

CHERISHING OTHERS:
THE HEART *of* DHARMA

LAM-RIM TEACHINGS FROM KOPAN 1991 ■ VOLUME FOUR

Lama Zopa Rinpoche

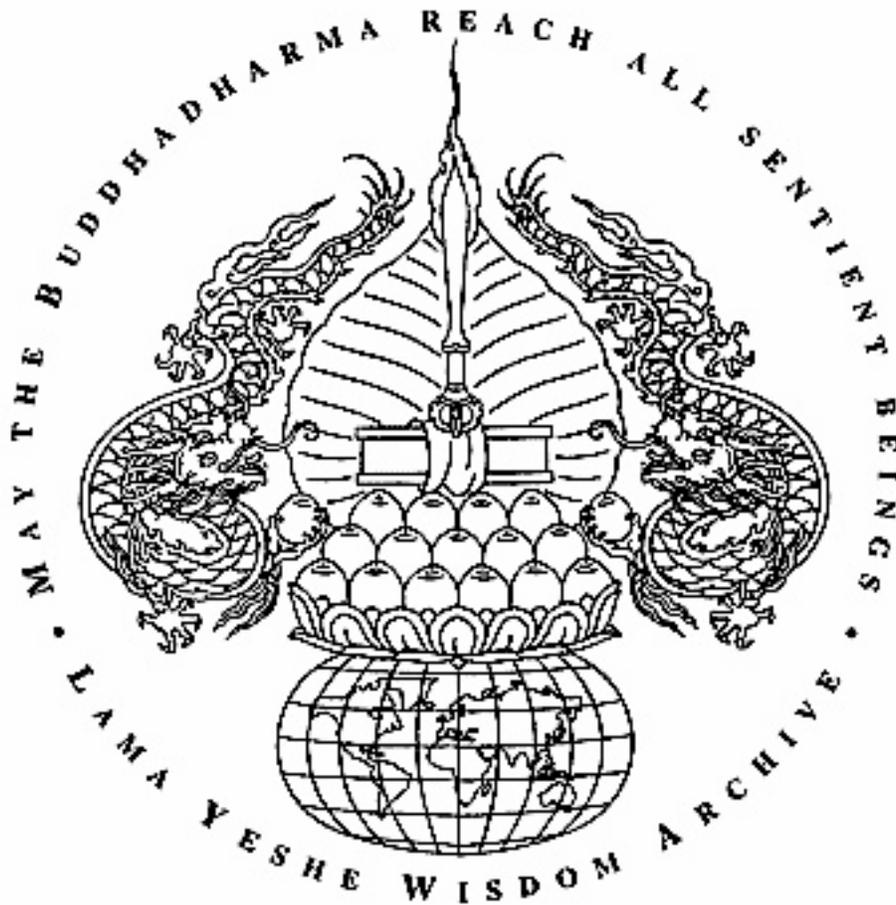
CHERISHING OTHERS: THE HEART OF DHARMA

Lam-rim Teachings from Kopan, 1991
Volume Four

Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Archive #872

Lightly edited by
Gordon McDougall & Sandra Smith



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

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Introducing the Kopan Teachings Series

This is the fourth volume in a new series presenting previously unpublished teachings from Lama Zopa Rinpoche's teachings given during the 24th Kopan lam-rim course in 1991. This new series will consist of four volumes starting with the first volume, *Practicing the Unmistaken Path*, the second volume, *Creating the Causes of Happiness*, the third volume, *Cutting the Root of Samsara*, and this, the fourth and final volume, *Cherishing Others: The Heart of Dharma*. These are lightly edited teachings that we hope will convey the feeling of receiving the teachings while attending Kopan's one-month course in Nepal. For more information about attending the yearly lam-rim courses at Kopan Monastery please visit KopanMonastery.com

You can also find many other Kopan teaching course transcripts for reading online or for downloading as a pdf for offline study published on our website at LamaYeshe.com.

-LYWA Director Nicholas Ribush

How the Kopan Courses Began

(Lama Zopa Rinpoche gave this teaching in Singapore on January 17, 2009)

You may not have heard of the great lama Kachen Yeshe Gyaltzen [1713–93, tutor of the 8th Dalai Lama] but like the sun illuminating the world, he was well known in Tibet and offered unbelievable benefit to sentient beings and the Buddhadharma. Even now his teachings benefit the world. I have spoken before about how the Kopan meditation courses started but actually, it was Kachen Yeshe Gyaltzen’s teachings that inspired them.

The Kopan courses also came from Lama Yeshe, who was kinder than the numberless buddhas of the past, present and future. Why was Lama kinder than the buddhas, whose only purpose in achieving enlightenment was to liberate us sentient beings from the ocean of samsaric suffering and its cause, delusion and karma, and bring us to enlightenment?

Even though all these buddhas exist, we don’t have the karma to see them. For example, from my side, I can’t see the numberless past, present and future buddhas or deities in their pure aspect because my mind is blanketed by impure karma. Therefore I can’t receive direct guidance from them. However, by their manifesting according to my level of mind in human form as Lama Yeshe, in an ordinary aspect showing mistakes and faults that my obscured mind can perceive, I can receive their guidance directly.

We can’t receive teachings, oral transmissions, jenangs, blessings, initiations or advice directly from the buddhas but we can from our guru; we can’t discuss our difficulties with Maitreya Buddha, Tara, Manjushri, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, but when they manifest in human form as our guru, we can. When Guru Shakyamuni Buddha manifests in the father-mother aspect of Vajradhara and reveals tantric teachings, we cannot receive those directly, but when he manifests in an ordinary form that we can see according to our ordinary mind, we can receive the teachings given by Tara, Yamantaka, Guhyasamaja Chakrasamvara and so forth. Therefore, the guru is inexpressibly kinder than the numberless past, present and future buddhas—unbelievably kind to manifest in an ordinary aspect.

During His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s teachings on mahamudra at the first Enlightened Experience Celebration [1982], he explained the meaning of “ordinary aspect” in a way that was very effective for the mind. It means showing delusions, samsaric suffering, mistaken actions and so forth; this is the form that we can see and receive guidance from. The text His Holiness taught was the First Panchen Lama Losang Chökyi Gyältsän’s auto-commentary to his root text on mahamudra. In Tibet, the Dalai Lama was considered to be a manifestation of Chenrezig, the Buddha of Compassion, the Panchen Lama was regarded as a manifestation of Amitabha Buddha, and the Tibetan people were said to be special objects to be subdued by Chenrezig and Amitabha. The Chinese people also have a strong connection with Amitabha. In that, they are extremely fortunate.

At this Dharma Celebration we also received many initiations and teachings from His Holiness Song Rinpoche, starting with the chöd initiation and commentary because it’s

considered inauspicious to do it last. Lama also wanted to show that the Gelug tradition contains the chöd practice. Then Rinpoche gave the Guhyasamaja and Heruka Body Mandala initiations and commentaries and a Vajrayogini initiation.

Anyway, getting back to what I was saying, since we don't have pure karma, we can see the guru only in an ordinary form. We cannot communicate with or receive direct guidance from any form purer than that.

One highly attained Tibetan geshe practitioner mentioned in his lam-rim teachings that one way to meditate on guru devotion is to imagine having fallen into a deep pit full of red-hot coals and desperately wanting to get out. The people above have thrown down a rope; if you hang onto it with total trust and complete reliance, you'll be able to get out. In this analogy, the pit is samsara, the people throwing down the rope are the three-time buddhas, and the rope is the guru in ordinary aspect.

When we do this meditation we should consider our gurus as the rope and single-pointedly put our complete trust in them. If we do that we can get out. If we don't hold the rope firmly, if we don't devote to the guru with complete reliance, but instead have doubt and keep examining him with a superstitious mind, then even though numberless buddhas are trying to help us, we can't be guided. Even though all the buddhas have compassion and loving-kindness for us and constantly want to liberate us from samsara, if we don't have devotion for our guru there's no way they can help us out. So that's a great way to practice guru devotion meditation.

However, I should finish the story of the Kopan courses. It seems that Lama Yeshe and I had very strong karma with teaching Dharma to Westerners. We taught them for many years and then our connections gradually extended to Hong Kong and Singapore. Taiwan and Malaysia came much later. All this started with our first Western student, Zina Rachevsky.

People called her Princess Rachevsky because her father was somehow connected with Russian royalty but he fled the revolution for Paris, where Zina was born [in 1931]. She led a varied life all over the world, sometimes rich, sometimes poor; for a while she was a model, perhaps in Hollywood, although I'm not sure about that.

In the early 1960s the hippie era exploded into existence and Zina came across the writings of the German author, Lama Govinda, who in Tibet had met the great yogi Domo Geshe Rinpoche, the former life of the one who passed away in the United States in 2001. The former Domo Geshe Rinpoche built the Domo Dungkar Gumpa in southern Tibet, where I became a monk; I didn't become a monk in Solu Khumbu. This great yogi lived in forests and caves until a wealthy family invited him to come and live in their shrine room. After a year he asked the family if they would build a monastery, and that's how the Domo Gumpa began. That monastery also had many branches in India and Tibet, especially in the Darjeeling area.

Lama Govinda wrote several books, including *The Way of the White Clouds*, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism* and books on Buddhist psychology. In those early

hippie days there were very few Tibetan Buddhist books in Western languages. In English there were [Evans-Wentz's] Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa and The Tibetan Book of the Dead, for example, and later there was a very good book by an English writer who lived in Thailand [John Blofeld's The Wheel of Life: The Autobiography of a Western Buddhist]. Zina read about Domo Geshe Rinpoche in The Way of the White Clouds.

The hippies were rebelling against Western society and searching for alternatives, a new way of life, something more spiritual, you might even say the truth, the Dharma, and many came to India and Nepal. However, what happens and whom you meet when you come to the East is totally up to your karma. You might be looking for something meaningful but what you find is up to karma.

Many of those people were taking drugs, but in some cases drugs could have been the Buddha's skillful means to help break those people's concepts. They had such unbelievably fixed minds, fixed ideas—strong, unchangeable beliefs that there was just this one life; no understanding that the mind can exist without the body. Their thinking was unbelievably gross. People like this needed something external to break their concepts and enable them to see things more deeply. Drugs gave them many experiences such as the mind being able to travel without the body, which shocked and surprised them, because it was completely opposite to what was taught and believed in the West.

This led many people to come to the East, looking for something to give meaning to their lives. They gave up ideas of wealth and a materialistic life and went to India. First they were more likely to meet Hindu gurus, and if they had no karma to meet Buddhism they either stayed with them or drifted into something else. But if they did have the karma, they would eventually come into contact with Buddhadharma, and of course, some actually met the Buddhadharma from the beginning.

Roger, for example, first went to Rishikesh. He stayed there for a while but met a sadhu who told him to go to Kopan. It's interesting how individuals' karma plays out. Roger's swami told him to go to Kopan, which is very unusual—most teachers try to get people to follow their own tradition, not send them somewhere else. Of course, we don't know who that swami really was!

Buxa [Duar], where many of the Tibetan refugee monks stayed when they first came out of Tibet, used to be a prison when the British ruled India. Gandhi-ji and Nehru were held there for a while. At one time there were 1,500 monks at Buxa. Some of them stayed ten or eleven years; I was there for eight. Monks who wanted to study went to Buxa; those who wanted to work were sent out to build roads near the Tibetan border or other places.

Because I had TB, I often had to go to Darjeeling for treatment and I used to stay in Domo Geshe's monastery in Ghoom, near the Ghoom railway station. I also lived there for a long time with Lama and the monk who took care of me in Tibet, who was originally from Domo Dungkar Gompa.

One day one of the young monks saw Zina outside and, thinking she might be my friend, brought her to our room. He opened the door and said, "Here's your friend," and in came

the blond-haired Zina, wearing a Tibetan dress and a sweater that she'd probably bought at the Darjeeling railway station.

My teacher from Tibet brought us a big kettle of Tibetan tea and poured Zina a huge mug. She drank it all but that's the only time she drank Tibetan tea. I never saw her drink it again!

She asked Lama some questions, he answered, and I tried to translate as best I could with my broken English—well, it's still broken! For the next month she came for teachings by car from Darjeeling every morning at nine or ten, with her baby daughter and a Nepalese nanny in tow, and then asked us to move to her house.

There were a couple of movie theaters in Darjeeling and she lived near the upper one in a very big house that I think had once been owned by a previous maharaja. A rich Indian family lived upstairs and she lived below. Lama and I lived in a tiny one-room glass house in the garden that previous residents had probably used for taking tea. Lama's bed was on one side, mine on the other and there was a small table between us. The only other things in there were a chair and some drawers. It was small but very pleasant.

We stayed there for nine months and every morning Zina came for teachings. She'd get up early looking like a sixty-year-old woman, spend a couple of hours in the bathroom, and come out looking like a sixteen-year-old girl! Although she came for teachings she'd spend much of the time telling us stories of her adventures in various parts of the world.

Then she went to Sri Lanka for a year and came back with the idea of starting a Mahayana center there. She wanted us to go back with her, but to do that we needed travel documents and permission from the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government. We went from Buxa to Calcutta to meet her and stayed at the Theravada guesthouse there. At that time relations between India and the Soviet Union were not good and although Zina was not a spy, she acted like one. Wherever we went we were trailed by Indian agents!

In Dharamsala we requested His Holiness to ordain Zina but he didn't have time so he asked Lati Rinpoche to do it, which he did at what is now Tushita Meditation Centre. Just before that time, our root guru, Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, who had lived there seven years, had moved down near the Tibetan Library and the place was a bit empty, like a haunted house. Then we went to Delhi to go to Sri Lanka, but some difficulties arose and Lama decided that we should go to Nepal instead.

We stayed at Chini Lama's place for the next year or so. I think he was Chinese but the story I heard was that he had been sent by the Tibetan government to take care of the Boudha stupa because of its strong connection with Tibet. Many years ago a woman had undertaken the task of building this stupa but passed away when it was only about half done; however, her four sons undertook the job of completing it. One prayed to become a Dharma king to spread the teachings in Tibet; another to become a minister to help the king; the next to become an abbot to pass on the lineage of the vows; and the fourth prayed to become a powerful yogi to pacify any obstacles that arose in the dissemination of Dharma throughout Tibet. What happened? In their next lives their prayers came true.

When the first monastery was being built at Samye in southern Tibet, whatever the people built by day, spirits tore down at night. This happened many times. So the king, Trisong Detsen, invited the powerful yogi Padmasambhava from India to subdue these spirits. He manifested as a deity, hooked and subdued the spirits, and made them vow not to harm but to protect the Buddhadharma in Tibet. He did this not only around Samye but wherever in Tibet they were.

As a result, Buddhism was sustained in Tibet for many centuries. The main goal of the government and the people was always to preserve and spread the Dharma. Consequently Tibet gave rise to many bodhisattvas and enlightened beings. And when the communist Chinese colonized Tibet, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and many great, learned lamas were able to leave Tibet, reestablish monasteries, educate thousands of monks and produce many qualified teachers. Every year, those qualified teachers go to different countries, especially the West, to teach the Dharma to hundreds of thousands of people all over the world. Even in the FPMT, there are many people who can teach Dharma and introduce it to others. So this benefit received by everybody, including us, is due to the kindness of Padmasambhava, who purified Tibet, allowing the Dharma to be established and last such a long time, and the power of the Boudha stupa and the prayers made to it.

So, Zina read Lama Govinda, came to India looking for Domo Geshe Rinpoche, was directed to the Ghoom Monastery and met a monk who thought she was my friend and brought her to us. Thus we started teaching Dharma to Westerners. So in one way you can say that all this started—Kopan courses, our spreading Dharma in the West, the FPMT—because of Zina and our having met her.

One day while Lama and I were staying in Boudha, a Sherpa family came to see us. The father was Ang Nyima, a well-known dealer of statues and thangkas, a kind of guru of Kathmandu business. He had about twenty students selling statues and thangkas, one of whom was a relative of mine. This man had come to see us because he used to go to Lawudo to receive initiations from the previous Lawudo Lama, the one who was said to be my previous life, lived in a cave doing practice, and was reputed to be a great yogi practitioner.

Ang Nyima gave me Kachen Yeshe Gyaltzen's great lo-jong text, Lo-jong Chen-mo[also called Losang Gongyen], which is basically a lam-rim text but greatly elaborated in the lo-jong section. He also offered Lama Yeshe the Heruka Body Mandala commentary written by Dagpo Rinpoche, Pabongka Rinpoche's root guru, and ever since then Lama was always reading the completion stage of that practice.

I spent the next few years reading the Lo-jong Chen-mo. I took it with me when I went to Lawudo to build the monastery, and instead of watching the workers as I was supposed to do I'd spend most of the day in the cave, reading texts. It was only when I went out to pee that I'd see them, standing around talking instead of working. But I never said anything.

Every evening I had to pay the workers but it felt very strange because usually people came into the cave to make offerings. This time they were coming in for me to give them money. I had to figure out what they were owed and pay them. After that I would go into

the kitchen where my sister would be making food, sit down and calculate how much money we'd spent, how much was left and so forth. This was a little difficult for me because I'd never been to school or learned math.

Before being given this book I'd been memorizing texts, usually the ones we studied for debate, but I hadn't received teachings on or studied the lam-rim. The first lam-rim teaching I received was Liberation In the Palm of Your Hand from my root guru, HH Trijang Rinpoche. After that I was very inspired to teach Dharma.

Around 1970 we went to Bodhgaya to receive a Yamantaka commentary from His Holiness the Dalai Lama's senior tutor, Kyabje Ling Rinpoche. At that time there was a Scottish Zen monk there giving a one-week meditation course, so we went along with Zina. She liked to see lots of lamas to ask them questions or just talk, so because of her we got to meet several lamas of other traditions, like Kalu Rinpoche, Chetsang Rinpoche, the Karmapa and others. Lama would tell her what to ask and she would then ask them that question.

Another day Lama, Zina and I went to an ashram where a Japanese Zen monk was leading the meditation. At the end of the hour I couldn't see any difference between the meditation he was leading and deep sleep! He told us to stop all thought; that's what happens in deep sleep. I couldn't see any difference.

At this point Zina asked Lama at least twice to conduct a meditation course at Kopan but Lama refused. However, I had the inspiration to do it. Later on she asked me and I asked Lama what he thought. Lama said that if I thought it beneficial I should go ahead. So I led a five-day course [March 1971] and several Western people came.

There was a two-page handout outlining the meditation subjects: one or two lines on the perfect human rebirth, five lines on the suffering of the lower realms, a few lines on karma...something to serve as a basis for the teaching. On the fifth day, out of the kindness of Lama Yeshe and Kachen Yeshe Gyaltsen, I talked about bodhicitta.

One English guy who was there didn't want me to stop teaching so he took the clock off my table. After teaching, Zina and I would go to eat in Lama's room. I think that very first course was the only one Zina attended. She was completely astonished at the teachings. I can't imitate the way she expressed herself but she was very happy, sort of completely amazed. As a result, the second course happened [March 1972]. Actually, it all came from Kachen Yeshe Gyaltsen's teachings, the Lo-jong Chen-mo, The Great Thought Transformation text.

Up to the seventh Kopan course [November 1974], people used to say to me, "Oh, the course went so well, it was so wonderful," they used to tell me this and that, but in my heart I never used to think it was me; I always felt that it was all Lama Yeshe. After the seventh course, I don't know what happened, but that feeling disappeared. From the first course to the seventh I always felt in my heart that the teachings I was giving were actually Lama's. After that, the feeling went.

Lecture 24



Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche 1989

EIGHT MAHAYANA PRECEPTS MOTIVATION: THE FOUR WRONG CONCEPTS

This is the time—this life, this year, this month, this week, this day, this hour, this minute, this second. This is the time when we have the freedom to choose whether after this life we go to the lower realms—the narak, preta or animal realm—or to the realm of the happy migratory beings. As we have this freedom, this choice, it's time to make preparations to stop our rebirth as a narak, preta or animal being by stopping creating the cause and instead making preparations to take rebirth in the body of a happy migratory being by creating the cause for that.

This is the time to differentiate ourselves from the lower realm beings, from the animals. It's not sufficient that we look physically different from the animals; that's not sufficient. Our attitude and conduct, our actions, have to be different from the animals. Therefore, we should reflect on these things, how samsara is in nature of suffering and what the cause of samsara is, the four wrong concepts,¹ which are the true cause, the all-arising.²

The I, the self, is empty of existing from its own side, however, the first wrong concept is that we apprehend the I as existing from its own side, as independent. The I, the life, the body and mind, the sense objects—form, sound and so forth—these phenomena are impermanent, but we apprehend them as permanent, we look at them as permanent. This is the second wrong concept.

The pleasures that we experience by depending on external objects and the five sense objects—form, sound, smell and so forth—are in the nature of suffering, but at first the suffering is unnoticeable [so we label the experience as pleasure]. These samsaric pleasures are dependent on external objects, thus another heavy suffering, another feeling that is unbearable, is stopped and another new feeling is created by the senses having contact with the object. When we continue having that feeling, however, sooner or later it becomes boring. By continuing, sooner or later, that feeling becomes unbearable discomfort, unbearable, undesirable. It becomes tiring or boring.

At the beginning it's unnoticeable that this feeling is in the nature of discomfort, that it's suffering. It's unnoticeable that it's the suffering of suffering. It's so small that it's unnoticeable. Because it's unnoticeable suffering of suffering, while it's unnoticeable that it's discomfort, we label it “pleasure.” That which is simply suffering we think of as pleasurable; it's just a question of the amount of suffering, great or small, noticeable or unnoticeable. It's a question of that. The difference is just that. But what it is, is only suffering. It's a suffering feeling that we have labeled “pleasure.” The third wrong concept is that we apprehend and we believe that suffering feeling to be real happiness, pure happiness.

The body is in the nature of impurity [but we think of it as pure.] It's in the nature of impurity, like a sack filled with thirty-two dirty things. The thirty-two dirty things were there [as an embryo] but now the shape has changed; it's become harder and the shape has changed. The body developed and became harder and the shape changed. In the beginning it was blood received from the mother and sperm received from the father. This is what this body originally was, just simply that, blood from the mother and sperm

from the father, the combination of those substances. It's just that the shape has changed and become harder. How it looked in the beginning is that.

So this body is a combination of those two substances. This sperm [of the father] is the continuation of another sperm, and that sperm is the continuation of another sperm, from say the grandfather. That's the evolution. That sperm came from another sperm and continued to another sperm. It came from that body but that body is a continuation of another sperm. If we think back, if we go back like this, it's unbelievable. Also the egg or the blood that is received from the mother, that continuation came from another blood, from the grandmother. Then *that* came from another one. What this body is, what it is, simply, it's like a septic tank, where all the things from the bathroom go inside, where everything is collected from the toilets.

When we think like this it's unimaginable. This body of ours comes from our mother's mother, mother's mother, mother's mother, so on like this, and from our father's father, father's father, father's father, so on like this. This body is simply that. What it is, is that. As Nagarjuna said in *The Jewel Garland*, this body is filled with the thirty-two dirty things.

Therefore, if the body is impure whatever comes out of this body will be impure. Before food and the like goes inside the body, before it goes into the mouth, it is clean but afterwards, when it comes out of the body it becomes dirty. Whether it comes out of the upper part of the body, the mouth, through vomiting, or out of the lower part of the body, even the ground it's dropped on becomes dirty. After it comes out of the body, even the ground becomes dirty. Even the place where it is vomited or where it is dropped, even the ground becomes dirty. The fourth wrong concept is that while the body is in the nature of impurity, filled with the thirty-two impurities, we apprehend it and believe it to be completely clean.

Due to these four wrong concepts, we ourselves and all sentient beings have been suffering. We have been experiencing the general sufferings of samsara and the particular sufferings of the three lower realms from beginningless rebirths. And if we still follow these wrong concepts, we will have to experience the suffering of samsara without end. At this time we have received a perfect human rebirth and have met the Buddhadharmas and the virtuous friend, and especially the Mahayana virtuous friend. Therefore, at this time, it's not sufficient just to be able to stop rebirth in the lower realms and to receive the body of the happy migratory being, a deva or a human being. That is not sufficient. Even if we achieve liberation that's not sufficient. We can't be satisfied with just that, even achieving liberation for ourselves. We must achieve full enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

THE NEED FOR BODHICITTA

We ourselves need to achieve full enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. For example, even though there are numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas who are helping sentient beings, there are many sentient beings who need *our* help. There are many sentient beings who need *our* help. We have to recognize this. For example, there are many sentient beings who have especially asked us and many times we have given them

help. They asked and they're dependent on us, on our help, and many times we have given them help for their happiness. For their happiness.

It's happened that there are many sentient beings who are dependent on us for spiritual help, for spiritual understanding, for Dharma guidance. There have been many others dependent on us. Because of our help, they have understood why there's a need to practice meditation. They have received many points of Dharma wisdom that we ourselves have explained to them. From us they have received many points of Dharma wisdom, and then they have followed it. This has happened many times.

Many of us here have had this experience that other sentient beings are dependent on us, even on the spiritual path, the path to the happiness, the path to liberation and enlightenment. Through our help, other sentient beings have met the Dharma and have been able to practice it, to follow it.

Even though there are numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas who are helping sentient beings, there are many sentient beings who are dependent to us, whose temporary and ultimate happiness is dependent to us. We have to recognize this; we have to realize this through past experience. By the example of our past experiences, we have to understand the present and the future in that way.

It's mentioned in the *Bodhicaryavatara*,

*All the happiness there is in this world
Comes from wishing others to be happy.
All suffering there is in this world
Comes from wishing myself to be happy.
What need is there to say more?
The childish work for their own benefit,
The Mighty Ones work for the benefit of others.
Just look at the difference between them!*³

The Mighty Ones are the buddhas. For example, because just one buddha, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, changed his attitude from the self-cherishing thought into cherishing other sentient beings, not only did he himself become enlightened but he has already enlightened numberless sentient beings. Even now—every day, every hour, every second—he is enlightening numberless sentient beings. Every second he enlightens numberless sentient beings. He will continuously do this until every sentient being becomes enlightened.

This is happening even now, because the Buddha revealed these skillful means, these eight Mahayana precepts, because the Buddha left this advice, gave this instruction. Therefore, today while we're taking these eight Mahayana precepts, the Buddha is guiding us. Even today Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is guiding us from the lower realms, from those eight negative karmas and their results, all the sufferings. Buddha is guiding and protecting us from all those sufferings that we would have to experience by creating

eight negative karmas again and again. We would have to experience that suffering life after life, on and on without end.

The Buddha is protecting us even today from all those, from getting habituated to these eight negative karmas, from keeping on committing these eight negative karmas and then experiencing all the endless suffering results. The Buddha is protecting us from all those sufferings and causes even today by revealing this method, the eight Mahayana precepts, which we take for one day, which are very simple and which have unbelievable benefits. Even today the Buddha is working for us, the Buddha is guiding us.

The Mighty Ones work for others, but look at the difference between them and us. We ourselves haven't changed our attitude from self-cherishing from the beginningless rebirths until now, like the buddhas such as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha have. If we had changed our attitude in the past from cherishing ourselves to cherishing other sentient beings, we would have become enlightened already and been able to help all sentient beings, such as the hell beings.

First of all, just to get the essential idea of the suffering of hell. All the heat energy of the fire at the end of the time, that which burns all the mountains, that burns the whole thing, is many hundreds of thousands of times hotter than all the heat energy of the fire on this earth where we human beings now live. The heat energy of a tiny fire spark of the hell realm is much hotter than that. A tiny fire spark is seven times hotter than the whole energy of the fire at the end of time, at the end of the world, the fire that burns the whole thing, that ends the world. A tiny fire spark of the hell realm is seven times hotter than that.

If we are in the hot hell, the whole ground is iron that is oneness with the fire, with the completely red fire. That is the ground. We are just talking about the ground, without talking about all the sufferings we have to experience by being on that ground. Without talking about all the rest of the sufferings, this is just explaining, introducing the ground. There's not one tiny pleasant place. There's not one tiny part of the ground that is not hot, oneness with the fire. There's not even a place the size of a foot where there's no fire. That is just the fundamental idea about the ground.

Because we ourselves didn't practice bodhicitta and only followed the self-cherishing thought, we didn't become enlightened in the past, and as a result numberless sentient beings who are dependent on our help have been constantly suffering in samsara. For example, this one narak being. There are numberless narak beings, preta beings, animal beings, human beings, suras and asuras who are dependent on our help to become free from samsara, to achieve enlightenment. This one hell being has been experiencing unbelievable suffering, again and again, numberless times, again and again, without end, from beginningless rebirths. Not just one hell being, there are numberless hell beings who have been suffering, without number.

Therefore the self-cherishing thought is extremely harmful. Our own self-cherishing thought has been extremely harmful. It's something that we should eliminate right now without delaying even a second.

Now, think about this one preta being who has experienced the heaviest hunger and thirst and so forth, numberless times. If we had generated bodhicitta in the past, we could have already enlightened numberless preta beings. Even this one preta being. There are numberless preta beings who are dependent to us, but this one preta being hasn't been freed from suffering because we have followed the self-cherishing thought. This one preta being has been suffering again and again numberless times. There is not just one, there are numberless preta beings, who have been suffering again and again, who haven't become enlightened.

Therefore, think, "The self-cherishing thought is extremely harmful. I must eliminate it without delaying even a second. If I had generated bodhicitta in the past, all these numberless animal beings would have already become enlightened. But because I follow only the self-cherishing thought, even this one animal being has had to experience suffering, being killed, being eaten by others, being extremely foolish and so forth. It has been experiencing the suffering of the animal realm again and again, numberless times. Not just that, there are numberless animal beings who have been suffering from the beginningless rebirths. Therefore, the self-cherishing thought has been extremely harmful. I must eliminate this self-cherishing thought from my heart without delaying even a second.

"There are numberless human beings who, if I had generated bodhicitta, would have already become enlightened, but that didn't happen. Even one human being has been experiencing the suffering of the human realm numberless times, such as the eight sufferings of the human realm: death and rebirth, old age, sicknesses, separating from desirable objects, meeting undesirable objects, not finding satisfaction. They are experiencing the suffering of samsara, the result of the negative karma, and on top of that they're creating the karma to again experience the suffering of samsara in the future, particularly the lower realms, those unimaginable sufferings. Like this, human beings are suffering. One human being is suffering very much. In reality, if I could realize that, it's like being in hell.

"If I had generated bodhicitta, I could have enlightened these numberless human beings already, but that didn't happen. By following the self-cherishing thought, even this one human being has been suffering numberless times. But there is not only this one; there are numberless human beings who have been suffering numberless times. Therefore, this self-cherishing thought has been extremely harmful, unbelievably harmful. Therefore, I *must* eliminate the self-cherishing thought from my heart without delaying even a second."

Like this, the same thing with the suras and asuras.

"Because of the self-cherishing thought the suras and asuras have been suffering numberless times. Therefore, I must eliminate this self-cherishing thought without delaying even a second.

“Numberless sentient beings have been experiencing suffering and have been obscured because of this self-cherishing thought. Therefore, I must eliminate the self-cherishing thought without delaying even a second.

“If I had generated bodhicitta, this one hell being would have become enlightened already. How wonderful, how incredible, how fantastic it would be if this one hell being had achieved peerless happiness, full enlightenment. How wonderful it would be. And the same with the numberless hell beings who would have achieved peerless happiness, full enlightenment. How incredible, how wonderful that would be. Therefore, without delaying even a second, I *must* generate bodhicitta.

“The same thing, if I had bodhicitta and I could enlighten even one preta being, how wonderful that would be. There is not just one, I could cause numberless preta beings to become enlightened. How wonderful that would be. Therefore, without delaying even a second, I *must* actualize bodhicitta.

“If I had bodhicitta and I could enlighten even one animal being, how wonderful that would be. There is not just one, there are numberless animal beings that could become enlightened due to my help, depending on me. How wonderful that would be. Without delaying even a second, I *must* generate bodhicitta.

“If I had bodhicitta and I could enlighten even one human being, how wonderful that would be. How fantastic that would be. Like this, numberless human beings could become enlightened by depending to me. How much more wonderful that would be. Therefore, without delaying even a second, I *must* actualize bodhicitta.

Now the same thing with the suras and asuras.

“How wonderful it would be if even one deva being became enlightened. But there are numberless devas who could become enlightened by depending to me. Therefore, without delaying even a second, I *must* actualize bodhicitta.

“Numberless sentient beings could become enlightened depending on me. Therefore, I must, without delaying even a second, I *must* actualize bodhicitta.

“In order to generate bodhicitta, in order to do listening, reflecting and meditation practice needed to develop bodhicitta, I must accumulate so much unbelievable merit. I have to be an extremely lucky or fortunate person to be able to do all this. I have to create good karma by taking the eight Mahayana precepts to be able to practice bodhicitta in this life and future lives.

“Without bodhicitta, it’s unbearable. To live my life for even one day—no question about one day, even one hour, even one minute, even one second—to live my life with the self-cherishing thought, it is unbelievably harmful, it’s unbearable. I can’t stand it.

“This is the purpose of my life and this is my responsibility, to free everyone, to free every sentient being experiencing the suffering of samsara from all the obscurations and

to lead them to peerless happiness, full enlightenment. Therefore, I must achieve full enlightenment, and for that reason I'm going to take the eight Mahayana precepts."

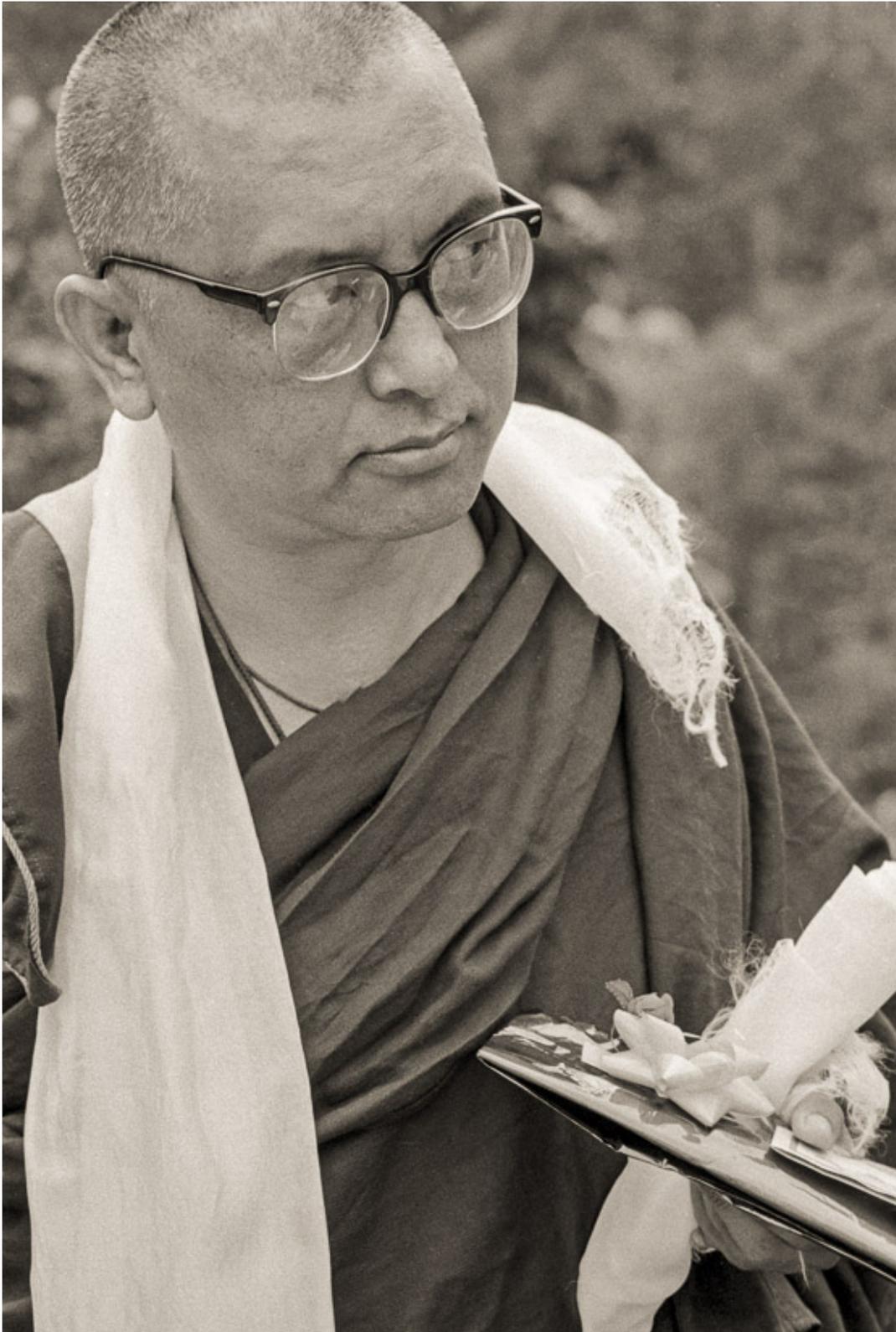
Please generate this motivation.



Visualize all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and with this, visualize the lama who gives the vows as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Meditate on this, visualizing him in that aspect. Think, "I'm taking the eight Mahayana precepts in front of them." With that thought, think that you are repeating the prayer that's recited.



Lecture 25



Lama Zopa Rinpoche at Chenrezig Institute 1991

EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS ON BEHALF OF OTHERS IS THE MOST BENEFICIAL THING

As the great bodhisattva Shantideva said in the *Bodhicaryavatara, A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*,

*If all the injury,
Fear and pain in this world
Arise from grasping at a self,
Then what use is this great ghost to me?
If I do not completely forsake it
I shall be unable to put an end to suffering,
Just as I cannot avoid being burnt
If I do not cast aside the fire I hold.⁴*

In order to pacify the harms for ourselves and to pacify the suffering of others, we must give up ourselves for others, we must cherish others as ourselves. The great bodhisattva Shantideva explained this is how to live our life, how to practice Dharma. He explained the best meditation. This bodhicitta meditation, exchanging oneself for others, is the best meditation because it's the one that has the most benefit. As I mentioned already on one of the mornings, you can never finish explaining the benefits of bodhicitta. Because meditating on bodhicitta has the greatest benefit, it's the most meaningful thing.

Even if we wish the best success for ourselves, the way to do that is by ceasing all the mistakes of the mind, all the sufferings, and by completing the mind in all the qualities of the realizations. What makes us able to eliminate, to cease every single mistake of the mind, every single obscuration, is bodhicitta. When the mind is perfectly qualified with all the realizations, that is the greatest success for ourselves. What makes that happiness happen is only bodhicitta. If there's no bodhicitta, that doesn't happen. We can't experience that. If there is bodhicitta then we can.

Similarly, we can complete the work for other sentient beings. We can lead everyone, every suffering being, to peerless happiness, full enlightenment. If there's no bodhicitta then we can't complete the work for other sentient beings. We can't fulfill it completely and perfectly. That's why, among meditations, even those which are the correct path, the best meditation is the bodhicitta meditation.

It's also the answer to how to live our life. This is the best way to live our life because from this all the success comes—temporary and especially ultimate, highest success, full enlightenment. Everything comes from this. As I just mentioned, we are able to obtain all the success for ourselves, all the success for all sentient beings, all the true success, by practicing bodhicitta, by living our life with bodhicitta.

This is the ultimate answer. Bodhicitta is the best medicine, the best meditation, the best psychology for our own problems, and even for consultation to people's problems. It solves all our own problems, when we have failure in practice, when we have obstacles to practicing Dharma, to achieving realizations on the path, and when there are obstacles to obtaining temporary happiness, the happiness of this life. Also, when there are

relationship problems, when everybody looks at us as an enemy, when everybody talks about us as an enemy, when they think of us as an enemy, an object of dislike by everybody.

This is the best advice, the best protection, the best guidance. By hearing this advice, by doing the consultation in this way, by giving the best psychology, the Mahayana thought transformation, in this way our own or others' problems can be eliminated at the root. The problems can be eliminated at the root, the self-cherishing thought, the ego. Otherwise, as long as the ego is preserved in the heart, as long as the ego is well taken care of, like a very precious treasure, we can't solve our problems. We can't succeed while we hold our self-cherishing thought like a precious jewel, a very expensive ornament that is kept in a safe place like a locked box in the house, like money that is kept in the bank, with police and guards.

Otherwise, without touching the ego at all, whatever solution is given, whatever advice is given, can't really solve our problem. Even if we like the idea, that doesn't necessarily mean that it will solve our problem. We may find interest in the idea but it doesn't mean it will really benefit our mind or solve our problems. It might distract our mind for a few minutes or an hour from thinking about the problem; instead of thinking of the problem we think of something else, just as when we are doing a drawing we need to pay attention to the colors. By not thinking of the other problem, we might find some quietness. While we are playing in the sand, during those minutes, those hours, there's some quietness because during that time we don't think of our relationship problems.

While we are aware of the problem we make it positive. While we're aware of what's happening in our life, at the same time by putting into practice what Shantideva said, we can transform it into happiness. Here, it's not just ignoring the problem. What I'm saying, it's not just ignoring the situation; when we're aware of the situation, we make it positive. We transform it into happiness by making it beneficial for all sentient beings, by making the experience worthwhile, beneficial, for all sentient beings. We experience it on behalf of all sentient beings. In that way, it naturally becomes the path to achieve full enlightenment.

As I mentioned already one morning during one of the morning motivations, even heavy diseases like cancer and AIDS, all those heavy problems, become much more beneficial than a powerful retreat of many hundreds of thousands of Vajrasattva mantras, those luxury, comfortable retreats with ego. Doing the luxury, comfortable retreat without problems, without the need to bear hardships, and on the top of that, with ego. Doing a Vajrasattva practice so that we do not have to be reborn in the hell and so forth.

With this bodhicitta practice, as Shantideva advised, having this attitude, even if all sentient beings become our enemies in this life, even if nobody loves us, even if everybody runs away from us, even if the mosquitoes don't like us. No, I'm joking. I'm joking about this, anyway. Mosquitoes, lice and bugs don't like us. With this attitude, when there's no ego involved, we naturally experience our problems for the sake of all sentient beings.

If we are experiencing the problem on behalf of even one sentient being, it becomes incredible purification. It purifies many eons, many lifetimes, so many lifetimes' negative karma. The stronger compassion we feel for even one sentient being, that itself becomes like tantra, very quick—in that sense it's like tantra—not so much by the sense of those particular tantric meditations, like the extremely subtle clear light and illusory body—not in the nature of those paths, but in the sense of, like the tantra path, it's a quick path. In a short time we purify an unimaginable amount of obscurations and accumulate an unbelievable, extensive amount of merit.

Depending on how strong the compassion we feel for even one sentient being, how much we are able to sacrifice ourselves with a sincere, whole heart; how much we are able to bear hardships, to bear problems for the sake of even one sentient being, on behalf of even one sentient being, that much we purify. Instead of that sentient being, that enemy, having to experience all this punishment, torture, hardships, disease—all of this life's problems—we experience them on behalf of that person. Depending on how much we are able to dedicate ourselves and how much compassion we have, how much bodhicitta, cherishing even that one sentient being, depending on how strong that is, that makes it that much quicker to achieve full enlightenment.

At this point there are more things to say, maybe another time. However, we need to understand how there's incredible benefit even cherishing one sentient being, even serving, even dedicating our life for one sentient being.

THE NATURE OF SELF-CHERISHING

In the consultation, when doing public service, as long as we don't look at the self-cherishing thought as the enemy, as long as we don't recognize that this is the real poison, the real enemy, the real creator of our life problems, the problem doesn't get solved. As long as we regard the creator of our problems as coming from outside and the self-cherishing thought as a very positive thing, as an encouragement, the problem doesn't get solved. The problem doesn't really get solved. It's like regarding poison as medicine; if we regard poison as medicine there's no way we can solve our problems.

Worldly concern, attachment, anger and all those other disturbing thoughts arise because of the self-cherishing thought. That's one reason. We create many actions, many negative karmas that become the cause of unsuccess, the cause of failure, because of the self-cherishing thought. We constantly create negative karma from that. Put it this way, we do many actions that become negative karma because of the self-cherishing thought. We can see the logic very clearly, how if we follow the self-cherishing thought, if we regard the self-cherishing thought as positive, as something we should have, as an achievement, as a quality of the mind, we can see the logic of how it is harmful, how self-cherishing makes us do actions that become the cause of failure in our Dharma practice, failure even in the secular work, obtaining the happiness for this life.

How does that happen? If we analyze, if we just think, what is the characteristic of the self-cherishing thought? What is the characteristic? If we analyze the characteristics, what is the wish of the self-cherishing thought? What does it like? What doesn't it like? If we analyze, then we can understand. What is the main characteristic of that mind? The

characteristic of that mind is seeking happiness only for ourselves. Seeking happiness only for ourselves. That is the function of that mind.

Even if we're doing a job for others this happens. Doing a job for others is a good example because it's something that normally somebody has asked us to do. And the purpose of that is if we don't do that, there's no happiness for ourselves; we can't survive. There's no means of living, there's no happiness for ourselves. So, doing a job is a good example.

If the job is done with the self-cherishing thought, even if externally it looks like we are working for others, in reality, in our heart, we're working for ourselves. That is the reality. No matter how many years we do the job—our whole life, one hundred years, one thousand years—with the self-cherishing thought, the whole work is done for ourselves.

That is the characteristic of self-cherishing; that is the function of self-cherishing. If there is unhappiness, dissatisfaction, the self-cherishing thought wants success, comfort. It's always looking for, expecting success, happiness, comfort, but for whom? For itself, for ourselves. What the self-cherishing thought expects is all that success and comfort for ourselves and when it doesn't get it then there's unhappiness and great disappointment in our life. And when somebody interferes with the self-cherishing thought getting what it wants then anger, hatred and jealousy and all those other things arise.

Now we can see logically, by experience, by analyzing the nature of the self-cherishing thought, we can see it's a great contagious disease. It's an age-old disease that has been with us from the beginningless rebirths without any break even in one life, without any break for even one year, one month, even one hour, one minute. We have lived without a holiday from the self-cherishing thought, without any rest for even an hour. We have been controlled by this enemy, by this contagious, chronic disease, the self-cherishing thought.

This is the basic problem of the world. This is why there are so many problems happening in the world, why there are so many people killing each other, controlling each other, all these things. It's basically because of the nature of the self-cherishing thought, because of following the self-cherishing thought. Because the nature of the self-cherishing thought is like this, as I mentioned before, all these thousands and millions of people kill each other, destroying whole cities, destroying whole countries, making all those weapons as the quickest way to give harm, the most powerful way to destroy things.

There's no way to be happy while we have the self-cherishing thought because it is really not a happy mind. Even if there's excitement due to some success at work or some material gain and so forth—receiving power, wealth or a position—even if there's excitement in the very inside of the heart there's no tranquility. There's no real peace because there's a tightness in the self-cherishing thought. There's no real freedom there in the heart. Our own mind, our heart, is overpowered by the self-cherishing thought, just as the Tibetan people are under the control of the Communist Chinese. They are controlled by force, not by their own wishes.

As I normally mention, when we are walking along a street and we remember the purpose of our life, to serve others, immediately there is happiness. We remember the meaning of life, the purpose of our life is to free all the sentient beings from all the sufferings and to obtain happiness. Our life is not for us. We're here for all these people around us; who are in these shops, who are in the street, who are in the cars, for all these sentient beings. We're here to obtain happiness for all of them.

When we think like that, immediately when we have a new mind, immediately when we have a new idea of life, that gives us new life, immediately there's happiness there. Immediately we experience happiness in our heart, tranquility and calmness in our heart. Immediately we find happiness, immediately we find satisfaction in our life—while we're walking along the street, while we're working in the office, while we're serving other people. Even if we are not in a temple or our own meditation room, there is happiness.

This way, suddenly we see the meaning of life, the purpose to life. With the previous attitude, the minute before this there was suffering; that attitude gave us a suffering life, it made our life suffering. We were dissatisfied and unhappy, and when we saw other people around us they also seemed kind of unhappy. When we are unhappy, dissatisfied, that also makes the surrounding people unhappy. There are huge differences between these two attitudes.

Because we have been following the self-cherishing thought so far, listening to our own self-cherishing thought, to what it likes and what it doesn't like, without analyzing, we have become a disciple of our own self-cherishing thought. We have become a slave to the self-cherishing thought. We have devoted our own life to the self-cherishing thought. Therefore, even if we have met the perfectly qualified gurus—those who have all the qualities, the same as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, the Buddha of Wisdom, Manjushri or Maitreya, or like those pandits like Lama Tsongkhapa—because we have been following the self-cherishing thought, we have been unable to follow the holy wishes of the spiritual guide, the virtuous friend who guides us to enlightenment by showing us virtue, the whole graduated path to enlightenment.

THE SHORTCOMINGS OF THE SELF-CHERISHING THOUGHT

If it's something that suits our self-cherishing thought we do it; if it doesn't suit our self-cherishing thought we don't do it. If the practice or advice the virtuous friend gives us suits our self-cherishing thought we do it; if it doesn't suit the self-cherishing thought we don't do it. Like this, we are unable to correctly devote ourselves to the virtuous friend as it is explained in the sutra and tantra teachings by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, by the yogis, the pandits. As it is explained in the lam-rim teachings, we are unable to correctly devote ourselves to the virtuous friend.

Also when things go against our self-cherishing thought, anger arises. When the advice or practice given by our virtuous friend doesn't suit our self-cherishing thought—even if the spiritual master is perfectly qualified from his or her own side, even an enlightened being—if the advice doesn't suit what the self-cherishing thought wants, when it's the

opposite to the self-cherishing thought's wishes, then anger, heresy and all those negative thoughts arise.

We experience the eight shortcomings of having made mistakes in devoting to the virtuous friend, such as belittling or criticizing the virtuous friend, or giving up the virtuous friend after we have established a Dharma contact, which is the heaviest negativity, the same as having criticized and given up on all the buddhas. The karma of having done this is as heavy as that. Why this is the heaviest karma needs some explanation but maybe I'll leave this part at the moment.

In short we need to understand that we create the heaviest negative karma in relation to the virtuous friend because among all the powerful objects, the guru, the virtuous friend we have received a Dharma contact from, is the most powerful object. The guru is the highest, the most powerful object among all the powerful objects. It's like if we just touch fire it doesn't kill us, but if we touch electricity without any protection it can burn us and even immediately kill us. It has the power to immediately cause death. However, if we are able to use electricity wisely it can be used for many good things. We can use it for a great many things, for comfort, for a means of living, for ourselves and for many other people. But if we're not skillful, if we don't know how dangerous it can be, then it can also cause great harm. Like this example, we can make an object extremely beneficial or we can make it dangerous for ourselves. It depends on whether we know this and how we deal with it.

This is the first shortcoming of the self-cherishing thought. By generating anger toward the virtuous friend for one second, [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] that number of eons of merit we have accumulated in the past gets destroyed, and for that number of eons we have to be born and experience suffering in the narak realm. This is a dependent arising. It's the nature of the phenomena. For example, a scientist in the laboratory puts different atoms together and produces something else, some other power. He is able to make different things. The scientist can do those things because it's the nature of phenomena. For example, flowers grow differently, with different sizes, different leaves, incredible designs and all these things because it's the nature of phenomena. It's the nature of phenomena. Depending on causes and conditions it happens like that. People's karma, people's intention, the mind, karma.

When people have the karma to grow this flower, when the people have the karma, the inner cause, this flower exists. But when people, sentient beings, the living beings in this world do not have the karma, when that karma is finished to have the appearance of this flower, when there's no karma, they can't see a flower with such a design.

It's all dependent arising. It's all nature. Why this happens like this is because it's the nature of phenomena. It's the same thing. Why the whole thing arises like this is exactly the same thing. It is exactly the same thing. By generating anger for one second toward the virtuous friend, however many seconds we get angry toward the virtuous friend, that many eons of merit get destroyed and for that many eons we have to be reborn in the narak realm, we have to experience that suffering. It's a dependent arising. It's the nature of the phenomena.

It's just that we don't remember our past experiences, being in the six realms, we don't remember. It's just a question of not remembering and not knowing. It's similar to not knowing about this flower, how it happened, why it grew, why it exists, how we can enjoy it—not knowing the reasons, not being aware. It's the same.

We can generate anger and heresy toward the virtuous friend in the duration of a finger snap. It's regarded as sixty-five moments in a second. Each second of negative karma has sixty-five moments. There are four schools, and the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika schools, the first and second schools, count like that. The Mahayana schools count 365 moments in a second. It's like the sound of a camera's shutter clicking that is counted in so many split-seconds.

According to the lower schools' calculation, even in a sixty-fifth of a second, if the duration is a second then sixty-five eons, that much merit is destroyed, that many eons of merit is destroyed, that many eons of realization is destroyed. If we were going to realize emptiness or bodhicitta today or tomorrow, with one second of anger toward the virtuous friend, that realization is put off for sixty-five eons, according to the explanation of the first two schools. This is a shortcoming of the self-cherishing thought.

Even if we are practicing tantra, if we make a mistake in correctly devoting to the virtuous friend while we are practicing tantra, we can't achieve realizations, we can't achieve enlightenment. While we are making mistakes in correctly devoting to the virtuous friend, even if we practice the highest, most secret tantra, we can't achieve enlightenment. No matter how many years we practice without any distractions at all, meditating on the path, never coming out of the room for years and years, not sleeping, not eating, we can't achieve enlightenment and those sublime realizations. That's a shortcoming of the self-cherishing thought.

Even if we attempt to practice tantra with great effort, it's like obtaining the narak realm, while we are constantly making mistakes in correctly devoting to the virtuous friend, while we are changing our mind toward the virtuous friend. No matter how much we attempt to practice tantra, it's like obtaining the narak realm, because even if we do many other virtuous actions—making offerings to the Buddha, making charity to sentient beings and so forth—this karma we create with the virtuous friend is the heaviest karma. Even if we create some virtue, somehow, because this is the very heaviest one, we experience the results of this one first.

You can see from the lam-rim outline, it says that even if we attempt to practice tantra it's like obtaining the narak realm. It doesn't mean that all other Dharma practice that we do, other actions that are Dharma, become the cause of the narak realm. It's not saying that. It's like when we're painting, when we're mixing the colors, if the white color is strongest, then generally we call the color white. Even if it's not completely white color, if there's some red or black mixed in, because the strongest is white, generally we call it white even if it's not pure white.

That's also the self-cherishing thought. Whatever realizations or qualities that we haven't achieved before won't happen. The next one is whatever realizations, qualities or

scriptural understanding we have already gained will degenerate. Even if we have some experience of the lam-rim, some compassion or some understanding of impermanence and death, that degenerates. Even the scriptural understandings we have learned before are forgotten; they don't stay in the mind. The Dharma we learned before doesn't stay in the mind. All these are shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought.

In this life we get tortured, we get harmed by many diseases, many undesirable things happen to us, and after this life, we have to wander in the lower realms for an incredible length of time. These things happen because of the self-cherishing thought. In all our lifetimes, having to endure the poverty of not having a virtuous friend, a guru, all these things happening are the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought.

Even if we have met the gurus who have all the qualities and there is nothing more profound and secret we can hear; even if we have met the actual Shakyamuni Buddha, or the actual Tara, the actual Vajradhara, and there is no teaching higher or more secret we can hear, we are still unable to change our mind, to develop our mind. That's a shortcoming of the self-cherishing thought.

Even if we have received all the sutra and tantra teachings, all the initiations; even if there's nothing new to hear, we have heard all the words of all the different texts, we have heard the essence of all the Buddhadharma, the whole path with nothing left, still nothing happens to the mind. We are unable to develop the mind, to have realizations. This is a shortcoming of the self-cherishing thought.

Even if we have received numberless initiations; if we had the vase touched on our head numberless times or drank the water from the vase numberless times, if we had done all these blessed things numberless times, still nothing develops, we are unable to develop the mind because of following the self-cherishing thought.

As long as from our own side we don't put in any effort, as long as we don't do something with this ego, with this self-cherishing thought, even if we meet all the past, present and future buddhas, we don't change unless we can do something with the self-cherishing thought. Even if we meet all the three-times' buddhas, still nothing happens. Even if the buddhas reveal the entire teachings to us, as long as from our own side we don't do something with the self-cherishing thought no development happens.

EXCHANGING SELF WITH OTHERS

It's mentioned in the *Bodhicaryavatara*,

*For ages you have made me suffer
Causing me to suffer in samsara.
Now that I can see you for what you are
Where can you go?*⁵

Shantideva is saying, "Now I can see you, self-cherishing thought, you enemy. Now that I recognize you where will you go?" Now I recognize you where will you go? To

Kathmandu? To the United States? Anyway, I'm joking. Shantideva didn't say. That one Shantideva didn't say.

When we can recognize the self-cherishing thought as the enemy, it has nowhere to go—this is what Shantideva is implying. The self-cherishing thought is in our hands and we can give it a hard time. That means we're going to destroy it. It's like when we catch a thief, when we have him in our room. Everything's locked; there's no way to escape. We can tell him, "Now I've found you." When we find the person in some safe place somewhere we can beat him. We can smash him, whether we make him flat or square or whatever. Anyway, I'm joking.

We tell him, "I will destroy your arrogance. I will sell you to others. Don't be upset. I will get the strength."

Shantideva says,

*If I am careless
And if I don't give you, the enemy, to others,
It's definite that you will put me
Into the hands of the hell guardians.*⁶

What he means is that if we are careless and don't replace our self-cherishing with cherishing others—if we don't give ourselves to others—then the self-cherishing thought will lead us into the hell realms, into the naraks. That's what "put me into the hands of the hell guardians" or the "karmic guardians" means.

We need to see that in the past we have suffered for a long time because of the self-cherishing thought and by remembering all the harm it has done us in the past—meaning from beginningless time—we must determine to destroy this thought of working for the self. Shantideva explained the bodhisattva's practice, exchanging oneself for others, in this way.

All problems come from the self-cherishing thought and that comes from the [sense of] I. Therefore, the I is the object forever to be renounced. What is called "others" is the source of all the past, present and future happiness.

We should visualize a person who doesn't love us, who doesn't like us, who is very negative to us. We visualize, we remember that person—somebody who is completely against us, who doesn't respect us, somebody who puts us down. If we have many people like that, OK.

We should think like this. "Where does all my past happiness, present happiness and future happiness come from? It all comes from my good karma, which is Dharma, which is the action of the buddhas. It comes from the buddhas, and the buddhas come from bodhisattvas and bodhisattvas come from bodhicitta. Bodhicitta comes from great compassion.

“The meaning, the definition of Mahayana compassion is compassion that covers all sentient beings. Mahayana great compassion covers all sentient beings, any being that has obscurations—gross obscurations and subtle obscurations. Great compassion covers all sentient beings, without leaving out even one. If there’s even one sentient being left out, then it becomes partial compassion; it’s not the great compassion that covers all sentient beings.

“Therefore, this great compassion which is the root of bodhicitta is generated depending on each obscured, suffering sentient being. Great compassion is generated on all sentient beings including this person who hates me, who puts me down. It includes this person. Great compassion is generated depending on this person, as well as all other sentient beings. Therefore, bodhicitta is also generated by depending on the kindness of this person who doesn’t love me, who puts me down, as well as all other sentient beings.

“From bodhicitta, bodhisattvas come. All the numberless bodhisattvas come about by the kindness of this sentient being. All the numberless bodhisattvas who pray for me all the time, who work for me and all sentient beings, who constantly live their lives for me and for all sentient beings, they all happen by the kindness of this sentient being and all the rest of the sentient beings.

“Buddhas come from bodhisattvas, thus all the numberless buddhas who are working for me, guiding me from the lower realms, from the suffering of samsara, guiding me from lower nirvana to highest nirvana, enlightenment, by letting me create good karma, giving me all the happiness—these buddhas who are guiding me now all happened by the kindness of this sentient being who puts me down, who hates me, as well as all sentient beings. All the numberless buddhas came from this person and all sentient beings.

“Therefore, this person is extremely precious. This person is unbelievably precious, extremely precious. And all the Dharma that I practice, which comes from the buddhas, all this also comes from the kindness of this sentient being, this person who hates me, who puts me down, as well as all sentient beings. So, he is extremely precious.

“All my past, present and future happiness, all the temporary, day-to-day life happiness, comfort and enjoyment, as well as liberation and enlightenment, ultimate happiness, [is received by the kindness of this person.] All this happiness which I experienced in the past, I am experiencing now, and which I will experience in the future, especially this ultimate happiness that I will experience in the future, is received by the kindness of this person. All this happiness I received by the kindness of this person, this sentient being. Like this, I received it by the kindness of every sentient being, starting from here, from every person here around me and all the creatures around me.

“Therefore, this person who hates me, who puts me down, is unbelievably precious, much more precious than the whole sky filled with diamonds, with dollars, with wish-granting jewels. Without depending on the kindness of this one person, this person who puts me down, who hates me; without depending on the kindness of this one sentient being, no matter how much wealth I have, there is no way I can experience all this temporary happiness and especially ultimate happiness. There’s no way. No way.

“Why? Why is there no way? Because there’s no way to generate compassion on those dollars, those diamonds, all the sky filled with dollars, with diamonds, with wish-granting jewels. There’s no way to generate compassion on them because they don’t have suffering. They don’t have suffering, but this person is a suffering sentient being. Therefore compassion is generated depending on his kindness. Compassion happens, compassion exists depending on the kindness of this suffering sentient being, and all the rest.

“Therefore, the whole sky filled with this much wealth is nothing. The value of all this wealth is nothing compared to how precious this one sentient being is, especially the one who hates me, who puts me down. The value of all this wealth is nothing compared to the value of this one sentient being, how he is precious to me. He is unbelievably precious.”

If somebody steals a hundred or a thousand dollars we get angry and want to kill that person or put him in prison, to give him harm in some way. But in reality, even that much wealth filling the whole sky is nothing compared to the value of this person, this suffering, obscured sentient being. He is unbelievably precious, incredibly precious.

Because we regard money as precious we protect it from thieves and so forth. We see the benefits of money and what we can do with money. We see how our life, our means of living, depends on it, how our comfort, our survival depends on it. But we don’t see how this obscured, suffering sentient being is so valuable, so precious, especially the person who hates us, who puts us down, who talks about our mistakes. We don’t see that if we practice with that person then we are able to achieve enlightenment quickly. We are able to achieve the realizations of the path, the six paramitas and so forth and achieve enlightenment. It gives quick enlightenment. This person gives us quick enlightenment. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers.] This person causes us to quickly cease all the mistakes of the mind and complete all the realizations of the path. If we practice on that person.

Therefore, all sentient beings are very precious. Think, “In my life, there’s nobody to cherish other than sentient beings. There’s nobody to work for other than sentient beings. All the rest is meaningless, it’s empty. Other than working for sentient beings everything else is meaningless, it’s empty. It’s nothing.

“What sentient beings want is happiness; what they do not want is suffering. Therefore I must free them from all suffering and its causes and lead them to full enlightenment. To do that I must achieve enlightenment. There’s no other way to do this. Therefore, I’m going to take the eight Mahayana precepts.”

Then do three prostrations with the same visualization.

BLACK FOOD AND TOBACCO

You may have heard during the prayers for the eight precepts there are four branches. Here it’s much more strict. The eight precepts include abstaining from any type of sexual activity, and one branch involves avoiding black food: onions, meat, garlic and so forth. These are the main ones that pollute the body. Polluting the body pollutes the mind,

causing it to be unclear, because the body is the vehicle of the mind thus it affects the mind, it causes lack of clarity and so forth.

That includes tobacco, cigarettes. Of course, there's no question tobacco is a black food. But if the food is pure and healthy, like having tea or eating food; if it doesn't pollute the body and mind, then it's different. Tobacco has a whole evolution, a whole story how it is a black food. There's a whole story about opium, how it came from the maras, the evil beings. Padmasambhava predicted that opium would happen, that it would spread and then all these things, how it destroys sentient beings' merit, not letting virtuous thoughts, the positive mind, arise, and how it makes the mind very gross. There are so many shortcomings explained in the teachings. It definitely pollutes the body and that pollutes the mind.

There is no danger for somebody who has power, control, freedom over those elements. The elements cannot affect, cannot endanger the body and mind. That is different. When somebody has that kind of power he can use poison as medicine. When poison can't affect him, when he has control over it, that's different. Even for our own health, even if we can't completely abandon smoking, if we can cut it down then that makes it better.

In the past, even when I was in my room or in a gompa, if there was somebody smoking outside, even if it's way down below, the smoke would come in with the air and with the breath the air went into the lungs. For a person who is very used to smoking maybe it doesn't have much effect, maybe the body has become too gross—the sensitivity is kind of destroyed—and he doesn't feel it. It goes into the lungs with the breath inside, and you can immediately see how it affects the person, causing discomfort down there. For other sentient beings who are around, the effect might be same.

The next branches are, "I will not use high, expensive beds or thrones. I will avoid eating food at inappropriate times. I will not wear garlands or ornaments, or sing or dance."

Lecture 26



Lama Zopa Rinpoche at Bern 1993

BUDDHA NATURE AND SUBTLE DEPENDENT ARISING

Think, “I must achieve full enlightenment for the sake of all the mother sentient beings who equal the infinite space. Therefore, I’m going to listen to the holy Dharma.”

Please listen to the teaching well by generating the most pure motivation, the motivation of bodhicitta, and also the righteous conduct of listening to the teaching.

The reason all us sentient beings—all the hell beings, the preta beings, the animal beings, the human beings, the suras, the asuras—can become fully enlightened is because all the mistakes of the mind, all the obscurations, can be eliminated, can be ceased. And that is because there is what is called in Tibetan, rig, the race of buddha, within all us sentient beings’ minds.

There are two types of race. The first is the *increasing race or the race of development*, which is the sentient beings’ causative phenomena such as the virtuous thoughts that develop into the transcendental wisdom, the omniscient mind, the dharmakaya. That race is the aspect of the mind that gets transformed or which takes the buddha’s holy body, the rupakaya.

The second type of race is *natural-abiding race or the race of the buddhas abiding in nature*. This is the ultimate nature of the mind, which is one with its own base or support, the mind. The support, the mind, supports the emptiness, the ultimate nature of the mind. That is the race of the buddhas abiding in nature.

For example, if what is called “mind” is not labeled, mind doesn’t exist. If what is called “mind” is not labeled as that, mind cannot exist. There’s no way the mind can exist without the label, without the thought that labels. Without depending on the name, there’s no way the mind can exist. Just exactly as without the name George, there’s no way George can exist.

Each time we think “my mind,” each time we label “mind,” we are making the mind exist. Because of the reason, the base to be labeled “I,” these aggregates, and within the body and mind, there’s the [non-body] phenomenon which is not substantial, which is colorless, shapeless and whose nature is clear and able to perceive an object, because of this reason, mind is merely imputed.

We made up the label like this. The labeling mind makes up the label and believes in that. Therefore, there is no real mind existing from its own side at all. The real mind appearing from its own side is a complete hallucination. That means it’s completely empty, it’s a complete hallucination. It’s completely empty in reality.

What is the mind? It becomes an *extremely* subtle phenomenon. It’s never that mind that normally appears and which we believe in. The way we believe it to be, the way we apprehend it—it’s never that. It’s not the mind we normally apprehend, the way it appears to us and the way we apprehend it, as something real from its own side. The mind isn’t that at all. That mind doesn’t have even the slightest atom of true existence from its own side, of inherent existence from its own side.

What the mind is becomes extremely subtle. The mind that is completely empty from its own side is an extremely subtle phenomenon. It's not that the mind doesn't exist, but it's *like* it doesn't exist. It's not that mind doesn't exist, but it's *like* it doesn't exist.

Not just the mind, this is also true of the body. In reality, even though in our view there's the appearance of a very concrete body, a real one, existing from its own side, and we believe in that, in reality it's exactly the same as the mind in that it is an extremely subtle phenomenon. It's completely empty from its own side and extremely subtle. How the body exists is also extremely subtle, the same as the mind. Like this, the whole of existence, of samsara and nirvana, everything, everything, the way it exists is so subtle, extremely subtle, extremely fine.

We see this when we meditate, when we analyze subtle dependent arising, when we do analytical meditation reflecting on the meaning of subtle dependent arising. This is not the gross dependent arising that the previous schools also believe in, that they also accept. It's not the gross dependent arising that scientists explain. It's not the gross dependent arising of the other previous schools of the four Buddhist schools, it's the one of the Prasangika Madhyamaka school. Of the two Madhyamaka schools, it's the second one, the Prasangika school's view of subtle dependent arising. When we do analytical meditation, when we reflect on the meaning of subtle dependent arising, we see that the way things exist is not at all the way they appear to us normally and the way we believe.

While everything, including the mind, the body, the I and so forth, all these things exist in mere name, at the same time they are empty from their own side. While all things such as the mind, the body, the I, are empty of existing from their own side, at the same time, they exist. They exist in mere name.

Like this, everything is the unification of emptiness and dependent arising. This subtle dependent arising is what Guru Shakyamuni Buddha realized. With his own unmistakable realizations, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha realized how things are, the way things exist, which is subtle dependent arising. Then he revealed the teachings of dependent arising to us sentient beings. And from that, numberless sentient beings have been able to realize emptiness, the correct ultimate nature. Through the teachings of dependent arising, they have realized the unmistakable ultimate nature, emptiness, the right view, the reality of things, how things exist in reality. So numberless sentient beings have been able to eliminate ignorance, the root of the samsara, and have been able to achieve liberation and full enlightenment.

This is what Lama Tsongkhapa praised. He composed a text, a praise to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha for having taught dependent arising [*In Praise of Dependent Arising.*] With his own experience, having realized dependent arising, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha then revealed this to sentient beings. What he himself experienced, he also taught sentient beings. That is the very essential guidance by the Buddha. Only this way, by the Buddha explaining dependent arising and then sentient beings listening, reflecting and meditating on it, only in this way can they realize the unmistakable, the reality, the ultimate nature of things, of the I, the self and so forth. Only this way are sentient beings able to escape, to be liberated from the whole, entire suffering and its causes.

This is the ultimate, the real guidance of the Buddha. As it's mentioned, the way the Buddha guides and liberates sentient beings is not by washing away negative karma with water or with his hands. It's not that way. There's this belief in Hinduism and other religions, but water can't wash away negative karma. We can't liberate sentient beings with water. That's not the way because water can't wash away negative karma.

Similarly, the Buddha can't eliminate sentient beings' suffering by hand, not in that way. For example, when there's a thorn that has gone into your flesh and you take it out with your hand. By hand, we cannot eliminate the whole, entire suffering and its causes. That's not the way the Buddha liberates us sentient beings.

And also, not by transplanting realizations, like transplanting the brain or the heart.

The way the buddhas, the Mighty Ones, liberate us, the sentient beings, is by revealing the ultimate nature. In other words, by explaining dependent arising, how things are dependent on causes and conditions, how things exist being merely imputed by the mind, how they exist in that way, how things function in mere name. Another way of putting this, dependent arising, especially subtle dependent arising, shows how things exist in mere name. In that way, things function in that way.

Especially by [the buddhas] revealing this, then by listening, reflecting and meditating on this, we are able to realize emptiness, we are able to realize ultimate truth and then after that, conventional truth. And so we realize the two truths. By realizing the ultimate truth of the mind, we are able to realize the conventional truth of the mind. And the same thing with the I. First we are able to realize the ultimate truth of the I, which is empty of existing from its own side, then the conventional truth of the I. We realize how the I is a subtle dependent arising. The subtle dependent arising of the I, the self, is the way of realizing the conventional truth.

Lama Tsongkhapa highly praised Guru Shakyamuni Buddha for having the realization of dependent arising and giving teachings and guiding sentient beings in this way. So far I haven't managed to memorize it well, but the boys have memorized it well. They recited it there on the hill, on Lama Tsongkhapa Day, the day before yesterday. I think it was the first prayer recited.

This mind that is completely empty from its own side, that is empty by nature, ignorance apprehends and believes to have inherent existence. This mind doesn't have the inherently-existent nature that the wrong view, ignorance, apprehends and believes.

This nature of the mind that is empty, this is the clear light. The nature of the mind is clear light. And this is the race of the buddha abiding in nature. This is buddha nature. This is buddha potential. This is the essence of the buddhas. There's no difference between the ultimate nature of a buddha's holy mind, the omniscient mind [and our mind]. There are differences in the base of our mind and a buddha's mind, but as far as the ultimate nature there's no difference.

Regarding the support, the base of the mind, at the moment we haven't actualized the remedy path thus this mind is not separated from the temporary obscurations. But the

obscurations are not permanent. They are not forever. These mistakes of the mind are not forever because the ultimate nature of the mind, clear light, is not oneness with the mistakes of the mind, not oneness with the obscurations. These obscurations are temporary and therefore they can be eliminated. From this we can understand how all the rest of the sufferings are temporary. These problems are also temporary; they're not permanent, including the hell realm. Even though hell exists it's not permanent, it's temporary.

The ultimate nature of the mind is not oneness with the obscurations; it's not mixed with them. In that sense, it's pure. It's the same as the ultimate nature of a buddha's holy mind.

MAITREYA'S NINE EXAMPLES OF BUDDHA NATURE

In *Uttara Tantra* Maitreya Buddha gave nine examples, nine meanings, of buddha nature, the essence of the buddha that is within the minds of us sentient beings that is obscured now. What obscures the buddha essence is explained using nine examples. Lama Tsongkhapa's disciple, Gyalsab Rinpoche, gave a commentary to the *Uttara Tantra*, the teaching by Maitreya Buddha.

Even though a sentient being's mind is pure by nature, it abides inside delusion. It's inside delusion, which is temporary, which is a temporary stain, and that stain is not mixed with the nature of the mind. The stain is not mixed with the nature of the mind. We can understand how the stain is not mixed with the nature of the mind through these nine examples.

As is mentioned in the root text, *Uttara Tantra*, the buddha nature is covered by delusion just as honey is covered by bees. The buddha nature is the honey and the delusions are the bees that cover it, so just as we can't see the honey for the bees, we can't see our buddha nature for the delusions.

And the essence, the grain, is hidden inside the husk. The essence is the buddha nature that we have within our mental continuum. In this example, it's like the grain, the essence, that is inside the husk, that is covered by the husk. So the stains are the husk.

Or just as gold is covered by kaka, or something dirty. There's another example I'm not going to use. Anyway, the gold in the kaka. I don't know the term for that dirty stuff, anyway. Gold is inside the dirty stuff. The buddha nature that we have is like the gold that is inside dirty stuff. The stains are like the dirty stuff that covers the gold.

It's like the treasure under the ground. The buddha nature that we have is like a treasure that is under the ground. The stains are like the ground that covers the treasure.

The next one seems a little bit of a repetition. I'll check. Maybe it's a fruit. I'm not a hundred percent sure, maybe it's a fruit. Before it was grain, the husk, and inside the essence. But maybe this is a fruit. Maybe this is a coconut, I'm not sure, or this fruit that has a fantastic smell. [Ven. Roger: *Durian.*] Durian. Maybe durian. I'm joking. No, I'm joking.

It says a small seed covered by the fruit. Maybe a fruit, I'm not sure. Inside the fruit there's a seed, the essence, and the seed is covered by the outside fruit. But that has to be checked. If that is the example, then the seed inside the fruit is like the buddha nature and the stains are like the cover.

The next example is a statue of the Buddha inside a ragged, garbage cloth, a rag. Again, it's the same. A buddha statue is covered with the garbage cloth, with a dirty rag cloth. The statue of a buddha is our buddha nature. The reason the text uses a statue of a buddha whereas it could, for example, be a diamond or gold covered by the garbage cloth is because a statue of a buddha is much more precious. There's no comparison. There's no comparison.

BUDDHA STATUES, MERIT AND OBSCURATIONS

The reason a statue of a buddha is used in this example is because we use the statue for developing devotion, to do various practices such as prostrations and so forth, and to purify the obscurations. We use the statue to make offerings and to accumulate merit. Whatever positive actions we do with the statue of a buddha, everything becomes the cause of enlightenment. Every single positive action that we do toward a buddha statue, every single thing becomes the cause of enlightenment. Every single offering, even making an offering of a tiny grain of rice or a handful of sand by visualizing it as gold. Even if we have nothing to offer and the only thing we can offer is sand, and even if we can't visualize it as gold but just sand itself, just offering sand itself.

Whether it's a small offering or a large offering, every single positive action that is done—offerings, prostrations, respect, circumambulation, anything that is done—everything becomes the cause to achieve enlightenment. Every single action we do toward a buddha statue leads us to enlightenment. It causes us to generate all the realizations of the path to enlightenment. It brings all the success of this life. As much as we do those practices, prostrations, offerings, circumambulations and so forth, we have more success in this life, more success in the happiness of this life and more success in the happiness of future lives, and of liberation and enlightenment. The most important one is every single thing becomes the cause of enlightenment. Every single positive action that is done toward the buddha statue leads us to enlightenment.

The merit of making offerings to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's statue is the same as if we had actually met and made offerings to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. It's said in the teaching by the Buddha himself, it's the same merit. Seeing the Buddha and making offerings isn't higher and making offerings to the statue isn't lower. There's nothing like that.

It's said in the teachings that even to be able to see a buddha statue is extremely fortunate. Remember I mentioned the other day, on one of the days, all the objects we see in our view, all these appearances are creations of our own mind. The appearance comes from our own mind. How much the appearance is pure and impure depends on the level of the mind. It depends how pure or impure the mind, the perceiver is, that produces the appearance, that creates the view. It depends on the quality of the mind.

I gave the example of the drink, the liquid in a bowl. To a deva's mind it's nectar. For those who have more merit, and of course for the buddhas, who have finished the work of accumulating the two types of merit—the merit of wisdom and the merit of fortune—whose minds are completely free from all the gross and subtle stains, there's no question this liquid in the bowl, the container, appears as the highest quality, the highest enjoyment, in the nature of the greatest bliss. For human beings, it appears as water. For those who have less merit, us human beings, it appears as water. For preta beings, it appears as pus and blood, much more impure. The liquid that is in this one container, in the same container, appears to the preta beings, the lower beings, as pus and blood, much more impure.

Therefore, even if we are born as a human being that doesn't mean everybody has the karma to see the statues. Even as a human being. Being born as a human being doesn't mean everyone has the karma to see the buddha statues, that they have the mind that can see the statues. It doesn't mean everyone has the karma to see these holy objects.

Generally in the world, it is like this. Even in Tibet there are stories that show this. Once a person came to Lhasa to see the Shakyamuni Buddha statue in the Lhasa temple. The Shakyamuni Buddha statue is one of the most precious holy objects in Tibet because it was made during the Buddha's time. The Buddha put his own hand on the head of the statue and so the statue was blessed by the Buddha himself. The Buddha advised having the statue made because his mother would miss seeing him when he went to Tushita during the rainy season retreat. During the three or four months in the middle of the summer there were so many insects in the air and on the ground that the Buddha made this Dharma law that the Sangha should stay in the monasteries and do retreat in order to not harm them by stepping on them. During that time the Sangha should abide more in the monastery to receive teachings and do retreat.

The Buddha had to go to Tushita for this retreat, and his mother said that she would miss him very much during those times because she couldn't see him. Thus, the Buddha advised making a statue of the Buddha for her to see, for her devotional object. So this statue was made. That was what caused the statue to be made, in India. After the statue was completed the Buddha put his hand on the head of the statue and predicted that this statue would be in India for this number of years and then it would go to Mongolia and benefit so many sentient beings there. After that it would go to China for many years and benefit so many sentient beings. Then it would go to Tibet after India, Mongolia, China—which one was first, I'm not sure. It would go to the Snow Land in Tibet for many years to bring extensive benefit to so many sentient beings.

The statue was predicted by the Buddha and the Buddha blessed it by touching it with his hand. That's why this statue is so precious. That's why everyone comes from all over Tibet, month after month, walking on foot from their home, for many months doing prostrations on the road, until they reach to the temple, where they see the statue.

When I was in Tibet, going to Amdo, on the way there were many people coming from Amdo, from very far away, doing prostrations. They were traveling by doing prostrations, for many months, to see the statue.

I asked Geshe Lama Konchog how these people could do it because they couldn't carry anything while they were doing prostrations. They couldn't do prostrations with all their luggage, the sleeping things and the food and so forth. They couldn't do prostrations with all the luggage. I wondered how they managed, where their luggage was. Geshe-la said that they have animals. I don't remember seeing animals with them, but they have animals, sheep or goats. The goats carry the food, the tsampa and the pots and the Tibetan blankets. The person does the prostrations and the goat follows. They kind of go together or something like that. We were going by bus but I didn't see any goats.

Anyway, a Tibetan person came one day and could not see the statue of Shakyamuni Buddha, and he couldn't even see the lights in the shrine room. He couldn't even see the butter lamps, the lights; it was completely dark. He regretted it so much he went to see a high lama. I'm not sure which one, maybe Chusang Rinpoche. This lama advised him to do many, many prostrations. Many, many prostrations. And he should do much confession, much confession, many prostrations. I think it might have been reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas' names. I don't remember a hundred percent but I think it might have been the prayer, *Confessing the Downfalls*, and reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas' names. Each buddha is mainly to purify different negative karmas, and reciting each buddha's name purifies many eons of negative karma.

By reciting the first name, Shakyamuni Buddha, 84,000 eons of negative karma get purified by reciting it one time. With the other buddhas, each one is to purify different negative karmas. One buddha purifies having killed, having done the negative karma of killing. One buddha is to purify the negative karma of sexual misconduct, and one is to purify the negative karma of telling lies. Another one is to purify the negative karma of stealing and so forth. Each buddha mainly manifested to purify the different negative karmas of us sentient beings.

Anyway, when he had done much purification and gone back to the temple he could see the light but he could still not see the statue. Thus he had to do a lot of purification again.

Another Tibetan person came and where there was a statue, he could not see it. All he could see was big piles of dried meat. Probably if you're going on the street around there, maybe you'll see some dried meat. Instead of a statue, he saw big piles of meat. There are many stories like this.

The first person was a butcher who had done a lot of killing in his life. Due to his heavy karma, he could not see even what the common people were able to see.

Anyway, as I mentioned, preta beings cannot even see water, which we human beings are able to see. Therefore, it's said in the teachings that animals—cats, dogs and so forth—cannot see holy objects.

When our mind is more purified we see an actual buddha. Now we can see a statue but when our mind is more purified, like this liquid in the pot, we can actually see a living buddha. At the moment our mind is not that purified thus we just see a statue, like the liquid in the container.

Therefore, we should realize that we are extremely fortunate even being able to see holy objects. It's said in the sutra teaching that even if we look at a statue or a drawing of a buddha on the wall out of anger, that causes us to gradually see tens of millions of buddhas. Even looking at a drawing of a buddha done on the wall out of anger causes us to gradually see tens of millions of buddhas.

Generally, for an action to become virtue depends on the motivation, but there are exceptions. Generally, for an action of body, speech and mind to become virtue, the motivation has to be virtuous. Only in that way can we make the action virtuous, as Rinpoche explained this morning, with Nagarjuna's quotation.

There are some exceptional actions that do not depend on motivation in order to become virtue. By the power of the object it becomes virtue, such as with these holy objects, with the Three Jewels. Even a statue of a buddha or a drawing of a buddha done on a wall, if we look at it out of anger, just seeing it but the mind is angry, even that action becomes good, virtue. It becomes purification. It purifies so many obscurations. Just by seeing the paintings of the buddhas, by seeing the mandala paintings, it purifies unbelievable obscurations. Gradually it causes us to actually meet tens of millions of buddhas.

There is a story about one of Guru Buddha Shakyamuni's main disciples, Shariputra. There are two arhats, disciples, on the right- and left-hand side of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. One is Maudgalyayana, who is excellent in psychic power and the other is Shariputra, who is excellent in wisdom.

The reason Shariputra was able to be with the Buddha all the time, to serve Buddha and to receive teachings from the Buddha, why he had this chance was because in one of his past lives when he was traveling he stopped at a temple, at a house. As he was fixing his shoes, sewing his shoes, there was light in front of him as he was taking rest, so he looked up and saw a painting of the Buddha on the wall. He thought, "How wonderful it is." He was very impressed by it, thinking how wonderful it was. As he was sewing, from time to time he stopped and looked at it. That planted an imprint on his mind. Then, in his next life, when the Buddha was in India, he was born as a human being and became a monk and a direct disciple of the Buddha. He was able to be with Buddha all the time, and was able to serve him and receive teachings from him.

Like this, we are able to gradually come to see so many buddhas. There's unbelievable benefit even just to look at them, even just to look at them. We don't know this because we're not aware of karma, we don't know action and result. We don't know that the action of seeing these holy objects, the action of doing prostrations to these holy objects, of making offerings to them, of respecting them, such actions have all these inconceivable results, the inconceivable result of happiness, the inconceivable result of success, from each action that we do, we don't know. It's even difficult for us to understand how this action becomes virtue, the cause of happiness. Even that is difficult to understand, leave aside all the benefits, all the inconceivable benefits, the results, including the highest, enlightenment. Leave aside that one, even just how these actions become virtue, even that is difficult to understand. It's just because we don't know karma.

Therefore, we are unbelievably lucky, incredibly fortunate, to have as many as possible of these holy objects, and to look at them every day, to look at them all the time or as much as possible. Not only that, to make offerings and do prostrations, any method.

It's the purpose of the buddhas to manifest as statues. The purpose of the existing statues is for us to purify the cause of sufferings, to purify the obstacles, and to accumulate merit, the merit of wisdom and of fortune, and to achieve enlightenment so we can bring everyone to full enlightenment. Thus, having these holy objects has unbelievable, infinite merits. It's very important; it has great purpose.

That's it. The story just happened.

Now you can see how a buddha statue is unbelievably precious. Without depending on virtuous motivation, any positive action—prostrating, circumambulating, respecting and so forth—that we do toward a holy object becomes the cause of enlightenment. Even if we pile up mountains of diamonds, big mountains of dollars, millions of dollars piled up, and we do prostrations to that, and circumambulations, and show respect, it doesn't become virtue. Generally in the world, money is regarded as very precious, but none of these actions that we do—prostrations, circumambulation, even looking at a holy object or whatever—becomes purification. Those actions don't become virtue: they don't become the cause, the method, of accumulating merit.

There are *huge* differences. There are unbelievable differences between that and the value, the benefits of looking at one painting or statue of a buddha, whatever the size, whether it's the size of a grain or the size of a mountain.

That's the example of the buddha statue covered by the garbage cloth. The nature of the mind, the buddha essence within our mind, is like the precious buddha statue, and the stains are like the cover, the garbage cloth.

MORE OF MAITREYA'S NINE EXAMPLES OF BUDDHA NATURE

Another of Maitreya's nine examples is a wheel-turning king in the womb of a polluted woman. It's not saying all women. It's not saying in the wombs of all the polluted women that there are. Who has the child? The woman, not the man, so I think, it's reality, it's a woman. That's the reality. What this is saying is that within the womb of a polluted woman, inside there is a wheel-turning king. I don't know what that would look like, I'm not sure, anyway, inside there is a wheel-turning king. A wheel-turning king with all his entourage! I'm joking. I'm joking about that. It didn't say with all the entourage, I'm joking. With the bodyguards. With the Mercedes cars. With the Mercedes cars outside.

Anyway, the text says there is a wheel-turning king in the womb of a polluted woman. The buddha essence which is within us is like the wheel-turning king who has great potential, who can do so much benefit for others, for many millions and millions of people, for the whole world. The stains which cover the buddha essence are like the womb that has pollution.

Another example is precious things made of gold that are covered by earth. Again that example is materials made out of gold. The buddha essence that we have is like the precious things. It is pure in essence, not mixed with the mental stains that temporarily obscure it in the same way that the golden objects are not mixed with the earth that covers them.

All these examples show the same thing, how the essence of our mind, our buddha nature, is pure, unmixed with the stains, the obscurations. For example, the seed has potential. We plant it and it can produce so much fruit and branches, and other trees that themselves produce so much fruit, and then it goes on and on. From there it goes on and on. One seed that is inside a fruit or covered by a husk or whatever, has so much potential.

This shows how the ultimate nature of our mind, our buddha nature, our buddha essence, is like that. It shows that we can completely cease all the gross consciousnesses, all the impure minds, and, especially on the base of the three principal aspects of the path and by practicing the Highest Yoga Tantra, we can purify even the subtle impure minds. Then the mind becomes a vajra holy mind, the extremely subtle holy mind, the dharmakaya, and the body is transformed into the holy vajra body. Here, it's not talking about this body made out of flesh and blood.

In the *Bodhicaryavatara* it says,

*[Bodhicitta] is like the supreme nectar
Because it transforms this impure body we have
Into a buddha's holy vajra body, which is priceless.
Therefore, firmly seize the Awakening Mind.²*

By having taken this impure body, we achieve the completely pure vajra holy body, which is priceless, because we are able to completely abandon, completely stop, this suffering body. Having done that we achieve the completely pure, indestructible vajra holy body, which covers all existence, which has no resistance at all, as I think I explained at the beginning of the course. All this is due to the buddha essence, the buddha nature, that we have within our mind.

Maybe tonight I should stop here.

It's a question of attempting, from our side, to open our heart. Even though many qualified gurus, virtuous friends, have passed away, and there are so many less than in the past, still there are many existing who can reveal the complete path. There are not as many as before but there are still many existing who can reveal the whole path with experience, the entire teachings of the Buddha, that which is the unmistakable path, that which has the complete path to liberation and enlightenment. The Buddhadharma has not completely degenerated yet. It still exists.

From our side, it's a question of opening our heart, opening our mind, and leaving space in our mind to allow these understandings, these wisdoms, these realizations of the path,

to develop. It's a question of attempting to do this from our own side. The mind is full of potential and because there's all this potential, there's every hope.

Lecture 27



Lama Zopa Rinpoche offering Mandala 1990

EIGHT MAHAYANA PRECEPTS MOTIVATION: WITH BODHICITTA NONVIRTUES BECOME VIRTUES

As the motivation for taking the precepts, do the meditation on the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought, how all problems arise from the self-cherishing thought. Then, meditate on the benefits of bodhicitta, cherishing other sentient beings.

I've already explained the four suffering results of a complete action of sexual misconduct. I think all four results have been mentioned twice the way that Lama Tsongkhapa explained in the *Lam-rim Chen-mo, The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*.

The three actions of body—killing, stealing and sexual misconduct—and four actions of speech—lying, speaking harshly, slandering and gossiping—without the self-cherishing thought, without the motivation that seeks happiness for the self, these seven actions can become virtue.

In the Lesser Vehicle path, the Hinayana teachings, there's no permission to ever do those seven actions because of the level of mind of the sentient beings who follow that path. The teachings of the Mahayana, the level of motivation of bodhicitta, carrying the whole responsibility for freeing all sentient beings from suffering, doesn't fit their minds. Freeing all sentient beings from all the obscurations, all the sufferings, leading them to

peerless happiness, to full enlightenment, doing this job, carrying this whole responsibility, the work for every sentient being, doing all this by ourselves alone, does not fit the level of their minds. The thought to achieve enlightenment for all sentient beings does not fit them. What fits according to their capacity, their level of mind, is to seek liberation for themselves. For those sentient beings who have that capacity of mind, the Buddha revealed that level of teachings in that way, teachings that fit their level of mind, according to their level of the mind or capacity of mind.

With *that* intention, the thought seeking happiness for oneself, these seven actions cannot become virtue. Doing these seven actions becomes risky, dangerous for *those* sentient beings themselves. It's not that the Buddha has complete freedom over sentient beings' actions, determining that some become virtue and some nonvirtue. It's according to the capacity of the sentient being's mind, the level of mind. It's permitted or not permitted according to that; it's not like God creating the whole thing.

Of course, if it were the case that it was up to whatever the buddhas wanted to do, since the buddhas have completed the holy training in compassion, and since there have been buddhas existing in all three times—the past, present and future—of which Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is one particular buddha, if it were completely in the hands of the buddhas, then there wouldn't be any sentient beings left. However, it's not completely up to the buddhas; it's also up to the sentient beings themselves.

Because there have always been buddhas, there has always been the omniscient mind, the holy mind that has become complete in compassion for all sentient beings. If it were completely up to the buddhas it would happen like this. Because buddhas have always existed, there would be no sentient beings. No sentient beings would have existed in the past; no sentient beings would exist now and no sentient beings would exist in the future.

Those sentient beings who did the practice, who followed the graduated path to enlightenment, who changed their attitude from cherishing themselves into cherishing others, those sentient beings became enlightened. The other sentient beings who haven't met the Dharma or who didn't complete the path, they still exist as sentient beings.

Normally it's mentioned that the karma of sentient beings, the potential of sentient beings, and the power of the buddhas are equal. That is what is normally explained.

Whether an action is permitted or not permitted is like how some actions are considered dangerous for a small child [but not for an adult]. For instance, when there is a risk to a small child going outside alone, the parents will not allow it, but when the child becomes capable of being outside alone, traveling alone and so forth, when there's no risk, then the parents will allow it.

Similarly, when somebody is sick a doctor might determine that some food is harmful and not allow the patient to eat it, but when the disease goes away and the food is no longer an obstacle, the doctor then allows the patient to eat it. Whether the food is allowed or not is determined by the capacity of the person. Similarly, it all depends on the person's capacity; it's not completely in the hands of the doctor, it's not up to what the

doctor determines. There are a lot of doctors in the West who are put on trial by patients when things go wrong.

With these seven actions, for the practitioners of the Lesser Vehicle path, because they don't have the capacity due to the attitude of working for the self, of seeking happiness for the self, there's no way these seven actions can become virtue. They can only ever be nonvirtue, so it becomes a risk, a danger to themselves. Therefore, for those beings who have a lower level of mind, the Buddha did not permit these actions.

For bodhisattvas it's different. When doing one of these seven actions becomes work for other sentient beings, when it becomes highly beneficial for other sentient beings, if the bodhisattva has the wisdom to see that doing the actions is definitely highly beneficial for the sentient beings, then it is permitted. Even if he himself has to be born in hell to do these actions in order to benefit sentient beings, it's like a swan happily entering a swimming pool. It's very happy to enter the swimming pool, so delighted, like drinking nectar. It's like we're very happy to go to the beach. After working hard, we're very happy to go to the beach, to surf in the water. We're extremely happy to have the opportunity to find the time to go to the beach or to surf in the water.

For bodhisattvas, when their wisdom definitely sees that doing these things is highly beneficial for sentient beings, even if they themselves have to be born in hell because of it, they're extremely happy and joyful to do that for sentient beings. Experiencing the sufferings of hell for the sake of other sentient beings is like drinking nectar. But doing work for themselves alone is like drinking poison. They feel that doing work for the self is poison. How we feel about taking poison—that it's a great risk to life, that it can kill us—the bodhisattvas feel like that about working for the self. How bodhisattvas feel about doing work for the self is similar to how we feel about going to hell.

For bodhisattvas, when those seven actions become great service for other sentient beings, then the Buddha permitted them to be done by the bodhisattvas. This is shown by the examples. Anyway, I think that's enough.

For example, before Maitreya Buddha was enlightened, when he was following the bodhisattva's path, I think the past life bodhisattva, Maitreya, was a monk. There was a girl who wanted to commit suicide because she couldn't find a man, so this bodhisattva completely gave himself up, completely sacrificed himself, to save her from committing suicide by living with her for some time. He sacrificed himself to protect this girl from negative karma, from falling down in the lower realms, to protect her from all the negative karmas and sufferings, thus he purified forty thousand eons of negative karma by this action.

Similarly, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, in one of his past lives as a bodhisattva, was the captain of a ship where there were five hundred business people. In the mind of one of the people came the thought to kill these five hundred people. Then the bodhisattva captain, who was one of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's past lives, realized what this person was thinking and felt unbearable compassion. He saw that if that person killed those five hundred people, he would create a lot of negative karma and have to suffer for a long

time in the lower realms. Therefore, the captain determined to kill that person, even if he himself had to be born in hell and suffer for him. He thought, “Even if I have to be born in the hell by killing him, I will suffer for him.” He felt unbearable compassion for him and completely decided this.

When compassion becomes very strong like this, then naturally this feeling comes. When the compassion really becomes very strong, then this thought that we want to be born in hell for sentient beings, on behalf of them, arises sincerely from the depth of our heart. We feel deep inside our heart that we really want to be born and suffer in hell on behalf of other sentient beings. When strong compassion arises like that, this determination also arises.

By killing that person with unbearable compassion, by completely sacrificing himself, by doing the action of killing, what happened was that instead of that being the cause of having to be born in hell, that action became virtue. It became a method of accumulating extensive merit and it caused his time in samsara to be shortened by a hundred thousand eons.

The previous one, Maitreya Buddha, his time in samsara was shortened by forty thousand eons. In other words the action became a quicker path to enlightenment; it became like a tantric path, the quick path to enlightenment.

The main point here is that the bodhisattva sees with wisdom how it is extremely beneficial, how there’s not the slightest thought of doing work for the self. There’s not the slightest thought, the motivation is only to benefit sentient beings. Like these examples, these actions become virtue.

THE FOUR SUFFERING RESULTS OF KILLING, STEALING AND LYING

The action of *killing* that is done out of self-cherishing becomes negative karma. By completing this karma, it has four suffering results. The *ripened aspect* result is rebirth in the lower realms. Even when we are born in the human realm we experience the result similar to the cause, which is shortage of life, experiencing many diseases and so forth. This is *experiencing the result similar to the cause*. We can die even in the womb, after even a few seconds, when the consciousness takes place on the fertilized egg; we can have a short life. Even during those times while we are alive, we have to experience many various diseases. There are many diseases experienced together or one after another; this is experiencing the result similar to the cause.

Then there is *creating the result similar to the cause*, which means doing the action of killing again.

The *possessed result* is to do with the place. Even when we are in the human realm, food, fruit, drinks, medicines, those enjoyments and so forth have very small potential. Food has very little protein, very small potential; it’s difficult to digest and it causes disease. Many of these enjoyments become the conditions for death or to experience a short life.

From this you can see very clearly the results of the negative karma of killing. If we live in the precept, in the vow to not kill, you can see how naturally, automatically, the four happy results arise. Living in the vow to not kill we experience the four happy results of this good karma, the opposite of killing; we have the absence of these four problems.

You can see from this, the best way to develop economically, the best way to change the environment, to make our life easy, the most reliable cause, is creating the good karma of abstaining from the negative karma of killing. You can see this from the example of the four suffering results of the negative karma of killing. Living in the precept to not kill is the best cause for all these four happinesses, which are the opposite to these four suffering results, for ourselves, for the world, for others.

The act of *stealing* that is done out of self-cherishing becomes negative karma. The *ripening aspect* results in having to be reborn and suffer in the lower realms. Even during the time we are born as a human being, we *experience the result similar to the cause*, which is having to live in poverty, with no means of living, with a scarcity of things and very little enjoyment in life. Even if we have wealth and material possessions and enjoyments, we have to share them with others, we don't have them all to ourselves.

With experiencing the result similar to the cause of the killing, those enjoyments become the cause of death and other human beings kill us.

With experiencing the result similar to the cause of stealing, other sentient beings steal our own belongings. They confiscate and steal our things. When we lose things or when other people steal our things—money, passport, our belongings and so forth—that is the time we are experiencing the result similar to the cause of the past karma of stealing. If we often lose things or things are stolen by others many times, those are the signs that in the past we created a lot of negative karma of stealing, and now we are experiencing the result.

Creating the result similar to the cause is doing the action of stealing again. The *possessed result* is that even if we are born as a human being, in the place we live crops are unable to grow, and even if they grow they are very little and there are many obstacles such as lack of rain and much drought. Even if they grow they get dried out and destroyed. The crops, the fruit and so forth might grow but they get changed or they are eaten by animals or insects. The whole crop is eaten by insects or destroyed by hailstorms and so forth. When there are a lot of obstacles like this, it is the possessed result of the past karma of stealing.

You can see now, even concerning temporary happiness, the solution that will stop these problems for ourselves and for the world is to know what the main cause of these problems is and to not only not create it but to do the opposite—to not steal. This brings all the success and happiness, to have no obstacles to plentiful crops, not having them eaten by insects, and not having to spray them and kill the insects. There is no drought and all these dangers, and the crops are rich in protein. All this comes from living in the precept to not steal. The opposite of these four undesirable things, all these happinesses come because of this.

Telling lies becomes negative karma when it is done out of the self-cherishing thought, the thought of seeking to work for ourselves. Completing this negative karma has four suffering results. The *ripening aspect* result is birth in the lower realms. *Experiencing the result similar to the cause*, when we are born as a human being, we are cheated by other sentient beings. Even if we tell the truth, other people don't listen or don't believe our words.

For example, there's the story of the king and the lost cow. One day a family's cow was lost and they told the king. At the time the king was watching a dance or something and he was given some wrong information by a minister or somebody. The king accused a person of stealing the cow and the person was put into prison for six days even though he didn't steal it.

After some time, the king was born as a human being again and became a monk. One day this monk was dying cloth in a pot, making it red. At that time another family's cow was lost and four people came looking for it. When they saw the monk dying the cloth red, what they saw was a pot full of cooking meat. In their view, the monk was cooking meat in the pot but in the view of the monk he was simply dying the cloth to make robes. No matter how many times he denied that this was meat, telling them this was cloth, no matter how many times he told the truth, it didn't help. He had to go to prison because the people looking for the cow saw meat in the pot. They believed he had stolen the cow and was cooking the meat. After that he was put into prison for six months.

Before, in his past life when he was a king, he put somebody into prison for six days, then in his next life he had to experiencing the result, he had to be in prison for six months. The point of this story is to understand that the person was accused of something he didn't do, which was not true. No matter how much we tell the truth, other people don't trust us, they don't listen to us, and they believe completely the opposite, accusing us of things we haven't done.

Many times people experience karma like this. We haven't done anything wrong but other people accuse us and somehow we have to go through the punishment. We have to go through the torture. We have to go through all this. Even if somebody else did it, we are accused and we have to go through the trouble.

Other people don't trust us. Others cheat us. When we experience the result similar to the cause, others cheat us, not telling the truth, telling lies. At that time we're experiencing the result of our past negative karma of telling lies.

Creating the result similar to the cause is doing the action of telling lies again. The *possessed result* is like this. If we become a farmer, somehow we're unable to develop the farm, we're unable to make a success of it. Or if our job is transportation, such as transporting people by bus or taxi or ship, we don't get enough passengers thus our business is not successful. If we run a restaurant or a hotel, if that is our business, then we don't receive enough people to make our business successful. We are unable to develop the business. This is the possessed result of telling lies.

Those are a few examples. From them we can make similar examples with all other rest. Not becoming successful, not having enough customers, those are the results of telling lies.

All these are the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought. All the problems that we always see in the world that other people experience, and that from time to time we experience, all these are the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought.

THE RESULTS OF NOT COMMITTING THE TEN NONVIRTUES

By living in the morality of not killing we experience the body of the happy migratory being, a deva or human body, and then we experience the result similar to the cause, having a long and healthy life. This is the complete opposite of the other action, killing. We have a long and healthy life.

Therefore, you can see now that the best way to be healthy is again to live in morality. To practice morality is the best way to be healthy. That is the main cause for health.

Again, the possessed result of practicing the morality of not killing is to live in a place where there's plenty of food, and the food has a lot of protein. All the food becomes healthy, all the enjoyments become healthy, nothing interferes with the body or becomes the condition for death.

All this happiness comes from good karma, from living in the morality of not killing. Without the existence of suffering sentient beings, there's no way for us to make the vow to not kill. There's no way. There's no way to make the vow to not kill. We don't make the vow to not kill based on rocks or trees, we make the vow to not kill all sentient beings. Making the vow to not kill every sentient being, we create the good karma of not killing and from that comes all the results, the four happinesses. Therefore, everything comes by the kindness of each sentient being. Even just simply by their existing, just simply that, by that kindness all happiness comes.

We make the vow to not kill any sentient being, except our enemy. Except somebody who harms us. We *don't* make the vow like this, a partial vow. We make the vow to not kill on the object of *every* sentient being.

It's the same thing with not stealing. All the four results of happiness come from living in the morality of not stealing, such as having plenty of crops and the crops growing well without any obstacles, with rain coming at the right time, and always having plenty of food.

Then, other people don't cheat us. They don't tell lies; they tell the truth. Other people trust us. Because they trust our words, we succeed with what we want. We're able to succeed in our work and our wishes. And again we are able to live in the morality of not stealing.

All these four happy results that come from the morality of not stealing, all this is by the kindness of sentient beings, because of the existence of sentient beings. These results

we're experiencing now and will experience in the future are completely by the kindness of all sentient beings. By each person here. What we experience comes by the kindness of each person here—each human being here, and each animal and each insect around us here. Starting from right here up to all sentient beings, we experience these four good results by the kindness of every sentient being.

It's the same thing with the morality of not telling lies. By living in the good karma of not telling lies, we experience the result, the four happinesses. The possessed result is when we do business, such as running a hotel or a transportation company or something like that—even working for a meditation center—it becomes successful and we are able to benefit a lot of sentient beings. Let's say we do work for a meditation center, we are able to benefit a lot of people because we live in the morality of not telling lies.

All this is the opposite of the four suffering results that come from telling lies and again all this happiness is by the kindness of each sentient being. These good results we're experiencing is by the kindness of each sentient being, because we're able to create the cause, the morality of not telling lies on the object. Because there are sentient beings existing and we've made the vow to not lie, the result is all the four happinesses, which we receive by the kindness of each sentient being's existence.

Starting from here, this is the way to meditate on the kindness of other sentient beings, and, by the way, it's also a meditation on karma. It's also combined with a meditation on karma. Very specific actions produce very specific results, either problems or happiness.

The four results of the morality to not steal. Sorry, this part has become a mess. I've mixed it with the results of not telling lies.

However, all these problems come from the self-cherishing thought; they come from the I. Therefore the I is the object to be renounced forever. Next we can look at the benefits of bodhicitta.

THE BENEFITS OF BODHICITTA

If we have bodhicitta, this is the best puja. This is the best puja because having bodhicitta stops so many negative karmas. It stops so many of these nonvirtuous actions. I've just mentioned a few. So many of those negative karmas get stopped and therefore we don't have to get sick; we don't have to experience all those suffering results. Therefore, having bodhicitta, practicing bodhicitta, is the best puja. That is the best puja. By having bodhicitta and not creating all these nonvirtuous actions, we don't experience the results, sicknesses, therefore practicing bodhicitta is the best medicine. It's the best treatment.

If we have bodhicitta we have our best friend. It is the best, unbetraying, uncheating friend. It's the friend that never betrays us, that never cheats us at all, the unbetraying best friend. Bodhicitta brings all success. Having bodhicitta brings us all the success, including the highest, enlightenment.

As Rinpoche mentioned, the external friend, the outside worldly friend, can betray us. He can betray us and change, not being our friend all the time, from life to life. Even in one

life, even within one year, within one month, within one week, he can change. He isn't a friend all the time and he can cheat us. Bodhicitta, on the other hand, never betrays us, therefore, bodhicitta is the most reliable, unbetraying friend, the best friend.

Having bodhicitta hooks all the fortune, all the good luck to us, it hooks all the success. There's a Tibetan term, *yang-guk*, a puja to bring all the luck, all the success. Having bodhicitta is this puja which hooks all the luck, all our own success, all our wishes.

Having bodhicitta is also the best way, the best method to have a long life. The reason is the same as I mentioned first. If we have bodhicitta, it purifies all the past negative karmas. It purifies the past negative karmas that cause a short life, such as the negative karma of killing and so forth. If we have bodhicitta, we don't do the negative karma of killing others, therefore it becomes the best method to prolong life now and in the future.

By having bodhicitta, whatever virtuous action we do becomes the cause of enlightenment. Everything becomes the cause of enlightenment. Even the normal daily life actions of walking, sitting, sleeping and so forth become virtue and the cause of enlightenment.

After having developed bodhicitta, even nonvirtuous actions, even they get transformed into virtue. Even those seven nonvirtuous actions [of body and speech] become the cause to achieve enlightenment.

By having bodhicitta within our own mind, we become a friend to all sentient beings. We become close to all sentient beings equaling the infinite sky. We become a friend to all sentient beings and all sentient beings become our own friend. It makes all sentient beings become our friend. Even if we don't ask them to be our friend, saying to all sentient beings, "Please be my friend," if we have bodhicitta all sentient beings naturally become our friend. Even the person who is called an enemy, who gives us harm, by having bodhicitta within our mind, right from that second, that person becomes a friend. Even that person becomes the best friend to us.

By having bodhicitta all the harms that we receive from others we see as beneficial. All the harms given by others support us to achieve enlightenment. In this way, all the sentient beings who dislike us, who are called enemy, become our friend, the only friend to us.

If we have bodhicitta, in return for the harm done to us, what we do is only benefit. In return for the harm done to us, we do only benefit. As it's mentioned in the lo-jong—the thought transformation—teachings, the holy beings, the supreme capable beings in the world, do good in return for harm.

If we have bodhicitta, this is the best means of purification. It's the best purification. If we want to do purification, the most important thing to rely upon is bodhicitta. For example, reciting OM MANI PADME HUM *once*, even one time, has the power to purify even the very heavy karma to be born in the hot hells, in the lowest and heaviest hell realm, the inexhaustible hot hell. Even if a fully ordained person has broken all the

four root vows, by reciting OM MANI PADME HUM one time, it can purify all this very heavy karma.

If we recite OM MANI PADME HUM, of course, there are infinite benefits, even without an understanding of emptiness, without meditating on emptiness or bodhicitta. It has inconceivable benefit. But this particular benefit, by reciting OM MANI PADME HUM one time with bodhicitta, it purifies all this heavy karma. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers.] If we recite the mantra with the motivation of bodhicitta, and also with the understanding of emptiness, with the meditation on emptiness.

It's the same thing with reciting the Vajrasattva mantra just one time with bodhicitta and with the experience of emptiness, with that meditation. How much negative karma gets purified by reciting the mantra? Even reciting the mantra one time can purify all these heavy negative karmas. It depends on how the mantra is recited, whether there's bodhicitta or not, whether there's the experience of emptiness or not. Therefore, again, if we want to purify negative karma, to do purification, the best, the excellent means of doing that is to practice bodhicitta, to have the realization of bodhicitta.

The best method to accumulate the most extensive merit is again bodhicitta. The benefits of bodhicitta are explained in the first chapter from *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, how having bodhicitta allows us to accomplish the two results, the dharmakaya and the rupakaya. It makes it possible to achieve these two results.

By having bodhicitta we are able to complete the work for ourselves and we are able to complete the work for all sentient beings, to lead all sentient beings to enlightenment.

These infinite benefits of bodhicitta all come from great compassion, the root of bodhicitta. Great compassion comes from sentient beings. All this is due to the kindness of sentient beings, therefore, sentient beings are very precious. There's nothing to cherish other than sentient beings and there's nothing to work for other than sentient beings. In our life there's nobody to work for other than sentient beings.

Think, "What sentient beings want is happiness and what they do not want is suffering, therefore I must free them all, by cherishing sentient beings, by living my life with bodhicitta, without separating from that for even one second. I must do the work of freeing all sentient beings from all the suffering, all the obscurations, and lead them to full enlightenment. To do that I must achieve enlightenment. For that reason I'm going to take the eight precepts."

Lecture 28



[Lama Zopa Rinpoche at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa 1988](#)

MEDITATION ON IMPERMANENCE AND DEATH

First of all, how does somebody who wants to practice the lam-rim, who wants to train the mind in the graduated path to enlightenment, do it? How do we do that? Practicing tantra, when we get up in the morning there are particular practices. Generally tantric practices are similar. Depending on which deity, there are just slight differences.

Life has many harms. Life is more transitory than a water bubble that is popped by the wind. How wonderful it is, having the opportunity to wake up this morning, after the sleep we have had, just being able to breathe in and out.

I'm not going to go into much detail on this point in these verses from Bodhicaryavatara. I think I'll probably say something from Nagarjuna's *Letter to Friend*.

Life is always surrounded by obstacles, by the dangers of death. Even what we take as the means of living—a house, food, medicine, even friends and the many things that we obtain for a long life—even many of these become mortally dangerous. They become a danger to our life, conditions for death. Besides those, there are many other obstacles, such as outer beings, the four hundred and twenty-four diseases and many different types of spirits. There are many hundreds of them, such as the three hundred and sixty *döns* or possessors and the eighty interferers and so forth, many which become conditions for death.

Generally speaking, if there's no breath, if there's no breathing in and out, even if the subtle consciousness hasn't yet left the body, even if the consciousness is there, common people still regard that person as dead. During sleep, the gross consciousness, the senses, cease to function, and what is there is breathing in and out, by that reason it isn't called death. However, after sleep, which has breathing in and out and the gross senses not functioning, then during that time, death can happen. Life is full of obstacles. Any time death can happen. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers.] But last night it didn't happen and as a result, this morning we are able to wake up. How wonderful that is. We should rejoice and feel great happiness.

We should remember the many people we know who have already died. Many gurus have passed away, many friends, or grandfathers and grandmothers—so many of them have already died.

Think, “If I were already dead and now in the narak, the hungry ghost or the animal realm there is nothing I could do.” As I mentioned in the motivation for the eight Mahayana precepts—those people who were there have heard this already but those who were not there may not have heard—even one tiny fire spark of the naraks, of the hells, due to karma, due to the unsubdued mind, the energy of one tiny fire spark is much hotter, seven times hotter than the fire that burns all the mountains, everything, the fire of the end of the time, the end of the world and *that* fire is 100,000 times hotter than all the fire that human beings use. Even one tiny fire spark due to the unsubdued mind, due to delusions, due to karma, due to narak beings' karma, is unbelievably, unbelievably hot.

For example, in the same room, even if the weather is cold, one person will feel hot. Even though for the rest of the people it's not hot, but this one particular person feels very hot. When the person is not healthy, he feels very hot. And sometimes when the person is dying, even if it's not hot for the other people who are in the room, this one person who is dying feels *so hot*. Just before the death, a few hours before death or a day before, he feels *so hot*. Other people in the same room don't feel that. These are common experiences of people who have been with dying people. Their life experience is like this. It's a creation of the mind, the production of the karmic appearance. It comes from the unsubdued mind, from delusion and karma.

Similarly, somebody can feel extremely cold. In the same room other people don't feel it but this one particular person feels very cold. Also, at the time of death a person can feel extremely cold. No matter how many blankets and things cover the body, it doesn't keep him warm. It doesn't help. This is normal experience. Many times, many times, I know this in my life. Many times people have different experiences. You're in the same country, the same area, the same room, but different people have different experiences. Some people are very cold; some it doesn't bother that much.

All these are a creation of delusion. As long as there is unpleasant feeling, suffering, it's a production of the unsubdued mind, delusion and karma. Even if you find it difficult to understand hell, this one is a common experience. I have seen it many times in my life; it's a common experience.

What is hell? What is hell? Hell is the experience of the heaviest suffering of samsara. The heaviest suffering of samsara, that is the experience of hell. It's mainly defined by how heavy the experience of suffering is.

If we were there, what could we do? Nothing. There would be no opportunity to practice Dharma. And if we were in the preta realm, where there is such incredibly heavy suffering of hunger and thirst as well as other sufferings, we couldn't stand it.

Imagine if you were obliged to meditate all day long and not allowed to eat food. You were obliged to sit there and listen to teachings all day long and not allowed to eat food. You weren't given any time to eat food. No breakfast, no lunch, no dinner. Just for one day. How painful that would be. If somebody kept on talking. If somebody kept on talking and talking and talking. Talking on and on and on, not allowing you to drink tea, no breakfast, no lunch, how painful it would be. Even when we have to feel hunger and thirst practicing the Dharma, how painful it is, how unbearable. We can't stand it. We can't stand having our food delayed even one hour.

If we were in a place where there was no water at all, not one drop of water for five, six, seven days, and where there was no food at all, nothing to eat, just desert, hot desert—if we were in such a place, what could we do? We couldn't stand it at all. This is what pretas have to experience for many hundreds of years, as long as ten thousand years. How could we stand experiencing that for many hundreds of years? And yet a preta's experience is much greater due to karma. Besides having no opportunity to practice

Dharma, there's no way to bear that experience even for an hour, even for a minute, even for a second.

Even if we find one white hair on our head it's very frightening. We get freaked out when we see one white hair in the mirror. Or we see one more wrinkle on the face. We can't stand it; we want to wipe it off immediately, to erase it or whatever. So how could we stand being a dog? Being a crocodile? Being a turtle?

When we look at a bird and those things, we say "nice cat" or "nice bird" but actually their own experience is not like that. We misjudge because we're not looking at their mind, we're looking at just the outer shape. It seems very nice but if we actually were an animal, or if an animal's suffering ripened on this body, there is no way we could stand their suffering. It would be so unbearable we wouldn't be able to express what it was like, what we were experiencing. There's no freedom. There's no freedom even for a household animal that is taken care of by a human. Living with a person, it's up to the person how the animal lives. It's up to the person, not up to the animal.

Think, "If I were now in the hell, preta or animal realm I couldn't stand it. Besides having no opportunity to practice Dharma, even for one second I couldn't stand it. However, this time I have not just been born as a human being, but I have received a perfect human body. This is like a dream. Not just being born a human being but receiving a perfect human body, it's like a dream". You should feel great happiness and rejoice. It's like a dream.

When a beggar finds a million dollars in the garbage, he can't believe it. When somebody who has never been rich suddenly wins the lottery, he finds it very hard to believe. It's like a dream. That person says it's like a dream because it's something that is rare, that is very unusual to happen, but it has happened, so it's like a dream. Like this, we have received a perfect human rebirth and it's like a dream. Not just having met the Dharma, but having met the Mahayana teachings that give us the opportunity to achieve enlightenment for ourselves and for sentient beings, it's like a dream.

Not just that, the third dream is, especially, not just having met the tantric teachings and not just having met Highest Yoga Tantra, but we have particularly met the unification of sutra and tantra, like refined gold, Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings, whose qualities I briefly mentioned before on the hill. There's a prayer to increase or to spread Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings, and that prayer contains all those special qualities.

Not just having met the Highest Yoga Tantra teachings, but especially having met the unification of sutra and tantra, the pure teaching of Lama Tsongkhapa that is an extremely clear explanation. That is like a dream. Just like a dream.

After that, you can think about impermanence and death. Think, "I'm going to die today." [Rinpoche snaps his fingers.] "I'm going to die today." Make the complete determination that you are going to die today and, in doing so, reflect on impermanence and death.

Lama Tsongkhapa explained that the purpose of thinking we are going to die today is that by doing so we make preparations for death. That persuades us to make preparations for

death. That is the best way to create the cause to achieve enlightenment. Practicing Dharma with bodhicitta, we create the cause to achieve enlightenment; that itself becomes the cause to achieve liberation. And by the way, it makes preparation for the happiness of future lives. Living the life with bodhicitta, practicing Dharma with bodhicitta, that itself becomes the best preparation for death.

Lama Tsongkhapa explained that the reason to think that we are going to die today is that this persuades us to practice Dharma, to prepare for death. Lama Tsongkhapa said, in case we do actually die today, if we die today, there's no regret because if we do die today, we have got something done. We've got some preparation done before death.

And if we don't die, by thinking that we *are* going to die today, even if we don't die today, it's good because we have more time to do more practice, we have more opportunity to accumulate merit. Either way, thinking we're going to die today makes us get our practice done. Even if death happens we get something done, therefore it's positive. There's no regret, and even if death doesn't happen it's positive, life becomes meaningful.

After thinking "I'm going to die today," the question comes, "What am I going to do?" [Rinpoche snaps his fingers.] "What should I do?" What is essential is that we should practice Dharma, but, what Dharma practice?

The essential practice, the very heart of Dharma is bodhicitta, renouncing ourselves and cherishing other sentient beings. That is the heart of Dharma. The answer to the question "I'm going to die today. I'm going to die now, so what should I do?" the answer is to practice the very heart of Dharma. Of course we must practice Dharma, that is the answer. But what? There are so many practices, so what? Bodhicitta, exchanging oneself for others. That's the answer. That's the very heart of the Dharma, and in particular the Mahayana teachings.

"THIS CHRONIC DISEASE OF CHERISHING THE SELF"

Remember the verse from the lam-rim prayer of the *Guru Puja*,

*This chronic disease of cherishing myself
Is the cause giving rise to my unsought suffering.
Perceiving this, I seek your blessings to blame, begrudge
And destroy the monstrous demon of selfishness.*⁸

So, recite this. Recite this. This has great meaning. This has great meaning in our daily life. Whatever problem arises comes from, is caused by, the self-cherishing thought. I mentioned already in the ten nonvirtues and the result of the ten nonvirtues, how each of the seven nonvirtuous actions [of body and speech] become nonvirtues because of the self-cherishing thought, because they are done out of self-cherishing thought. As I've already mentioned, many of life's problems are caused by the self-cherishing thought, so we should recognize that and put all the blame on the self-cherishing thought.

When we put all the blame on the self-cherishing thought, immediately there's peace. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers.] Immediately there's peace. When we blame somebody else, there's no peace in the heart. When we put the blame on somebody else there's pain in the heart. It creates pain in the heart. But when we put the blame on our own mind, the self-cherishing thought, there's peace, there's great peace. There are big differences in the effect. Even by that there's peace, there's calmness. There's that much calmness.

The second thing is this. We give the problem we are experiencing back to the self-cherishing thought. Rather than taking on a problem—cancer, AIDS, a relationship problem, whatever it is, even death, whether it's a small problem or a big problem—rather than taking it on ourselves, we give it back to the self-cherishing thought. We return it to the self-cherishing thought where it came from.

We use it as a weapon to destroy the self-cherishing thought; we use it as a medicine to eliminate the chronic disease, the self-cherishing thought. We let him have it. We tell ourselves, "Let him have it." Him, the self-cherishing thought, the ego. If we have some problem such as cancer or AIDS or a very heavy toothache or stomach pain or whatever, if there's some unbearable pain or problem, we give it to the self-cherishing thought and let him have it.

Immediately by this second solution, this second meditation, giving the problem back to the self-cherishing thought, to the ego, there's great peace; it cuts down the pain.

As the *Guru Puja* says, "I seek your blessings to blame, begrudge and destroy the monstrous demon of selfishness." However many problems there are in daily life, we use them as the path. Bodhicitta helps us destroy the self-cherishing thought, and the wisdom realizing emptiness, this path also helps us destroy the ego.

After we have realized emptiness, there's no truly existent I, something concrete from its own side that we cherish so much. There's nothing to cherish, there's no concrete, truly-existent I, no real I from its own side. There's nothing to cherish because it doesn't exist.

Arhats don't have the self-cherishing thought but they have the thought of working for the self. The reason they don't have the self-cherishing thought could be because they have the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness. For most of us ordinary beings, however, besides having the thought of seeking happiness for the self what we have is the self-cherishing thought, the thought that strongly clings to the I.

ADVICE FOR PRACTICE

This verse I have just mentioned is very important to understand thought transformation. It's very important psychology showing us how to deal with the problems we have in daily life. Whether we have cancer, AIDS or even if we are experiencing death—from the greatest to the smallest problem—this is a very important, fundamental Buddhist psychology that shows us how to deal with it. It's a fundamental, very powerful, effective thought transformation technique. Whenever we motivate, however we are going to live our life, we should do this. In short, we should always see how all undesirable things, all obstacles, everything comes from the self-cherishing thought. And all the good things, all

happiness and success, everything comes from cherishing other sentient beings. Then, if you want to use them, there are also the verses in the *Guru Puja* similar to the one I mentioned that are very effective.

The short way is to think like this, “From now on, from this second, *especially* today, I will never let myself be under the control of the self-cherishing thought and I will never separate from bodhicitta, cherishing other sentient beings.” Make the strong determination that this is how you’re going to live your life. Make this the motivation for your life.

Also, after that, you can do the refuge and bodhicitta prayer. The meaning of the bodhicitta part is, “I’m going to achieve enlightenment in order to free all sentient beings from all obscurations and lead them to enlightenment.” You can use this as a motivation, thinking, “For this reason, I’m going to do all my activities.” In other words, everything you do is in order to achieve enlightenment to free all sentient beings from all obscurations, from all sufferings, and to lead them to full enlightenment. Think, “For that reason all my activities, all my Dharma practice, is going to be virtuous.”

Here you’re motivating for everything. There are two types of motivation, the motivation of cause and the motivation of time. The motivation of time is the motivation while you’re doing the act, while you’re doing the work. Before you do the act, there’s the motivation of cause. What you have to understand is that, of the two types of motivation, the motivation of cause—the motivation you set *before* you do the action—is what actually decides whether the action is virtuous or nonvirtuous. Therefore, for all activities, this motivation, the motivation of cause, becomes the cause of enlightenment, bodhicitta. By training your mind like this, after some time your heart naturally feels that way.

People talk about the brain and the heart, or the intellect and the heart. Here we can say without putting effort into saying the words, without it coming from the brain, from the intellect, after some time your heart naturally becomes that motivation, through training. Then, all your actions, whatever you do, naturally becomes the cause of enlightenment.

Motivate like this. After *sang gyä chhö dang tshog kyi chhog nam la...*, after this prayer, this meditation is done, think, “In order to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, I’m going to make all my activities virtuous.”

If you have a guru, you can think of the root guru above your crown and make the request to him like this. “From now on may all my activities and all the Dharma practice only become the cause to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.” Pray like this, even two or three times. Or you can pray to all the ten directions’ buddhas, bodhisattvas and gurus. Whichever way you do it, make a strong prayer like this. It’s extremely good to do it this way.

To elaborate, after this, you can do the blessing of the speech. There’s a practice to bless the speech before you speak. This way, all day long whatever you say, even gossiping, becomes like reciting a mantra. It gets transformed. There’s unbelievable benefit. The

recitation of mantras, all those get increased many millions of times. I don't remember exactly but for whatever mantra is recited the benefits are increased many millions of times. That means you accumulate so much merit and purify so much. There is great benefit in that.

The blessing of the speech is in English in one of the Dharma Celebration books. This way the speech has power. Otherwise, eating black food makes the power of speech decrease, when you recite a mantra and so forth. Depending on which kind of black food you eat, it becomes an obstacle, it weakens the power of speech for a certain length of time.

After this, you can elaborate by reciting OM MANI PADME HUM, the Compassion Buddha's mantra. OM MANI PADME HUM is a very important mantra to recite to develop compassion. Here, I'm expressing what I feel. It's *very* important and it's a great loss if you don't get to recite it, if even one day you don't get to recite OM MANI PADME HUM. There's infinite benefit in that. This mantra OM MANI PADME HUM is the heart of the whole entire Dharma.

With OM MANI PADME HUM you can do the extensive meditation on the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought and the benefits of cherishing others. Either that or the kindness of other sentient beings. While you're meditating, you can recite the long or short mantra, or both, of Chenrezig, the Compassion Buddha. If you have a commitment and you recite the mantra together with the meditation, at the time it becomes very rich; the time you spend becomes very rich.

Each morning, the times that I came to do the ordination, I have introduced different motivations, different ways to meditate on the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought and the benefits of cherishing others. There are still some points to explain, but I've already explained many. Today, this morning, and the next day you can do different ones. You can do it like that, at the same time reciting OM MANI PADME HUM.

At the end, make the conclusion: "What sentient beings want is happiness, what they don't want is suffering. Therefore, there's nothing in my life to cherish other than sentient beings; there's nothing to work for other than sentient beings. What sentient beings want is happiness, what they don't want is suffering. Therefore, I must lead them to the peerless happiness, full enlightenment. For that reason, I must achieve enlightenment."

After that Chenrezig can be absorbed into you. Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo explained that a quick way to develop bodhicitta is by meditating on the path, the bodhicitta meditation itself. The other way is to recite OM MANI PADME HUM as many times as possible with the meditation that your mind is oneness with the Compassion Buddha, Chenrezig's holy mind. In other words, your mind and the holy mind of Chenrezig, the Great Compassionate One, are one, like having put water into the water, oneness.

This probably might be a secret teaching, but anyway, I've finished it already. I've already gone to hell!

Anyway, with this divine meditation, then recite one mala of OM MANI PADME HUM. This is an *excellent* meditation.

After this, you can do *tong-len*, taking and giving. Try to feel how much one hell being is suffering. Then think, “How wonderful it would be if I could take all this one hell being’s suffering and causes on myself and let this one hell being be completely free from all this. How wonderful it would be if I could take the complete suffering and its causes on myself. How wonderful that would be.” Then, you take it.

Think the same thing for all the other beings. “How wonderful it would be if I could take all the suffering of all the numberless hell beings on me and let them have ultimate happiness. How wonderful that would be.” Immediately take everything on yourself. Like that, for all other sentient beings, you take their suffering and its causes so they will become free. You can do the same thing with the preta beings and the animal beings.

First you start with one, then with all. This is very effective, extremely effective. You take all of one human being’s problems completely. First you think, “How wonderful it would be if I could experience that one human being’s whole entire problems and its causes, everything. How wonderful it would be if this one human being could be free and have ultimate happiness.” After that you take on all the sufferings and obscurations of all human beings. They are also all received by you.

I think with these meditations you can recite OM MANI PADME HUM.

After that, you do the practice of giving. You give all happiness to all the hell beings. Their entire place becomes a pure realm. All those houses that are oneness with fire become a mandala or a celestial mansion, a pure realm where there’s no death, rebirth, old age, sickness, where there’s no suffering at all. Instead of all the enjoyments causing delusion, they don’t become an obstacle to developing the path, so by receiving all the enjoyments they actualize the path. You give your body as a wish-granting jewel, then you give all the merit and the results of all the good karma, up to and including the highest, enlightenment. All the happiness, the belongings, everything you have, you give.

Whatever enjoyment they receive becomes the cause to actualize the path in their minds. Then they all become enlightened; they become Chenrezig. With this, if you recite OM MANI PADME HUM it’s very good. It’s an excellent practice because each time you take others’ suffering, because sentient beings are numberless, you accumulate infinite merit. And when you do giving, because sentient beings are numberless, again you accumulate infinite merit. Each time you do taking and giving, each time you accumulate infinite merit. The actual practice of exchanging oneself for others is an unbelievable practice.

The purpose of doing this visualization is to train the mind. Then, when you’re actually dealing with people the rest of the day, when you’re actually working with people, you’re able to take other people’s problems, other people’s suffering, other people’s difficulties, other people’s hardships, on yourself and give them happiness, freedom or comfort. You give the comfort to another person. In daily life you are actually able to give your

happiness to the other person and take whatever problem that person has upon yourself. If he is carrying a very heavy load, then you help him by carrying that heavy load yourself. You let that person have comfort.

If he has been accused of making a mistake that was actually somebody else's fault, rather than letting him take the blame, you take it yourself. Even if he did make the actual mistake, rather than letting him suffer you take the blame yourself, even though you didn't do it. You let the other person have happiness.

There are many things like that. Giving the victory to others and taking the loss upon yourself. Why? Because all good things, all happiness comes from others. Why take the loss upon yourself? Because all sufferings, all loss comes from the I. Why are we experiencing defeat, why are we experiencing loss in this life? Why do many unsuccesses happen in this life, spiritually and even materially? Why? Because with the self-cherishing thought in the past we always took the victory for ourselves, we always took the profit for ourselves, we always gave the loss to others. This attitude creates the cause of failure in this life, in the spiritual life and also in the material life.

Taking the loss upon yourself, offering the victory to others, this gives the greatest victory, enlightenment, to you. And with that you're able to give the victory, the greatest profit, enlightenment to all sentient beings.

The previous one is just in short. If you can, extend it by reciting the Chenrezig mantra.

A very good thing to do is prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas, reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas' names, because each one purifies many eons of different negative karma. If you haven't memorized the practice you can put it on tape and play the tape recorder. While the tape recorder is reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas' prayer, you do prostrations. You imitate what the tape recorder is reciting, so that you also learn. By verbally reciting, it purifies many eons of negative karma and by doing prostrations, with each prostration you accumulate unbelievable, inconceivable merit.

This is explained in the teachings. There are teachings, commentaries, on how to do all these preliminary practices and what all the benefits are, so you can study these things if you want to know. If you wish, you can study these things and take teachings on them. If you don't know how to do them and what their benefits are—why they are done—there are many commentaries, many teachings. You can study those or you can receive teachings, even though I haven't managed to give those explanations at this time.

That is one, the Thirty-five Buddhas. You can do it once or you can recite the names three times. If you do that with the prostrations, by repeating each of the Thirty-five Buddhas' names three times, just the names, it becomes more than a hundred prostrations. Without needing to count the prostrations separately, if you recite the Thirty-five Buddhas' prayer like that, with the prostrations, then that much gets done.

This way, after you have taken refuge, a general precept of refuge is doing prostrations. When you get up, you have to do three prostrations, and before going to bed, three

prostrations. If you combine it with doing the Thirty-five Buddhas, it becomes much more powerful.

As far as the mind training in the lam-rim, those who do the lam-rim meditation with the Six-session Yoga, with the *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga*, with *Lama Chöpa*, the *Guru Puja*, of course that's excellent. But for those who are not familiar with those other practices, how to meditate on lam-rim?

As in the course book, you can do the preliminary prayers, blessing the offerings and so forth. Then refuge, bodhicitta, and you can do the four immeasurables and the seven-limb practice. After that you can do a long mandala or a short mandala offering, depending on your own time. After that do the lam-rim prayer. After the mandala offering, you can do one of the requesting prayers. Even if you can't do the very long one, there are short ones, more abbreviated ones, even one stanza requesting prayers. Even just *pal dän tsa wäi lama...*,⁹ this is requesting the root guru, who is the entire merit field. Even that can be done.

THE BENEFITS OF RECITING THE LAM-RIM PRAYER

After that, recite the lam-rim prayer. It's extremely important when you read the prayer to do it mindfully. This becomes a direct meditation on the whole path to enlightenment, both sutra and tantra. Also there's tantra mentioned there. This direct meditation on the lam-rim, going over it mindfully, is one of the *most* important practices in daily life. Even if you don't have time, even if you don't have another separate time to do an analytical meditation and fixed meditation on the lam-rim, going deeper, *at least* do a direct meditation, going straight, mindfully. That is *extremely* important. Each day, each time you read the lam-rim prayer, which has the complete essence, when you do it mindfully it leaves an imprint of the whole path to enlightenment—*each time*—on the mind.

The benefit of the imprint is that sooner or later you're able to understand the extensive teachings of the Buddha and then you're able to actualize the path. As much an imprint as you can leave, it makes it much easier, without difficulties, quicker, to actualize the graduated path to enlightenment.

For example, either in this life or in the next lives, as soon as you hear the teachings you experience the path. As soon as you hear the teachings on emptiness you're able to experience emptiness. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers.] As soon as it talks about bodhicitta, you're able to realize bodhicitta; as soon as it talks about renunciation, immediately you're able to feel renunciation. Many meditators experience it like that. Depending on how deep the imprints left are, which part of the subject you have deeper imprints from in the past, thus in the next life, the understanding of the teachings comes easily and you experience it easily.

My belief in reincarnation, my belief that I have had past lives, is not that I can see all the past lives, not that I have clairvoyance to see all the past lives. In the past because I tried to do some meditation on past lives, even for a very short time, there's some understanding, some experience, which just comes during meditation. I believe that's

because in a past life I meditated on those subjects which left an imprint of those subjects. This is my belief of reincarnation.

I don't think that this understanding of the Dharma or these experiences come from water. I don't think that they come from water bubbles. Human beings came from monkeys and monkeys came from something else and then it goes all the way back to things in the water. The very first thing, the very original thing, is an amoeba or something. The very first original being is an amoeba or something, I don't know, some kind of water bubble or something. I don't think this experience came from water bubbles or those atoms in the water.

Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo explained that even just doing the direct meditation on the lam-rim, the graduated path to enlightenment, is much more precious, much more meaningful than reciting many hundreds of millions of mantras. This direct meditation on the lam-rim is much more meaningful than even being able to do hundreds of millions of mantras or even meeting the buddhas, even seeing the buddhas. Why? Because even if you actually meet a buddha you still have to meditate on renunciation, bodhicitta, emptiness; you still have to actualize these. You still have to meditate; you still have to go through this path. Just by seeing a buddha you don't become enlightened like that. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers.] Even if you see a buddha, you still have to meditate on the three principal aspects of the path and the two stages of Highest Yoga Tantra in order to achieve enlightenment.

Succeeding in this realization depends on the imprint, on creating the cause. Therefore, the direct meditation becomes essential, it becomes extremely important in daily life. Going over the lam-rim prayer mindfully each day makes the day meaningful. It's the same thing as, "An apple a day, good-bye doctor. An apple a day, goodbye doctor." Anyway, I'm not sure what I'm talking about.

If you can at least do the direct meditation each day, going over the prayer mindfully, this makes that day highly meaningful. It leaves one more imprint of the whole path to enlightenment, and that means you become closer to enlightenment. You become closer to enlightenment.

Also it is mentioned that the Kadampa Geshe Chengawa was asked by one of his disciples which he would prefer if he had the choice between meditating on the lam-rim or having one-pointed concentration that could last for eons. Even if a big drum were to be beaten in front of the ears, it could not disturb you. In other words, even if a big jet airplane went in front of your ears it couldn't disturb your concentration. Which one would you prefer? Kadampa Geshe Chengawa said that even to ask, just to question in the mind what the lam-rim is, is preferable to having the five types of clairvoyance, all those concentrations, all those psychic powers, that can last for many eons. We have achieved all those psychic powers, those concentrations, in the past, but we haven't achieved the graduated path to enlightenment. This is new. This is the new experience, therefore, this is very essential.

The other thing is this. In the lam-rim there are two direct meditations, two direct prayers. The lam-rim prayer that contains just the names of the tantric path is very brief. The other prayer, if you have received a tantric initiation in the Highest Yoga Tantra practice of whichever deity that you're practicing—the deity you have the most karmic connection with—there's a prayer of the graduated path of the tantra of that deity. That prayer is very important to recite, to leave the imprint of the whole path of the Highest Yoga Tantra of that deity. If it's Cittamani Tara, Vajrayogini, Yamantaka, Kalachakra or whatever deity, to recite the graduated path of Highest Yoga Tantra of that deity is, I think, very important. It's maybe OK to just recite the prayer even if you haven't received the initiation, as long as it's the deity that you are going to practice. Maybe that part is OK, as long as this is what you are going to practice, even if you haven't yet received the great initiation.

These two direct meditations are very, very important. Even if you can't do a more detailed meditation on the tantric path, at least you should do the lam-rim part. Those who have time, those who are going to meditate on the lam-rim, after that direct meditation is finished you should do the analytical meditation and the fixed meditation.

As a beginner, first you should make yourself familiar with the whole, entire subject, from the beginning, from guru devotion up to the last part, great insight, emptiness. You should become familiar with all the meditations. How to do it is like this. Today, you begin from guru devotion. If you can't remember all the details, read a book on guru devotion. That's the first meditation. Whatever is not finished you do the next day. Whatever is then not finished you do on the third day. Do it like that, according to the time you are able to make.

Except for *shamatha*, calm abiding, everything else involves analytical and fixed meditation. For example, with the perfect human rebirth, you go through each freedom and each richness one by one. After that, when you have done this, you do a fixed meditation. That means after the analytical meditation, when you have the experience, the understanding that this is so precious, then you hold that. You keep that experience. You hold that feeling, "This is so precious." You keep the mind in that experience, "This is so precious." You stay there for a little while. It's good to do it like this.

After the analytical meditation on, for instance, guru devotion—with the quotations, the logic of seeing the guru from your own side as an enlightened being, a buddha—when the mind is transformed, you do a fixed meditation, keeping the mind in that state, the state of the devotion seeing that the guru is a buddha. You keep the mind in that state for a little while.

From the beginning of the lam-rim, down to great insight, emptiness, you do it a few times like this. In that way you make your mind familiar with it. Do this for about six months or a year or whatever. You have to become familiar with the whole subject.

To really experience the path, you start to actually experience, to have the realization of guru devotion. No matter how many months or years it takes, you spend time on that one

subject. Then you start another subject such as perfect human rebirth, depending on how much time you are able to dedicate to meditating.

If you are practicing tantra, His Holiness the Dalai Lama advised that you can do one-pointed concentration with the tantra, either the generation stage or the completion stage, especially with meditations such as *tum-mo* and the Six Yogas of Naropa. One-pointed concentration can be combined with this. In this way the meditation on emptiness also comes into the tantric practice when you do the dharmakaya meditation in the sadhana. If you practice tantra it's like that. If you're not practicing tantra, then you do the meditation on emptiness at another time.

You can start going through these different meditations, training the mind in these in order to get the actual realizations. Every day you can start two or three meditations and continue no matter how many months or years it takes, until you get the realization. You can do two or three meditations, or if that's not possible, at least do one. The purpose of starting two or three meditations a day is because life is short, so before death you can have some experience, some realization. If *this* realization doesn't happen, then you have *that* realization. If *that one* doesn't happen, *this one* happens. The purpose is to have some realization of at least one.

When you feel that all the buddhas are the guru and each guru is all the buddhas, when you feel like this from the very inside of your heart, at that time you have the realization of guru devotion. When you feel from your heart that there's no separation between the buddhas and the guru, that's the realization.

For your mind, the work of this life is nothing important. Whether it happens or not, nothing is important. The comfort of this life, the work of this life, none of that is important. Worldly people feel that the happiness of this life is very important and their whole life is dedicated to that. When your mind is completely changed from that, when you feel in your heart that the happiness of future lives is most important and whatever happens in this one doesn't bother you—when you feel what is important is long-term happiness, the happiness of future lives—at that time you have the realization of the graduated path of the lower capable being.

When you see the whole, entire samsara like being in the center of a fire, when you don't find even the slightest attraction to it, when you feel this naturally, day and night, from your heart, when you want to achieve liberation, that's the realization of renunciation of samsara.

Similarly, if you feel bodhicitta like this, in a similar way, day and night, naturally, from your heart, wanting to achieve enlightenment for each sentient being; when you feel this from the heart, naturally, day and night, that is the definition of having achieved bodhicitta.

And when you see things—the I and so forth—unified with emptiness, with dependent arising, at that time you have completed the unmistakable realization of emptiness.

VAJRASATTVA

In the evening before going to bed, it's extremely good if you can do prostrations with Vajrasattva. Do twenty-one Vajrasattva mantras or half a mala or one mala, depending on your capacity. Doing at least three prostrations before going to bed becomes part of the refuge practice. Doing the Thirty-five Buddhas or Vajrasattva in the morning or the evening is extremely good. In this way, those who really want to experience the path are able to do so.

If you don't do confession with Vajrasattva, with the remedy of the four powers, then the negative karma that you created today—even having killed one tiny insect—multiplies day by day and after fifteen days it becomes the same heavy karma as having killed one human being. It becomes the same heavy karma as having killed one human being because without confessing it, purifying it using the remedy of the four powers, it multiplies day by day and like this, as the months, the years, go by it becomes like a mountain. It becomes like the earth. It becomes unimaginably, unbelievably huge.

Therefore, doing the Vajrasattva practice before going to bed is an extremely important practice. It's a very important preparation for death and dying. There's so much talk about death and dying. This is a very important preparation, working on the preparation for death and dying for yourself as well as helping in other people's death and dying.

Reciting the Vajrasattva long mantra or the short one—OM VAJRASATTVA HUM—twenty-eight times or twenty-one times has the power to stop the negative karma increasing, multiplying. If you say [the long mantra twenty-one times] or the short one twenty-eight times, it stops the negative karma multiplying.

Then do the dedication. You can dedicate using the four or five dedications I did during the course. This is most important for bodhicitta and then with *ge wa di...*, sealing it with emptiness, to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings.

“THIS IS NO TIME TO SLEEP!”

We say that there's no time to meditate. In the daytime we have to go to work and in the nighttime we have to sleep, so there's no time to meditate. My idea is that if our sleep could be like the yogis whose sleep itself is meditation, everything would be meditation. No matter how many hours the yogis sleep, it's meditation on the clear light thus it's the quickest path to enlightenment. If we could do it like those meditators, even if we slept for twenty-four hours, it would all be meditation.

From beginningless rebirths we have been sleeping but our sleep is normally nonvirtuous, especially sleeping with attachment. We've done this numberless times. Not just in this life, not just from the time of our birth, but from beginningless rebirths we have been sleeping in samsara. All that sleep, all those numberless times we have been sleeping, what has it done for us? That's one thing. From beginningless rebirths we have slept, but what has it done for us, especially the sleep that becomes nonvirtue because of attachment.

Even if we live for a hundred years, for half of our life there is no opportunity to practice Dharma because of sleep. Half of our life is gone to sleep, nighttime sleep and also daytime sleep. The time that is left for practice, the time that we give ourselves from our side for practice, is very little.

As Shantideva said in *Bodhicaryavatara*,

*Relying upon the boat of a human (body),
Free yourself from the great river of pain!
As it is hard to find this boat again,
This is no time to sleep, you fool.*¹⁰

“This boat” means this perfect human rebirth; we use this “boat,” this perfect human rebirth, to cross the ocean of the suffering of samsara and to achieve enlightenment. As Shantideva said, this boat is difficult to find again, therefore *while* we are ignorant we mustn’t sleep. While we are ignorant, don’t sleep!

It doesn’t mean don’t sleep at all. It’s not saying to not sleep at all. Here it’s talking about making this perfect human body useful, beneficial, and that happens only by practicing Dharma, virtue. It’s not saying don’t sleep. Making your sleep virtuous means making this perfect human rebirth beneficial and particularly not sleeping with attachment, which is negative karma.

Usually, those who are real meditators get up at three o’clock in the morning. Even in Sera, Ganden and Drepung, the monks in the monasteries and those real meditators get up very early. They are very busy in the daytime doing pujas for other people as well as many other activities, so they get up very early in the morning, at three o’clock, and do all their prayers. Because the daytime is very busy they finish their practice in the morning before they start work, doing pujas or activities for others.

If even the Sangha do this there’s no question about the real practitioners of the lam-rim. Even those who do many activities in the daytime for others, and even many Tibetan lay people, in the daytime they do business, things like that, starting from eight o’clock, but in the morning they get up at four or five and do their prayers.

By making sleep shorter, there’s time. The conclusion is that. It’s not saying don’t sleep, but it’s making the sleep shorter. Instead of sleeping for so long, saying, “I need it,” by making it shorter, you have that much time to do prayers or for meditation.

Whether you have time for practice or meditation or not, or to do prayers, mainly depends on your interest. If your interest is more in parties or watching TV and other things like this, there’s a lot of time for those things. You find a lot of time for sleeping, for talking, for gossiping and things like this but you can’t find time to recite even one mala of a mantra or do one meditation on the lam-rim. It’s basically a question of which one you have more interest in.

It’s not that time is truly existent. It’s not that it’s coming from the side of time. It’s a question of interest. It’s a question of how important you feel it is to help other sentient

beings, with bodhicitta. It depends on how much you feel renunciation, renouncing the suffering of samsara, is important or how much you feel the meditations on impermanence and death, the lower realms and so on, are important. It depends on that.

As far as thinking you don't have time, my explanation is that. Also, although at the beginning you might find it difficult to make your sleeping hours shorter, you can get used to it. You can get in the habit of it, making it one hour or half an hour shorter.

The other thing to put emphasis on is to do a retreat each year. If you can do that, I think it's very important. Even if you don't practice tantric deity retreat, you can do a lam-rim retreat combined with mandala offerings, prostrations and preliminary practices. There are many preliminary practices to do—Vajrasattva and so forth—you can combine this with the lam-rim and get two practices done. It's very important to have this plan to get some retreat done each year, for ten days, fifteen days, a month or even longer is better. Sometimes, if you practice tantra, also do a deity retreat but even that has to be based on lam-rim practice. Otherwise, without the lam-rim, the retreat itself doesn't become rich.

To continue the inspiration of Dharma practice, the other thing is, if you can, to listen to the teachings and to take courses on the lam-rim. If you can, try to listen to teachings, to take teachings, whether it's in the West or the East, especially from His Holiness. If you can, take teachings from qualified masters, from lamas. That one is very important. If you've taken courses or listened to teachings again and again and somehow lost your inspiration or practice, this brings it back. It helps you to continue to listen to the teachings again and again. That's an important thing, I think.

The teacher you listen to teachings from, who you established Dharma contact with or who at least inspires you by emphasizing morality, at least that person should become an example by living in morality. That is extremely important because without morality the teacher cannot guide you, cannot even protect you from the lower realms' sufferings. That is just the essence, when talking about the qualities of the teacher. Secondly, the teacher should emphasize how the happiness of future lives is more important and cherishing other sentient beings [even more important]. The teacher should emphasize bodhicitta. This is an even greater quality than the second one.

Once you have established a Dharma contact, you have to look at the teacher with a new mind. You have to devote to that person correctly. Correctly means according to how the Buddha explained, how Lama Tsongkhapa explained, according to what is explained in the teachings. That is what "correctly" means. Even if you saw mistakes before, now after establishing a Dharma contact, you have to look with that new mind. With that new, pure mind there's pure appearance. With devotion, you receive the blessings and that makes it possible to achieve enlightenment.

The other thing is, if in the West there's a meditation center in the city where you live, that's very helpful because you can help them and they can help you. If there's a teacher, then of course there's no question you should learn from him or her. Even if there's no teacher, just having discussions and group meditations together, you inspire each other. So, that's a very good one. Even if there's no meditation center established, if there are

Dharma students there, you can just meet together and do the same thing, discussing and meditating in a group together. It's kind of like you oblige the others to practice and the others oblige you to practice, so you are helping each other to develop the mind. That's something I think you would find helpful. Even if there's no established center you can still do something like this.

Now, we're about to finish.

UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY

The very essence is that you must try to avoid harming yourself and others as much as possible. Even if you can't avoid doing it completely you should try to do it as little as possible. Then, as much as possible, you should try to benefit other sentient beings and that is benefiting yourself. Especially, you should concentrate on giving whatever is of ultimate benefit, putting more time and effort into that than into work which has only temporary benefit.

Even if you don't have faith in reincarnation and karma, in those things, still it's worthwhile to attempt to lead sentient beings, to bring sentient beings to the highest happiness, liberation from samsara and to the peerless happiness of full enlightenment. Even if those two are not possible, you should attempt to bring sentient beings to long-term happiness, to cause them to have the happiness of future lives.

As I mentioned at the very beginning of the course, in your everyday life, from morning until night, at least you must remember the meaning of life is to free everyone from all the problems and the causes and to obtain happiness for all sentient beings. That is the meaning of life. To only work for the happiness of the self, that's *not* the meaning of life. And you must remember that you have *universal* responsibility, as I mentioned at the beginning of the course. Remember those reasons and think, "I have universal responsibility to free everyone from all the suffering and the causes and to cause happiness for all sentient beings. I have universal responsibility. I am responsible because if I practice compassion, everyone doesn't receive any harm from me, they only receive happiness and peace from me. On top of this, because I benefit them, I help them. This is the additional benefit they receive from me. Therefore, I am completely responsible for each sentient being's happiness."

You should try to live your life with this attitude from morning until night. With this motivation you get up, get dressed, have breakfast and go to work. With this motivation you have lunch; with this motivation you have dinner; with this motivation you go to parties; with this motivation you go to sleep. Even if you don't believe in reincarnation and karma, in hell and so forth, at least you can live with this correct motivation, the thought that you have universal responsibility, which is the meaning of life.

If you can live your life every day with this motivation, even if you're talking, you try to talk with this attitude. For the eight hours at work, you try to work with this attitude. If you're working in the family, taking care of children, you do it with this attitude. This way there's satisfaction in life; there's happiness, there's peace in your life, in your heart. This way, you dedicate your life for others, so there's enjoyment.

When you only think of yourself, when you cherish yourself, there's only pain, suffering, dissatisfaction; you become more and more dissatisfied. Even if you are doing a job that pays a million dollars a month, there's still dissatisfaction.

That is my conclusion.

THE KINDNESS OF LAMA YESHE

The last thing is, I must apologize that I kept you for so many hours, nighttime and morning time. All those things, I must express, I'm sorry for them all.

Of my talks, those that are mistakes can be left and those that are useful—that are not mistakes but useful—can be put into practice. So I hope there's a tiny bit of benefit from all the talking I've done. I hope there's some worth in it.

Anyway, you should realize how extremely fortunate you are that you met great teachers, Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche and Geshe Lama Konchog and Lama Lhundrup. Many people who are here for the first time may not recognize how great these teachers are. The old ones may know more. You should feel extremely fortunate to have received those extensive teachings and been able to deepen your wisdom. I think you've been extremely fortunate to be able to receive teachings from them and been able to study.

However much merit we have accumulated during this month by understanding the Dharma—and especially bodhicitta and emptiness that have left so many imprints to achieve liberation and enlightenment—all this is basically due to the kindness of Lama Yeshe. If I hadn't met Lama Yeshe, all these things wouldn't have happened. For all of us, all these things wouldn't have happened. All this virtue, this merit, this understanding of the Dharma, wouldn't have happened.

Therefore, please pray for the whole organization and for Lama's incarnation to have a stable life, and to be able to be of benefit. He's already benefiting the world incredibly, even before he actually starts to give teachings after studying in the monastery. Pray he is able to benefit all sentient beings and for him to be able to be the owner, the possessor, of the whole, entire teachings of the Buddha—not just one part of the teachings—and then to be able to benefit all sentient beings, like Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, like Lama Tsongkhapa, like Lama Atisha.

Please pray, please dedicate the merits to the success of the organization, that whatever work being done to benefit other sentient beings succeeds immediately, and to receive all the necessary conditions without difficulties.

THE KARMA TO PRACTICE DHARMA

Not everybody has the karma to practice Buddhadharma. Only some sentient beings have the opportunity to practice the Dharma. Not everyone has the karma to be a Buddhist, to be an inner being. Not everyone has the karma to be an inner being.

If transforming the mind or developing the mind were so easy, if it didn't depend on sentient beings' karma, if it were in the hands of the Buddha, the Omniscient One,

without depending on sentient beings' karma, if there were no obstacles from the side of the sentient being, then, as Rinpoche explained, because the Buddha's omniscient mind sees sentient beings' minds all the time, and whenever the karma is ripened, there's no delay for even a second, immediately the Buddha's guidance is there. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers.]

As soon as the karma is ripened, the mind is ripened, the Buddha's guidance is immediately there, without the delay of even a second. Therefore, if there were no obstacles from the side of sentient beings, by now there wouldn't be even one sentient being remaining. There wouldn't be any world problems. There wouldn't be one single suffering. Everyone would have been enlightened an unimaginable length of time ago. As the Buddha exists, there wouldn't be one sentient being; everyone would have become enlightened.

Developing the mind in the path to enlightenment, finding faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, in reincarnation and karma—even to have some faith in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, even to have some faith in reincarnation and karma, is a kind of realization. Comparatively, even to have some faith is a kind of realization.

It's not easy. It takes time, and you need a lot of purification. You need to purify the obstacles. It depends on how many obstacles there are from the side of each sentient being, so it takes time.

As I mentioned just before, I'm not sure about the Buddhadharma, but you can practice Dharma. I'm not sure about Buddhadharma, but you can practice Dharma. With this positive attitude of universal responsibility, which is the meaning of the life, it's still practicing Dharma. If you can live life with this attitude, then so much of the work in that one day becomes Dharma, the cause of happiness.

DEDICATION

Again, as with last night, here again tonight I've kept you for a very long time. It took much time.

I would like to say thank you very, very much. Thank you very much to everybody, especially those taking the eight Mahayana precepts, getting up early in the morning and bearing so many hardships to practice the Dharma, to do the course. This present situation at Kopan is living in luxury compared to many years back. But maybe compared to the West this is very uncomfortable. However, with all that, you continued to practice.

So I would like to thank everybody very much, and I will also pray all the time. I think that's all. Thank you so much.

[The group offers a long mandala and recites long-life prayers for Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Lama Yeshe and His Holiness the Dalai Lama.]

“Due to all the three-times' merits accumulated by myself, by the buddhas and bodhisattvas, may the bodhicitta be generated within my mind and in the minds of all

sentient beings. Those who have it, may it be developed. May all sentient beings generate bodhicitta without the delay of even a second.” Please dedicate like this.

“Due to all the three-times’ merits accumulated by myself, by the buddhas and bodhisattvas, that are empty from their own side, may the I, who is empty, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, that is empty, and lead all sentient beings, who are empty, to enlightenment, that is empty.

“Due to all these three-times’ merits, may the father and mother sentient beings have happiness, and may I cause that by myself alone. May the three lower realms be empty forever, and may I cause that by myself alone. May the bodhisattvas’ prayers be successful immediately, and may I cause that by myself alone.

“As the three-times’ buddhas and all the bodhisattvas have dedicated their merits, I will dedicate all the merits to quickly enlighten all sentient beings.

“Due to the three-times’ merits accumulated by the buddhas and bodhisattvas and by myself and my family, may the pure teaching of Lama Tsongkhapa, the unification of sutra and tantra, especially bodhicitta and clear light, be generated within my own mind, in the minds of the family and in the minds of all the students, without delay of even a second. And may we all quickly achieve enlightenment and spread the Dharma in the minds of all sentient beings and lead all sentient beings to enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“Due to all these merits, may the general organization that benefits others succeed immediately. May the activities of the individual meditation centers benefitting others succeed immediately. May the work of individual students to benefit others succeed immediately and may all their wishes succeed immediately according to Dharma.”

Thank you so much. Thank you very much.

[End of the 24th Kopan course.]

Lecture 29



[Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche 1992](#)

REFUGE CEREMONY MOTIVATION: THE NATURE OF SAMBARA

[This discourse was given immediately after the course.]

Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche explained very extensively the qualities, the purpose and the need to take refuge. The very extensive, very deep reason is that because we ourselves are not completely free from the lower realms, we haven't got the confidence that we can never be born in the lower realms. Therefore we are not free from the whole, entire suffering of samsara.

Basically, one reason is that we ourselves are not free from suffering and its causes. The other, more extensive reason is that there are numberless sentient beings whose mind is obscured and who are suffering in samsara. The most extensive reason for taking refuge is that. Because those numberless sentient beings are suffering, we want to help them. It's the meaning of our life to have compassion for them and to have concern for them, and to free them from all the causes of the whole, entire sufferings, of all the obscurations. That is the real meaning of our life and we have that responsibility.

We alone can't fulfill this without completing the mind training in compassion, and developing perfect power and wisdom, the omniscient mind. Without making ourselves completely qualified we can't do perfect work for other sentient beings. This understanding is very logical.

Therefore, we need to have scriptural understanding and to actualize all the meanings that the scriptures contain, which is the whole graduated path to enlightenment. That itself is taking refuge in the Dharma. That has to be shown to us by somebody and that somebody is the Buddha. That's how we have to rely upon the Buddha. And there's a need for supporters, for those who help us in our practice, in actualizing the actual refuge, the Dharma. That helper is the Sangha. That is the function of the Sangha. By relying upon them, the Sangha guide us in that way.

As I mentioned earlier, just for us to be free from the lower realms, to not be reborn in the lower realms, doesn't need all three objects of refuge, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. We don't have to rely upon all three. But to be completely free, to liberate ourselves from the whole entire samsara, we need to rely upon all three, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Just relying upon one is not sufficient, we have to rely upon all three. Just as a person who has a very severe disease has to rely upon all three—the doctor, the medicine and the nurse—to take care of him, to look after him day and night, similarly we need all three objects of refuge.

REFUGE CEREMONY MOTIVATION: THE NEED TO BE FREE FROM ALL THREE TYPES OF SUFFERING

What is samsara? These aggregates are samsara. In *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* Lama Tsongkhapa defines samsara as the part of the continuation of these contaminated or defiled aggregates joining again and again, from one life to another life. That's the definition of samsara by Lama Tsongkhapa.

What causes these contaminated or defiled aggregates to join from one life to another is karma and disturbing thoughts. As long as we follow delusion, as long as we are in samsara, we are without freedom, we are controlled by karma and delusion, and the contaminated seed of disturbing thoughts, the concept of a truly-existent I and so forth.

This is the fundamental suffering of samsara, the third of the three types of suffering, pervasive compounding suffering. This is the very basis. If the aggregates are in this nature then those two other types of sufferings—the suffering of change and the suffering of suffering—arise like water bubbles rising in the water, or like an infection coming naturally from the body. Having this body, there's infection. If we didn't have this

samsaric body there would be no infection. Without this body we wouldn't need to scratch; we wouldn't have the kinds of experience that we call pleasure but are only suffering, which, like leprosy, cause itching that we can't stop scratching, making the suffering still worse.

If we didn't have this contaminated body that is created by karma and delusion and the contaminated seed of disturbing thoughts, the suffering of change—that pleasure produced by scratching—wouldn't happen and the infection wouldn't spread, with more pus or water produced. Without this body we also wouldn't experience those other two types of suffering. The way to liberate ourselves completely from this suffering, from the whole, entire suffering of samsara, is to make ourselves completely free from the third suffering, pervasive compounding suffering; from these aggregates created or controlled, or caused by karma and delusion, the contaminated seeds of disturbing thoughts, the seeds that make delusion arise by meeting the object.

First of all, one mistake is not having actualized the remedial path in the past, therefore the seeds have not been removed. As Lama Lhundrup went over the explanation of the whole path, we haven't actualized that remedial path in past times, so the seeds of the delusions are still left on the mental continuum. They didn't get removed.

The second thing is that when we have met the object we have not applied the meditation. We haven't protected our mind, therefore what happens is the seed is there. It's like after planting the seed in the ground, when there are minerals and everything else is there, when everything is kind of together, there's no obstacle and the plant grows from the seed.

Similarly, the second thing is by meeting the object, because the path has not been generated, we don't know how to protect our mind. Since we don't know the meditations of the lam-rim, the graduated path to enlightenment, and we don't apply the meditations in our everyday life, by meeting the object, delusion arises from that seed and it produces karma. It motivates karma that creates the imprint, that leaves the imprint that is the cause of the future lives' samsara. That is left on the mental continuum, the consciousness.

In that way we collect so many causes of our future lives' samsara. Even in one day, even in one hour, delusion arises. Without watching the mind, without protecting the mind by applying the meditation, we are not aware of the reality of the object, how it's in the nature of impermanence, how it's empty. Not knowing how its existence is empty from its own side, without being aware, then delusion arises on the basis of the hallucinated appearance and we believe in that. That creates karma which leaves imprints which are the cause of future lives' samsara on the mental continuum, like having planted so many seeds in the ground. Even in one day, even in one hour, so many imprints are planted on the mental continuum that are the cause of future lives' samsara.

As those seeds of future lives' samsara become ready to produce the result, to throw their future result, samsara, that's how the continuation of these present aggregates joins to the next life, and then *that* one joins to the life after that and *that* one joins to the life after that and *that* one joins to the life after that and so on like this. This is pervasive

compounding suffering. These aggregates are compounding the future lives' samsara with this seed, then from the seed the disturbing thoughts arise.

This is the main suffering we have. This is the most important suffering that we have to realize, that we must have the determination to be free from. The main suffering we need to renounce is this one.

What liberation means is also the cessation of this third kind of suffering. That is ultimate liberation. By knowing this fundamental suffering of samsara, this third kind of suffering, we know what liberation means, we know what ultimate happiness means. Otherwise, if we only understand suffering to be the suffering of suffering and the suffering of change, we can't break free from samsara.

Even Hindus have the determination to be free from the suffering of suffering and the suffering of change. For example, even in Hinduism there is shamatha meditation, calm abiding, with the nine stages. Even though they have this meditation and they go through the form and formless realms, still it's samsara. How they go to the form realm is by having renunciation of the suffering of change. They see how the desire realm pleasure that is dependent on the five external sense objects is in the nature of suffering. By meditating on that, by realizing that, the meditators achieve the four meditative states, the four states of concentration, of the form realm.

In the form and formless realms [these meditators] don't have the suffering of change, which depends on external objects and experiencing the sense pleasures. They have inner pleasure through meditation but not external pleasure. Even Hindus are able to develop this kind of meditation, however, the form and formless realms are still in samsara. They are still suffering even where there's no suffering of suffering or suffering of change—the temporary pleasures that depend on external desire objects. They are free from the suffering of change while they're in those states, while they're in the form and formless realms, but they are still suffering because they haven't overcome the third kind of suffering, pervasive compounding suffering. They haven't recognized as suffering the aggregates that are caused by karma and delusion, the contaminated seed of disturbing thoughts, which creates future lives' samsara. This is the fundamental suffering and they haven't realized it.

Because of that, they don't have the determination to be free from this third kind of suffering; there is no renunciation from this. Even if they go to the highest realm in samsara, to the fourth category of the formless realm, the *tip of samsara*, because they're not free from it, they don't see the tip of samsara as suffering because there's no other higher realm to compare it with. Until that point they have seen the realm they are in as gross compared to the next higher realm, but now there is nothing to compare it with thus there is no renunciation of that samsara.

This is because they have not realized the third kind of suffering—pervasive compounding suffering. They have not recognized it as suffering and therefore have no determination to be free from it. Therefore, there's no renunciation of the whole, entire samsara. There's renunciation of some part of samsaric suffering but there's no

renunciation of the whole entire samsara. That's why even though they reach the highest realm of samsara they still get reborn, and because of their past karma they will get reborn again in the lower realms and so forth, again and again. They will continuously circle like this, until they renounce the whole entire samsara and realize emptiness. It's like this until this realization happens.

In those other religions, whether [they assert] you can achieve liberation or not, if there's no mention of the Prasangika view of emptiness—not just emptiness but especially the Prasangika view of emptiness—if that's not taught in that religion, then that means there's no opportunity to achieve liberation. And if there's no renunciation of the whole entire samsara, if it's not mentioned, there's no way to achieve liberation.

It's just like the machines that work by depending on many things. It's simply like that. To say that is not being sectarian. It's not because you simply cling to Buddhism, to being a Buddhist, and assert there's no way others can achieve liberation and this and that, without using logic, without reasoning. It's not saying that. In order to be sure this is true, the best method is to study the whole of Buddhism first and then study those other religions. If you have enough life, if you have enough time, if you have enough intelligence, enough merit, enough good karma, to be able to study and know the whole of Buddhism, even the scriptural understanding, as well as studying the other religions, then you can judge. Only then, even without realizations, there's enough wisdom to be able to check the other religions and to judge whether it's possible to achieve liberation or not. To be able to judge whether it's possible or not, the best method is to study all the religions in the world, then you can see. Within that comes studying the whole of Buddhadharma, which is one of the spiritual paths revealed in this world. You have to study everything in order to analyze it.

On the basis of this, you can judge whether you can achieve enlightenment by practicing that religion. It depends on whether bodhicitta is mentioned, whether it's explained how to generate the realization of bodhicitta, with all the steps of the path leading to bodhicitta. That is the very fundamental answer. If that religion's path is developed on the basis of renunciation, emptiness and bodhicitta, how to develop bodhicitta, then there's some basic answer that enlightenment is possible by practicing that religion.

Not only that, there have to be five paths explained. Lama Lhundrup explained the details, how each realization is working in your mind and becomes the remedy, the medicine, to remove the delusions. It's like a machine, it's like a scientific machine, how these things work. It's like atoms meeting together to produce power and so forth. The way the mind develops is similar.

If there's no mention of how to develop bodhicitta, with these five paths that remove the different levels of the delusions, how is it possible to achieve full enlightenment? Full enlightenment is just one. Ultimate emptiness is just one. There's no difference. Ultimate emptiness is one. Bodhicitta is one. In reality it's one; there's no difference. There's no different interpretation for the ultimate emptiness.

For example, a patient is checked by a doctor who diagnoses him as healthy whereas another doctor sees that the patient has cancer. The two different diagnoses are according to the different levels of knowledge of the doctors. One doctor has less insight, less knowledge, less education, less experience; the other has more knowledge, more experience. What they can find depends on how much knowledge they have, thus one labels the patient as OK and one says he has a cancer. It's like that.

With the founders of the different religions, their understanding of suffering is limited, their recognition of the suffering of samsara is limited, therefore what they call liberation is not real liberation; it's not the cessation of the whole of suffering. It's just the cessation of one part of it, the cessation of one problem.

Regarding the cessation of the suffering of suffering as liberation is wrong in reality because there is still not the freedom from pervasive compounding suffering. Even if you're temporarily free from the suffering of suffering, you will experience it again as long as you're not free from pervasive compounding suffering, the third kind of suffering. Therefore, what those people, the founders [of other religions], call liberation from suffering—even if they call it liberation from the whole of suffering—is not that at all.

Until we become free from this samsara, we will continuously be attacked by the three types of suffering, such as the suffering of change. After a long time sitting we have a heavy pain and as soon as we stand up, that new action of standing up stops the great discomfort because the action of sitting is stopped. We stop that and start another new action, standing. That great discomfort, that tiredness, is stopped. Then, by this new, second action, standing, immediately after that action, the second after this action is done, immediately a new suffering, a new problem, starts. As soon as one suffering has stopped, another suffering has started.

Immediately that action of standing compounds the discomfort, the tiredness, of standing, but at that stage it's subtle. It's so small we don't notice it. As we continue the action of standing the discomfort of standing gradually increases. When it becomes noticeable, unbearable, it becomes the suffering of suffering. At that time it becomes the suffering of suffering. While that feeling—the discomfort, the tiredness of standing—is unnoticeable, we label that feeling “pleasure.” What that feeling is, basically, is suffering. It's another suffering, the tiredness of standing.

Like this, sitting is suffering, standing is suffering. Like this, eating is suffering, not eating is suffering; sleeping is suffering, not sleeping is suffering. Like this, until we become free from samsara, whatever we do is suffering. Until we are free from samsara.

Whatever place we stay is a place of suffering; whatever friend or companion we have is a friend or companion of suffering. From this explanation of the suffering of change, we can understand how any place, wherever we are, is a place of suffering, and whoever we're with is a companion of suffering. Whatever enjoyment we experience in samsara is the enjoyment of suffering.

Besides being attacked by the three types of sufferings constantly, we have to experience the general sufferings of samsara, the six types, such as leaving the body again and again, always going to higher and lower again and again, that nothing is definite—relationships and so forth—and not finding satisfaction. Then joining again and again, how this mother came from another mother and that mother came from another mother. We join like this again and again. Even if this whole earth was made into pills and we counted them, we couldn't count the number of mothers we have had.

As I mentioned before, this body is a collection of the blood from our mother and her mother, her mother's mother and so forth, and the sperm from our father and our father's father, his father's father, his father's father and so forth. This is its nature. This body is a collection of those. This is how it is, the nature of samsara.

Then, there is the suffering of being without a companion. When we are reborn, we are reborn alone. And when we die, we also die alone, without a companion. When we experience the suffering in the lower realms, in the hells, only we ourselves can experience the karma we have created, only we can experience the suffering result. Even the negative karma we have created for others, for our relatives and friends and so forth, we alone have to experience. Nobody comes to share it with us. We experience the suffering result; nobody comes to share the suffering. We have to experience it alone.

REFUGE CEREMONY MOTIVATION: THE BENEFITS OF TAKING THE VOWS

Until we are free from samsara we have to experience these sufferings, the general and particular sufferings of each realm, continuously. Therefore think, “At this time, while I have this perfect human rebirth, I have met the virtuous friend and have met Buddhadharma, at this time I *must* achieve full enlightenment, great liberation, for the sake of all sentient beings. Therefore I'm going to take the refuge ceremony and take the *upasika*¹¹ vows.”

If you're taking only refuge without any of the five precepts, think you're only taking the refuge ordination. If you're taking the five precepts, the upasika vows, if you're taking all five or one, two, three or four vows, then think like that.

Think, “Therefore, by relying upon the Buddha as the founder of refuge, the Dharma as the actual refuge and the Sangha as those who help me actualize the actual refuge within my mind, by relying upon those three, I'm going to take only the refuge vow, or the refuge and the upasika vows.” Like that, OK?

Please make three prostrations. Here's the Guru Shakyamuni Buddha statue, so by thinking it's the actual living Shakyamuni Buddha, make three prostrations first. After that, make three prostrations to the lama who gives the refuge, or the upasika vows.

[Part of recording missing. Rinpoche seems to talking about Khunu Lama Rinpoche's explanation of the refuge mudra.] He lived outside for many, many years, near the River Ganga, looking like a sadhu. Afterwards, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and His Holiness' tutors took teachings from him. Afterwards, when he started living in monasteries,

everybody took teachings after they found out that he was a great bodhisattva, a great holy being.

I also took many teachings from him, including the oral transmission of the *Bodhicaryavatara* and the commentary on the wisdom chapter. I requested the commentary but I didn't get the whole commentary alone. I received the commentary at other times with the public, but as soon as Rinpoche started the wisdom chapter, talking about emptiness, I fell asleep! As soon as he began that, much sleeping started, unfortunately.

Rinpoche explained, this is *namaste*. This is what Rinpoche explained. This is not having an empty hand because this [the thumbs in the closed palms] is the offering jewel, the wish-granting jewel. This [right] hand signifies method, the method path, and this [left] one wisdom. Method—renunciation, bodhicitta and so forth—and the wisdom realizing emptiness, the wisdom realizing emptiness from the sutra path and from the tantric path. So the [two palms together] signifies those two paths.

Inside is empty, which signifies the two enlightened results you can achieve. This one is the dharmakaya and this one is the rupakaya. By actualizing in your mind method and wisdom, the path, what you achieve is the dharmakaya and the rupakaya, enlightenment, for sentient beings.

This has the whole explanation of the base, the two truths, and the two paths, method and wisdom, and the two results, the rupakaya and dharmakaya. Putting your palms together has the whole explanation. So, put your palms at the heart like this and please repeat the prayer of the ceremony.

There are three precepts of things to be abandoned and three precepts to practice.¹² By taking refuge in the Dharma, what you should abandon is giving harm to other sentient beings. Normally I emphasize this. Without taking all those five precepts, all five or any of the precepts, just taking refuge, still we abandon harming others, so that is the upasika only refuge vow.

I asked His Holiness the Dalai Lama how it is possible to not take the vow to not kill when you take refuge, because taking refuge, if you give harm to other sentient beings, that's not Dharma. So, the fundamental Dharma is to not give harm, even if you can't practice benefiting others. At least the Dharma that avoids giving harm to others has to be practiced otherwise there's no Dharma left. If you can't practice avoiding giving harm to others, there's no Dharma practice, there's no spiritual practice, there's no real meditation left. The purpose of doing meditation is to stop giving harm to others, to inspire the mind or to build the capacity to not harm others. That's the purpose of meditation, that's the goal of meditation, to be able to stop giving harm to others, to gradually stop every single harm toward other sentient beings and to do all the benefit to them.

This is the real thing. Therefore I thought if you don't stop giving harm, killing, how is it possible to take refuge in the Dharma? Somehow it doesn't seem right. His Holiness explained that it's because there are some people who can't avoid killing. They can't

abandon killing but they want to take the refuge vow. His Holiness said that even if the person can't stop killing there are other harms he can stop. Whether it's small or great, there are other harms the person can practice avoiding. So it makes sense. It makes sense.

However, normally my emphasis is that during the refuge ceremony, because killing is the greatest harm we can do others you should at least try to take that vow. For example, generally speaking, if we have to choose between being killed or beaten, of course we would choose being beaten. Being killed is more fearful. It's the same thing toward others. By taking refuge in the Dharma you should avoid killing. That is normally the basic emphasis I have been trying to make—not just taking the refuge vow but from the five upasika vows at least taking one, to not kill.

However, it doesn't have to be only this particular vow to not kill. From the five precepts it could be to not tell lies or to not steal. It could be any of those from the five—to not take alcohol or not have sexual misconduct, whatever. If you are only able to take one then it could be any one of those that does great harm to other sentient beings. If you can take one from these five, then that's great, because it makes a huge difference. This is very important.

I think the benefits of the eight Mahayana precepts are extremely important to understand. Of two people making charity, giving money, to a beggar, there is one person living in the one vow and one person not living in any vow. The person living in the vow and the one not living in the vow give the same amount of money, one rupee, but the merit created by the person living in the vow is as huge as the earth whereas the merit created by the person not living in the vow is as big as a handful of dirt. In regards to the merit, the profit that is the good karma, there are *huge* differences. There are *huge* differences. One is almost nothing, kind of lost, compared to the other person who is living in one vow and making charity of one rupee to a beggar, whose merit is the size of the earth.

It's mentioned that for a person who lives in one vow the merit of making offerings to the buddhas of butter the size of a nail with a wick the size of a hair is incomparably greater than the merit of the person not living in a vow who offers oceans of butter with wicks the size of Mount Meru. For the person who doesn't live in the vow, the offering is very large but the merit is very small, almost nothing, compared to the person who lives in one vow and only makes a tiny offering, butter the size of a nail with a wick inside the size of a hair. This merit is unbelievable, unimaginable, it's so much. It's far greater than the merit of the other person who doesn't live in any vow but who makes light offerings to the buddhas of oceans of butter and wicks the size of the greatest mountain. It's explained like this in the sutra teachings on karma.

There are *huge* differences. In daily life, there is a *huge* difference between living in one vow or not living in any vow. Even if a person not living in any vow doesn't kill, steal, commit sexual misconduct and so forth there are big differences. The person is not doing any of these negative actions but not living in the vow, not having taken the commitment, doesn't have the benefits, doesn't accumulate the merit that living in the vow does. That person doesn't accumulate the merit of living in the vow. So, there are big differences.

For example, sleeping. Even if you sleep all twenty-four hours, even if you become unconscious, for somebody living in the vow and somebody not living in the vow, there are huge differences. It's the same, neither of these people kills, steals, commits sexual misconduct and so forth, both are sleeping or unconscious twenty-four hours a day, therefore they aren't committing any negative actions, but there are huge differences between the merit created by each of them.

A person who is sleeping all night or a person who is in a coma, who can't speak or do anything—just a slight movement of a nerve or something—they don't have the merit of living in the vow, they don't create the good karma of living in the vow, even if they don't do the action of killing or stealing and so forth during their period of sleep or coma. But the person who lives in the vow, even if he is sleeping twenty-four hours or is unconscious or in a coma, how many years he lives in a coma, the merit is there until he dies.

Living in one vow makes a *huge* difference in life. And it makes even more of difference if you take two vows, three vows, five vows, or a lot more, the 36 or 253 ordination vows or the 364 fully-ordained nun's vows. There are huge differences between those living in one, two or five vows and somebody not living in even one vow, so there's no question about somebody who lives in 36, 253 or 364 vows. Even if they don't make much charity, even if they don't do many preliminary practices, or many extensive offerings every day—even if they only do those external practices very occasionally, there's a huge difference between that person and somebody who doesn't live in even one vow who does all that very extensively, doing so many preliminary practices, making offerings, making charity to so many beings, helping so many sentient beings. The merit created by a lay person or a monk or nun who lives in the vows and who only occasionally does these external practices is still huge. Even if it's a small thing it creates unbelievable merit. Without the vows, even making extensive offerings doesn't create much merit, so there's no comparison.

Therefore, the person who is able to live in the vows has the most profitable life. And then especially, among that, the person who is able to live in a greater number of vows, in the most number of vows, has the greatest profitable life. This is very important. It's explained in the benefits of the eight Mahayana precepts. You may have heard it already but this point is very important. This point is very important.

I think many people who don't understand the Dharma don't understand how, by living in the vows as a nun, monk or lay practitioner you can serve the world, how you benefit the world. I think there are many people who don't understand Dharma and can't see this, especially those who don't understand karma. Because there's no understanding of karma, it's difficult to understand how living in the vows, particularly as a monk or nun, benefits the world, how it serves other people.

The common understanding is that to serve others you mix with people, like working in a hospital. You physically mix with people and do service for other people. The general understanding of service in the world is physically mixing with the people and being their servant, like that. That is the only understanding. But the *most* important, the *most*

important service to the world, or service to other people, is disciplining the mind, controlling the mind. Generally, that is totally left out. That part, the most important service for other sentient beings, the most important service to the world, that which brings peace to the world—controlling the mind, disciplining the mind, then disciplining the speech and the body—*that* is completely left out. The *most* important service is completely left out. People don't understand this—to stop your body, speech and mind becoming harmful to others—so that one is completely left out. The *real* one, the *real* service for other sentient beings, the real service for the world, that is completely left out because people don't understand the main point.

The understanding of service is physically mixing with people and doing something to their body. Even that is mainly concentrated on the body, and not so much on helping the mind. Even helping the mind is left out. Again, there's a big thing missing in the education of what it means to serve others, to serve the world, what it means to bring peace to the world. That education, that real understanding, is not there in the majority of the common people's minds. Therefore, they don't understand how useful it is, how beneficial it is to the world, to people, to live in the vows as monks and nuns.

Basically, this is through not understanding karma, not understanding the Dharma. Not understanding that world peace has to come through watching and disciplining the mind, from each individual's side. Disciplining the mind means living in morality, which means abstaining from the harmful actions toward ourselves and toward other sentient beings. Common people don't understand this.

Not understanding karma, not understanding the benefits of the vows, many people complain about it. Many political people can't understand how it serves the world.

The reason why the world doesn't have peace is because people don't discipline their minds. They don't place their body, speech and mind in morality, abstaining from harmful actions. Basically, they don't control the mind; they don't watch the mind, keeping it in a positive attitude. They don't develop a good heart, abstaining from the harmful thoughts, without letting harmful thoughts arise.

By taking one vow to stop killing, in this way, besides human beings, all sentient beings don't receive harm from you. This way all sentient beings don't receive harm from you. As long as you are living in this vow, all sentient beings don't receive the harm of killing from you. In that way, by all sentient beings receiving the absence of the harm of being killed by you, that is peace. All sentient beings receive peace from you. That is the real peace. The absence of harm that other sentient beings receive from you is real peace. *That* you can do. *That* you can do. That, each of us has in our hands, whether we choose to do it or not. We can do that for every sentient being, by living in the vow.

However many number of vows you take, other sentient beings receive more peace, the absence of more harms, from each vow you take. The greater number of vows you take, the more peace you bring to the world. You give more peace to all the sentient beings. You can see this is very logical and very practical.

Even if you're not involved in those big meetings on world peace and so forth, even if you don't go to those meetings, while you're in your retreat room, while you're in the hermitage, while you're in your own room, you're bringing peace to the world. You're giving peace to all sentient beings by developing your own mind, by developing your peaceful mind, your good heart. That's incredible! What you're offering to sentient beings, and what sentient beings are receiving from you, is incredible peace. The more you develop the mind, the more compassion that's developed, the more bodhicitta that's developed, the greater peace they receive, the more benefit they receive from you.

Please repeat the prayer.

[Rinpoche begins the ceremony.]

REFUGE CEREMONY MOTIVATION: THE GENERAL PRECEPTS

You've already heard about the precepts; what is to be abandoned by taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and what is to be practiced by taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

There are also the general precepts, such as any time before eating and drinking, even fruit or candy, before you eat you make an offering to the Buddha first. Do this by visualizing the Buddha in your heart or in the front, whatever. Also, in the morning when you first get up, make three prostrations to the Buddha and before going to bed make three prostrations to the Buddha. There are precepts about listening to teachings again and again, practicing compassion for others and so forth. There are about seven.¹³

I think Marcel has already read them to you. If you don't remember, please, you must read them and write them down in a notebook because these are the fundamental practice. These precepts, the things to be abandoned and to be practiced, are the Buddha's skillful means to help us to stop those heavy karmas. And, by the way, in our daily life, since we have to get up and go to bed, this is the way to accumulate merit by the way, so life doesn't become empty.

We eat many times a day. We eat on and on, many times in one day, we eat and drink. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is the nature of compassion and because of that, all these things—doing these actions before eating, drinking and so forth—are skillful means to stop our life becoming completely empty, by the way. And with those things, however many times we do them in one day, at least, by the way, as we drink, we create some unmistakable causes of happiness. Those actions become the cause of happiness. With those actions we at least create some good karma. Creating good karma happens without effort, just by the way. All those skillful means, those instructions, are to help us achieve happiness, to guide us to have the long-term happiness of future lives, liberation and enlightenment.

Even though we don't do these things for the success of this life—they're not motivated by the thought clinging to the happiness of this life—these things also become the main cause of success and happiness in this life as well.

REFUGE CEREMONY

Now do three prostrations.

From the heart, sincerely dedicate this way. “Through all the three-times’ merits accumulated by me, by the buddhas and bodhisattvas, may I, my family, friends, enemies, strangers, all sentient beings, may we be able to complete the paramita of morality by keeping it without mistake, pure, without pride.”

[Rinpoche recites the verse in Tibetan.]

Please dedicate for bodhicitta, to generate bodhicitta.

Jang chhub sem chhog rin po chhe...

To generate bodhicitta without delay even a second.

“May I, my family, all sentient beings, in all lifetimes, be able to live in pure vows and in this way to quickly achieve enlightenment for all sentient beings.” This is the way to achieve liberation or enlightenment, therefore dedicate the merit so that you and all sentient beings are able to live in the pure vows for all lifetimes, until enlightenment.

OK, thank you.

[End of refuge ceremony.]

Footnotes

1. The four wrong concepts are: that the self has an independent nature, that impermanent things are permanent, that samsaric pleasure is real happiness, and that the body is clean. See also the LYWA book, [*Bodhisattva Attitude*](#), ch. 6.

2. See [Kopan Course 20, Lecture 16](#), for discussion of the term all-arising.

3. Ch. 8, vv. 129 & 130.

4. Ch. 8, vv. 134 & 135.

5. Ch. 8, v. 172.

6. Ch. 8, v. 171.

7. Ch. 1, v. 10.

8. V. 91.

9. *Requesting Prayer to the Lam-rim Lineage Gurus*. See www.fpmt.org

10. Ch. 7, v. 14.

11. *Upasika* (Skt) is a female lay follower of Buddhism; *upasaka* is a male lay follower of Buddhism.

12. Actions to be avoided and practiced are: *what to avoid*: (Buddha) don't follow a wrong founder, (Dharma) don't harm others, (Sangha) don't be influenced by those following wrong paths; *what to practice*: (Buddha) respect holy objects. (Dharma) respect the written texts, (Sangha) respect the Sangha; *the general advice*: take refuge three times in the morning and three times at night, offer the first portion of food or drink, guide others with compassion, listen to teachings as much as possible, always rely on the holy beings with all your heart, never give up your refuge.

13. Normally six are listed. See the footnote above.

Images

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Glossary

aggregates (Skt: skandha). The association of body and mind; a person comprises five aggregates: form, feeling, recognition, compositional factors and consciousness.

Amitabha (Skt). One of the five Dhyani Buddhas, red in color, representing the wisdom of analysis and the fully purified aggregate of discrimination.

anger. A disturbing thought that exaggerates the negative qualities of an object and wishes to harm it; one of the three root delusions.

arhat (Skt). Literally, foe destroyer. A being who, having ceased their karma and delusions, is completely free from all suffering and its causes and has achieved liberation from cyclic existence.

arya (Skt). A being who has directly realized emptiness.

asura (Skt). demigod.

Atisha, Lama (982–1054). The renowned Indian master who went to Tibet in 1042 to help in the revival of Buddhism and established the Kadam tradition. His text *Light of the Path* was the first lam-rim text.

attachment. A disturbing thought that exaggerates the positive qualities of an object and wishes to possess it; one of the three root delusions.

Avalokiteshvara (Skt). See *Chenrezig*.

bhumi (Skt). Literally, stage or ground. Bodhisattvas must traverse ten bhumis on their journey to enlightenment, the first being reached with the direct perception of emptiness.

bodhicitta (Skt). The altruistic determination to achieve full enlightenment in order to free all sentient beings from suffering and bring them to enlightenment.

bodhisattva (Skt). One who possesses bodhicitta.

buddha, a (Skt). A fully awakened being. One who has totally eliminated (Tib: *sang*) all obscurations veiling the mind and has fully developed (Tib: *gye*) all good qualities to perfection.

Buddha, the (Skt). The historical Buddha, Shakyamuni. See also *enlightenment*, *Shakyamuni Buddha*.

Buddhadharma (Skt). See *Dharma*.

capable being (lower, middle or higher). See *three levels of practice*.

chakra (Skt). Energy wheel; the focal point of the wind energy channels within the body.

Chengawa, Geshe (1038–1103). One of Dromtonpa’s main disciples.

Chenrezig (*Tib; Skt: Avalokiteshvara*). The Buddha of Compassion. The male meditational deity that embodies the compassion of all the buddhas. The Dalai Lamas are said to be emanations of this deity.

compassion. The sincere wish that others be free from suffering and its causes.

conventional bodhicitta. The altruistic mind that wishes to attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. The word “conventional” is used to distinguish it from “ultimate” bodhicitta, the realization of emptiness with a bodhicitta motivation.

dakini (*Skt*). Literally, “female sky-goer.”

Dalai Lama, His Holiness (b. 1935). Gyalwa Tenzin Gyatso. Revered spiritual leader of the Tibetan people and tireless worker for world peace; winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989; a guru of Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

deity (*Tib: yidam*). An emanation of the enlightened mind, used as the object of meditation in tantric practices.

delusions. The disturbing, negative thoughts, or minds, that are the cause of suffering. The three root delusions are ignorance, anger and attachment.

Denma Lochö Rinpoche (b. 1928). A learned Gelugpa lama, a former abbot of Namgyal Monastery, who is one of Lama Zopa Rinpoche’s gurus.

desire realm (*Skt: kamadhatu*). One of the three realms of samsara, comprising the hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, demigods and the six lower classes of gods; beings in this realm are preoccupied with desire for objects of the six senses.

Dharamsala. A village in the north-west of India, in Himachal Pradesh. The residence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government-in-Exile.

Dharma (*Skt*). In general, spiritual practice; specifically, the teachings of Buddha, which protect from suffering and lead to liberation and full enlightenment.

Dromtönpa (1005-64). Lama Atisha’s heart disciple and chief translator in Tibet; propagator of the Kadampa tradition.

eight freedoms. The eight states from which a perfect human rebirth is free: being born as a hell being, hungry ghost, animal, long-life god, when no buddha has descended, as a barbarian, being born with defective mental or physical faculties or as a heretic, holding wrong views. (See also *ten richnesses*.)

eight Mahayana precepts. One-day vows to abandon killing; stealing; lying; sexual contact; taking intoxicants; sitting on high seats or beds; eating at the wrong time; and singing, dancing and wearing perfumes and jewelry.

eight worldly dharmas. The worldly concerns that generally motivate the actions of ordinary beings: craving material possessions and to be free from lack of possessions; craving happiness and comfort and to be free from lack of happiness and comfort; craving a good reputation and to be free from a bad one; craving praise and to be free from criticism.

emptiness (Skt: shunyata; Tib: tong-pa-nyi) Literally “emptiness only.” The absence, or lack, of true existence. Ultimately, every phenomenon is empty of existing truly, or from its own side, or independently. Lama Zopa Rinpoche explains the importance of the syllable *nyi* (Tib) or “only” in cutting off ordinary emptiness, for example, a purse being empty of having money. Without this final syllable the term falls short of indicating the total lack of inherent existence.

enlightenment (Skt: bodhi; Tib: jang-chub). Full awakening; buddhahood; omniscience. The ultimate goal of a Mahayana Buddhist, attained when all obscurations have been removed and all the qualities of the mind have been fully actualized. It is a state characterized by perfect compassion, wisdom and power. Lama Zopa Rinpoche points out that the Tibetan, *jang-chub*, is much more precise than the English as the two syllables encompass what enlightenment is: *jang* meaning “elimination” as in the elimination of all gross and subtle obstacles and *chub* meaning “development” as in the development of all perfect qualities.

eon (Skt: kalpa). A world period, an inconceivably long period of time. The life span of the universe is divided into eons.

faith. There are three kinds: believing, or pure-hearted, faith; lucid, or understanding, faith—faith based on logical conviction; and yearning, or aspirational, faith.

five lay vows. The vows against killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct and taking intoxicants taken by lay Buddhist practitioners.

five paths. The paths along which beings progress to liberation and enlightenment; the paths of accumulation, preparation, seeing, meditation and no more learning.

form realm (Skt: rupadhatu). The second of samsara’s three realms, with seventeen classes of gods.

formless realm (Skt: arupyadhatu). The highest of samsara’s three realms, with four classes of gods involved in formless meditations.

four means of drawing disciples to the Dharma. The second of two sets of practices of the bodhisattva (the other being the six perfections); they are giving, speaking kind words, teaching to the level of the student and practicing what you teach.

four noble truths. The subject of Shakyamuni Buddha’s first teaching, or first turning of the wheel of Dharma: true suffering, true cause of suffering, true cessation of suffering and true path leading to the cessation of suffering.

four opponent powers. The four-part purification practice; the power of the object (refuge), regret (having done a specific negative action), resolve (not to do the specific negative action again) and remedy (a practice such as Vajrasattva).

Gelug (Tib). One of the four traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, it was founded by Lama Tsongkhapa in the early fifteenth century and has been propagated by such illustrious masters as the successive Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas.

Gelugpa (Tib). A follower of the Gelug tradition.

geshe (Tib). Literally, spiritual friend. The title conferred on those who have completed extensive studies and examinations at Gelugpa monastic universities.

Geshe Chengawa. See *Chengawa*.

god. See *deva*.

gompa (Tib). Usually refers to the main meditation hall, or temple, within a monastery.

graduated path to enlightenment. See *lam-rim*.

Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment. See *Lam-rim Chen-mo*.

guru (Skt; Tib: lama). Literally, heavy, as in heavy with Dharma knowledge. A spiritual teacher, master.

guru devotion. The sutra or tantra practice of seeing the guru as a buddha then devoting to him or her with thought and action.

Guru Puja (Skt; Tib: Lama Chöpa). A special Highest Yoga Tantra guru yoga practice composed by Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen.

hearer (Skt: shravaka). Followers of the Hinayana, who strive for nirvana on the basis of listening to teachings from a teacher.

Heart Sutra aka Heart of Wisdom Sutra (Skt: prajnaparamita-hrdaya). The best known of a series of sutras on emptiness classified as *prajnaparamita (perfection of wisdom) sutras*. See also *prajnaparamita*.

hell. The samsaric realm with the greatest suffering. There are eight hot hells, eight cold hells, four surrounding hells and various occasional hells.

heresy (Tib: log-ta). Also called “mistaken wrong views,” one of the five afflicted views that are part of the root afflictions. Heresy is a deluded intelligence that rejects the existence of something that exists, such as karma, reincarnation, the Three Jewels and so forth, and ascribes existence to that which is nonexistent. It is also holding incorrect views about the guru.

Highest Yoga Tantra (Skt: Anuttara yoga tantra). The fourth and supreme of the four classes of tantra, which mainly emphasizes internal activities.

Hinayana (Skt). Literally, the Lesser Vehicle. The path of the arhats, the goal of which is nirvana, or personal liberation from samsara. Although not synonymous, the term Theravada is often preferred. (See also *Theravada*.)

hungry ghost (Skt: preta) One of the six classes of samsaric beings, hungry ghosts experience the greatest sufferings of hunger and thirst.

ignorance. A mental factor that obscures the mind from seeing the way in which things exist in reality. There are basically two types of ignorance, ignorance of karma and the ignorance that holds the concept of true existence; the fundamental delusion from which all other delusions arise.

impermanence. The gross and subtle levels of the transience of phenomena.

imprints. The seeds, or potentials, left on the mind by positive or negative actions of body, speech and mind.

inherent existence. See *true existence*.

initiation (Skt: abhishika; Tib: wang). Or empowerment. The transmission of the practice of a particular deity from a tantric master to a disciple, which permits the disciple to engage in that practice.

Kadampa geshe. A practitioner of the Buddhist tradition that originated in Tibet in the eleventh century with the teachings of Lama Atisha. Kadampa geshe are renowned for their practice of thought transformation.

Kagyü (Tib). One of the four traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, having its source in such illustrious lamas as Marpa, Milarepa, Gampopa and Gyalwa Karmapa.

karma (Skt; Tib: lä). Literally, action. The working of cause and effect, whereby positive actions produce happiness and negative actions produce suffering.

Kasyapa. The third buddha of this eon.

Khunu Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen (1894–1977). A renowned bodhisattva born in northern India, who wrote *Vast as the Heavens, Deeps as the Sea: Verses in Praise of Bodhicitta*; a guru of Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche (1926-2006). A highly attained and learned ascetic yogi who lived in Dharamsala, India, and who is one of Lama Zopa Rinpoche's gurus.

Kopan Monastery. The monastery near Boudhanath in the Kathmandu valley, Nepal, founded by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

lama (Tib). See *guru*.

Lama Atisha. See *Atisha, Lama*.

Lama Chöpa. See *Guru Puja*.

Lama Tsongkhapa. See *Tsongkhapa, Lama*.

Lama Yeshe. See *Yeshe, Lama*.

lam-rim (Tib). The graduated path to enlightenment. A presentation of Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings as step-by-step training for a disciple to achieve enlightenment.

Lam-rim Chen-mo (Tib.) The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment. Lama Tsongkhapa's most important work, a commentary on Atisha's *Lamp for the Path*, the fundamental lam-rim text.

liberation (Skt: nirvana or moksha; Tib: nyang-dä or thar-pa). The state of complete freedom from samsara; the goal of a practitioner seeking his or her own escape from suffering (see also Hinayana). "Lower nirvana" is used to refer to this state of self-liberation, while "higher nirvana" refers to the supreme attainment of the full enlightenment of buddhahood. Natural nirvana (Tib: *rang-zhin nyang-dä*) is the fundamentally pure nature of reality, where all things and events are devoid of any inherent, intrinsic or independent reality.

lineage lama. A spiritual teacher who is in the line of direct guru-disciple transmission of teachings, from Buddha to the teachers of the present day.

loving kindness. The wish for others to have happiness and its causes.

lower realms. The three realms of cyclic existence with the most suffering: the hell, hungry ghost and animals realms.

Mahayana (Skt). Literally, Great Vehicle. The path of the bodhisattvas, those seeking enlightenment in order to enlighten all other beings.

Maitreya Buddha (Skt; Tib: Jampa). The Loving One. The next buddha, after Shakyamuni, and fifth of the thousand buddhas of this present world age.

mala (Skt; Tib: threng-wa). A rosary of beads for counting mantras.

mandala (Skt). The purified environment of a tantric deity; the diagram or painting representing this.

mandala offering. The symbolic offering of the entire purified universe.

mantra (Skt). Literally, mind protection. Sanskrit syllables usually recited in conjunction with the practice of a particular meditational deity and embodying the qualities of that deity.

meditation. Familiarization of the mind with a virtuous object. There are two main types of meditation: analytical and concentration, or fixed.

merit. The positive energy accumulated in the mind as a result of virtuous actions of body, speech and mind. The principal cause of happiness.

merit field. Or field of accumulation. The visualized or actual holy beings in relation to whom one accumulates merit by going for refuge, making offerings and so forth and to whom one prays or makes requests for special purposes.

method. All aspects of the path to enlightenment other than those related to emptiness, principally associated with the development of loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta.

Milarepa (1040–1123). A great Tibetan yogi and poet famed for his impeccable relationship with his guru, Marpa, his asceticism and his songs of realization. A founding figure of the Kagyü tradition.

mind. Synonymous with consciousness. Defined as “that which is clear and knowing”; a formless entity that has the ability to perceive objects.

mind training. See *thought transformation*.

Mount Meru. The center of the universe in Buddhist cosmology.

mudra (*Skt*). Literally, seal. Symbolic hand gestures used in images of Buddha or in tantric rituals.

naga (*Skt*). Snake-like beings of the animal realm who live in or near bodies of water; commonly associated with fertility of the land, but can also function as protectors of religion.

Nagarjuna. The great second-century Indian philosopher and tantric adept who propounded the Madhyamaka philosophy of emptiness.

Nalanda. A Mahayana Buddhist monastic university founded in the fifth century in north India, not far from Bodhgaya, which served as a major source of the Buddhist teachings that spread to Tibet.

narak (*Skt*). Hell, either an overall term for the hell realm, or a specific term, as in the hot hells or cold hells.

negative karma. See *nonvirtue*.

nirvana (*Skt*). See *liberation*.

nonvirtue. Negative karma; an action that results in suffering.

Nyingma (Tib). The oldest of the four traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, it traces its teachings back to Padmasambhava, or Guru Rinpoche.

obscurations (Skt: avarana; Tib: drip-pa). Also known as obstructions, these obscurations block the attainment of liberation and enlightenment. They are: the grosser kind, called *disturbing-thought obscurations* or *obscurations to liberation*, and the subtle obscurations, the imprints left when those are purified, called *obscurations to knowledge* or *obscurations to enlightenment*.

om mani padme hum. The *mani*; the mantra of Chenrezig, Buddha of Compassion.

omniscient mind. See *enlightenment*.

Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo (1871–1941). The author of *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, and a very influential teacher and root guru of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Senior and Junior Tutors.

Padmasambhava. The eighth-century Indian tantric master mainly responsible for the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet, revered by all Tibetan Buddhists, but especially by the Nyingmapas.

Panchen Lama. Lineage representing incarnations of Amitabha Buddha; the Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama are the two highest spiritual leaders of Tibet.

pandit (Skt). A great scholar and philosopher.

paramitas (Skt). See *perfections*.

Paramitayana (Skt). Literally, Perfection Vehicle. The bodhisattva vehicle; a section of the Mahayana sutra teachings; one of the two forms of Mahayana, the other being Vajrayana. Also called Bodhisattvayana or Sutrayana.

perfect human rebirth. The rare human state, qualified by eight freedoms and ten richnesses, which is the ideal condition for practicing Dharma and attaining enlightenment.

perfections (Skt: paramitas). The practices of a bodhisattva. On the basis of bodhicitta, a bodhisattva practices the six perfections or paramitas: generosity, morality, patience, joyous perseverance, concentration and wisdom.

pervasive compounding suffering. The most subtle of the three types of suffering, it refers to the nature of the five aggregates, which are contaminated by karma and delusions.

Prajnaparamita (Skt; Eng: Perfection of Wisdom). Shakyamuni Buddha's second teaching, or turning of the wheel of Dharma, in which the wisdom of emptiness and the path of the bodhisattva are explained.

preliminaries (Tib: ngön-dro). The practices that prepare the mind for successful tantric meditation by removing hindrances and accumulating merit.

preta (Skt). See *hungry ghost*.

prostrations. Paying respect to the guru-deity with body, speech and mind; one of the tantric preliminaries.

puja (Skt). Literally, offering; a religious ceremony.

pure realm. A pure land of a buddha where there is no suffering; after birth in a pure land, the practitioner receives teachings directly from the buddha of that pure land, actualizes the rest of the path and then can quickly become enlightened.

purification. The removal, or cleansing, of negative karma and its imprints from the mind.

Rajgir. A town in Bihar, northern India; ancient capital of Magadha kingdom. Vulture's Peak is nearby.

refuge (Skt: sharana; Tib: kyab). The door to the Dharma path. Having taken refuge from the heart we become an inner being or Buddhist (as opposed to an outer being). There are three levels of refuge—Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana—and two or three causes necessary for taking refuge: fearing the sufferings of samsara in general and lower realms in particular; faith that Buddha, Dharma and Sangha have the qualities and power to lead us to happiness, liberation and enlightenment; and (for Mahayana refuge) compassion for all sentient beings.

renunciation. The state of mind not having the slightest attraction to samsaric pleasures for even a second and having the strong wish for liberation.

Rinpoche (Tib). Literally, precious one. Generally, a title given to a lama who has intentionally taken rebirth in a human body to continue helping others. A respectful title used for one's own lama.

Sakya (Tib). One of the four principal traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, it was founded in the eleventh century by Drokmi Shakya Yeshe (933–1047).

samsara (Skt; Tib: khor-wa). Cyclic existence; the six realms: the lower realms of the hell beings, hungry ghosts and animals, and the upper realms of the humans, demi-gods and gods; the recurring cycle of death and rebirth within one or other of the six realms. It also refers to the contaminated aggregates of a sentient being.

Sangha (Skt; Tib: ge-diin). Spiritual community; the third of the Three Jewels of Refuge. In Tibetan *ge-diin* literally means intending (*diin*) to virtue (*ge*). Absolute Sangha are those who have directly realized emptiness; relative Sangha refers to a group of at least four fully ordained monks or nuns.

Sarnath. A small town near Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, India; the site of Deer Park, where the Buddha first turned the wheel of Dharma, giving his famous discourse on the four noble truths.

secret mantra. See *Vajrayana*.

self-cherishing. The self-centered attitude of considering one's own happiness to be more important than that of others; the main obstacle to the realization of bodhicitta.

sentient being (*Tib: sem-chen*). Any unenlightened being; any being whose mind is not completely free of ignorance.

Sera Monastery. One of the three great Gelugpa monasteries near Lhasa; founded in the early fifteenth century by Jamchen Chöje, a disciple of Lama Tsongkhapa; now also established in exile in south India. It has two colleges, Sera Je, with which Lama Zopa Rinpoche is connected, and Sera Me.

Shakyamuni Buddha (563–483 bce). The founder of the present Buddhadharma. Fourth of the one thousand founding buddhas of this present world age, he was born a prince of the Shakya clan in North India and taught the sutra and tantra paths to liberation and full enlightenment.

Shantideva (685–763). The great Indian bodhisattva who wrote *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*, one of the essential Mahayana texts.

single-pointed concentration. The ability to focus effortlessly and for as long as one wishes on an object of meditation.

six realms. The general way that Buddhism divides the whole of cyclic existence, with three suffering realms (hell, hungry ghost and animal) and three fortunate realms (human, demigod and god).

spirits. Beings not usually visible to ordinary people; they can belong to the hungry ghost or god realms and can be beneficent as well as harmful.

stupa (*Skt*). A reliquary symbolic of the Buddha's mind.

sura (*Skt*). Another term for deva or god.

sutra (*Skt*). The open discourses of Shakyamuni Buddha; a scriptural text and the teachings and practices it contains.

Sutrayana (*Skt*). the pre-tantric division of Mahayana teachings stressing the cultivation of bodhicitta and the practice of the six perfections. Also called Paramitayana or Bodhisattvayana.

tantra (*Skt*). Also called Vajrayana, Mantrayana; the secret teachings of the Buddha; a scriptural text and the teachings and practices it contains. Tantric practices generally

involve identification of oneself with a fully enlightened deity in order to transform one's own impure states of body, speech and mind into the pure states of that enlightened being.

Tara (Skt; Tib: Drolma). A female meditational deity who embodies the enlightened activities of all the buddhas; often referred to as the mother of the buddhas of the past, present and future.

ten nonvirtues. The three nonvirtues of body are killing, stealing and sexual misconduct; the four nonvirtues of speech are lying, slander, harsh speech and gossip; the three nonvirtues of mind are covetousness, ill will and wrong views.

ten richnesses. The ten qualities that characterize a perfect human rebirth: being born as a human being, in a Dharma country and with perfect mental and physical faculties; being free for the five immediate negativities; having faith in Buddha's teachings; being born when a buddha has descended, when the teachings are still alive, when there are still followers of the teachings and having the necessary conditions to practice Dharma, such as the kindness of others. (See also *eight freedoms*.)

thought transformation (Tib: lo-jong). Also called *mind training*; a powerful approach to the development of bodhicitta, in which the mind is trained to use all situations, both happy and unhappy, as a means to destroy self-cherishing and self-grasping.

Three Baskets. See *Tripitaka*.

three doors. Body, speech and mind.

three great meanings. The happiness of future lives, liberation and enlightenment. See also *three ways a perfect human rebirth is highly meaningful*.

three higher trainings. The higher trainings in morality, concentration and wisdom.

Three Jewels. Another term for the Triple Gem.

three levels of practice. Also known as the three scopes, the three levels of lower, medium and higher capable being, based on the motivations of trying to attain a better future rebirth, liberation or enlightenment.

three poisons. Attachment, anger and ignorance.

three principal aspects of the path. The essential points of the lam-rim: renunciation of samsara, bodhicitta and right view, or emptiness.

three ways a perfect human rebirth is highly meaningful. The happiness of future lives, liberation and enlightenment and making this life useful in every moment. See also *three great meanings*.

torma (Tib). An offering cake used in tantric rituals. In Tibet, tormas were usually made of tsampa, but other edibles such as biscuits and so forth suffice.

Tripitaka (Skt). Literally, “three baskets”, the way the Buddha’s teachings are traditionally divided: the *Vinaya* (monastic discipline and ethics), *Sutra* (the Buddha’s discourses) and *Abhidharma* (logic and philosophy).

Triple Gem. The objects of Buddhist refuge: the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

true existence. The type of concrete, real existence from its own side that everything appears to possess; in fact, everything is empty of true existence.

tsampa (Tib). Roasted barley flour, a Tibetan staple food.

Tsongkhapa, Lama (1357–1419). The revered teacher and accomplished practitioner who founded the Gelug order of Tibetan Buddhism. An emanation of Manjushri, the Buddha of Wisdom.

twelve deeds. The twelve deeds that each of the thousand buddhas of this eon perform, including Shakyamuni. They are: 1. descent from Tushita heaven, 2. conception in the womb, 3. being born, 4. training in the arts and sciences, 5. enjoying palace life, 6. renouncing the life of leisure, 7. practicing austerities, 8. sitting under the bodhi tree at Bodhgaya, 9. victory over the maras, 10. the attainment of enlightenment, 11. teaching the Dharma, 12. passing into Parinirvana.

vajra (Skt; Tib: dorje). Literally, “adamantine”, often translated as “thunderbolt” but usually left untranslated, the vajra is the four- or five-spoke implement used in tantric practice.

Vajrasattva (Skt; Tib: Dorje Sempa). A male tantric deity used especially for purification.

virtue. Positive karma; that which results in happiness.

virtuous friend (Tib: ge-wai she-nyen). See *guru*.

wheel-turning king (Skt: chakravartin). A monarch of an entire continent who rules by the Dharma and encourages his people to practice the Dharma. Ashoka is a prime example.

wisdom. All aspects of the path to enlightenment associated with the development of insight into the nature of reality, often specifically referring to the realization of emptiness.

wish-granting jewel. A jewel that brings its possessor everything that he or she desires.

Yeshe, Lama (1935–1984). Born and educated in Tibet, he fled to India, where he met his chief disciple, Lama Zopa Rinpoche. They began teaching Westerners at Kopan

Monastery in 1969 and founded the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) in 1975.

yoga (Skt). Literally, to yoke. The spiritual discipline to which one yokes oneself in order to achieve enlightenment.

yogi (Skt). A highly realized meditator.

zen (Tib). The upper robe of a monk or nun.

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Advice for Monks and Nuns, by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Virtue and Reality, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Make Your Mind an Ocean, by Lama Yeshe
Teachings from the Vajrasattva Retreat, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Mirror of Wisdom, by Geshe Tsultim Gyeltsen (for TDL Publications)
A Teaching on Heruka, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
A Teaching on Yamantaka, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
The Essence of Tibetan Buddhism, by Lama Yeshe
Daily Purification: A Short Vajrasattva Practice, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Making Life Meaningful, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Teachings from the Mani Retreat, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Illuminating the Path to Enlightenment, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama (for TDL Publications)
The Direct and Unmistaken Method, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
The Yoga of Offering Food, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
The Peaceful Stillness of the Silent Mind, by Lama Yeshe
Teachings from Tibet, by various great lamas
The Joy of Compassion, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
The Kindness of Others, by Geshe Jampa Tegchok
Ego, Attachment and Liberation, by Lama Yeshe
How Things Exist, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Universal Love, by Lama Yeshe
The Heart of the Path, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Teachings from the Medicine Buddha Retreat, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Freedom Through Understanding, by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Kadampa Teachings, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Life, Death and After Death, Lama Yeshe
Bodhisattva Attitude, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
How to Practice Dharma, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
The Perfect Human Rebirth, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Practicing the Unmistaken Path, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Creating the Causes of Happiness, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

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

Other teachings by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche

BOOKS PUBLISHED BY WISDOM PUBLICATIONS

Wisdom Energy, by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Introduction to Tantra, by Lama Yeshe
Transforming Problems, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
The Door to Satisfaction, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Becoming Vajrasattva: The Tantric Path of Purification, by Lama Yeshe
The Bliss of Inner Fire, by Lama Yeshe
Becoming the Compassion Buddha, by Lama Yeshe
Ultimate Healing, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Dear Lama Zopa, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
How to Be Happy, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Wholesome Fear, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche with Kathleen McDonald
When the Chocolate Runs Out, by Lama Yeshe
About Lama Yeshe: Reincarnation: The Boy Lama, by Vicki Mackenzie
About Lama Zopa Rinpoche: The Lawudo Lama, by Jamyang Wangmo

You can get more information about and order the above titles at wisdompubs.org or call toll free in the USA on 1-800-272-4050.

TRANSCRIPTS, PRACTICES AND OTHER MATERIALS

See the LYWA and FPMT websites for transcripts of teachings by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche and other practices written or compiled by Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

VIDEO OF LAMA YESHE AND LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

LYWA has released DVDs of early teachings of the Lamas, including *The Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, *Introduction to Tantra*, *Offering Tsok to Heruka Vajrasattva*, *Anxiety in the Nuclear Age*, *Bringing Dharma to the West*, *Lama Yeshe at Disneyland*, *Freedom Through Understanding* and *Life, Death and After Death*. See LamaYeshe.com to order any of these DVDs or visit our YouTube channel to view these and many other videos for free: YouTube.com/LamaYeshe.

FPMT has produced a number of DVDs of Lama Zopa Rinpoche's more recent teachings. Visit the FPMT Foundation Store to order. Many more videos are freely available at FPMT.org, and on FPMT's YouTube channel, YouTube.com/FPMTInc.

About the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive



The Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive (LYWA) is the collected works of Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche. Lama Zopa Rinpoche, its spiritual director, founded the Archive in 1996.

Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche began teaching at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, in 1970. Since then, their teachings have been recorded and transcribed. At present we have well over 12,000 hours of digital audio and some 90,000 pages of raw transcript. Many recordings, mostly teachings by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, remain to be transcribed, and as Rinpoche continues to teach, the number of recordings in the Archive increases accordingly. Most of our transcripts have been neither checked nor edited.

Here at the LYWA we are making every effort to organize the transcription of that which has not yet been transcribed, edit that which has not yet been edited, and generally do the many other tasks detailed below.

The work of the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive falls into two categories: archiving and dissemination.

Archiving requires managing the recordings of teachings by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche that have already been collected, collecting recordings of teachings given but not yet sent to the Archive, and collecting recordings of Lama Zopa's on-going teachings, talks, advice and so forth as he travels the world for the benefit of all. Incoming media are then catalogued and stored safely while being kept accessible for further work.

We organize the transcription of audio, add the transcripts to the already existent database of teachings, manage this database, have transcripts checked, and make transcripts available to editors or others doing research on or practicing these teachings.

Other archiving activities include working with video and photographs of the Lamas and digitizing Archive materials.

Dissemination involves keeping up with evolving technology and making the Lamas' teachings available through various avenues including books for free distribution and sale, ebooks on a wide range of readers, lightly edited transcripts, a monthly e-letter (see

below), social media, DVDs and online video, articles in Mandala and other magazines and on our website. Irrespective of the medium we choose, the teachings require a significant amount of work to prepare them for distribution.

This is just a summary of what we do. The Archive was established with virtually no seed funding and has developed solely through the kindness of many people, most of whom we mention and thank sincerely on our website. We are indebted to you all.

Our further development similarly depends upon the generosity of those who see the benefit and necessity of this work, and we would be extremely grateful for your help. Thus we hereby appeal to you for your kind support. If you would like to make a contribution to help us with any of the above tasks or to sponsor books for free distribution, please contact us:

LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE
PO Box 636, Lincoln, MA 01773, USA
Telephone (781) 259-4466
info@LamaYeshe.com
LamaYeshe.com

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LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE MEMBERSHIP

In order to raise the money we need to employ editors to make available the thousands of hours of teachings mentioned above, we have established a membership plan. Membership costs US\$1,000 and its main benefit is that you will be helping make the Lamas' incredible teachings available to a worldwide audience. More direct and tangible benefits to you personally include free Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche books from the Archive and Wisdom Publications, a year's subscription to Mandala, a year of monthly pujas by the monks and nuns at Kopan Monastery with your personal dedication, and access to an exclusive members-only section of our website containing the entire LYWA library of publications in electronic format. Please see LamaYeshe.com for more information.

MONTHLY E-LETTER

Each month we send out a free e-letter containing our latest news and a previously unpublished teaching by Lama Yeshe or Lama Zopa Rinpoche. To see over 140 back-issues or to subscribe with your email address, please visit our website.

About The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition



The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) is an international organization of Buddhist meditation study and retreat centers—both urban and rural—monasteries, publishing houses, healing centers and other related activities founded in 1975 by Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche. At present, there are more than 160 FPMT centers, projects and services in over forty countries worldwide.

The FPMT has been established to facilitate the study and practice of Mahayana Buddhism in general and the Tibetan Gelug tradition, founded in the fifteenth century by the great scholar, yogi and saint, Lama Je Tsongkhapa, in particular.

The Foundation publishes a wonderful news journal, Mandala, from its International Office in the United States of America. To subscribe or view back-issues, please go to the Mandala website, mandalamagazine.org, or contact:

FPMT
1632 SE 11th Avenue, Portland, OR 97214
Telephone (503) 808-1588; Fax (503) 808-1589
info@fpmt.org
www.fpmt.org

The FPMT website also offers teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lama Yeshe, Lama Zopa Rinpoche and many other highly respected teachers in the tradition, details about the FPMT's educational programs, an online learning center, a complete listing of FPMT centers all over the world and, especially, those in your area, a link to the excellent FPMT Store, and links to FPMT centers—where you will find details of their programs—and other interesting Buddhist and Tibetan pages.

FPMT Online Learning Center



In 2009, FPMT Education Services launched the FPMT Online Learning Center to make FPMT education programs and materials more accessible to students worldwide. While continuing to expand, the Online Learning Center currently offers the following courses:

MEDITATION 101
BUDDHISM IN A NUTSHELL
HEART ADVICE FOR DEATH AND DYING
DISCOVERING BUDDHISM
BASIC PROGRAM
LIVING IN THE PATH
SPECIAL COMMENTARIES

Living in the Path is particularly unique in that it takes teachings by Lama Zopa Rinpoche and presents them in theme-related modules that include teaching transcripts, video extracts, meditations, mindfulness practices, karma yoga, and questions to assist students in integrating the material. Current modules include: *Motivation for Life, Taking the Essence, What Buddhists Believe, Guru is Buddha, Introduction to Atisha's text, The Happiness of Dharma, Bringing Emptiness to Life, The Secret of the Mind, Diamond Cutter Meditation, Refuge & Bodhicitta* and *Seven-Limb Prayer*.

All of our online programs provide audio and/or video teachings of the subjects, guided meditations, readings, and other support materials. Online forums for each program provide students the opportunity to discuss the subject matter and to ask questions of forum elders. Additionally, many retreats led by Lama Zopa Rinpoche are available in full via audio and/or video format.

Education Services is committed to creating a dynamic virtual learning environment and adding more FPMT programming and materials for you to enjoy via the Online Learning Center.

Visit us at: onlinelearning.fpmt.org

What to do with Dharma Teachings

The Buddhadharma is the true source of happiness for all sentient beings. Books like this show you how to put the teachings into practice and integrate them into your life, whereby you get the happiness you seek. Therefore, anything containing Dharma teachings, the names of your teachers or holy images is more precious than other material objects and should be treated with respect. To avoid creating the karma of not meeting the Dharma again in future lives, please do not put books (or other holy objects) on the floor or underneath other stuff, step over or sit upon them, or use them for mundane purposes such as propping up wobbly chairs or tables. They should be kept in a clean, high place, separate from worldly writings, and wrapped in cloth when being carried around. These are but a few considerations.

Should you need to get rid of Dharma materials, they should not be thrown in the rubbish but burned in a special way. Briefly: do not incinerate such materials with other trash, but alone, and as they burn, recite the mantra OM AH HUM. As the smoke rises, visualize that it pervades all of space, carrying the essence of the Dharma to all sentient beings in the six samsaric realms, purifying their minds, alleviating their suffering, and bringing them all happiness, up to and including enlightenment. Some people might find this practice a bit unusual, but it is given according to tradition. Thank you very much.

Dedication

Through the merit created by preparing, reading, thinking about and sharing this book with others, may all teachers of the Dharma live long and healthy lives, may the Dharma spread throughout the infinite reaches of space, and may all sentient beings quickly attain enlightenment.

In whichever realm, country, area or place this book may be, may there be no war, drought, famine, disease, injury, disharmony or unhappiness, may there be only great prosperity, may everything needed be easily obtained, and may all be guided by only perfectly qualified Dharma teachers, enjoy the happiness of Dharma, have love and compassion for all sentient beings, and only benefit and never harm each other.

About Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche was born in Thangme, Nepal, in 1945. At the age of three he was recognized as the reincarnation of the Lawudo Lama, who had lived nearby at Lawudo, within sight of Rinpoche's Thangme home. Rinpoche's own description of his early years may be found in his book, *The Door to Satisfaction*. At the age of ten, Rinpoche went to Tibet and studied and meditated at Domo Geshe Rinpoche's monastery near Pagri, until the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959 forced him to forsake Tibet for the safety of Bhutan. Rinpoche then went to the Tibetan refugee camp at Buxa Duar, West Bengal, India, where he met Lama Yeshe, who became his closest teacher. The Lamas went to Nepal in 1967, and over the next few years built Kopan and Lawudo Monasteries. In 1971 Lama Zopa Rinpoche gave the first of his famous annual lam-rim retreat courses, which continue at Kopan to this day. In 1974, with Lama Yeshe, Rinpoche began traveling the world to teach and establish centers of Dharma. When Lama Yeshe passed away in 1984, Rinpoche took over as spiritual head of the FPMT, which has continued to flourish under his peerless leadership. More details of Rinpoche's life and work may be found in *The Lawudo Lama* and on the LYWA and FPMT websites. Rinpoche's published teachings include *Wisdom Energy* (with Lama Yeshe), *Transforming Problems*, *Virtue and Reality*, *Ultimate Healing*, *Heart of the Path* and *How Things Exist*.

About Dr. Nicholas Ribush

Dr. Nicholas Ribush, MB, BS, is a graduate of Melbourne University Medical School (1964) who first encountered Buddhism at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, in 1972. Since then he has been a student of Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche and a full time worker for their international organization, the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT). He was a monk from 1974 to 1986. He established FPMT archiving and publishing activities at Kopan in 1973 and with Lama Yeshe founded Wisdom Publications in 1975. Between 1981 and 1996 he served variously as Wisdom's director, editorial director and director of development. Over the years he has edited and published many teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lama Yeshe, Lama Zopa Rinpoche and many other teachers and established and/or directed several other FPMT activities, including the International Mahayana Institute, Tushita Mahayana Meditation Centre, the Enlightened Experience Celebration, Mahayana Publications, and now Kurukulla Center for Tibetan Buddhist Studies and the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive. He was a member of the FPMT board of directors from its inception in 1983 until 2002 and currently serves on the boards of LYWA and Maitripa College.

About Gordon McDougall

Gordon McDougall first met Tibetan Buddhism in Hong Kong in 1986 and was the director of Cham-Tse Ling, the FPMT center there, for two years. Since then he has been involved with various FPMT centers and projects. In 2001 he became the spiritual program coordinator of Jamyang Buddhist Centre, London, where he worked with the resident teacher, Geshe Tashi Tsering, to develop the Foundation of Buddhist Thought, the two-year campus and correspondence course that is part of the FPMT core education program. He administered the course and worked at Jamyang for seven years, editing the six FBT books, first as study books for the course and then as “stand-alone” books for Wisdom Publications. He has also led lam-rim courses in Europe and India and was involved with the creation of the Discovering Buddhism program. After moving to Bath he became a full time editor with the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive in 2008, managing the Publishing the FPMT Lineage project and editing the books in this series.

About Sandra Smith

Sandra Smith, BCmn, met her teachers Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche in New Zealand in 1975. Later that year she joined the community at Chenrezig Institute, Queensland, Australia, where she has offered service in various roles. Sandra has studied with many lamas, including Geshe Loden, Zazep Tulku Rinpoche, Geshe Thinley, Khensur Rinpoche Geshe Tashi Tsering, H.E. Chöden Rinpoche and His Holiness the Dalai Lama. While raising her two children, Sandra became coordinator of the Dharma Club at Chenrezig Institute for several years. This role led to the creation of FPMT children's practice materials, including [Meditations for Children](#) and [Plays for Children](#). She currently writes feature articles for an Australian parenting magazine. Sandra served as Director of Chenrezig Institute from 2004 to 2006 and then worked at Mandala Books, a project of Karuna Hospice Service, Brisbane. In 2007/08 she held the positions of FPMT Australian National Coordinator and Tour Coordinator. Sandra commenced work as a web editor for Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive in 2009.

Sign up for the LYWA Monthly Eletter

[Sign up to receive a monthly e-message from LYWA](#) offering you a newly edited teaching from Lama Yeshe or Lama Zopa Rinpoche, up-to-date news about the work of the Archive both at home and online, links to other great Dharma online resources and very special offerings for the LYWA community.

E-letter No. 138: November 2014

[Email](#) [PDF](#) [Large Print](#)

By [Dr. Nicholas Ribush](#) (Last Updated Nov 25, 2014)

Dear LYWA friends and supporters,

Below, we have much to share with you about new teachings made available to you in November from the Archive. Thank you so much for your continued interest and support.

NEW TEACHINGS ON OUR WEBSITE



We have just posted a translation and short commentary by Lama Zopa Rinpoche on [the meaning of the eight auspicious signs](#) and how they can be used for success. It was dictated to Ven. Sarah Thresher at Root Institute, Bodhgaya, India, on February 4, 2014.

Read a talk on [Transforming the Mind in Everyday Life](#), given by Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche in Adelaide, Australia, on August 2, 1991. In this teaching Rinpoche talks about the purpose of our life and how to develop a positive attitude, and gives advice on searching for the I. You can read an excerpt from this teaching as our eletter teaching below.

You can also read the [prayer for the quick return of Geshe Lhundub Sopa Rinpoche](#), composed by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. Geshe Sopa, Abbot of [Deer Park Center](#) in Wisconsin, passed away in August.

Read advice from Rinpoche where he discusses the [reasons for giving up alcohol, cigarettes and other addictive substances](#) at a Dharma talk in Bendigo, Australia, in August 1991. Read more advice from Rinpoche regarding [Addiction](#) in the Online Advice Book.

MORE ADVICE FROM LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

New advices added to the Online Advice Book this month include a letter to a student advising [how to benefit her dogs by building stupas](#) and circumambulating them. In this letter Rinpoche says:

In reality by just walking around a stupa even one time, so many eons of heavy negative karma collected from beginningless rebirth gets purified and we collect extensive merits every time we go around it. That makes it possible to achieve enlightenment.

Read also a letter from a [student writing to confess](#) that he had negative, harmful thoughts when hearing Rinpoche speak, and advice from Rinpoche that [when teaching Dharma, the main emphasis should be on the good heart and benefiting others](#).

For our friends in the US who are celebrating Thanksgiving this week, it is always good to remember the [Rinpoche's advice for this holiday](#). Read a letter Rinpoche wrote to the Sangha of Sera as dedication for pujas they did for all the turkeys killed for Thanksgiving, and Rinpoche's thoughts about this holiday.



OUR WORK TOGETHER

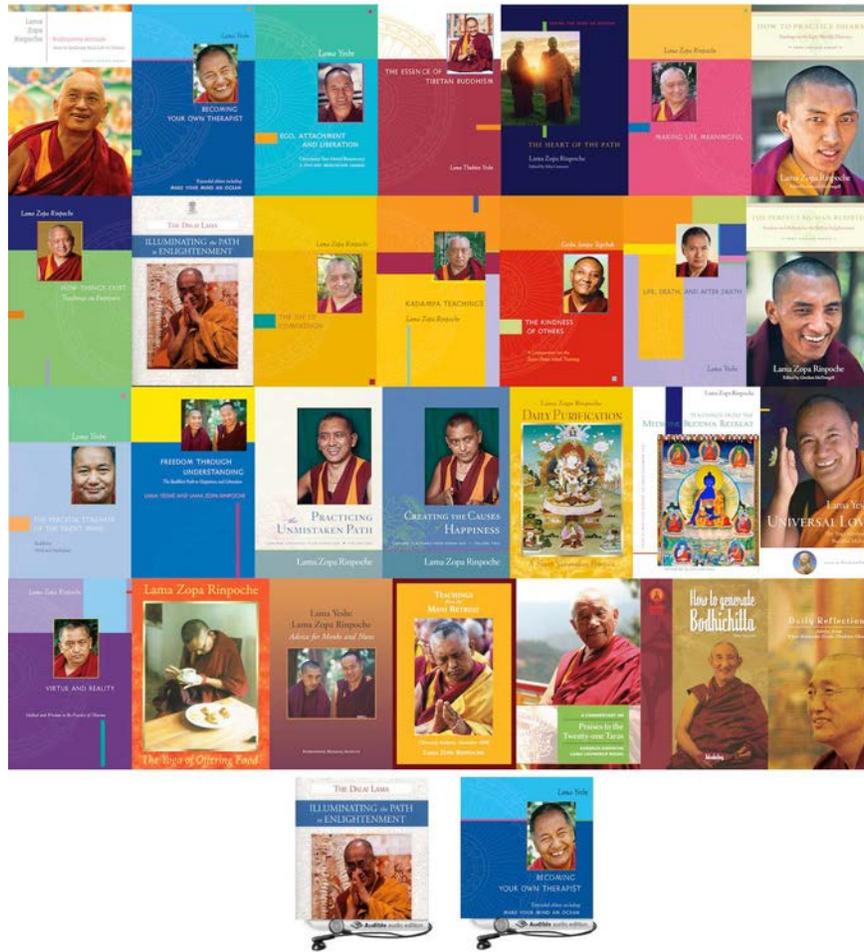


Last week we sent you an email about [our annual year-end appeal](#). Our sincere thanks to those of you who donated during Lhabab Duchen to give us an excellent start to this year's appeal. To date we have raised over \$6,000 towards our \$50,000 goal.

We have much to rejoice in after a very successful year of fulfilling our mission to bring you the teachings of Lama Yeshe, Lama Zopa Rinpoche and other great lamas of our time.

This year saw the publication of [many new ebooks](#), and the start of our first ebook only series of [teachings from Kopan](#). Our website continues to grow by leaps and bounds and we are hard at work on a new and improved website design. We have begun to post many new videos to [our YouTube channel](#) and this year we more than doubled the number of people we share the teachings with daily through social media outlets such as [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Browse more LYWA Ebooks and Audio Books



For more please visit LamaYeshe.com

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