve enlightenment to benefit all transmigratory beings and that covers all these insects, and all the insects in the ground. When we dig in the ground, how many worms are there in the moist ground. There are so many worms *in* the ground and *on* the ground, so many suffering sentient beings.

On top of one buffalo's kaka there are so many thousands and thousands of those tiny flies. There are so many tiny ones just there, thousands and thousands and thousands of them. In Switzerland or Italy or somewhere, I don't remember, I went outside and there on the ground there was some cow dung. Without sunlight I didn't notice it, it looked like there was nobody there, but on the part where there's a little bit of sun, there were so many tiny insects in the sky above the ground. But when there was no sunlight, they were invisible.

Even on one tree, how many insects are there? So many.

And if we think of ants, there are an unbelievable number in just one place; there are thousands and thousands and thousands. So how many would there be on one mountain? Or in one country? Or in the numberless universes? We can think like that.

We are going to achieve enlightenment, we are going to benefit all the transmigratory beings, which covers all those suffering insects, like ants and worms.

We can think of the fish we see in TV shows, how there are uncountable numbers of big ones and even more small ones, really small, maybe this size, billions and billions of them, and this is just in one place, just one location, not the whole ocean.

There are fish with so many different sized bodies, and there are insects so tiny we cannot see them with the eye, only with a microscope. Even in our body, there are many sentient beings that we can only see with a microscope.

All these sentient beings living inside our body are a very good present for attachment, a very good gift for attachment. It's like an office, like a department store or a big restaurant, with people coming and going, coming and going. Or like on a big road, like in Nepal, where people go this way and that way. It's like a busy airport. A microscope can show these things much bigger, so we can see all the beings going down and going up in our body. It's exactly like that, so many going up and down.

Recently in America I saw a sutra text that explains this. There are the Kangyur and Tengyur, the sutra and tantra taught by the Buddha and the commentaries by the yogis, the pandits. Ven. Roger [Kunsang] bought a print from Taiwan. I think this is something His Holiness Karmapa has done. They are printed in Delhi. They have been copied but it's a full book, to have in the shrine room in the house in America. In one sutra text I saw that the Buddha explains the details of the body, about all the sentient beings living in the body, all those tiny germs, those tiny sentient beings living in the body. It also talks about the female body, describing more about certain places in the female body. Anyway, there are many details about those sentient beings there. I was very surprised. But what Buddha says about the beings in the body, the Western machines have shown. It looks like a lot of diseases, which, although naturally related to our negative karma of course, are sometimes related to those beings and things like that.

Anyway, when we make the decision to achieve enlightenment to benefit all transmigratory beings, it covers all the numberless sentient beings we see in the water. And the numberless

conch shell animals, those born on the rocks at the beach; there are so many. They are like grains of sand on the beach.

If we just think of the insects of the animal realm, each type is numberless, like the limitless sky. Even just thinking of those on this earth, it is unbelievable. But there are numberless universes, and other worlds that are similar. And all those beings are suffering. They are not enlightened beings, they are suffering beings, obscured, and that includes all the pigs that have to be killed, all the chickens that are in restaurants, everywhere in the world, that are kept to be killed, and all those millions and millions of cows and goats and sheep, numberless of them, that have to be killed.

When we pray like this to achieve enlightenment to benefit all the transmigratory beings, that covers every one of those, including the butchers who kill them, all the people who are doing killing, all the fishermen. We talked about fishing. There are numberless fishermen in the world, all those engaging in so much negative karma that causes them to be born in the lower realms, for hundreds and thousands of lifetimes as a fish, and then the hell realm and other realms because karma is expandable. One negative karma of catching a fish means not just being reborn once in the hell or once as a fish, but hundreds and thousands of times, because karma is expandable, much more expandable than an outside seed.

When we plant a small seed, it will grow into a big tree, with many thousands of branches, leaves and flowers, and then tens or hundreds of thousands of seeds come from that, from that one seed. But inner karma is more expandable than the external cause and effect of plants.

Therefore, when we do prayers to achieve enlightenment to benefit all the transmigratory beings, that includes all those beings, all the people who are in a war where so many get killed, like in Chechnya near Russia, where so many human beings are killing other human beings. Many are dying, suffering, homeless, sick. This prayer covers everybody. There is not a suffering single being left out.

When we generate the bodhicitta motivation like that, to achieve enlightenment to benefit all transmigratory beings, it includes all those numberless sentient beings, including all the suras and asuras [gods and demigods], and all the suffering beings of the form and formless realms, all

those who are in samsara suffering. To achieve enlightenment to benefit all transmigratory beings covers everything, all those sentient beings.

When we remember what a transmigrator is, we remember the suffering of samsara and how samsara evolves. We remember everything, how sentient beings have no choice, no freedom, how they are under the control of karma and delusions, having to continuously transmigrate and suffer on and on. We remember that when we pray to benefit all transmigratory beings.

### **MAHAYANA REFUGE HAS THREE CAUSES**

This bodhicitta practice is not a simple thing. It's not just a simple prayer, "Oh blah, blah, blah." It's not just a traditional ritual prayer. That's the wrong way to think. That is to not understand that prayers *are* meditation. With prayers, the words are to remind us to meditate, to make us think of the meaning, to transform our mind into the path. People who think it's just ritual are totally wrong. In Buddhism, all rituals have meaning, every word has skies of meaning.

In the practice of Buddhism, everything, every practice, every word, has a valid reason, a logical reason. I can't say whether every ritual has a valid reason or whether it's just custom. Whether it has a valid reason or not has to be checked.

Since I have talked about it, we should just do it. I think maybe we can do the prayer together with meditation. We're going to maybe recite it twice in English and once in Tibetan, so you can learn the Tibetan language! That time is especially to learn the Tibetan language!

You can visualize Shakyamuni Buddha. There's a statue there of Shakyamuni Buddha. At least, just think of the Buddha, of Shakyamuni Buddha, or you can visualize the elaborate merit field or the numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas who are in all the ten directions. Think whichever way you wish.

The first thing is taking refuge. There is the Hinayana way of taking refuge that has two causes: the useful fear of the samsara and particularly the lower realms' suffering, and because that, the wish to be free from samsara, and then, the second cause, devotion to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, by remembering their qualities and then single-pointedly relying on the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. That's the Hinayana way of taking refuge.

With the Mahayana way of taking refuge, on the basis of these two causes of refuge, there is [the third cause], generating compassion for all sentient beings by thinking that they are suffering in samsara.

I mentioned the meaning of transmigratory beings before. So, this means feeling compassion for other sentient beings whose minds are obscured and who are suffering. With the two causes and the additional cause, compassion for other sentient beings, we single-pointedly rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. That is the Mahayana way of taking refuge.

First, think of samsara as I just described it, how samsara is in the nature of suffering. Remember the three types of suffering and the other sufferings that you have heard about before. Think of your own samsara.

[Long pause for meditation]

Think of the lower realms' sufferings. Now generate strong renunciation to be free from all these sufferings, that you yourself become free from all of these sufferings of samsara and particularly the sufferings of the lower realms.

Now, think of the numberless other sentient beings who are the source of all your past, present and future happiness, who are the most precious, most kind ones in your life, how they are also suffering in samsara. Think of those who are in the lower realms and the unimaginable heavy sufferings there, and how there are numberless of them. And think of the human beings, the gods and demigods, all those beings, who are experiencing the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering, how there is not even the break of a second from the suffering of samsara. They have been experiencing these oceans of samsaric suffering from beginningless rebirths. So, generate strong compassion, thinking, "I will free these numberless precious, kind sentient beings from all suffering and its causes."

[Long pause for meditation]

For the success of this, now completely, single-pointedly rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha by remembering what is the Buddha, what is the Dharma and what is the Sangha.



“I go for refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha until I achieve full enlightenment.”

Remember the causal refuge and the resultant refuge.

“I go for refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha until I achieve full enlightenment.”

Now, this is Tibetan language class!

*Sang gyä chhö dang tshog kyi chhog nam la*

“Due to the merits collected by having done charity and so forth, may I achieve enlightenment in order to benefit all the transmigratory beings.”

Remember the six realms’ sentient beings as I have described before, who are transmigratory beings, suffering without choice, without freedom.

[Long pause for meditation]

*Sang gyä chhö dang tshog kyi chhog nam la*

It is said in the sutra called the *Ten Bhumis Sutra*, when you put your palms together like this, generating the thought to achieve enlightenment for all sentient beings, how much merit you collect is like the limitless sky. It is amazing, unimaginable. It equals the number of sand grains of the river Ganga. In India there’s a huge, very long river that flows past Varanasi. I don’t know, it must have come from another place before Varanasi; here we are talking about the number of sand grains of the river Ganga. Therefore, you fill that many universes with jewels—gold, diamonds, silver and so forth—you fill up that many universes with jewels and make offerings to the buddhas for eons equaling the number of sand grains of the river Ganga. I think the time is eons equaling the number of sand grains of the river Ganga, for that much length of time make offerings to Buddha. And then, to simply put your palms together and then think, “I’m going to generate bodhicitta to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all the sentient beings,” you collect far greater merit than offering many worlds filled up with the seven types of precious jewels, equaling the number of sand grains of the river Ganga, that much gold, diamonds and so

forth, to how many buddhas? To the number equaling the number of sand grains in the river Ganga. And how long? For that many number of eons.

Just making one offering to one buddha statue, the merit is inconceivable. It's beyond our imagination, the merit you get by making one offering to a statue of a buddha or a picture of a buddha. It's beyond our imagination; it has infinite benefit.

That many worlds filled with the precious jewels, of course creates great merit, that many equaling the number of sand grains of the river Ganga, offered to that number of buddhas for eons equaling the number of sand grains of the river Ganga, for an incredible length of time. That itself is unbelievable but, when you compare it to bodhicitta, when generating bodhicitta like this, thinking to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, that merit is small. This merit is far greater.

I think the sutra that explains this is called the *Ten Bhumis Sutra*. I'm not one hundred percent sure. So, I'll stop here.

## DEDICATION

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the other sentient beings, may loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta, which is the source of all the happiness and success for myself and for all sentient beings, be generated within my mind and in the minds of my family members and in the minds of all the students, benefactors and so on, and in the minds of all the rest of the sentient beings, without delay of even a second. May that which has been generated increase.”

*Jang chhub ...*

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, may the Compassion Buddha, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the source of all sentient beings' happiness, and the source of refuge for all sentient beings, have a stable life and may all his holy wishes succeed immediately, as well as the wishes of all the other holy beings and all my virtuous friends.

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

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of the sentient beings, may I, my own family members, all the students and benefactors of this organization as well as all the sentient beings, may we in all lifetimes meet only perfectly qualified Mahayana virtuous friends, gurus, and from each sentient being’s side, may we be able to see that guru only as an enlightened being and be able to do only actions most pleasing to the holy mind of the virtuous friend, from each sentient being’s side and from my own side. May I and each sentient being be able to fulfill the holy wishes of the virtuous friend, the guru, immediately. May these things happen from now on, from this second until enlightenment is achieved, in all the future lifetimes until we achieve enlightenment.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the sentient beings, may I be able to offer benefits like the sky to all sentient beings, like Lama Tsongkhapa, by having the same qualities within me as Lama Tsongkhapa has, from now on in all the future lifetimes.

“I dedicate all the merits to be able to follow the extensive bodhisattva deeds, such as the bodhisattvas Manjugosha, Samantabhadra and Ksitigarbha and so forth. I dedicate all my merits in the best way that the three-time buddhas and bodhisattvas highly admire.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, that are totally nonexistent from their own side, may the I, who is also totally nonexistent from its own side, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, which is also totally nonexistent from its own side, and lead all the sentient beings who are also totally nonexistent from their own side, by myself alone, who is also totally nonexistent, to that enlightenment, which is also totally nonexistent from its own side, by myself alone, who is also totally nonexistent from its own side.

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the other sentient beings, may Lama Tsongkhapa’s stainless teachings, the paths of sutra and tantra, be completely actualized within me within my life, as well as within my family and all the students and benefactors of this organization, without delay of even a second in this very lifetime.

“May Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s teachings and particularly those of Lama Tsongkhapa be spread in all the directions. May I be able to cause this to happen by myself alone.

“Due to that, may no sentient beings experience war, famine, disease, the dangers of fire, water, air and earth, and all the economic problems and so forth. May everybody live their lives with loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta, and may they only benefit each other without any harm. May everyone have perfect peace and happiness.”

[Rinpoche chants in Tibetan]

Good night.

# Lecture 7

December 1, 1999

## REFUGE IS AN INNER CHANGE

Yesterday I said I was going to recite the requesting prayer to Lama Tsongkhapa, then I recited something else! I'm not sure what happened.

[Rinpoche recites the requesting prayer to Lama Tsongkhapa]

As I explained yesterday, with the meditation on refuge and generating bodhicitta, this one stanza, you first think of your own samsara, of all the sufferings, that is explained in the teachings. You first think of your own samsara by thinking what "samsara" means. Then, at least think of the three types of suffering: the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering. At least these three, whatever you can think. If you can think about other sufferings, if you can elaborate on them, that's better.

In this way, what you are supposed to do is generate the useful fear of samsara, and along with that fear, the wish to be free from samsara.

Now, think of other sentient beings, the numberless other sentient beings, how they are in the same situation, suffering in samsara. Try to get the whole idea of the suffering of samsara that others are experiencing.

Feel it is so unbearable that they are trapped in samsara, experiencing the oceans of samsaric suffering. Now generate compassion, not only wishing them to be free from all the suffering and causes but that you yourself will cause this. You will cause all sentient beings to be free from all the oceans of samsara's sufferings and all the causes of the sufferings.

Think of the hell beings. Generate great compassion for the hell beings. Generate great compassion for the hungry ghosts, great compassion for the animals, great compassion for the human beings, great compassion for the gods and demigods, great compassion for the intermediate state beings, for all the sentient beings whose minds are obscured. Generate great compassion for all of them.

Now think of the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. They have all the power to save you from these oceans of samsaric sufferings and particularly the lower realms' sufferings. Not only can they save all the sentient beings from all samsaric suffering and its causes, they have the power to help you, to guide you in order that you can liberate all the sentient beings from all suffering and its causes.

Now, with this faith that they have the power to guide you, with your whole heart, completely rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. When your mind is in this state, in this experience, that is refuge. The mind feeling this way is the refuge that you have in your heart.

Generating these thoughts and totally relying on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, with these three causes, use your understanding of the useful fear, and the compassion and devotion to the Triple Gem—that's what taking refuge means.

Taking refuge doesn't mean changing the color of your body from white to black or from black to white, or changing your nose, making your nose a different shape or different style, instead of down, making it up. It's nothing like that. It doesn't mean having hair a mile long or no hair at all. It doesn't mean any of these things. Taking refuge is a mental thing, it's a quality of mind.

It doesn't mean covering your whole head with hair or having a shiny head, with no hair at all; it doesn't mean any of this. In other cultures, the external change is regarded as very important, like wearing ladies' saris or putting colors on the nose. In other religions external change is often very much emphasized. If you do that, it means that you belong to that religion. But in Buddhism, what you do outside doesn't define what you are. How you change the outside alone doesn't define having refuge in the mind.

Even if you are able to recite all the hundreds of volumes of the Buddha's teachings on sutra and tantra and all the commentaries by both the ancient Indian yogis, the pandits and the highly attained Tibetan lamas, even if you know the entire Kangyur and Tengyur by heart, that alone doesn't define having refuge. You can do all those things but the mind remains completely dry. There is not even a single wish to be free from samsara, not even the slightest faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Even with no thought to rely on them, you can memorize all these texts and maybe recite and explain them all. Whatever change that is done externally, that alone

doesn't mean you are a Buddhist, that alone doesn't mean having refuge in the mind. There are big differences.

The verse that I recite before the teachings:

Do not engage in any nonvirtuous action, negative karma,  
Engage in perfect virtue.  
Subdue your mind completely—  
This is the teaching of the Buddha.

The most important thing in Buddhism is taking care of your mind, subduing your mind, taming the unpeaceful, obscuring, disturbing mind. Taming it, pacifying it, controlling it.

#### **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ROBES: SUBTLE IMPERMANENCE**

Why then do monks and nuns wear robes? Why do they need a different way to dress? That is called “dancing,” not in the daytime but at night! When there's nobody in our room, not even ourselves! Anyway, what we believe is not there, it doesn't exist at all. The way we hold onto the I is not there. It doesn't exist day and night, anytime.

It has never existed. Not only doesn't it exist now, it has never existed before. There is no time it has ever come into existence. That is impossible. That is not the I that exists, the one that is doing the meditating, the listening, the reflecting, the eating, the walking, the sitting, the sleeping, going to the toilet and so forth.

At this point, maybe we haven't done much meditation on this emptiness, we haven't analyzed the ultimate view. Maybe what I'm saying now is for those who haven't studied or meditated much or who haven't heard teachings on emptiness, who are maybe thinking, “If this I doesn't exist, then what else exists? What else can exist? There's nothing left, there's no I left. If this I that I believe now, that I hold onto, if this I doesn't exist, then what else is left?” Some of you might wonder like that.

So anyway, going back. Monk and nuns wearing robes is not superstition; it is for protection. The ordination that they have taken includes the vow to practice, and this is to remind them of

the vows. All this is for protection, to remind them to practice in daily life, to live in the vows. How does it protect them? By reminding them to live in the vows they have taken. The robes signify the lamrim, especially renunciation. They especially signify renunciation.

They are to remind the monk or nun to remember impermanence and death every day of their life, to remind them of the Wheel of Life. Yesterday, I just gave a very rough introduction to the Wheel of Life. When we see a drawing of the Wheel of Life held in the mouth of Yama and are asked to meditate on it, we should get the feeling, the idea, that sentient beings must always transmigrate under the control of karma and delusions. And not only that, they have to experience all those sufferings that come in three types: the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering. So, we get the whole idea of the meaning of “transmigratory being,” the whole idea of the suffering being, including the evolution signified by twelve links that are on the outside of the drawing. In brief, the Wheel of Life holds that meaning, that explanation, when we recite the term “transmigratory being.” We should think, “I’m going to benefit transmigratory beings.”

The whole of the Wheel of Life is held in the mouth of Yama, the Lord of Death. That shows wherever we reincarnate in these six realms or in samsara there is nothing that is beyond the nature of impermanence and death. Since we are born in samsara, we are bound to impermanence and death. Life in samsara is in the nature of impermanence and death. After we are born, we have to die.

Not only that, everything is changing, including our body and mind and all causative phenomena—the surrounding people and material possessions, all these things. Not only are they changing day by day due to causes and conditions, being under the control of causes and conditions, they are changing, decaying, hour by hour, including our body and all causative phenomena, they are changing and decaying even minute by minute, even second by second, even within a second. Even within every second, our body and mind and all causative phenomena—the people around us and all material possessions, including beautiful flowers that we see—all things are changing and decaying.

Because they are changing within every second, they are decaying even within every second, that is the subtlest impermanence; it is the nature of impermanence. Because they do not last even



within a second, they don't last from minute to minute, from hour to hour, from day to day. That's how they don't last, how they decay, although this is not noticeable.

This is another hallucination that we have. We notice it only when there is gross change, like becoming old, when we notice our hair changing color, our skin getting wrinkled and we are getting clumsy. We only notice the changes when they are very gross. Only then do we discover the change. Otherwise, we don't notice the change, the decay, hour by hour, we don't notice the change, the decay, minute by minute, we don't notice the change, the decay, second by second. We especially don't notice how everything is decaying within every second.

### **WE HALLUCINATE A PERMANENT, INHERENT I**

Then, we don't notice that there is the hallucination, the appearance of permanence. The appearance of permanence is projected onto impermanent, causative phenomena, just as our mind projects the inherently existent appearance onto the merely labeled phenomena—the merely labeled I, the merely labeled enlightenment, the merely labeled hell, the merely labeled nirvana, the merely labeled samsara. Our mind, our ignorance, projects the hallucination on these things, making them seem real. Even though everything is merely labeled by the mind, right after we perceive the object, our ignorance immediately decorates or projects the hallucination, something real, inherently existent, independent, something that has never come from our mind.

The object we have made in our view is totally false. In our view we have made our I totally false. Although our I is merely labeled by our mind, it appears to us as not merely labeled by mind, totally false.

In other words, even the I comes from our mind. How? It is merely imputed by our mind, but, immediately after that, ignorance, that always leaves a negative imprint on the mind, projects onto the merely labeled I an inherently existent appearance, an independent appearance, something not merely labeled by mind.

It's like when we have bile disease, we see a white conch shell as yellow, or we see a white snow mountain as yellow. Or when we have a fever, we sometimes hallucinate that things are upside down or we see things that are not there, especially by eating hallucinatory plants, drugs and so

forth. While the mind is under the power of the substance, the hallucination pervades the mind. When the power finishes, the hallucination stops.

This is similar to a magician with a powerful mantra that can illusion our mind, making us see a hallucination. Ignorance is exactly like that magician with the mantra illusioning our mind. Not knowing the ultimate nature of the I, the mind and so forth, ignorance leaves a negative imprint on the mental continuum, projecting the appearance of inherent existence. Right after the mind has apprehended the merely labeled phenomenon, ignorance immediately projects the hallucination of inherent existence on that merely labeled phenomenon.

Then, we believe it! By leaving a negative imprint on the mental continuum, ignorance illusions our mind; we have this appearance that is not true: the I appearing as not merely labeled by mind, as well as all phenomena—hell, enlightenment, everything. Even though everything exists being merely labeled by the mind, because of this projection, we have the appearance of not being merely labeled, as something real, as existing from there, which is totally false, which is totally nonexistent. Nothing, even the size of an atom, exists in that way. Everything is completely empty, totally empty, of existing in that way.

It's very good to think of our ignorance, this concept of inherent existence, as a magician. Using the example of the external magician is very good. From beginningless rebirths until now, because we have not eradicated this ignorance, this magician, it has been illusioning our mind. Because our mind is illusioned, that's why we have all this illusion from beginningless rebirths until now.

This illusion that things appear as inherently existent can only be ceased when we become fully enlightened. This hallucination is there until we achieve enlightenment, except when we become an arya being and enter the equipoise meditation. During those meditation states, when our wisdom directly perceives emptiness in equipoise meditation, only at that time, there is no hallucination; there is no appearance of inherent existence. Other than that, all the time, even at night when we dream, we have the illusion, the hallucination. And during the daytime, when we're not dreaming, there is the illusion, the hallucination. We get up with the hallucination, with the total hallucination, the completely false world, where the I, action, object—everything—appears as not merely labeled by mind, even though the way they exist is being merely labeled by mind.

Just as, through their mental power, the magician can make people believe the illusion, ignorance, as the magician, by leaving the negative imprint on our mental continuum, causes us to have this hallucination, this illusion, from birth to the death, from beginningless rebirths up to now, up to enlightenment, except when we become an arya being for the duration of the equipoise meditation.

#### **WITH EMPTINESS WE SEE EVERYTHING AS LIKE A DREAM**

But of course, if we were to realize emptiness, the ultimate nature, by developing that wisdom, we would be like that magician. While the audience believes the illusion that they see is real, the magician might have the same appearance, but they don't believe that it is true; they know it appears by the power of the mantra. So, for them, there is the appearance but no belief.

After we have realized emptiness and developed the wisdom, we see everything as a dream, including our I, including the doer, the action and the object—everything is like a dream or everything is like an illusion.

The magician also has all those illusions but they don't believe they are true; they don't hold onto them as true. Believing the illusions are real, we get attached to them. Because the magician sees they are not real, even though they have the appearance, they don't believe them to be real and so there is no thought of clinging onto them.

When we have realized emptiness, by developing the wisdom seeing emptiness, we still have the same hallucination of inherently existent appearance, of things being not merely labeled by mind, but we have recognized—here, in our heart—that all of these are totally false, they are objects to be refuted, there is nothing true. While we are eating food, while we are walking, while we are shopping, while we are traveling, while we are talking to people, while we are having a party, while we are meditating, studying, whatever, constantly there is the understanding, the realization, that all of this is not true, that the way things appear, including the I, all this is not true. The difference is that. There is still the hallucination but there is no belief in it. There is no mind holding onto it by believing it's real.

Because we don't believe it is real, because of our realization that things are empty, there is no base for the arising of attachment, anger or any of those delusions, those afflicting emotions or disturbing thoughts. Generally speaking, it is like that. We don't see any reason to get angry or get attached because that is not real. From the point of view of that wisdom, getting attached to an object or getting angry or something doesn't make any sense at all. It is totally childish.

It's like when somebody in the desert with great thirst sees there, in distance amid the sand and bright sunlight, the appearance of water. For that person, there is such strong attachment for that water and they rush to drink it, strongly believing it is real water. Not only is there the appearance of water, but they believe in that appearance, and because of their thirst, they develop strong attachment to it. And they fear that somebody might do something to the water before they reach it, like an animal making the water dirty or something.

Another person has the same appearance, the appearance of water, but knows there is no water there, that it's a mirage due to how the hot sun hits the sand. They understand that there is not a drop of water there.

So, there are the two people. One person believes in the real water and therefore is both attached to it and fearful that it will be spoiled by others playing in it or animals making it dirty. The other person understands there is no water, even though they also have the appearance of water. When that person sees how attached the other person is to the water and how angry they are at those who could spoil it, they think of that person as totally childish and their attachment and anger as nonsense.

It is similar. After we have realized emptiness, the appearance is the same but our understanding is different; our recognition of the object is different. We understand it according to the reality. Before we realize emptiness, how we understand the object is totally wrong. We think we understand the nature of the object, but that is totally false; it is not according to reality, it is against reality. Having realized emptiness, even though we still have the hallucination, our understanding is according to reality, according to the ultimate nature of the phenomenon. The understanding of the object is correct; it is according to how the object exists.

## **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ROBES: WE ARE IN THE JAWS OF THE LORD OF DEATH**

Now, going back to impermanence. My subject got scattered. The robes are to remind the monk or nun of what is significant to remember. They are supposed to remember impermanence and death in everyday life, that their life is in the nature of impermanence and how they live in the mouth of the Lord of Death.

It's like a mouse in the mouth of the cat. At any time it could bite down and swallow the mouse. Or like a frog living in the mouth of a snake. I think maybe this way is better, with the snake and the frog. You can remember when the frog is in the mouth of the snake. The frog is there, with huge, terrified eyes, held so strongly by the snake. Its body has already half gone into the mouth of the long snake. There is no choice; there is no way to escape, nowhere to go. It tries very hard but there is nothing it can do.

We should remember this, to remind ourselves that our life is in the nature of impermanence and death; that we are in the mouth of the Lord of Death and his jaws can be closed at any time. That means death can happen at any time. The nature of life is being in the mouth of the Lord of Death, like the drawing of the Wheel of Life, meaning life is in the nature of impermanence and death, and the jaws can be closed at any time and death can happen at any time. Because death can happen to us at any moment, we must remember mindfulness, in particular renunciation.

The lower robes also have significance. I think they signify the three higher trainings. The basic one is the higher training of morality, which is the foundation, that is like the piece of cloth that is at the bottom. I'm not a hundred percent sure, but I think the lower robes signify the foundation of the higher training of the morality. Geshe Sopa Rinpoche explained all this, but I don't remember now.

Therefore, in Buddhism the external appearance is not the religion. Other religions might regard this as their religion, but not in Buddhism. Wearing robes is not superstition. There are all these reasons to help the mind practice the path. We have to understand it that way.

I was meant to do refuge, to do bodhicitta, but again it's become blah, blah, blah.

Anyway, I'll stop there. I just wanted to mention some things.

## **THE UNIFICATION OF EMPTINESS AND DEPENDENT ARISING**

The only reason the Buddha descended on this earth is to benefit us sentient beings, to liberate us sentient beings from the suffering we do not like, that is undesirable for us.

The way Buddha guides us, the way he saves us from the sufferings of samsara, liberating us from suffering, is by revealing the truth. The great truth he reveals is karma, what is the cause of happiness and the cause of suffering. That is extremely important.

But the main truth he reveals is right view, the ultimate nature of phenomena, that which is the unification of dependent arising and emptiness. He shows us that the nature of the phenomena is empty and dependent arising, this unification. Because it's empty, it exists; because it exists, it's empty. Because it is empty, it is a dependent arising; because it is a dependent arising, it's empty of independent existence. This is the unification of emptiness and dependent arising.

This is the Buddha's fundamental teaching for all the three levels of teachings according to the different levels of minds of us sentient beings: the Lesser Vehicle teaching, the Paramitayana Mahayana teachings and the Mahayana tantra teachings.

## **THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS AND THE BUDDHA, DHARMA AND SANGHA AS DOCTOR, MEDICINE AND NURSE**

The foundation of all those teachings is the four noble truths.

It is mentioned by Maitreya Buddha that the sickness is to be known, the cause of sickness is to be abandoned, abiding in happiness—that is, being recovered from the sicknesses and its cause—is to be achieved and the medicine to be taken is to be relied on. That means that suffering is to be known, the cause of suffering is to be abandoned, the cessation of suffering is to be actualized and the true path that leads to cessation is to be practiced, [which is the four noble truths].

When we have a health problem and we feel unhealthy, we go to see a doctor. By examining us, the doctor tells us that we have such and such a sickness. They explain the cause of the sickness,

whether it is from diet or some wrong behavior or whatever. If we wonder what the cause of the sickness is, the doctor will explain.

After the doctor has explained this, if we can become free from this sickness and its cause, that's real health, that's being healthy. This is what we can learn from the doctor; that why we went to the doctor, to check if there is a treatment. The doctor gives us the right medicine and we are cured. So, we rely on the medicine to succeed in this.

For all this to succeed, to have a complete recovery from this sickness and whatever are the causes of this sickness, we must have the correct treatment, we must take the correct medicine, and that depends on finding a qualified doctor.

In exactly the same way, in order to achieve liberation from samsara, to attain the cessation of the entire suffering and its causes, we must practice the path, and that depends on finding a qualified guru, a virtuous friend who reveals the unmistakable complete path to liberation. And after we have found them, we exactly follow the qualified guru's advice, like after having found a qualified doctor we exactly follow the instructions they give us.

## **THE TWELVE LINKS AND THE RICE SEEDLING SUTRA**

In the *Rice Seedling Sutra*, the twelve dependent related limbs are explained by using the example of the evolution of the external plant.

The first of the twelve dependent related limbs is the unknowing mind, the cognition that is *totally* the opposite of wisdom. The way of apprehending the object is totally the opposite to the way that wisdom apprehends the object, the ultimate nature of the phenomena.

[Rinpoche talks to a student about the translation from the Tibetan]

This is ignorance. What it simply says is that [this ignorance is the opposite of] the way that wisdom realizes emptiness, the way wisdom apprehends that the I does not have inherent existence, that the I is completely empty.

That is the opposite of ignorance, the way our old mind apprehends it. Putting it another way, our old concept or our sleeping mind, whose continuation has no beginning, our sleeping mind is unaware of what's happening around us. The sleeping mind is unaware, totally ignorant. In some ways, that's quite a good introduction to ignorance.

A few years ago, I was in London. Because I was meant to be studying English for two months, they found a very nice Irish school teacher. She followed Gurdjieff, the Russian philosopher. There is a group of people in England who are followers of Gurdjieff. This was a long time before 1959, when Tibet [was invaded and the lamas escaped]. At that time in the West, it was extremely difficult to make people understand Buddhism. The karma had not ripened; the people's minds were maybe not ready to understand Buddhism.

I don't know if Gurdjieff was a professor, but he went to England—he might have gone to other countries as well—and taught Buddhism but in a kindergarten way. He presented Buddhism in a very simple way, one that the people could understand.

One of the examples he used was the “sleeping mind.” In that way he explained ignorance, using the metaphor of the sleeping mind, saying people are sleeping. This way has great meaning. I thought the way he introduced ignorance has great effect. He understood the point of what ignorance means. Relating ignorance to sleeping gives the essential idea, showing how the mind is dark, totally unaware. He used terms like that to introduce Dharma to the Western people at that time.

Even though he died a long time ago, it seems the group still exists. It is a small group but it has existed for a very long time. My Irish English teacher was not a direct follower of Gurdjieff but a follower of a follower, probably another lady. She introduced me to three things about Gurdjieff, how he tried to explain Dharma at that time to people in the West.

Although wisdom sees that the nature of the I is totally empty, that there is not the slightest inherent existence, ignorance, our sleeping mind, the old mind that we have been living with from beginningless rebirths up to now, apprehends the I as inherently existent, as not empty. Our sleeping mind views the I as not empty of inherent existence but as inherently existent.



There are four schools of Buddhist philosophy, and the fourth one is Madhyamaka School, which has two subschools: Svatantrika and Prasangika. According to the Prasangika School, this view is the root of samsara.

The way this ignorance apprehends the I is inherently existent, not merely labeled by the mind. To make it more specific, this very subtle false object—the object not merely labeled by mind—is the object to be refuted according to the Prasangika School. What the real wisdom sees is it is merely labeled, it is empty of inherent existence, whereas the other view, ignorance, sees it as inherently existent, not merely labeled by mind. That is completely against the way that wisdom realizes the nature of the I.

This ignorance is like a farmer, a cultivator, and the karmic formation or the compounding action—the second of the twelve links—that is motivated by the ignorance is like the field where various crops grow. Everything that happens in life, happiness, suffering, all the various rebirths, all come from this, like the various crops that grow from the field.

Then, the compounding action plants a seed, an imprint, on the mental continuum, on the consciousness—the third link. Consciousness is like a tiny seed from a tree, such as the bodhi tree here in front. From the one small seed that is planted, a huge tree comes, with many thousands of branches and several thousand leaves. Just one seed, but so many things come from that, several thousands and thousands come out.

It is because that small seed carries all that potential. It carries the potential for the continuation of the consciousness. Generally speaking, there are six consciousnesses, depending on which school explains them. Some, like the Mind Only School, talk of seven and eight, but generally there are six main minds and the sixth one is consciousness. That is the one whose continuation goes from one life to another life, and that is the one that carries the imprint. You can say it is like an electric cable carrying the waves of electricity that carry the message from one place to another. Whatever message there is spoken into a telephone is carried by the signal, manifesting in another phone. The wave carries the message or the wire carries the electricity. Probably it's better to use the example of the wave of electricity and the message it carries or something, meaning the potential it carries.

The consciousness carries the imprints from one life to another. Because there is the continuation of consciousness from yesterday to today, we can remember things from yesterday and from last year, we can remember things from our childhood. When our mind is clearer, we can even remember being in our mother's womb and even the time of conception. And if our mind is *even* clearer, we can remember our life before the conception of this life. When our mind is very, very clear, we can remember many other past lives and we can also see future lives.

At present, we sometimes we don't remember things that we did today, some of the things we forget. We not only don't remember past lives but we don't even remember things we have done today; we forget. That is due to ignorance. All that is due to mental pollution, due to ignorance, due to obscurations, the karmic pollution.

Just because we can't remember some of the things we did today does not mean we didn't do them. We cannot use that as a reason—because we don't remember we didn't do it. That becomes a very funny reason.

Anyway, the consciousness is what carries the potential, the imprint. The imprint, the potential that the consciousness carries determines how this life, from birth up to now and from now up to death, is going to turn out, what kind of life we have, what kind of experiences we have, including this human body. It determines what kind of appearance we have, pure or impure, bad or good. All these things are projections, including this human body, the whole thing. What kind of view we have, what kind of concept, what kind of feeling we get, pleasant, unpleasant, indifferent, all depends on that. The whole thing, including this human body, all the potential is carried by the consciousness. It is like that small seed that carries all the potential of the huge tree with all the branches and leaves.

After that, the sprout comes up, and craving and grasping are like the conditions around the seed, like water and soil, that make the seed ready to produce the stem. Craving and grasping, the eighth and ninth links, make the imprint left on the mental continuum ready to produce the future rebirth. That is the tenth link, becoming, which is like the seed, nurtured by the soil and water, being about to produce the stem.

Before that, there is the sprout coming from the seed. In the twelve links this is name and form, the fourth link. This refers to the aggregates that are forming, "name" referring to the mental

aggregates and “form” to the physical one. I guess “name” is used because we cannot see the mental aggregates with the eye. I’m not one hundred percent sure. So, name refers to the mind and form refers to the body, the physical part, the fertilized egg.

Then there is birth, the eleventh link, which is when conception takes place on the fertilized egg.

Then, within the twelve links itself, there is the fifth link, what is called either the six sources or the six sense bases, it’s the same meaning. Whether we use sense bases or six sources, we are talking about the same thing.

Then, contact and feeling, the sixth and seventh links. Then, there is old age and death, which are put together as the twelfth link. It doesn’t mean that becoming old only happens when we die. Old age starts right after the birth. Right after the first second of the birth, the decay of ageing starts. Death does not only happen after we become kind of physically deteriorated. Death can happen in the mother’s womb; it can happen anytime.

This last part—the six sense bases, contact, feeling—I don’t know if it’s related to the rice plant, but up to there, it is.

The conclusion or the main point is this. This clearly shows the evolution of samsara, where this life came from. There is a whole evolution. And the root is ignorance; the root is the sleeping mind, not knowing the ultimate nature of the I. The creator is that, ignorance.

In the evolution of this rebirth, there are the twelve dependent related limbs, and the very first one, ignorance, which is our own mind, is the creator of this life, this body, these aggregates, this samsara. *That* is the one that creates our rebirth; *that* is the one that creates the sicknesses of this life; *that* is the one which creates old age, suffering, death. What creates death is our ignorance, the first link of the twelve links. So, basically death comes from our mind. This is the conclusion we have to understand.

## THE TWELVE LINKS: THE THREE DELUSIONS, TWO ACTIONS AND SEVEN RESULTS

Ignorance, craving and grasping are the three delusions, and compounding action motivated by ignorance and becoming are the two actions. So, in the twelve links there are three delusions and two actions. These are the causes.

Then, there are seven results. First, maybe I'll try first counting them and see how many I can remember. There is name and form, the sense bases, contact, feeling, then old age and death. I left out a whole bunch. What did I leave out? Name and form, sense bases, contact, feeling, old age and death. [*Student: Birth?*] Birth, that's right! That's five, then old age and death is six. [*Student: Awareness? Consciousness?*]

So, there's six. With consciousness, there are two ways to include it. According to some lamas' texts, consciousness, past life's consciousness, is counted as part of the cause, the past on which the imprint is left. And some lamas count consciousness as a result. If you count consciousness in that way, there are seven results. If you don't count consciousness, then there are six.

Anyway, there are three delusions, two actions and seven results (or six results). This is the evolution. It shows that this life, this rebirth, this samsara comes from three delusions and two actions. That's why the body and mind is suffering. That's the evolution of samsara.

Everything, including this body, these aggregates, and whatever appearance we have in this life—ugly, beautiful, indifferent, whatever—depending on our senses contacting that, all pleasant, unpleasant and indifferent feelings arise. All this world comes from our mind. From what? From our consciousness, the consciousness on which the imprint is left by karma. So, all this comes from our consciousness.

Not only that, the whole of this life, our aggregates, our projections, our views and feelings, how we see people—as friend or enemy—all this, all our views of the place, the whole thing, including our feelings, comes from our mind, from the karmic imprint left on the mental continuum, on the consciousness.

Not only *that*, our whole world, our aggregates, our views, our projections, our feelings, *all* these come from our mind, from the root, ignorance. The root of this samsaric rebirth is ignorance.

There is consciousness. Before that, there is karma, and before that, there is ignorance, our mind's ignorance, not somebody else's ignorance.

I'm sorry I pointed that way! I didn't mean to.

This is a very effective way to use the twelve links meditation, not only to realize how all this comes from karma and delusions, how it is created by karma and delusions, but also how all this life comes from our mind: first from consciousness, and before that karma, and before that ignorance.

### **EVERYTHING COMES FROM THE MIND**

Everything comes from our mind.

If somebody changes their mind, if a friend changes their mind or somebody gets angry at us and no longer loves us, that view is our view of somebody's attitude, how we see someone. It is our view of somebody's attitude, that they don't like us, they don't love us, that they are angry at us. Even that view comes from our consciousness, from karma, from ignorance.

Some people abuse us, some disrespect or harm us, some badly treat us, this view of our mind—our perception that somebody has harmed us, has abused or disrespected us—comes from our consciousness; it comes from our karma, from our ignorance.

There are many very extensive stories of karma that the Buddha explained in the Sutra teachings, why this person suffered like this because in a past life they did this; why this person has such and such success, such a good voice and beautiful body, wealth or whatever, so many things, because in a past life they did this and this and this. There are so many stories of karma, but the *essence* is that everything comes from the mind. Therefore, our mind is the creator of our life. There is no god or external creator there, some separate being that has created our life, our happiness, our sufferings, our problems.

This is the Buddha's basic explanation of nature, of the origin of our happiness and suffering, where it comes from, from our own mind. This is the basic Buddhist philosophy: our mind is the creator of our whole life.

And ceasing the suffering, ceasing the cause of suffering, and achieving liberation, nirvana, that also comes from our mind, from the wisdom realizing emptiness. We can also think like that. Enlightenment comes from the wisdom realizing emptiness, supported by bodhicitta, so that too comes from our pure mind. Enlightenment comes from our pure mind.

What I want to mention is this. There is nobody outside to point out, to blame in our life; there is nobody outside to blame for our problems. Problems don't come from outside; they come from our own mind.

This meditation becomes another very good meditation, a practical meditation on tolerance, on patience. It is a very practical, clear meditation on patience, if we can remember the basic Buddhist philosophy, that there is no other creator separate from us except our own mind. We are the creator of our experience, of our life, of our world.

When we experience problems in our daily life, when there is the danger of having problems, of getting angry and harming other sentient beings, when we project that somebody is harming us, abusing us, our mind labels it and we believe it. Then, without knowing it, anger arises and the thought comes to harm. When there is danger like this, remembering the basic Buddhist philosophy that we are the creator of everything—enlightenment, our happiness, our suffering—immediately we have no reason to get angry, to harm others.

I went on for a long, long time! I'll stop here.

## **DEDICATION**

“Due to all the past, present, future merits collected by me, three-time merits collected by buddhas, bodhisattvas, all the sentient beings, may the bodhicitta, the source of all the happiness, success for oneself, for all sentient beings, may it be generated in one's own mind, and in the minds of all the sentient beings, one's own family members, and all the students, benefactors in this organization as well as all the rest of the other sentient beings without delay even a second, and that which is generated, may it be increased.”

*Jang chhub ...*

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

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me and by others, may the source of peace and happiness of all sentient beings, the holy object of refuge, the Buddha of Compassion, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and all the other holy beings, have a stable life, and may all their holy wishes succeed immediately. And the same for all my virtuous friends.

“Due to all the past, present, and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, from now on, may any sentient being, just by seeing or touching me, or remembering me, just by thinking about me or talking about me, even seeing a picture of me, by seeing, touching, remembering, thinking, talking about or dreaming about me, just by that, may all those sentient beings never ever be reborn in the lower realms from that moment on. May they never ever be reborn in the lower realms in all the future lifetimes and may they immediately be liberated from all the disease, spirit harm, negative karma, all the defilements. May they achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible by actualizing the whole path, especially bodhicitta. In particular, all sentient beings who have sicknesses that have no cure, may they all immediately recover through seeing, touching, thinking about, remembering, talking about or dreaming of me, even seeing a picture of me. Those with diseases such as AIDS, cancer, [mental illness], headaches, arthritis, comas, all those heavy sicknesses, even those possessed by spirits, those who are wild, crazy, may they immediately recover.

“If a person is dying, by seeing, touching, remembering, thinking about, talking about me, may they immediately be able to experience great bliss and joy, and immediately cut away the emotional, terrifying fear of death, and all those terrifying karmic appearances.

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me and by others, may I be able to offer infinite benefit like the sky to all sentient beings by having the same qualities within me as Lama Tsongkhapa has, from now on and in all my future lifetimes.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by all other sentient beings, that which exist but are totally nonexistent from their own side, may the I, who exists but who is totally nonexistent from its own side, achieve my own deity’s enlightenment, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, which exists but is totally nonexistent from its own side, and lead all the sentient beings, who exist but are totally nonexistent from their own side, to that enlightenment, which exists but is totally nonexistent from its own side, by myself alone, who exists but who is totally nonexistent from its own side.

“I dedicate all my merits to be able to follow the holy extensive deeds of the bodhisattvas Samantabhadra, Manjugosha, Ksitigarbha and so forth, dedicating in the way that the three-time buddhas and bodhisattvas admire the most.

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me and by others, may Lama Tsongkhapa’s stainless teachings, that which unify sutra and tantra, be completely actualized in this very lifetime without delay of even a second within me and within the minds of my own family members, in the minds of all the students and benefactors in this organization, and then spread in all the directions and flourish forever. Due to that, may nobody experience war, famine, disease, death by fire, water, earth, torture, recession, economic problems, poverty and so forth.

“May everyone have perfect peace and happiness and live only with compassion, benefiting each other without any harm. May I be able to cause all this to happen by myself.”

[Rinpoche chants]

So, goodnight. Thank you.



## Lecture 8

December 2, 1999

### SEEING THE PILLAR DEPENDS ON LABELING THE PILLAR

*Student:* Could I ask a question? When I look at that post, does my projection have any base to it, or is even the solid image of that pillar purely mine?

*Rinpoche:* There is a base. The pillar that you see, before seeing that this is a *pillar*, your seeing that this is a pillar depends on your labeling “pillar,” your mind labeling “pillar” and believing that.

That’s how this comes from your mind. It depends on that. Why does your mind label “pillar”? Why don’t you label “pillar” when you see [that thing over there]? You don’t label “pillar” by seeing this. You have to see a very specific object, one that causes you to label “pillar.”

There is a reason that causes the mind to make up the label “pillar.” And the reason exists before you make up the label. What is the reason? That reason is *the base*.

For the mind to make the label “pillar,” the mind first sees the base, this phenomenon that lifts the beams and things like that. This is the base. The mind sees this base, and this base makes the mind make up the label “pillar.” The same thing here. Since I brought the mala anyway, seeing this [pillar] doesn’t cause you to label “mala.” Do you understand? And by seeing this [other object], it again doesn’t cause you to label “mala.”

What causes your mind to make up the label “mala,” you have to see the *specific base*. You have to see a base which can receive the label “mala,” not just any base. A particular base, that means *valid base*, that particular base that can receive the label “mala.” Seeing any of these objects doesn’t cause your mind to label “mala.” You have to see a particular base.

Just consider this. Seeing this phenomenon that is shaped like this, that is used to count, to recite mantras, what this mind sees first is just this phenomenon that is shaped like this, that does this function. Then, the mind is immediately caused to make up the label “mala,” and then you believe in that. There’s the appearance that this is a mala, which comes from your mind.

I will put this one more time. So now, furthermore, you can analyze to prove the false view of mala. After your mind imputed “mala,” you believe in it. *Then*, there’s the appearance of a mala. The appearance of the mala is *on* this, on this base, and there appears to be a mala from its own side. But if you look for it, if you check whether it’s true or not, if you check whether this is a mala, when you point to each bead to see whether it’s a mala or not, then no, each bead is not the mala, it’s a *part* of the mala. When this breaks, when there are these pieces, you label it, “The mala is broken.” You think, “My mala is broken,” and maybe you even cry. I’m joking!

If you look for the mala, you cannot find it on each bead. One bead is part of the mala so you cannot find the mala on each bead. Even the whole group altogether is not the mala. Therefore, this is the base that receives the label “mala.” There’s the base and there’s the label “mala.” These two are different phenomena; they are not oneness. They don’t exist separately, but they exist differently.

Each bead is part of the mala but it’s not the mala, otherwise, if you had only part of the car, you would have the car. Just having one wheel, you would have the car. If a part of the car were the car, then just by having one piece of a car, like a wheel or something, you would have the car. That proves a part of the car is not the car. Similarly, a part of the mala is not the mala, and even the whole together, that’s not the mala. That’s the base, and your mind makes up the label “mala.”

So now, on this thing, there’s no mala *at all*. On all the pieces altogether, there’s no mala at all. It doesn’t exist at all. *But* in my hand there’s a mala. There’s no mala on this, [Rinpoche holds up the mala] but in my hand there’s a mala. Why? Because there is the *base* in my hand; that’s why there’s a mala in my hand but there’s no mala on this.

So, what is that mala? It is nothing else except what is merely imputed by the mind. We’re using a mala that is merely imputed by the mind.

*Student:* Is the base imputed by the mind?

*Rinpoche:* Yes, yes, also.

*Student:* The base is also imputed?

*Rinpoche:* Yes, yes.

*Student:* It doesn't exist?

*Rinpoche:* From its own side, no. Just as the mala is merely imputed, it's exactly the same, the base is also merely imputed by the mind.

### **EVEN ATOMS ONLY EXIST IN MERE NAME**

It's the same with the I. For the I, I pointed there, but I'm not sure! Of the five aggregates, for example, for the body, the general body, there are the five limbs and then all the pieces of limbs. Then you go back to the cells, and then down to the atoms, then the particles of the atoms. There are different schools talking about the particles of the atoms. It depends on the different schools. I think the Prasangika School believes there are always particles in every atom.

So, from the self, all these are what are imputed: the I, the aggregates, then for each aggregate the various parts. For example, when you take the form, the general body, there are five limbs, then all the pieces, all with so many labels, so many things imputed, right down to the atoms. And even the atoms are also labeled on the particles of atoms. So, everything is what is merely imputed by the mind. That's how everything exists, in mere name.

That is how everything exists, starting with the I, down to the particles of atoms of the body, and then the consciousness and the particles of the split seconds of consciousness. You keep going finer and finer. The way everything exists is in mere name, merely imputed by the mind.

That's how it exists. *But* to our hallucinated mind, due to our ignorance that leaves the imprint on our mental continuum, everything—starting from the I down to the particles of atoms, down to the split seconds of consciousness—everything that exists in mere name, that in reality is totally empty, does *not* appear to us that way. Due to ignorance, everything appears as something solid, something inherently existent, something real, existing from its own side. Everything—from the I down the particles of atoms, down to split seconds of consciousness—appears as totally something else, something totally false. This is the hallucination. This hallucinated world is the projection of our own ignorance.

In reality, these phenomena exist, they all exist, but they exist *in mere name*; they are totally empty of existing from their own side.

All these are totally empty from their own side, while at the same time existing in mere name. They are *not* nonexistent but exist in mere name. While all these exist in mere name, as dependent arisings, at the same time they are all empty.

What is reality and how we see things, how things appear to us and how we believe [them to exist] is totally the opposite; the two are totally contradictory.

Our basic problem comes from not knowing what is false, the basic wrong view, and what is the truth in our life. The suffering in our life comes from that. We are unable to recognize the differences. Therefore, it is essential to study and meditate, and to have this wisdom, to learn teachings on emptiness, the ultimate nature that the Buddha revealed, the teachings on emptiness. Until then, we are ignorant, we can never overcome our suffering. We can never be free from death, rebirth and all the sufferings of samsara.

So just one more thing. I'm sorry I'm going on and on! Just one more thing to your question. This is a very helpful meditation, a very good meditation; this analysis is very good.

You can see that the base and label are not one; they are different phenomena. You can understand that. That helps to be able to recognize what the false view is. Only by recognizing what the false view is can it lead us to realize what is empty. This only comes by recognizing the false view that we have. Only by recognizing that, can we have a correct understanding of what is empty, what emptiness, the ultimate nature, really means.

So, to put it this way. I think I'll use this, which is maybe easier. One of the simple meditations that I introduce is to understand dependent arising and also to recognize what is the false I, the I that doesn't exist. This is a very good meditation. Normally I introduce it like this. Ask yourself, "What am I doing here?" Ask yourself the question.

Then, you answer, "I'm sitting." Now here, pay attention. Asking yourself the question what you are doing makes you think. Here's the point. Your thought makes you analyze what your body is

doing *before* you put the label but *after* you have put the question. Asking the question “What am I doing?” makes the mind analyze what your body is doing, what your speech is doing, what your mind is doing. Then, it gives you the answer, which means making up the label, because the mind sees what the body is doing and you decide, “*I am sitting.*” After analyzing what the body is doing, the mind makes up the label, “*I am sitting,*” then believes in that.

Similarly, with “I’m meditating,” the mind is meditating, transforming into virtue, so then the mind makes up the label, “*I am meditating,*” and you believe in that. And with speech, if it is the speech doing the function, then you think, “*I am talking,*” and you believe in that.

So that’s it. You understand the point? First, you ask yourself the question, then that makes your mind analyze what the body, speech and mind are doing. *Then*, according to what the body is doing, what the speech is doing, what the mind is doing, *then* the mind can make up the label, “I’m doing this and that,” and then you believe in that.

So now, here pay attention! Here, I’m talking like a presenter on TV. It reminds me of TV, where they show a business in order to sell things. The TV program comes to an exciting bit and then they stop and there is an advertisement selling Coca-Cola or other things. And then the program continues. I think there was this show. Before they got to the business part, they said, “Don’t go away!” They had to remind you to pay attention before they got to the business part. So here, I’m saying, “Now pay attention!” It reminds me of the TV.

Anyway, here’s the point of your question. Maybe it’s clearer than the mala. *Now* listen to this!

The mind labeling, “I am sitting,” “I am talking,” “I am meditating,” doesn’t happen at the same time as the mind seeing the body. It doesn’t happen at the same time as doing the action of sitting, speaking or meditating. Seeing the action and making up the label are not simultaneous.

Why doesn’t that happen? Because if were to happen at the same time, what would it be? We have to find out the reason that persuades the mind to make up the label, “I am sitting,” “I am talking,” “I am meditating.” What is the reason? What causes the mind to make that particular label? If it were to happen at the same time, we wouldn’t have any reason.

Why? Because our mind makes up these labels based on a specific base, the particular base that allows us to label, “body sitting,” “speech talking,” “mind meditating.” The mind labeling and the action happening at the same time—that doesn’t happen. Why? because for our mind to make up this label, we have to have a particular reason. And that particular reason is seeing that particular valid base: the body sitting, the speech doing the function of talking, the mind transforming into virtue by meditating on the path. The mind has to see those valid bases. Only *then* can we have a reason to make up the labels, “I am sitting,” “I am talking,” “I am meditating.”

So now listen! Which one do we see first? We see our body sitting first. That is the evolution, our mind sees our aggregates, the body sitting, first, and then, after that, we see the label, “I am sitting.” And the same with seeing the speech—the base—and then seeing the label, “I am talking,” and seeing the mind meditating—the base—and then seeing the label that we have imputed, “I am meditating.”

The next example might make it clearer. We stand up, our body stands up; it changes from sitting down. Somebody asks us, “Hey! What are you doing?” Or we ask ourselves, “What am I doing?” The first thing the mind does is analyze the aggregates of the body and see that they are doing the function of standing. When the mind sees the base, the aggregates, the body doing the function of standing, then it makes up the label, “I am standing.”

So, the base comes first. The body is standing—that comes first—and then afterwards there is the label, “I am standing,” which comes second. That is because our mind sees the base, the body is standing, and then after that, after we see we are standing, we add the label, “I am standing.”

The next thing is walking. Again we change the actions of the body from standing to walking, and again we ask, ‘What am I doing?’ Asking the question, the mind sees the body doing the action of walking. Then, after seeing this base, the mind makes up the label, “I am walking.” So you see, the base comes first. Got some idea?

Actually, this is a very good, very simple but very effective meditation on dependent arising or emptiness. It is an extremely profound meditation when walking, doing a walking meditation on

emptiness or dependent arising, or watching the hallucination, the false I, the false action, the false object. Even one minute, even one second meditating on this cuts the root of samsara.

It is said in the teachings, to even have a *doubt* about emptiness, thinking that maybe this I is empty, even having a doubt like that, breaks samsara into pieces. It is so powerful.

Each time we meditate on emptiness, doing an analysis like this, which brings the mind into emptiness, that there's no inherent existence, each time we do this meditation, it purifies unimaginable defilements. Each time, we become closer to liberation from samsara.

It's the same with any phenomena. Before we see the label, we have to see the base. When we see our mom, do we see her body first or do we see "mom" first? The base and label are never together; that is impossible. When we don't analyze it, it seems like we see "mom" first, then maybe the body. But actually, if we were to analyze it, we would have to come to the conclusion that in order to see our mom and believe that this is our mom, there must be something that makes us give that label, "That's my mom!" There must be a base for us to have the label. What makes us label that that's our "mom?"

For that, we have to see something. By seeing any other person's body, is our mom there? Maybe it's our past life's mom! Seeing any person's body doesn't cause us to label, "This is my mom." We must see a *particular* body, a particular body shape that did the function of giving birth to us. Among the crowd of people, we first see that particular body shape of the person who gave birth to us, which is the base, and then, seeing the base causes us to make up the label "my mom." Do you understand? We first see the base of "mom" and, after that, we see "mom" second. It's like that with *all* phenomena.

Thank you.

[Rinpoche does a short mandala offering]

## **THE ORAL TRANSMISSION OF SHAKYAMUNI PRACTICE: THE IMPORTANCE OF VOWS**

This time I'm not going to talk about that verse. Yesterday, we took time on it. But we will do the meditation on these two verses: refuge and generating bodhicitta.

Visualize Shakyamuni Buddha in front of you, by thinking of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas in all the directions or the *Guru Puja* merit field, whichever way you wish to visualize it or you can visualize it. Say,

I go for refuge until I am enlightened  
To the Buddha, the Dharma and the Supreme Assembly.

I say, “By the merits of explaining ...” and you can say, “By the merits I create through listening to Dharma ...”

I go for refuge until I am enlightened  
To the Buddha, the Dharma and the Supreme Assembly.  
By the merits I create through listening to the Dharma,  
May I become a buddha in order to benefit all sentient beings.

Today I’m going to do the oral transmission of this Guru Shakyamuni Buddha yoga practice. This can be used by those who do not have other guru yoga practices to do and want to do this meditation practice. You can also practice another deity’s guru yoga practice if you wish.

Generally, this is what I suggest practicing for the time being. Then later, with more understanding, you can do a more elaborate guru yoga practice. You don’t need to do this if you are doing other more elaborate guru yoga practices.

This practice contains Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s mantra and also the lamrim prayer of the *Steps of the Path to Enlightenment* that was composed by Lama Tsongkhapa. And, by the way, you receive the oral transmission, the continuation of the blessing of the Shakyamuni Buddha mantra and Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s name, the lamrim prayer, the short mandala offering, the seven-limb practices and so forth.

As it is mentioned in Lama Tsongkhapa’s lamrim prayer, [*The Foundation of All Good Qualities*], the second verse:

When I have discovered that the precious freedom of this rebirth is found only once,



Is extremely difficult to find again and is greatly meaningful,  
Please bless me to unceasingly generate the mind  
Taking its essence, day and night.

This is talking about this human body. Normally, we common people don't think the human body is very precious because we don't know the real, unmistakable cause of achieving a human body. Because we don't know the unmistakable cause of achieving a human body, we don't know that the cause just to be human being is so difficult to create. Just to be a human being depends on the cause: practicing pure morality, living a pure life, keeping the vows, which is the promise that we made on the basis of not harming sentient beings, who do not want suffering and who only want happiness, who do not want to receive harm from others and who only want to receive help.

People in the world are not aware of this; they don't know the real unmistakable cause to be born a human being and don't know how difficult it is to create. Therefore, they have no idea of how precious this human body is; there's no feeling of how precious it is. Our human body is so precious, others' human bodies are so precious.

Because of this lack of knowledge of how a human body is so precious, without talking about a perfect human rebirth with the eighteen precious qualities, they just sort of use the human body like a toy. Even a dollar is more precious than this human body. Maybe chocolate is more precious, especially Swiss chocolate! I'm joking! Or maybe Italian wine or Italian olive oil is more precious than a human body!

This is because we don't know the real cause, why it's so difficult to practice. Besides living the practice, even just to understand, just to accept that we must live in morality and practice vows. Generally speaking, from our own side, even to take one vow is so difficult. Abstaining from killing, abstaining from sexual misconduct, abstaining from stealing, abstaining from telling lies, or abstaining from alcohol, which many problems of life arise from, causing many dangers to our own life and to others, making our life so uncontrolled. That's not talking about the suffering results that will be experienced in the future lives, just this life. I'm not talking about the future lives that come from the negative karmas of drinking alcohol and so forth.

We might hear the explanation about how this makes our life so meaningful but because it takes a long time to actually experience this karma it will still be difficult to see how this human body is so precious and the unmistakable cause of attaining this body is so difficult to attain. To be able to understand Dharma, particularly this subject, which is at the beginning of the path to enlightenment, the beginning of the lamrim, the perfect human rebirth with the eight freedoms and ten richnesses, it takes so many years for the karma to ripen for the cause of even just a human body. Even if we hear the explanation, that doesn't mean we can accept it immediately. It takes a long time to understand and accept it. And after that, the actual practice to create the cause even just to be born a human being, by practicing pure morality, that is not easy. It takes a long time to even make the decision to do the actual practice.

We are unbelievably fortunate that we are able to take a vow for these last two weeks of the course, that we are able to create so many causes to receive a human body in many hundreds of thousands of lifetimes because karma is expandable. This one-month meditation course was set up in this way many, many years ago. It was planned to give the opportunity in the last two weeks to really practice, not just learning the words, not just having an intellectual understanding, but to really do something, to practice Dharma, not just collecting ideas, gaining an intellectual understanding of the Dharma.

Those of us who are able to take the vows, not just one but the eight Mahayana precepts, for this number of days, we are unbelievably fortunate. It's really amazing! It's a miracle. Even if we don't recognize it now, we will later. The more we understand karma, the more we purify our mind, the more we collect merit by doing these preliminary practices with the holy objects, with the Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and then generate a good heart, benefiting other sentient beings, then we can understand more and more about karma, getting a feeling for it more and more, and not just an intellectual understanding but understanding with faith, with a feeling for the karma in our heart.

And the more feeling, awareness, we get about how the human body is so precious, the more we see how it is so important to create its cause, such as practicing morality and charity. We get more and more feeling, understanding, faith, in how important it is to engage in virtue, the cause of a good rebirth.

At that time, we will be able to feel how attending this course was so important, how it was the most valuable thing in our life or the most important decision we made in our life. At that time, we feel the importance of this, when the mind is more purified and we have collected more merit, then understanding with faith comes more and more.

We have heard teachings on how difficult this precious human body is to find, how this is the one time we have it and how it will be extremely difficult to find again. But now we finally try to come to the conclusion that we need to do something in our life, that we *must* do something, we must change something. We must practice.

Unless we become liberated from samsara in this life, we need to take another rebirth. I mean, there are buddhas' pure lands where we can become enlightened, but otherwise the best thing is to take a perfect human body again in a country where all the teachings exist, not only the Lesser Vehicle teachings but also the Mahayana teachings, and not just the Mahayana sutra but also tantra, and especially highest tantra, where we can achieve enlightenment within a brief lifetime of degenerated times. We must receive a perfect human body with all the conditions for us to develop our mind in the path to attain the rest of the realizations of the path to enlightenment that we haven't developed in this life. That's the best one.

If we don't become enlightened in this life, if we don't get liberated from samsara in this life, we need to take a good rebirth again to continue to practice, one that has the most opportunity to benefit others. We need to attain another human body, especially the perfect human body. Therefore, we need to create the unmistakable cause of a good rebirth, the practice of morality.

After thinking for a long time, if we finally make the decision to take a vow in this life, then we need to live purely. Just taking the vow is not enough; we have to live purely in that vow, whether it's one vow or many. Otherwise, a good rebirth cannot happen; it will be so difficult to continue. There will be so many obstacles to continue living in the pure vows. At first, these obstacles will come from inside, in particular from all the attachment, then, because of that, there will be many obstacles coming from outside. All these internal obstacles make us receive many external obstacles. That's what makes life difficult. Even if we take a vow, it is difficult to live purely in that vow.

That's how it is very difficult to receive a human body. And if we analyze it, if we look at the world, at all the other people, to even find a person living in one vow purely is very rare. There is only a tiny number of human beings who exist on this earth who are living purely in even one vow. When we look at the world, it's like that.

Generally, even if we collect virtue by practicing morality, the merit gets destroyed by becoming angry. Unless we practice patience, loving kindness and compassion for others, unless we practice renunciation, unless we practice bodhicitta, unless we practice right view, unless we practice lamrim, we become angry, and then there's no protection for our mind in life. Anger arises and it destroys our merits. Or heresy arises toward the Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and it destroys our merits. Not only that, we feel proud that we have collected virtue by practicing morality, and then the pride makes the virtue weaker. That's why, when the ordination is taken, there is usually the dedication, "May I complete the paramita of morality by keeping it without mistakes, pure, without pride." We dedicate to be able to complete the perfection of morality without pride because pride makes our virtue weaker.

Pride makes our virtue, our merit weaker, because it's not strong, and then other nonvirtuous actions that are very strong will bring the result first, which means a suffering rebirth. Even if virtue is there, having become very weak, the result is that a good rebirth is delayed. It's there but it's delayed because the cause is very weak.

Even if we finally come to understand this very basic practice to create the cause of happiness, when we collect virtue, either there's no motivation or there's a virtuous motivation but there's no dedication at the end, so it is incomplete, it is imperfect. Or maybe there's a motivation and a dedication, but the actual body of the virtue—the meditation or whatever it is—is not done well, so it's not perfect.

Usually, in our lives, when we do nonvirtuous actions, there's a motivation and at the end we rejoice. There's motivation and rejoicing, feeling happy that it's done, so the preparation, the actual body and completion are all done. Nonvirtuous actions are mostly done perfectly, so we experience their results: rebirth in the lower realms or the sufferings of the upper realms. Those are the results that come first.

## THE ORAL TRANSMISSION OF SHAKYAMUNI PRACTICE: THE PRECIOUSNESS OF THE PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH

We have found this precious human body at this time, but it's difficult to find it *again*. Not just that, at this time we have received a *perfect* human body qualified with the eight freedoms and ten richnesses, a human body which has these eighteen qualities.

This is so unbelievably precious. This perfect human rebirth that is found this once is so meaningful. With it we can achieve whatever we wish. We can achieve a good rebirth in our next life; we can achieve any happiness in our next life—wealth, a long life, to be born as king, a god or in the human realm, having a beautiful body, having perfect surroundings, family and friends who always follows our wishes, who always support us—whatever happiness in future lives we wish for, we can achieve with this human body because we can create the cause. We can practice morality and charity. Charity helps us to have wealth, and patience helps us to have a beautiful body or perfect surroundings with people to help us. Whatever happiness in future lives we wish for, we can create the cause with this human body.

If we wish to be born with a perfect human body in the next life, having the eighteen qualities, we can create that cause in this life. If we wish to receive a human body with the eight ripening qualities, we can create that. The eight ripening qualities are having a beautiful body, long life, a capable, strong body and mind and so forth. We can create all the causes to achieve all these eight ripening qualities of a human in our next lives. If we wish to achieve a human body having the seven qualities, we can achieve that because with this body we can create all the causes. And if we wish in the next lives to achieve a precious human body having the four Mahayana Dharma wheels, we can do that. The four Mahayana Dharma wheels are having all the necessary conditions to practice, such as a place to practice and a family which doesn't oppose our wishes, [relying on holy beings, and collecting merit and making prayers]. With this human body we can create the cause to have all that we need to develop our mind in the path to enlightenment.

If we wish to be born in the pure land of a buddha, which is a quick way to achieve enlightenment, we can create various causes to be born there with this human body, by practicing morality and generating the wish. And by doing the practice of transferring our consciousness into the pure land. There are particular practices we can do.

If we want to immediately achieve liberation from samsara, we can do that, because with this perfect human body we can practice the fundamental path, the three higher trainings: the higher trainings of morality, of concentration and of wisdom. And if we wish to achieve ultimate happiness, full enlightenment, we can do that, because with this human body we can create the cause by practicing bodhicitta and following the bodhisattvas' path.

As I mentioned before, we can achieve not only enlightenment in a brief lifetime of degenerate times, but if we don't do it in this life, we can also do it after death, in the intermediate state, which is what Lama Tsongkhapa purposely chose to do, even though he could have become enlightened during his lifetime.

The quick way to become enlightened is by practicing highest tantra. We can do it within three lifetimes or within sixteen lifetimes. We can do it with this human body. There are all the necessary conditions to do it with this human body that is born in the southern human continent. For the body to practice tantra, especially highest tantra, it has to be a human body and it has to be born in the human world of the southern continent, a body that is constituted of six things, three things received from father—bone, marrow and sperm—and three things received from the mother—skin, blood and flesh. I think it might be that but I'm not one hundred percent sure. To practice highest tantra, we need a vehicle, a base, a foundation like this, a body that is constituted with the six things received from the parents. We have that body. Otherwise, there's no vehicle, no base to practice highest tantra.

In this way, this perfect human body is the most meaningful one. One day with this perfect human body means we can achieve whichever great meaning of life that I mentioned before, all the happiness beyond this life up to enlightenment. In one day we can achieve however many of those great meanings in life we wish to achieve. In every twenty-four hours we can continuously create the cause of this happiness. We can continuously achieve the three great meanings. Within each hour, even within a second, we have so much freedom with this perfect human body, creating the cause to achieve whichever of the great meanings of life we wish to achieve.

If we only have this perfect human body for one second, within that one second we can create the cause of enlightenment, therefore that one second of having a perfect human body is much more precious than the whole sky filled with not only diamonds but wish-granting jewels.

Without having such a perfect human body, even if we owned that much wealth, with skies filled with diamonds or wish-granting jewels, that alone cannot stop rebirth in the lower realms, that alone cannot cause us to achieve good rebirths in future lives and, besides that, enlightenment. But if we have this precious human body, especially this perfect human body, even if we don't have a single diamond, a single wish-granting jewel or a single dollar, we can create the cause of enlightenment.

Many yogis like Milarepa, who didn't even have a single dollar, not even a rupee, by using the same human body that we have, achieved enlightenment in one brief lifetime. Maybe Milarepa was mentally stronger, but our body is certainly stronger than his was when he was practicing, only living on nettles, so he was very skinny compared to us. We have far more muscles! Milarepa was a great yogi who achieved enlightenment in one brief lifetime of degenerated times, and many others also did this. Without having even one rupee, they wisely used their human rebirth, ceased all the delusions and all suffering, and achieved enlightenment.

The body they used to practice Dharma and achieve enlightenment is the same body that we have, but, as I was saying before, in the early stage when they were practicing Dharma, their body was maybe not strong, and was very skinny compared to ours.

Even within a second this perfect human body is much more precious than skies of diamonds, skies of wish-granting jewels. Therefore, if we let our life become distracted and fail to practice Dharma for even a second, it's like having lost far more than skies of diamonds or skies of wish-granting jewels, or skies of billions of dollars. Even within one second, wasting this perfect human body by not practicing Dharma is a much greater loss than having lost all that much wealth.

If we become distracted and don't practice Dharma, then the minutes, the hours, the days, the weeks, the months, the years that we are distracted, there is no question that this is the biggest loss in life. If a second passes being distracted, not getting to practice Dharma, that is a great loss, even if it's only one second.

This will give you a clear idea. Say, there's only one second left before we die, we can still create the cause of enlightenment with bodhicitta, generating the altruistic thought for others, trying to benefit others. When we think like this, if we have only a second left of our human life, and we

use that second to practice Dharma, that one second of being a human being is so unbelievably precious, because what we can do in that one second is unbelievable especially by practicing Mahayana Buddhism, bodhicitta.

We should have the same feeling now with all the other seconds we have, how precious this human body is. It should be the same with all the seconds remaining during the life. Every second of our human life is so precious.

If our life is completely used only with the attitude of ignorance, anger and attachment, especially attachment to this life, the thought of the eight worldly dharmas, if we live our life continuously with just this thought, as I have mentioned many times, all our activities become negative karma, nonvirtue. Distracted by this attachment to all the sense pleasures, we are not enjoying life with bodhicitta, with renunciation, with right view, just with worldly concern.

The Buddha is not saying we cannot have pleasure in this life. Pleasure is not the problem; the problem is the wrong attitude that creates the action to gain this enjoyment, the negative attitude that is the nonvirtuous thought, that makes the action of having enjoyment become negative karma, nonvirtue. The problem is living life without right concepts but with wrong concepts, with mistaken thoughts, this worldly concern, this desire clinging to just this life.

With it, all the actions become negative karma. The seconds, minute, hours, days, months, years—our whole life becomes negative karma. It not only becomes the cause of samsaric suffering but particularly the cause of the lower realms' suffering, which must be experienced for an inconceivable length of time.

Because one negative karma is expandable, we have to experience the suffering result of that one action for hundreds of lifetimes, for thousands of lifetimes. We have to experience the problems, the difficulties, throughout our whole life from just one negative karma. However, there is not just *one* negative karma, but so many from this life and from past lives.

Now, we have received the perfect human body and have met the virtuous friend who reveals the unmistakable path to not just happiness but liberation, and not just liberation but enlightenment, who can show the complete path to enlightenment without missing anything, the virtuous friend like His Holiness the Dalai Lama and many others like him. Even if we were to



actually meet Shakyamuni Buddha, even if we were to actually meet all the buddhas, there would be nothing more special we could hear from them than we can hear from His Holiness the Dalai Lama and those other great masters.

I, myself, am a Mickey Mouse guru! But of the others, even if we were to directly see all the buddhas, there would be nothing more special to hear of the Buddhadharma than what we hear from His Holiness the Dalai Lama or other great masters, especially the lamrim. Even if we actually met them, what they would teach would be exactly the same. Anyway, most of us have met the Mahayana virtuous friend who reveals the complete path without missing anything, and even if we haven't yet met them, we still can. There's still so much opportunity.

Having met the Buddhadharma, we are full of opportunity, but if we totally let our life become distracted with attachment—I mean, we don't live with anger all the time but basically with attachment, with worldly concern—and, on top of that, negative karma, we would be making a greater mistake than the animals, than the insects, because insects haven't received a perfect human body to practice Dharma; they have no opportunity to meet the Dharma, no opportunity to learn Dharma, no opportunity to meet the guru, whereas we have all the opportunities. With all this, if we then totally spent our life in distraction, in negative karma, we are sadder, poorer, than the animals, than the insects.

So anyway, I want to finish this sentence from Lama Tsongkhapa's lamrim prayer:

When I have discovered that the precious freedom of this rebirth is found only once,  
Is extremely difficult to find again and is greatly meaningful,  
Please bless me to unceasingly generate the mind  
Taking its essence, day and night.

Wishing for blessings to make use of this perfect human rebirth that is received just once, that is extremely difficult to find again and that is highly meaningful, the answer is in the last two lines, to unceasingly generate the mind that takes its essence day and night. With the thought of taking the essence, we constantly achieve the three great meanings, twenty-four hours a day, by continuously creating the cause. That means twenty-four hours a day we continuously practice the lamrim, we always keep the mind in the lamrim, which basically means practicing the three principal aspects of the path, living in the three principal aspects of the path twenty-four hours a

day. In that way, we continuously take the essence, the three great meanings. Then especially, if we live our life with the attitude of bodhicitta twenty-four hours a day, we achieve the best essence, the greatest meaning in life, enlightenment.

Another way to think might be in the morning, if we do a meditation on bodhicitta, for the rest of the day, we maintain the feeling of bodhicitta, the thought to achieve enlightenment for others. If we continuously keep the thought of benefiting others that we generated in the morning for the rest of the day, then our actions continuously become Dharma and the cause of enlightenment.

Another example, if we meditate on impermanence and death in the morning, the feeling that this life is very short and it can be stopped at any moment, if we maintain that feeling we have generated without losing it for the rest of the day, if we try to live life in that feeling, what we have generated in the morning from meditating on impermanence and death, then worldly concern and attachment do not arise, only renunciation. Because the attitude is a feeling of impermanence and death, that death can happen at any time, all our activities become Dharma, at least the cause of happiness beyond this life.

### **THE ORAL TRANSMISSION OF THE LAMRIM PRAYER: THE LAMRIM IS THE ESSENCE OF THE DHARMA**

Maybe I will do the *lung* of the lamrim prayer, maybe not the whole thing. The oral transmission is getting shorter and shorter than what I promised at the beginning!

Generate bodhicitta to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings and think, “Therefore, I’m taking the oral transmission blessing.” OK?

The foundation of all good qualities is the kind and perfect, pure guru;  
Correctly following the guru is the root of the path.  
By my clearly seeing this and applying great effort,  
Please bless me to rely upon the guru with great respect.

I don’t know what that means!

When I have discovered that the precious freedom of this rebirth is found only once,  
Is extremely difficult to find again and is greatly meaningful,  
Please bless me to unceasingly generate the mind  
Taking its essence, day and night.

This body and life are changing, like a water bubble;  
Remember how quickly they perish and death comes.  
After death, just like a shadow follows the body,  
The results of negative and positive karma follow.

When I have found definite conviction in this,  
Please bless me always to be conscientious  
In abandoning even the slightest collection of shortcomings  
And in accomplishing all virtuous deeds.

When I have recognized the shortcomings of samsaric perfections—  
There is no satisfaction in enjoying them, they are the door to all suffering,  
And they cannot be trusted—  
Please bless me to generate a strong wish for the bliss of liberation.

If we think of the West, so much of the people's problems is contained in these two shortcomings. Even if people have everything, to understand that there is no satisfaction in enjoying samsaric pleasure, that's one big problem. And that their shortcoming is that they cannot be trusted, that's another big problem. Many of people's problems are in the first and the second shortcomings that Lama Tsongkhapa explained here. There are about six shortcomings of samsara, but Lama Tsongkhapa specifically mentioned these two.

Through my being led by this pure thought  
With great remembrance, alertness, and conscientiousness,  
Please bless me to make keeping the individual liberation vows,  
The root of the teachings, my essential practice.

Just as I have fallen into the sea of samsara,  
So have all mother transmigratory beings.

By my seeing this, please bless me to train in supreme bodhicitta,  
Which bears the responsibility of freeing transmigratory beings.

Even if I develop only bodhicitta, without familiarizing myself with the three types of  
morality,  
I cannot achieve enlightenment.  
By my seeing this well,  
Please bless me to keep the vow of the sons of the victorious ones with fervent effort.

Therefore, the bodhisattva vows become a very important practice to benefit sentient beings,  
because without them we cannot achieve enlightenment. So, that's the advertisement for the  
bodhisattva!

By my having pacified distractions to wrong objects  
And correctly analyzed the meaning of reality,  
Please bless me to quickly generate within my mindstream  
The unified path of calm abiding and special insight.

When I have become a [suitable] vessel by training in the common path,  
Please bless me to immediately enter  
The holy gateway of the fortunate beings—  
The supreme of all vehicles, the Vajrayana.

At that time, the basis of accomplishing the two attainments  
Is keeping my vows and samayas purely.  
When I have gained effortless conviction in this,  
Please bless me to protect them even at the cost of my life.

Then, when I have realized exactly the vital points of the two stages—  
The essence of the tantric sets—  
And am enjoying the yoga of four sessions with effort, without being distracted [by  
nonmeditation objects],  
Please bless me to accomplish these according to the teachings of the holy beings.

Thus, may the virtuous friends who reveal the noble path  
And the spiritual practitioners who correctly accomplish it have long lives.  
Please bless me to pacify completely  
The collections of outer and inner obstacles.

In all my lives, never separated from perfect gurus,  
May I enjoy the magnificent Dharma  
And, by completing the qualities of the grounds and paths,  
May I quickly attain the state of Vajradhara.

If we want to have the realizations on the path to liberation and enlightenment, this is the way. If we also want to help the numberless sentient beings, to liberate the numberless sentient beings, this is the way.

There's only one definition. This way brings them to enlightenment. Besides mind training in the whole lamrim path, try to have realizations. All this is based on planting the seed on our mental continuum as much as possible by studying the lamrim, by reading and reciting lamrim prayers. Meditating on the lamrim and achieving the realizations of the whole path to enlightenment depends on the foundation, planting the seed, the positive imprint, on our mental continuum as much as possible by reading and reciting lamrim prayers.

When we read a lamrim prayer like this, whether it's the long version or the short version, it's very important to not become distracted, to keep the mind in the meaning of the prayer. Whether we know it or not, we should always keep the mind in the prayer. In that way, it becomes a direct meditation on the lamrim.

“Direct” means we go straight, we don't stop there and try to analyze and elaborate or to feel the experience and transform the mind into that. Here, we go straight through the prayer by meditating on the meaning, by thinking of the meaning of the prayer. This is called a direct meditation. What does it do? Within that minute, the seed of the whole lamrim path, all the realizations up to enlightenment, is already planted on our mental continuum by the time the prayer finishes. That means we made our mind closer to the realizations of the path to enlightenment; that means we made our mind closer to enlightenment; that means we made our mind closer to being able to enlighten all sentient beings.

Each day we do something like this guru yoga that contains a lamrim prayer, each day we become closer to the realizations of the path to enlightenment, we become closer to enlightenment, we become closer to enlightening all sentient beings. That is the benefit it has.

Even if we don't have time every day to do the elaborate meditation that normally comes at the end of a sadhana to transform the mind into the lamrim, doing an effortful meditation practice [we can] transform our mind into the lamrim. There's a long version that usually comes at the end of the whole tantric path [within the sadhana].

One prayer is the lamrim prayer and the other is the prayer of the graduated path of tantra. By reciting that, each day it leaves an imprint on the mind of the whole tantric path realization. That mean each day our mind becomes closer to tantric path realization and closer to enlightenment and closer to enlightening sentient beings more quickly—not just to enlighten sentient beings but to do that more quickly, due to tantra.

So, if we want to have realizations, if we want to achieve enlightenment, if we want to liberate others from suffering and enlighten them, this is what we must do. Even if we have no time to do an elaborate meditation, we must recite a lamrim prayer, mindfully, to at least plant the imprint of the lamrim realizations as many times as possible in everyday life.

I planned to talk more about prostrations, about the benefits and meditation that goes with prostrations, but I got distracted again with some other subject.

We have to do the Lama Tsongkhapa puja for the special day of Lama Tsongkhapa's passing, so today we'll stop here.

## **DEDICATION**

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me and by others, I dedicate the merits to actualize bodhicitta within my own mind, within my family members and all the students and benefactors in this organization, as well as all sentient beings.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the sentient beings, that are totally nonexistent from their own side, may the I who is totally nonexistent from its own side, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, that is also totally nonexistent from its own side, and lead all the sentient beings who are also totally nonexistent from their own side, to that enlightenment, which is also totally nonexistent from its own side, by myself alone, who is totally nonexistent from its own side.”

At different times, there are different dedications that I mention. Of course, due to ignorance there might be mistakes in the subject that I’m talking about, however, as much as possible, I try to make less mistakes.

This subject is how to meditate, so with a dedication like this, if you write it down, this is an education for your normal daily life, showing the way it’s done, which means how you should practice, how you should do the dedications in everyday life. It shows how to dedicate the merits in the purest, best way. It is meant to be used in that way in daily life, to get some idea of how to do even the dedications, how to practice in the wisest way, how to collect the most extensive merit and have the greatest success. You have to make it simple.

It’s not that everybody doesn’t do it, but I’m just emphasizing it to remind others who don’t think that way, just to show how to meditate and how to even do a dedication.

Thanks very much.

# Lecture 9

December 3, 1999

## HOW CAN WE BE FREE FROM DELUSIONS?

The essence of Buddha's advice is this:

Do not commit any nonvirtuous actions,  
Perform only perfect virtuous actions,  
Subdue your mind thoroughly—  
This is the teaching of the Buddha.

This verse contains the four noble truths: the truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of the suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering and the truth of the path [that leads to the cessation of suffering].

I have about twenty-five gurus, and one guru I have received many hundreds of sets of initiations and many teachings from is Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche. He is both a great scholar and a great yogi combined, having extensive understanding of the Buddhist philosophy, the Buddhist teachings, both sutra and tantra, both the words and their meanings. Besides having an extensive intellectual understanding, he has great experience of the path, the lamrim, the three principal aspects of the path, starting from guru devotion up to the highest tantra path. He has skies of experience; his holy mind is enriched not just with an extensive intellectual understanding of Buddhism but also with the experience of the path. His qualities are like the limitless sky. He is learned, pure in moral conduct and good-hearted. He is enriched with these three important qualities.

When Rinpoche mentioned this stanza, he often used to say that this contains the fundamental teachings of the Buddha, the four noble truths.

How do we make it happen? How do we make it possible to not commit any unwholesome actions and engage in perfect wholesome actions? It happens if we are able to do as the Buddha advised, to subdue our mind. It's just a question of subduing our mind even though it may appear impossible to us, due to the present nature of our mind. How can we possibly be free



from delusions? Without delusions, how can we have life? Without attachment, how can we survive? How can we breathe in and out? Breathe not from the nose but from the mouth? I'm joking!

If we examine our present state of mind, to many of us beginners it is kind of hard to believe that we can subdue the mind. For we ordinary beings, it's hard to see life without ignorance and attachment. Without anger might be easier. Maybe for many but not everybody, for much of the time anger does not arise that often. But desire and ignorance? Such a thought might arise that to live without them is not possible.

I think I heard a few times in the past in the West, when you talk about total liberation from delusions, when you talk about the cessation of the suffering, the cause of the suffering, about life's problems, some people cannot believe it is possible to live life without desire. They are talking from their own experience, knowing how they have lived their entire life with desire.

So, when we hear that liberation is liberation from attachment and all these delusions, that our mind separates from all this, is free from all this, it is difficult to understand. I guess that's because the attitude so far has been attachment. The person who thinks like this is speaking according to their understanding, by looking at their life, at their state of mind so far, from the time of birth, what they can remember and recognize.

However, as I used to mention in the past, it is possible for our mental continuum to be liberated from these delusions, to be completely free forever from these delusions, to be able to cease all these delusions where all the sufferings of samsara arise from.

Even without meditation, the object used as the object of our attachment is not necessarily the object of our attachment forever. It's the object of attachment for some time, then one day it disappears; one day it says goodbye! Even if it's the object of attachment—a person or something—it's not the object of our attachment forever. In life there are many examples that show it doesn't continue all the time, even in this life, besides in the life after this.

And the object used as the object of our anger is not necessarily the object we will always have anger for. After some time, it changes even without the meditation. Then, one day it's not the

object of anger. This emotional thought arising toward the object is temporary. It changes due to causes and conditions, even without meditation.

Once we have met Buddhadharma, especially the lamrim teachings that show us how to meditate, that reveal the subject of meditation, if from our side we don't put in the effort to meditate, that's different. But the minute we remember the lamrim teachings, the minute we do the meditation, we can reflect on the shortcomings of samsara, how samsara is in the nature of suffering, on how the delusions are harmful to ourselves and to other sentient beings, how they obscure the mind from seeing reality and from having realizations to develop the mind in the path to enlightenment. We see how delusions keep us continuously tied to samsara, to the suffering aggregates that continuously circle from one life to another life. These delusions always bind us to samsara, to the suffering realms, like rope, like the chain that ties our body to a log that is oneness with fire, red-hot, so our body also burns like that. Delusions are like the chain that ties us to samsara, which is only in the nature of suffering.

We should especially think about impermanence and death, by thinking about the uncertainty of when death will occur, that death can happen at any moment. We should reflect on that.

The minute we meditate on the lamrim, the delusions stop. Attachment, anger, ignorance and so forth, the delusions that arise for an object, stop. While we are meditating on the lamrim, delusions do not arise. While we are meditating, the mind meditating becomes the remedy for the delusions. Even though at the beginning it is hard, by continuing it gets easier and easier to control the delusions. As time goes by, it is not only easier and easier to control them, it becomes more and more difficult for delusions to arise.

Before, the delusions were so powerful; we were overwhelmed by them. There seemed no remedy. After some time, continuing the meditation for month and years, it becomes easier and easier to control them and we find less and less delusions arising. Then, the mind is more and more in a virtuous state, with more realizations. As I mentioned, there are the five paths to liberation. After some time, we remove not only the intellectual ones, the wrong concepts, the delusions that are due to doctrines, but even the simultaneously born delusions. Even they are ceased and even the seed of delusion that causes them to arise is totally removed by the wisdom directly realizing emptiness practiced cooperatively with method.

After having ceased the seed of delusion, it is impossible for delusions to ever arise again, to produce karma, the cause of samsara. Since delusion and karma can no longer arise, it is impossible to ever experience suffering again. There is no cause to create suffering, so it becomes impossible to experience it again.

As an example, at the beginning because we don't practice tolerance, because we don't know the meditations, whenever an unpleasant situation occurs, we are immediately overwhelmed by anger, we are overtaken by anger, invaded by anger. Then, after having learned the meditation techniques to practice patience, for most of us, even if we know the technique where we can immediately transform the mind into patience, it is still not possible to stop anger from ever arising. However, by knowing the meditation technique, we must plan, we must have a project to continue until we accomplish our aim. We must continue with these meditation techniques that we have heard or learned, like a long-term project, using them in the situation when we can.

Then, after some years, it becomes very rare to get angry. If we get angry in a very heavy situation, it doesn't last, but it is very rare that anger arises. In a very heavy situation, we might get angry for a second or so, but it goes away. It lasts a very short time, then it goes away. That's how we progress as we practice month after month and year after year. After some years, we will see big differences from a few years back. These are the signs of development.

Similarly, with attachment, over time we will be able to control attachment and other delusions. Gradually we will achieve the total cessation of all the delusions, we will achieve full enlightenment, the cessation of even the subtle negative imprint of the delusions. But in the beginning it's very difficult because the mind is so uncontrolled, so untamed. We find it very difficult to practice Dharma but as we put effort into it for months and years, practicing Dharma becomes easier and easier and easier. Then, during twenty-four hours of each day, most of what we do becomes Dharma. Maybe a quarter becomes nonvirtue, but most of it becomes Dharma, and this happens more and more.

Practicing Dharma becomes the easiest then. At the beginning, it is the most difficult thing but after some time, it becomes the easiest and *not* practicing Dharma becomes the most difficult thing. To not practice Dharma becomes very difficult. Whatever we do, our life is oneness with Dharma. Whatever we do is all Dharma.

When we have realizations of bodhicitta especially, then everything we do is a cause of enlightenment, even breathing in and out. Every single enjoyment, every single movement, becomes the cause to achieve enlightenment for ourselves and becomes the cause of happiness for all sentient beings. With bodhicitta, even if we are having entertainment, even if we are enjoying sense pleasures, it's only for others; we never seek happiness for ourselves. That doesn't arise even for one second after having the realization of bodhicitta.

### **GESHE JAMPA WANGDU**

One of the gurus who passed away the same year as Lama Yeshe did in America was Gen Jampa Wangdu. I didn't receive many teachings from him but he was one of the most successful meditators in India. Gen Jampa Wangdu was the best friend of Lama Yeshe and myself and we always had the best time when he came to meet us.

When he came, we heard a lot of information about the world. When I say "about the world" I don't mean every human being in the world but just among Tibetans, the different meditators in different places who achieved realizations, what realizations they achieved and so forth. He had much information like this, mainly from His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Because he was a very successful meditator, he could go to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama without any appointment, without going through secretary or anybody. He could go straight through whenever he wanted without going through other attendants. But I think also he might have known from his side the right time to go before he went there! He had clairvoyance developed through good qualities, not ordinary clairvoyance you're born with or due to karma but developed through meditations such as shamatha and especially very high tantra realizations through the Six Yogas of Naropa.

On occasions when I was in Dharamsala and needed to talk to him about Dharma, Gen Jampa Wangdu would immediately suddenly appear in the room. And it was the same when somebody was dying in Dharamsala, having a very hard time, with much fear and seeing all kinds of terrifying karmic appearances. The person hadn't yet gone to the hell realm but there was a sign before death, with so many terrifying karmic visions happening causing them to scream and say they were seeing all these tortures happening. Nobody would inform Gen Jampa Wangdu but he would just come down from his hermitage, from his cave, and go to see the dying person, or he

would help the geshes or the lay people who were helping. He helped some famous geshes to die.

Gen Jampa Wangdu sometimes talked about his own life story in Tibet and India. It was very, very inspiring. He didn't talk so much about his realizations, about having achieved this and that realization. He was not the type of meditator who advertised his realizations to other people. He didn't want to talk about his achievements to other people but just wanted to stay very quiet.

From His Holiness's office in Dharamsala, some American scientists came to do research, to experiment on meditators who have achieved particular highest tantric completion stage realizations, especially those who had realizations of *tummo* meditation from the Six Yogas of Naropa where they could generate heat. I guess that means something more than a normal person's heat. The scientists had heard about this and they wanted to mainly check these things out. I don't think it had so much to do with the realizations of the mind, just some external things they could check with machines. Some of the meditators with those high realizations accepted but Gen Jampa Wangdu did not.

When those American scientists were doing their research, Gen Jampa Wangdu sent a message to His Holiness' private office, telling them that if they did not leave him alone, he would leave Dharamsala! (That's not a message to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, just to the people in the office.)

I think he was among the most successful of the Tibetan meditators who escaped from Tibet to India, who actualized the basis, guru devotion, and the three principal aspects of the path and single-pointed concentration. To achieve shamatha, calm abiding, you have to proceed through the nine levels of concentration. Gen Jampa Wangdu achieved actual shamatha, which is achieved after this and the extremely refined, rapturous ecstasy of the body comes and then the extremely refined rapturous ecstasy of the mind. After all that, he achieved the actual shamatha realization, the real one.

In India, close to Dharamsala there's a place called Dalhousie where Tibetans live. There is a tantric college, and some monks from Sera, Ganden and Drepung also live there. They are selected meditators, geshes who have finished studying very well the five major sutra texts in these large monastic study universities and who went there to meditate.

There was a very high lama who, after he completed all his studies in the monastery and got a top quality lharampa degree, left the monastery and went very, very far into the very, very high mountains to meditate in a hermitage, in a cave. He meditated for many years. Then his disciples, those who really wanted to experiment in the path, also went there. When I went there, they were scattered in the mountains, not very close, meditating like that.

This lama escaped Tibet and lived in Dalhousie, guiding a selected few. I don't know how many but a few. Some people went there to renounce life and meditate but the lama did not accept them. Gen Jampa Wangdu was one of the meditators guided by this lama at Dalhousie. And then he moved from Dalhousie to Dharamsala. There were a few places he lived in Dharamsala.

There's Tushita Meditation Centre. Then, on the other side, if you go that way, there's a large building where His Holiness the Dalai Lama's guru, His Holiness Ling Rinpoche, lived for many years. He was one of the main gurus who offered education to His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Tibet. He passed the Kalachakra initiation to His Holiness, that His Holiness has given so many times in many different parts of the world. His Holiness Ling Rinpoche passed the lineage of Kalachakra teachings to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, as well as many other teachings and initiations.

Below that large building, between that and the other mountain, there's a huge rock. Under that rock, Gen Jampa Wangdu meditated for seven years or something.

I didn't go there but I heard he was meditating there. Behind Ling Rinpoche's house, there was a small house where my first guru, Geshe Rabten Rinpoche, taught me the very beginning philosophical subject of debating. He was also a great scholar, a highly attained yogi who actualized the path. He had done extensive study on Madhyamaka in Tibet, the particular extensive subject on emptiness and the two truths, conventional truth and ultimate truth. I'm not sure, but maybe he studied and debated extensively, day and night for three years. I heard he debated all night. The class had debate and discussions and he debated all night. This is very intensive study.

By the time Geshe Rabten Rinpoche reached that class, he already had many disciples because of his great understanding of Dharma. Still, after that, there were so many texts to study. He had to

learn Vinaya, all the monk's rules, all the 253 vows, and the *Abhidharmakosha*, the two major sutra texts still left to study after Madhyamaka.

Even at that time, there was a whole schedule, a program for the monastery. There was debating in a class, and the same class studied those different texts. The classes in the monasteries were like in a university, learning the different philosophical texts, debating, hours of prayers, meditating, chanting, and then again debating individually, one person to another person. Here in Kopan it's the same. The whole monastery's daily schedule is like that from morning to night. The monks take teachings from teachers, and those who are also teachers have to teach other disciples.

Geshe Rabten Rinpoche used his time in the monastery when the other monks were praying to recite prayers for people who had requested it, for the sick or dying. Even if there was no request, it was part of the program according to the constitution, to have certain hours to do prayers.

There are various prayers like the *Heart Sutra*, the *Essence of Wisdom*, the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* as well as many other prayers, done in the mornings and evenings. The high lamas who founded the monasteries set into the constitution that all these prayers were to be done for those who needed them, the sick or dying or dead. These prayers are also for the monks to complete their Dharma study, to not only have intellectual understanding but also to have success gaining realizations. So, every day there were these various prayers the monks would have to do, partly for themselves, partly for others.

Geshe Rabten Rinpoche, this great meditator's teacher, was not only my teacher but also Lama Yeshe's and Gen Jampa Wangdu's teacher. When the monks were doing these prayers in the hall, he used those times to meditate on the lamrim, to experiment on the path. Even before he fled Tibet to India, when he was in the Madhyamaka class, he was able to do meditation and transform himself and everything completely into his personal deity, the one he practiced the path to become. Even at that time, he was able to very clearly see himself completely as the buddha, the deity.

Geshe Rabten Rinpoche mentioned just this small piece to the great meditator, Gen Jampa Wangdu, and he told us.

Geshe Rabten was another extremely compassionate and learned, highly attained teacher. When he lived in the small house behind the house of His Holiness Ling Rinpoche, he heard of Gen Jampa Wangdu's situation, living in the cave. I think somebody went there. It might have been Geshe Rabten's attendant, a geshe called Pemba, who never got angry no matter whatever situation happened. He was famous for his patience, his tolerance; he had an incomparable reputation for the practice of patience. Nobody ever saw him angry or upset, no matter what awful things people told him. I think it was Geshe Pemba who went down to see Gen Jampa Wangdu, but anyway Geshe Rabten heard of his situation.

I think when his attendant went down, it was raining heavily and the whole floor of the cave was filled with water, pouring from the roof in the rock. There was just a tiny space still dry, but the rest of the cave was filled with water, completely wet. The attendant saw that Gen Jampa Wangdu was still meditating there in the cave in the dry patch. Even though Geshe Rabten Rinpoche was this meditator's teacher, he could not bear this situation, so he himself stood up and carried things down with his attendant to the cave to dig the ground, to make the water escape.

Anyway, now you can see why he was so successful in attaining realizations! You can understand from this example.

Anyway, the point is this. I'm getting farther and farther and farther and farther from the point. Gen Jampa Wangdu told Lama Yeshe and me that for the last seven years he had never gone to anybody's house for his own purpose. It's not saying that he didn't go to anybody's house but what he said was that, since seven years before, he had never gone to anybody's house for his own purpose. I think both Lama Yeshe and I were there when he said this. Gen Jampa Wangdu was not saying that he didn't go to other people's houses, but he never went for his own benefit, for his own purpose. What he was implying is that he actualized bodhicitta, that he had completely left behind the thought of seeking happiness for himself and had generated the thought of only seeking the happiness of others. He told us he had achieved the realization of bodhicitta seven years before. This is what is contained in that statement.



Ribur Rinpoche is also one of my gurus. A few years ago I took some initiations from him that I needed. I wanted to take some initiations that I could not receive from other gurus, or, when they were given, I was not there, so I took some initiations from Ribur Rinpoche.

I recently did a few days' retreat in New York. Other people go to Nepal or India to do retreat, but *I* go from here to do retreat in New York. Anyway, I'm joking! I did Mitukpa, a very powerful buddha for purification, for a few days outside New York. Ribur Rinpoche had also been doing retreat a little bit outside of New York, at Richard Gere's house, his secret house, and Rinpoche wanted me to do retreat there, so I did retreat at the same house.

In the night, I took the oral transmission of the lamrim again, *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, from Rinpoche. *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* was the first lamrim teaching I received in my life, not in Tibet, in India, at Varanasi, from His Holiness the Dalai Lama's younger tutor, His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche, who was both Lama Yeshe's and my root guru.

Usually, traditionally, when the commentary is given, the oral transmission of the text is also given, but at that time I don't think I did a good job. I maybe took the oral transmission in a dream. It was so many years ago. I was maybe distracted or sleeping during the teachings, sleeping and playing.

To make it better quality, so it can be better when I give the oral transmission to others, I took it from Rinpoche in the evenings. At other times Ribur Rinpoche took care of me with the very inspiring stories of many high lamas who lived in Tibet, who preserved the Dharma and were of incredible benefit to sentient beings. There were so many of their life stories, so I was taken care of with the very inspiring stories in my ear!

His Holiness the Dalai Lama requested Ribur Rinpoche to write autobiographies of different high lamas, how they practiced, how they achieved realizations, how they were of incredible benefit to other sentient beings and the teachings of the Buddha. His Holiness asked Ribur Rinpoche to collect all the information and make a book, and this is what Rinpoche did, making many books on different lamas by collecting the information from the students of that lama as well as other students. So, not only is Rinpoche's holy mind great, not only does he have realizations, but he has many great stories of high lamas.

So anyway, I don't know how it happened in the conversation, but although Rinpoche had done many retreats, one night he said he had never done a long-life retreat for himself. Even though, because Rinpoche was my guru and I should look at him as the Buddha, just by hearing this, that he never did a long-life meditation for himself, I was very inspired to hear that. It shows he had attained the realization of bodhicitta. In sutra and tantra, there are so many things to help ourselves. Besides eliminating the root of samsara, the cause of all suffering, there are so many things we can do to take care of ourselves, mainly meditation. Rinpoche saw I was very inspired.

Anyway, to conclude Geshe Jampa Wangdu's life story! I think it might have been in that same cave that he realized emptiness when he was there.

When I was once taking commentary on the very special teaching on Mahamudra from Geshe Rabten Rinpoche, he mentioned three times that if I had any questions on emptiness, it was good to ask to Gen Jampa Wangdu. I don't remember exactly what he said but it was something like this, because Gen Jampa Wangdu had fresh experience, realization. Geshe Rabten Rinpoche used to highly admire Gen Jampa Wangdu, saying how fortunate he was. Geshe Rabten used to admire this meditator who was his own disciple.

It seems he had realized emptiness, emptiness that cuts the root of samsara, all the sufferings. He had the realization down there in the cave.

He also had the realization of bodhicitta in Dharamsala, and the Six Yogas of Naropa, also I think in Dharamsala. Besides that, there's another hermitage where he lived for some time, way up in the mountains.

When His Holiness the Dalai Lama was giving the commentary on the Six Yogas of Naropa, as we went back from His Holiness's palace to 'Tushita, Gen Jampa Wangdu had tea with us and we discussed it before he went back to his own place. He was somebody who had already experienced these realizations.

When he passed away, there was a special sign that meant that he had achieved the realizations. He had great success of the Six Yogas of Naropa, and I think he had the realization of what is called the "clear light," which is actualizing the extremely subtle mind. There's the gross mind, the subtle mind, and the extremely subtle mind, and there's the very high tantra realization. If

you are able to achieve that realization in this life, that means you are able to become enlightened in this life. If you have the realization of the clear light, in the completion stage of highest tantra, you can become enlightened in a brief lifetime of degenerate times, within a few years.

Because the gross mind does not go to enlightenment, it has to be stopped in order to achieve enlightenment. The gross mind has to be ceased. What goes to enlightenment? What goes to enlightenment is only the very subtle mind. Only that goes to enlightenment. So, without actualizing that, we cannot achieve the two holy bodies, the rupakaya and dharmakaya.

Gen Jampa Wangdu used to express the happiness of his realization with his arms. I remember, keeping his hands like that, he said that until we achieve shamatha, calm abiding, what *we* call meditation is not meditation at all; it's not real meditation. With arms like this, he kind of showed the happiness of his attainment of shamatha realization. He also talked about his feeling of the experience of the extremely refined rapturous ecstasy of shamatha.

Once in Dharamsala we were taking teachings in His Holiness's palace on the very high tantra teaching composed by Lama Tsongkhapa called *Illumination of the Hidden Meaning*. It is a special text, a very extensive commentary on the Heruka path, which His Holiness the Dalai Lama was giving commentary on. During the teaching, it was raining. When Gen Jampa Wangdu was coming back from a pipi break, before entering the house he slipped on the step, which was very wet, knocking his head on the cement step of the floor. When he went inside, His Holiness blew on his head and suggested he go to hospital.

I didn't see it but that night or after some time he told us about this. When he slipped over on the step and banged his head on the floor, whereas other people would have been in much pain, even though he was wounded, he felt so much bliss. Instead of pain, he experienced bliss, which is a sign of his realization. It shows his shamatha or his tantra realizations.

So maybe my advertisement is finished!

## **THE EIGHT BENEFITS OF PROSTRATIONS**

I thought to maybe start with some introduction to the preliminary practices. The problem is that I may not be able to finish. [It's best] to start whatever can be finished. There are some

things in the preliminary practices that you haven't gone through, so maybe I can start from there.

On the other hand, maybe I won't start from there! I have been waiting to explain about prostrations for a long time, for many days! So, I think maybe I'll discuss prostrations at this time. I think it's probably much better than starting from the beginning of the preliminary practices, which starts with the six preparatory practices: cleaning and setting up the altar, making offerings and so forth.

With prostrations, as I normally mention, even if we just put our two palms together like this to a statue or painting of a buddha—of course, there's no question of doing it to an actual living buddha—as soon as we do that, we immediately achieve eight important benefits.

The first one is a perfect body. We achieve a perfect body in our next lives, which means having all the organs, the senses and a beautiful body. That's the first thing.

The second one is having perfect surrounding people. If we have perfect surrounding people, their minds are always harmonious with our mind. They always support us to practice the Dharma, to benefit and help others and so forth. They are always supportive, never against us.

The third benefit is very important. It is to be able to live in morality. Why is this so important? Without morality, there is no foundation for all the realizations of the path to achieve liberation and enlightenment.

When we meditate, how much we can concentrate depends on how much we live a pure, ethical life. Only by living purely in morality can we concentrate when we practice meditation, concentrating peacefully without obstacles.

This is especially true of shamatha. To achieve a realization of shamatha, calm abiding, depends on the foundation, on having gathered the cause, which is protecting morality well. The answer is there. If we are going to do a long retreat to achieve shamatha, which includes single-pointed concentration, whether we succeed or not depends on how much we are able to practice pure morality. This sort of becomes the answer to how much we can achieve. Whether we can achieve

a realization of shamatha or not and how many years it will take, it all depends so much on this, on how much we are able to live in pure morality.

This is generally the foundation for any of the realizations of the path to enlightenment, and in particular shamatha. This also means tantra realizations, not just realizations on the sutra path.

The fourth benefit is having devotion. Doing prostrations causes us to have devotion. Devotion also becomes a very important foundation. Without devotion, there is no cause to receive the blessings of the Guru and Triple Gem. With devotion, there's a cause to receive the blessings, so we receive the blessings. From the blessings, we receive the realizations of the path to enlightenment.

The fifth benefit is having a brave heart, courage. We have to have courage to do the hard work for the teachings of the Buddha, for sentient beings. We especially have to have courage to do things among the public. So, the fifth benefit is that we will receive supreme courage, the brave heart.

The sixth one is that we will be born in the god or human realm.

The seventh benefit is a very important one. We will achieve the arya path, the transcendental path. This does not refer to the Hindu transcendental meditation. It's not that one. I remember I mentioned the other day the five paths: the path of merit, the path of preparation, the right-seeing path, the path of meditation and the path of no more learning. There are five paths to achieve liberation and there are five paths to achieve enlightenment.

When we achieve the third and fourth of these paths, the right-seeing path and the path of meditation, starting from there is the arya path because with the right-seeing path we attain the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness. Having that realization, we transcend being a lower, ordinary being into an arya being. Before that, our wisdom saw emptiness but not directly, but on the third path we transcend being an ordinary being by directly perceiving emptiness, which actually ceases the delusions.

So, this seventh benefit of putting our palms to a statue or painting of a buddha, prostrating like that, is that it causes us to achieve the arya path. When we achieve this third Mahayana path, the

right-seeing path, we are totally free from the suffering cycle of death and rebirth and old age and sicknesses. We are totally free from these sufferings of samsara.

By achieving the third path, we have overcome the death, we are free from death, therefore this seventh benefit is very important. By prostrating like this to a statue or a painting of a buddha, not even an actual buddha, we gain the seventh benefit, achieving the arya path where we can overcome death. No more death means no more rebirth or any of the other sufferings.

Then the last benefit, the eighth one, is enlightenment.

In the sutra explaining the different aspects of karma, the Buddha explained the details of karma to Brahmin Chu Nan Tsü, how things happened. As the Buddha's omniscient mind sees the causes of things very clearly, it is written down in this sutra.<sup>5</sup> In it ten benefits of prostrating are explained, just putting our palms together simply like that to [a stupa, statue] or painting of a buddha, to a holy object.

We achieve birth in the king's family; we achieve extensive wealth, we achieve extensive listening to Dharma, we achieve extensive concentration, we achieve extensive form, as I mentioned before, a beautiful body with all the sense organs. We achieve extensive surrounding people, such as servants, helpers. We are also able to make and receive extensive offerings. The main emphasis here is receiving extensive offerings, then extensive devotion, extensive remembrance, mindfulness, extensive wisdom, extensive realizations, which includes liberation and full enlightenment. Like that, there are about ten benefits of simply putting our two palms together like this.

## **PROSTRATING TO HOLY OBJECTS**

The reason there is so much benefit prostrating to even one statue or a painting of a buddha is because of the power of the Buddha. The Buddha has completed the two types of merit: the merit of wisdom and the merit of virtue. He has ceased all the defilements and completed all the realizations.

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<sup>5</sup> Rinpoche may be referring to *The Exposition of Karma* (Skt: *Karmavibhanga*), stanza 1.160. In this sutra the Buddha presents a discourse on the workings of karma to a brahmin youth. See <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh338.html>.

The Buddha has inconceivable qualities, so simply putting our palms together, prostrating to even a statue or painting of a buddha has so much effect in our life, now and in the future, in all the hundreds and thousands of lifetimes. It causes us to achieve all the realizations; it causes us to achieve liberation and enlightenment. We cannot achieve liberation and enlightenment without a cause. It doesn't happen without realizations of the path, so this simple action causes us to achieve liberation and enlightenment through achieving all the realizations of the path to enlightenment. Because of the Buddha's infinite qualities, if we simply put our palms together and prostrate, we immediately achieve all this.

Normally, I advise that when we go on pilgrimage and see temples, there are many, many statues, there are many, many paintings of buddhas. In one temple there are so many paintings of buddhas on the walls, especially in Tibetan temples but also in Chinese ones. In Chinese temples there are so many small buddhas, all filling the walls. Tibetan temples are especially full of paintings of buddhas. If there are a thousand on one wall, simply by prostrating, that means right in that second we create these eight or ten benefits a thousand times. In that second, we achieve these eight or ten benefits a thousand times with those thousand buddhas.

However many statues or paintings there are in the temple, we think that we are prostrating to them all, and in those few minutes, we create that many causes of enlightenment. If there are a thousand, we create a thousand causes of enlightenment just by putting our palms together. Immediately, in that second, we create a thousand causes of enlightenment, as well as liberation from samsara.

Not only that, we create a thousand causes to have a good rebirth in our next lives. Because karma is expandable, putting our palms together to a buddha's statue or painting, we don't just create the cause to attain one good rebirth but hundreds of thousands of lifetimes of good rebirths, to be reborn in the human or god realms hundreds of thousands of times. So, even in one prayer hall at a temple, where there are so many statues and paintings, within that few minutes, without talking about the benefits of actually prostrating on the floor, just putting our palms together like this creates immense, unbelievable, extensive merit.

And it's similar when we are outside in those holy places where there are so many stupas. Rather than keeping our hands at our sides like a tourist, we can make our precious human body useful.

I often think of the parents, how they suffered so much for us. Our mother suffered so much to give birth to us and even after birth, for so many years, she bore so many hardships for us, suffering day and night, never having a peaceful sleep, crying, making herself dirty constantly. Our parents, our father and mother, suffered so much, besides giving us this body, sacrificing their lives to take care of us, protecting our life from the hundreds of dangers of everyday life, giving us an education. For so many years they bore so many hardships for our well-being, for our happiness.

After all that, if we don't make our life beneficial, if we don't make our body, speech and mind beneficial, useful, then we are born only to torture our parents, only to harm other sentient beings. We are there to be a burden for our parents and for other sentient beings.

In everyday life we should make our body, speech and mind as useful as possible, using every opportunity to make it useful, to create good karma, to create merit. Of course, creating the cause of enlightenment is the best because that's the most benefit for other sentient beings, as well as liberation and all those good rebirths. Then we can meditate on the path in the future lives to benefit other sentient beings.

Therefore, while we are going to see monasteries and temples, seeing holy objects, statues and painting of buddhas, while we are at holy places where there are many stupas, if we don't put our hands like this, we lose the chance to make so much merit. If we were to lose a hundred dollars, we would panic; we wouldn't be able to stand it. But that's nothing. Even a million dollars is nothing, even a billion dollars is nothing.

As I explained the other day, losing a billion dollars is nothing, even a trillion dollars. That much wealth might bring a small benefit, but when we offer a mandala, we visualize the whole entire universe, everything, so when we offer to the merit field, these trillion dollars is just a small benefit compared to offering a mandala. To become a millionaire or billionaire in the West needs a small amount of merit. That is part of the benefit of offering a mandala, just a small part of that benefit. It doesn't need the whole merit we collect from offering a mandala.



It's the same thing with prostrating. The kind of wealth of a billionaire or millionaire is a small part of that. It's not the whole merit, it's a small part of that unimaginable merit that we collect by doing one prostration on the floor.

Therefore, however many stupas and statues there are, even if there is only one holy object where we can put our palms together, we immediately create the cause to achieve these eight or ten benefits, which include enlightenment.

As I explained before, if we have the opportunity but we don't take it, it's a much greater loss than losing a million, billion or trillion dollars. Similarly, if there's the opportunity to create the cause of enlightenment but we don't take it, or even the opportunity to create the cause of liberation, which is of great benefit but less than enlightenment, or if we have the opportunity to have a good rebirth in so many lifetimes by putting our palms together, but we didn't do it, we lose all that. We miss out on all these benefits, which is a much greater loss than losing a million, billion or trillion dollars.

### **THE BENEFITS OF HAVING HOLY OBJECTS AT HOME**

Because of that, it's very good to have many, many holy objects in our home. So, here comes the advertisement! Anyway, I'm not joking.

[We should have many holy objects] unless there are other people living in our home and there would be a problem, because they don't understand what we are doing and they get upset, or because they have a different religion or something. Then, maybe that's different. However, if there is no such problem, especially if we have a big house, then it's a waste of money if we don't use it for many holy objects. We waste having spent all that much money to buy the house when we don't use it to collect virtue or to benefit other sentient beings.

Because of the unbelievable merit of just putting our palms together like this, it's very good to have many, many holy objects even outside the house but especially inside the house, although maybe having them in the toilet and bathroom is not appropriate. Maybe it's not so comfortable!

If we have many pictures or statues, either of buddhas or gurus, like His Holiness the Dalai Lama and those great masters, if possible every day, as much as possible, each time we enter a

room where there are holy objects, we should do like this. [Rinpoche shows students by putting his palms together] If it is not possible to do it each time, we should at least do it a few times a day. With all the holy objects we have placed in our own home, we should put our palms together and prostrate as we enter a room.

Because of the kindness of the buddhas, because of their compassion to us sentient beings, they have manifested for us in these holy objects, these statues or paintings. At the moment our mind is totally obscured, impure; we cannot see the actual Buddha to do prostrations. Therefore, the Buddha is so kind. Because of his compassion, he never gives up on us sentient beings, no matter how deluded we are, how difficult we are, how stubborn or thickskulled, how unable to practice. Because of his compassion, because he never gives up on us sentient beings, he manifests in these holy objects. These holy objects exist in order for us to purify all the obstacles, the defilements, and to collect merit. In that way, they make it possible for us to have realizations of the path to enlightenment; they guide us in the path to full enlightenment. They exist for this purpose, to liberate us from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and its causes and to bring us to enlightenment.

How does this happen? By seeing them, by using them to prostrate, to make offerings, to circumambulate, by using them in this way, we collect inconceivable merit each time we do this.

Even if there is no monastery in our country, if there are no pilgrimage places to go to, to make offerings at or circumambulate, we can make a holy place in our own home with all these holy objects, and then we can do all the practices to purify and collect merit, to achieve enlightenment.

Also, for example, when we look at the books of buddhas, such as the many art books with photos of statues and paintings of buddhas, each time we turn a page, if we put our palms like this and rejoice in their qualities or the infinite benefits that they brought to sentient beings, we should say this prayer as we see their pictures, “May I be able to benefit sentient beings like the sky just as you did, by having the same qualities within me as you have.”

Putting our palms together and praying like that, by the time we finish going through the art book, however many buddhas there are in the book, we create thousands and thousands and

thousands of causes of enlightenment. The causes of liberation, a good rebirth and all these realizations are collected many hundreds of thousands of times.

In that way, we take the essence of our life. We use every single picture of a buddha that we see to achieve a good rebirth, to achieve all the realizations of the path to enlightenment, to achieve liberation and enlightenment in order to benefit and enlighten numberless other sentient beings. We use every picture of a buddha we see.

This is making pilgrimage in a book! A pilgrimage means to purify the negative karma and to collect merit in order to have realizations. That's the purpose of pilgrimage. So, it's the same here.

Maybe I'll stop there.

In America, in the Aptos house, besides the ceiling in my own room which is left empty, it's completely covered by thangkas and holy objects, except the floor and the ceiling where there are no buddhas. [In this room,] but not right on the carpet, there's a table where there are many relics of past buddhas and relics of many yogis from recent times and especially from ancient India. Many highly enlightened beings, yogis, have relics. And I don't know how many pictures of buddhas there are, probably many thousands. There can be many thousands of buddhas in one photo. [The holy objects are] surrounded by light offerings and water offerings, and there is a place to circumambulate in the room. I think what's left empty is the ceiling and the floor.

If it's a private room that people don't have to come in, you can put mandalas of the deities [on the ceiling], because each time we see the mandala of the deity, as it is mentioned in Manjugosha root text, it has the power to purify the five very heavy uninterrupted negative karmas: killing the father and mother of this life, killing an arhat, causing the blood of a buddha to flow and causing disunity among the groups of Sangha. These five uninterrupted negative karmas are so heavy that after death we immediately go to the unbearable suffering of the heaviest hell realm. Among the hell realms, the heaviest suffering of the hell realm is the eighth hot hell.

Just by seeing the painting of a mandala or a sand mandala these [five uninterrupted negative karmas] are purified, as well as the ten nonvirtuous actions. This is mentioned in the Manjugosha

root tantra text. There are also quotations in other texts that say how powerful it is to purify the mind, although I don't remember the verses right now.

If other people haven't received a tantric initiation or don't have faith in these holy objects, it's maybe better not to see them. Otherwise, we can have many mandalas of the deities, and every time we see them, it purifies and leaves a positive imprint. They *only* leave a positive imprint, not like TV or magazines!

What I wanted to mention was not that, but anyway I mentioned it already. The other thing is that there's a room just for offerings, completely filled with pictures of buddhas and *tsha tsas*. The *tsha tsas* were not made by me but by other people, by other students.

A nun who was abbess of a Chinese nunnery in America, Thubten Munsel, received a commitment from me to make 200,000 or 300,000 *tsha tsas*, I'm not sure. She finished them and she is now in retreat at Vajrapani. I think it's mostly her *tsha tsas* filling the room. And there are about four or five hundred water bowls, many of them very big. There are no tiny water bowls there, only big and very big ones. Right now they're fixing the house, so probably the offering room is not there. There are offerings completely around the table, in the center, and there are stupas with offerings around. When I take people on a guided tour, I give them incense in their hands to put their palms together with the two lighted incense sticks. Then, I make them first generate a bodhicitta motivation, by thinking, "The purpose of my life is to free all sentient beings from their suffering and bring them to enlightenment, therefore I must achieve enlightenment, therefore I'm going to make offerings and prostrations."

Then, inside the room there are many stupas and *tsha tsas*. The people look at all the buddhas and make offerings all the way round. So, I guide them around like this, making them look at all the buddhas and think, "I'm prostrating and making offerings," but not just thinking about the buddhas and holy objects but, with the meditation on guru yoga, seeing they are all manifestations of the guru. From the person's side, they meditate like that, with the mindfulness that all these are the guru.

As I often say, giving a biscuit or a chocolate or a glass of water to even a disciple of the same guru, by remembering in your mind that this is the guru, the merit you collect is unimaginable, much more merit than making offerings to all the ten directions' Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and

all the ten directions' statues, stupas, scriptures, thangkas. Making offerings to all of them, who are numberless, and making offerings to one of the guru's pores—the guru's pores means the guru's disciples and even the guru's animals, the dogs, cats or horses, and the guru's friends, those in the guru's neighborhood and if the guru is a layperson, the guru's spouse and children—if you offer to just one of the guru's pores you create far greater merit than having made offerings to all the ten directions' Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and all the statues, stupas, scriptures. When you compare all those merits to giving a small piece of biscuit to a dog that belongs to your guru, by thinking of the guru and how this is one of the guru's pores, the merit is far greater; all those other merits are much smaller.

Therefore, if you actually make offering to the guru, there is no question how much more merit you collect than making merit by any other means. So I tell the visitors they should make the offerings with mindfulness, with the mind of guru yoga, making the prostration, offering the incense while thinking from their side that they are making offerings and prostrating [to the guru]. If they continuously think like this as they go around, by the time one circumambulation is finished, many thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of causes of enlightenment have been created. By prostrating and offering incense, it also becomes circumambulation to all those holy objects that are in the center. So, three practices are done.

This is so much more profitable than anything else! Especially, life is very short and death can happen at any moment, therefore it's very important to be ambitious and use every single possible opportunity to collect merit, to create the cause of good rebirth, liberation and enlightenment, to gain all the realizations. However much you can create in every moment is excellent. Being ambitious for samsaric pleasures is no good; being ambitious for realizations, for liberation, for enlightenment is good. Being ambitious for merit is very useful.

When we go to see holy objects, such as in these holy places, Swayambhunath or Boudhanath Stupa, where there are many holy objects in the monasteries there, if we can do like this, as I explained, this makes life most meaningful.

The other part of the explanation about prostrations, maybe I'll do that tomorrow or maybe tonight, when we do the Mickey Mouse dance!

## **WE NEED ALL THREE OBJECTS OF REFUGE TO BE FREE FROM SAMBARA**

You have already gone through refuge during the course, and I have also already gone over samsara, with all the sufferings. From the lamrim subjects, I have gone over all the lower realm sufferings and all the samsaric sufferings, all the delusions and so forth. That's the reason to take refuge, because we don't want to experience them, we don't want to suffer again and again, we want to be completely liberated from all this, from delusion and karma. That's a reason to take refuge.

To just not be born in the lower realms, we don't need to take refuge in all three, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. If we just take refuge in the Buddha, if we remember the Buddha at the time of death, we won't be reborn in the lower realms. If we can remember the prayer at the time of death, like in our prayer book, our meditation prayer book, such as the *Essence of Wisdom* or a lamrim prayer, if we can remember the meditation from the lamrim text at the time of death, we won't be reborn in the lower realms. Even if we remember a buddha's name or a mantra at the time of death, we won't be reborn in the lower realms.

When we are dying, if we die with the thought of seeing an ordained person we have devotion for, not necessarily the guru but just a member of the Sangha we have devotion for, if we can die with that thought, we won't be reborn in the lower realms.

So, just to protect ourselves from reincarnating in the lower realms, we don't need to take refuge in all three, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. But to be free from the entire suffering of samsara including the cause, delusion and karma, for that we need to rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Dharma is the actual refuge, but just as a sick patient has to rely on the doctor, the nurse and the medicine, all three, we need to rely on all Three Jewels. To be free from all the oceans of sufferings, from delusions and karma, we need to rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Just relying on one, only the Dharma or only the Sangha or only the Buddha, we cannot be liberated from the entire suffering of samsara and all the causes, delusions and karma.

Therefore, I usually mention that when we are dying, if we think of all the scientific knowledge that we have acquired, how does it help at that time? What benefit does it have when we are dying? At the time of death, it cannot purify our negative karma and protect us from the lower realms. It cannot stop us being reborn in lower realms or help us have good rebirth when we are dying, the most critical time of our life.

But, when we are dying, if we can simply remember even the name of a buddha or the mantra of a buddha, or even a Dharma text, if we can simply remember that, [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] or if we can simply remember a member of the Sangha, an ordained person we have devotion for, if we die with that thought, we will not be reborn in the lower realms. Even one object of refuge protects us from the unimaginable suffering realms, from a lower realm rebirth.

Normally I introduce the subject of refuge, saying how powerful refuge is, how important it is, how we need it in life and how beneficial it is at the most dangerous, most critical time of life. I don't need to say much here because you have already gone through all this, through all the meditations and teachings in quite some detail this time. You have already received the explanation.

Therefore, those who are taking refuge now, it is important to understand how you must rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha to get out of samsara, for your own happiness. Of course, there is no doubt it is the most urgent emergency, it is needed immediately.

However, the reason to take refuge doesn't finish here. As I explained the other day, numberless other sentient beings are suffering like we are in samsara. There are numberless other sentient beings in samsara experiencing the oceans of sufferings of samsara, and they want happiness and do not want suffering, like us. Therefore, it is our responsibility, our job, to free the numberless other sentient beings from all the suffering and its causes and bring them to enlightenment. That is the universal responsibility we have.

To do that, we need to achieve enlightenment ourselves. And that is all based on taking refuge. Therefore, we are going to take refuge in the Buddha, the founder of the actual refuge, in the Dharma, the actual refuge, like useful medicine, and the Sangha, those who help us actualize refuge. That is the motivation for those who are taking refuge.

First, meditate on this.

[Long pause]

## THE IMPORTANCE OF VOWS

I already explained the other day about the importance of practicing morality, of taking precepts, so when we take refuge in the Dharma, there are two things: one is what is to be abandoned and the other is what is to be practiced.

What is to be abandoned is giving harm to others. In regards to giving harm to others, there are so many different types of actions that harm others. Usually, killing is regarded as the heaviest, most frightening. Of course, that's not same for everybody. For some, speaking harshly is more painful than being killed, but mostly killing is the most frightening, I think. Therefore, I usually advise that if you are taking refuge, because you have to abandon giving harm to others by taking refuge in the Dharma as part of the precepts, it's good to at least take the vow of not intentionally killing. Even if you don't take the other vows, at least take the vow not to intentionally kill.

Without knowing you are killing something, it can happen. You can inadvertently step on a worm or something like that without knowing, but the vow is to stop intentionally killing, to live in that vow. Normally I emphasize that.

Of course, if it is difficult for somebody to take and keep this precept to not kill, and if not telling lies is easier, you can take that, or one or more of the other vows from the five lay vows, such as not taking alcohol. If you are unable to take the others, then you can take this vow. Normally I explain it like that.

However, as I mentioned one night, you should know that by creating one complete negative karma, whether it's sexual misconduct or killing or whatever it is, when the negative karma is complete, there are four suffering results. The ripening aspect result is rebirth in a lower realm, as a hell being, a hungry ghost or an animal. Then, experiencing the result similar to the cause is that the harm you gave others you experience in this life when you are born a human being. Others treat you the same as you treated them in the past. And creating the result similar to the cause, again when you are reborn as a human being, you repeat the same negative karma again and again.

So, again, with creating the result similar to the cause, when you commit this the next time you are born as a human being, that again produces the four suffering results, which means creating



the result similar to the cause again, and *again* that produces the four suffering results. This goes on and on like that, meaning there is no end to the suffering of samsara, no end to creating negative karma.

When you meditate on how by creating one complete negative karma, you have to experience the suffering result again and again without end in the future lives, you can understand how important it is to not commit even that one negative karma. If you don't do that one negative karma this time, what happens is that you stop experiencing the four suffering results, not just once but you stop what would happen again and again without end. By stopping this one negative karma, this one day, like today, you don't need to experience all these four suffering results that go on and on from life to life without end.

When you think of this, you can see how urgent it is, how it is so unbelievably important to practice morality, to take vows. Even if it's just one vow, it's so important. You need to take and keep that vow in this life right now, because death can happen at any moment. You need to start creating the cause, to stop the cause of suffering right now. Right now you need to make the preparation.

Now you have to understand, by living in morality, by abstaining from sexual misconduct or killing, whatever, from that good karma, you have the four happy results. You have to understand it's the other way round. You experience the four happy results, the four happinesses.

The ripening result is rebirth in a god or human realm. Then, you experience the other three happinesses in that life. Creating the result similar to the cause means you again create good karma, abstaining from killing or sexual misconduct, whatever, and so you experience the four happy results on and on. You achieve the four happy results again and again for so many lifetimes.

Even in this life, even taking one precept today, it gives happiness in all your coming future lives, then liberation and then enlightenment.

If you analyze like this, you can understand how it is important not just for ordained people, those living in ordination, but even for the lay people to live in lay vows, how it is the key thing for happiness for you and for all other living beings.

### **THE REFUGE CEREMONY**

So now, make three prostrations to the Buddha by thinking of the actual living Buddha.

[Rinpoche gives the refuge ceremony and the five lay vows]

As I mentioned before, how many vows you take, this is your most practical contribution for world peace. Otherwise, when you just talk about peace, it's just words. From your side, try to dedicate your life to not harming others, make the vow that in such and such a way you will not harm others. That includes not harming yourself.

Harming yourself is also indirectly harming others. For example, if you commit suicide, you stop benefiting others. You destroy this human body which has so many opportunities, which has the capacity to help others. You stop that, so that indirectly harms others.

So, I'll emphasize again that taking precepts is the most practical contribution to world peace. Now here tonight, for each of you taking refuge, especially if you also take precepts, it's related to world peace. There is always the possibility of others receiving harm from you, but then, by living in the vows, all people, all sentient beings, all human beings, animals and so forth, those who are around you no longer receive harm from you. How many vows you take, they no longer receive that many harms. What they are receiving from you is peace and happiness.

Therefore, you must rejoice! You must feel happy that you are doing something for the world, not only for the peace of this world, but you are doing something for the peace and happiness of *all* sentient beings.

[Rinpoche continues the refuge ceremony]

Now the ceremony is completed. Make three prostrations to the Lama you took refuge from.

There's a request to give the Mickey Mouse name mantra! The mantra that contains my name. So, please sit down for just a short time.

This is like the example of the mother who was longing very much for a relic of the Buddha. She asked her son to bring her a relic, but her son forgot. So, on the way home, he picked up a dog's bone and gave that to his mother saying it was a relic of the Buddha.

Even though it was a dog's bone and not the Buddha's relic, the mother really sincerely believed it was. She was devoted to it and worshipped it. And after some time she actually got the relic of the Buddha—actual pills—from the dog's bone. Pills, Buddha's white relic pills, actually manifested from the dog's bone. That happened because of her devotion, thinking that the dog's bone was the actual Buddha's bone, the Buddha's relic. From that strong devotion, the pills manifested. The actual cause of that Buddha's relic was her devotion and she received the benefit of having a Buddha relic due to her devotion. The condition was the dog's bone, but she received the Buddha's relic due to her devotion.

This is similar. I'm not saying I'm the Buddha, but from the Lama's side, even if they are not the Buddha, from the disciple's side, by practicing guru yoga, looking at them as the Buddha and seeing them as the Buddha, from that devotion the disciple receives blessings, and then from the blessings they receive realizations of the whole path to enlightenment.

Then of course, you can enlighten all sentient beings. That's the ultimate aim of doing the guru yoga practice, to be able to enlighten all sentient beings.

For that, you need to achieve enlightenment, and for that, you need to achieve all the realizations of the path. For that, you need the cause; you need to receive the Guru's blessing, and the cause of the blessing is guru devotion, which is your own mind and your own heart.

So, the purpose of giving my name mantra is for that.

Think, "The purpose of my life is to free all sentient beings from all the suffering and bring them to enlightenment. Therefore, I must achieve enlightenment. Therefore, I'm going to take an oral transmission of the Guru's mantra."

For the meditation, from your own side with a mind of guru yoga, meditate that the Lama and Shakyamuni Buddha are oneness with that guru yoga mind. Then, dedicate the merits.

“Due to all the past, present, future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by buddhas, bodhisattvas and all sentient beings, may the I, that is empty, achieve all the merit, that is empty—my merits and all others’ merits are empty—and may I, that is empty, achieve enlightenment, that is also empty from its own side, and lead all sentient beings, who are empty from their own side, to that enlightenment, that is also empty from its own side, by myself alone, that is also empty from its own side.”

Dedicate it for bodhicitta, as I often mention.

*Jang chhub ...*

This particular dedication is for morality to be complete, to be able to practice it.

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me, by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the other sentient beings, may I myself, all my family members, all the students and benefactors of this organization and all the sentient beings be able to complete the perfection of morality by keeping it without mistakes, without pride, and by keeping it pure.”

Dedicate to practice pure morality like this in all the future lifetimes.

And then dedicate, “I dedicate all my merits to be able to follow the great holy deeds of the bodhisattvas Samantabhadra, Manjugosha, Ksitigarbha and so forth. I dedicate all my merits in the way that the three-time buddhas and bodhisattvas admire the most.”

So this is a very important dedication. In this way we dedicate all the merits [in the same way] as all the bodhisattvas, so according to Samantabhadra’s extensive prayer called the *King of Prayers*, that includes the thousand prayers of bodhisattvas.

And please dedicate the merits to be able to actualize the complete teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa, to completely actualize this without delay of even a second in this very lifetime.

“Like Lama Tsongkhapa, may I be able to offer extensive benefits equaling the limitless sky to all sentient beings and the teachings of Buddha, from now on in all future lives, by having all the qualities of Lama Tsongkhapa within me.

“Because of all the merits of the three times created by me and all the buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other sentient beings, may there be no wars, famines, disease, quarreling, fighting, or unhappy minds. May there be great prosperity and may everything needed be easily obtained. May all the human beings in the world be guided by spiritual leaders teaching only Dharma and may everyone enjoy the happiness of Dharma.”

What it’s saying is may all the problems not happen; may we not have to experience them.

[Rinpoche chants in Tibetan]

Then, there is the mantra to multiply a hundred thousand times the merits that we collected now and today. Each one increases a hundred million times. It is said a hundred *thousand* times, not one hundred million. I think that’s too ambitious! You can recite together, follow my reciting, then your merit increases a hundred thousand times.

[Mantras for increasing merit]

Now the Buddha’s name, which has the power to bring all the success, whatever prayer you have done. It also increases each merit a hundred thousand times.

[The mantra for increasing merit]

“Due to the power of the blessings of the eminent buddhas and bodhisattvas, the power of infallible dependent arising, and the power of my pure special attitude, may all my pure prayers succeed immediately.”

[Rinpoche chants in Tibetan]

These are malas to count how many times you get angry! What? Roger says he needs a long mala. There are a few different ways you can use this. You keep it like this when you do prostrations.

If you are mainly counting the Thirty-five Buddhas prayer, you don't count prostrations. From the beginning to end, when you recite each one once, that is one set. Then you pass one bead. You count mainly the number of names, reciting from the beginning to the last one. When you prostrate you count like that. Or you can count the actual prostrations rather than the names.

The other thing is, when you offer the short mandala, after you finish each one you pass one bead. That way makes it easy.

There are other practices for counting, where you need to repeat many times, like making offerings and so forth. You can count like this. [Rinpoche demonstrates] While you're doing prostrations or making offerings, you can count the number of offerings.

I think that's it.

[Rinpoche hands out the malas to the students]

## Lecture 10

December 5, 1999

### THE POWER OF THE OBJECT

[Rinpoche and the students offer a short mandala]

Maybe there's a question or a half a question?

*Student:* Rinpoche, what does it mean to say, "due to the power of the object," the sacred object, like a holy statue?

*Rinpoche:* The power of the holy object. So, what's the question exactly?

*Student:* Rinpoche, what does it mean to say that it's the power of the object? What does it mean?

*Rinpoche:* Yes. We can take some ordinary examples. First, I would like to mention that in our daily lives, what we wish is happiness and what we do not wish is suffering. How do we stop the sufferings that we don't like and always achieve the happiness that we like? We have to do something about it.

Now, happiness has to come from our actions, our good karma, and that has to be motivated by the virtuous, pure thought. The pure action has to be motivated by pure thought. That's one way of saying it.

How does an action become pure? The action has to be made pure by the pure mind. If the action is motivated by negative thoughts, then that action becomes negative. That's the general evolution. Then, from that negative action, suffering arises, the suffering result arises. And from that virtuous thought, that pure action, the virtuous action arises, resulting only in happiness. In other words, the virtuous action is motivated by the virtuous thought.

From the medicinal seed, the medicinal plant and medicinal fruit come. From the poisonous seed planted in the ground, the poisonous plant and the poisonous fruit come. It is exactly the

same with regards to happiness coming from good karma, from the pure mind, from the virtuous thought, and suffering coming from negative karma, from the negative thought.

In our daily life, that's how it is. That's how happiness and suffering come. That's the only way the happiness that we wish for comes. First, we have to put in effort for the actions to become pure virtue. We have to put effort into making the mind, the attitude of that act, pure. And similarly, we have to put effort into ensuring our actions do not produce suffering. Generally, we must put effort to stop our mind being stained by ignorance, anger and attachment of this life.

But there are exceptional actions we can do, such as circumambulating holy objects, prostrating to holy objects, offering to the holy objects, besides the actual Buddha, even to paintings and statues that show the form of holy objects, such as scriptures and stupas. Even if these actions done with the holy objects are done without a Dharma motivation, even if the motivation for doing this act of circumambulating, prostrating or offering to the holy objects is done with ignorance or even with anger or attachment clinging to this life, these actions still immediately become the cause of enlightenment. Even though these actions are done out of ignorance, anger or the attachment clinging to this life, they immediately become the cause of enlightenment.

For example, offering one stick of incense, one tiny grain of rice or one tiny flower to a statue or painting of a buddha, no matter what size it is, whether it is a tiny one or as big as a mountain, as long as the holy object—this statue, scripture, stupa or whatever—signifies the Buddha's holy body, holy speech and holy mind, that action immediately becomes the cause of enlightenment. That means, by the way, it becomes the cause to achieve liberation from samsara for ourselves and, by the way, the cause to achieve a good rebirth in the god or human realm, not just once but for hundreds of thousands of lifetimes. We achieve a good rebirth like this for so many lifetimes from this one good karma.

This is because we collect so much merit doing this action that it not only has all these positive results in so many future lives, besides liberation and enlightenment, it becomes the cause of success in this life, health, long life, wealth, and so forth. And because it purifies negative karma, the difficulties and problems of this life decrease. So, there's an effect even in this life.



## **THE POWER OF THE OBJECT: THE PIG WHO WAS REBORN IN A PURE REALM**

There are many stories that show this, not just one or two. I'm sure there are numberless stories about this.

For example, once a pig was chased around a stupa by a dog. This story was written in the sutra teachings. I always had a feeling that it might be in Nepal, but I don't know why. Anyway, chased by the dog, the pig went around the stupa to escape. By going around, it became a circumambulation.

When the pig died it was not born in the lower realms, which would have been the normal case. Even for us humans who want to practice the Dharma, who think the Dharma is good, that doesn't mean we can practice it twenty-four hours a day; it doesn't mean all our actions become Dharma twenty-four hours a day. We have to put in so much effort to transform the mind into Dharma. Even if we have met and studied the Dharma, having an intellectual understanding doesn't mean all our actions twenty-four hours a day, our entire attitude, becomes Dharma.

Therefore, how is it possible for an animal to do so? The consciousness that has taken an animal body blocks understanding. I might have mentioned this already but I don't remember. An animal's consciousness blocks understanding of even the words, let alone the meaning of the words.

As I often mention, the cause of happiness is virtue. What is the definition of virtue? It is the action that has the result of happiness, only happiness, motivated by the attitude of non-anger, non-ignorance and non-attachment. That is the cause of happiness. But, even if we explained it for hundreds of thousands or billions of eons to a pig or dog, repeating it over and over, there is no way they can understand. The consciousness having taken an animal body, as a dog or a pig, they are blocked from understanding not only the words but the meaning.

Whereas, within a few seconds, we human beings can understand the meaning of what is the cause of happiness. We can have the correct understanding of the cause of happiness and the definition of virtue. We can understand it within a few minutes, within a few seconds, because our consciousness at this time has taken this precious human body which has the capacity, which gives that opportunity to understand the definition of virtue within a few seconds.

So, the differences between those other non-human beings and us human beings is like the sky. We have the opportunity to work for happiness, the opportunity to create the unmistakable cause of happiness up to enlightenment, which they don't.

So, now you can understand with just this example the unbelievable freedom we have. It's like skies of freedom, how much opportunity or freedom this human body gives us. Conversely, these sentient beings, the animals who have no human body are very pitiful. Animals like tigers, snakes and so forth are very pitiful; their ability to achieve any happiness is unbelievably limited. Therefore, normally, after their death animals will be reborn in the lower realms, either in the hell or hungry ghost realm or as an animal again.

So now here, this pig that was chased just once by a dog around the stupa, which became a circumambulation, then after it died it was born in the god realm, I think the Heaven of Thirty-three.

The pig's motivation was trying to escape the dog. The motivation was simply attachment, looking for comfort, for protection in this life, but because it went around the stupa, that became a circumambulation. And *that* became virtue, not from the side of the motivation but because of the power of the holy object.

#### **THE POWER OF THE OBJECT: THE FLY ON THE DUNG**

[Part of this story is missing due to change of tape]

Similarly, [a fly rested on a pile of dung that floated on a stream of urine, causing it to go around a stupa. An inconceivable length of time later it was born as a human who,] at eighty years old, began to practice Dharma. He then became an arhat and was liberated from samsara in that life, even though he only began to practice Dharma after eighty years old. In that life, he became an arhat, which literally means "foe-destroyer," having destroyed the enemy. The enemy is the delusions, including the seed of delusion.

How did this happen? You have probably heard this already, so maybe I'll only mention it a little bit.

This eighty-year-old man was at home, being bothered every day by the children making fun of him and teasing him all the time. He got so fed up that he thought if he went to a monastery his life would be so peaceful. Therefore, one day he left home and he went to the monastery to become a monk. He went to the monastery where the abbot was Shariputra, the Buddha's heart disciple, an arhat who, among the Buddha's disciples, was excellent at wisdom.

Shariputra checked with his clairvoyance whether this old man had the karma to become a monk but he could not see that he had any good karma. So he said, "You are too old, and you won't be able to study. You also won't be able to do any service at the monastery." So Shariputra did not accept him.

The old man got so upset that he put his head on the door of the monastery and cried. Then he went into the park and cried and cried and cried. At that time Buddha was somewhere else in India. The Buddha's omniscient mind always sees sentient beings and whenever the karma is ripened for the Buddha to guide us, he helps without delay of even a second. So, the Buddha immediately appeared there for that old man to guide him.

When he asked the old man what had happened and the old man explained everything, and the Buddha said, "Because I have completed the two types of merit, the merit of wisdom and the merit of virtue, I can see you have the karma to become a monk." As an arhat, Shariputra had not completed the two types of merit, so he could not see the old man had that karma.

Then the Buddha explained how the karma was created, how inconceivable eons ago, this old man was a fly, and there was a stupa, and the fly floated on the cow dung around the stupa.

There are two stories about this! I'm not sure which one I'm telling! One is the fly was in the ditch in the water with some cow dung and, I guess, some dirty water. Then, the water went around, so the fly went around because there was this ditch around. The other story is the cow dung. I think the usual story is that the cow dung went around, and the fly followed the smell of the cow dung. Anyway, like the pig, it became a circumambulation. And that merit it created by the circumambulation was the cause for the old man to become a monk. This is what the Buddha explained.

Then, the Buddha checked who could guide him, who could look after him, who had a karmic connection to the old man. He saw that his other heart disciple, Maudgalyayana, had a karmic connection to the old man, so the Buddha handed him over to Maudgalyayana, who was the abbot at another monastery.

So, he became a monk there. But again, every day in the monastery the young monks made fun of him, always teasing him. One day he got so fed up, he ran away from the monastery and jumped in the river.

When he jumped in the river, his guru, the abbot of the monastery, Maudgalyayana checked where the old man was and could not find him in the monastery, so he checked with his clairvoyance and he saw the old man just jumping into the river. Then he immediately appeared there, grabbed the old man from the river and asked him what had happened. The old man was completely shocked because he never expected that his teacher would come there and grab him.

He could not speak for a little while, he was so shocked, but then he explained all his problems. Maudgalyayana explained that this was because he did not have enough renunciation. Then he asked him to hold the corner of his robe and they both flew away. They went on and on and on over the ocean. Then there was a huge mountain which they landed on. It was a huge mountain of bones. After they landed, the old man asked Maudgalyayana whose bones they were. Maudgalyayana explained that they were his past life's bones.

In a past life, the old man was born as a huge whale, the largest animal in the ocean. As soon as he heard this from his abbot, Maudgalyayana, hairs from the pores of his body stood up, and he generated the realization of renunciation to samsara. He realized how samsara is in the nature of suffering, with the six shortcomings, such as nothing is definite, nothing gives satisfaction and so forth. He realized how samsara is in the nature of suffering. Then he entered the path and in that life he ceased the delusions and became an arya being.

As I mentioned yesterday or the day before, when the merit to enter the Mahayana path is ripened, the Buddha persuades the arhat to enter the Mahayana path. Then they can cease the subtle defilements and become enlightened, and then enlighten numberless other sentient beings.

So, this person was able to enlighten numberless other sentient beings. Before that, he himself became enlightened, and before that, an arhat. Before the arhat, he was a monk, and why he was able to become a monk was because of that tiny good karma, the merit collected not from the side of the motivation but from the action—due to the power of the holy object, following the smell of cow dung became a circumambulation of the stupa.

That small good karma, that merit, that came from that one circumambulation which became virtue was not from the side of the motivation, but only from the power of the holy object. From that virtue or from that circumambulation, all these things happened, all this evolution, becoming a monk, achieving all the realizations of the path to liberation, achieving all the Mahayana path, then enlightenment, and then enlightening all sentient beings. You have to understand this point.

From that one circumambulation of the stupa, that action did not become virtue from the side of the motivation, just from the power of the holy object. From that small merit all this evolution happened, all these results, up to enlightenment, and then being able to enlighten numberless other sentient beings. Do you understand?

### **THE POWER OF THE OBJECT (BACK TO)**

I'll just finish this. Therefore, whenever we ourselves circumambulate, prostrate or make offerings to holy objects, we have to understand the effect it has, what it does to us, like the story of this old man. Every single action of circumambulation, prostration or making offerings to the holy objects, every single thing that is done toward the holy object, gradually leads us to have realizations of the whole path to enlightenment, and then to achieve the infinite qualities of the Buddha's holy body, holy speech and holy mind, and to be able to cause all the happiness for every sentient being, to be able to enlighten all sentient beings.

We have to understand, like that story, the merit is much, much stronger because we not only have the power of the holy object but we do the action with a virtuous thought. Understanding the power of the holy object and so forth, the merit is much stronger when the action is done with a virtuous motivation. If we can remember it in our daily life, every single action that we do has this effect through our present and all our future lives.

Like this old man's story, even without a virtuous motivation, just from the power of the holy object it becomes virtue, and this affects all these things. Therefore, every single holy object, even a tiny photo, statue or painting, where there are many hundreds of thousands of buddhas, very, very small figures of buddhas—no matter whether it's so tiny or the size of a mountain—by doing a circumambulation, a prostration, or making offerings to this holy object, it affects our life. The benefit we get from this one action toward even a tiny drawing of a buddha is not only temporary happiness, all the temporary happiness of this and future lives until we are free from samsara, not only that but all the realizations up to enlightenment. Then, we will be able to enlighten all sentient beings. All this is what we achieve, even from a tiny picture or drawing of a buddha.

This is true of every single object, besides an actual living buddha. Statues, stupas, scriptures are all so unbelievably precious. These holy objects are the *real* wish-fulfilling objects, wish-fulfilling for sentient beings' happiness. It is very important to understand this.

Many people ask questions about my building a five-hundred-foot Maitreya Buddha statue in Bodhgaya. Many people ask, "Isn't it better to spend that much money on beggars?" I can understand their point of view.

I think I already mentioned before on one of the days about Africa and all those stories on the subject of karma, how giving only food, clothing, shelter and so forth, only external help without Dharma is good but it doesn't do anything to purify any negative karma, the defilements, where all life's problems and suffering come from. It doesn't change the cause of the poverty, of sicknesses, wars, killing, all this. It doesn't change the cause of their problem, their suffering. The cause of their poverty, sicknesses and so forth, all these problems, can only be purified by the Dharma, nothing else.

Having these holy objects existing in the world makes it so easy to purify negative karma, so easy to create the cause of happiness, not only health, long life, and so forth, the happiness of this life, but also the happiness of future lives, liberation, all the way up to enlightenment. By these holy objects existing, even without depending on our motivation, our attitude, becoming Dharma, it makes it so easy. The actions of sentient beings circumambulating, prostrating, offering and even looking at holy objects, all becomes virtue.

Therefore, the existence of holy objects makes it so *easy* for sentient beings to purify the cause of suffering and create the cause of happiness, to be liberated from samsara; it makes it *so easy* to achieve enlightenment. Using the holy objects by circumambulating, offering, prostrating, even just looking at them, purifies negative karma. Otherwise, no matter how much shelter, food and money is given, the cause of suffering can never change; it can never stop the cause of suffering that is within their minds, not outside.

That's the reason I'm trying to answer that question. Besides the Maitreya Project giving jobs to many thousands of people, meaning those thousands of people can earn their living from it, even after it is finished, besides all other reasons, such as preserving art and so forth, the main reason is this.

Every object has its own power. That is the power of the object. Electricity has its own power to affect things; water has its own power to affect things; fire has its own effect on things, it burns things. It can destroy things but also keep us warm. We can use electricity for communicating, to have cinema, the movies, TV and so forth. Each phenomenon has its own power. In exactly the same way, holy objects—stupas, statues, even statues of buddhas—have their own power.

Even though these holy objects such as buddha statues or stupas are made of substances, they have the power to transform sentient beings' minds. Without our mind becoming Dharma, without us creating virtue by circumambulating, prostrating or making offerings, our mind becomes virtuous through their power. Do you understand? As I explained before with the examples of water, fire and electricity, which have their own power, which can do their own functions. Does it help you?

*Student:* Yes, thank you.

*Rinpoche:* It took a long time! I think I'm going to stop and say goodbye. Let's do the dedications. Did you raise your hand?

*Student:* Did you want to stop?

*Rinpoche:* It depends on your question!

*Student:* It's related to the last one.

*Rinpoche:* Yes, please.

*Student:* I still don't understand.

*Rinpoche:* Oh, I see.

*Student:* Can you explain why?

*Rinpoche:* Maybe *you* need to explain why.

*Student:* If karma is volitional action and a stupa has no stupa essence to it, there's no stupa from the side of the object, and the power of the object is created by the minds of the people who circumambulate it, then how can an animal with no volitional action and no perception of the benefits of the object create any merit?

*Rinpoche:* But that would be the same thing with a human being.

*Student:* Well, there would be perception of the benefits.

*Rinpoche:* No, but there are human beings who go around holy objects, in the same way as animals, without knowing the benefits. There are so many human beings who go around holy objects, like tourists wandering around or people just passing by, they go around without even knowing that it's a holy object.

*Student:* Why would the tourists also get merit in that case?

*Rinpoche:* If there's no benefit?

*Student:* If the tourist doesn't perceive the benefit?



*Rinpoche:* No, sorry, I didn't say that. I said that, like an animal, human beings go around without any knowledge [it is a holy object]. That's what I'm saying. Even if they have no knowledge that this is a stupa or no knowledge of the benefits, it's the same as animals, they still get the merit.

In your talk you started saying that the stupa does not exist from something. What was that?

*Student:* It does not exist from its own side.

*Rinpoche:* From its own side! And because of that, how do the animals get merit? Is that what you meant?

*Student:* Yes.

*Rinpoche:* Because it doesn't exist from its own side.

*Student:* Yes, pretty much.

*Rinpoche:* In that case, it will be the same with human beings. Why would human beings get any benefit, because it doesn't exist from its own side? It not only applies to animals, it would also apply to human beings. Because it doesn't exist from its own side, how could human beings get benefits.

*Student:* It seems to me that because of the volition of the human thought, perceiving that he or she is doing a virtuous action, that virtuous action brings happiness.

*Rinpoche:* Yes, yes, that's right. What?

*Student:* So, virtue is the cause of happiness.

*Rinpoche:* Now, I'll give you an example. I'll ask you a question. For a person who has no idea of computers, who has no knowledge of computers, does the computer function for that person or not?

*Student:* It depends.

*Rinpoche:* Depends on what? So, people who have no knowledge of computers, for some the computers function and for some they don't, yeah?

In the same way, if people have children who have no knowledge that fire is hot, no concept that the fire is hot, then when the children come into contact with the fire, it doesn't burn them, yes?

Children who have no concept that fire can burn, jump into the fire, but the fire doesn't burn them because they don't have that concept, they have not yet been introduced to the fact that fire can burn. Is it correct?

*Student:* No, no, no.

*Rinpoche:* It's the same thing with electricity. If we have no knowledge of electricity, in the wrong conditions—if we don't have proper shoes or whatever—if we touch electricity, it can kill us. But you're saying that if somebody has no knowledge about what electricity does, it is not dangerous. Even if they touch electricity, it won't kill them, yeah? What?

*Student:* That's also not true.

*Rinpoche:* Oh, you agree! Oh, great! I'm so shocked that you agree!

So, it's *exactly* the same with the effect of the holy object. Whether we have the concept or not, whether our mind labels it or not, that object still affects our life, our body and mind. It's exactly the same with this holy object. It can affect our mind, we can get this benefit, whether we know it or not. But, if you *know*, there's more effect! Did that help you a tiny bit, just a tiny, tiny bit?

*Student:* Yes.

*Rinpoche:* So maybe just one more question.

## **TO PRACTICE RENUNCIATION IN THE WEST, REFLECT ON THE ENTIRE LAMRIM**

*Student:* I was wondering if you could tell us a good way of practicing renunciation when we go back to the West?

*Rinpoche:* You can write a *big* book on that subject! A very large book, the size of a table!

This is a very important question, not only for liberation and enlightenment but also to rescue ourselves from this life's problems. It's very important. Renunciation is very important even for day-to-day life peace of mind. It's important for many things, for health, for long life.

Renunciation is needed in every case, otherwise there can be danger. Without renunciation, desire can endanger so many aspects of our life. It can harm us.

The shortest answer! The shortest answer is to try as much as possible. That's the shortest answer! Try to practice renunciation, try to practice the remedy for desire as much as you can. All the subjects of the lamrim can help with that, especially impermanence and death and the suffering of the lower realms. That's for us beginners. We should meditate on these things in our everyday life as much as possible. That is most important.

Then there are the higher meditations on bodhicitta and emptiness. For some people to meditate on emptiness is extremely powerful; it becomes a great protection in their life. But this is some people, not most. I mean I'm talking as a beginner. For us beginners, these meditations in the first section of the lamrim, the graduated path of the lower capable being, are so helpful because they are to control the delusions, to control desire. They are very helpful, very powerful. It is very important in our daily life to meditate on them as much as possible, to remember them. Of course, to have realizations of them is the best. But, even if we don't have realizations, meditating on them as much as possible can help a lot.

Then, there's the section on samsaric suffering, the graduated path of the middle capable being, which talks about the shortcomings of delusions. In the graduated path of the lower capable being, impermanence and death and the suffering of the lower realms is related with karma, with negative karma and lower realms' sufferings. That is extremely powerful. And, with the graduated path of the middle capable being, there are meditations on the general and particular sufferings of samsara, the shortcomings of delusions, especially desire. We should always meditate on that. This is also very helpful, very powerful.

As well as meditating on the shortcomings of delusions, we should also meditate on the shortcomings of the object of delusion. For instance, the object of attachment is the human body, so we should reflect on the shortcomings of the body, the mistakes of the body, as it's explained in the teachings, looking at the body as dirty, like a container of garbage or a septic tank, a toilet. There is the skin outside but inside it's like a septic tank or a toilet, or a garbage can filled with all kinds of things. In case of attachment to the body, there are specific things. To practice mindfulness on these things is very helpful.

One thing is to think of the shortcomings of delusions and desire, how that obscures us from realizing the truth. Each time we follow desire it obscures us from realizing the truth, and if we don't realize the truth, we will never get out of samsara, we will never cease the suffering of samsara and its causes. We will never be able to do that if we cannot realize emptiness, the truth, the ultimate nature.

Each time we follow the delusions, it obscures us from seeing ourselves, the very nature of the I, the very nature of the mind. It stops us from achieving liberation from samsara; it stops us from achieving enlightenment. It blocks us from having realizations of the path to enlightenment. That means it blocks us from offering infinite benefit to all sentient beings, bringing them every happiness up to enlightenment.

There are many ways to think about the shortcomings of delusion. The delusions, desire, create the hell realm. By leaving imprints on the mind, it produces all the heaviest sufferings of the hell realm. There are many ways to think like that.

And then, we can think of the shortcomings of [attachment to] the body, by meditating on going beyond the skin, inside the body, and seeing how dirty it is. We can practice mindfulness on all the bones, all the pieces of flesh and all the dirty things in the body, blood and so forth. In the teachings Nagarjuna described the body as a container of thirty-two dirty things. We can count all the things that are inside, that come from the body, from the upper and lower doors. It is especially helpful to think about the inside of the body. If we just go a little bit beyond the skin, it's frightening! With the blood and flesh and so forth, there's nothing to be attached to there. We should think like that.

And even when a thorn or some tiny thing goes into the skin, when blood comes out, even that terrifies us. Like this, looking at the bones, the skeleton, there's still nothing to be attached to. All the pieces of flesh, the intestines and all the blood—there's nothing to be attached to.

And if we are attached to somebody's skin, we can meditate on putting all the skin separately, to one side, separate from the bones and flesh. Seeing it in this way, as a separate heap, we won't be attached to the skin. We will just want to throw it in the garbage.

It's only when the skin is covered by all the bones and flesh that it seems worth being attached to, but really the skin is like a plastic bag that covers a pile of garbage. We can wrap garbage or kaka in plastic and it will seem attractive. Only when all this is wrapped with skin, only at that time does it seem worth being attached to.

This *might* look good to us but being attached to it cannot benefit us at all. And the attachment is harmful to even achieve liberation for ourselves or the happiness of future lives. It stops us even achieving a good rebirth and the happiness of future lives. Thinking in that way might be powerful.

The other thing is this. If we have a compassionate nature, it might be helpful to see that following desire, being attached to this object, blocks us from benefiting all sentient beings. It can also be very powerful to see that this stops us developing our realizations to benefit other sentient beings.

Generally, which meditation technique is more powerful depends on the individual. For some people this meditation is more powerful; for some people that meditation is more powerful. For some, bodhicitta is more powerful, for others it is emptiness, and for others it is impermanence and death or the suffering of the lower realms.

The other thing is this. Remember how I mentioned how the appearance of the letters—A, B, C, D, E, F, G, all these up to Z—all come from our mind. Remember I explained this before. I used one object before to say that is how all appearances come from our mind. I don't remember what object I used before the alphabet.

*Student:* Number one.

*Rinpoche:* Oh yeah, number one. Huh? Number one. You have a very excellent memory. I think you brought it from Chechnya. Which country?

*Student:* Chyornaya.

*Rinpoche:* You've brought a good memory from Chyornaya.

So, I mentioned how all appearances come from the mind, how this and that all come from the mind after the concept. Remember? Here, with the object we are attached to, it's exactly the same thing. With this appearance we think, "This is beautiful, blah, blah, blah. This nose is beautiful; this hair is beautiful," and this and this and this. In our view, whether it's to do with the voice or the body, we have the appearance that this is beautiful. Without first having the concept, without our mind making it up, we won't have this appearance that this is beautiful, that this is beautiful and that this is beautiful. We won't have all this without the concept, without making up the concept by ourselves. So, all this has come from our concept.

So, we should think like this. "What I'm attached to is my own appearance, the appearance of my own mind. There's no such thing outside of this creation of my mind. I'm just attached to my own view, to my own projection. All these appearances of beauty come from my own concept; they are projections of my own concept."

That analysis is so helpful. The other one is explained in Madhyamaka teachings, also in the great insight section of Lama Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* [*The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*.] First, we project on the merely labeled body and so forth, on everything we see there, that this is beautiful and that is beautiful. All that is merely labeled by the mind. Then, right after the mere imputation, the imprint left by past ignorance, the concept of inherent existence, immediately projects [inherent existence onto the object], just as an image is projected on a screen from film put into a projector and light is shone through it.

That beautiful body, that beautiful hair, that beautiful voice, that beautiful this and that—that is a mere imputation but, right after that, the negative imprint left by ignorance immediately projects, decorates, on that the sense of inherent existence, making us believe there is something really beautiful out there from its own side.

We don't get attached to the merely imputed one. Merely imputed beauty does not cause attachment to arise. Generally, does beauty exist or not? Beauty exists, but it is what is merely labeled by the mind. Merely imputed beauty doesn't cause attachment to arise, but now here, on that mere imputation, this negative imprint decorates, projects, the whole hallucination of inherent existence, that all these things truly exist from their own side.

Then, after the ignorance holds on to that, believing that this is true, attachment, desire, arises and clings onto that. This is how attachment develops. After all that, when desire clings onto that, that makes it so painful to separate from the object.

This is a very profound meditation. It makes us go very deep into the emptiness, the mere imputation, and how we built up this hallucination. All of this is a projection from the negative imprint and the attachment.

It not only gives us a deep understanding but also a surprise. It's like when a magician has transformed something into a beautiful house, with a car, a swimming pool, a very beautiful park and things like that, and we believe this to be real, that it has really existed for a long time, and then suddenly we realize this is not true. The magician has illusioned our mind and we see it's not true. This can give us a deep understanding of the hallucination.

We can also think that as we get closer to the object of desire, we get closer to the hell realm. This is Dromtönpa's advice. When we are closer to the object of desire, we should think we are closer to the hell realms, because by creating negative karma in relation to that object, the motivation is just nonvirtuous. It is desire clinging to this life, which is just nonvirtue, negative karma. This is the cause to be reborn in the lower realms, the hell realms and so forth. This is the advice of Dromtönpa, Lama Atisha's great translator, who was the embodiment of the Compassion Buddha.

Now the conclusion. These are the different meditations we can try. Whether we are physically with the object of desire or whether our object of desire is in the West and our body is in the East, in Solu Khumbu or Lawudo or Tibet, no matter whether the object is physically close or very distant, if we don't meditate, our mind suffers all the time. Whether we are close or far, if

we don't practice the meditation on renunciation at least, we will have stronger desire and greater pain in our life.

Even if we are unable to completely cut desire, we can at least reduce it. However, if we don't practice the meditation on renunciation, if the remedy to desire is not practiced, we might physically be very distant, like the distance from America to Tibet, but the mind will continuously suffer. We won't have any peace and happiness. We will always be sick with the sickness of desire. Therefore, this meditation is extremely important.

The other thing is this. Generally speaking, for us beginners who have no control over delusions, who have no realizations of impermanence and death or the renunciation of samsara, who have no realizations of the three principal aspects of the path, the general advice for us as beginners is to look after our mind, to protect it all the time with meditation. And, at the same time, we should try to be physically separated from the object or the delusion, desire or anger. At the same time as we are looking after our mind with meditation, which are antidotes to the delusion, we should specifically try to keep away [from the object]. Doing these two things together is very helpful. In that way, there's more mental stability and less obstacles. Then, realizations can come.

After some time, after we have achieved these fundamental lamrim realizations, with stable realizations of the three principal aspects of the path, then even being close to the object of desire, mixing with others and so forth, because our mind has stability due to the realizations, we are able to control the delusions, to stop them from arising. Then, the object cannot harm us. Of course, when we become an arya being, then no question.

Generally, the advice is like that. These two things are important. Not everybody can do this. This is how to do it, especially in the case of the danger of desire and so forth, but since everyone does not have karma or since everyone—I'll put it this way, since everybody cannot become ascetic, with total renunciation, cutting the desire clinging to this life, since every human being in this world does not have karma, the merit, to become a Buddhist, the answer that I gave at the very beginning applies. Do your best! The answer that I gave at the very beginning, the shortest answer, is to do your best.

Not everybody can be a monk or nun, not everybody has the karma, not everybody can live in celibacy, but you can all do as much as you can. As a couple, living together, with that style of



life, both sides must decide to use your life together to benefit other sentient beings. I think it's very important to have that basic motivation to serve others. Living together is to benefit other sentient beings; I think that motivation is essential. If you have that motivation then you can do many good things together for others.

If you are living that style of life, you should try to make that life as beneficial as you can, as much as possible. From both sides there should be a motivation like that. I think it is of utmost importance. Your own pleasure or comfort is not the first thing. The first thing is to benefit others. Trying to bring happiness to other sentient beings, not your own happiness and comfort with your companion. That's not the first thing. The first thing is the happiness of other sentient beings. This is the attitude you should have.

Then, there can be a lot of peace and happiness; you can help each other grow, but it is most important to benefit others, which also helps you develop your Dharma practice. If the first thing in your attitude is your own comfort and pleasure in this life, that brings many problems. Even if you are physically living together, there can be always disharmony, fighting, distrust, uncertainty. There will always be problems.

So, even if it's difficult to control desire, to not engage in negative karma, even though we can't stop completely, it's very important to try to reduce it as much as possible. Even though we can't completely stop it, we should try to practice renunciation and reduce desire, which means our negative karma becomes less.

Renunciation is the minimum Dharma practice. Anyway, I think it's time to go to bed!

## **DEDICATION**

Dedicate all the three-time merits collected by yourself and by others, and generate bodhicitta, the source of all happiness and success for yourself and for all sentient beings. In your own mind and in the minds of all sentient beings, may that which has been generated increase.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me and by others, may the Buddha of Compassion, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and all the other holy beings have a stable life; may all their holy wishes succeed immediately.”

[Long-life prayer to His Holiness the Dalai Lama]

# Lecture 11

December 6, 1999

## AN EXTENSIVE BODHICITTA MOTIVATION FROM THE REFUGE PRAYER

[Rinpoche and students recite in Tibetan]

I explained these four lines [of the prayer, *Taking Refuge and Generating Bodhicitta*] on one of the previous days. The first two lines are taking refuge, practicing causal refuge and then we generate bodhicitta.

Then, we'll do the same meditation. Within this, it becomes the practice of the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment. Even just within this prayer, it becomes practice of the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment.

So, first think of your own samsara.

Think of the defiled aggregates caused by karma and delusion. They are defiled, contaminated, because they are contaminated by the seed of disturbing thoughts. And because of that, there is this continuation. Because of that, delusions arise, motivating karma, which leaves an imprint, a seed, on the mental continuum and that again produces future samsara, the suffering aggregates in the next lives. It again produces the suffering body and the suffering mind in the next lives. That which is produced is compounded by this present samsara, the aggregates. So, remember this. There is the continuation of this circle, from here to the next life. That continuation circles to the next life.

Like that, it goes on and on without end. Unless you can break this continuation of samsara, circling from one life after another, it will be endless. The continuation is endless, so your suffering is endless. The suffering of samsara becomes endless.

Then, you must experience all the sufferings again and again. Now, you are experiencing human sufferings. Each time, when the continuation of these aggregates joins the next life, you experience all the sufferings of that realm again. Again and again.

Now, think of other sentient beings who are similarly suffering in samsara.

They must continuously experience the oceans of suffering of that samsaric realm, again and again, again and again, with all the karma and delusions, being under the control of this contaminated seed of disturbing thoughts.

These sentient beings have absolutely no freedom at all. They must continuously suffer in samsara.

Now, generate compassion, wishing to free them from all suffering and its causes, by yourself.

Now, think of how the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha have the qualities and powers to liberate you and all sentient beings from all the suffering of samsara and from all the gross and subtle defilements.

Now single-pointedly rely upon them.

[The students recite the first lines of the refuge prayer with Rinpoche]

“I go for refuge to Buddha, Dharma and the Sangha until I achieve full enlightenment.”<sup>6</sup>

Practice causal refuge to actualize the result of refuge, that which is possessed by your own mind.

“By the merits of listening to the teachings and so forth, may I achieve full enlightenment in order to benefit all the transmigratory beings.”

This includes the merits collected by listening to the teaching. Not only that, it includes all the past, present and future merits, those you collected in the past, those you are collecting now and those you will collect in the future.

“May I achieve full enlightenment in order to benefit all the transmigratory beings.”

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<sup>6</sup> Revised translation: *I take refuge until I am enlightened / In the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Supreme Assembly.*

This means all the numberless sentient beings who are suffering in samsara, transmigrating from one realm to another. Now, remember the whole meaning of the Wheel of Life, how all the numberless sentient beings are experiencing that suffering that is signified by the painting of the Wheel of Life.

This is to bring about the ultimate benefit, not just temporary benefit, the temporal happiness, the happiness of this and future lives in samsara. Not only that, but the ultimate benefit, liberating them from all the sufferings and the cause of suffering, karma and delusions, even the subtle defilements, and bringing them to full enlightenment.

This means to benefit all transmigratory beings, to bring the numberless suffering sentient beings, including each and every hell being, and there are numberless hell beings, and all other sentient beings to enlightenment.

There are numberless hungry ghosts who are experiencing the most unimaginable suffering, so this means bringing each and every one of them to full enlightenment.

There are numberless suffering animals, so this means bringing each and every one to full enlightenment.

There are numberless suffering human beings, so this means bringing each and every one to full enlightenment.

There are numberless gods and demigods, so this means bringing each and every one to full enlightenment. By yourself. By yourself, *alone*.

To make this thought stronger, to have more feeling, to feel the sentient beings in your heart, think of their kindness and feel how unbearable it is that they are suffering.

Think of the numberless hell beings who are each the source of all your past, present and future happiness, of all the realizations including enlightenment.

Think, “I must free all those hell beings from all suffering and its causes and lead them to enlightenment by myself, alone.”

And then the numberless hungry ghosts, each one who is the source of all your past, present and future happiness, including all the realizations of the path to enlightenment, who are the most precious, kind ones in your life.

Think, “I must free all those hungry ghosts from all suffering and its causes and lead them to enlightenment by myself, alone.”

Think of the numberless animal beings, who are each the source of all your past, present and future happiness, including the realizations of the path to enlightenment, who are the kindest, most precious ones in your life.

Think, “I must free all those animals from all suffering and its causes and lead them to enlightenment by myself, alone.”

Think of the numberless human beings who are the source of all your past, present and future happiness, including all the realizations of the path to enlightenment, who are the most precious ones, the kindest ones in your life.

Think, “I must free all those human beings from all suffering and its causes and lead them to enlightenment by myself, alone.”

Think of all the gods who are each the source of all your past, present and future happiness, including the realizations of the path to enlightenment, who are the most precious, the kindest ones in your life.

Think, “I must free all those gods from all the suffering and its causes and lead them to full enlightenment by myself, alone.”

Think of the numberless demigods who are each the source of all your past, present and future happiness, including the realizations of the path to enlightenment, who are the most precious, the kindest ones in your life.

Think, “I must free all those demigods from all the suffering and its causes and lead them to enlightenment by myself, alone.”

Think of all the numberless intermediate state beings who are the source of all your past, present and future happiness, including the realizations of the path and enlightenment, who are the most precious, the kindest ones in your life.

Think, “I must free all those intermediate state beings from all the suffering and its causes and lead them to full enlightenment by myself, alone.”

Now, after this, think, “I, the meditator, the attainer of enlightenment. What exists is what is merely labeled by mind, therefore, that is totally nonexistent. What appears as real, as the real meditator, the real attainer of enlightenment, from its own side, as the real one, is totally absent; it is totally nonexistent. It is totally empty right there.”

Now, strongly concentrate on that.

As well as that, there is the action of attaining enlightenment. Think, “What exists is what is merely labeled by mind. Therefore, the action of attaining enlightenment that appears real from there is a total hallucination. It is totally nonexistent. It is totally empty, right there. From where it appears, it is totally empty right there.

“What is to be attained is enlightenment. What exists is what is merely labeled by the mind, so even the enlightenment that appears real from there, that is a total hallucination. It is totally nonexistent. It is totally empty right there.

“In emptiness there is no I, there is no attaining and there is no enlightenment. There is no action of attaining and there is no what is to be attained, enlightenment.”

The other thing is this. This is one way to meditate at the end of the meditation on emptiness or the merely labeled I. You can think at the end that the I, the action of attaining enlightenment and enlightenment itself, all these phenomena are merely labeled by the mind. You can just think this, say this and meditate on the meaning of this. That can also come at the end of the meditation on emptiness.

This is meditating on subtle dependent arising, the dependent arising according to the fourth of the four Buddhist philosophical schools, the Madhyamaka school, which has two, the second being the Prasangika school. This is the dependent arising according to that school.

This is subtle dependent arising. It is that which is not only labeled but *merely* labeled. That makes the dependent arising much more subtle. It refers to how these things exist in mere name, being merely labeled by mind.

At the end, when you meditate on this, on the meaning of subtle dependent arising, you are doing a meditation on emptiness because, when you think of that subtle dependent arising, it breaks the hallucination. It makes you recognize the hallucination as a hallucination. You are able to go through that. Not just stopping at the thought that things exist in mere name. Otherwise, you get stuck on the hallucination that is decorated over the phenomenon, the subject, the action of attaining, and the object to be attained, enlightenment, including the path.

By meditating on the meaning of subtle dependent arising, how all these are subtle dependent arisings, it gives you the understanding that they are empty. That what appears is the false view, which you see is false and you see is empty, that these phenomena are empty.

Now with the four lines of this prayer, renunciation is included in the refuge, then the bodhicitta meditation and emptiness are also there. The essence of lamrim meditations is there.

Now, listen to the teaching in order to benefit all the sentient beings. I thought to finish the part about prostrations, then we will stop there. I think it's probably already time for dinner. Or maybe time for breakfast! Maybe this time we will have it the other way around, we'll have dinner tomorrow morning and breakfast now!

So anyway, I thought at least I would finish the prostration part from the preliminary practices.

## **THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS AND THE FOUR POWERS**

If you are going to do prostrations, either with Vajrasattva or the Thirty-five Confession Buddhas, the first thing is the motivation.



So, think like this, “The purpose of my life is not just to achieve happiness for myself, to only solve my own problems. The purpose of my life is to free the numberless other sentient beings from all the sufferings and to bring them happiness, especially the ultimate happiness, full enlightenment. For that, I need to achieve full enlightenment myself. For that, I need to actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment. And for that, I need to purify the defilements, the obstacles.”

To make the confession and purification perfect, it needs to be perfected with the four remedial powers. This power is the power of reliance or dependence. Bodhicitta has already been generated.

Then, when you recite the names of Buddhas, taking refuge in them, that is also the power of reliance. In this way, the negative karmas you have collected in relation to the sentient beings and in relation to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha get purified. Taking refuge is dependent on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and generating bodhicitta is dependent on sentient beings. There’s also refuge at the beginning of each of the Buddhas’ names.

Reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas’ names is also taking refuge in them. From the four powers, this is the power of the remedy. It is the antidote, the remedy to negative karma. The Tibetan is *nyän po kün tu chö pa’i tob*, which means the “power of the remedy to always enjoy.” But that’s my own translation. I have never heard it from anybody else! It is a literal translation, word by word, but it needs to be checked and revised. To translate word by word from Tibetan rather than making some general translation adds great meaning. It is well-packed, like a package, if it’s translated exactly. Each word has great meaning. I guess, but I’m not sure.

So, this is the remedy for negative karma. What it does is it pacifies negative karma, and the benefit from that is happiness. By practicing this, you can enjoy happiness all the time; the benefit is this. The words might have that meaning, but I’m not sure. Some lamas may have explained it, but I don’t remember the meaning.

Then, there is practicing the power of regret. Again here, it is useful regret, beneficial regret. This way of regretting purifies the cause of the suffering; it purifies the negative karmas. The regret

here becomes the medicine. It's not painful. You are not creating any pain yourself. It is medicine to purify the cause of the problems, the sufferings.

This regret [is positive regret], just as meditating on impermanence and death, connected with karma and the suffering of the lower realms can bring a fear of death, but this is positive because it persuades you to practice Dharma, to do the study and listening, to do the meditation practice on the whole path to enlightenment. By doing that, you are able to achieve enlightenment and then enlighten all sentient beings. So, the fear that is generated by meditating on impermanence and death makes you enlightened. The benefit is that it makes you achieve all the realizations from the beginning to the end up to enlightenment. The fear generated by meditating on impermanence and death makes you fully qualified to be able to perfectly guide numberless other sentient beings. That's the advantage you get. Therefore, it has benefits like the sky. This is what you get from this fear. It is not a foolish fear, causing you suffering, but a wise one. Similarly, this way of practicing regret is a wise one. It is freeing you, liberating you from the sufferings and its causes.

If you need to elaborate on the practice of regret from the four powers, regret is reflecting on the shortcomings of negative karma. It is facing what problems can happen by having committed them. It is reflecting on the suffering results that occur from having created those negative karmas. You reflect on that and feel sorry for that.

If you have eaten poison, either in food or without food, and if you can recognize this is poison, which means understanding the harm it can do, when you recognize this, having regret, feeling sorry you have taken it, comes as a result. The stronger the regret you feel for having taken the poison, the more you want to do something about it immediately, without waiting for even a minute or a second. You can't wait. You try to find the best method to be free from the poison and you take the right medicine or whatever is needed to get rid of this poison as quickly as possible.

Therefore, regret here is useful. If you didn't have regret after eating the poison, you wouldn't look for a method to get rid of the poison. Then what happens is that you get sick and die. Like that. Just as being regretful for taking poison, here you generate regret for having created negative karma.

You generate regret for creating negative karma by thinking of its shortcomings, of all the problems that occur now and in the future; all the sufferings, all the obstacles to achieving liberation and enlightenment and then being able to enlighten all sentient beings, to cause extensive benefit to others. By thinking of all the sufferings this negative action will bring, particularly all the sufferings that you will have to go through from life to life, regret arises, making you want to immediately purify. You can't stand having these negative karmas collected on your mental continuum. Seeing this persuades you to immediately to get rid of it by purifying. Only then will you have no obstacles for realizations and all the happiness now and future.

To elaborate further on practicing the power of regret, first you need to think of the definition of negative karma, as I have mentioned quite a few times, what negative karma means. If you don't understand the definition clearly, your understanding of negative karma will only extend to some actions such as killing a person or stealing or some other actions like that. Your understanding of negative karma will be very limited. Then, the other negative karmas on your mental continuum won't be purified. Therefore, first you must think what negative karma is. The definition is any action that will result only in suffering, motivated by ignorance, anger or especially the attachment clinging to this life. Think like that.

Then with this definition, you will see that almost every action you do in one day is negative karma because it's done with the attachment to this life. Almost everything is done with that nonvirtuous thought. Like that, in a week, a month, a year, from birth until now—and not only in this life but from beginningless rebirths—you have collected so many negative karmas. The basic examples of negative karma are the ten nonvirtuous actions, some of which you do repeatedly, every day. You do them many times in a day, many times in a week, a month, a year, and you have been doing them from beginningless past lives.

Then, if you have taken vows, the pratimoksha vows, the bodhisattva and tantric vows, you have broken them all. On top of that, you have incurred the very, very heavy negative karma in our relationship with the guru, the one you have received your Dharma connection from. You have given harm to their holy body, broken their advice, displeased them, made them unhappy, disturbed their holy mind and developed nondevotional thoughts like heresy and anger toward them. Why are these actions very heavy negative karma? Because the object you have collected this negative karma with is the most powerful object among all the powerful objects, therefore

the karma that you create, generally, whether it's negative or positive karma, is the most powerful karma.

You need to think of all this to get the whole view of negative karma, everything. You need to consider whether those things have happened not just in this life but in your past lives, whether you have created all those negative karmas. And you need to be aware of the harm they bring from life to life, in all the coming future lives, harm to you and harm to other sentient beings.

Then, after that, you should think, "If I were in a hell realm now, what would it be like?" And you should think about how you would be completely, totally overwhelmed by the heaviest suffering of the hell realm, such as heat or cold, and how you would have no opportunity to practice the Dharma. Suffering in the hell realm for even a minute is like suffering for eons because it's so unbearable. Not only is death definite, but death can happen at any moment. Death can happen even now. You could be in the lower realms, in this hell realm, even now. It's like that. You could be there.

Therefore, the conclusion is this. "I must purify all this negative karma *right now*. I must purify all the downfalls *right now*, without delay of even a second. Therefore, I'm going to do prostrations, by practicing the *Confession of Downfalls* or by reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas' names."

Here again you remember sentient beings. You can either say, "For the happiness of numberless sentient beings," or "To free the numberless sentient beings from all the sufferings and defilements." You can say like that. So again, by bringing other sentient beings into your practice of purification, you are not only focused on yourself, the purpose is for others. The reason you are purifying is for others, for the numberless other sentient being. To get that idea, even though you have already generated bodhicitta, you bring sentient being up here again at the end.

To make your regret stronger, you expand your thinking by reflecting on the different parts of negative karma, first on negative karma in general, then on all the different groups. It depends on your state of mind. If you need to make something very strong, you can reflect on all that.

## **KHUNU LAMA RINPOCHE**

Now, [to start the prostration, you stand] with the two feet together and the hands [with palms together]. You don't prostrate with empty hands. [This is what was advised by] Khunu Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen Rinpoche, a great bodhisattva, a great pandit, who was a guru of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the many high lamas. They studied Tibetan poetry or other subjects from this great bodhisattva and His Holiness the Dalai Lama received teachings from him, including commentaries on Shantideva's *Bodhicaryavatara*, the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*.

I also received it from him once or twice when he was living upstairs in a Gelugpa monastery in Bodhgaya with the many other incarnate lamas. Khunu Lama Rinpoche seemed kind of pleased with me because I went to see him so many times to receive blessings and to ask Dharma questions. I requested the commentary because Rinpoche was not only very busy with his own practice but also, after His Holiness the Dalai Lama took teachings from him, he became famous.

Before that, Rinpoche was a kind of sadhu, like an Indian sadhu, living in Varanasi near the river Ganga, where the Indian people bring many dead bodies to burn. And they go there to wash their bodies in the water, in the dirty, holy water! Before [he became famous], Rinpoche used to live around there with the sadhus, although inside he was a great bodhisattva whose holy mind was like a vast Buddhist library. Not only Buddhist philosophy, he was also expert in the many other different types of Hinduism. His holy mind could quote from any text, from any of the hundreds of volumes of sutra and tantra texts of the Buddha and the commentaries by the pandits. He could quote anything. And he was a very highly attained being, living an ascetic life, just living with the sadhus. I'm not sure, maybe living like that they helped him. At that time the Tibetan people had no idea [who he was].

One day, he went to the Gelug monastery to ask for a place to sleep. But because the monastery didn't know him, they didn't give him a room. He maybe just stayed outside. The monastery had a balcony outside, so he stayed there.

Then, I think, somehow, His Holiness the Dalai Lama took teachings from him as well as His Holiness' gurus, His Holiness Ling Rinpoche and His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche. The monasteries in Lhasa—Sera Mey, Sera Je, Ganden Shartse, Ganden Jangtse, Drepung Loseling, Gomo and so on—each of these monasteries had many thousands of monks. Sera, for example,

was supposed to have seven thousand monks living there but actually I think there were more. All of those monks were disciples of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's gurus, Ling Rinpoche and Trijang Rinpoche. They studied poetry from Khunu Lama Rinpoche, as well as special writing. Anyway, His Holiness the Dalai Lama took the *Bodhicaryavatara* commentary, not at that time and of course not on the balcony, not staying on the balcony. He took it in the room of the monastery.

After that, Khunu Lama Rinpoche became very famous. Every day people lined up to see him, as if on pilgrimage, in order to receive blessings. Rinpoche accepted to give the *Bodhicaryavatara* teachings, giving the *lung*, the oral transmission. Then, when he reached the wisdom chapter, he gave a commentary. That is considered the hardest part. The subject of emptiness is regarded as extremely hard to understand. So, Rinpoche very kindly gave a commentary on that and for the rest of the book he gave a lung.

But as soon as Rinpoche started the commentary on the wisdom chapter, I fell asleep! As soon as Rinpoche started the commentary on that, the most important subject, my sleeping came! I think that was my obstacle to my liberation, to my nirvana. Because I didn't have enough merit, sleeping came as soon as Rinpoche started. I think it took two days. And then Rinpoche said that I should translate *Bodhicaryavatara* into English, but I would have to study both the text and English very well in order to translate. It still hasn't been done! I do have the wish, maybe not so much the root text, but maybe something like a bit of a commentary or something. I do have the wish if there's enough merit to do it.

Rinpoche said that it didn't matter whether other people had translated it. I think, at that time, there was maybe only one translation, from a Sikkimese person [called Kazi Dawa Samdup]. That was so many years ago. All the translations that are available now didn't exist at that time.

I've lost my thought. I'm not sure why I'm talking about Khunu Lama Rinpoche, what the connection is. [Student prompts] Alay, thanks. It came from this story.

## **THE MEANING OF THE PROSTRATION MUDRA**

Khunu Lama Rinpoche explained how to do the prostration mudra. Rinpoche said this one is called the "namaste." That's right! Rinpoche said it is the namaste when he explained how to do

it. Of course, the teachings on how to do prostrations are also in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*.

So this, [the left and right palms together with the thumbs tucked in,] signifies offering a wish-fulfilling jewel. You keep [the thumbs] tucked inside like that. The left palm signifies the path of the wisdom—the path of wisdom in the Hinayana as well as in the Mahayana Paramitayana and in the Mahayana Vajrayana, the tantric path. It signifies the whole path of wisdom. Then, the right palm signifies the path of the method. Again, this includes the method side in Hinayana, the Mahayana Paramitayana and the Mahayana Vajrayana, the whole path of method to achieve enlightenment. So, these two palms placed together signify the whole path to enlightenment; the left palm showing the whole path of wisdom and the right palm showing the whole method path to achieve enlightenment.

Putting them together means you are practicing method and wisdom cooperatively. Just practicing one alone, either method or wisdom, without the other, you cannot achieve liberation or enlightenment. Just practicing method alone, you cannot achieve liberation or enlightenment; just practicing wisdom alone, you cannot achieve liberation or enlightenment. You have to practice those two cooperatively to achieve liberation or enlightenment.

Especially in the highest tantra, one mind practices both method and wisdom, whereas in the sutra system, different minds practice wisdom and method. But in tantra one mind practices method and wisdom together. That's what allows you to achieve enlightenment much quicker, in one lifetime, even in a brief lifetime of degenerated time.

This empty [space between the palms] signifies the dharmakaya and the two palms together signify the rupakaya. These are your goal, the two kayas to be achieved. So, these two hands like this signify the whole of Buddhism: the base of the two truths, conventional and ultimate truth; the path of method and wisdom; and the goal of the rupakaya and dharmakaya. So, when you prostrate with your two hands like this, it signifies the entire thing, the base, path and goal. The whole of existence is included in the two truths, in conventional and ultimate truth. Then, there are the two paths of method and wisdom that lead to the rupakaya and dharmakaya, which is the goal.

Now, [touch your hands to your crown, forehead, throat and heart. Touching them to the crown] creates the cause to achieve the *ushmisha*, the pinnacle on the head of a buddha's holy body. At the forehead creates the cause to achieve the curl of hair at the forehead, which is a special feature of a buddha. It is a white hair curled from left to the right, which is supposed to extend to a great length if you pull out, and if you let it go, it goes back and stays curled!

If you're going to paint this feature on a buddha it is white. I made a mistake. Many years ago, we invited His Holiness Zong Rinpoche to the first Dharma celebration. He was the ex-abbot of Ganden Shartse monastery, an extremely learned, great Tibetan pandit as well as the purest being. He had completed not only the entire lamrim path but even the highest tantra path, so there is no question about the deity. He was the purest being and very good-hearted. We invited His Holiness Zong Rinpoche to the West, particularly to the FPMT centers in the West, mainly to spread the Mahayana Vajrayana, to give initiations and commentaries and so forth.

Geshe Sopa Rinpoche invited Zong Rinpoche to his center. Geshe Rabten Rinpoche was also there. Lama Yeshe came for just a very short time at the end. Denma Lochö Rinpoche also came at one time. So, it was kind of like a celebration, a special occasion.

At that time, a life-sized Buddha statue like many of our centers have arrived from Delhi. I was painting the mouth and the eyes. When I had to paint the curl at the forehead I painted it blue or green, I think, and Geshe Sopa explained that it should be white. That mistake has stayed in my mind. Anyway, normally other people also paint it like that. So, I think that was mistaken; it should have been white. Of course, instead of painting it, you can put diamonds or things like that to create more merit. But as far as painting, it should be white.

So anyway, to have this special quality of Buddha's holy body, you need to create unbelievable, unbelievable merit. I remember the number of this is mentioned in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* by Pabongka Rinpoche.

Placing the hands at these two places [the crown and the forehead] purifies all the negative karmas, the defilements, collected with the body and creates the cause to achieve all the qualities of a buddha's holy body. Then, [placing the palms at the throat] purifies all the negative karmas, the defilements, collected with the speech and creates the cause to achieve all the qualities of a buddha's holy speech. And [at the heart] it purifies all the negative karmas, the defilements,



collected with the mind and creates the cause to achieve all the qualities of a buddha's holy mind. That means, with this action, you create all the infinite qualities of a buddha's holy body, holy speech and holy mind.

Now, the meditation. But I think this is a little bit one of my own trips! Anyway, you may not find the basic thing, prostrating, in the texts, but I just want to elaborate on this. It simply means prostrating to the Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. That's it. Nothing else!

## **PROSTRATING**

When you prostrate, if there are no holy objects to actually prostrate to, you can visualize the Thirty-five Buddhas. Because you're going to recite the 'Thirty-five Buddhas' names you can do that. However, even if you're going to visualize the Thirty-five Buddha for prostrations, the very important thing is to do prostrations with guru yoga. What makes you collect the most extensive merit is prostrating to the guru, who is the most powerful object among all the powerful objects, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Even with the Thirty-five Buddhas, you should think, "They are my root guru manifested to save me from the oceans of samsaric suffering, particular the sufferings of the lower realms, and to bring me to enlightenment, by purifying the defilements."

With such a guru yoga mind, you recite the Thirty-five Buddhas' names. As I mentioned, reciting those names has unbelievable power, like an atomic bomb, to purify your negative karma. So many eons of negative karma are purified by even reciting each name just once.

One way is to visualize the numberless buddhas of the ten directions and, thinking of the guru, do the prostrations while reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas. It can be like that. Another simple way is to just [visualize] your root guru, who is the essence of all the Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and then do the prostrations. If you have no particular altar, this is how you can visualize. When you think it's all the guru, all the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, all the Thirty-five Buddhas are there, already contained.

If there is an altar, either in your room or in the temple or somewhere, if there are many hundreds and thousands of images, such as in one small picture of the merit field, then prostrate to the guru manifested in all these holy objects. Then think, from your own side, that these are the embodiment of your guru. Then, you are prostrating toward all the ten-direction Buddha,

Dharma, Sangha, which are the guru. You are prostrating to all the ten-direction statues, stupas, scriptures, to all the holy objects, which are all the guru.

If there is space, you should always take the opportunity to do a long prostration. If there's no space—if you might break tables or things and create chaos—[you can do a short prostration]. Anyway, if there's space, you should always take the opportunity to do a long prostration. The reason will come later.

[Part of the recording is missing, possibly...] [When you go down on the ground, it should not be] like a tree falling down, making a lot of noise! You should stretch your hands as much as possible.

Now, this part is very important. There are two meditations here. That means you may have to lie down for two hours! You might need a sleeping bag! Anyway, when you lie down, think, "I am prostrating to all the ten-direction Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and all the holy objects. That means all the statues, stupas, scriptures and thangkas starting from here, which are all my guru." From your side think they are your guru. By doing this visualization, when you lie down, whether you are prostrating in your room or in a hotel or wherever, you prostrate to every single holy object, to the numberless buddhas in the ten directions. You prostrate to every single holy being, to all the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. And to every single statue, every single stupa, every single scripture. If you prostrate from your room, you prostrate to every single holy object, like all the holy objects there are in Tibet. Even if you are not in Tibet, you prostrate in your room to all the holy objects in Tibet, as well as Burma.<sup>7</sup>

I haven't been to Burma, but it seems it is very, very inspiring. Even though it is a dictatorship, the people have incredible freedom to practice Dharma. There are temples everywhere, in every village. Wherever you go, there are temples and stupas, and there are monks everywhere. That's what I heard. Buddhism is so strong there, much stronger than in Sri Lanka or Thailand. I think there are a lot of monks and meditators. So, even though the leader is a dictator, the people have incredible freedom to practice the Dharma and collect merit. He's a different kind of dictator, one who allows Buddhism to be very strong. I guess that's different from communist China, where they don't allow people to propagate the Dharma.

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<sup>7</sup> Myanmar.

So anyway, by meditating like this, when you lie down, you prostrate to any holy object that is in anybody's house, how many pictures or statues of the Buddha in anybody's house, in any country. From your room, you prostrate to all those. There are people who make many, many tsa tsas, many hundreds of thousands. Others produce many statues of the Buddha, many holy objects. Wherever you are prostrating, from there, you prostrate to every single holy object there is. If somebody somewhere had made a hundred thousand or three hundred thousand tsa tsas, holy objects, when you prostrate you get the incredible benefit from all those number of tsa tsas that person made, each one creating the cause of enlightenment. If that person made four hundred thousand or seven hundred thousand tsa tsas, with your prostrations you create four hundred thousand or seven hundred thousand causes of enlightenment, as well as that many causes of liberation and that many causes of a good rebirth for many hundreds of thousands of lifetimes. Then, there is no question of the benefit in this life, which just comes by the way.

Anyway, to understand it in short, prostrating like this, you are prostrating to the numberless Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, the numberless statues, stupas, scriptures and thangkas. With this meditation you create numberless causes of enlightenment. You have to understand this. With one prostration you create numberless causes of enlightenment, and the same thing with all the rest. So, with one prostration, you collect incredible merit, good karma, good luck, like the sky.

You can visualize this even while you are standing up. You don't have to do it only when you are lying down. You might be physically standing up, but you can visualize lying down. This meditation is what Lama Tsongkhapa explained in the *Lamrim Chenmo, The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*.

Visualize you have numberless bodies, covering the entire ground. During the prostration, even if your body is very small, very short, like mine, you can visualize it like a ridge of mountains, covering the whole ground and doing the prostration to the holy object.

It's easy if you visualize yourself transformed into a deity, like the Thousand-arm Chenrezig, especially if you have received a great Chenrezig initiation, the one that normally takes two days' preparation. If you have received this, you can visualize yourself as the Thousand-arm Chenrezig. Then it's very easy because Chenrezig is very tall. So, you visualize numberless of your bodies in

the form of Thousand-arm Chenrezig, extremely tall, covering the whole ground in all four directions, lying down doing prostrations.

Even if you don't finish touching your head to the ground, even while you are still standing up you can do that visualization. It is mentioned in the sutra teachings, in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, when you are doing prostrations, if you can visualize one other body also prostrating—and here it's not saying yourself visualized as the deity, just another ordinary human body—you collect the same amount of merit as your actual body doing prostrations. So that's why you should visualize as many bodies as possible doing prostrations. As many as you can visualize—thousands, billions, however many—with every body visualized you collect the same extensive amount of merit as your actual body doing the prostration. That's why this is so important. Visualizing numberless bodies is the technique to make the prostrations collect extensive merit.

And then also, as I explained just before, prostrating to all the ten-direction Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, to all the statues, stupas, scriptures, to every single holy object, and especially by thinking of each of them as the guru, your prostration collects the most extensive merit. Each of the numberless holy objects you think of as the guru. Then you collect the most unbelievable, most extensive, inconsiderable numbers of merit.

And when you prostrate you should stretch your body out as much as possible. This is because when you prostrate each atom of the ground that your body covers creates the cause for you to be born as a wheel-turning king for a thousand lifetimes. Why a wheel-turning king? This particular name is mentioned because to be born as a wheel-turning king, you must collect the most unimaginable, inconsiderable merit. To become the king of one country needs so much merit, but here, a wheel-turning king is a king with the most power and wealth in everything. There is no other king to compete with this king in the whole world. There is a wheel-turning king in the god realm and a wheel-turning king in the human realm. Wheel-turning kings happen in the first eon after the world has evolved, when the lifespan of human beings is unimaginable, maybe eighty thousand years. Now our lifespan is decreasing but by collecting merit, it will increase again to eighty thousand years.

Anyway, during those first eons, when human beings lived for an unimaginable number of years, this is when the wheel-turning kings happened. You need incredible physic powers and so forth,

and so much merit to be born once as a wheel-turning king. But with this one atom of ground you cover, you create the cause to be born as a wheel-turning king for a thousand lifetimes.

But now, when you do a prostration, how many atoms of the ground does your body cover? It is not just one. The texts say that this means the number of atoms from here, from this floor, down to the bottom of the earth. When you stretch your body, how many atoms does that cover? That many number of atoms your body covers, you create the merit to be born as wheel-turning king for a thousand lifetimes.

With one prostration to the Buddha, the merit you collect is beyond the concept of us ordinary people. Therefore, when you prostrate, stretch out your hands as much as possible. It's very important. The longer your nails are the better! This is one advantage of having long hair and long nails! Then, if you have a tail ... I'm joking! Although I didn't see it, I think my mother had a child who had a small tail. That's why I mentioned the tail. Anyway, one advantage of having long nails and long hair is, when you do prostrations, you cover more ground. How much ground the hair covers, how much ground the nails cover, you can create a considerable cause of enlightenment because so many atoms are covered from the ground down to the bottom of the world. Also, at other times when you get angry, long hair and nails are good. You can pull your hair and scratch your face! No, I'm joking! Other people can pull your long hair!

Talking about a wheel-turning king is just to give you an idea about the amount of merit you can collect. It doesn't mean that by doing prostrations you will only get born as a wheel-turning king. Nothing else, no enlightenment, no liberation, just a wheel-turning king. It doesn't mean that!

Also the feet. If you keep your feet like this, you lose uncountable numbers of cause of enlightenment! If you stretch out your feet like this, you should make your feet flat on the ground. Especially if people are tall and have long feet do this, they lose more opportunities for the causes of enlightenment. So, you need to get the feet flat so they cover the greatest amount of space, with more atoms from here down to the bottom. Then, you create many more causes of enlightenment, of liberation, of a good rebirth in your next life, because you are doing prostrations to the Buddha. You are not just exercising. It doesn't mean that you get this benefit just by lying down, it means when you prostrate to the Buddha. Thinking of the Buddha and prostrating brings that experience, but not just any time you lie down, on the beach or anywhere.

Now, you can understand why Lama Tsongkhapa explained that, when you prostrate, you should visualize as many bodies as possible doing the prostration. All these bodies cover the ground and each atom covered creates that inconceivable merit. You get the same merit from those visualized bodies prostrating as with your actual body.

With these two visualizations, as I've explained, that is how making prostrations collects the most extensive merit, how it creates the cause to achieve enlightenment in the quickest time. It depends on the skill of the meditator.

It is also normally explained in the teachings that when you prostrate, you should stand up straight, not have your body bent. Then, you've probably heard this already, when you put your hand on the ground, you shouldn't spread out the fingers on the ground like that. That is disrespectful to the holy object, the merit field and becomes the negative karma to be born as a duck or a chicken, an animal that has web feet. And if you put your hand on the ground like that, bunched up, that too is disrespectful of the holy object and you create the karma to be born as an animal with hooves, like a yak. So, your hands should be in a respectful attitude when you go down on the ground.

The Chinese way of doing prostrations, doing them very slowly, is also very respectful. I don't think there is any contradiction. There is nothing wrong with the Chinese way of doing it like this, very nicely. The main thing is to have respect in the presence of a powerful object. As I mentioned before, if there's space you should do long prostrations.

#### **WAYS OF DOING THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS PRACTICE**

There are two ways of reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas prayer. First, you can begin with OM NAMO MANJUSHRIYE NAMO SUSHRIYE NAMO UTTAMA SHRIYE SVAHA, which increases the merit of each prostration a thousand times. If you recite this Buddha's name mantra, the merit created with each the prostration increases ten million, a hundred thousand times. So, it increases much more with this Buddha's name and the mantra. And this is the same when you use this Buddha's name and mantra when you circumambulate a stupa or temple, any holy object. If you recite this name and mantra while circumambulating them, the merit increases that many times.

If you are going to do a hundred or fifteen prostrations, or something like that, you can repeat the name over and over, and then, as you stand up and go down again, you change the name when you touch your head on the ground. So, like that, you can repeat one buddha's name many times while doing a prostration. This way, you repeat the buddha's name during one prostration until you put your forehead on the ground, repeating it ten, fifteen, twenty or thirty times depending on how quickly you can recite. Because reciting the name once has the power to purify 80,000 eons of negative karma, by repeating it many times during one prostration, purifying 80,000 eons of negative karma happens many times. That's the advantage, rather than doing it slowly and saying the name very slowly. If you do it slowly, you can only say the name once or twice, maybe three times. This way is much more skillful. You collect unbelievable purification and so much merit.

Then, when you finish the last name of the Thirty-five Buddhas, there are other ceremonies you can add. If you recite the names of the seven Medicine Buddhas, that helps all your wishes be fulfilled. It's not only for healing, it brings success for whatever you normally pray for. It makes your life much easier, and you succeed in whatever wishes you have. This is by reciting the Medicine Buddha's name mantra but you don't need to recite the mantra, just the names. If you can recite the Medicine Buddhas' names, you can do that.

Otherwise, you can go back and start from refuge, to the beginning of the practice of the Thirty-five Buddhas and [recite each name once as you prostrate] and then repeat it again. When you have finished the third repetition, you have completed the hundred thousand prostrations. Not a hundred thousand! [Rinpoche probably means 108 but doesn't say this.] It takes about fifteen minutes because of the refuge. This is one way of doing it.

The other way is to not count the prostration but count the Thirty-five Buddhas' names. You go straight, you just keep on reciting. Then, when you finish the last one, if you are going to do a certain number of Thirty-five Buddhas' names, you keep on reciting. If you want to recite the names twenty-five times or thirty-five times in the morning [you count until you have achieved this]. Normally, if it is possible, do the Thirty-five Buddhas in the morning, that's very good. Then, in the evening, before going to bed, if you can do a purification practice, maybe you can begin with the Thirty-five Buddhas, reciting each Buddha's name just once straight through. Because there is so much power, then you can do the Vajrasattva, either with prostrations or just

sitting. I sit. With Vajrasattva you count the mantras, you don't count prostrations twenty-one times. You just count the last word, *SVAHA*.

As I mentioned before, if you are doing three sets like that, repeating the names that many times, then doing prostration like that for three sets—or you are doing three hundred times—the other thing is, after you finish the Thirty-five Buddhas' names, think that you have completely purified. Even if you are unable to think that after each prostration, at least when you finish all the Thirty-five Buddhas' names, think you have completely purified and nectar beams are emitted from all the merit field. That's supposed to happen when you begin the prostrations, that nectar beams are emitted from the merit field, constantly purifying you. When you finish the Thirty-five Buddhas' names, generate the strong thought that everything is purified. Your mental continuum is totally pure. Not a single negative karma remains; there is no cause to be born in the lower realms.

If you are doing the three sets like this, whichever way you do it, with the first set you purify your own negative karma; you are basically focused on purifying negative karma. Then, the next set of prostrations is to cause the happiness of all sentient beings. You can do those prostrations with that attitude, emphasizing that. Then, you can do the third set of prostrations with the idea that the gurus are guiding you, saving you from the lower realms, from the oceans of samsaric sufferings, and bringing you to enlightenment by purifying your negative karma and causing you to collect extensive merits.

So, when you begin the third set, you begin with this idea, that the guru is guiding you, liberating you from suffering and bringing you to enlightenment. Or, if you are doing [three sets of] a hundred prostrations, you can do the first hundred or second hundred or the third hundred with that way of thinking.

I think I'll stop here. In everyday life, even if you don't have a place or the opportunity to do prostrations, what you can do is put your palms together like this and recite. Maybe you can't physically prostrate, either because you are sick or because of old age you cannot lie down in prostration. During the *nyung nä*, the Compassion Buddha's retreat, some people, due to their physical condition, can't do prostrations, so I tell them to put their palms together and recite the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas while visualizing numberless of their body doing prostrations. In that way, they still collect such unbelievable merit by visualizing numberless bodies. Even in



an airplane or car or whatever, while traveling, where there's no opportunity or no place to do prostrations, you can still recite the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas and put your palms together like this while visualizing numberless emanations of your body doing prostrations to the *Guru Puja* merit field or you can visualize the gurus. By thinking in that way, you are prostrating.

## DEDICATION

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all sentient beings, may the bodhicitta that is the source of all the happiness and success for me and for all sentient beings be actualized within my mind and in the minds of my family members, of all the students and benefactors of this organization, as well as all sentient beings, without delay of even a second. May that which is generated be increased.”

[Rinpoche and students chant prayers]

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the sentient beings, may the Buddha of Compassion, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and all the other holy beings, my virtuous friends, have a long and stable life and may all their holy wishes succeed immediately.”

[Rinpoche chants prayers]

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the sentient beings, may my family members as well as the students and benefactors and all the sentient beings never be separated from but always meet the perfect, qualified Mahayana virtuous friend in all the lifetimes. Not only that, may we be able to see them as an enlightened being, from our side and from the side of each sentient being. Not only that, may we be able to only do actions most pleasing to the holy mind of the virtuous friend, and on top of that, may I and each sentient being be able to complete the holy wishes of the virtuous friend in all our lifetimes from now on.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all sentient beings, may I be able to benefit all sentient beings like

the sky, like Lama Tsongkhapa, by having the same qualities within me as Lama Tsongkhapa has, from now on and all my future lifetimes.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the sentient beings, that exist but are totally nonexistent from their own side, may the I, who exists but is totally nonexistent from its own side, empty, achieve Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, which exists but is totally nonexistent from its own side, and lead all the sentient beings, who exist but who are totally nonexistent from their own side, to that enlightenment, which exists but which is totally nonexistent from its own side, by myself alone, who exists but who is totally nonexistent from its own side.

“I dedicate all my merits to follow the extensive holy deeds of the bodhisattvas Manjugosha, Samantabhadra, Ksitigarbha and so forth, and dedicate the merits that three-time buddhas and bodhisattvas admire the most. In that way I dedicate all my merits.”

“May the complete teaching of Lama Tsongkhapa, the sutra and tantra teachings, which are stainless, be completely actualized within my mental continuum, as well as within the mental continuum of my family members, of all the students and benefactors of this organization, and those who do service to others through this organization, to have success for life, all the directors of all the centers and so forth, all those sacrificing their life for others through this organization, to be able to completely actualize the whole path of Lama Tsongkhapa, the extensive path of unified sutra and tantra in this very lifetime. And may the Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings spread in all the directions and may they flourish. May I be able to cause all this to happen, and may there be no wars, famine, disease, dangers from fire or water, recession and so forth. May nobody ever experience any of these things. And may everyone have perfect peace and happiness and live their life only with bodhicitta, only benefiting each other, never causing any harm.”

[Rinpoche chants prayers]

After dinner, if there is time, maybe it is good to recite the *King of Prayers*, the bodhisattvas’ extensive prayer, to dedicate all the merits collected in this course. Even though before each initiation there will be teachings, if you are not taking the initiations you can be there for the teachings. If you have not taken initiations, you can read it at that time. There will be three

initiations, the long-life initiation then the great initiation of the Thousand-arm Compassion Buddha. One is the preparation, one is the actual initiation, and then there is the Vajrasattva retreat. There will be some teachings before that.

However, maybe it's good to do an extensive dedication tonight. There are different prayers that we did during the three-month Vajrasattva retreat at the Land of Medicine Buddha.<sup>8</sup> Over three nights, each night there was a different extensive dedication. That's very inspiring. If you dedicate all the past merit and especially any merit collected in this course, the way the bodhisattvas dedicate, that's the most extensive dedication for sentient beings.

Even if you don't know how to dedicate, if you want to do that, that's the best dedication. Then the shortest one, what you did before, to be able to follow the buddhas and bodhisattvas' extensive deeds, which means the extensive benefit for sentient beings. It's not talking about extensive deeds for the bodhisattvas themselves, to get lots of chocolate or lots of biscuits or lots of ice cream or lots of money. It's not that. It's extensive benefit for the numberless sentient beings. That is the way that the three-time buddhas and bodhisattvas—the past, present and future buddhas and bodhisattvas—admire the most. If you don't know how else to dedicate, you can dedicate like this. Then you are dedicating in the best way.

Those of you who paid attention well during the teachings have planted a lot of positive imprints on the mind. Then, there are those of you who spaced out, who have been physically here but the mind has been traveling to very far countries or at home having parties or something. Anyway, for you maybe there have been less imprints on the mind. However, I guess everybody took the eight Mahayana precepts, and attended the sessions and the practices as much as possible. Even if you didn't pay attention to the teachings that well, there may be other things you have done well.

Therefore, what I want to say is thank you very, very much! That's the main thing. I am extremely happy seeing all the people that I have talked to. I have great admiration for you! I rejoice to see that attitude, that determination to really want to practice Dharma. So, I'm very happy for that. That's all!

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<sup>8</sup> An FPMT retreat center in California, USA, where Rinpoche led a three-month Vajrasattva retreat, February to April 1999. See [Teachings from the Vajrasattva Retreat](#) for the edited transcript of Rinpoche's teachings.