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LAMRIM TEACHINGS FROM KOPAN 1980

BY

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LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE

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Lecture 2

November 10, 1980

Lecture One was a talk by Lama Yeshe.

THE NEED TO PRACTICE FOR OTHER SENTIENT BEINGS

You have come from various distant places. Maybe you are dissatisfied with your selfish attitude or with worldly pleasure, with this limited idea that there's no happiness to experience beyond all this. You might think, "There must be something beyond what I can feel, what I have been experiencing with this human life, with this body. The happiness I can experience can't *only* be this—what I see, what I experience." You might have the faintest idea there must be something more than that.

Being dissatisfied with just the worldly, temporal pleasure, you are here seeking ultimate happiness, thinking there is something else besides this. You are here for a reason, seeking a method to attain that. Any method to attain ultimate happiness can never be a normal method, something you do in your everyday life; it must be something else. It must be a new method in order to seek mental peace, everlasting, ultimate happiness. Therefore, having that reason, with that thought to achieve enlightenment in this very life, you should listen to the teachings and study. That is very worthwhile.

Training in the methods to obtain ultimate happiness is greatly worthwhile because it brings the greatest result. Just having the thought to practice Dharma, the result is amazing. It's kind of an impossible thing to happen, but it's happening. For such a thought to arise is extremely rare. Leaving aside the thought to seek liberation or enlightenment, just the wish to practice Dharma is amazing. Just having this wish arise is so fortunate, because you are giving yourself the opportunity to find the door to your own wisdom.

Through this you can achieve mental peace, inner happiness. Whatever your initial wish, there can also be the opportunity to achieve inner happiness, to achieve ultimate happiness such as nirvana or the omniscient mind, buddhahood. This won't happen unless you give yourself this opportunity to understand the methods on the path to ultimate happiness.

You should be pleased with what you are trying to achieve, not just a few days' peace and happiness, not just one month's, not just one life's—just this single life's happiness—not just several lives' happiness. This is happiness beyond this life, right up to the state of the omniscient mind. The main aim is to achieve the omniscient mind.

Who should you achieve this omniscient mind of enlightenment for? For other sentient beings, to eliminate the suffering of other sentient beings and, through that, to allow them to reach the highest state of omniscience. That selfless goal is the goal you should have in your heart whenever you listen to teachings, study or practice meditation. That is the purpose. It is not for your sake, not for attaining pleasure for yourself, not even for attaining ultimate happiness for yourself. This is the main goal you should have in your heart, whatever other goals you might have.

Some of you might think I've just explained the motive to obtain a miserable mind, instead of benefitting other sentient beings! Some of you might have come with some goal of developing peace, some kind of realization in the mind. Some of you others might have no clear goal what you want to achieve, no particular wish to pacify the mind or to achieve ultimate happiness. Maybe some friend was coming to this course and so you also decided to join in. Or maybe you're already a great master of *chulen* meditation—living for months on the essence of a flower or a rock—and you've come to teach others! You can earn a lot of praise teaching others. I've also come with that motivation!

Even if your attitude is to achieve temporary or ultimate happiness for yourself, that should be transformed into the wish to benefit all sentient beings, to eliminate all the sentient beings' suffering. Instead of happiness for yourself, the attitude becomes trying to obtain happiness for others. However, you cannot do this great work for others without having attained the state of omniscience. Becoming omniscient is difficult; it cannot be attained without generating the entire path to enlightenment in your own mind. To do that, you should listen and understand, study and meditate on the complete path to enlightenment.

There are many hindrances from the inside, from the mind. And, because of that, there are many hindrances from outside, many external things that disturb the mind, blocking you from accomplishing the path, from studying and meditating on the complete path to enlightenment.

There are many conditions necessary for you to succeed in even some small work to attain a few days of pleasure, even to do the work of this life. And because there is no greater work than attaining the highest state of omniscience for the benefit of sentient beings, there are many hindrances from inside and outside.

There are different prayers that can be recited to overcome these hindrances. They are not just some ritual without meaning. They don't have to be perfect, but they should be prayers that are meditations to prevent the difficult hindrances arising. Listening, studying and meditating become effective means to benefit your mind.

Some of you have already been doing some prayers and meditations that we will do in the course. Because you have to understand the meaning of these prayers, they will be explained during the course. To even have a rough idea can take years of study. However gradually, gradually you can understand the prayers, even though you can't understand them in the beginning. If you do not wish to do the prayers, you don't have to; you are not obliged to do it. Whenever you feel like it, then you can say the prayers. As you hear it in English and you meditate on it, gradually you will understand the meaning of the prayer.

THE HEART SUTRA

This time the prayers are done in a different way, not as in previous courses. How it is traditionally done is we recite the *Heart Sutra* at the beginning, then, after that, we normally do the lamrim teachings, when the lamas give the teachings on the graduated path to enlightenment. There's a very long preliminary practice to do. So here, we'll cut a bit out. As well as doing the *Lama Chöpa*, the *Guru Puja*, which is the guru yoga of Lama Tsongkhapa, along with the *Jorhö* practice, at this time

what I've planned to do is study Lama Tsongkhapa's short lamrim prayer, *Hymns of Experience*,¹ Lama Tsongkhapa's own experience on the path to enlightenment. Even though this text is short, it explains the complete path from beginning up to enlightenment. Also, because of the way it is written, just reading it is very beneficial for the mind.

That is one reason why Lama Tsongkhapa's biography was read this morning. There are many texts that contain different biographies of Lama Tsongkhapa. One text only talks about how extensively he studied, whereas some others contain all the experiences Lama Tsongkhapa had, all the incredible realizations he attained. There are different biographies. I don't think all are translated into English.

So, we'll read together and those who have copies can help.

I think the *Heart Sutra* is probably enlightenment's good news! This teaching is the essence of all the sutra teachings, which is why it is called the *Heart Sutra*. The subject of this prayer is emptiness only—*shunyata*. Shunyata is the essence of all the Buddhist teachings, both sutra and tantra, the essence of the whole teachings from the Buddha.

The best method to prevent hindrances such as sickness is to explain the Dharma, to listen to it, study it and meditate on it. This prevents both inner and outer hindrances—outer hindrances such as the black side beings, the maras, who dislike you practicing the Dharma and try to disturb you and prevent you from doing it. By the power of reciting emptiness prayers like this, they cannot disturb you.

[Rinpoche and the students recite the *Heart Sutra*]

WE NEED TO TASTE THE DHARMA TO UNDERSTAND ITS IMPORTANCE

This is according to my limited understanding, which comes from no practice, no experience. My practice is the opposite to Dharma; it is the opposite to the actual irrefutable practices. The Dharma teachings as explained by the Buddha are like the Earth, like space, like the oceans, so extensive, whereas my understanding of the teachings of the Buddha is like a single atom, so limited. With no inner practice, no experience, my practice is the opposite to the Dharma. How is it possible to teach meditation when I myself don't practice, when I have no experience, nothing? Teaching meditation to others seems an impossible thing.

I was wondering what benefit you will receive here. But here there is not only me. Here, nowadays, we have many geshe who are all well-educated. They have studied and practiced for their whole life, in order to be able to give teachings. So, I think you are not completely without hope! You will certainly receive something, so it is not completely hopeless.

There must be some reason why we have met, why you have come from far and different places and we are all gathered here. There must be some reason. Also, by listening to the advice of Lama Yeshe and not breaking his advice, I can then give teachings of the Buddha from the little I've heard from the holy mouths of my gurus. As much as possible, according to the time we have, I will try to go

¹ This is more commonly known as *A Song of Experience (Lamrim Nyam Gyur)* but as Rinpoche invariably calls it *Hymns of Experience* we will use that name. (See *FPMT Retreat Prayer book*, pp. 258–65.)

through the teachings and explain them. There will sometimes be misunderstandings, due to my bad pronunciation, my broken English. We can discuss those points you are not clear on; the misunderstandings can be clarified by discussing. The geshees will also be coming to the discussions. Also there are people who have heard the teachings and studied before, so you can discuss things with them and clear up the wrong understandings.

It is very important to study first, to listen and to understand. Without understanding, how can you discriminate what is the right path and what is the wrong path? There is no way. Before studying the teachings, it's impossible to decide from your own knowledge.

Even if you don't practice, the first thing is to have an understanding of the teachings of the Buddha. That is extremely important because, by understanding them, you can understand how they are true, unbetrayable teachings. If you practice, if you follow the path of the teachings, you will never be misled; it will definitely lead you to the goal, the state of omniscience. You will definitely reach the enlightened state. And by discovering that the teachings of the Buddha are true, unbetrayable, you can discover that the founder of the teachings, the Buddha, is the true founder, the unbetrayable founder.

Through listening, understanding, studying and meditating—especially through meditating—you get the experience of the path. Then, as you gain the experience of the path to enlightenment in your own mind, at that time you can clearly see how it works, how the teachings are unbetrayable. Through the experience of meditation you can clearly feel how it is definitely possible to achieve the state of nirvana, to achieve the omniscient mind.

It is written that the most important thing to understand is why you do the practice. The more you understand the teachings of the Buddha, the more benefit there is for your life. Try to understand, to check as you study whether the path is a pure path or not. It's like with the food. If there's delicious-looking food in the store, without tasting it yourself, without your experience of it, you cannot tell what kind of taste it has, whether it is delicious or disgusting.

It's the same with the special quality of Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings. The more you study, the more you understand, the more you can check whether or not the teachings are pure, logical, valid. The more you check the deeper your understanding will be; the more you check the more you will find the teachings are pure. That's the special quality of Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings. They are not something you have to just believe in without ever checking.

For some other paths, the only way to practice is by following with faith, without checking what is right and wrong. If you question it, there's the danger you will discover mistakes. Any path that needs to guard its reasons, that doesn't allow you to question it, that insists you accept it and follow it with faith, such a path is not a pure path. Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings are never like that. They are very practical, very rational; you are encouraged to check them. And the deeper you examine the teachings to see whether they are pure or not, the more you will perceive how pure they are.

You can tell yourself how pure and logical the Buddha's teachings are, just as the texts say, when you study them deeply enough. That's one thing to emphasize. First, check them out as you are trying to understand them. At first certain subjects will seem unclear, difficult to understand. The path you are going to be listening to, and studying and meditating on, will be difficult at first because you've

never heard it before. It's a very new thing, something you have never experienced from beginningless past lives.

So, you definitely shouldn't expect to easily understand and generate the realizations through meditation within a few days or within a month. Realizations only come gradually. You should not have a small mind, thinking, "I am hopeless. I cannot understand. This teaching is not for me. I'm hopeless." Thinking like that only causes you more wind disease! Instead of bringing you peace, practicing the Dharma only disturbs your mind, making the mind more unpeaceful. So, you shouldn't feel like that.

Gradually, as you listen to the teachings, and study and meditate, you will have a clearer and clearer understanding. You should determine that however long it takes and however difficult it is to understand and experience the realizations of the path, you will do it! For example, if there is a tree that produces fruit that has an acid taste, just putting something sweet, like honey, around the tree a few times won't transform the taste of the fruit to sweet. Even doing it several times can't transform the taste.

Similarly, just doing one or two days' meditation, or even several years' meditation, you shouldn't expect to easily transform the mind into the Dharma, to easily generate the graduated path to enlightenment. It might be easy without bearing many hardships to have an experience of meditation right away—within a few days or within a week or a month—but then the mind becomes disturbed. That is because you expected too much at the beginning. Only after some time, after several months, something happens in the mind, and slowly, slowly, you graduate to junior class then to senior class!

In order to achieve the state of omniscience for the sake of sentient beings, no matter how long it takes, even if it takes a hundred eons, make the determination, "I will do it. I will follow the path in this life for the benefit of sentient beings. No matter how long it takes, no matter how difficult it is, I will do it." If you have such strong will, if you make long-term plans like this, you will be able to follow the path and transform your mind into the Dharma. A person with such great will can generate the realizations of the meditations within three months or within three years. You can definitely have realization of the graduated path to enlightenment.

It's difficult for a small-minded person—somebody with no plans for long-time practice—to bear the hardships and even any pain. They might expect to become enlightened very easily, very comfortably; they might think within a few years, a few months, a few days they can reach a high level of realizations of the path. It is difficult for such a small-minded person. They encounter more hindrances and it becomes difficult for them to become successful in generating the complete path to enlightenment.

So, if you have come from very far away and at great expense, it is very important that this time here is not a waste of time. You haven't come here because it's the law. Coming to this course is not part of your country's law and you'll get punished if you don't come. You won't be put in prison. It's not like that. The fact you have come here of your own choice, that you are here, is great.

As I mentioned before, attending this course must point you on the path of the good heart. It must give you the good motivation to always meditate on the teachings as much as possible, to attempt to listen, study and meditate with a good motivation, with a good heart. Even if your early life was

utterly without meaning, during this one month you must try to make your life as meaningful as possible, as beneficial for all the sentient beings as possible—not only for yourself but for all the sentient beings. That’s extremely important.

[Mandala offering]

Lecture 3

November 11, 1980

HAPPINESS AND SUFFERING COME FROM THE MIND

I'm going to read some parts of the prayers in Tibetan, so those who know the visualization can do the meditation with the prayer. Even if I just read this prayer or something similar, like the *Heart Sutra*, just listening plants the seed in your mind to quickly generate the realizations on the graduated path to enlightenment.

[Rinpoche reads a prayer in Tibetan]

In order to attain your wish to have happiness and to not have suffering, there are the wisdom teachings. The principal cause of happiness or suffering is not external, it is the mind. Happiness and suffering are products, produced from causes that come from the mind. All happiness and suffering come from the mind. All suffering comes from which type of mind? The unsubdued mind, the mind whose nature is wrathful, angry, untamed. Such a mind is disturbed by selfish thoughts. The root is the self-cherishing thought. Conversely, all happiness comes from the subdued mind, from the peaceful mind.

Because of that, if you wish for happiness or if you do not want suffering, what you should do in everyday life to obtain happiness and eliminate suffering is to take care of your mind. You must protect your mind, always watching it and keeping it peaceful, virtuous, never letting it be disturbed. You should not let yourself become under the control of the unsubdued mind.

If you protect your mind like this in your everyday life, there's always peace in the mind, there's always harmony, there's always happiness. If you let your mind come under the control of the disturbed or unsubdued mind, then there's no peace. In that way, the mind is compared to an elephant. If you let it run wild, it can disturb you, it can harm you and others. Unless you tame it, tether it, unless you take care of the mind, like taming an elephant, a mind controlled by delusions, an unsubdued mind, becomes very dangerous, very harmful to others and to yourself. Unless you tame the crazy mind, it gets more and more unsubdued, more and more violent; then there are more and more problems in your life, and your Dharma practice becomes less and less.

Unless the mind is subdued, no matter how much education you have, there can never be any peace. Somebody who has very strong self-cherishing, very strong pride or anger, who is very impatient or has a strong clinging mind full of attachment or jealousy, no matter how much education that person has, there is no peace. No matter how rich they are, no matter how many possessions or how great a reputation they have, there is still no peace and there are always many problems. The stronger the clinging and attachment to reputation and such, the less peace there is.

Even if they are religious, even if they are studying Dharma, without subduing the mind there is no peace. If they do not attempt to use the Dharma they have studied to subdue their mind, if they don't use it to eliminate their pride, there can't be any peace. No matter how much they understand the Dharma, how much they are a great scholar, there is no peace in their mind, no happiness in their life.

CUTTING OFF THE FOUR CLINGINGS

What blocks you from having peace and happiness in your life? There are four clingings that don't allow any peace at all. So many of the problems of this life come from these four clingings: the disturbing thought that clings to this life, that clings to samsara, that clings to a sense of a true self and that clings to cherishing yourself rather than cherishing others. The self-cherishing thought is the most harmful attitude; it is something that you definitely have to transform and to eliminate.

The very root of the whole of suffering is grasping the I, grasping on to it as if it is truly existent. While the I doesn't exist from its own side, you grasp on to it as if it does. All of your suffering comes from this source.

These four clingings cause so many problems in your life and block you from experiencing any happiness. Whatever you do when you practice the Dharma should be an antidote to these four clingings. Unless the meditation has the energy to eliminate them, it doesn't make sense. There is no way that Dharma practice can become the cause of happiness, the cause of peace of mind.

At this time, before receiving the excellent teaching of the graduated path to enlightenment, we will do the very precious motivation of the four clingings. I'm not saying the four clingings are precious! Cutting off clinging to the four clingings—that's what's precious.

If you look you can see that you are not separate from the four clingings; you are kind of at one with them. That's why life has so much confusion. These four clingings make you frantic because whatever you do is always accompanied by them and therefore whatever you do will have many problems. No matter how you try to lead your life differently, problems never cease because you are always friendly with these four clingings, your actions are always accompanied by these four clingings. If you really seek happiness, what you should do is practice separating yourself from these four clingings that always give you so many problems and always disturb you, never letting you succeed in your wish for happiness.

There is a story of these teachings about cutting off the four clingings. When the great Tibetan yogi whose mind gained great realizations, Sakya Pandita, was only twelve, he followed a translator, his guru, Dragpa Gyaltzen, the great compassionate one. His guru told him that because he was the spiritual son of Lama Atisha and Lama Dromtönpa, he should be able to study. His guru advised him to do a retreat on Manjushri, the special buddha of wisdom. All the buddhas' wisdom is manifested in this special aspect, so those who practice Manjushri as a special manifestation of wisdom can receive each of the seven wisdoms. You can achieve *great wisdom* to comprehend and memorize both the meanings and the words of the extensive teachings, and *clear wisdom* to be able to understand the subtle meaning. You can have *quick wisdom* to be able to immediately understand any difficult points, any unknown subjects, and to immediately eliminate wrong conceptions, and you can have things like *profound wisdom* as well as the *wisdom to explain the Dharma*, *debating wisdom* and *writing wisdom*.

His guru advised him to do a retreat on Manjushri. At the beginning of the retreat there were some hindrances. Then, Sakya Pandita meditated on a wrathful deity and the hindrances were prevented. He did the retreat for six months and then one day during his meditation he saw the deity he had

been trying to achieve, Manjushri, sitting in front of him on a throne with two bodhisattvas beside him. Then, from his holy mouth, Manjushri gave this short teaching on the four clings to Sakya Pandita:

- If you cling to this life, you are not a Dharma practitioner.
- If you cling to the three realms [of samsara] that is not renunciation.
- If you cling to cherishing the self that is not bodhicitta.
- If you cling to the self as truly existing that is not right view.

After Sakya Pandita had been given this teaching by Arya Manjushri, he kept this advice in his heart and meditated much on it, realizing that the importance of the practice of all Buddha's teachings is contained in these four advices. He discovered these four advices were extremely profound and put them into action.

CLINGING TO THIS LIFE

The first advice is that if you cling to this life, you are not a Dharma practitioner. It's like wishing to drink mirage water, which is just a hallucination. Seeing the appearance of the water and believing it to be real water, you wish to drink it, but you are just attempting to drink mirage water. When the motivation of people trying to practice Dharma is clinging to the happiness of this life, no matter whether they say prayers, do retreats or do whatever different forms of practice, the practice does not become pure Dharma. Even if they think they experience bliss while practicing Dharma, their action doesn't become Dharma; it doesn't become virtue. Because of that, it doesn't become the cause of happiness.

When Dromtönpa asked Lama Atisha what the result would be if actions were done with the motive of clinging to this life, Lama Atisha answered that the result would be rebirth as a hell being, a hungry ghost or an animal. For actions done without this motive, the result would be rebirth as a happy transmigratory being, as a human being or a worldly god. Even if the practitioner did a retreat for eons in the holiest place, where there were no people, not even animals; if their motive was completely for the happiness of this life—for the enjoyment of pleasure or reputation or good clothing and so forth—they would end in hell. The retreat wouldn't become holy Dharma but worldly dharma because it was done with worldly concern, just seeking the happiness of this life.

Not just in retreat, whatever actions you do, if they are done with this worldly concern, with the thought of seeking happiness for this life, they are nonvirtuous because they are done with a nonvirtuous thought. The result is suffering. The result you experience is confusion in this life and even after this life. The highly realized pandit, Chandragomin, described it as like an ox who is attached to a few clumps of the grass growing at the edge of a precipice. Running to get the grass, the ox trips over the edge without receiving the grass and dies. Worldly beings who have attachment to this life are similar to that example.

The actions of worldly beings whose aim is to seek the happiness of this life are nonvirtuous because their motivation is attachment. Attachment is nonvirtue. So, with the motivation of worldly concern, however much work they do to achieve happiness, because all those actions become nonvirtuous, the result is suffering. That is similar to the example of trying to drink the mirage water to quench the suffering of thirst.

When you are trying to practice Dharma, as long as you are clinging to this life, the nonvirtuous thought dwelling in your heart always comes to disturb you. When it arises, it doesn't let your actions become pure Dharma. Even if you meditate for an hour, this worldly concern of clinging to this life doesn't let the mind stay on the object of meditation. Strong clinging to the happiness of this life brings many other distractions that disturb the meditation. It never lets your mind remain quiet but is always looking for the desirable objects, the things you have attachment for, like possessions, friends and food.

When you try to do some good action like helping others or you try to practice Dharma by making offerings, doing prostrations and so forth, the thought clinging to this life arises and pollutes the action, so the motive becomes nonvirtuous, making the actions worldly dharma not holy Dharma. There are eight worldly dharmas: craving happiness and unhappiness, good and bad reputation, receiving material things and not receiving material things, and admiration and criticism. There are the four desirable and the four undesirable objects.

Because there is great attachment, clinging to the happiness of this life, unhappiness comes. And as the attachment to the happiness of this life becomes less, there is more real happiness in this life. With less attachment, less clinging, even when you experience discomfort, there is less confusion in the mind, less concern for the comfort of this life. When you meet discomfort, there's a lot less fear, worry and aversion to that discomfort. Whether you suffer or not from an uncomfortable situation depends on how much concern there is clinging to the comfort of this life.

Why is there so much concern for comfort? Even if somebody doesn't get exactly the food they want or if there is some small problem with the food, it becomes a huge problem in their mind. The whole day becomes filled with anxiety, from morning till night, "Today I didn't get the good food I wanted." It becomes a huge problem. Or if somebody finds a bug in their room, a bug or a mosquito flying around in their big apartment, around their comfortable bed, they become terrified and completely freak out. "Oh, this is my room and there is this terrible bug on my bed!" Even though the bug is so small, they cannot relax—not even their friends can relax because they are so wound up. For them it is a disaster.

So, Manjushri, the buddha of wisdom's advice to Sakya Pandita was to separate from the four clings. If you cling to this life, you are not a Dharma practitioner. What happens is you believe the mirage water is real water and you grasp onto it, attempting to relieve the suffering of thirst. Unless you renounce that, it is unresolvable because you are clinging to this life's happiness with this evil thought, therefore whatever you do—living in the moral conduct, listening, studying, meditating—doesn't become pure Dharma.

The danger of clinging to this life is true of those who practice the Dharma and those who don't. You can easily understand this if you examine your own experience and that of others. Checking out others, you can see how a person who has very strong clinging to the attachments of this life has more problems, and somebody who practices Dharma and has less clinging to this life has less problems. Whatever situation they encounter, whether it's a good situation or a bad one, nothing becomes a big disturbance. It is less of a shock, less of a problem. It depends so much on the strength of the clinging a person has to these four desirable objects and the strength of the fear, worry and anger that arises when they meet the four undesirable objects.

For instance, a person who drinks too much finds it very difficult to be satisfied no matter what situation they are in. There is always something missing, always something wrong; the mind is always difficult to satisfy. Even food and clothing and other enjoyments don't bring satisfaction with such a difficult mind.

You can see this with a person who clings so much to a good reputation. (I think it's very good to cling to bad reputation!) Somebody might have a good reputation, but if they cling to it, they are always worried they might lose it. Also, when they cling to it, they have to work very hard, putting so much time and effort into it, spending millions of dollars—all for their good reputation. At the same time there's great fear of losing it. I think when such a person faces criticism there is great pain in the heart. There is so much worry they will not receive the reputation they want.

It's similar when you cling to the admiration of others, wanting other people to compliment you for the work you have done or the help you have given. If somebody doesn't thank you after you have given them a piece of chocolate or a cup of coffee, it becomes a huge problem. If they just took it quietly without offering a word of thanks, you suffer greatly because their admiration is so important. Then for days and days you show a black face to that ungrateful person.

Similarly, when you work together as a team and you helped somebody and they thank all the other people but not you, when you are completely left out like that, it becomes like putting a needle in the heart. You feel great pain.

All this is kind of nonsense. These are useless kinds of worries. There's no point at all to get worried; there's no point to suffer; there's no point to get angry. It just doesn't make any sense. But for the person full of clinging, it does! The problem comes from the clinging, from not facing and averting the attachment and clinging during this life for things such as the pleasure you receive from admiration.

The fact is all this is suffering—the worries and dislike and so forth—when you meet these four bad circumstances comes from the clinging. Even if you have the four desirable objects—comfort, possessions, good reputation, compliments—when you cling to those four objects there is also suffering. There's no peace as long as you are clinging. That thought itself of clinging to a desirable object is a confused mind; it is suffering. The nature of that thought is not relaxed, not peaceful. Its nature is uptight, it's a tightness; it is tied to the object, bound to the object.

All the unbelievably many problems in the West basically come from not having renounced clinging to this life. From the root of clinging to this life come all the many problems, like branches coming from the trunk of a tree.

For instance, the company you worked for has closed down, leaving you without a job, and you are unable to find another one. Once something like that happens, there is so much clinging to receiving material possessions. There is the fear of losing what you have and not finding more. There is tremendous fear that you have failed in some way. There is such unbelievable worry you can have a nervous breakdown or go completely crazy, going back home with your whole body shaking, full of sweat, utterly unable to relax at all, becoming completely berserk. Then, in your own mind, there's no other solution—the only way is to go and see a psychologist. You take refuge in a psychologist!

If the psychologist is skillful, it might work sometimes. Certain words they say might help you relax a little. Maybe you'll be better for one day but then, the next day, you're back to the same worry, and again you have to go to see the psychologist. It starts to become tiresome like this but you can see no other method, so what can be done? Talking with them for just a few minutes is a huge expense, but you have to go back again and again. Then your partner also goes crazy because things didn't work in the business and you no longer have a job for life. Your whole life becomes crazy. You seem completely useless.

When a person becomes crazy, they create problems in their relationship. There is disharmony and it might even lead to a separation. The husband leaves the wife for another woman or the wife leaves the husband for another man, and when they separate they create further unbelievable fear and worry. Even the thought of leaving the beautiful apartment or house, leaving the luxury, no longer eating very expensive and delicious food, is like living in a hell realm. They are so completely overwhelmed by the fears and worries and all these things to do with the separation, it doesn't make any difference whether they are living in a hovel or a mansion, living in a beautiful house, wearing beautiful clothes, eating delicious, expensive food. There's no peace in the mind; there's no sleep, no happiness.

The tradition is to then go to the bars, to take refuge in some bottles! They take ten or fifteen bottles into their bedroom and take refuge in drink. That only makes it worse. Life is very untogether. Some people sleep if they drink; they don't become violent, so that's a good thing. If you go to sleep on beer, there's no danger, but others become violent when they are intoxicated. They fight the whole family, destroying the possessions, beating the children, quarrelling with the neighbors without any reason. All the bad thoughts they have about others' mistakes that they usually keep silent about come out. Everything comes out. Then other people fight, creating great disharmony.

When there is no peace, when whatever wish you have is unsatisfied and you don't get what you want, the final decision comes to commit suicide. You have to climb a very high tower, the highest one, and you jump from there. Or you go around to where there is a big bridge. That's the only thing some people can think of. It's the immediate way to solve the problem. They can see no other way out. No other thought comes in the mind, so they just accept it. Like that, they completely waste this precious human life, this life that can be highly meaningful, highly beneficial for themselves and for all sentient beings. They completely make this life meaningless; they waste it completely.

This life is like a wish-granting jewel that is extremely difficult to get, allowing you to obtain whatever you wish for. Wasting this precious human life is like having a wish-granting jewel but not recognizing its worth, and, instead of making it useful, just throwing it away, throwing it over a precipice.

Not able to gain satisfaction from the first relationship, you divorce and marry again, but then, after some time, you get divorced again—and then there is one marriage after another. You continually experience the same problem, like a wheel turning endlessly on and on. That is due to the dissatisfied mind. All these are mistakes come from clinging to this life.

The great Kadampa Geshe Sharawa said that because the cause of the suffering is the desire for this life, you should therefore renounce trying to attain this desire. When you do too much work for this life, when you cling too much to this life, the mind is not happy. All you do is make yourself

completely busy. You work very hard in order to satisfy your desire but satisfaction never happens. Why? You are always dissatisfied because you are always following the mind of dissatisfaction, the mind that clings to the happiness of this life. If the purpose is to get satisfaction but the method is wrong, it can never work. You might face many difficulties and dangers to gain this life's happiness but, no matter how dangerous it might be, no matter how much you keep on and on, it can never work.

This is why Kadampa Geshe Sharawa said a person who clings to this life is always looking what to do, where to go, where to run in order to satisfy their desires, and in doing that they accumulate so much negative karma and receive so much suffering, such as getting a bad reputation or experiencing so many undesirable things. That happens when there is incredibly strong clinging like this.

In this world, even when people have enough to live comfortably, even though they are not in danger of starvation, they can be even more plagued by the dissatisfied mind. Clinging to pleasure, they always want more, even though there is enough for their life. And if there's no peaceful way to get the possessions they want from other people, then they steal them. That's how the thought to steal comes about. When they see how rich another person is, how much money they have in the bank, they might even decide to kill them in order to take the money. In that way, all the negative karmas are accumulated.

Then, they are caught and punished by being thrown into prison, and their name is in all the newspapers, giving them a bad reputation and creating much criticism. All of this—the punishment, the bad reputation, the criticism, the fear and worry, all the negative karma and so forth—fall like heavy rainfall. Therefore, Kadampa Geshe Sharawa said that clinging to this life is the root from which all these branches grow, the problems you encounter in this life. Therefore, it is necessary to overcome the desire for this life's happiness. Whenever you are able to do that, happiness begins.

RENOUNCING THE EIGHT WORLDLY DHARMAS IS THE BEST DHARMA

Nagarjuna explained that to completely overcome all worry and anxiety you need to equalize all your feelings of happiness and unhappiness, comfort and discomfort, the wish for possessions and the fear of not receiving them, and the wish for a good reputation and admiration and the fear of a bad reputation and criticism. For the great yogis, the meditators, their minds are not that much disturbed whenever any of the eight conditions arise. There is no attachment to comfort, possessions, reputation or admiration and there is no aversion to discomfort, lack of possessions, bad reputation or criticism. Even if they meet the four desirable objects they don't cling to them.

Whatever conditions arise, however things change, there is always peace in the mind. Wherever they go, there is always peace in the mind. Not clinging to the pleasures of this life, different circumstances don't bother them at all, and there is great peace. Since clinging to these eight worldly dharmas is the root of all faults, it is easy to see that when that is overcome there are no longer the problems that come with the eight worldly dharmas, like branches stemming from the trunk of a tree.

Otherwise, your life is so busy, full of expectations you'll get this and that, and full of worries and fear you won't get what you want. It's easy to see that by overcoming clinging to this life, your mind

becomes very peaceful. This is actually the meaning of practicing the Dharma. It means renouncing this life, separating from the evil thought clinging to this life that, until now, you have always been together with. You can see that practicing Dharma means renouncing suffering. When whatever action you do becomes the cause of cutting off clinging to this life, it becomes pure Dharma.

As the Kadampa geshe, the yogi Chekawa said,

Not being attached to happiness is the best happiness,
Not being attached to possessions is the best possession,
Not being attached to a good reputation is the best reputation,
Not being attached to admiration is the best admiration.

Even though the great beings like Shakyamuni and Milarepa didn't try to receive things like offerings or reputation, even though they didn't expect such things, by completely renouncing them, they had the best offerings, the best reputation, the greatest respect.

It is like Kadampa Geshe Ben Gungyal. I'm not going to mention the whole story. Before he met the Dharma, he was a thief in the daytime and a robber at night. He had his own land where he grew barley. Even though he got a big load, many sacks of grain from his field, he still stole from others in the daytime and at night. Day and night he worked so hard! He carried many weapons around his waist, tied to his belt: knives, arrows and all kinds of weapons. I don't think he had bombs! This is how he lived his early life. People in that area gave him the nickname "Forty Evil" because even though he obtained forty big sacks of barley from his field, he would still steal things from other people day and night.

Later, his mind was completely changed by hearing the Dharma. Then, he did much practice in a cave, examining his mind the whole day, practicing the lamrim. He completely renounced clinging to this life. Afterwards he became a great practitioner and achieved many realizations. Previously, he had been famous but now he was famous in a different way, for being a great practitioner and benefiting so many sentient beings. So many people came to see him and make offerings, and because of that, he said, "Before I practiced Dharma my mouth had trouble finding food, but now food has trouble finding my mouth." Previously, even though he worked so hard to get what he wanted, no matter how much he worked, he never had enough. But after he became a great yogi and reached the experience of the path, so many people made offerings to him that he couldn't enjoy all the food people offered.

When Kadampa Geshe Kharag Gomchung was living with a family, he got leprosy and the whole family became fed up with him and nobody wanted to take care of him. They were scared of him. He became very upset and somehow the thought of renunciation arose in his mind. Totally giving up his family, he decided that it didn't matter what he did. "I will just live on the road and recite the mantra OM MANI PADME HUM. I will live by begging." He did this, completely cutting off clinging to this life. One night, as he was asleep on top of a big rock, he had a dream that he was drowning and a white-colored man picked him up out of the water. After this dream his whole body felt soaked. What happened is that his leprosy was cured because he had made such a strong determination to purify his negativity and therefore practiced such pure Dharma. It was the result of negative karma and, with his purification, all the liquid contained in the wounds poured out while he was asleep and he completely recovered. There are many examples like this.

The Kadampa Geshe Gampopa said that possessions are like a bad person; they cannot be trusted. For instance, when poor people look at the lives of rich people, who have cars, a good house, a garden outside, travel and so forth, they see a kind of happy life. People who work in a circus and cabin crew or pilots of planes give the impression of leading happy lives. Some people might even seem to have a happy life in prison, having shelter and all their food provided! With examples like this, from one perspective, their lives seem happy. Maybe you think it would be very exciting to be in that group or have that role in life. But after you start, you realize that style of life is in the nature of suffering, full of problems. Seeing how wrong your previous view was, you feel upset, you feel great disappointment. You trusted one view and you were cheated by it.

You might decide because you have tried the rich life trying to be a straight person and that didn't bring you happiness, you then become a hippy. Maybe that can bring happiness in your life. But again, after trying that you see there is no happiness there, only disappointment. That's what Gampopa means, that possessions are like a bad person, totally untrustworthy. Even this body, this illusory body, is like it has just been borrowed. It's like it's something that doesn't belong to you. It is just with you for a short time and then you have to separate from it again.

This illusory body easily decays, and you must separate from it. Similarly, other possessions are like illusions conjured by a magician to cheat you. They are the cause of suffering. You see what a magician has transformed and given to you—beautiful clothing and jewels and so forth—and you completely trust them. Then, afterwards, when they don't stay as they are, you get upset. Like this, the nature of possessions is like a magician's trick; they are the cause of suffering. What is emphasized here is that there is no point in being attached. Tying yourself to the object, clinging to it, you circle in samsara forever. Therefore, you should cut off the I-grasping, the root of samsara. Remembering this advice is very good for the mind.

Lecture 4

November 13, 1980

HOLY DHARMA AND WORLDLY DHARMA ARE COMPLETE OPPOSITES

The great bodhisattva who wrote the *Thirty-Seven Practices of the Bodhisattva*, Thogme Zangpo, gave this advice:

There is nobody who has accomplished
Both the holy Dharma and the desire of this life.
There is no doubt that one who wishes to accomplish both cheats themselves.
I have nothing else to say to whoever I meet, even if I needed to.

Nobody can achieve the holy Dharma and cling on to the desire for this life. This is what Milarepa was advised by his guru, Marpa. Because of that, he renounced his worldly life. When you mix worldly dharma and holy Dharma, you lose the holy Dharma. Even if somebody is a great scholar, extremely learned in the extensive teachings, if they try to achieve both worldly dharma and holy Dharma together, that is the mistake they make.

You want enlightenment but you also want the comfort of this life. When you seek both together, you must lose one and Lama Marpa told Milarepa that it is the holy Dharma you lose. The Kadampa Geshe Potowa said that “a two-pointed needle cannot be used for sewing cloth.” Like that, worldly dharma and holy Dharma cannot work together. Nobody accomplishes both because those two are complete opposites.

You are just cheating yourself because you think you are working for happiness but in practice the work that is done is work for suffering. What is holy Dharma? What is worldly dharma? What is the thing to practice, the thing that benefits you, that brings peace in the mind? And what is the thing to renounce, the thing that bothers you, that makes you unhappy? This is the point. I have nothing else to advise you other than this. I have nothing else to say as important as this.

Therefore, wherever you are, try to transform your body and speech into virtue. Try to understand the very big difference between worldly pleasure and the pleasure of enjoying the Dharma. The great pandit Asanga said,

There is no way to compare the pleasure of eating, drinking, dancing, singing and so forth with the pleasure of enjoying the Dharma.

For example, let's say you eat the most delicious food, even if the tongue experiences that taste, the feet don't! Worldly pleasure is always limited in this way, whereas the pleasure of the Dharma is not. The experience of the pleasure of taste doesn't cover the whole body but the pleasure of the holy Dharma does. Worldly pleasures are only external conditions. When your object runs away, your pleasure stops! Or if you are far from the object, your pleasure stops. The enjoyment of the holy Dharma, on the other hand, doesn't depend on external pleasures.

Worldly pleasures don't cover the whole three realms—the desire, form and formless realms—whereas the pleasure of the holy Dharma does. The enjoyment of worldly pleasures does not benefit you or help to achieve realizations, either in this life or in future lives. There are seven jewels of the arya beings such as wisdom, devotion and so forth² and worldly pleasure does not help you attain these. But enjoying the pleasure of the holy Dharma causes you to generate realizations, attain the seven jewels of the arya beings and attain enlightenment.

Once you have enjoyed an external, worldly pleasure it finishes. The more you use something like food and drink, the more you enjoy it, the quicker it finishes. The enjoyment does not increase as you use it but rather it diminishes and then ceases. On the other hand, the pleasure you experience from the Dharma does not diminish or cease; it always increases. However much you experience, however much you enjoy the holy Dharma, it always increases. The more you practice, the more your peace of mind increases.

The worldly pleasure of having things such as possessions or friends can also be disturbed or stopped by an enemy. Getting jealous of your possessions, thieves can come and steal them; other people can come to beg. The more wealth you have, the more likely many enemies will try to disturb your enjoyment of that wealth. Whereas possessions, even friends, can be taken by enemies, causing you to lose your pleasure, Dharma pleasure can never be stolen by an outside enemy. You cannot carry worldly pleasure into future lives, but you can carry the pleasure of enjoying the holy Dharma into future lives. It can be carried all the time.

The enjoyment of worldly pleasures is not unceasing; it is not a continuum. The act of enjoying a worldly pleasure causes it to end. But the pleasure of enjoying the holy Dharma is unceasing; it doesn't finish, it doesn't end. The more you enjoy the holy Dharma, the more the pleasure increases, and it becomes unceasing.

Further, no matter how much you enjoy worldly pleasures, they can never give satisfaction, whereas the pleasure of enjoying the holy Dharma gives satisfaction. Worldly pleasures bring you many problems in this life and lead to many sufferings in future lives. The pleasure of enjoying the holy Dharma not only pacifies the problems of this life but also pacifies the suffering of the future lives.

Worldly pleasures, such as eating, drinking alcohol, the company of women or men, are like the pleasure of scratching a leprosy sore. To relieve the itching you scratch it, but that scratching is itself only suffering. You just label it “pleasure.” It is just given the name “pleasure.” Somebody with leprosy feels terrible itching, but when they scratch that is still only suffering—the basis is suffering. The relief caused by the scratching is just a different feeling, but it is still suffering. However, because it brings temporary relief from the itching of the leprosy sore, it seems like pleasure. Similarly, all worldly pleasures are only suffering; they are just given the name “pleasure” by the superstitious mind. The pleasure enjoying the holy Dharma is not like that. With ultimate happiness and peace, the cause of suffering, the delusions, are pacified. Ultimate happiness, unlike worldly happiness, is not just a base that is in the nature of suffering but is labeled “pleasure.”

Then, enjoying worldly pleasures causes attachment to arise. However much you enjoy them, rather than giving satisfaction, they always give rise to attachment. On the other hand, the pleasure of enjoying the holy Dharma pacifies the disturbed, unsubdued mind of attachment. Worldly pleasures

² They are wisdom, devotion, ethics, learning, generosity, integrity and consideration for others.

create negative karma and make you do harmful actions, such as taking the life of other creatures. Because of your need for worldly pleasures, you might uncaringly even take the life of another human being to obtain what you want.

The confusion of the clinging to the happiness of this life blocks you from achieving enlightenment. Even if you have the wish to achieve enlightenment in this life, it doesn't allow that to happen. Even if you wish to achieve nirvana, it doesn't allow it to happen. Clinging to the happiness of this life doesn't allow you complete happiness in future lives; it doesn't even give peace in this life. That's why Manjushri said that if you cling to this life you are not a Dharma practitioner. You also have to understand that actions done with that motivation are not pure Dharma. Mostly actions done with this thought become the cause of samsara. There are certain exceptional actions that become the cause of enlightenment without a particular motivation. Otherwise, most of the actions done with this thought, clinging to this life, do not become holy Dharma.

You should listen to the teachings of the Buddha that show the path to attain enlightenment that explain how to separate yourself from clinging to this life. Then, you should reflect on the meaning of what you have listened to and studied. You should resolve to cut off the wrong understanding through studying what you have heard. After you have become clearer by studying and examining like that, you should then meditate on it. With that resolve, your doubts will definitely be cut off and the subject will become clearer. When the meaning is clear, you meditate on it to generate the realization of the path.

To reach enlightenment for the benefit of other sentient beings, you should reflect on the usefulness of the precious human body, with its freedoms and richnesses. This allows you to take the essence from this life in order to achieve enlightenment by listening, understanding, studying and then meditating on the path.

THE PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH

In order to follow and complete the path, to work toward attaining enlightenment, you should generate great energy and reflect on loving kindness. How important that is! From beginningless lifetimes until now, there has been no single suffering in samsara that you have not experienced and no samsaric pleasure left that you have never experienced. Whatever problem you see, even though you might not have experienced it in this life but have just seen other sentient beings experiencing, you have certainly experienced it in past lives. There is not one samsaric suffering or samsaric pleasure left that you can point to and categorically say you have never experienced.

Even the Buddha's holy enlightened mind which can see every single thing that exists cannot count how many bodies you have taken. You have had numberless bodies throughout your beginningless past lives until now. However, of all the bodies you have had, you have never once realized its true essence. There hasn't been one body in which you have attained the path and realized emptiness. Of the uncountable bodies you have had, there hasn't been one single body where you have experienced generating bodhicitta.

At this present time you have found a precious human body, with the eight freedoms and the ten richnesses. While you have this precious body, this perfect body with its freedoms and richnesses, on this body you must do whatever you can to take its essence.

Generally, people feel there is nothing special in having such a precious body, whereas they feel great happiness if they make five dollars profit in their business. When you think there is no money in your pocket, that you have completely run out of money, and then you find a dollar on the street, you feel so happy! Amazing!

Conversely, on the way back from the shop after buying chocolate, if a dollar drops out of your pocket or you find the shopkeeper has shortchanged you, you would be miserable; there would be a huge sense of loss. On the other hand, no matter how much you waste this precious body with its freedoms and riches, there is not even a tiny sense of loss. The feeling of loss is even greater when you lose possessions and the feeling of happiness of having them is much greater.

At this time, this precious human body you have received is much more valuable, much more excellent, than a hundred wish-fulfilling jewels. And one wish-fulfilling jewel is much more valuable than billions of dollars. Dollars we understand!

In previous times bodhisattvas who had great qualities were able to find wish-fulfilling jewels in the ocean, like the Atlantic Ocean. They got them from the ocean by going in a boat. I think it is of great importance that they were able to find them. After they were found, the jewels had to be washed in three ways with different materials such as soft cotton because they were covered in mud and were very filthy. Then, when people put a wish-fulfilling jewel on top of the house on a special day, such as a full moon day, they would receive whatever material possession they wished for without any effort, just by the power of that jewel. While it is extremely rare to find even one wish-fulfilling jewel, if you found a hundred billion, even a trillion, they would not be able to help you in the slightest in avoiding migrating to the evil-gone realms, the lower realms, after this life. Only with this precious human body can you avoid these realms. Only by using this precious human body meaningfully can you avoid migrating to the lower realms and becoming an animal, a hungry ghost or a hell being after this life.

With a precious human body you can achieve anything you want. If you wish to receive the body of the king of the worldly gods, you can. The worldly gods such as Brahma or Indra have incredible powers and material possessions. They are incomparably more powerful and richer than the most powerful and richest king or leader of the human world. If you wish to attain the state of the most powerful god like Indra you can, or you can attain another good human body where you can succeed in whatever worldly business you want. If you wish to be born in a pure realm of a buddha you can, such as the pure land of Milarepa, Heruka, Amitabha or Lama Tsongkhapa, the pure realm of Tushita. After this life, if you wish to travel to one of these pure realms, you can achieve that with this precious human body. Beside all those things that you can achieve with this precious human body, you can achieve peace, the sorrowless state of nirvana, and the state of the omniscient mind.

You *could* achieve all this with this precious human body, except that from your own side you haven't practiced. From your own side you haven't worked for that. You have the potential to achieve nirvana and the state of the omniscient mind, if only you had done the work, but you haven't practiced.

With this precious human body, you can even achieve the unified state of Vajradhara, enlightenment, in this very lifetime, the supreme state that normally has to be accomplished by accumulating merit for three countless great eons. That's why this precious human body is the most

valuable thing there is. If somebody gave you a choice between big piles of jewels, piles of dollars, like Mount Everest, and a perfect human body with the eight freedoms and ten richnesses, without any doubt, without any delay, you should immediately say your choice is the perfect human body. You shouldn't have to think for even a moment.

With this precious human body, within every minute you can work for the happiness of future lives, you can work for the sorrowless state of nirvana, for the omniscient mind. Whatever you wish to achieve can be done with this precious human body.

Without utilizing it to achieve the body of a happy transmigrating being in your future life, or nirvana, or enlightenment while there is this great opportunity, each minute wasted in this perfect human body is like having lost big piles of dollars or wish-fulfilling jewels the size of Mount Everest. Every minute you don't make the most of this human life, you don't make it meaningful, is a dreadful loss, much worse than losing those wish-fulfilling jewels or that uncountable number of dollars. There is no greater loss than this. There is no greater ignorance than this. There is no greater cheating than this.

The great bodhisattva Shantideva said,

So if, when having found leisure such as this,
I do not attune myself to what is wholesome,
There could be no greater deception
And there could be no greater folly.

And if, having understood this,
I still foolishly continue to be slothful,
When the hour of death arrives
Tremendous grief will rear its head.³

DEATH IS DEFINITE

You must attempt to take the essence of this perfect human body *right now* because, if you don't, death is definite and the actual time of death is indefinite. Therefore it is most skillful to take the essence, to practice Dharma right away.

On this body with its perfect freedom that you have received just this once, you can achieve whatever great work you wish, therefore, you must attempt to take the essence, you must start right away to accomplish the three great meanings. If you don't, death will certainly happen but when death will occur is uncertain. After a hundred years it is sure that none of us who are presently here at this retreat, gathered here at Kopan, will be left. Even after fifty years so many of us here will already have left the body.

In the past times, even our founder Shakyamuni Buddha, who achieved the vajra holy body created by the accumulation of merit for many eons, showed the aspect of entering the sorrowless state. After him, of the numbers of pandits, the great yogis, who came from India and Tibet, what is left

³ *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, Ch. 4, vv. 23 and 24.

now is only their holy names and the teachings they left. They have all shown the aspect of having passed away in peace. What's left is only their holy names, their caves and some ruins, like the great monastic university of Nalanda, which is now just a few piles of stones. This was the great monastic university where the holy minds of thousands of pandits attained the high paths. Now all you can see are old piles of stones, just remnants of what was there before.

From the time human beings started on this earth until now, there is nobody you can point to who has never died. You can't go to see somebody who from the first eon of human beings' existence until now didn't die. There is not one single example. And there is no hope that anybody in the future will not have to experience death. If that is true, that there has never been anybody who has ever escaped death, how can it be possible that you alone will be able to live on this earth without dying?

And whereas death is definite, its time is uncertain. By this time next year or even this month, you can't be sure this body will still be alive, wearing a coat and tie and pants, comfortably relaxing. By this time next year or even this month, your body could have hundreds of legs and you could be living under a stone, or you could have antlers, like a deer, living in great fear of being hunted by hunters. Or by this time next year or even this month, you could be one of those sentient beings that have great difficulty finding even a drop of water.

For example, even on this earth there are certain places where, because of drought, there is no water even though there was water before. It is very difficult. You have to buy water from other countries and have it transported by truck, like what happened in South America.

Even with a human body like this one, there are problems. The main suffering is hunger and thirst. In many places, like South Africa and India, even though somebody's early life was rich, in later life they became poor, becoming homeless and even dying of starvation. There are many examples like that. However, hungry ghosts have far greater suffering of hunger than any human being. It is uncertain whether by this time next year, you might be born as a hungry ghost, having great difficulty finding even a drop of water.

Similarly, in a place where it is normally very easy to discover water, there will be some people who are unable to find it, no matter how hard they try. This is their karma; even if there is water there, they cannot see it.

THE CONTINUITY OF THE CONSCIOUSNESS

By this time next month or next week, you might have left this human body on this earth and been reborn as a hell being, experiencing the suffering of the most unimaginable heat or cold, being burned in a karmically created fire. After death, the consciousness does not cease. Even though this body can no longer be seen at all after the flames of the cremation, the consciousness does not cease; it migrates throughout the three realms: the desire, form and formless realms. You definitely have to take birth in one of these realms.

For those of you who haven't studied this subject before, all objects of knowledge—the whole of existence—are divided into two: permanent and impermanent objects. All objects of knowledge are clearly differentiated in this way.

Relating to the self, the person, the base on which the self or “I” is labeled is divided into body and mind. This body is matter, form; it is composed of atoms. The mind, which is the knower, that which knows, is formless, colorless, shapeless. One, the body, has form and is the object of the eye sense, whereas the other, the mind, is formless and not the object of the eye sense. Its nature is clarity and its function is the ability to perceive an object, therefore it is called a “knower.” Those phenomena such as feeling, recognition and wisdom are consciousnesses; all those different types of consciousness are labeled “knowers” because they have the nature of being clear and being able to perceive the object.

So, there are two completely different things: the mind that is colorless and shapeless and has the function to perceive objects, to remember, discriminate and understand meanings; and there is the body, which is matter, form. Those two are completely different. One is tangible and one is intangible.

How is the consciousness of this life a continuation of the consciousness of the past life? That is similar to how today’s consciousness is a continuation of yesterday’s consciousness. If there was a break between yesterday’s and today’s consciousness—if there was no continuation of consciousness between them—there would be no way that we could remember what we did yesterday, what meditation we did yesterday. There would be no connection to yesterday’s mind.

Like that, if there was no continuation of consciousness, today’s person would have no connection to yesterday’s person. Today’s Linda would have no connection with yesterday’s Linda. Yesterday’s Linda would be a completely separate person. Just like my consciousness is not your consciousness, these would be two separate people.

If that were so, there would be no way you could remember how you came from the West, which flight you took, being exhausted at the airports—especially in Delhi and Nepal, where it takes more time to collect the luggage at the airport than the whole flight from the West! There would be no way to remember all those things if there was a break. The reason you can remember the work you did yesterday, or last year or the year before, or as a child, is because there is a continuation of previous consciousness.

This is similar to those who are able to remember when they were in their mother’s womb, and even those who are able to remember beyond that, to things from past lives, such as the place they had lived in or possessions they had owned. They are able to recognize things like that.

LAMAS AND LAY PEOPLE WHO REMEMBER PREVIOUS LIVES

There are many lamas who can remember their past lives, who are able to recognize the things they had in the monastery in their previous life, ritual things such as cymbals, bells, rosaries—all things for their practice from their past life.

In Tibet, as well as in Solu Kumbu where I was born, they do a lot of checking in this way when there is a reincarnation they have any doubts about, whose childhood thoughts suggest that he is an emanation of such-and-such a lama. Then other people—the servants, the caretakers of the monastery, the lamas—do an examination using the possessions, the instruments the previous lama

used to practice the Dharma. They bring that lama's things and mix them with other lamas' things from other monasteries. The cymbals, rosaries and all the things are very similar. They lay them all out like in an American shop, putting them all on a table, and all the examiners sit around and ask the child which are the things from his past life. He is supposed to pick them out without mistake. There are many who are able to recognize the things in this way, proving they are a reincarnation of the past lama. There can also be texts that mention which past life he had.

If you read His Holiness the Dalai Lama's biography and how his reincarnation was examined by many lamas in many different ways, you can see how it is amazing. I don't remember how old His Holiness was, but as a very small child he was even able to tell you the names of the servants in his past life. He was able to recognize some high lamas in disguise who had traveled from Sera Monastery to examine the reincarnation so there would be no doubt. Even though there had already been many signs that they believed, they still went there disguised as beggars to check. Amazing things happened. He was able to recognize and pick up all those things that had belonged to him in his past life.

You Westerners are different. You think you don't have past lives because you were born in the West! Because you have no previous experience of being born in Tibet, you conclude past and future lives don't exist. It's not like that. In the West and in almost in every country there are many children, and many old people, who can remember past lives. You can check by reading a book in the library here by an American professor from Harvard University,⁴ Dr. Stevenson. He phoned me when I was taking teachings from Geshe Sopa from Wisconsin University, asking me whether I remembered my past lives. I found the experience very strange.

I think he went to several countries and went out to villages and wrote down all the stories of the villagers' children who could remember their past lives. There were so many in number. There is one book only about people that he found in the West. He went to see other lamas here to get their stories, to see how much they could remember. I think some lamas explained things very extensively and some didn't bother. I didn't pay attention and gave a simple answer.

In the West, because of the culture, the idea of reincarnation isn't common like it is in India and Tibet. Because of what is taught, what is written in books, there is a kind of different philosophy, without concern for the real experiences that people have had. Philosophy comes from people who have a reputation not those with clairvoyance, not from those who know fully, without mistake. If you ask different people in the West you get slightly different answers because their criterion is always something physical. They are the ones who say there are no past lives, having no trust in the mind, such as the memories of people who remember past lives, who have clairvoyance. They don't trust those you can completely trust without slightest mistake. I think it is hard. Even though there are people in the West who can remember their past lives, they have to be careful. If they talk a lot about their real experience, they could endanger themselves; they might even be put in an institution or a prison! It's cultural, due to the way of thinking of those who wrote the philosophical texts.

Those people cannot say. Not remembering past lives is similar to not remembering yesterday's things. People can't even remember what meditation they did yesterday or how much money they

⁴ Dr. Ian Stevenson (1918–2007) was a Canadian biochemist and professor of psychiatry who researched reincarnation extensively. The book Rinpoche is referring to is probably either *Children Who Remember Previous Lives: A Question of Reincarnation* or *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*.

spent or how many cigarettes they smoked! Not remembering past lives is similar to that. Just because you cannot remember, that is no reason to say it never existed. Because you can't remember it, you can't say, "I didn't smoke yesterday. I didn't smoke three packets yesterday—one in the morning, one in the afternoon and one at the night." You cannot say, "I didn't smoke," because you can't remember. Similar, even though you don't remember your past lives, you can't deny that you don't have past lives.

You can't remember past lives because you do not have enough merit. There can be obscurations, also deep shocks, like heavy suffering in the womb, which is like when you have a car accident. You don't remember; you are kind of unconscious. However, even though remembering your past life is not your experience, it is the experience of other people; it is the object of knowledge of those who have clairvoyance, the state of omniscient mind. You cannot contradict that knowledge, denying there's no past and future life simply because it is not an object of your own knowledge.

Denying past lives is similar to denying karma. Whatever results of suffering or happiness you experience in this life are all due to causes created in the past lives. It's not necessary that all the causes have to be created in a past life but many were. Similarly, even though you do not understand your own karma, you cannot say that there is no such thing as karma. From virtue, the result is happiness; from nonvirtue, from negative karma, the result is suffering. Having accumulated those causes in a past life, you cannot say "I didn't do it," because you can't see the cause. You can't say that there's no such thing as cause and result. Even if it's not your own object of knowledge, it is the object of other being's knowledge.

You might not accept that you have created the cause, the karma, of what you are experiencing; you might say there is no such thing as this, even though there are beings who are able to see and understand what the causes are. You can't say such things don't exist. That is not a straight answer. You should at least have some doubt, accepting that it might be yes or it might be no. If you check with an unbiased mind, without following dogma, without following somebody else's idea that there is no reincarnation or no karma, you can at least have some doubt, where you can't say yes or no.

You are able to remember yesterday because the very first second of consciousness of this morning is the result of the previous moment of consciousness, the last moment of yesterday's consciousness, the previous second. That first moment of today's consciousness becomes the cause of the next, later second's consciousness. And that continuation becomes the cause of the next second's consciousness. In that way, there have been numberless moments of consciousness we have experienced, even just from yesterday. Similarly, the very first second's consciousness that we experienced in our mother's womb is the consequence of previous causes, of the very last consciousness of the intermediate state, the consciousness that was about to enter the fertilized egg.

If the consciousness came into existence all of a sudden, without depending on anything, it would be truly existing, existing without having causes and conditions. If that were so, then things like karma, attaining the path and so forth would be impossible. However, it is not like that for consciousness or anything else. Not the slightest thing exists from its own side. Nothing exists except as being merely labeled by thought, the name imputed on the base, all the gathering of causes and conditions.

Lecture 5

November 14, 1980

THE POWER OF THE MIND

HAVING THE KARMA FOR HAPPINESS AND SUFFERING PROVES REINCARNATION

In everyday life, people find it hard to control negative minds such as attachment, anger and pride. These arise very easily but are very difficult to control. Even though you might know the remedies, the meditations that alleviate the negative minds, you cannot apply them. The mind is overwhelmed by disturbing emotions that spontaneously arise, without effort. In everyday life, this experience is a sign that there is reincarnation, that there are past lives. If there were no past lives, there would be no reason why it is so difficult to practice patience, to have a good heart, to have compassion for others. Why is it so difficult? Why does this self-cherishing thought, this I-grasping, arise spontaneously and strongly? There would be no reason unless there were previous lives.

Similarly, there are children born in the same family, to the same parents, who have very different personalities. Some are very impatient, some are very patient; some have very good hearts, some are very selfish. They have different character traits. This is due to previous habit. The child with a compassionate, loving nature, always wanting to help others and protect others from harm, was habituated to love and compassion in their past lives. The other child, the incredibly miserly one who hates to give things away to people, was habituated to miserliness in their past lives.

One of the four aspects of karma is creating the result similar to the cause. Through having created the habit in the past, you have it again in this life; you have much miserliness, much anger and much attachment. If you talk about the four aspects of karma, this one, creating the result similar to the cause, means that the miserly child does the same thing in this life that they did in their previous life. They naturally repeat the same action, just as some people find it very easy to tell lies; they can't control their cheating and lying, even though they know it's bad, even though they think they shouldn't. Or they steal, even though it's not really necessary. Somehow, the thought arises easily and that person gives in to it, doing the action. No matter how many times they are punished, somehow they do it again and again. This is the result of previous karma, previous habit.

This is clear evidence that there is a previous life's consciousness. Before this life, there was this consciousness in a past life. For those of you who are not familiar with this subject, who have difficulty in accepting reincarnation, past and future lives, you should remember these experiences that I have explained and then check for yourself. Check whether these arguments are proof of reincarnation or not for you. If you think, even with this reasoning, that there is no reincarnation, then check what you think there is.

Did you discover anything you can absolutely refute from the few reasons I mentioned yesterday? If you have, then I'll have to admit there is no reincarnation! Does nobody have any doubts? This moment's consciousness comes from the consciousness of the previous moment, right? And that goes right back to the first moment of consciousness of this life, so similarly we can relate that to other lives. It's good to think deeply about this, not just accepting that the mind is beginningless, not

just leaving it there, but really investigating how that is so, gradually understanding the subjects that follow that. Then, when you do the meditations, it becomes easier to generate the feeling of the continuation of mind.

Logically you must accept that the first moment of consciousness of this life is the direct result of the last moment of consciousness in the intermediate state, the consciousness before this life, before it entered the fertilized egg. When you accept that, it proves the continuity of consciousness. Because it is endless, you have to work hard! You have to plan what to do with this endless mind, whether to try to keep it happy or just go on experiencing suffering as normal. If it is endless, you should not only think about this life, but relate it to all the previous and future lives' consciousnesses.

BECAUSE THE MIND CAN CHANGE, WE HAVE THE POWER TO TRANSFORM IT

As I mentioned yesterday, if mind existed without causes and conditions, without any means for coming into existence, then it would be truly existent; it would be a self-existent mind. In that case, every moment of the continuation of consciousness in the mind would be self-existent. Each moment would have to exist from its own side, without depending on thought and name, or parts or conditions. If the first consciousness truly existed, then all the consciousnesses would have to truly exist. Mind would not come from your own mind nor would it come from other beings. The mind of today would not come from your consciousness of yesterday and it would not be created by a separate being. Consciousness cannot be truly existent. On this moment of consciousness, there is not the slightest atom of true existence from its own side. That truly existent consciousness doesn't exist anywhere, not on the body, not on the consciousness.

If the consciousness began with the first moment of this life—if it didn't exist before it happened in the mother's womb but was actualized there at the same time as the body—there would be no cause of that first moment of consciousness and no cause of happiness or suffering. Whatever happiness or suffering you have experienced since your consciousness first joined with the fertilized egg would be independent of causes. In that case, you wouldn't need to create the cause to experience suffering and, conversely, even if you eliminated disturbing emotions such as anger completely, even if you achieved the cessation of suffering, even if you achieved nirvana, it would still be possible to experience the suffering of samsara. The experience of suffering would not depend on the cause and the experience of happiness would not depend on the cause.

If that were so, working to create the cause for happiness and to eliminate the cause of suffering wouldn't make sense, because you experience both without having created the previous causes. There would be no freedom at all; it would not depend on your own mind. Your life would not be in your hands. Your mind would have no potential at all to develop, so it is useless. There would be no possibility to be liberated from the cause of suffering, the I-grasping ignorance, to eliminate all the obscurations and achieve omniscience. Because it would not be up to you, to your mind, you would have no freedom at all. When you follow that mistaken logic, that is where it takes you.

This is similar to the argument about being created by a separate being, such as Brahma or God. In that case, that separate being—Brahma or God—who created your consciousness would be the cause of your suffering. To stop the suffering you have to do something about the cause, and that would mean—following that logic—you would have to destroy the creator of your consciousness.

If your consciousness—your happiness and suffering—were created by a separate being and not by yourself, you would have no freedom at all, you would have no choice at all. Life would be completely dependent on the creator. You would be unable to transform your mind through your own effort, through listening, studying and meditating on the path to enlightenment. You wouldn't be able to gradually eliminate all the suffering and attain an omniscient mind. Because there would be freedom, it wouldn't make sense to make an effort to pacify suffering and achieve happiness. Whatever work you did, whether it was for your own happiness or even your own suffering, wouldn't make any sense because it would be completely up to that other being, the creator, and not you. It would only get worse, not better. The whole thing becomes very upsetting.

Some people think that all consciousnesses are part of one principal, universal consciousness. They think that all sentient beings' minds are pieces of that one big mind; all the sentient beings are in essence one being with different bodies. In this case, there would be no such thing as stealing, because stealing involves taking things that belong to others, that don't belong to you. Even though somebody took everything from you and made you bankrupt, it would be OK because it wasn't yours anyway. Or you could go and stay in an expensive, beautiful apartment, maybe the prime minister's, because it's all one being. Everybody would probably want to go and stay there. It becomes like this if it were one being with many different forms. It would become utterly illogical. You would steal things from yourself and put yourself in prison!

We cannot criticize other religions that have such beliefs, even though they do not accord with reality. For some people, for their level of mind, it suits them to believe that everything is created by a god, even though it is not reality. In Buddhadharma, you yourself create the cause for happiness and you experience that happiness, and you yourself create the cause for suffering and you experience that suffering. It is completely in your own hands; it is your own creation. For others, believing in a creator works well. Believing if you don't act well God will punish you, they pay attention to God. Being scared of God, they refrain from nonvirtuous actions, actions prohibited by God, and so save themselves from suffering. That way of thinking is of great benefit to them, so you cannot say it is totally wrong.

Even though Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's main teaching is to benefit others, if you can't benefit other sentient beings then at least you should not harm them. That was what he explained to Angulimala, the murderer who had killed 999 people and made a mala of their thumbs. By telling Angulimala that, somehow his mind became happy, and he renounced killing and didn't run away. From that he came to understand the two wrong concepts of true existence, the self-grasping of the person and the self-grasping of the aggregates. The first wrong concept is grasping onto the person as truly existent and the second one is grasping onto the aggregates as truly existent. With Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's advice, he discovered that these two wrong concepts need to be cut off. They are the things that need to be killed. When the Buddha advised like this, his mind became very happy.

Of course, as the person's level of mind changes, the method must change. You cannot always use the same method for that person. Shakyamuni Buddha guided sentient beings at the different levels at the different times, revealing whatever method was suitable for their minds.

WHEN DEATH HAPPENS THE MOST POWERFUL IMPRINT WILL RIPEN

If a person's personality were contained in the atoms of the fertilized egg, then it would be possible to remove the atoms that have attachment, anger and so forth, and keep the good atoms that have love, compassion and wisdom. Then you could make a very nice person, a perfect person who has no anger at all in their life no matter how badly they were treated. If personality were part of the atoms of a sentient being, somebody with more patience atoms would be more patient and somebody with more impatience atoms would be more impatient. You could check up each time you wanted to get a baby! You could take the juice of the brain of the most learned person in the world and inject it into foolish people. Although, I think there would be danger because you might take the juice from the brain of a doctor who is expert in their subject and they become foolish. Their knowledge decreases because there are less atoms.

There is a logical argument for reincarnation—there are countless logical reasons—whereas there is not one single logical argument against it. There is not one person who has realized that there is no reincarnation; there is nobody who ever had that experience. On the other hand, those who have realized there is reincarnation are numberless. After the previous life, the consciousness continues through to this rebirth. Then, after this life, the consciousness doesn't cease but has to take rebirth. It definitely has to take rebirth.

What rebirth will you take? There is no trick to where you will be reborn; it is definite. And it must either be in the realms of the happy transmigratory beings or the suffering transmigratory beings. Of the six kinds of transmigratory beings—gods, demigods, human beings, hungry ghosts and hell beings, the ones who experience the heaviest suffering are those called naraks or hell beings. If you are born in the heaviest suffering of the hell realm due to the unsubdued mind, your body becomes oneness with fire. In a lighter stage of the hell realm there is a lighter suffering, being alive again and again. But even if you are born into that stage, you are killed a hundred times each day and each day you have to be reborn there, and experience all the suffering of that realm again and again. We cannot stand holding our hand in the flame of a candle for even a minute—even this is extremely unbearable for us—so how could we possibly bear the suffering of being born in the hell realm?

How you experience suffering in this body is not just like a dream that doesn't actually exist. If, after this life, you are reborn in the realm of the hungry ghosts, you won't be able to find a scrap of food—even a putrid one—even after a hundred years. At present we can't stand it if our meal is late, even just by one or two hours, so, within the six realms, how could we bear the suffering of being born as a hungry ghost?

And it's the same if you think of the beings in the animal realm. If you think of the way that street dogs live—how they find food—or cows, or the creatures that are in the ocean, it is unbearable. Fish obviously live in great fear every day. You would find it unbearable, spending your whole life always terrified of being attacked and eaten by other animals, and hardly able to find any food for yourself. There are creatures you see in tanks in Chinese restaurants, fish, lobsters and prawns, that are pulled out alive and thrown into boiling water, causing them terrible suffering before they die. There are also those living in the wild, being attacked by other animals or being hunted by human beings, besides experiencing the hardships of finding a safe place to stay and enough food to eat. Even to live as a pig for one day would be unbearable.

The rebirth you might have to experience in the lower realm probably seems very far away in your mind. It seems like a life that will probably never happen, certainly not next year, next month, tomorrow or today. However, what is there between yourself in this life and yourself in your future

life, between your life in the human realm and your next life in the lower realms? There is nothing but the breath flowing in and out—just that, nothing else. There will come a time when there is an in-breath but there won't be another out-breath, and then, right there, there is the start of your future life.

If we haven't practiced a good heart in the life, we haven't practiced the Dharma, accumulated extensive merit and strongly purified obscurations, when the breath stops, we fall into one of the lower realms. This can happen to us if we do not examine our everyday life, our actions. Unless we examine our actions, we can believe we know how to practice the Dharma but still be heading for the lower realms. "I've been practicing Dharma for thirty years and my mind is very comfortable. How can it be possible to be born in the lower realms? I took ordination. I took precepts. I do my sadhana; I do my prayers. I haven't killed any human beings or elephants! I'm not a butcher; I'm not a soldier going off to war. I haven't created any powerful negative karma." We feel very comfortable in our mind, but this is a mistake because we haven't been checking our everyday actions well. If we are really aware of our actions, checking whether we are heading for the lower realms or not, we'll see we have no freedom; it is all up to karma.

NONVIRTUE IS GENERALLY MORE POWERFUL THAN VIRTUE

You might think, "I'm practicing Dharma. I'm a holy person," but every one of us has accumulated a mixture of virtuous and nonvirtuous karmas. So, when death happens, at the time of death whichever karma is more powerful will determine where you go. Your mind is like a big storeroom with all kinds of things inside. There are virtuous actions and nonvirtuous actions accumulated there. Just before death, craving and grasping are generated, pushing the consciousness toward the resulting rebirth. If the most powerful karma at the moment of death is a virtuous one, the craving and grasping will propel you toward the body of a happy transmigrating being. If the most powerful karma at the moment of death is a nonvirtuous one, the craving and grasping propel you toward the evil-gone realms.

You can only know which it is likely to be by examining which kind of karma you generally accumulate on our mindstream more powerfully every day. For most people, nonvirtue is generally more powerful in their everyday life, not only at the time of death. Even though you are practicing the Dharma and accumulating virtue, it depends on whether virtuous or nonvirtuous karmas are more powerful in your everyday life. If you honestly examine your mind, I think you will see that nonvirtue is more powerful than virtue.

Whether an action is a complete action of virtue or nonvirtue depends on the motivation for doing it, the action itself and the completion of the action. In everyday life, disturbing, unsubdued minds arise spontaneously, one after the other. When you meet one object, attachment rises; when you meet another object, anger arises, or ignorance arises, or pride or jealousy. One after another, these disturbed, unsubdued states of mind arise uncontrolled. They arise so easily, like a waterfall. On the other hand, a virtuous thought arises very rarely and with such difficulty, just as it is difficult for a river to flow up a mountain. There are many hindrances for virtue to arise in the mind.

Even the nonvirtuous actions you have done that you believe are insignificant can become great, powerful. When you insult somebody or swear at them, the motivation is anger, wanting to hurt them. You say whatever words are the most painful for that person, whatever hurts the most. Even

after you have said it, after it's gone from your mouth, when you relax in bed later on, you think how fantastic it was that you said it. You feel it is a great relief to have said those words, that it got a lot off your chest. At the end you even feel happy and proud that you were able to hurt the other person. The motivation was very powerful, the action was very powerful and now the completion—feeling relieved, happy and proud, thinking how good it was that you did it—is also very powerful.

If there's a flea biting you, not letting you sleep, travelling around biting you here, biting you there, the more it happens the angrier you get. Then, you can't stand it any longer and you go searching for that little bug. It's difficult to find, but you finally find it and you are so happy, your anger making you think of the worst thing you can do to it. You can spray it or kill it by crushing it between your fingernails. You can even bite it! It bit you so you can bite it back. After you have killed it, you feel so satisfied, so good now you've got it. You have a feeling of great satisfaction. Now you can sleep for hours in your sleeping bag totally undisturbed.

Even though it looks like a small nonvirtue when it is unexamined, when you do an action like that with a strong motivation out of a disturbing, unsubdued mind, and when you feel happy at the end, the action becomes extremely powerful.

It is so easy to create powerful nonvirtuous actions in this way, but the virtuous actions you create are rarely done powerfully. They should be done perfectly, with strong, pure motivation, perfect action and pure completion. The virtuous actions most of us do are not like this. Even though you might have done a virtuous action, it is rarely done with the best motivation, bodhicitta, or even with the middle scope motivation, the mind totally renouncing samsara. Even a virtuous action done with the thought for the happiness of future lives—the lower scope motivation—is rare. You might try to do a virtuous action but, if you examine your motivation, probably you will be doing it for the happiness of this life.

Whatever action done mostly for the happiness of this life is negative, with one or two exceptions. You might recite a mala of Shakyamuni Buddha's mantra, TADYATHA OM MUNÉ MUNÉ MAHA MUNÉYÉ SVAHA, or a mala of Chenrezig's mantra OM MANI PADME HUM. Even if your recitation is perfect in both the motivation and the actual action, during the actual body of reciting the mantra, the mind starts wandering off. Even though the recitation began with a bodhicitta motivation, "I am going to recite the mantra to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings," by halfway through the mind is completely distracted. When you do an hour's meditation, you might be able to start the visualization perfectly, but then, like clouds, the mind floats away. It is there and then it gradually disappears. Gradually the mind is no longer on the meditation subject but has wandered to something else.

There is something missing. The motivation is missing, even though the actual body is done. The motivation is not strong enough or it is not done, or even if both motivation and action are done virtuously, the dedication is missing. Even if you try to dedicate, you are still somehow involved with something in this life; your dedication slips over to this life. This is very important. You might believe you have done the action perfectly, but in fact the virtue has become very small.

So, even for one day, you should check whether you have accumulated more virtue or more nonvirtue. From the morning after you wake up until nighttime, before going to bed, check how many actions have become virtue and how many have become nonvirtue. You can count them with

a mala or a calculator. By understanding the definitions of virtue and nonvirtue, you will definitely find far more nonvirtuous actions than virtuous.

Since your life has been like this, at the time of death, when you are about to die, craving and grasping will make the seeds of nonvirtuous action ripen, and then there will be no other realm to go to except the evil-gone realm. Perhaps someone using a horoscope or something has predicted that you will be born as a wealthy person in a Western country or as a Dharma practitioner, but how can you trust them? Could you then think, “I don’t have to practice the Dharma now. I can relax comfortably. I don’t have to worry.” How could you trust them? Maybe it would be more useful if they predicted that you had been bad and therefore you were going to be reborn in the hell realm! Then, you would be so afraid you would make sure that everything you did would be meaningful. Then, you would be able to practice Dharma longer and more purely.

There was a Tibetan monk in a monastery in Bodhgaya who, after having a heart attack, was told by an Indian doctor that he could die at any time. The monk became very scared. Of course, he had already heard the Buddha’s teaching that death could come at any time, but somehow the doctor’s advice was more powerful, more real. Until then, the monk had only ever been able to see statues; he had never been able to see them as the Buddha, even though it is taught. However, after he had been told of his imminent death by doctor, his mind changed a lot. Before, he had never prepared for death at all, but afterward he prepared for death all the time, every day.

He waited for death, never planning to live. He thought what to do with the possessions in his room. He used the money he had to sponsor teachings, inviting the Dalai Lama’s gurus to give teachings there. He made many offerings to the people who took the teachings and he even gave away his texts and the Dharma possessions he had, saying, “I was told by a doctor I’m about to die at any time, so these texts might be useful for your monastery or school.” I think he is still alive! However, the doctor telling him that he would die at any time, that his life was in great danger, became a huge teaching for him. His concern with this life, which before was big, diminished greatly. Because of that, he was able to accumulate so much merit. If the doctor hadn’t told him that, he would never have been able to do all those practices and accumulate all that extensive merit. So, the doctor was very kind.

In the next life, where will you go: to the realm of the happy transmigratory being or to the realm of the suffering transmigratory being? No observations such as horoscopes can predict that. However, Shakyamuni Buddha, the founder, the great compassionate one, has already predicted it in his teachings. The Indian and Tibetan pandits, the great yogis, have already predicted where you will be reborn in their teachings. The highly realized being Nagarjuna explained in *The Precious Garland*:

From nonvirtue all suffering arises,
As well as the unfortunate realms of the evil transmigratory beings.
From virtue all happiness arises,
As well as the happy transmigratory beings.⁵

This itself is a prediction. We can check for ourselves and understand. We can predict the realm we will be reborn into after this life by examining the cause. Whichever causes we have created more of will determine which realm we will be born into. None of us has the clairvoyance to actually see

⁵ V. 21.

which realm we will be born in, we cannot see clearly with an undeceptive, valid mind, but we do have the ability to understand the true teachings given by the Buddha and to develop faith in them. The Buddha has the ability to clearly and exactly see what is extremely difficult to see and to realize, and what is incomprehensible at our level, and he has revealed the teachings without mistake.

THE BUDDHA LIBERATES US BY GUIDING US

I'll mention this story. When Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was in India, one day while on his alms round, a woman offered a handful of mustard seeds to the Buddha.⁶ When somebody made an offering while Buddha Shakyamuni was on his alms round, he always predicted the result of that karma, what kind of rebirth that person would have in their future life, and he predicted that due to this karma the woman would become a buddha called Supranihita. Her husband couldn't figure it out at all. I think he told Shakyamuni Buddha that he shouldn't tell lies. How could such a thing be possible?

The Buddha asked him if he had ever heard of a pipal tree whose branches can cover five hundred horse carriages. When he said of course he knew of such a thing, saying it had been his experience, he had seen it. Then Buddha said, "Of course, this karma is also my experience. From such a small karma, planting a seed the size of a mustard seed can produce a tree that has so many branches it is able to cover five hundred horse carriages. It is my experience that your wife offering one handful of mustard seeds will result in her becoming a buddha called Supranihita in the future. That is my experience, even though it is not your experience." This is similar. Like the husband who couldn't comprehend the results of his wife's offering, you can't understand which realm you will be reborn in, but you should think that, even though it is not your own experience, there will certainly be a result, due to the existence of karma.

From virtue all happiness arises as well as rebirth as a happy transmigratory being, and from nonvirtue all suffering arises as well as rebirth in the unfortunate realms of the evil transmigratory beings. Although this is not your own experience, you can trust this is so because it is the object of an omniscient mind, a mind that a deceptive mind cannot contradict. You cannot say it is not true. If it is definite this is going to happen, you must seek a method to not be reborn in the realm of the suffering transmigratory beings.

A criminal who has committed many crimes and is about to be punished can seek refuge from a top person in the government to save him from the punishment. Like that, you can seek somebody who has the power to save you, to guide you from falling into the realm of the suffering transmigratory beings. That is the Triple Gem, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Just as the criminal who has been saved from punishment would be in danger if they committed the same crime again, you must not only rely on the Triple Gem, you must also do the practice. You must follow the points of the practice shown by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, the founder of the Buddhadharma.

The way that the Buddha liberates sentient beings from the suffering of samsara is not by pulling the suffering out with his hands, not by washing the obscurations with water. If such a thing were possible, then the buddhas would have liberated all the sentient beings and led them all to enlightenment an unimaginably long time ago. If such a method were possible, by now none of us

⁶ In *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hands*, (p. 390), Pabongka says the offering is a handful of sweetmeats made of sesame.

would experience any suffering at all. The Buddha cannot liberate sentient beings from the suffering of samsara in that way. The way that the Buddha liberates sentient beings from the suffering of samsara is by revealing the teachings, such as the important points of karma, the things that must be renounced and those that must be practiced. By revealing the teachings, guiding sentient beings in this way without mistake, he leads them to practice the Dharma, which means renouncing the cause of suffering and practicing the cause of happiness.

As it is said in the sutra teachings,

The Great Ones do not wash away sin with water;
They do not rid beings of suffering with their hands;
They do not transfer realizations of suchness onto others.
They liberate by teaching the truth of suchness.⁷

Because the Buddha liberates sentient beings by revealing the truth, especially emptiness, *shunyata*, you should think, “In order to be liberated from the evil-gone realms, I will rely with all my heart on the Triple Gem. By doing so, I will follow the practice of karma—the law of cause and result.” Thinking like this is generating the motivation of the graduated path of the lower capable being in general. The meaning of this “in general” you can gradually understand. It means that this is the foundation.

On the basis of this, you must generate the motivation to follow the path of the middle capable being and of the higher capable being. Therefore, in general you follow the gradual path of the lower capable being. This is the first of Buddha Manjushri’s four clings that I mentioned earlier, “If you cling to this life you are not a Dharma practitioner.”

In order to take the essence of this perfect human rebirth, to complete the work of listening, studying and meditating that is the path to enlightenment, to preserve the mind, understanding impermanence gives you strong energy. With such an understanding, all your actions of listening, studying and meditating on the graduated path to enlightenment become pure Dharma and, in that way, they become the cause of enlightenment. They also become the cause of liberation and, by the way, the cause of the happiness of future lives. Meditating on impermanence and death cuts off clinging to this life and also generates great energy to complete the work.

⁷ Quoted in Pabongka’s *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, p. 247.

Lecture 6

November 15, 1980

ANOTHER HAPPY MIGRATION IS NOT ENOUGH

The second of the four clingings that the very highly realized lama Sakya Pandita heard directly from Manjushri is:

If you cling to the three realms, that is not renunciation.

Clinging to the three realms of samsara and the perfections of samsara is the cause of samsara. That clinging ties you to samsara and doesn't allow you to achieve the sorrowless state of being liberated from the bounds of karma and the unsubdued mind. When you cling to samsara with the unsubdued mind you cannot separate from it, but rather create more karma that continuously binds you further to samsara. This means you continuously experience the suffering of samsara.

In order to cut clinging to even the three upper realms, you must realize how samsara is in the nature of suffering; you must see the shortcomings of samsara. The wish to clearly understand this allows you to see what you think of as the perfections of samsara are imperfections. In that way you can change your thinking. Unless this is established, you might think that to just be liberated from the lower realms is sufficient but that is not so. Even if you are able to receive the body of the happy transmigrating being once or twice, during those lives if you again accumulate negative karma, then you will again fall into the evil-gone realms. Nothing is definite. Having found the body of a happy transmigratory being by chance does not mean it's impossible to then fall down into the evil-gone realms. Nothing is certain. It depends on karma.

Only when you have achieved nirvana, the cessation of all delusions, is it impossible for the delusions to ever arise again. Then, it is impossible to ever experience suffering again. That is definite. But just achieving the body of a happy transmigratory being, nothing is certain. You can easily fall down into the evil-gone realms.

NOTHING IS DEFINITE IN SAMBARA

In previous times, you have found the body of a happy migrating being so many times, again and again, and you have fallen into the evil-gone realms again and again. Even now, if you follow negative karma you will fall again into the evil-gone realms. In past lives, many times you have taken the body of a god, including the kings of the worldly gods, such as Brahma or Indra; you have enjoyed such bodies countless times, living in palaces and mansions hundreds of thousands of times more precious and more beautiful than the most expensive place in the human world. Having the body of such a worldly god, you have lived for an incredibly long time in such beautiful mansions many, many times. But then, after that life finished, you were born in the hell realm, in the hot blaze of the naraks, where you had to crawl on the hot iron ground which is oneness with fire. It has happened so many times like this. You have experienced this again and again.

You must remember in New York there was an airplane accident. (I probably read about it in *Time* magazine.) I think there was a group of people who were going on holidays and when the airplane landed at the airport, the people saw smoke. They screamed at the pilot and he was able to land at the airport. After he had landed, he thanked the people for a safe landing and, after some time, hostesses went to open the door. This is usually very easy; there is nothing complicated and the crew is well-trained. But somehow the door wasn't functioning. People outside the plane also tried but still it didn't work. The door had become very hot and the people outside started hearing cries of "Help me! Help me!" The whole plane must have been on fire and there was no way to get out. Even though the passengers were suffering, there was no one able to help the pilot release the doors.

After some time, the people outside managed to open one door a little and saw in the airplane all the passengers like in a dream world. There were piles of dead bodies. I guess the people tried to escape and everyone became piled one on top of the other, but they couldn't escape so they died there, suffocated and also completely burnt even though they had been able to land. Half the roof of the plane was completely burnt. The newspaper said the authorities needed to check what the mistake was. Somebody mentioned that there was a button the pilot needed to press for the door to open but whether he did that, I'm not sure.

This is a very good example of the shortcomings of samsara. It proves the Buddha's teachings that nothing is definite in samsara. The Buddha explained very clearly in the teachings on karma that karma is definite and it definitely brings its result. Whether their life before had been happy or suffering, they had created the karma to end their life in such a place in such a terrible way. Since they didn't purify that negative karmic imprint that was on their mindstream—they didn't do anything with it—it became definite to experience the result.

The cause might have been quite small but they didn't do any work to purify the negative imprints, therefore it was not only definite they would experience the result, it also became powerful. Karma is definite and karma is expandable. The karma created might have been very small but the suffering result can be great for a long period of time. Maybe this was one of the results of one negative action; maybe there are still more results to come.

You do not experience the result of karma without creating the cause. Many times when a plane crashes, some people get killed and some people don't; some people get injured and some people don't. There is a reason why people have different experiences like this. It is not random. The pilot and all the people died in that accident. Even though a hostess is trained to open the emergency exit, on that occasion it didn't work. That was due to karma; they had all created the cause, so they all experienced the result. They had a safe landing—they had created the cause for that—but they had not created the cause to come out safely. They had created the karma to die there, and they were completely burnt, completely suffocated.

In some plane or car crashes, some people are able to come out alive without being hurt at all, whereas others are killed. They aren't hurt because they haven't created the cause, whereas the other people in the same vehicle have created the cause.

In the teachings the Buddha said that nothing is definite in samsara. These people who ended their life in such a horrible, terrifying way, might have had a nice apartment, a luxurious life. They might have lived like worldly gods, but later they experienced the complete opposite. When those people

took their seats in the airplane, they must have been comfortably relaxed, with no expectation at all that such a thing could happen. Nothing is definite. Life goes up and down; sometimes we experience much pleasure and sometimes terrible suffering. It changes from day to day, from one life to the next. Everything changes in samsara. If it changes in this life, why can't it change from one life to another?

Many times in the past you have been born in the realm of the worldly gods and enjoyed unbelievable luxury, drinking nectar. Then, after that life finished, you were born as a hell being and had to drink molten iron. This has happened so many times. Similarly, in this world, there are many people who had a very rich early life, eating only expensive, delicious food that lower class people couldn't afford, but in their later life they had to eat dust. They couldn't even get the food that poor people eat. This is similar to the change from one life to another life. Being born as a worldly god, there are incredible enjoyments; they live on nectar, which is not even like food. The food we think as the very best in the human world is rubbish compared to the nectar they live on; there's no comparison. But after that life, they are reborn as a hell being and have to drink molten iron without choice.

So like this, nothing is definite in samsara. Being born so many times in the realm of the worldly gods, always accompanied by boys and girls, always playing and enjoying things for a long time, and then again being born as a hell being, surrounded by fearful karmically created guardians.

Nothing is definite in samsara—not the perfections, the friends, the companions. Many times you are born as a wheel-turning king, leading millions and billions of people. Many times you are born like this, and then again many times you are born as a beggar or slave, the lowest possible state, the complete opposite of being a king. Many times you have taken the bodies of the worldly gods called “sun” and “moon,” whose bodies radiate light, like fireflies. Some creatures and some fish have light. In the zoo in Sydney, Australia, there are fish that produce electricity. When they run they make a noise. The insects and animals that have lights in their body must have achieved divine light!

There are worldly gods who have bodies like this and can see in the darkness—always having light even when they disappear into the darkness of the earth. Many times you have been born like this; you have taken bodies like this. Many times in samsara you have also been born in the deepest part of the Pacific as those animals that are like elephants, like huge piles, completely in the dark, without any light at all. You have been born under the earth where you can't see a single light your whole life, no matter how long you live. Many times you have been born in a place so dark you can't even see your own arms; your whole life you can't see the slightest light.

Nothing is definite. Whatever body that you find in samsara, nothing is definite; whatever enjoyment you experience, nothing is definite. While you are not liberated from samsara, you will have to experience more and more suffering.

In the past you were born countless times as every type of animal, such as a pig or a dog. If the bones that you chewed as a dog in those past lives were collected, the pile they would make would be much greater than this earth. There would be no space left; the whole of space would be filled up with bones. If you think of all the garbage that you have eaten when you were a pig, putting your noses right in it; if all the garbage were piled up, there wouldn't be any space left, the whole of space would be filled up with this garbage. Unless you are able to somehow liberate yourself from samsara at this time, in this body, you will have to eat more garbage, much more than you have eaten before.

Also, in the past, your enemies have cut off your head countless times. If all those heads that your enemies have cut off in your past lives were piled up, not only would the sight of all your past lives' heads be incredibly frightening, the pile would be greater than this world. There wouldn't be any space left. So similarly, unless you can end samsara now, in this present body, you will have to continue losing your head by the hand of your enemy.

Again, all the times you were born as a hell being and your own karmically created guardian poured molten liquid in your mouth, if all that were collected it would be a much greater volume than the Pacific Ocean. Unless you are able to liberate yourself from samsara while you have this body, you will soon have to drink much more molten liquid.

If you could feel this from way inside your heart—that from now on you will continue wandering endlessly in samsara, having to experience all the sufferings of samsara—if you could look at your future like that, you would go crazy, you would be unable to relax for a second. It would be impossible not to do everything you can to free yourself from that future. You couldn't stand not to practice the Dharma.

Even the bodies of the worldly gods and human beings are only in the nature of suffering. Now, you have been born as a human being—that is your present experience—but that experience includes the suffering of birth, old age, sickness and death. And even during those times you are not experiencing those four types of suffering, at other times there is little opportunity to make the mind and body comfortable, at peace; you have to experience many other problems, such as being separated from desirable objects: your parents, your partner, especially your children, your possessions and your body. At other times, rather than being separated from objects you desire, you are forced to meet undesirable objects, bringing a different kind of problem. There are so many problems you are encountering now and will encounter, even in this human body.

Even if you were born as a worldly god, a sura, their bodies are also in the nature of suffering. They have to fight much with the demigods, the asuras, who suffer greatly from jealousy. And the demigods are wounded in the fighting, but when a limb is cut off, no matter how many times it happens, it grows back again and they have to continue. They only die when their neck is cut off. That is their karma.

The heaviest suffering of the worldly gods—the suras, not the asuras—is when they see the five signs of the death. It is unimaginable suffering. You can read it in *The Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun*.⁸

While the gods who are in the higher realms, the form and formless realms, might not have the suffering of suffering or the suffering of change, they experience pervasive compounding suffering. Their aggregates are still under the control of karma and the unsubdued mind, therefore they are not free. They have no freedom; they always have to be in that state. When their karma to be in that realm finishes, they still have no freedom and again they fall into the evil-gone realms. None of the three realms—the desire realm of humans, suras and asuras—and the form and formless realms, is beyond the continuation of suffering.

⁸ Rinpoche's first book, from 1973, was the coursebook for the very early Kopan courses. You can read this book online or download a PDF at www.lamayeshe.com.

Because the whole of samsara is in the nature of suffering, you must liberate yourself from this samsara. It's easy enough to understand that it must be done, but when should it be done? It *must* be done in this body. To expect to be able to do the work of liberating yourself from samsara in the body of some future lifetime is unrealistic. It is uncertain that you will find a perfect body like this again, with the freedom to practice the Dharma. Therefore, the work to liberate yourself from samsara must be done right in this present body.

With this present body you can accomplish this work. Why? You have received this special human body of freedoms and riches that can practice the Buddhadharma; you have met the teachings of the Buddha that reveal the path, the unmistakable method to be liberated from samsara. You have not only met the teachings of the Buddha, but you also have the perfect conditions, free from hindrances. So, while you have such circumstances, when everything is gathered together at this time, if you are unable to follow the method revealed by Buddha at this time, when will you be able to?

Therefore think, "At this time I must definitely liberate myself from samsara. The method to achieve this is the unmistakable path of the three precious higher trainings. Therefore, at this time I am going to practice the three precious higher trainings. No matter how difficult it is, and I'm going to liberate myself from the oceans of samsaric suffering." Thinking in this way is generating the motivation of the middle capable being in general.

THE TWO OBSCURATIONS

To return to the four clingings, the next one says,

If you cling to cherishing the self that is not bodhicitta.

As long as there is the self-cherishing thought in your heart, clinging to the works for the self, as long as you don't transform this, there is no place for bodhicitta. You cannot generate bodhicitta while you are unable to separate yourself from self-cherishing. From beginningless previous lifetimes until now, you have never generated bodhicitta because you have befriended the self-cherishing thought, and never separated yourself from this enemy. Many other sentient beings rely on you for their liberation but you have no time for them, so they must continue to suffer in samsara.

The mistake is that you haven't done the practice of separating yourself from the self-cherishing thought. Perhaps you might feel satisfied that you have the ability to liberate yourself from samsara by practicing the three higher trainings—moral conduct, concentration and insight—but is achieving that sorrowless state sufficient? Can you be satisfied with that attainment? Even if, for your own sake, you have achieved the state of an arhat, you still haven't completed the work for the self, let alone completing the work for others. Even if you do the work for others, there are still limitations. There are still great obstacles to be removed.

There are two obscurations, one that blocks you from achieving nirvana and one that blocks you from achieving enlightenment. The first is called "disturbing-thought obscurations" or "obscurations to liberation" (*nyön drib*). It is the obscuration that causes your mind to be unsubdued, unpeaceful; that is its function. Of the two goals, enlightenment and nirvana, this type of

obscurations mainly blocks you from reaching nirvana. Using the term “disturbing-thought obscurations” is much clearer than just saying “delusions.”

The second type of obscuration is called “obscurations to knowledge” (*she drib*), which are the obscurations that block you from achieving the state of omniscience. When you have completely removed the ignorance of grasping the I, the obscurations to knowledge are what is left, the impression left on the consciousness; the dualistic conceptions and the views that arise from that.

Even though arhats have completely removed the unsubdued mind, completely eliminated the ignorance of I-grasping, they still haven’t removed the subtle obstacles, the obscurations to knowledge. There are still subtle obstacles such as the four unknowing minds to be eliminated: the inability to see the secret actions of a buddha, the inability to see the subtle karma of sentient beings, the inability to see things that happened a very long time ago and the inability to see very long distances.

There was an arhat, one of Guru Shakyamuni’s disciples, who wanted to know which world his mother was in, but it was incredibly far away so he couldn’t see it. This subtle understanding is the object of a buddha’s omniscient mind, something not even arhats can know. A buddha’s holy actions of body, speech and mind are very subtle and can only be known by the buddhas themselves, only by the omniscient mind. Arhats and others cannot see those subtle, secret actions of body, speech and mind of the buddhas.

What causes the colors and patterns of the feathers of a peacock or the wings of a butterfly? Why they have all those different colors is due to very subtle karma, something arhats cannot see, even though they have unimaginable knowledge. That is the second unknowing mind, the inability to see the subtle karma of sentient beings.

The third unknowing mind is not seeing things that happened an uncountable number of eons ago. It is so extremely far that small karmas that have been committed are hidden from them. For example, only Shakyamuni Buddha was able to see the very distant karma of an old man, something that Shariputra, his main disciple, was not able to do. This old man was eighty when he became a monk. He hadn’t done any work for his family and they were completely fed up with him, ignoring him like old people are ignored in old folks’ homes, so he decided to become a monk. He went to Shariputra, who was the abbot of the monastery there, and asked to become a monk. However, when Shariputra checked with his clairvoyance, he told the old man it was impossible; that he was too old to memorize texts or work for the monastery; that he didn’t have the karma to become a monk and do the work for the monastery. The old man banged his head on the monastery’s doors he was so upset.

At that time, although Shakyamuni Buddha was far away in another part of India, because his omniscient mind could continuously see and work for sentient beings without one second’s break, as soon as the old man left the monastery and stood in the park outside, feeling terribly depressed, the Buddha came right in front of him and asked what was wrong. After the old man explained, the Buddha told him that he did have the karma to be a monk, but Shariputra, not yet being omniscient, could not see this. The Buddha could see that an uncountable number of eons ago, when this old man was born as a fly, he landed on some cow dung that was moving around a stupa on a stream of animal’s urine. The fly was just following the dung. It was quite a mess; all kinds of things happened there! It was smelly, and that action of following the smell of the cow dung was the small karma that

Buddha Shakyamuni saw that created his karma to become monk, something Shariputra could not see.

HAVING OVERCOME BOTH OBSCURATIONS, A BUDDHA CAN DO PERFECT WORK FOR OTHERS

Student: Does anger and attachment have a color?

Rinpoche: Is anger or attachment the only thing to make you move your limbs? When you have attachment, is there a color? When you are angry, is there a color? Is it red? When you have anger inside the heart, you can see red, right? The ground outside is red, like fire coming out of the mouth, the arms, the nose. With strong anger, you see outside things as orange, and you are often blinded to other things, such as books or things you've left behind. You become completely consumed! That is due to *lung*, wind disease. The anger affects the winds, like a person with a bile disease. It makes you perceive things in the same way a person with a bile disease does; you see things the wrong way, you see things upside down when you have fever. This happens when the four elements are unbalanced, but I don't think you can say it is the color of anger or attachment. It happens due to that, due to anger.

You cannot see the color of anger with the eyes but it can disturb the elements, like going up and down on the roller coaster at Disneyland. Although you cannot see it with the eyes, it is able to destroy, to rot, to burn, to do all these things. The wind outside is an example of that. You can't see it but you can feel it, you can see the curtains moving. It does not have a shape, such as triangular, square, round or long; it's not fat or skinny. The mind is the same. You can't see it but it affects your world. When you get to lunchtime, you can watch how it makes your hand move to the plate. It directs your actions, like a person riding a horse or driving a car directs the horse or the car. They are under the control of the person. The question is similar. How does the wind blow that?

Arhats still have to complete the work for the self, so the work they can do for others is limited. This is because they still haven't removed the obscurations to knowledge; they still have the causes of the four unknowing minds. There are two aspects to the work for the self, the *perfection of purity* and the *perfection of realizations*. The perfection of purity is the cessation of both obscurations—the disturbing-thought obscurations and the obscurations to knowledge.

Buddhas have completed the work for the self, having completed the perfection of purity by purifying both obscurations and having attained all the realizations, the perfection of realizations. They have no stains left to purify and no realizations left to attain. The buddhas have finished the work for the self, thus they are able to do perfect work for other sentient beings. There is no stain that obscures a buddha's holy mind from clearly seeing the whole of existence because a buddha's mind is omniscient. The buddhas can see things still obscured from the arhats, such as the four unknowing minds. They can see all the three times—past, present and future—as well as every single thought and imprint on the mind of every single sentient being. The buddhas' omniscient mind can see all this clearly at the time, simultaneously.

Just as every buddha can perfectly see every single different personality of every sentient being and every imprint on their mindstream, they can see the exact method that fits that sentient being's mind. Therefore, a buddha never makes a mistake working for sentient beings. With their

omniscient mind, a buddha not only has the power to benefit all sentient beings, they have compassion for all sentient beings.

THE KINDNESS OF THE MOTHER

Unlike buddhas, arhats cannot do perfect work for others, and neither can higher bodhisattvas. Therefore, to attain enlightenment, even if somebody becomes an arhat, sooner or later they will have to take up the Mahayana path and progress through the five paths and the ten bhūmis.

While you only seek the work for the self, you cannot generate bodhicitta and you cannot do extensive work for sentient beings. Just as a banana does not come from a chili seed, enlightenment does not come from the self-cherishing thought. If somebody wanted bananas but instead planted chili seeds in their field, no matter how much they prayed for bananas, it would never happen. You need to plant a banana tree and give it perfect conditions to bring the result, bananas. Like the banana tree, bodhicitta is the principal cause of enlightenment.

The root of the path is compassion for sentient beings. You feel how unbearable it is that other sentient beings must experience suffering. From generating love and compassion, great love and great compassion grow, producing the special intention, and from that bodhicitta arises. In order to generate the special intention that you will become enlightened for all sentient beings, which arises from love and compassion, you should recognize that all the sentient beings have been your mother. Then, you should remember and reflect on the kindness of the mother sentient beings. From that comes the thought to repay their kindness.

In the *Three Principal Aspects of the Path to Enlightenment* Lama Tsongkhapa explained,

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

Endlessly reborn in cyclic existence,
Ceaselessly tormented by the three sufferings—
Thinking that all mothers are in such a condition,
Generate the supreme mind of enlightenment.⁹

There can be no greater shame than seeing your own mother of this life, who gave you your body, drowning in the whirlpools of the ocean of samsara and having no wish to save her. Rather than paying attention to your kind mother who is drowning, screaming in fear, to only have single-pointed concern for your own happiness, to ensure your own life is free from danger, is a disgusting attitude.

Think of your mother who has been very kind to you, or somebody else, a friend or a relative who has given you much help. If you are in the water with that person and they are being drawn into the whirlpool, how would you feel about it? What is in your mind when you think of that person—your

⁹ Vv. 7 and 8.

mother, your friend or relative who has been very kind to you—just there guideless, helpless, in great danger, screaming, on the verge of dying? They are helpless, pitiful; there is no one able to help them. For you to completely ignore them and just concentrate on your own happiness, trying to escape the danger, how ridiculous is that? That way of thinking is utterly disgusting; there is no greater shame than that!

Just as in this example—your mother, your friend or relative who has been very kind to you—it is the same for all sentient beings who are suffering now in samsara. They are all kind; they have all been your relative, your friend; they have all been your kind mother. While your relatives, your kind mothers, are suffering in samsara, if you one-pointedly only consider attempting to liberate yourself alone from samsara without the least concern for other beings, that is only because you are unaware of how your relationship with all these beings changes due to the changes of rebirth and death. All these sentient beings who are suffering in samsara are all one family. They have all have been your sister; they have all been your brother; they have all been your uncle, your nephew, your husband, your wife, your baby son and daughter; they have all been your father and your mother. There is not one sentient being you have not had every kind of relationship with.

I think it is very important to have the feeling that every sentient being is one family, like the closeness you feel for your family of this present life, because when you feel that way, you naturally feel great concern to help that person just as if they were somebody in your family having a problem.

If you can have this feeling with all sentient beings who are suffering in samsara, that is very good. Automatically, when you feel all sentient beings are one family, the concern comes to help them as if you have something to share. If somebody you don't know and have no feelings for is in trouble, you don't have any desire to help them, like you would with your own family. The world's problems come from discrimination, seeing the suffering of other people in the world as nothing to do with yours, whereas seeing all beings as your family stops that discrimination. In that way, even if the person is Chinese, Western, Indian—whatever they are, however they look, whatever language they speak—the thought of closeness, the wish to help, is the same. There is no discrimination, no mental separation. “Oh, he's not important, not like me. He's just an Eastern person!” You make your own reasons not to help them, to not be concerned about them. That is not the quality of a human being. Lack of consideration for others is a mistake and it is something to be renounced.

There is not one sentient being you have not had a relationship with. In the past, there have been gods who were your mother or your father, your own child, your husband or wife. They have all been related. Then, you really cared, but now, just because you are in a different body, because of death and rebirth, taking other bodies, they have all become unknown to you. There is no other reason. It's like two people in a family who die and are reborn back into the family as animals, as cows or horses or chickens, and because of that the other members of the family no longer recognize them.

If you feel that all sentient beings circling in samsara—all the hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, demigods and gods—are one family, and you feel about them like you do about your present family, if you give them the same love, then, when you think of their sufferings, the concern to do something for them naturally comes. “I should do something to help them, to liberate them from samsara.” Compassion arises. You can't just ignore them and relax; you have to attempt to do something to liberate them from samsara.

There is not one sentient being who hasn't been your mother. Not one. Your present mother who gave you this body has been your mother numberless times in past lives, and likewise each sentient being has been your mother numberless times in past lives. You can understand how your present body has been given to you by your present life's mother. But how is it that other sentient beings have been your mother? The continuation of consciousness has no beginning. The continuation of consciousness did not just begin at New Year or at some fixed time in the past; it existed before that time. Because the continuity of consciousness has no beginning, we have all had numberless rebirths.

At this time, you have been born into this body and you are going to die, and then you are going to be reborn. This is how it has been in the past and will be in the future. You have had innumerable rebirths. You haven't always been born to the same continuation of the present life's mother. In the past, when she was born as a dog, you were born as a human being. When you were born as a dog, she was born as a human being. When she was born as a human being, you were born as a horse. Sometimes when she was born as a horse, you were born as a monkey. You have taken numberless different rebirths, numberless different bodies. Each time, the body you received has been dependent on the mother. There is no sentient being who has not been your mother.

Then the question arises, "I can remember today's mother who gave me this body, but I don't understand how other sentient beings could have been my mother. I don't remember." It's the same thing. You don't remember being in your mother's womb; you don't remember coming out of your mother's womb. You can't say that even though you were told you came from that person's womb, because you can't remember, there is therefore no proof. In the same way, just because you can't remember the mothers of previous lives that doesn't mean you didn't have them. Just as you need to rely on what others tell you about this life's mother, you need to rely on the Buddha when he says that all beings have been your mother, that there is not one sentient being who has not been your mother. If you have faith when others tell you about this life's mother, why can't you have faith in the teachings of the Omniscient One?

You might think that if sentient being have been your mother you should recognize them, but you don't. Just because you don't know, you can't say they have not been your mother. There are many people who do not recognize their present life's mother. There are children who were separated from their mother and taken care of by other people. Even if after many years they saw their mother again, they could not recognize her. Many young Tibetans were taken to the West and brought up by other people, and when they had grown up they could not recognize their own parents. They had forgotten their Tibetan language, so when they went back to India from Switzerland or some other country, they needed a translator in order to speak to their parents. For the parents, it was like talking to a Western person. Therefore, it is not a logical argument to say that because you can't remember a previous life's mother, you never had one.

Just as this present life's mother is so kind, you should similarly realize this about all other sentient beings who have been your kind mothers. If this present mother did not create the karma to give birth to you, you would not have received your body from her. She has been extremely kind. Even during the nine months you were in her womb, she took great care not to do any action that might in any way be harmful to the baby. She was always aware of the comfort of the baby in her womb whenever she moved or sat or lay down. With great compassion she took great care, one-pointedly concentrating on the care of her baby, always concerned to do nothing that might hurt the baby.

Even if there was a particular food she really liked, if it was harmful to the baby, she gave it up while she was pregnant. She might have normally been so busy at work, but she had to stop work to prevent harming you. During that time she experienced so much hardship, so many difficulties while you were in her womb. The pregnancy made her body very heavy, very uncomfortable, very painful. Her body completely changed. Even the place where she gave birth had to be the best place she could find for the child.

When you came out, she experienced incredible pain. Even if she suffered unbelievable pain, she ignored it. The loving thought for her child is like a form of compassion. If other people asked if it was hard, she would reply she had a very easy time, despite the fact she went through so much pain and hardship, like meeting death, feeling utterly exhausted during that time.

If this life's mother hadn't lovingly taken care of you while you were in her womb—if she had had an abortion, which she could have done—you would never have met the holy teachings of Buddha, which is the incredible path to enlightenment. To be able to listen, reflect and meditate on the path would have been impossible. None of this would have happened. If she had an abortion, what kind of life would you have had instead? Would you have been born as a worm, being eaten by a bird? You wouldn't have had the seed let alone the opportunity to enjoy even temporal pleasure. So, she has been extremely kind not having done that.

After you came out of her womb, she lovingly took great care of you, holding your body close to her to keep you warm with the heat of her body, looking at you with loving eyes. The look a mother gives her child is quite different from the look she gives other people. She gazed on you with a gentle smile, wanting to make you happy. She carried you on her back, taking care of you as if her heart were on the outside.

She has been extremely kind, giving you this body and then, after that, taking care of you for so long, no matter what hardship she had to experience. This is not the first time she has been kind in giving you a body. She has been kind like this numberless times from your beginningless past lives. At first, feel her kindness for giving you this present body, guarding your life and experiencing much hardship. Feel this until you get a strong feeling for the depth of her kindness.

While you were in your mother's womb, she fed and protected you. After you were born, she experienced so much anguish about having enough money to keep you fed and comfortable, worrying day and night about not finding a job, or even after finding a job not getting enough money. She worked so hard, sweating, using her body, speech and mind to get whatever money she could, spending it all on you, to take care of all your needs. She fed you with her own milk, given with loving kindness, never able to rest. In the West baby food can be bought, but in primitive places like Tibet and the Himalayan region, the mothers give food from mouth to mouth. They chew small pieces and then pass it into the baby's mouth in order to take the best care of the baby. Any food that comes out of the baby's mouth, they would clean off with their tongue. They even wipe the snot off with their mouth.

Your mother always made sure you were well-dressed, covering your body from head to foot to protect you from the heat and cold. She made sure you had so many different clothes for all the different seasons, even though that meant she didn't have any money to spend on herself. Whatever you needed or wanted, she did everything she could to make sure you got it. If all the food and

clothing she bought you over your life were collected it would make a huge pile. If you could see all the food she bought for you it would be a huge shock because it would be so much.

Whenever you were sick and needed a lot of medicines and doctors, day and night, she would only think of how her child was so precious. She was always aware of you, always worried about your safety. If she took her eyes off you for one minute, she was sure you would be in danger, falling down the stairs or putting dangerous things like rocks in your mouth. Anything could go wrong if she took her eyes off you for a minute.

Whenever I see parents taking care of their children—how the children cause much trouble to the parents and how the parents feed them and clothe them and do whatever makes them happy—even though my present life body wasn't received by them, it reminds me of the debt, that they too took care of me in the same way in the past. It makes a great impact on me. Just seeing how they take care of their children reminds me of their great kindness to me. They have also taken care of me like that in past lives. It is very effective for the mind, especially when the children bother them and never leave them quiet.

When you came out of your mother's womb, you were like a worm in the ground. You couldn't speak; you didn't know anything, what would harm or what would benefit. She worried about keeping your body warm and gave you clothing in cold weather; she was concerned about your hunger and thirst and gave you food to take care of your life and to protect you from the harms of hunger and thirst. Like this, your mother took care of you and has been extremely kind. Each day she protected you from hundreds of dangers. If for some reason she couldn't look after you for a while, she hired somebody else to do it.

Like the worm in the ground which knows nothing, you had to be taught by her how to speak and how to walk. She was the one who put you in the line of the human beings, making you a human being with the ability to communicate and work. While she was protecting your life from harm, she had to experience much hardship. She has been very kind protecting your life numberless times from the beginningless past lives until now. Feel this. Remember how kind she has been and how much hardship she has experienced during that time.

She has been extremely kind leading you on the worldly path, giving you an education. In her inner heart she always only thought how wonderful it would be if her child was able to have a happy life. She wanted you to have a good education and a good reputation for this reason. She incurred a lot of expense sending you to good schools, to a college or university to get a degree so you can easily get a job and become self-supporting. That was how concerned she was with your life.

Because of that, you are now able to receive teachings. Even if you still can't follow them that well, you are able to write them down, which gives you the opportunity to read them again and gradually understand them. To be able to read and understand the precious teachings, to be able to find a job because of qualifications you receive, all this is because of the kindness of the mother, even though you think you are self-supporting, that you can look after yourself. You believe this has nothing to do with her kindness, that you were solely responsible for your own education, that you make money by yourself. You might believe that, but in fact all this comes from her kindness. She has given you an education, freeing you while she herself had to experience so much hardship, so much fear and worry. She has been extremely kind in this way in this life and in numberless past lives, experiencing much hardship in order to give you an education. Thinking in this way is good.

If the milk that you have drunk that she has lovingly given from her body were collected, there would be no space left. If all the clothing that she has given you in past lives were piled up, there would be no space left. If all the food and drink that she has given you in past lives were piled up, there would be no space left.

Despite you making everything dirty every day, day and night, despite all the dirtiness, all the smell, she cleaned everything with her hands. She has done that numberless times. If she had the power to give more than enlightenment, she would immediately give it to you. From her side, she has been *that* kind, but from your side, you the child, what benefit has she received? Nothing! Only trouble! Only the great pain when you came out of the womb and all the work and worry looking after you all those years.

During the time you were crawling, you didn't let her sleep at night. When you had grown up a little and you were able to speak and walk, you screamed, not giving her any quiet. You screamed all the time, "I want this" or "I want that." Even after you were educated, you needed help and got angry when you didn't get what you wanted, insulting your mother and even beating her. You returned the incredible kindness you received from her with meanness, never giving her any benefits, only ever causing her pain and worry. It's very upsetting when you think about it. It's as if, rather than repaying her kindness in giving you this body by making your life meaningful, you have resolved to purposely torture her.

I'm talking about your mother, but it is the same with your father. Numberless times he has shown you kindnesses great and small. And it's the same thing with your enemy or your friend—they have been your mother and have shown you great kindness numberless times. After that, you can think of all other sentient beings: all the hell beings, all the hungry ghosts, all the animals, all the human beings, all the gods. Start with all the humans who are here around you and then go out to all the rest of the sentient beings, thinking how they have been your mother and have been so kind to you. After you have generated the thought of kindness, do one-pointed concentration on that, holding the thought of kindness.

Although all your previous mothers might have been kind, they have all died, so how can they be kind now? There's no difference between this mother and the past lives' mothers—their kindness is the same. The past lives' mothers have been kind in past lives; this life's mother has been kind in this life. There is not one single difference. Similarly, there is no difference between the kindness of the person who benefited you last year by giving you food and drink and the person who has been kind to you this year by giving food and drink. It's the same; it's just a matter of time. One is previous and one is now. They are both recognized as kind. So, all the present lives' mothers and all the rest of the sentient beings are all the same in being kind.

All these sentient beings who have been your extremely kind mother, who are drowning in the suffering oceans of samsara, do not have your concern or your attention. Even your extremely dear present life mother who has been most kind is about to be drowned in the ocean and is screaming with great fear, while you yourself are on the same ground, right next to the ocean, not paying the slightest attention to her, just singing and dancing. There is nothing more ungrateful than that.

Without considering all sentient beings in this way, you don't see the relationship you have with them and, even though they are all drowning in the ocean of samsara, you have no real feeling for

them, no compassion. Shopping in a market with your family, you might feel close to them but have no feeling of closeness for the other people in the market. Unlike your family, where there is a sense of kindness, others seem quite distant.

Perhaps you have difficulty relating others to your present life's mother because your mother died when you were born or she ran away, and you were cared for by other people. If that is so, you can take whoever raised you as your object of meditation and base the kindness of the mother on them. Even if you can use the argument about her having given you your body, you can still see how much you owe them and then relate that to all other sentient beings.

The main point is to realize that every sentient being has been extremely kind. The degree of love you can feel for others depends on how kind you feel they have been. To start with, rather than trying to feel love for all sentient beings, you can just focus on some. For example, you can relate to those in your present life, usually your present life's mother, father or friend who have been very kind. You can see how they have been kind and so feel love for them and wish them to be happy. Similarly, with compassion, you wish them to be free from problems and you naturally want to help. In that way, you can take the love and compassion that you have for just these few sentient beings and train yourself to generate love and compassion for more and more sentient beings, until you can genuinely wish all sentient beings to have happiness and be free from suffering.

This great compassion is extremely important because it is the principal cause of bodhicitta. Unless you can generate great compassion for all sentient beings, you can never generate bodhicitta and you can never achieve the omniscient mind. Unless you achieve omniscience, even if you do ordinary work for others, the benefit is limited; you cannot do the effortless, extensive work for all other sentient beings.

I AM ONE, OTHERS ARE NUMBERLESS

One of the techniques used in the profound thought transformation practice of *equalizing and exchanging yourself with others* is to put all sentient beings on one side and yourself on the other side. Then think, when it is called I, how much happiness and how much suffering can this one person have? Others, on the other hand, are numberless. When they experience suffering, so many of them are experiencing suffering, not just one person. So, since I is just one and others are numberless, which is more important? Put this question to yourself.

Is it more important to work for just one person, yourself? Is it more important to work just for your own happiness? Or is it more important to obtain the happiness of others who are uncountable.

Let's put it this way. Say, there are ten sentient beings. Is it more important to give up working for the happiness of the ten sentient beings, to work to try to eliminate their suffering, or is it more important to work for the happiness of just one sentient being? If that one sentient being is yourself, which is more important? Just relating to numbers, of course working for the happiness of ten is more important than working for the happiness of one, even though that one is yourself and the ten are others. Working for others is extremely worthwhile; it is more important.

Similarly, working for the happiness of a hundred others is much more important than the previous one, working for ten sentient beings, not just the one. And of course, working for others who are infinite, uncountable, is much more important than working for a hundred sentient beings or for ten sentient beings. There is no need to say how important it is to work for an uncountable, infinite number of sentient beings. There is no question about working for their happiness and to eliminate their suffering.

Renouncing ten sentient beings and working only for the self is unworthy. Renouncing a hundred sentient beings and working solely for the self is extremely unworthy. So, giving up others who are infinite and working only for the benefit of the self is unthinkable selfish and ungenerous. I think it is very upsetting having only that motive. It is a very poor mind, whereas renouncing the I, the self which is one, to obtain happiness for ten others is extremely worthwhile. Then, giving up the self to work for a hundred others—even if you don't think of all sentient beings, just those sentient beings in your area—is even more worthwhile.

Of course, there is no question of how important, how extremely worthwhile it is to give up the self for the happiness of all the human beings. Even if you are able to exchange yourself with just the human beings you can talk to and understand but can't do it with the animals, hungry ghosts, hell beings or other beings; even if you work for their happiness at least, that is so worthwhile. The number of animals, hungry ghosts and hell beings is utterly uncountable, so to be only concerned day and night with your own wellbeing, to secure your own happiness, is completely ridiculous. It is such a poor mind. Without thinking of the kindness of other sentient beings, just considering their numbers, it is unbearable to not attempt to work for others in order to help them have happiness and be free from suffering.

To be one-pointedly concerned for your own welfare for even an hour, even a minute, how can you behave like that? How can you be comfortable and carry on a normal life when there are unimaginable numbers of beings suffering, even if you don't think of their kindness. This is very upsetting.

Working for others who are uncountable is what is to be practiced; working for the self is what is to be renounced. This is the thought training practice of equalizing and exchanging yourself for others. You need to see how important it is to work for others. If you could see the benefits clearly, if you could feel how such an attitude benefits others—the most important—and how it benefits yourself, you would gladly work solely for others and feel happy to receive less than others.

REPAYING THE KINDNESS

However, working for others is not easy. You can't just run into the street and shout, "I am going to work for others!" You might have a car accident! It's difficult working for others. First, your own mind must be developed. If you are blind, how can you work for other sentient beings? Maybe you go to another country to work for others but after one or two days, life becomes very complicated, and you return. "Oh no, I thought I could do it, but I couldn't so now I've come back. There were so many problems." Unable to overcome problems, not understanding, not having method or wisdom, without enough effort or ability to listen, not even having clairvoyance—how can you work for sentient beings?

Why should you work for other sentient beings? How important is it? Even though you can't do perfect, extensive work for other sentient beings at present, you can create the conditions. This is the whole point. In order to effortlessly do extensive, perfect work for other sentient beings, first you should achieve a stable omniscient mind. Listening, reflecting, meditating on the path to enlightenment—that itself is working for other sentient beings. It becomes the method to achieve enlightenment and becomes the method to be able to do work for sentient beings.

You might pray to be able to do work like this, but it impossible without achieving the omniscient mind, without practicing the Buddhadharmā, without transforming your own mind. Without subduing your own mind, how can you subdue others sentient beings' minds? How can you bring peace of mind to other sentient beings? It's impossible without the method to subdue the mind, without practicing Buddhadharmā. The ability to do perfect work for others comes from the state of omniscient mind, which comes from bodhicitta, and bodhicitta comes from great compassion. To achieve the omniscient mind you need bodhicitta, the thought wishing to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. And that comes from great compassion and great love.

Great compassion and great love come from realizing how sentient beings are kind and precious. Therefore, in order to generate great compassion and great love for all sentient beings, it is very important to realize how kind sentient beings are. The whole thing comes to this point. The Buddha explained this and you can apply your experience of the kindness of your mother and father to other sentient beings. You don't have to necessarily use your mother or father if you were brought up by some other unrelated family or your sister or brother. You can meditate on your present mother or whoever took care of you and brought you up. If your father was the one who took care of you as a child because your mother had left before you could even remember her, then remember the kindness of the father.

Remember that sentient being. Remember that person's kindness and think how all sentient beings have similarly been so kind to you in the past lives. One reason the "kindness of the mother" is the meditation that is usually done—meditating how all sentient beings have been your mother and remembering their kindness—is that usually a child is closer to the mother than the father, so it is easier to feel the kindness of all sentient beings through that example. You can think that all sentient beings have been your mother or your father and have been incredibly kind. You can use the father, even though the meditation only mentions "mother." The main point is to see how sentient beings are kind, whether you use your father, mother or whoever—whatever is more effective for your mind.

Because all these sentient beings have been your kind mother, you determine to repay that kindness. What do sentient beings need? These mother sentient beings who are fully engaged in taking care of their children have themselves been worldly kings numberless times in the past, with incredible material wealth and incredible power. They have been kings of the worldly gods like Indra or Brahma. They have had so much wealth in past lives, but what benefit has it been? They are still in samsara, suffering. What sentient beings want is happiness; what they do not want is suffering. So, the best way for me to repay their kindness is to liberate all sentient beings from all their suffering and to lead them to sublime happiness, the state of the omniscient mind. That is the best way to repay them.

Then, generate great love for all the kind mother sentient beings who are devoid of happiness—the sentient beings who are in the lower realms and devoid of even the simple pleasures. Even those

sentient beings who are in the realms of the happy transmigratory beings and have some temporary pleasures are devoid of ultimate happiness.

Also think that although what your kind mother sentient beings want is happiness, because they are ignorant of its cause, they always destroy the cause by generating anger and heresy. Even though they know how to create the cause of happiness, they are lazy to do it. Then think, “I myself will cause them to have all the happiness and create the cause of happiness.” Make a challenge. “I myself will do that.” Then generate great compassion.

What they do not wish is suffering but in practice, because they are ignorant of the method to attain happiness and eliminate suffering, they run toward suffering day and night. Think of it. Watch the actions of the birds, the small creatures. Their actions are only nonvirtue. Watch the birds. How many worms do they eat in one day? How many nonvirtuous actions of killing? Watch the mother sentient beings in the bushes or living in the water and see how many nonvirtuous acts they commit. They are so busy always running to create the cause of suffering. The motive is completely seeking the happiness of this life.

After you have realized how these types of creatures are suffering, then watch human beings and see how they are suffering, how your kind mother sentient beings are suffering. Again, it is the same thing. The motive is the same; it is one of the poisonous minds. Attachment, seeking only the happiness of his life, is at the heart. Whatever they do, they are mainly focused on their own happiness, and so, because of that motive, the actions of their three doors are nonvirtuous. They are all so busy. Those who fly in the sky are the same; those who swim in the water are the same; human beings are the same. Those who live in a house are the same—the motive and the actions are the same thing. Those who work outside are the same. Their motive is like this, constantly busy creating the cause of suffering day and night.

The mother sentient beings who are in the lower realms constantly create the cause for rebirth in the lower realms, but even those who know what the cause of suffering is, those kind mother sentient beings who are in the upper realms, constantly create the cause to be reborn in the lower realms. That’s how it looks. Even though they know the cause of suffering, they are too lazy to renounce it. So think, “I myself must cause them to be free from all the suffering and the causes of suffering,” and feel great compassion.

Lecture 7

November 16, 1980

ONLY A BUDDHA KNOWS ALL THE METHODS FOR RELIEVING SUFFERING

After generating great love and great compassion, you should generate the special intention, the great will that derives from these thoughts. You take the responsibility to do the work for other sentient beings by yourself alone. You should generate this thought. Think, “While my mother is suffering, if I, the child, do not help my kind mother sentient being, then who should help?”

There are children who help their mothers by thinking like this. If you do not help your mother who has been so kind to you when she is in trouble, if you are lazy and careless or think there are other people who can help her, that is an ungenerous mind. Even though there are numberless buddhas, there are mother sentient beings you have to enlighten. You might think, “Because there are numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas, why should I be so busy? I don’t have to hurry to achieve enlightenment.” This is a ridiculous way of thinking. It’s a totally useless thought.

Even though there are numberless sentient beings, they don’t have the karma to be enlightened by other buddhas, therefore they are still suffering in samsara. There are many sentient beings that *you* have to enlighten. They don’t have the karma to be enlightened by other buddhas except *you*, therefore you must determine to carry the responsibility, to eliminate all the suffering of all sentient beings and bring them all to happiness. You must think, “I must do this by myself.” Make the complete determination.

When you see a beautiful piece of clothing in a shop and you want to buy it more and more, thinking about it more and more, you then make the determination to return to the shop with the money in your pocket. You can’t keep away from the shop without buying it! In the same way, you must have completely strong determination to save all sentient beings with love and compassion.

There is the thought to do it by yourself. You carry the complete responsibility to do that work *by yourself*. You are aware of the suffering of every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal, every human being, including your enemy. You remember every sentient being and are aware of their suffering. That is the whole point. It is completely unimaginable not to work for sentient beings, to renounce all their suffering and to work solely for your own happiness. If a person is carrying a very heavy load and they are sick with exhaustion, make the complete determination to carry that heavy load yourself, relieving them from their tiredness and pain and giving them happiness.

You don’t lead all sentient beings to enlightenment by pulling them by the hand, dragging them along towards enlightenment, saying, “Come to enlightenment!” You don’t put big piles of sentient beings in trucks! You can’t put them in airplanes and trains, you can’t place all the vast crowds in whole convoys of vehicles to take them to Tibet, or to the top of a high mountain like Mount Everest or somewhere, with you yourself as the pilot. It is not like that. If you are going to lead all sentient beings to happiness and enlightenment, they *themselves* have to follow the path.

In order to follow the path to enlightenment, they have to understand the teachings on the path to enlightenment, so you should reveal the teachings to the mother sentient beings who have been so

kind to you. In order to reveal the teachings to mother sentient beings, first you should clearly and completely know the personality of every single mother sentient being, the different levels of their minds and their different characteristics, as well as all the imprints that they have on their mindstreams. You have to know this clearly without the slightest mistake.

Because there are various levels of thoughts, imprints and personalities, knowing only one method is not satisfactory. There are various methods that need to be revealed in order to suit all those different sentient beings, and you should know every single different method clearly without any mistake. Who knows this? Nobody, except a being with an omniscient mind, a buddha. Not even the highest bodhisattvas know this perfectly.

Therefore, you must achieve omniscience in order to fully understand all the different imprints, characteristics and levels of thoughts of every sentient being, without the slightest deception. You must precisely understand every single method to help them and be able to reveal the path to them. With an omniscient mind, you are able to manifest in millions of different forms just to guide one sentient being. Every pore of a buddha's holy body can eliminate many sentient beings' suffering and lead them to happiness.

This is like the story of Buddha Shakyamuni when he was invited by an Indian woman, Magadha Sangmo. Her husband was Hindu and he was devoted to the Hindu priest but she was Buddhist, so she wanted to invite Buddha Shakyamuni and the arhats. Her husband said Buddha Shakyamuni wouldn't come to the house just by her standing outside and inviting him, but she said if she invited them they would definitely come. The husband let her do this, thinking she would make a fool of herself, so she prepared the meals to offer Buddha Shakyamuni and his followers well. After she fixed the house, she went outside and waited, carrying incense in her palms in the mudra of prostration. Then, because there's not the slightest second the Buddha does not see the works of sentient beings with his omniscient mind, he came. At first many arhats and followers came, flying over the mountains and into her house, then afterward Buddha Shakyamuni came.

When he was coming down to Magadha Sangmo's house, at her invitation, in such a short time on his way he passed over so many birds and worms, on the road and in the forest, and those who saw Shakyamuni Buddha were immediately freed from their suffering and led to happiness. Even when Buddha walked, he didn't touch the ground. He walked with his feet just above the ground so on the road the worms and creatures who wanted to cross over felt incredible great bliss. There are many unimaginable stories of how Buddha Shakyamuni skillfully works for sentient beings according to their needs.

Like that, think, "Therefore, I must achieve the same as that. At any rate, I must achieve enlightenment, the complete state of buddhahood for the benefit of all mother sentient beings." This generates the motivation to save living beings by leading them on the graduated path to enlightenment. At present generating such a thought to achieve the fully accomplished buddhahood for the benefit of sentient beings requires effort. By thinking how they have been so kind and by generating love and compassion, you should make the great determination to achieve enlightenment for the sake of others, like Buddha Shakyamuni. For that, you have to generate the effort.

Now, you might be able to generate the experience with effort. When this experience becomes effortless, it is like the mother who sees her one beloved child fall into a fire. Whatever she is doing—while she is eating, working, sitting—continuously, spontaneously, without any effort,

without having to consider any reason, the thought comes to save her only beloved child from the fire. Even while she's talking with other people, while she is eating, whatever she is doing, this thought is spontaneously there. Like that, it is effortless. If you can have that thought totally spontaneously, where you can't stand to see sentient beings experience suffering and be devoid of happiness for even a minute; if the thought comes spontaneously to liberate them from their suffering and give them happiness and therefore to achieve enlightenment—like this example of the mother and how she feels for her one loved child who falls in the fire—you have generated bodhicitta, the loving compassionate thought.

THE CLEAR LIGHT NATURE OF THE MIND

It is a very good idea to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. That's fantastic, but how can you do it with your deluded mind? All sentient beings, not just human beings, can achieve enlightenment. All sentient beings' minds can achieve the omniscient mind, the complete state of buddhahood. There is the potentiality of becoming a buddha in the mind of all sentient beings.

Why is that? The nature of the mind is clear light. For example, if a mirror is completely covered with dust it cannot reflect back a single object. If the mirror itself were completely oneness with the dust, you could not separate it from the dust, and therefore there would be no way to make the mirror give a reflection, because there would be no way to clean the mirror of the dust. Just as you cannot separate *kaka* from kaka, it would be like this with the dust.

You might feel now that your mind is deluded, ignorant, full of attachment, full of hatred, but your mind is like a mirror. Just as a mirror is not inseparable from dust, your mind is not inseparable from attachment, not inseparable from hatred, not inseparable from ignorance. Because the mirror is only temporarily covered with dust, there's an opportunity to gradually clean off the dust that dulls the reflection, and gradually the mirror is able to reflect more and more back until it is able to give a completely clear reflection.

Similarly, you can see that your unsubdued mind is temporarily obscured by the dust of afflictions. By practicing, by following the power of the remedies, you can manage to gradually eliminate the obscurations. That's how the mind can become omniscient. This is the nature of this present mind. It becomes an omniscient mind when there is not the slightest obscuration. Then, when all the obscurations are completely finished, your mind will be able to see the whole of existence. The clear nature of this present mind is the omniscient mind.

Aryadeva explained that it is very effective when you are feeling depressed to think that it is possible to achieve enlightenment. It may not be important for others but it is important for you. When you feel depressed it is difficult to see any connection between this mind and the omniscient mind but it is very important to see it is possible.

You need to think more particularly about this subject. First, you should understand that the mind is not oneness with the unsubdued mind, and second you should appreciate that you have this precious time where you have gathered all the necessary conditions to practice the Dharma. You should examine how you have everything now, so if from your own side you don't attempt to practice the Dharma it's a great waste. Aryadeva said it is possible to achieve nirvana, the sorrowless

state, in daily life because the mind is not oneness with the unsubdued mind. Anger might arise about an object, but the mind isn't continuously the object of anger; sometimes it can be the object of attachment and sometimes the object of indifference or ignorance. So, like this, it changes. This second reason is the main reason that shows how it is possible to separate the mind from this unsubdued, confused mind.

SEARCHING FOR THE NON-EXISTENT I

How can you eliminate the cause of the unsubdued mind? How can the cause of this unsubdued mind, the ignorance that grasps at the "I" as truly existent, be eliminated completely? How can the cause of all the other confused minds be eliminated completely? How can the ignorance, the self-grasping, grasping the I as truly existent, be cut off?

What is grasped is the truly existent I—that is the object of ignorance—and that is false. In fact, it is completely empty. The truly existent I does not exist technically. While the truly existent I is completely empty on the I, it appears to ignorance as if it is true and the ignorance grasps it as true. While it doesn't exist at all from its own side, ignorance believes that it does exist. This ignorance that holds and grasps the I as truly existent is the basis of all other unsubdued minds, such as anger, attachment, hatred. You accumulate karma with this unsubdued mind and have to experience suffering again and again and be reborn again and again. You experience the cycle of death and rebirth in each of the six realms. Right now you are suffering in the human realm.

You need to listen to and understand the teachings given by experienced teachers on shunyata, emptiness, and on the meaning of selflessness, and then, with this wisdom, you need to research whether the object of ignorance—this grasping at the I as truly existent—does truly exist. You need to try to find the truly existent I, the object of ignorance.

Then, after having found the I that the ignorance believes to exist truly, you need search throughout the aggregates to see whether you can find it on one of them, to see whether it exists or not. Understanding the teachings and the advice given by an experienced guru, you will find by searching that the object of ignorance is completely empty.

It is like a mirage you see in the distance. It appears as water and you believe it to be real water and grasp at it as water but someone who comes from that place will tell you there is no water. Why did that person say there is no water? Due to certain conditions, it appears as water, but when the knowledgeable person explains that it is just a mirage and you go closer to examine whether there really is water there, you will find there is not a single drop. Then, your view of water completely disappears. The water that you see is completely empty. In the same way, you realize the truly existent I is completely empty. That which you have been grasping onto since beginningless time, you can now see as completely empty. Then you have realized emptiness, shunyata. By realizing it is completely empty, the truly existent I, which is the object of ignorance and grasping, is completely eliminated. By developing this wisdom realizing emptiness, you will continuously progress along the five paths until you are able to completely remove the very root of the unsubdued mind, the ignorance clinging to the I as truly existent.

That's how the absolute nature of the mind becomes completely free of the obscurations of the unsubdued mind. That is called nirvana. That is the goal of the arhat. You need to completely eliminate the main enemy, the ignorance grasping at the I as truly existent.

All the suffering of samsara comes from karma and the unsubdued mind. All the unsubdued minds come from that very root of ignorance—grasping at the I as truly existent. That can be eliminated by realizing that the I is empty of true existence. When the very root of the delusions is eliminated, the other delusions are ceased. When you achieve the true cessation, then you have finally achieved nirvana and have become a great meditator. Then you are an arhat.

THE FIVE PATHS

The five paths to omniscience are the Mahayana path of merit, the Mahayana path of preparation, the right-seeing Mahayana path, the Mahayana path of meditation and the Mahayana path of no more learning. When you generate bodhicitta effortlessly you have entered the Mahayana path.

Within the first Mahayana path, the path of merit, there are three divisions: lower, middle and greater. The first Mahayana path is the accumulation of merit. That is the literal meaning. The second path is when you have achieved insight, the wisdom realizing emptiness. Then, you have achieved the path of preparation, which has four divisions. The initial meaning of the Mahayana path of preparation is about working in order to fully see the meaning of selflessness, without any deception.

Whenever you generate the wisdom of fully realizing emptiness, your mind approaches the right-seeing path, the third path. You have the wisdom to fully see the meaning of selflessness, emptiness. Then, the next stage is the Mahayana path of meditation, where the wisdom that you have generated before, fully seeing emptiness, is developed by continuously training the mind. Then, when all the disturbing-thought obscurations and all the obscurations to knowledge are both completely removed, there is no need for further training, and you have achieved the path of no more learning.

According to the path to nirvana for the individual liberation practitioner, when you have generated the thought of renouncing samsara, at that time you enter the Lesser Vehicle's path of merit. The thought of renouncing samsara is the door of the path to nirvana. If you only generate the thought to renounce samsara, without the thought of bodhicitta, then you enter the path of the individual liberation practitioner. When you effortlessly generate the thought to renounce samsara and bodhicitta together, then you have attained the Mahayana path.

You can experiment on the mind, just as a scientist does on external phenomena. You can understand it with your own experience. All the confusion and world problems come from the unsubdued mind. Not having a subdued mind is the whole problem. Everything that the Buddha said in all the five great treatises, everything that Buddha ever explained, is the method to subdue the mind. He did not explain it just to calm the mind. It was not just to write books, not just to show he was very learned and a great scholar. The whole Sutrayana teachings are to subdue the mind, to improve the mind, because the unsubdued mind is the whole problem.

Scientists examine things. They count the numbers of things, to try and learn things—how many people in the mountains have big heads, how many stones are in this country, how many birds are in

that country. No matter how much they examine things and how many numbers they know about external phenomena, it cannot subdue the mind. It is more profound to examine the mind than to examine external phenomena. By examining the mind you can understand better and be clearer about the nature of the external phenomena. No matter how much scientific progress there is, inner peace doesn't increase in the minds of the humans in the world. Even in the country where there are the greatest scientific discoveries, there is no more inner peace. That is mainly because what is missing is the method, the practice to subdue the mind. Even though you learn so much about external phenomena, the practice to subdue the mind is still missing.

Therefore, you should attempt to practice meditation; you should seek enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, not only for your own happiness, for nirvana, but for the happiness of all others. If you have that aim, you should make an experiment about the thought of liberation from samsara, bodhicitta and the wisdom realizing emptiness. When you generate each of these realizations, is there greater and greater peace? When each of the wrong conceptions is eliminated in the unsubdued mind, when all the conditions are perfect, you should experiment on these three principal paths to enlightenment. When you do, you are making an experiment on something you have never done in any of your past lives, from beginningless past lives until now. There is nothing more worthwhile in the world to do. What else can you do? What is the most precious thing you can do in the world? What is there in the world that gives greater benefit for others, even for yourself? Nothing.

Just watch everybody in the whole country; watch the people's minds. Whatever they do, they are just repeating what they have done numberless times, just repeating on and on. Their minds are completely confused. Going for a holiday, working, whatever they are doing, they don't know what they are doing. They don't know what the best thing for others is.

In this life, if you are able to make an experiment on the three principal aspects of the path, that's great. Even if you just want to benefit yourself, that is good. But if your concern is for other sentient beings, that is the doorway to give extensive benefit to others.

So, without wasting time, without being lazy, it's time to have a long-term plan, even though you might find the subject unclear and hard to understand now. It takes time to learn the ABC all the way up to Z. It takes time to understand the Dharma and generate realizations. This is the hardest work! It is the most profitable work but it is the hardest work of all. So far, you have been overwhelmed. Since beginningless time until now you have been unable to eliminate your delusions but now, at this time, you are able to face up to them and not be overwhelmed. So, of course, it is the hardest thing. By knowing this, it is extremely important to have a long-term aim and be prepared to practice for a long time in spite of the difficulties.

Lecture 8

November 17, 1980

THE TEN BHUMIS

I have briefly given some idea of the five Mahayana paths you need to progress through in order to achieve the state of omniscience. There are also ten bodhisattva *bhumis*, ten progressive states you need to achieve the omniscience. The first bhumi happens on the third Mahayana path, the right-seeing path. The second to seventh bhumis occur from the right-seeing path to the Mahayana path of meditation, and the eighth to the tenth are on the path of no more learning. These ten bhumis refer to the minds of bodhisattvas who do not follow the tantric path, who follow the Paramitayana path only. When the meditators' minds progress from one path to another, they progress through these ten bhumis.

For each bhumi, when their power of concentration becomes increasingly strong, they pass from the previous bhumi and subsequently attain the next level. Within the concentration there are two different things, the uninterrupted path and the liberated path. Reaching the uninterrupted path becomes the remedy to the disturbing-thought obscurations that block them reaching the next level and the liberated path removes the obscurations to knowledge.

Just to explain how the mind approaches the ten bhumis. There are different scriptures and texts—small ones and elaborate ones—that explain the paths that you can study if you want to. The third Mahayana path, the liberating right-seeing path, removes the one hundred and twelve acquired disturbing-thought obscurations. The path of meditation removes the sixteen innate disturbing-thought obscurations and then the one hundred and eight obscurations to knowledge.

There are quite a few steps to reach the first bhumi. When the meditator is at the level of the first bhumi, they are able to see a hundred buddhas and receive all their blessings. This happens in one second. They can go to one hundred buddha realms. They are able to exist and to see the previous hundred buddha realms and the future hundred buddha realms. They are able to reveal hundreds of Dharma teachings, give hundreds of different teachings, and ripen the minds of hundreds of sentient beings, transforming the beings' bodies so that each body is surrounded by the one hundred and eight higher bodhisattvas. They are also able to do different concentrations. There are twelve different qualities that the meditator can do. There's concentration time and subsequent attainment. After subsequent attainment, the meditator can do these actions.

After the second bhumi is subsequently attained, these twelve qualities increase a thousand-fold. At the third bhumi this becomes a hundred thousand-fold, I think. These twelve different qualities increase more and more as they approach each bhumi.

By only following the paramita path, the meditator gradually approaches the different levels on the Mahayana path. Due to power of the remedy, the path, the obscurations diminish more and more. When they reach the level of the eighth bhumi, they have completely removed the innate disturbing-thought obscurations. The rest of the bhumi becomes the remedy to the obscurations to knowledge. Also, as they gradually approach the ninth and tenth bhumis, the obscurations to knowledge become less and less by the power of the remedy. When all the obscurations to knowledge are completely

eliminated; when all the imprints left by the conception of true existence are destroyed, the truly existent view is completely eliminated. When all this is removed from the continuation of this mind, it becomes the omniscient mind, the *dharmakaya*.

There are two types of dharmakaya: the nature body, which is the emptiness of the buddha's mind, called the *svabhavikakaya*, and the wisdom body, which is the buddha's omniscient mind, called the *jnanakaya*. This is what is called enlightenment, the great nirvana, or the absolute nature of the mind, which is completely purified of both the disturbing-thought obscurations and the obscurations to knowledge.

This is similar to how, previously, when an arhat's absolute nature of mind has been purified of the disturbing-thought obscurations, that is called nirvana. Sometimes it is said that is just the cessation of the unsubdued mind, but I have to point out that nirvana is the absolute nature of the arhat's mind of wisdom. This is completely purified of the ignorance that grasps at the I as truly existent.

This just gives a small idea. These are paths that you have to generate gradually. If you want to understand, you should study the particular scriptures as well as all the elaborate commentaries that give the definitions and details of the paths. Then, as well as studying, you must also practice by listening, reflecting and meditating. When you experience the path you will understand clearly.

If you want to know the details of this path according to tantra, then you should ask Jim! He has taken degrees in the five paths. So, you can check with him if you want to know if this path is more complicated. He has taken more than five degrees. According to tantra, without following the Paramitayana paths to achieve enlightenment, you attain enlightenment through the path of Secret Mantra.

ENTERING THE TANTRIC PATH

First you should have the foundation in mind. In order to enter the Tantrayana path you need to receive an initiation. To enter the Highest Yoga Tantra path, Maha-anuttara Tantra, you must receive an initiation into the Maha-anuttara Tantra path. To be granted the initiation it is desirable that the mind should be enriched in the three principal aspects of the path: the thought to renounce samsara, bodhicitta and the wisdom realizing emptiness. A mind that has these fundamental realizations is the perfect receptacle for the initiation.

In order to generate the thought of renouncing samsara, you first have to cut off clinging to this life, seeing the works of this life as just like food you have vomited out. To renounce samsara, you should see the whole of samsara is like being in the middle of a nest of poisonous snakes or like living in a thorn bush. Wherever you stay there is not one single happiness; that is the nature of samara. Wherever you stay it's like a being in big hole full of thorns, so that wherever you move your body there is only pain. You must see the whole of samsara as in the nature of suffering and have not the slightest attraction for any samsaric perfection. You can't stand to be in samsara for even an hour. To be in samsara it's as if an arrow has gone inside your heart; you can't stand it for even an hour or a minute. You must be free of it.

When that strong thought arises effortlessly to renounce samsara, you generate great compassion, feeling it is unbearable that other sentient beings are suffering too. It is also as if an arrow has gone

through your heart and you can't stand it for one minute. It is unbearable that others are suffering in samsara, and they need to be liberated by you. Bodhicitta arises from that great compassion.

When you can't stand that sentient beings are suffering in samsara for even a minute, that is uncreated, effortless bodhicitta, the wish to achieve enlightenment for all sentient beings. If you have these three realizations—renunciation, bodhicitta and wisdom—you are a perfect receptacle to receive the initiation.

Actually, this applies to any other kind of meditation practice, any sadhana involving deities, as long as it starts with bodhicitta. Without having the realization of bodhicitta and without having the wisdom realizing emptiness, there is no way that you can do a perfect, pure tantric practice. As every practice starts with bodhicitta and a meditation on shunyata, the whole practice has to be done with those two thoughts, those two bodhicittas: absolute bodhicitta and conventional or all-obscuring bodhicitta. The whole practice should be done one-pointedly for the benefit of others, from the beginning right up to the dedications at the end. The whole practice—visualizing yourself as the deity, meditating on the mandala and all the rest—has to be done in this way. You have to constantly remember that the whole thing is empty of true existence. Without having these two realizations, these two bodhicittas, it is very difficult to even start the yoga practice of whatever deity you are practicing. You can't start purely.

If you have attained certain realizations, that is the perfect basis, but at least you should have an altruistic motivation, at least you should have the effortful experience of these paths. Even though you might not have the realization of emptiness, it is extremely important to have a realization of bodhicitta in order to practice tantra.

Even though you understand all the tantric teachings completely, all the achievements of the four levels of tantra, even if you have memorized all the texts and understood all the meanings, if you haven't generated a realization of the three principal aspects of the path in your mind, you cannot complete your tantric practice. Many hindrances arise, and there is a great danger that instead of achieving enlightenment you achieve the vajra hell or the other unbearable suffering states of the hell realm.

However, even if you don't have the realization of the two bodhicittas, you can still take an initiation and practice tantra. You can have an effortful experience of these paths, but you cannot actually achieve the graduated path of the generation stage and completion stage, which are the two stages in Highest Yoga Tantra. Without having a realization of these two bodhicittas, you might achieve a little progress, you might get some result, but you cannot complete the whole tantric path. Eventually, if you are trying to practice tantra, you must realize both bodhicitta and emptiness.

What you first need to do is find a lama who has the perfect qualifications to give a tantric initiation and from that experienced, perfectly qualified guru you should receive the four initiations of Mahānuttara Tantra.

The guru, from their own experience, gives the four initiations which plant the seeds to attain the four kayas in the disciple's mind: the *svabhavikakaya* or transcendental dharmakaya—the emptiness of the omniscient mind—the *jnanakaya* or a buddha's omniscient mind, the *sambhogakaya* or enjoyment body and the *nirmanakaya* or emanation body.

THE GENERATION AND COMPLETION STAGES OF HIGHEST YOGA TANTRA

Once the initiation is received by the disciple, they enter the vajra path, the gradual path of the generation stage and the gradual path of the completion stage.

These are the preliminaries in order to receive initiation and to meditate on the graduated path of the generation stage. The graduated path of the generation stage, the first path, is the preliminary realization for the second path, the gradual path of the completion stage. The gradual path of the generation stage has three levels to achieve.

By completing the realization of the graduated path of the generation stage, the mind is ripened and it becomes ready to meditate on the graduated path of completion stage, which is the actual path that purifies the ordinary death, intermediate state and rebirth.

When the meditator meditates on the graduated path of the completion stage, there are six levels: body isolation, speech isolation, mind isolation, illusory body, clear light and the union of clear light and illusory body. When they have reached the stage of mind isolation, they meditate like you did yesterday, going through the death process, transforming the ordinary death—the ordinary death that is going to come tomorrow! In this completion stage meditation, with clear light there are four visions. When the meditator reaches these stages, they release the knots in the six or seven channels that stop the mind from functioning in the left and right *nadis*, or channels. Until that time, the winds have been stuck and unable to go inside the central nadi. Now, however, the meditator has control. After the knots are released, the wind is able to go into the central channel, entering, abiding and absorbing in the central channel.

During that time, the meditator can do whatever they are supposed to with the channels and the red and white seed that become the father and mother. At the time of death, this vision will occur to the meditator, like how it happens that they meet their parents. During meditation time this happens. So, when they reach the clear light vision they meditate by applying the tantric meditations. They meditate on that clear light and recognize the clear light vision that appears. With that they meditate on emptiness and also apply the tantra meditations.

Then, the second step is the illusory body. There are two types: the pure illusory body and the impure illusory body. It is the impure illusory body on the Paramitayana path where you have to accumulate merit for three hundred great eons. In tantric practice, you are able to accumulate all that merit so quickly. The main way to accumulate such extensive great merit so quickly is by meditating on the impure illusory body.

After the impure illusory body, the meditator then meditates again on clear light. The previous one is called the clear light of example whereas this one is called the meaning clear light. After this, the meditator rises up in a pure illusory body. Dignified in the tantric path of training, they completely cut off the dualistic mind and become an arya being.

Then, they achieve the unification of no more learning, the omniscient mind. The holy body has seven qualities. They can manifest in millions of different forms for the sentient beings, whichever manifestation subdues their minds. They can do effortless extensive work for sentient beings with their holy body, holy speech and the holy mind.

This is very brief idea showing how it is possible to achieve enlightenment by following the tantric path. All sentient beings have buddha potential. Because of that, if you practice the holy Dharma, if you follow the path, you can achieve enlightenment. Second, which is the perfect body to follow the path and achieve enlightenment? You have the body qualified by these eight perfect conditions. Not only have you received the body qualified with freedoms and riches, you have also been born in this southern world, born from the womb that consists of six elements, three from the mother and three from the father. It is only in such a special body that you can achieve the unified state of Vajradhara, the result of the Mahayana and Tantrayana. You can achieve this in one brief lifetime, *except*—I think everyone understands—except if you haven't done the practice, if you haven't followed the path.

Not only having the body qualified by the eight freedoms and ten riches, but having this special body to achieve enlightenment, born in this southern world where all the tantra teachings still exist and there is much wisdom. Born from the womb, with a body made of six elements, if you want to practice Mahayana and Tantrayana and achieve enlightenment, it is in a body such as this. Only with this particular body is it possible to achieve enlightenment in one brief lifetime. You can't do it with any other body, not with the body of a worldly god or with a body from another continent or another universe.

At this time, the Vajrayana teachings exist. They exist in the holy minds of the perfectly qualified lamas who are able to reveal the complete paths of sutra and tantra. Unless you cheat yourself by not practicing the holy Dharma, all the conditions are there. There is a lama who can reveal all the teachings; there is a body with all the qualities to achieve enlightenment in one brief lifetime; you have met the teachings. Not only do the teachings exist in this world, but you have met the stainless Mahayana teachings that show the path to enlightenment, the teachings that combine sutra and tantra.

THE LAMRIM IS LIKE THE MAIN ROAD TO ENLIGHTENMENT

When all the necessary conditions are perfected in this way, while you have such a precious body, if you don't follow the path and achieve enlightenment in this lifetime, when can you in the future? When will it again be possible to achieve enlightenment? Is it definite that you will receive a better body than this in the future? Which is more definite: to receive a better body or a worse body than this? It is pretty definite you won't receive a better, more precious body than this.

Even though generally this is such a degenerated, difficult time in the world—even though it is a bad time in the world, a *kaliyuga* time, when people are worried—for us it is the best time! From beginningless samsaric lifetimes until now it has never happened before. This is such a precious opportunity to meet the teachings like this, the stainless teachings of sutra and tantra, the method to achieve enlightenment. So, for us there is no better time than this. At this one time when you have found this precious body that has all the necessary conditions, you *must* at any rate achieve enlightenment. You must!

You must follow a path to achieve enlightenment, but which kind of path should you follow? You should follow a path that is like the main road, the only way that people can go down that they can get what they want. You should follow the path like this main road, the path that all the buddhas of the three times have followed. If you do that, you will reach the same state that they have,

omniscience. If, on the other hand, you follow a path that the three-time buddhas have *not* followed, you will reach a strange place, a place that not one buddha has achieved. You might attain some strange realizations! The graduated path to enlightenment is like the main road. This is the road that all people have to go along to attain enlightenment. All the three-time buddhas have proceeded along this graduated path.

Within the lamrim are all the condensed teachings that are easy to understand and practice. They cause no confusion to the practitioner. The lamrim contains the essence of the path to enlightenment. Having such teachings as this is by the kindness of Lama Atisha, who wrote *A Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, and Lama Tsongkhapa, who gave commentaries on Lama Atisha's teachings. Even though the subjects were taught extensively by the Buddha, the title of the condensed text was *lamrim*, the *graduated path to enlightenment*, which is extremely beneficial for sentient beings at any level. There are beings of the lower capability, of middle capability and of higher capability, those studying extensive scriptures and all the levels of tantra. The lamrim is extremely beneficial for any level of sentient being there is. Everything in the Dharma we are able to hear, understand and practice is by the kindness of Lama Atisha and Lama Tsongkhapa.

Sometimes it is very beneficial late in the evening before going to bed to do the dedication according to the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. Even if you cannot finish the whole chapter on dedication, do as much as possible. The rest can be done the next day, then the rest the next day, and so on. It is very effective for the mind. You can also do *tonglen* practice, which is an incredibly effective individual practice, along with the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* prayer.

Lecture 9

November 18, 1980

THE *HEART SUTRA*

The *Heart Sutra* mantra—TADYATHA GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA—relates to the five Mahayana paths to enlightenment. The first word, TADYATHA means “it is like this,” meaning this is how Shakyamuni Buddha and all the buddhas came to enlightenment. Then, the first GATE, “gone” means that they have entered the path of merit, the first path. With the second gate, they have entered the path of preparation and with PARAGATE, “gone beyond” they are on the third path, the right-seeing path. PARASAMGATE means they have gone completely beyond that to the path of meditation. Finally, with BODHI, they have reached the path of no more learning and they have attained omniscience.

SVAHA means “the thought of enlightenment to take the root in the mind,” like planting the root of a tree into the ground, then everything develops from there and fruit is produced. The whole thing develops when you plant the root. The cause of enlightenment is the path, and the result is enlightenment. Saying this mantra is the cause of enlightenment taking root in your heart. So, when someone understands all these five paths, when they hear this mantra the vision of the whole path comes. It becomes a direct meditation on the whole path. Avalokiteshvara (Chenrezig) says to Shariputra that this is how a bodhisattva mahasattva should practice the profound perfection of wisdom. The *Heart Sutra* is very short and after a few days of saying it each morning, it gives you the chance to think about it and meditate on it.

KHUNU LAMA RINPOCHE

Before this quotation, I would like to talk about Khunu Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen, the great bodhisattva who passed away two or three years ago. His great understanding goes beyond what others see of his life’s meaning, according to our mind. Not only was he an expert, learned in the Dharma, but also in general education, like the great pandit Shantideva. I think Shantideva might have achieved enlightenment in one lifetime. There are several like Aryadeva who achieved enlightenment in one lifetime, but I don’t remember exactly about Shantideva.

Khunu Lama Rinpoche was an expert in general education, like a second Shantideva. He was also an expert in Sanskrit language. There was not one single sutra of tantric teaching that he did not understand, both the hundred scriptures of the Kangyur, the teachings of the Buddha, and the two hundred texts of the Tengyur, the commentaries written by the pandits who understood the many various methods and tantric subjects and what practice needed to be done. Even with the Compassion Buddha, Chenrezig, there are hundreds of different practices to do for different purposes for the benefit of sentient beings. Each of the buddhas has different things that they can do to work for sentient beings. Khunu Lama could remember all those hundreds and hundreds of texts on sutra and tantra. When he taught, he could recite all the teachings quickly by heart, with unbelievable understanding. I don’t remember his exact age¹⁰ but even though his aspect was very

¹⁰ Khunu Lama was 82 when he died.

old, he was able to remember them. There was no sign of old age, like losing his memory, not like an ordinary person who is very old. He not only knew the teaching from one sect, he was an expert in the teachings of all four sects, and he could explain the subject according to the people listening. When the various lamas, Sangha and lay people from the four different sects took teachings from him, he would explain the right view of shunyata according to the understanding of each listener. With his different way of presenting the teachings, he never limited his presentation to just one sect.

I don't know much about his life story or his early life in Tibet but for so many years he lived an ascetic life. I think he had many learned lamas from different sects, and he had many teachings, many commentaries and tantric teachings and transmissions of texts and scriptures given by many Indian pandits. He had all those teachings in his early life, but he not only collected words, he also practiced. During his whole life he practiced bodhicitta one-pointedly. His heart practice, the essential practice in Buddhism, was bodhicitta, renouncing himself and cherishing other sentient beings.

After his escape from Tibet he spent a long time on the banks of the River Ganga at Varanasi, the place where many sadhus wash their bodies in the water. The sadhus helped him, offering him food and things like that. He dressed like them. After spending his whole life listening, he then put into practice what he had listened to and understood, practicing the meaning of the Buddha's teachings for the rest of his life, becoming realized. He became a great bodhisattva.

One day, dressed like a sadhu, he went to a Tibetan monastery in Bodhgaya and asked them for a place to sleep. Because the monks at that great monastery didn't know who he was, they didn't let him stay. From the outside, he looked like a sadhu, just wearing just a couple of red-colored scarves. Eventually, he gave a lama two commentaries on bodhicitta, on *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. He also studied Tibetan grammar from the Dalai Lama's two other tutors.

From the side of his understanding, there was no difference from those previous pandits such as Shantideva. When I met him, he gave two teachings to the people of Tibet and of many other countries. Great crowds of people had come to take blessings from him and many other people also received teachings from him.

I requested the *lung* and the commentary of *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* from his holy mouth but, at that time, he didn't accept to give the commentary, only the *lung*, the oral transmission. I think I didn't understand anything! With great kindness and great compassion he gave the *lung*. I received teachings together with many other lamas and geshe from other monasteries like Sera and Drepung. We received the commentary on the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* in Bodhgaya at the Mahabodhi temple and then several commentaries on the lamrim. He also taught on *The Jewel Lamp*, the text in praise of bodhicitta that he had written.¹¹

At that time, there were other Sangha, monks and nuns, and he rarely accepted offerings people made to him, giving back whatever he received. His whole life was an ascetic one, a very pure monastic life. He not only had great knowledge, he had foreknowledge [clairvoyance]. At one time in Bodhgaya, several hundred people wanted to receive blessings from him. It was so crowded and there were lines of people upstairs and downstairs in the monastery, and even outside. A monk waited there for many days but somehow he wasn't able to see Rinpoche. He waited there for many

¹¹ Published as *Vast as the Heavens, Deep as the Sea*. Trans. Gareth Sparham, Wisdom Publications, 1999.

days. Then, one day, when the monk who served Rinpoche food went into his room, this monk sneaked in behind him. He didn't have permission to enter the room but he went in anyway with the other monk! This monk felt kind of angry for having to wait so long. He asked Rinpoche, "Why didn't you let me see you?" Rinpoche replied, "People who come to see me may have had a relationship with me from past lives. Many are like that and many come to see me because they like me. However, the person standing there has not been a disciple in a previous life, nor does he seem to like me. He is neither of these."

We were chatting here about the monastery he was excluded from. Rinpoche told me this was the last time he was seen to get some truth in this text! He then advised many people at the monastery to subdue their minds. I think that was his last advice.

After some time Rinpoche left for Padmasambhava's place in India, where there is a story that Padmasambhava was born from the lotus in the lake. I really wanted to go there and take teachings and commentary on thought training. Somehow there wasn't much luck. I didn't create the karma. Sometime after that Rinpoche passed away. He had earlier returned to the place where he was born, a place called Sunnam in Himachal Pradesh. I think he must have already been reincarnated.

ALWAYS HAVE BODHICITTA IN YOUR MIND

Feel the kindness from deep within your heart, the very inside of your heart. What is important is that you should practice bodhicitta in your everyday life in the company of people you live and eat with. If you wish to generate bodhicitta, always keep the altruistic attitude in the heart. The nature of bodhicitta is continuing to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of others, so try to keep that goal with whatever action you do in everyday life.

Of course, if your goal is only for the happiness of this life, then the action doesn't become the Dharma. Nor should the goal you have in your heart be just for the happiness of future lives either or even liberation for yourself. It shouldn't be that.

The normal goal in people's hearts is for the happiness of this life. They feel this very strongly, spontaneously; it is there without need for effort. That is the *one* goal that is currently there—to be happy in this life. They think it should be enough. Instead of that, however, you should aim to develop omniscience for the sake of others. Don't think that you want to reach omniscience because you want to be happy. How can this be smart, because again in the heart is the self-cherishing thought! "I want omniscience because it is the best happiness." It's not like this.

In your everyday life and during your meditation sessions, you should frequently think that sentient beings are not only extremely kind they are suffering greatly. Remember this frequently and then think, "I must achieve omniscience for the sake of all these mother sentient beings, to eliminate all their suffering and lead them into the peerless happiness of enlightenment by myself alone." If you constantly practice like this in your everyday life and during your meditation sessions, it leaves a greater and greater imprint on your mind and you can quickly generate bodhicitta. This is your entire daily plan, from morning until night. All your actions of body, speech and mind should be done with this goal.

On that basis, think, “I myself am merely labeled. Nothing exists from its own side. It is merely labeled. Other sentient beings are also merely labeled. The whole of existence is merely labeled. Not one slightest thing exists from its own side. Nothing exists except what is merely labeled.” The practice of true Buddhism must become your life; it is not just something to be practiced for one day, one month or one year. You must practice it for your whole life until the time of death. Determine to attain the two bodhicittas—ultimate bodhicitta and all-obscuring bodhicitta. At least be aware of these practices.

Lecture 10

November 20, 1980 (morning)

THERE IS NOTHING MORE WORTHWHILE THAN DEVELOPING BODHICITTA

Generating virtue is generally difficult. Generating liberation is more difficult. Generating bodhicitta, however, is even more difficult. The Buddha said that generally in our everyday life our mind is a mixture of virtue and nonvirtue but nonvirtue arises extremely easily, far more easily than virtue. Of the virtues that can arise, the virtue that leads to the five paths is more difficult to attain than the virtue that leads to liberation.

Of the five paths, the path of merit is called “similar to liberation.” Why is it called that? Even though the meditator on the path of merit still has intellectually acquired obscurations, still holding that things are truly existent, the training they do on the path of merit indirectly leads to the cessation of certain unsubdued minds, so it is similar to the path that leads to liberation. Even though it doesn’t actually remove the intellectually acquired obscurations at that stage, it directly causes them to cease. This is done effortlessly with the uncreated thought of renunciation of samsara, which is why it is called the merit similar to liberation.

In order to achieve that, you have to have the thought of renunciation of samsara. Therefore, this merit is much more difficult to generate than general merit. Even more difficult than this, the most difficult mind to generate is bodhicitta. The merit of bodhicitta is the most extensive, the greatest one.

In *A Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life* the great bodhisattva Shantideva talked about the benefits of bodhicitta. He said:

All other virtues are like the plantain tree;
For after bearing fruit they simply perish.
But the perennial tree of the Awakening Mind
Unceasingly bears fruit and thereby flourishes without end.¹²

Other trees, like apple or orange trees, grow by being dependent on the elements such as water and soil, therefore they need certain conditions to grow. Once you have taken the fruit, that’s it; the result is finished. But this tree, the water tree [the plantain], is not like that. It continues to give fruit every day whenever you want fruit. Other trees depend on the season; they don’t give fruit all year around, whenever you want.

In the same way, other virtues bear the fruit of good karma ripening but then that’s it. The result is finished. Bodhicitta, on the other hand, never finishes producing positive results. The more you enjoy bodhicitta the more the positive results increase, unlike other virtues where the more you enjoy the results the less there is. With the virtue, the merit, of bodhicitta, the more you enjoy the result, the more it increases. It is like the wish-granting tree, like those trees in the pure realm of

¹² Ch. 1, v. 12.

Buddha. Whatever you request you find it on the tree. Whatever perfection, whatever enjoyment you request, it gives unceasingly, and unless you become lazy, it only increases.

Even if you have still not attained actual bodhicitta, if your actions are imbued with a bodhicitta motivation, that merit is like a drop of water that is put into the Pacific Ocean. Alone, it might dry up, but because the Pacific will never dry up, it too will never dry up.

Like that, until you achieve omniscience, the merit that is accumulated with thought of bodhicitta, even though not actual bodhicitta, continually increases until you achieve the state of omniscience. It continues to increase even after you have achieved enlightenment, doing effortless continual work for all the sentient beings until they too become enlightened. All this is the result of the merit possessed by the thought of bodhicitta. It is truly unimaginable how great this thought is. It is uncountable, immeasurable.

Compared to the merit of attaining bodhicitta, all other merits are easy, even the merit that helps you attain liberation. Why is bodhicitta the most difficult? Because for bodhicitta you need to have great compassion for every single sentient being, without leaving one out. Such a thought is extremely rare; it is extremely difficult to generate.

My conclusion is this. Khunu Lama said,

As the *pundarika* [lotus] is the best flower among all the flowers,
Bodhicitta is the best mind among all the virtuous minds.
Therefore, since having it brings happiness in this life and all lives,
It is worthwhile to always make effort to develop it.¹³

As Khunu Lama had the taste, the experience of the whole path, with this experience, he himself said it is very worthwhile to pay precise attention to bodhicitta.

If you are going to buy a jewel in the shop and you want the best quality jewel, one that can make you trillions of dollars, when you are in the shop you pay special attention to all the jewels there, the colors, the quality and so forth. Even though there are many other precious jewels in that shop, you don't care much about them. You have a particular one in mind, the one that is best. With that idea in mind, you go into the shop to search. Even though there are many jewels in the shop, it is extremely worthwhile to pay precise attention to what is the most precious.

Similarly, by knowing the incredible benefits of bodhicitta, even though it is most difficult to generate, it is extremely worthwhile to pay precise attention to how to generate it. Worldly people don't do this; they undergo great hardships for things that are useless.

For example, three years ago when I was waiting in the mountain airport at Tengboche in Nepal for a delayed flight, there was a group of people staying in the next room who had returned from a trekking expedition who were also waiting. They were very impatient about the delay, very nervous. That night was one of the special days, either the tenth or twenty-fifth day of the Tibetan calendar and we had to do a puja. So we did a puja with other students who were up there in the mountains doing a Chenrezig retreat. I think it was after nine o'clock. What I didn't realize, though, was that by

¹³ *The Jewel Lamp*, v. 10.

leading the prayers I was disturbing the others in the house. I was the main disturbance. I was the leader of disturbances! As we were doing the prayers, somebody in the other room who was trying to sleep banged on the wall right behind me. He didn't scream or shout but after the second bang I was very scared that he might come to our room with all his muscles out! Maybe anger manifests muscles. I didn't cause him to do that, but I imagined him running into the room. We then did the prayers quickly and quietly. I guess he recovered.

The main thing is this group made a plan to climb Mount Everest the next year the most difficult way, not the normal way that the English and Japanese do. They had mapped out the whole path of how to climb Mount Everest the most difficult way. They said they themselves and other groups would come next year to climb it that way.

What is the point of such a venture? What meaning does this have? Even if they were successful, what benefit would there be for the mind, what peace would it bring, even in this life? What benefit would all sentient beings receive from it? Suppose one of the climbers ends his life up there in the snow, what benefit would that be to carry into the future life? Even after climbing Mount Everest, in the next life he could be born as a crocodile. Then he wouldn't be able to enjoy the reputation that he had once climbed Mount Everest! He wouldn't have the same reputation as he had in the past life. The crocodile wouldn't know anything from a past life, not even its past life's kind mother.

We have all been born numberless times in the past, on a mountain like Mount Everest or Mount Meru, maybe as birds like those big eagles that fly effortlessly over Mount Everest. There is no use, no benefit at all, as long as the mind is not subdued. There is no benefit, not even for the next life, no matter how great a reputation you have. Despite having a reputation, there is no calmness in the mind. You might believe you are happy but there is no calmness, no tranquility; the mind is overcome by attachment and confusion.

If it were so worthwhile to give up your life mountain climbing, why not give up your life to practice bodhicitta, to generate compassion for all the sentient beings? If you are able to give up your life just for the reputation of this life, for just a few years' reputation in this life, if you are able to face the difficulties of that, why can't you face the hardships of generating bodhicitta, the cause of the state of omniscient mind? Facing hardships that have no benefit in this life and no benefit in future lives for you or for other sentient beings is extremely silly.

In car racing, people face terrifying dangers, breaking their arms or legs many times. Before the race starts they have no idea whether they will be able to return home safely afterwards. If they were honest they would have to say they weren't sure. But no matter how aware they are of the terrible dangers they face by racing cars, maybe even giving up their life, they still do it. Some people line up many trucks and then jump over all of them on a motorcycle! It is completely useless, completely essenceless.

There is no danger to your life by practicing bodhicitta. Practicing bodhicitta is the best protection for life. It prevents hindrances to your life; it gives comfort to the mind and to the body. You have heard the advice about bodhicitta and know these things, but those people have not met the teachings, they have not heard such precious advice. They have not had the opportunity to train the mind.

Having met the Mahayana, the teachings on bodhicitta, however, no matter how many hardships there are, even if it takes many hundreds of lives, if it takes hundreds of eons, if you have to give up your life in order to generate bodhicitta, it is extremely worthwhile; it is of unbelievably great benefit.

If you do not practice after having met the teachings on the other hand, if you cannot face the hardships, that is more ignorant than the people who have not met the teachings. What they are doing is silly but they don't understand because they have not met the teachings. But to meet and understand the Buddha's teachings and yet still not practice them is far worse. You must do more than just reading the teachings in a book, just leaving them in the book, not assimilating them in your mind. That is not meditation; it's just collecting books and notes. It has no benefit. There is no way for the mind developing compassion.

It is such an incredibly worthwhile thing to practice the good heart. It benefits you in this life, at the end of this life and in future lives. It benefits other sentient beings now and in the future, all the time. If you cannot face the hardships of practicing the good heart of bodhicitta after you have received the teachings, there is nothing more foolish, nothing more stupid. It is far more foolish than people who have not met the Dharma, who have no understanding.

You should always train your mind like this, keeping this in the heart, determining to generate incredible kindness. I don't think it is sufficient to have just any kind of virtuous motivation when you listen to the lamrim teachings. What motivation is necessary to listen to the teaching on the graduated path to enlightenment? I think it is the motivation of bodhicitta. Or at any rate, the thought that you must achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all the mother sentient beings. Listening to teachings with such a motivation creates great merit.

PUT EFFORT ONLY INTO WHAT IS WORTHWHILE

You are going to practice the Dharma in order to achieve enlightenment. Generally people don't strive for enlightenment; they don't even seek ultimate happiness or the cessation of the whole of suffering. Before you dedicate your life to that, before you put your whole life into that, it is extremely important to examine whatever you read to see whether it is the right path, whether it will lead you where you want to go or not.

At the beginning you should examine well the Dharma you are going to spend your whole life practicing, putting all your energy into it. The great Sakya Pandita said that worldly people examine everything minutely, horses, possessions, jewels and so forth, but with the Dharma it is like dog's food; they don't bother to examine the quality. Whatever they hear, they believe; whichever teacher they meet, they follow. If you are going to make lunch, even if it's just a sandwich, when you go to buy vegetables or fruit at the shop, you would never just pick them up without examining them, determining which are the best, which aren't rotten, which aren't eaten by worms. Only after you have found the right ones, you pay the money.

What Sakya Pandita is saying is that the whole of this life and all your future lives are completely dependent on what practice you do. All the good things and all the bad things you experience in your future lives, the whole thing is completely dependent on this life's practice, on how you live this life.

All the happiness of this life and all the future lives depends on the holy Dharma. What kind of Dharma you practice in this life determines the happiness or suffering you will experience in this life and in all your future lives, whether it is the holy Dharma that becomes the cause for all the happiness, or the non-holy dharma that doesn't benefit the happiness of this life and future lives.

You must examine what kind of practice you are doing. If what you practice is not holy Dharma, it is not the method to subdue the mind. If it is not holy Dharma—even if you believe it to be holy Dharma—it is not the remedy that pacifies the unsubdued mind. Instead of benefiting you, bringing you more and more happiness, the spiritual path you practice can reinforce wrong conceptions, making the mind more ignorant and destroying what wisdom you have. You not only waste all your energy, but what you practice is also the cause of suffering. It only brings suffering.

It not only doesn't lead you to the body of a happy transmigratory being in your future life, it also leads you to the lower realms. Like that, it is not holy Dharma. Your whole practice, your whole life, is completely wasted. All happiness, from this life all the way up to enlightenment, is completely lost. You have cheated yourself. It is such a great loss.

Therefore, it is incredibly important to examine the spiritual path you follow. Since what you want is happiness, the Dharma you practice should be infallible; it should lead you to the peace that you are searching for. It should benefit you beyond this life, all the way up to enlightenment.

There is great danger if you follow a path without having first examined it thoroughly. You are like a dog that sees some meat and runs to it, gobbling it down immediately without seeing what it is, whether it will help or harm, what are its qualities. If you are like that with your practice, there is great danger.

When you are going to do a retreat in a solitary place for years and years, something that will certainly entail many hardships for your life, it is important you have all the teachings before you start. Without that you won't have the energy to face the hardships. Without having the complete teachings of the whole path available, your practice does not have much meaning and there is not much result, so facing hardships is difficult. Practicing with mistakes means there is no result, no meaning at all. The great yogi Milarepa said from his experience, "If you do not meditate on the advice passed from year to year, even if you live in a solitary place, you are just torturing yourself."

The Dharma you want to practice, the Dharma that will lead you all the way to omniscience, should be revealed by the Omniscient One and explained by incredible learned pandits.

Lecture 11

November 20, 1980 (evening)

PRACTICE THE DHARMA CONTINUOUSLY AND CORRECTLY

Think, “I am going to listen to the commentary of the graduated path to enlightenment in order to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all the kind mother sentient beings.”

As I mentioned this morning, the Dharma you are going to practice in this life, that you are going to spend your life putting energy into, must refer back to the Omniscient One, the founder of the teachings. This is the incredible method. It must be like this. If it is not Dharma that has come from the Omniscient One, the founder of the teachings, even though you spend a thousand years practicing this dharma that doesn't have pure references like this, you will be unable to attain a single pure realization. You will have nothing to show, even after a thousand years of practice, “I have generated bodhicitta;” “I have generated the thought of renouncing samsara;” “I have generated the wisdom realizing emptiness;” “I have generated the realizations of the gradual path of enlightenment;” “I have attained the generation stage of Secret Mantra.” There will be nothing to show like that. What you want is butter but you churn water! You put water in a big pot and then you churn it, believing that you will get butter from that. But no matter how many years you churn the water, you will never get one piece of butter that you can put on your toast!

The Dharma you are going to practice will bring your desired results, whether it is wishing for temporal happiness, finding the body of a happy transmigratory being, attaining the perfections in all the future lives, attaining liberation, the sorrowless state, or attaining enlightenment. In order to achieve this aim, the holy Dharma that you practice should have been revealed by the founder, the Omniscient One. After the Buddha revealed the teachings, maybe some misunderstandings crept in, there were some questions, but the great pandits examined them and were able to rectify whatever mistakes they found. They eliminated any mistakes, clarifying what was right and wrong, by examining and debating the Dharma.

In that way, the great yogis followed the path and attained realizations. Having such a lineage, you can be assured that what you are going to practice is the holy Dharma, perfected in all these qualities. It is the graduated path that definitely leads to enlightenment.

Shakyamuni Buddha himself was originally like us, wandering in samsara. In the beginning he did not have Dharma wisdom. Then, having gradually followed the teachings shown by his guru, he actualized the complete graduated path to enlightenment in his holy mind. With this complete experience, he revealed the teachings to other sentient beings, to us.

It is very effective for your mind to know that Buddha Shakyamuni himself was the same sort of being, but then he practiced the teachings and generated the completed graduated path to enlightenment in his mind. He completed the work for himself and then was able to do extensive work for other sentient beings. He became a perfect example for us all, showing us that we too can follow the path and do extensive work for other sentient beings. Being told this life story, your small mind is made very extensive and very happy. It makes the mind very happy to think what the

Buddha accomplished in his lifetime. It is incredible how he himself followed the path and achieved enlightenment.

The only difference is that, from your own side, you are not doing the practice; you are not following the path. Thinking that Shakyamuni has been enlightened since beginningless time doesn't benefit your mind. It's like the sky, like space; there is no way you can use it as an example. It's too vast to inspire the mind. You have nothing to relate to in thinking there was no beginning to him being enlightened.

So now, we have to do something before sleep comes! I'm only joking.

Buddha Shakyamuni was an unbelievable example of working for other sentient beings. Hearing about his life story makes tears flow uncontrollably while you are reading. His buddha nature is unbelievable. Hearing how he gave his body to hungry sentient beings, such as the tiger and her cubs inspires you, bringing incredible strength in your mind, so if someone is hungry or in great difficulty, you really want to give your body right away. Even if you haven't generated bodhicitta, reading about this bodhisattva's life story is incredibly effective for the mind, especially to destroy the self-cherishing thought.

The Buddha's 84,000 teachings can be divided in two aspects: the profound and the extensive. The profound teachings are revealed in the profound graduated path and the extensive meanings, the hidden works, are contained in the extensive graduated path. The entire teachings consist of both paths, the profound and extensive paths. Somebody who hopes to be able to practice the holy Dharma should definitely enter the graduated path.

From the side of the holy Dharma you can't be cheated but even if you try to practice, if you don't have perseverance to continue the practices or if you continue to practice the Dharma but incorrectly, you can cheat yourself. Or, conversely, if what you practice is right, but there is no perseverance, like a waterfall, you cannot complete your Dharma practice. From the side of the holy Dharma, there is no cheating at all, no mistakes at all; the cheating comes from your side.

If you continuously persevere in practicing the entire holy Dharma shown by the founder, the Buddha, after you have studied it, and if you practice it correctly as it is explained by the kind founder, it won't take a long time to achieve enlightenment. Enlightenment can be achieved quickly when these three are gathered: the infallible teachings, continuous strong perseverance and correct practice. Enlightenment sounds very difficult to achieve but it is entirely in your own hands.

LAMA TSONGKHAPA RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS FROM MANJUSHRI

It is time to go over the outline of the teachings. The great, extremely learned scholar Lama Tsongkhapa attained the realizations of the entire graduated path to enlightenment and explained it, dividing it into three scopes. I will begin to go over the small scope on the basis of human suffering.

At the beginning of the teachings, Lama Tsongkhapa paid homage particularly to Manjushri. Generally, all scriptural understanding, all the realizations, all the qualities, from guru devotion up to enlightenment are completed, as with Lama Tsongkhapa, by the kindness of the guru.

Manjushri was his guru, even though he had many gurus from different sects. Actually Lama Tsongkhapa's life story is very long. There are many different biographies written by different disciples.

Unlike some of the biographies, I won't start from the beginning, from the place where Lama Tsongkhapa was born. One of them contains one of the stories of Lama Tsongkhapa, when he was going to practice in one of the caves in Tibet and had a conversation with his guru Manjushri. In this particular place, he saw Manjushri in the center surrounded by all the great Indian yogis, all those who had achieved the unified state of Vajradhara, who had achieved enlightenment in three years. In the *Lama Chöpa* merit field, there are many of those pandits and many deities such as White Tara and the Buddha. Manjushri's sword, which is not made of iron, immediately came from Manjushri's holy mind and struck Lama Tsongkhapa's heart and nectars flowed. There were many known and unknown people around this place at the time, so when that happened, they drank much of the nectar that flowed through the sword, like drinking water from a pipe. Some drank a lot and some didn't get much. The significance is this. Those who received a lot of nectar would achieve sublime realizations in that life. They would achieve the concentration of bliss and voidness from hearing Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings. Those who just got some nectar would get some realization of tantra, the general realizations of the three principal aspects of the path and things like that from Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings. And those who did not get any nectar would have the imprint to seek enlightenment on their mindstreams and would gain realizations in a future life. That is what this means.

Without elaborating, from his guru Manjushri Lama Tsongkhapa received incredibly clear, profound teachings, especially on emptiness and the method to obtain the illusory body. All the time Lama Tsongkhapa saw and received teachings from Manjushri, not in dreams and not just as an appearance in his mind. Lama Tsongkhapa could actually see Manjushri. There are two ways of seeing any deity: seeing with transcendental wisdom and seeing with the eye sense, like we see. Lama Tsongkhapa actually saw Manjushri with the eye sense and he received teachings by having conversations with Manjushri just as we have conversations and ask questions of the guru. Whenever Lama Tsongkhapa had questions, he asked Manjushri while he was doing the action, practicing very extensive listening, reflecting and meditation on emptiness and while he was memorizing and reflecting on all the commentaries by the pandits. Whenever he had a question, especially on subjects such as emptiness, Lama Tsongkhapa was able to ask Manjushri and get the answer straight from Manjushri, without any resistance, even the very subtle points of emptiness and tantric practice.

THE FIVE STAGES OF THE GENERATION STAGE AND THE FIVE OF THE COMPLETION STAGE

Lama Tsongkhapa wrote incredibly extensive, profound commentaries on the first tantric path, the graduated path of the generation stage, explaining how to practice that path. Then, he also wrote incredibly extensive commentaries on the graduated path of the completion stage.

I mentioned the five outlines the other day: body isolation, mind isolation, illusory body, clear light and then the union of those two. Just as there are five stages in the generation stage, the completion stage has five stages. The other day when I was going through this, I left out one thing. After the illusory body is reached, the meditator has to concentrate on the clear light of meaning. Then the meditator rises up in the unified body. This is the union of clear light and illusory body.

Even now you should be making plans to one day be able to study all eighteen volumes of Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings, to be able to read and listen to teachings on them, and then to reflect and meditate on what you have learned.

The plans you make to actualize the Dharma should be as extensive as possible and as long as possible, determining to study and meditate for three great eons if necessary. If it takes that long to attain one realization, you should make the determination to have that degree of perseverance, thinking this is not only for yourself but for all sentient beings. No matter how long it takes or how hard it is, determine you will do it. You should make such a strong determination.

The aim is ultimate happiness, not just temporary pleasure. Working solely for the happiness of this life has nothing to do with future lives, nothing to do with liberation or enlightenment, nothing to do with benefiting all sentient beings. So whatever you have to do for the works of this life should be as little as possible. By now you should be able to understand why that is. I've been talking about this for several days now!

One thing you need to consider. Death is definite. With every hour, every minute, it is more definite that it is going to happen than not to happen. It's easy to see that it will definitely happen sometime and very difficult to convince yourself it will never happen. If death were to come now, at this hour, all the work you have done for this life would benefit no one. The only benefit, the only thing that can help you at the time of death is having practiced the Dharma as much as possible. That is something you can do that carries into your future lives.

I'll stop here.

Lecture 12

November 22, 1980

LAMA TSONGKHAPA SEES THE QUALITIES OF THE BUDDHA

Lama Tsongkhapa wrote various lamrim texts, including *Lamrim Chenmo*, the *Great Treatise on the Path to Enlightenment*. When Lama Atisha went to Tibet at the invitation of the king, he wrote the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, and *Lamrim Chenmo* was Lama Tsongkhapa's essential commentary on that text.

Later, he wrote the *Middle Lamrim* and the *Small Lamrim*. These are more condensed. The small lamrim, called *Hymns of Experience*, is his personal experiences in a condensed way. When Lama Tsongkhapa was writing *Lamrim Chenmo*, before he started to write the insight section he stopped, presuming it would not benefit much. After asking Manjushri to consider what he had written, Manjushri asked him why he had not written about emptiness in the great scope section. He explained his reservations but Manjushri advised him if he wrote the last part of the text, the higher seeing, the benefit to sentient beings would be unlimited.

Lama Tsongkhapa explained how he wrote the teaching based on the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, then he put together all the advice he received from Manjushri. His commentary on the lamrim was actually Manjushri's teaching.

One day, while Lama Tsongkhapa was giving teachings to hundreds of disciples, giving several different teachings during one day, Manjushri advised him to leave the teachings and go into retreat. Lama Tsongkhapa objected, saying he couldn't leave the teachings in the middle but Manjushri asked him, "Don't you have to benefit numberless sentient beings?" The point of Manjushri's advice was that these people who were taking teachings from him at that time were limited in number but sentient beings are numberless. By doing the practice he could complete the realizations on the path to enlightenment and, in that way, benefit more sentient beings. There's no doubt about it. Manjushri advised Lama Tsongkhapa to concentrate on numberless sentient beings, not just several hundred of beings who are nothing in comparison. Therefore, Lama Tsongkhapa stopped his teachings and went off to practice. Whatever work Lama Tsongkhapa had to do, whatever teachings he gave, he always asked Manjushri.

Lama Tsongkhapa wrote the requesting prayer for the lineage lamas called *Opening the Extreme Path*, which is a long version of the lineage prayer. That prayer is recognized as the one you must recite in the lamrim. Because each stanza expresses perfectly all the qualities and realizations, it is very effective and powerful for subduing and transforming the mind and generating realization. When Lama Tsongkhapa was writing this lineage lamas prayer, he saw the entire merit field, with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, all the lineage lamas and pandits, Lama Atisha and all the Kadampa geshe, the whole merit field. Then, the entire merit field absorbed into Lama Atisha, then Lama Dromtönpa, the embodiment of Chenrezig, then Kadampa Geshe Potowa, then Sharawa. After they absorbed, Lama Atisha put his palms on Lama Tsongkhapa's head and advised him to do great work for the teachings and told him he would help him. After this advice, Lama Atisha absorbed through Lama Tsongkhapa's crown. In that way, Lama Tsongkhapa is the embodiment of Lama Atisha.

Although Lama Tsongkhapa wrote his texts through Lama Manjushri, that does not mean he does not pay homage to other gurus. He has many other gurus. Even though his words were shared by Manjushri, by seeing all the gurus in one essence, he then pays homage to them. Paying particular homage to Manjushri doesn't mean not paying homage to other gurus.

HYMNS OF EXPERIENCE COMMENTARY: HOMAGE

Your body is created from a billion perfect factors of goodness;
Your speech satisfies the yearnings of countless sentient beings;
Your mind perceives all objects of knowledge exactly as they are—
I bow my head to you, O chief of the Shakya clan.¹⁴

Usually, when you see people, there is always some discrimination. When you look at the body, some parts are good, some parts are *very* beautiful, but some parts have something wrong! Even if the nose is good, there is something wrong with the ear. Even if they are both good, there is something wrong with the mouth or the cheek! Even if the upper body is good, then down below, the legs, are wrong somehow.

Whoever sees Guru Shakyamuni's holy body, adorned with the holy signs and exemplifications, finds nothing other than what is perfect. Everything is extremely enchanting, magnificent. No matter how much you look at his holy body, you will never feel tired or bored. Ordinary people, whenever you see their body—today you see it, tomorrow you see it, in the morning you see it, in the afternoon you see it, in the evening you see it—you get bored. You get tired of seeing the same person with the same body and the same manner. You become bored and start making excuses to avoid them.

It is not like that with Buddha Shakyamuni's holy body. However much you want to look at it, just seeing it gives incredible bliss in the mind, calmness and tranquility. The mind is easily transformed just by seeing it. This is true even when you look at the statues or paintings that are examples of Buddha Shakyamuni's holy body. Even if it is a very rough rendition, not an exact idea of Shakyamuni Buddha, even that has incredible power. Just by seeing it, you can feel the great peace that is in the mind of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Even from his position, the way he sits, you can feel the great calmness, the great attainment which is in the mind of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. From that simple example, when you look at it, it releases unimaginable power to calm your mind, even if your mind is violent. Even seeing a painting or statue has the power to calm your mind, to bring your mind to the same attainment that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha has.

There is no question that you can actually see Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy body. Each pore of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy body manifests many millions of different forms, even to guide just one sentient being. Each pore is able to precisely do the work of the holy body, the work of the holy speech, and the work of the holy mind. It's impossible to write down every single merit that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha accumulated when he was a bodhisattva. Saying a billion implies an infinite number. This is similar to the prayer we do here, the prayer to Lama Tsongkhapa called *Ganden Lha Gyäma*, the *Hundred Deities of the Land of Joy (Tushita)*. It doesn't mean in Tushita pure

¹⁴ *Hymns of Experience*, v. 1. Trans. Thupten Jinpa, FPMT, 2004.

realm there are only a hundred buddhas; there are just a limited number of buddhas. “Hundred” here implies many buddhas.

“Your body is created from a billion perfect factors of goodness.” This holy body is the production of a billion perfect merits accumulated over three great eons. There are two types of merit: the *perfect merit of transcendental wisdom* and the *perfect merit of fortune*, which is sometimes translated as the “merit of method.” One is merit accumulated with wisdom and the other is accumulated through the method side of the path, such as the thought of the renunciation of samsara or of bodhicitta. Shakyamuni Buddha has perfectly completed the merit of transcendental wisdom and the merit of fortune, and in that way he has perfectly completed merits of the holy body.

Who has holy speech? Whose holy speech completely satisfies the needs of infinite migratory beings? For us ordinary people, if we try to say some sweet words to make other people happy, somehow it doesn’t fit. Even though in our own mind they seem like nice words, they become a disturbance for other people’s minds. Because it doesn’t suit their dispositions, it doesn’t make them happy or satisfy them, no matter how much we try to talk. Instead, we might cause them to become angry or depressed. To give satisfaction to one sentient being through our speech is difficult, so it is impossible to satisfy the minds of the infinite sentient beings with our present speech habits.

When Guru Shakyamuni Buddha gave teachings, each teaching was only to subdue the minds of his disciples. Each disciple received the teachings according to the level of their mind. Even though the Buddha was teaching hundreds of thousands of disciples, to each one it felt like he was giving personal instructions just to them. At any one moment, any few words he said could become a different teaching to each different disciple, according to the level of their mind. Some might understand it as a teaching on impermanence, and through that they might realize impermanence; some might hear it as a teaching on emptiness only, and through that they might realize emptiness.

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha gave teaching at Vulture’s Peak in Rajgir to those intelligent sentient beings who were the objects to be subdued, who had the good fortune to receive his teachings on emptiness. While he was teaching there, at the same time he was giving teachings on the third turning of the wheel of Dharma at another place to those particular sentient beings, and simultaneously he was in Sarnath giving teachings on the first turning of the wheel of Dharma, the place where he gave the teachings on the four noble truths. He was also in the southern continent in the aspect of the tantric deity, Vajradhara, transforming mandalas. Only the highest intelligence beings, whose minds were well trained in the general path and who had already generated the three principles of the path, could receive tantric teachings from him in the aspect of Vajradhara. In that way, Shakyamuni Buddha was able to fulfil the wishes of infinite sentient beings, not only those who liked and respect him, but also those who didn’t like and respect him.

His holy mind was able to see the whole of existence simultaneously in both aspects, both the absolute truth and the conventional or all-obscuring truth. The literal translation of *kun dzob den pa* is “all-obscuring truth” but it is also translated as “conventional truth.” All existent things come within these two truths; everything is contained in these two. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s holy mind sees every single existence exactly as it is. Besides seeing the conventional or all-obscuring truth—all the three-time existence, all the different personalities, all the different imprints and thoughts of all sentient beings, even their subtle karma—he could see the absolute nature of the whole of existence. He could see how not an atom of the whole of existence is truly existent; nothing at all exists from its own side, except what is merely labeled on.

The nature of everything is that it is empty of any true existence, and Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy mind saw exactly that. Even the transcendental arya beings, while their minds are focused on the all-obscuring or conventional truth, cannot focus at the same time on the absolute truth, emptiness only. The Buddha, however, while one-pointedly concentrating on the absolute truth, the nature of emptiness only, is able to focus on the conventional truth of all things and, at the same time, he is able to do unimaginable work for sentient beings, revealing the different teachings and benefiting the different beings according to their different levels. Only the Buddha is able to do this, while the holy mind is in concentration on absolute nature, like pouring water into water. This is the special quality of Buddha's holy mind. This is without mentioning the stories about the Buddha's clairvoyance. This is very brief in the first stanza.

The second stanza says,

You're the most excellent sons of such peerless teacher;
You carry the burden of the enlightened activities of all conquerors,
And in countless realms you engage in ecstatic display of emanations—
I pay homage to you O Maitreya and Manjushri.

Maitreya is great love. If you have great love you cannot be harmed by maras. Also, Maitreya is referred to as the one who cannot be defeated. People like us, who are under the control of delusions, overwhelmed by delusions, are defeated, are lost. Because we are very weak and the delusions are very strong, we are defeated by them, but holy beings such as Maitreya Buddha have completely destroyed the source of delusions so he is said to be undefeated by delusion.

“I prostrate to Maitreya, the undefeated one, Manjushri, the son of the peerless founder, Shakyamuni Buddha, who manifests in numberless realms, by carrying the responsibility of performing all the actions of holy body, holy speech and holy mind of the Victorious Ones according to the level of sentient beings, in order to bring them on the path to peace.”

This means saving sentient beings from the lower realms and bringing them to the upper realms, and then, for those who are in the upper realms, by revealing the teachings, liberating them from true suffering and the true cause of suffering. They lead those whose minds are fit only for that method to nirvana, and they lead those who are fortunate to be suited to the Mahayana teachings to enlightenment. However, all sentient beings are gradually led to the one goal of enlightenment. Even though there are three vehicles—the lesser vehicle and the great vehicle, and within the great vehicle the bodhisattva's vehicle and the tantric vehicle—the ultimate goal is enlightenment. The verse says that Maitreya and Manjushri carry the burden; they take the responsibility of all the actions of the Buddha, by manifesting in uncountable numbers of forms and in uncountable numbers of realms and giving teachings that fit the minds of sentient beings, both the extensive teachings and the profound teachings.

The lineage of the teachings of the extensive path began with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and continued to Buddha Maitreya, and the lineage of the teachings of the profound path began with the Buddha and was handed down to Buddha Manjushri. So, Lama Tsongkhapa pays homage to these two.

The third verse says,

So difficult to fathom is the mother of all conquerors,
You who unravel its contents as it is are the jewels of the world;
You're hailed with great fame in all three spheres of the world—
I pay homage to you O Nagarjuna and Asanga.

Prostrating at the holy feet of Nagarjuna and Asanga shows how the lineage of the teachings was handed down to the other great pandits. The lineage of teachings of the extensive path was handed down from Maitreya to Asanga, and the lineage of the teachings of the profound path was handed down from Manjushri to Nagarjuna. From there the two lineages were passed on to pandits such as Aryadeva and Vasubandhu. There is no need to mention all the names of the pandits who followed, those who made commentaries of the Prajnaparamita texts of the Victorious One. Of those teachings of the Buddha that are extremely difficult to comprehend, all the pandits that you see in the thangkas made clear, extensive commentaries, exactly according to the view of the Buddha. So, Lama Tsongkhapa prostrates at the holy feet of all those pandits who are in both the lineages of the teachings of the extensive path and the profound path, handed down from Nagarjuna and Asanga.

The fourth verse says,

Stemming from these two great charioteers with excellence
Are the two paths of the profound view and the vast conduct;
You're the custodian of the treasury of instructions encompassing all essential points
Of these paths without error, I pay homage to you O Dipamkara.

I pay homage to Dipamkara, Lama Atisha, who is the holder of the treasure of advice which contains all the importance of the incredible complete path. This is the path of the extensive action and the path of the profound right view which was passed by the two great charioteers. Lama Atisha received the complete teachings of the lineage of the extensive path from Asanga and Vasubandhu, the complete teachings of the lineage of the profound path from Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti and the complete teachings of the lineage of the profound experience Tilopa and Naropa.

Then, Lama Atisha handed down the lineage of all these teaching to Dromtönpa and Dromtönpa handed them down to Potowa. Like this, the teachings were gradually passed on to other Kadampa geshes. Three different lineages happened after Dromtönpa. Potowa became the lineage holder for the scriptural texts, Chengawa became the lineage holder for the essential or pith instructions and Phuchungwa became the lineage holder of the oral instructions.

THE MEANING OF SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA'S MANTRA

Now, I'd like us to meditate together but I don't know what to meditate on! Maybe we can meditate on emptiness—no, not emptiness, nothingness! I thought it would be very good to recite the three mantras that you learnt before. A great number of mantras are collected when there are many people reciting them together. This time each mantra is multiplied by seventy. I don't think I'll explain the other mantras tonight, Chenrezig mantra or Padmasambhava mantra, maybe just the Shakyamuni Buddha mantra. I'll just do the *lung*, the oral transmission tonight.

The meaning of *mantra* is to “protect the mind.” As it does the function of protecting the mind it is called mantra.

First, TADYATHA OM means purifying your ordinary body, speech and mind, transform them into Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s vajra holy body, vajra holy speech and vajra holy mind.

MUNÉ MUNÉ MAHA MUNÉYÉ SVAHA; these syllables contain the whole graduated path to enlightenment, from guru devotion all the way up to enlightenment. The first MUNÉ refers to the path of the lower capable being, the second MUNÉ refers to the graduated path of the middle capable being and MAHA MUNÉYÉ refers to the graduated path of the higher capable being, which contains the tantra path.

By listening, reflecting and meditating on the first path, you attain the graduated path of the lower capable being, then with the second MUNÉ you generate the graduated path of the middle capable being, and finally with MAHA MUNÉYÉ you generate the graduated path of the higher capable being, which includes the whole tantric path. By actualizing this mantra in your mind, you purify your ordinary body, speech and mind and transform them into Shakyamuni Buddha’s vajra holy body, vajra holy speech and vajra holy mind.

By actualizing the path contained in MAHA MUNÉYÉ you achieve the result that is signified by the syllable OM, purifying all the obscurations and negative karma committed with the body, with the speech and with the mind. The final syllable, SVAHA, means to achieve the result that is signified by the OM. So, the path that is contained in OM MUNÉ MUNÉ MAHA MUNÉYÉ is planting the root, like a tree. First you plant the root, then whatever seed is planted grows from that.

TIBETANS AND MANTRAS

The purpose of reciting mantras is not just to make a nice sound that doesn’t have much meaning. It’s not just a kind of meaningless ritual, just a chant. If it was just a chant to keep the mind calm and free from busyness, there wouldn’t be much value.

The purpose of reciting mantras is to generate the good heart. There are many methods to develop a good heart and reciting mantras is one of them. However, in order to understand the subject you are listening to, or to understand the meaning of the lamrim teachings, you need to prevent hindrances and quickly generate the realizations on the path to enlightenment. The hindrances are the negative karma. If you have very thick negative karma, there will be many hindrances to understanding; you will not be able to comprehend the meaning of the teachings well and therefore will not be able to generate the realizations of the path quickly. So, the purpose of reciting mantras is to generate the realizations on the path quickly that are contained in MUNÉ MUNÉ MAHA MUNÉYÉ, the graduated paths of the three capable beings.

Preventing all the hindrances by generating the path to enlightenment, to put it simply, is developing the good heart. That is the purpose of reciting mantras. If you recite the mantra you are meant to practice what it means in your everyday life in order to develop the good heart and to renounce harmful thoughts as much as possible. You need to replace the mind wishing to harm others with the mind that wishes to benefit others.

If you recite the mantra in the morning or at night and then, in the daytime, you completely follow anger, pride, jealousy or other negative thoughts, harming others with your body, speech and mind, disturbing their peace, that is completely the opposite of the reason why you recited the mantra. Your daytime life should be harmonious with the times in the morning and night when you recite mantras.

In Tibet we have a story like this. The people in the northern part of Tibet have a kind of faith but no understanding of the meaning of offering to holy objects. They recite mantras to prevent hindrances with some kind of limited understanding, but it's not really understanding. They must be nomads! They hold a prayer wheel in one hand. They have many sheep. I think the father of the family, who has a prayer wheel in one hand to clear the hindrances, points out with the other hand which sheep he wants killed. Despite the prayer wheel in his left hand, he turns into a butcher deciding which sheep are to be killed. This is the complete opposite of what it should be. This is like the people who live in Solu Khumbu, the place where I was born. Even though they have some faith, there is not so much understanding of karma and they have never heard teachings. In general, they have some faith but little understanding, the complete opposite of Western people!

In general, uneducated people who didn't go to a monastery find it very difficult to study. Even if they attend a teaching such as on the lamrim, they find it hard to understand the teachings, unlike most Western people. They only prick up their ears like a horse if the lama mentions some stories. If they are asleep, they wake up. If they are doing something, they stop at that time. Generally it is like that. Even if they do attend teachings, they find them difficult to understand. If they are literate, they might be able to read some scriptures when they return home, depending on their level of understanding, but there are many who are illiterate and cannot read the scriptures.

They were born in Tibet where there are all the precious teachings of the Mahayana and Vajrayana, but somehow it doesn't happen like in the West, where from childhood everyone learns the alphabet. There are schools, but not everyone goes. Many lay people can't read scriptures or understand any teachings they attend, even though they might think that hearing the teachings will benefit their future lives, assuring them a higher rebirth. With that kind of general faith they come to listen to the teachings and take refuge in the lama. They do have strong devotion but without understanding the teaching being given. They didn't study because they are unable to read the scriptures. When they return home and you ask what teachings the lama gave, they can't explain. Only someone who has some imprints left from past lives might be able to understand some of what the lama said.

The Tibetans have good things and bad things. They are similar in that way to Western people, but not similar in other ways. You might be able to understand the topic the lama was speaking about perfectly and their teachings were given perfectly, but because of karmic obscurations created in previous lives, no matter how logical the reasoning is or how long you debate it with others, you remain skeptical. In fact, maybe the more you look into the subject, the more disturbed your mind becomes, and instead of becoming clearer it becomes more difficult.

Once His Holiness the Dalai Lama joked that although the Tibetan people are usually uneducated and Westerners usually have a good education and have been trained to study from childhood and are thought to be intelligent and able to distinguish right from wrong, sometimes he feels Western people are much more foolish than uneducated Tibetans. Westerners are skeptical in some ways and

gullible in others. It is kind of true, I think. Sometimes, Westerners never check up! I don't have to tell you. There are so many stories you can hear in the world.

A family in the village where I was born still carry on behaving like it was in a film. Even though they really don't attend the teachings and hardly understand any teachings they go to—they really don't try to understand the teachings—even though they go there physically, they really just go for the blessing part. This family told me that before they kill a sheep, for a certain number of weeks they recite the mantra OM MANI PADME HUM. I don't know who recites the mantra for virtue, but after they recite the mantra, they kill the sheep. They believe they are better because other people don't do that. There are many funny stories like this. I've lost the point of what I was talking about.

I really do appreciate the differences very much when I see those Tibetans who are educated in the monasteries. With such an education comes great understanding, especially where there are debating subjects, not like where the young monks study. In the big monasteries, the monks who seek the teachings train their minds through analyzing. They have already studied different scriptures in detail and have a profound knowledge of the subjects, so when they hear the lamrim teachings condensed like this, the conditions are perfect to subdue the mind, to transform the mind. That is not difficult to understand.

For those who have completed the whole study program, the five great treatises, there is nothing new, but when they hear the lamrim presented by an experienced lama, the way it is set up is especially to subdue the mind. Even the subjects they know very well, when explained by an experienced lama, are very effective for the mind.

For Westerners, you can at least understand the words that the lama said. If you can't remember, you are able to immediately write down what the lama says. Even though you might not understand the meaning, at least you can understand the words. But to have faith in the subject is completely something else. That is not the realization of experience. If you can't remember or write down the words, or if you don't understand them, then there is nothing to check on. There is no base to think about. The very special qualities I see in Westerners is your ability to understand the whole thing, because that makes it a continuation, as well as the wisdom to examine what you have heard. Your minds have already been trained by studying other things.

By using your intelligence to examine the teachings, you have the opportunity to understand more clearly and get a stronger feeling for the validity of them. From that you will gradually generate strong faith. If you continue to study, I think in a short time you can have a vast understanding of the teachings. Then, you won't make mistakes in your practice. If you can put effort into continuing your study, in a short time, with great intelligence you will be able to understand all the scriptures that explain the whole path to enlightenment. When you complete it for the first time, you will understand.

Then, even if you get depressed about how long you've got to live, since you have all these understandings and have received all these teachings, there is no danger in the practice because you can guide yourself. I think that is a great advantage. This is what I have found so far in these past years.

I think Western people who receive teachings from certain lamas in the West and in Dharamsala are unbelievably fortunate in many ways. I think you are far more fortunate than those lay Tibetan

people in Lhasa. If you ask them just one question about the lamrim, they cannot give an answer. But if you ask Western students, they can often talk at length about it, very nicely and very effectively. The Tibetan people might have also received teachings from lamas, but Westerners can remember and say something about it.

For instance, let's say there are lamrim teachings that everyone can attend. Even if there are five hundred people there, generally speaking there might be one hundred Westerners who at least understand well the words of the lama, and on the basis of the outline can remember the subject. But most of the Tibetans would find it difficult because they can't write it down in a book. Their minds can't catch the words. There are many difficulties like this. These one hundred Westerners are able to hold the words somehow, even if they don't fully understand them, so generally speaking the Westerners who take teachings have more understanding.

I didn't intend to talk about all these things, but it is good to understand and recognize your special qualities. Maybe we can edit these special qualities for a television program!

Think, "I must attain enlightenment for the benefit of all my kind mother sentient beings, therefore I am going to take the oral transmission of the mantra."

[Rinpoche give the oral transmission of the Chenrezig mantra]

"May love and compassion be generated in my mind and the minds of all the others. Where there is no bodhicitta, may there be bodhicitta. May the thought of love and compassion be generated, and what is generated, may it be increased."

"Due to the three-time merits accumulated by myself and others, may I achieve the guru, the great compassionate one and lead every single sentient being to the enlightened state."

[Rinpoche and group chant in Tibetan]

Lecture 13

November 23, 1980 (morning)

WITH BODHICITTA, WHATEVER YOU DO YOU ARE HAPPY

Khunu Lama said,

When you have bodhicitta you are happy.
If you are sick you are happy, if you are well you are happy;
Even if you are dying you are happy.
Listening, studying, meditating, whatever you do, you are happy.¹⁵

What the great bodhisattva Khunu Lama Rinpoche is saying, if you can transform your mind that is currently overwhelmed by the self-cherishing thought into bodhicitta, cherishing other sentient beings more than yourself, then whatever you do you are happy

Even if you don't do a retreat or a meditation practice, in your everyday life whatever happens, there is no confusion in your mind and you are happy. Whether you are healthy or sick, since there is bodhicitta in the mind, you are very happy, very comfortable. Inside the body there might be pain, but inside the heart there is harmony and tranquility; there is great happiness in the heart. Being healthy or being sick, both are very meaningful for other sentient beings.

Similarly, even if somebody complains about you, there is no confusion in the mind. There is tranquility in the mind. No matter how much somebody criticizes you or abuses you, there is tranquility in the mind. Having a bad reputation only causes great happiness in the mind, like wanting to help others is highly beneficial. Even having a good reputation doesn't disturb the tranquility of the mind.

Whatever happens in life, living in good conditions or bad conditions, being wealthy or poor, being helped by others or harmed by others, having a good or a bad reputation, whatever happens there is always tranquility in the mind because you are only concerned with working for others and not concerned about yourself. You are always happy, never depressed. There is no great fear in the mind, no worry. Whether you do mundane work or a Buddhist meditation practice, everything you do becomes a cause for enlightenment. It becomes the method to achieve happiness for all sentient beings. Whatever you do is highly meaningful.

If you are concerned for the happiness of others, in just this one life, in this world, you will always be happy. Khunu Lama Rinpoche said that we should use our experiences to train the mind, always thinking of bodhicitta, renunciation and things like that.

Whatever actions we do in everyday life, we should attempt to do those actions motivated by bodhicitta. We should always try to develop it. Therefore, first take the teachings with the bodhicitta motivation and then remember the five conducts given in the teachings. Think, "I am going to listen

¹⁵ *The Jewel Lamp*, v. 296.

to the commentary on the graduated path to enlightenment for the benefit of all the kind mother sentient beings.”

LAMA TSONGKHAPA’S LINEAGE

Lama Tsongkhapa was highly learned and had great attainments. In his *Hymns of Experience* he explained his experience of the gradual path to enlightenment.

As I mentioned earlier, after Lama Atisha and Dromtönpa, there became three lineages: the lineage of the scriptural texts passed to Potowa; the lineage of the essential instructions passed to Chengawa; and the lineage of the oral instructions passed to Phuchungwa.

The three lineages are called the *Kadam Lharimpa*, who studied the lamrim texts started by Gönpawa; the *Kadam Mengapa*, who generated the path by following the oral advice given by their guru; and the *Kadam Zhungpa*, who generated the path by following the extensive scriptures, which were handed down from Gönpawa to Sharawa, and then to Chekawa, the guru who wrote the *Seven-Point Thought Transformation*. I think Lama Tsongkhapa has received all these lineages.

Those three lineages are called Old Kadampa and, starting from Lama Tsongkhapa, it is called New Kadampa. So, Lama Tsongkhapa pays homage to all the Kadampa geshe lineage lamas. Then, gradually the teachings were handed down, first to Lama Tsongkhapa’s two main disciples, Khedrub Je and Gyaltsab Je, then gradually to great pandits like Pabongka Rinpoche, who is recognized as Heruka, who did retreat on that. From there, to the holy mind of Trijang Rinpoche, my guru, whose mind is of incomparable kindness, who incorporated the teachings of the *Lamrim Chenmo*—the *Great Treatise on the Path to Enlightenment*—and the different lamrim commentaries of the Dalai Lamas, including the commentary given by Pabongka Rinpoche, *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*. That was the first lamrim commentary I heard in my life. The very first explanation of the commentary was taught by Trijang Rinpoche, the root guru of the Dalai Lama’s teachers.

HYMNS OF EXPERIENCE COMMENTARY: HOMAGE

The fifth verse of *Hymns of Experience* says,

You are the eyes to see all the myriad collections of scriptures;
To the fortunate ones traveling to freedom you illuminate the excellent path,
You do this through skillful deeds stirred forth by compassion.
I pay respectful homage to you O all my spiritual mentors.

Lama Tsongkhapa paid homage to all the gurus, the virtuous friends who encompass all the essential scriptures and who are the door for the fortunate ones to quickly travel to freedom. Guiding us through skillful actions, they are moved with unbearable compassion. Because of this powerful compassion, the gurus guide us with their holy body, holy speech and holy mind, skillfully leading us to enlightenment.

Even though you might have all the texts of sutra and tantra, everything the Buddha taught, you cannot progress on the path without a guru, without receiving the *lung*s, the initiations, the

commentaries and the advice explaining the profound tantra teachings. You cannot even understand one word without the guru. Without somebody giving blessings, it isn't easy to transform your mind, to generate the realizations in the mind.

It's a question of correctly following the guru. By listening to the words from the holy mouth of the teacher, you can perfectly understand the meaning of the teachings on sutra and tantra. So, the guru is like the supreme door of the fortunate ones, allowing them to proceed to liberation.

You need to clearly understand the advantages of correctly following the guru with thought and action and the disadvantages of not correctly following the guru. Following the guru, making offering with practice according to the guru's advice, pleases the holy mind of the guru. Then, when you receive the guru's blessings, your mind becomes transformed.

In that way, because your mind is subdued, it is very easy to generate the rest of the path, from the beginning of lamrim up to enlightenment, including the general realizations and the realizations of Secret Mantra. You can generate all realizations very easily, without much time and without much effort.

It's like being at the gateway to a rich country, one where if you enter you will receive whatever entitlement, possessions and enjoyment you want. If you don't pass through that gateway, you will receive nothing; you won't be able to enjoy what that country has to offer or make business there. Similarly, depending on the guru is the main entrance to liberation, the main entrance to enlightenment. Without depending on the guru, no matter how much you want to achieve liberation or enlightenment, you can never achieve it. The whole thing comes from correctly devoting to the guru. And to do guru practice, you should have a guru! That's how the guru is the supreme entrance for the fortunate one to proceed to liberation.

The guru is the one who, with skillful means moved by the compassion, dispels the disciple's ignorance. That is ignorance in the teachings, unable to distinguish between what is to be practiced and what is to be avoided. The guru clarifies the profound and extensive teachings taught by Buddha. In that way, those kind virtuous friends are kinder than Shakyamuni Buddha. In this time of the flourishing of the five degenerations, other buddhas are unable subdue the minds of us sentient beings. We didn't become the object to be subdued by other buddhas because we are too difficult to subdue. So, Shakyamuni Buddha made many prayers in the past that if there are sentient beings who could not be subdued by other buddhas, he would be the one who is able to teach and subdue them. That's why Guru Shakyamuni Buddha descended at this time when the lifespan is a hundred years.

He revealed the twelve deeds of a buddha, taking the aspect of achieving enlightenment and turning the wheel of the Dharma. Even though he did all that, still we were unable to become objects to be subdued directly by Shakyamuni Buddha. Even though many other sentient beings became the objects to be subdued by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's actions of the holy body and, because of that, achieved nirvana, we didn't have the karma to be subdued. This is a more degenerate time than Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's time.

Unable to be subdued by anybody, completely guideless, like a child without a mother, deserted, completely ignorant, without refuge, with no water to drink—we are like that. At such a time, the virtuous friend appears in the aspect that suits our disposition, according to our karma. According to

the level of our mind, we have the karma to be able to see the guru in that form. In that aspect, they can reveal the methods, the teachings, guiding us to happiness, guiding us to the upper realms, guiding us to liberation, guiding us to enlightenment. This shows us how Lama Tsongkhapa is paying homage to his gurus, his kind virtuous friends.

The sixth stanza is related to the qualities of the teachings.

You're the crowning jewels among all the learned ones of this world;
Your banners of fame flutter vibrantly amongst the sentient beings;
O Nagarjuna and Asanga from you flow in an excellent steady stream
This [instruction on the] stages of the path to enlightenment.

The stages of path to enlightenment have been transmitted in the correct order by the proper lineage from Nagarjuna and Asanga who are the crown jewels of all the erudite Indian scholars and the banners, whose families are resplendent throughout the three realms. These stages can bring about the completion of the basic aims of beings because they combine the streams of thousands of good scriptural texts.

Nagarjuna and Asanga and those others who took the crown of all the learned ones in the world, are resplendent with enchanting sounds heard by sentient beings. That means when sentient beings hear their holy names, it inspires their minds and pacifies their suffering, and devotion to them arises.

This is the particular quality of the lamrim teaching. As I have said, there are the two lamrim paths, the profound and the extensive. The lineage of the profound path passed from Manjushri to Nagarjuna and then down to Chandrakirti and Atisha, and the lineage of the extensive path passed from Maitreya to Asanga, and then to Vasubandhu all the way to Atisha, so what Atisha wrote is adorned with the advice of these great lineage lamas. It is very effective for the mind, especially as it has been decorated with those two lineages.

Understanding and practicing the graduated path to enlightenment, which has been perfectly handed down from Nagarjuna and Asanga and then gradually to others, fulfils all the wishes of sentient beings up to enlightenment. Therefore this advice is like a wish-granting jewel, a jewel that is more precious than any other kind, gold, diamonds or whatever. No matter how much there is, no other jewel can compete. Just as gold overwhelms brass, the wish-granting jewel overwhelms all other jewels. This advice is the crowning jewel of all advice, just like that wish-granting jewel, fulfilling the wishes of all sentient beings.

The seventh and eighth verses say,

Since it fulfils all the wishes of beings without exception,
It is the king of kings among all quintessential instructions;
Since it gathers into it thousands of excellent rivers of treatises,
It's as well the ocean of most glorious well-uttered insights.

It helps to recognize all teachings to be free of contradictions;
It helps the dawning of all scriptures as pith instructions;
It helps to find easily the enlightened intention of the conquerors;
It helps also to guard against the abyss of grave negative deeds.

The lamrim is precious because it contains all the rivers of the 84,000 pure scriptures shown by Shakyamuni Buddha. All these teachings are like all the rivers on the earth flowing into the ocean; they are all contained in the lamrim teachings.

This is also the ocean glorified by the expansive teaching. Even what Maitreya wrote, the extensive teachings, does not contain more on tantra. This is like the ocean that receives water from all the different rivers; everything meets together to become the ocean. The whole teaching of the Buddha is contained in this pith advice, which is the second particular quality of these teachings.

The lamrim helps protect the mind from negative thoughts. The creator of all the suffering, the creator of samsara, is the unsubdued mind; the creator of liberation is also the mind. The creator of the hells is the mind; the creator of enlightenment is the mind. Through not having subdued the mind, the hells are created; through having subdued the mind, enlightenment is achieved. The whole thing depends on mind. Because the way the lamrim teachings are presented is to subdue the mind, they are very easy to practice.

Lecture 14

November 23, 1980 (evening)

THE FOUR QUALITIES OF THE LAMRIM: ALL TEACHINGS ARE FREE FROM CONTRADICTIONS

We will start this teaching by generating the motivation to achieve enlightenment. “I must achieve enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings. Therefore I am going to listen to the commentary on the graduated path to enlightenment.”

As we saw before, in *Hymns of Experience* it says,

It helps to recognize all teachings to be free of contradictions;
It helps the dawning of all scriptures as pith instructions;
It helps to find easily the enlightened intention of the conquerors;
It helps also to guard against the abyss of grave negative deeds.

It describes the four qualities of lamrim. The first one is *realizing there is no contradiction* in all the teachings. The second quality is that each and *every teaching appears as advice*. The third quality is that *you can immediately and easily find the view of the Victorious Ones*. And the fourth quality is that *you are protected against falling over a precipice* into the lower realms caused by doing negative actions.

The way of realizing that there are no contradictions in any of the Buddhadharma is by understanding that all the teachings of the Buddha are solely to lead the practitioner to enlightenment; they all describe the gradual process of getting to enlightenment. When you look at the teachings within the Theravada, the Paramitayana and the Vajrayana, the words might appear to be contradictory, in some ways they might often seem to directly oppose each other, but all these teachings are only for the practitioner to achieve enlightenment.

For instance, meat and wine are part of the practice of Secret Mantra, and you need them in order to practice, whereas in other teachings you read that you should renounce them. Similarly, the tantric teachings talk about how enlightenment is born from attachment. Enjoying the objects of the five senses is a method to attain enlightenment. This looks very contradictory to the advice given in the other two vehicles, but all this different advice is for you to gradually progress to enlightenment.

For example, if you have a heavy illness, the doctor might advise you to give up an unhealthy diet such as wine and meat, the types of food that raise your blood pressure. If you don't give them up it will be dangerous for your life. Afterwards, however, when the illness subsides, because you are not eating strong food, your body might have wind disease and the doctor could advise you to have some wine and meat, the very things you were told before not to have. The two advices appear contradictory, but in fact they are two different advices relevant to two different circumstances, both needed at different times if you are to fully recover from the illness—first not consuming wine and meat and then consuming them. In that way, there is no contradiction.

Similarly, there are different advices in the Lesser Vehicle teachings and the Mahayana or Paramitayana teachings and different advices yet again in the tantric teachings. It is not that one lot

of teachings is for you to subdue your mind to some degree but not to become enlightened and the other teachings are for that. It's not like that at all. All these teachings were expounded by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha in order to reach enlightenment.

One week ago a group of people came here with a few Zen masters. A question was asked by an old Zen master, "How do you practice tantra while you are a monk?" It seemed contradictory to him. The idea is very common in the West. They have the idea of tantric sex, not exactly what is in the tantra teachings, but the idea of an ordinary life's couple in union rather than practicing tantra with a wisdom-female consort. Because the Zen master asked the question, I talked about the stages of the path of Secret Mantra, those extremely advanced practices that are done with the body of a wisdom-female being. Only when you reach that level does it become the method to achieve enlightenment more quickly. If you practice it at the right level with the support of the wisdom-female being, there is no danger. If you haven't reached that level, however, it is very dangerous for the practitioner. They must take care during that time; if the practitioner loses the seed, they lose the realization. It becomes a distraction to successfully generating the realizations of the Secret Mantra.

Before that level, the practitioner must be able to control all the chakras, being able to open them and release the knots. They must be able to bring the mind into the chakras and allow it to abide there, as explained in the completion stage tantric teachings.

The Zen master also asked some Tibetan lamas who were in America whether they thought it was contradictory to have a married life and be a monk. If somebody has a wife, he is not monk. He can teach the Dharma; he can teach others what he knows. That is the best thing. There is no contradiction. I don't know why he was asking those kinds of questions!

The realizations of the graduated path of the lower capable being and the middle capable being—the realization of impermanence, the renunciation of samsara, moral conduct, *shamatha*, and wisdom—and of the higher capable being—the Mahayana teachings on bodhicitta, the six paramitas and the tantric teachings on the generation and completion stages—are all instructions to lead a person to enlightenment. There is no contradiction.

Each one of us must follow the whole practice to achieve enlightenment. All these realizations explained in the teachings of the Lesser Vehicle, the Mahayana and the Secret Mantra path must be generated in our minds. That's how the teachings of the realizations are not contradictory, even though the words might seem to contradict each other.

There is not one single teaching of the Buddha that does not benefit you, that does not lead you to enlightenment. A bodhisattva's main concern is to work for every sentient being. In order to do that, they reveal the path that best fits the mind of that sentient being, whether it is the path of the hearer, the solitary realizer or the Mahayana. Without knowing those paths, the bodhisattva cannot do that. They have to understand all three paths completely. They have to not only understand all three paths but also generate them in their mind—the path of the hearer, the path of the solitary realizer and the Mahayana path to enlightenment. So, you see, the teachings are not contradictory.

THE FOUR QUALITIES OF THE LAMRIM: EVERYTHING APPEARS AS ADVICE

The second quality of all the teachings of Buddha is that each and every teaching appears as advice to achieve enlightenment. Until you come to understand the entire graduated path to enlightenment, you cannot really see all the teachings of the Buddha as advice.

From all the teachings of the Buddha and all the commentaries of the Buddha's teachings, not even one syllable can be omitted. There is not even one syllable that doesn't appear as advice. Being able to appreciate that every letter of the scriptures is advice that leads to enlightenment is the definition of "Kadam." Kadampas are those practitioners who see the Buddha's teachings and commentaries of those teachings in every single letter, where nothing can be left out; every single letter appears as advice to reach enlightenment.

The lamrim encompasses every single teaching of the Buddha, everything from guru devotion all the way up to shamatha, emptiness, bodhicitta, right up to the attainment of enlightenment. Whatever other extensive teachings you might listen to or study, you are always able to relate them to the gradual path to enlightenment. If it is about the path of the guru, by recalling the outline of the teachings of the lamrim on the practice of the guru, you can bring those teachings into that practice. If it is teachings about the nature of mind or the nature of birth and death, by recalling the outlines from the gradual path of the middle capable being, you can meditate on that. If it is teachings on bodhicitta, by recalling the outlines of the lamrim bodhicitta teachings, you can meditate on that. Whatever teachings of the Buddha you see, right away you can relate them to the lamrim meditations that you practice, right away you can relate the outlines of the meditation to that. When you are able to do this, that is the definition of how you receive Buddha Shakyamuni's advice.

In this way, no matter how many various scriptures you study, it doesn't confuse your practice. Once you understand the lamrim meditations completely, from the beginning to the end, you can relate to anything in the scriptures without the slightest confusion.

Sometimes you might feel you are receiving so many teachings and you don't know which one to practice. You don't know how to integrate all these different teachings into your practice. Understanding the lamrim, you can examine them and determine which is best for you.

It's then like receiving some food ingredient you didn't have before. Say you had some wheat, some barley, some sugar, but not much salt. Then, somebody gives you a bit of salt. You can add that to the recipe, enhancing the flavor. You don't get confused by receiving something extra. Similarly, once you understand the whole of the lamrim, whatever extra scriptural teachings you receive only add to your understanding; they are not the cause of confusion.

Because you have met the lamrim and understand all the complete meditations for the whole of the lamrim from the beginning to the end, besides other teachings of the Buddha, even when you hear people talking about what is good and what is bad, you can immediately relate it to the lamrim. Any article from a newspaper can be brought into your lamrim meditation. You can relate it to many different lamrim subjects, such as thinking of it in terms of the six or eight types of suffering or in terms of emptiness. You can certainly relate much of what you read in newspapers to impermanence and death! And it can also bring compassion to your meditation session because it talks about the suffering of other sentient beings. The whole thing can become a meditation on great compassion.

When you practice lamrim, whatever good or bad thing you hear—from movies, television, newspapers and so forth—can become a lamrim teaching. As Milarepa said in one of his hymns, “the whole thing appears as advice.”

I think I will stop here.

THE MERELY LABELED I DOES NOT APPEAR TO US AS MERELY LABELED

Realizing the I is empty, you are not realizing that what you thought was real doesn't exist at all. It's not like that. As it says in the *Heart Sutra*, the essence of Prajnaparamita teachings, “Form is emptiness, emptiness is form.” Meditating on the I as empty is not trying to realize the I that exists somehow doesn't exist. It's not as if you have an I that exists and, through meditation, you make it nonexistent. There is an I that exists, but it exists as merely labeled on the base of the aggregates. You cannot make that I that actually exists nonexistent. That's impossible.

The I is empty of its own nature. You realize the I is empty of the truly existent I, of existing from its own side. While there is no such I that exists from its own side, to your mind it appears as if it does. With analytical meditation and one-pointed meditation, you are trying to realize that which is empty that you haven't recognized as empty before. For that you need to find the object of ignorance, the object to be refuted, which is the truly existent I. It's quite different to find.

Whatever you do, there seems to be a truly existent I—when you meditate, when you are in love—it seems to be constantly there, appearing from its own side, as if it exists from its own side. It's there right now, but you don't recognize it if you don't have that view.

When you have trained your mind and have a little understanding of emptiness, you will be able to recognize this truly existent I and see it as the object you need to negate. Otherwise, you might find this appearance of a truly existent I and think that therefore the I does exist from its own side. So, on one hand, when you don't meditate on emptiness, you won't recognize the falsity of the truly existing I, but also, on the other hand, you might be able to recognize the object to be negated but mistakenly think it is real.

You must see that there is an I that doesn't exist—the truly existent I— and there is an I that exists, which is nothing more than merely labeled on base of the aggregates. Ignorance, seeing the I that is based on the aggregates, mistakenly sees it as completely existing from its own side, as completely true. But when you search for this truly existing I, you can't find it anywhere. If you search your body you can't find it; if you search your mind you can't find it; and it can't be found on both the body and the mind or separate from the body and mind. From the head down to the feet, wherever you search it cannot be found.

Each time that you label “I” onto these aggregates, this isn't the real I. Each time you think, “Now I'm going to meditate;” “Now I'm going to eat food;” “Now I'm going to have tea;” “I'm hungry;” “I'm thirsty;” “I'm tired;” “I've been listening to Rinpoche for a *long time!*”—each time you say this you label an “I” onto the aggregates. Even though you are putting the name “I” there, you are merely labeling on the labeling base, the aggregates. However, that is not how it appears to you; you

are not aware of it as merely labeled. The I that is merely labeled on this labeling base of the aggregates appears as though it truly exists from its own side.

This object to be negated doesn't exist at all; it is a complete hallucination, but we all completely believe in this and grasp on it, and *that* is the source of the whole of samsaric suffering. So, it is very important to realize it is empty.

It is very good to use a very simple method to meditate on emptiness, one that doesn't require much logical thought. When you do that, your mind becomes more and more aware. The benefits of meditating on how the I is dependent are very good to understand; this meditation is very effective for the mind.

First, bring your mind inside, be aware inside. Then, slowly become aware of what you are doing. Then, whatever you are doing, try to be aware of the I at the same time. One part of the mind is spying on what the I is doing. At the same time, whatever you are doing, you watch to see how the I appears, how you think of the I. Watch the ways in which you believe in this I, how you experience it. That gives you the answer.

When you look at me, nobody at all can identify that I am teaching, except on the labeling base of the body that is teaching. On the reason that the body is teaching and the description—that's all. There is no other reason to identify that I am teaching here. No other profound reason can be found. Stay in this state a little while. There is nothing else at all except the body sitting here.

Enquire about whatever continuously comes up in your mind. As the questioner you have to be totally aware. What experience comes? How do you feel the I exists? Can you sense that the I is nothing more than what is merely labeled onto the aggregates, the body and mind? That's all, nothing else.

After meditating for quite a while, again hook the mind, become aware again of how it sees the I. You ask, "What am I doing here? I am meditating. Why am I meditating?" There is no reason at all, only the labeling base, the mind thinking these questions. The I that is meditating is just a name given to this process; there is nothing else at all. There is nothing else you can identify as the I that is meditating.

Do this over and over, constantly checking your experiences. Also ask the question, "What experience comes when I don't analyze, when I don't think how the I is dependent?" Try to find out whether there are differences or not in the two ways of perceiving the I.

I think that's all.

Lecture 15

November 24, 1980

GANDEN LHA GYĀMA: VISUALIZATION OF THE MERIT FIELD

Before I start, I want to explain the visualization to do with the prayer that we have said already. It is very effective for the mind if you know the visualizations. Little by little I shall describe the preliminary practices, as simply as possible and as short as possible.

Before you start you say the refuge prayer, at least the short one like this. There is a longer version in the *Jorcbö*, the preparatory practices.

“I and all sentient beings have been experiencing the various sufferings in samsara from beginningless samsaric lifetimes.”

Remember all your past experiences. It is extremely difficult to comprehend the death of samsara, the end of samsara. The end of death is very different from our ordinary death.

Think, “At this time, when I have found a perfect human body and have met the teachings of the Buddha, if I don’t try to be liberated from samsara forever, I will have to experience the various sufferings of samsara endlessly. Therefore, at this time, I must achieve enlightenment, the fully enlightened state, for the benefit of all mother sentient beings.”

Before generating this virtuous thought, after saying, “If I don’t try to be liberated from samsara forever, I will have to experience the various sufferings of samsara endlessly,” then ask, “Who has the power to guide me and all the sentient beings from all the sufferings in samsara? The guru and the Triple Gem who are in front of me have the power. Therefore, I must achieve the fully enlightened state for the benefit of all sentient beings. Therefore, I and all sentient beings are going to take refuge.”

That means from the bottom of your heart you can rely on the guru and the Triple Gem. Then you request them to purify all the general and particular obscurations accumulated since beginningless time and to generate all the general and particular realizations that they have.

In front of you, at the same level from the ground as the center of your two eyebrows, there is an extremely large, jeweled throne, beautifully adorned with bright jewels, raised up by eight snow lions, as you see in the thangka. Generate the field and visualize like that. The eight snow lions signify the eight bodhisattvas or the eight qualities of the Buddha.

The attitudes of the lions are significant—how they have open mouths, how their faces look up towards the merit field and so forth. There are many details. On this extensive large throne there are five thrones. One is in the center, one on the right side, one on the left, one behind and one in front. On the center throne, which is higher, sits your root guru, the one who revealed the teachings of the holy Dharma to you. The essence is the root guru, in the aspect as the founder, Shakyamuni Buddha.

The purpose of visualizing is this. Not only when doing the refuge practice but also at any time when you are meant to visualize whatever aspect of the Buddha—Tara, Manjushri, Chenrezig, Vajrasattva—anything you are meant to visualize, they are the embodiment of your own guru, the dharmakaya of all the buddhas. As they are like this, then you practice. If you can remember this, it is very effective. First remember the essence of your own guru, then remember the particular aspect of that buddha. That way there is also a feeling of closeness when you do the meditation. By visualizing that the deity is the essence of your guru, you receive greater blessings and, by visualizing the guru in the aspect of the Buddha, you receive the blessings quicker. There is great purpose like this.

As you meditate like this on Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, do the same with the rest of the merit field. The one purpose of visualizing the essence of Shakyamuni Buddha, the merit field, the guru, is because you receive all the realizations of the path to enlightenment completely by depending on the kindness of the guru. Therefore looking at the essence of your guru in the aspect of Shakyamuni Buddha is because Shakyamuni Buddha is the founder of the present teachings. He revealed the teachings in order to show their relevance.

The Buddha's right hand is in the mudra of controlling the earth, which signifies having destroyed the mara who is the son of the worldly gods and who interferes with our practice. When people try to practice the Dharma or when monks and nuns go through their ordination, that is when this mara tries to disturb their lives.

In his begging bowl is nectar that is the natural medicine that ceases the suffering of samsaric disease. The nectar also signifies having destroyed the mara of the aggregates, having eliminated samsara, which is bound by karma and the unsubdued mind. It is also undying long-life nectar, which destroys the mara of the Lord of the Death; and the undiluted, transcendental wisdom nectar, which destroys the mara of the unsubdued mind. Guru Shakyamuni has already finished destroying his own four maras; he has overwhelmed them. He has become victorious over the four maras. So we should think that the signification of the "controlling earth mudra" is to quickly destroy our own four maras. These four maras can be gross ones and subtle ones. There are two types.

Relating to tantric practice, at the heart of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha there is the transcendental wisdom of Vajradhara. At his heart is the concentration being, the syllable HUM.

If you have many gurus who have revealed the lamrim teachings to you, which one are you going to choose? Whoever has benefited your mind the most should be your main guru, but you should not think there is a separation from the other ones. That guru is just the main guru.

On the right in the front, there is the Maitreya Buddha. He is surrounded by the lineage lamas of the extensive conduct. On the left in the front, there is Manjushri. He is surrounded by the lineage lamas of the profound view. Behind is Vajradhara surrounded by the lineage lamas of the blessing of the practice. In front of the Buddha is your own root guru in the aspect as you see them. Then, around Guru Shakyamuni Buddha are the other gurus.

In Tibet, we say that if someone who has given us a commentary, *lung*, an initiation, tantric explanations or advice has an imperfect body, such as missing limbs, missing fingers, blind and so forth, you shouldn't visualize them exactly like that. If there are defects like that, you should think of

them with a perfect body. If you visualize an imperfect body, it disturbs the development of the mind. It degenerates the realization and becomes a hindrance for that.

There are different ways to visualize the position or mudra of the root guru according to what practice you wish to achieve. Generally, because the teacher is like the cause to generate that realization in your mind, the left hand is in the mudra of concentration, holding the long-life vase filled with the long-life nectar. That signifies that while the root guru is concentrating on emptiness they are simultaneously revealing the holy Dharma. That means they must be a buddha because only a buddha is able to teach while in samadhi.

The right hand is in the mudra of explaining the Dharma, signifying persuading sentient beings who are the object to be subdued, who are listening to the teaching. They have listened and understood the teaching and the guru has persuaded their mind to practice Dharma, putting it into action.

The principal hindrance to practicing the Dharma is ignorance, which disturbs the mind. The principal hindrance to accomplishing the Dharma practice is the Lord of Death, which destroys the body. These two are the principal hindrances. The mudra of the right hand explaining the Dharma is the remedy to destroy ignorance. Holding the long-life vase filled with undying nectar signifies destroying the Lord of the Death.

There are also different mudras when you practice tantra, when you are completing the experience of the tantric path. So you should visualize whatever number of gurus you have a guru/disciple relationship with surrounding Guru Shakyamuni, facing him. The gurus who are still living are seated on cushions, very soft ones which very easy to fall off, and those who have passed away are seated on a lotus and moon disc. You should visualize it like that. The guru teaching you now should be in front of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha.

I think I'll stop there.

There are very fixed ways to visualize each lineage lama in different positions and mudras and sometimes different ways of sitting. Manjushri and Maitreya face Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and then the fourth pandit. All the pandits are lined up like this with all the Kadampa geshe. Then in front there's Lama Tsongkhapa and the rest of the lineage lamas. They are all facing Shakyamuni Buddha in the center.

Behind Vajradhara are the lineage lamas of the blessed practice and all around are the four kinds of assemblies of the four tantra divisions such as Heruka, Hevajra, Chenrezig and Tara. Behind them are the thousand buddhas of this fortunate time, also in the nirmanakaya aspect, similar to Shakyamuni Buddha.

Then, there are the eight Medicine Buddhas. Praying to the Medicine Buddhas brings the result of your wish very quickly. It is very powerful in these degenerated times. So, before you start off, visualize the eight Medicine Buddhas, then the Thirty-five Buddhas, particularly manifesting in that form to purify the negative karma and obscurations of sentient beings. Because of that, it is important to visualize all Thirty-five Buddhas to purify obscurations.

Below that are the other buddhas and bodhisattvas and behind that are the arhats, the solitary realizers and the hearers, and at the edge of that are the dakas and dakinis.

At the edge of those are the protectors who are beyond samsara. These are principally the protectors of the three capable beings—of the lower capable being, the middle capable being and the higher capable being. In the front is the protector of the higher capable being, six-armed Mahakala. In order to complete the generation of the graduated path of the higher capable being—bodhicitta and the six perfections—you rely on six-armed Mahakala.

In order to complete generation of the graduated path of the middle capable being—morality and the renunciation of samsara—you should rely on Vaishravarana [Tib: *Namtöse*]. And in order to complete the generation of the graduated path of the lower capable being, you should rely on the protector, Kalarupa.

These three are recognized as the three practices to generate the three principal aspects of the path. The sport of Mahakala is to generate bodhicitta; the sport of Kalarupa, the one who is riding on a buffalo, is to realize emptiness; and the sport of Vaishravarana, the protector riding on the snow lion, is to realize renunciation. If you are going to have protectors to quickly accomplish the graduated path to enlightenment, these are the protectors that you should rely on or take refuge in.

The important thing to remember, though, is that all these protectors, all the dakas and dakinis that harm evil-doers, all the bodhisattvas, all the deities of the four tantric divisions, all the lineage lamas—the whole thing is the dharmakaya, the holy mind of the Buddha. That is the way to think of them, even though they are in different aspects.

There is a slight difference in the visualization of the merit field according to different lamas.

This is the elaborate way to visualize the merit field when you take refuge. There are some thangkas of the merit field of the lamrim where behind Lama Tsongkhapa the merit field doesn't have the wish-granting tree. This one has the lineage lamas of the profound practice behind Lama Tsongkhapa. That is according to Pabongka.

Other merit fields are basically the same but with a few minor differences, where you visualize all the lineage lamas of the profound and extensive paths behind Lama Tsongkhapa.

There are also the four side protectors, the four great kings. Sometimes they are above the throne, sometimes they are below it on a cloud. If the four great kings are above the throne, they are beyond samsara; if they are below on the cloud, they are worldly beings. This is the reason there is this difference.

When I asked His Holiness the Dalai Lama about the visualization, he explained that it doesn't have to necessarily be done exactly like this, with the lions and everything. You can visualize it in whichever way you find more comfortable. Basically, it is explained like that in the teachings, but if you find another way more comfortable, it is better to do it that way.

From whatever direction you see Guru Shakyamuni Buddha he seems to be looking straight at you. For one being over there, he seems to be looking at them; for another in completely the opposite direction, he seems to be looking straight at them. Each thinks the Buddha is looking at them, that they are facing toward Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and are able to see the holy face. It is a miracle

that it appears like that. It doesn't have to be concrete, like us! If you turned your back on somebody, they would see only your back, not your face.

With the refuge prayer, think, "At any rate I must reach enlightenment for the benefit of all mother sentient beings, therefore I am going to listen to the commentary on the graduated path to enlightenment." Have faith in the teachings by generating the motivation of bodhicitta.

THE FOUR QUALITIES OF THE LAMRIM: THE MEANING IS EASILY FOUND

The third quality of the lamrim is that you can easily find the views of the Victorious Ones. You understand the meaning of the Buddha's teachings and the commentaries, seeing that they are the best advice.

But without depending on and understanding the advice of the guru and the teachings on the graduated path to enlightenment, you cannot easily find the ultimate view of the Buddha just from those great scriptures. If you don't depend on the lamrim and the advice of the guru, even if you find the ultimate view of Buddha from the scriptures, it takes much time and you have to undergo many hardships. Whereas, by depending on the understanding you gain from the lamrim and the advice of the guru, you can immediately find what is explained in those great extensive scriptures without taking much time.

The advice of the guru is like a key to a house where all the precious treasures are kept. If you don't have the key, you cannot get what you wish. Without depending on this advice of the guru and the lamrim, the key, you cannot understand the difficult, subtle points of the great scriptures and realize the ultimate view of the Buddha.

What is the ultimate view of the Buddha? Generally, it is the path of the three capable beings, particularly the three principal aspects of the path. Among all these, the ultimate view of the Buddha is the complete pure view, emptiness. As Lama Tsongkhapa said in the *Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, this ultimate view of the Buddha is the Buddha's intention.

If the appearance of dependent relation,
Which is unbetraying, is accepted separately from emptiness,
And as long as they are seen as separate,
Then one has still not realized the Buddha's intent.

As long as emptiness is seen as separate from dependent origination, as long as you see these two understandings as separate, you still haven't realized the view of Shakyamuni Buddha. Lama Tsongkhapa's point is that while you see these two as separate, when you cannot unify these two on one base, while you might be able to see how the I is a dependent arising, you will never be able to explain how the I is empty of inherent existence. And conversely, while you might be able to see how the I is empty of inherent existence, you will never be able to explain how the I is a dependent arising. Therefore, you will never be able to unify the dependence of the I with its emptiness. You can either accept one view or the other.

As long as you continue to have this confusion, you have still not understood the intention of the Buddha, whereas when you are able to put these two things together—dependent arising and

emptiness—without finding any separation, you have understood the Buddha’s view. Then, whenever you see the emptiness of the I, you see its dependence—how it arises in dependence on other factors—and whenever you see its dependence, you understand this means it must be empty of true existence. Thus, emptiness and dependent arising are seen as unified. That is the definition of having realized the right view, the pure, incredible right view of the Buddha.

By depending on the lamrim, you will immediately understand the important points of how to generate the three principal aspects of the path in your mind, which is the subject of great extensive scriptures. You will be able to understand them immediately, without experiencing much hardship.

The extensive scriptures are like an ocean. The three principal aspects of the path—the intention or the view of the Buddha—are like the jewels in the ocean. The teachings of the lamrim are like the ship. The lama who reveals the teachings of the lamrim, the one who guides you, is like the captain. If there are jewels in the ocean, without depending on the ship, you can never find them. If you tried to collect the jewels from the ocean, there is a danger you might lose your life. Without knowing the lamrim, even if you read the great scriptures extensively, it is very difficult to find the view of Buddha. If you depend on a skillful captain—the lama—and if you enter into the ship of the graduated path to enlightenment, you can go on the great ocean of the extensive scriptures and easily find the jewels, the view of the Buddha.

THE FOUR QUALITIES OF THE LAMRIM: ALL THE GREAT NEGATIVITIES ARE STOPPED

The fourth quality of the lamrim is that it helps you guard against the abyss of grave negative deeds. As Lama Tsongkhapa explained, if you have no definite understanding of the other three qualities, if you see the lamrim as just teachings to be studied or debated but not practiced, this is a big mistake.

If you discriminate like this, you create the very heavy karma of renouncing the holy Dharma. For instance, it’s easy to have more respect for some teachings and less respect for others, thinking some teachings are to be practiced and others are not. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha said in the sutra teachings that this kind of obscuration of avoiding the holy Dharma is very subtle and very heavy.

Some people discriminate, saying that certain teachings explained by tathagatas are pure and good, whereas others are bad. What they are actually doing, by saying these teachings can be practiced and these teachings can’t be, is criticizing the tathagatas, the buddhas. That is avoiding the holy Dharma.

Some people say that these teachings are only taught for bodhisattvas and those are only for hearers and solitary realizers and therefore not what bodhisattvas practice. If you say this, it is avoiding the holy Dharma. Similarly, if you discriminate that these teachings are Theravada and only for the followers of the Lesser Vehicle and not for us Mahayana practitioners, that is avoiding the holy Dharma. “We are Mahayanists, so those teachings are not for us,” or “We are Theravadins, we do not take Mahayana teachings, the bodhisattva teachings, the practice of the six perfections. They are not for us.” People also say these are not Buddha’s teachings. Without knowing exactly why, just by saying words of dislike like this, besides being avoiding the Dharma, it also becomes an obstacle to attaining enlightenment.

In Tibet there are four sects. The Gelugpa teachings are very pure and correct, but so too are the teachings of the Nyingma, the Kagyü and the Sakya. The teachings of all the four sects came from

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and, when practiced, can lead a practitioner to enlightenment. However, you hear some people say that the teachings of the other sects are corrupt, that only their own teachings are pure. Gelugpas say Nyingma teachings are no good; Nyingmapas say Gelug teachings are no good, and the same with the other sects. That kind of discrimination and generalization is avoiding the holy Dharma.

Such mistakes that create the very heavy negative karma of avoiding holy Dharma are due to people not having understood the lamrim well. They have not even understood the refuge practice let alone the subjects of the lamrim.

Similarly, when you find it hard to understand the teachings, when they are not clear for your mind, the thought might arise that these teachings are not fun. That is also avoiding the holy Dharma. You should have the wish to understand, even though they seem too difficult to at this point. You should think, “May I be able to practice that in the future.” Even though that practice doesn’t fit the present level of your mind, you shouldn’t dismiss that practice, thinking that this teaching is not for you. You should wish and pray to be able to practice it in the future. All the teachings that the Buddha taught are to gradually lead you to enlightenment, so thinking like that is avoiding the holy Dharma.

As I mentioned before, in each sect there is the complete path to enlightenment from guru devotion up to enlightenment, in the general path and in the tantric path, the path of Secret Mantra. There are the pure teachings in each sect. Like a skillful captain who knows the whole trail, who knows how to guide, a skillful teacher has complete understanding of the whole path from the beginning up to the end, from guru devotion up to enlightenment, without missing anything.

The skillful disciple is the one who practices as advised by the skillful teacher, the one with perfect, complete advice of the path from the beginning up to the end with nothing missing. If the skillful disciple of any of the four sects practices in that way, without taking much time, without depending on accumulating merit for three eons, they can quickly achieve enlightenment. This is because there is complete infallible advice to achieve enlightenment in one brief lifetime in all the four sects.

Even though the teachings are pure, if the teacher doesn’t show the complete infallible advice of the whole path to enlightenment, or if the disciple practices incorrectly, then they will be unable to reach enlightenment, but that is no fault of the sect. Therefore, disrespecting other sects, making generalized assumptions about their teachings, creates very heavy negative karma.

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha explained the shortcomings of avoiding the holy Dharma in the teachings. It is much heavier karma than destroying all the holy stupas in this world or killing arhats equaling the number of grains of sand in the river Ganga.

If you have a definite understanding of the first three qualities of the lamrim then you can easily see that there is nothing to leave out from the teaching of the Buddha and there is not one thing that is not to be practiced. You can easily see that all of the Buddha’s teachings are to be practiced. In that way, respect arises for all the teachings of the Buddha. Even though the teachings in the four sects are presented with different terms, you respect all of them in the same way.

When you appreciate the lamrim, many heavy negative karmas such as avoiding the holy Dharma are avoided. Particularly relating to the teachings on guru devotion in the lamrim, when you correctly

reflect on how to follow the guru, you no longer create all the negative karmas in your relationship with the guru and you purify the negative karmas you have received from mistakes you have already made in your relationship.

When you reflect on any subject, you stop the negativities that arise in relation to your mistaken views on that subject. For instance, by understanding the perfect human rebirth, with its eight freedoms and ten richnesses, and impermanence and death, you overcome all the negativities concerned with clinging to this life. Understanding the difficulties of attaining this human body and the fragility of this life cuts off the attachment clinging to this life. When you cut off clinging to this life, all the negative karmas that arise from that are naturally stopped.

Similarly, when you understand that the whole of samsara is suffering, you cut off the thought that clings to samsaric perfections, the karmas that cause you to endlessly circle in the cycle of death and rebirth. Both get stopped. And when you train the mind in the meditations on bodhicitta, the self-cherishing thought is cut off. As your mind becomes more and more transformed into bodhicitta then the self-cherishing thought becomes less and less and so the negative karmas that arise from cherishing the self become less and less.

Similarly, as you train your mind in emptiness, in seeing that there is no truly existing self, the negative karmas associated with ignorance, grasping the truly existing I, become less and less. All negative thoughts and all suffering stem from the thought that grasps the I as truly existing, so when you have finally developed the wisdom realizing selflessness completely all the negative karmas that arise from the unsubdued mind are stopped.

Training the mind in all the meditation subjects of the lamrim is the method to overcome all the wrong concepts that trigger negative actions and cause you to suffer in samsara, therefore one of the great qualities of the lamrim is that all the great negativities are naturally stopped.

HYMNS OF EXPERIENCE COMMENTARY: HOMAGE TO THE DHARMA

The ninth and tenth verses of the *Hymns of Experience* say,

Therefore this most excellent instruction that is sought after
By numerous fortunate ones like the learned ones of India and Tibet,
This [instruction of the] stages of the path of persons of three capacities,
What intelligent person is there whose mind is not captured by it?

This concise instruction distilling the essence of all scriptures,
Even through reciting it or listening to it only once,
The benefits of teaching the Dharma, listening to it, and so on,
Since such waves of merit are bound to be gathered, contemplate its meaning.

Who of powerful mind would not be captured by it? It's much simpler in Tibetan—it has more taste—where it sort of says, which of all the learned holy beings of India and Tibet with their great intelligence would not be attracted to these teachings? There are none who would not be enchanted by the supreme advice of the gradual path of the three capable beings, the supreme advice that many fortunate beings follow.

Lama Tsongkhapa said this directly but it also implies that the ignorant ones are not enchanted by these teachings, they have no attraction for the teachings of the lamrim that contain the advice of the many fortunate beings who came before. He implies that the ignorant ones are unfortunate.

One session of hearing the teachings of this tradition that embodies the essence of all Buddha's words collects waves of merit equivalent to hearing all teachings of the Buddhadharma.

This explains the benefits of explaining and listening to the lamrim teaching, not only in general but specifically here—that it encompasses all the Buddhadharma. All the 84,000 teachings that comprise three baskets or divisions of teachings, the Tripitaka, are contained in the teaching of the gradual path of the three capable beings. According to the Tibetan, it says the essence of all the teachings is contained in the three baskets of the teaching and all that is contained in the lamrim teachings. It can be understood in that way.

Because of that, by reading and listening to it once, you receive incredible benefits, multitudes of benefits; benefits as great as if you had expounded all the holy Dharma, as if you had listened to all the teachings of the Buddha. Even though the lamrim does not contain every word the Buddha taught, it contains all the meaning of his words.

When he was giving a lamrim teaching, a Kadampa geshe said, “When I talk about the lamrim, it shakes the heart of all the teachings that are in the world.”

Even if you just recite the short Lama Tsongkhapa lamrim prayer without a wandering mind, this encompassed the entire lamrim, and, while concentrating on the prayer, in that few short minutes, it becomes a direct meditation on all the teachings given by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Reciting the short or medium lamrim prayer, within that time, you receive the same benefits as if you had read all the teachings of the Buddha.

By listening to the holy Dharma, you understand the qualities of the Triple Gem and then you become devoted to them. Because of that, you strive to accumulate merit, such as making offerings, doing prostrations and so on to the Triple Gem.

You develop faith in karma, seeing that karma is definite and by understanding the teachings. Your mind becomes happy, knowing what the cause of happiness is and what to practice, and knowing what the cause of suffering is and what to refrain from practicing. Before, you were ignorant and unable to discriminate. Your mind was completely dark and you ignorantly did the wrong practice. Now, with faith and the wisdom of Dharma, you know which karma brings happiness and which brings suffering, thus you have so much freedom. You are a hundred percent confident, knowing exactly what you are doing.

By understanding each of the four noble truths—true suffering, the true cause of suffering, the true cessation of suffering and the true path—you can generate the wisdom realizing emptiness and then eliminate ignorance, grasping onto the I as truly existing. Then you can achieve the sorrowless state.

You receive infinite benefits from listening to the holy Dharma. Even if it costs a thousand golden coins for one verse, as it said in the sutras, or if you have to cut your own flesh to receive one word, it is worth it. When the Buddha was a bodhisattva he had to undergo many hardships just to receive

one verse of the holy Dharma, such as putting thousands of nails into his holy body. You don't have to cut your flesh, you don't have to bear hardships like this, just to receive teachings. However, you must attempt to listen to the teachings as much as you can, bearing whatever hardships there might be. Despite any hardships, you should try listening to the teachings as much as possible.

THE THREE INCORRECT WAYS OF LISTENING TO THE DHARMA

When you listen extensively to the teachings, there are many different ways of reflecting. As you understand more teachings and more meditation practice, it becomes quicker to generate the experience.

The texts say that when you listen to the teachings, there are three hindrances to avoid and six recognitions. The three incorrect ways of listening to the Dharma use the analogy of the pot. Of the first mistake, the mind is compared to a pot that is upside down. The purpose of a pot is to collect water, but if you keep the pot upside down, when you pour water over it, it can't fill the pot. Similarly, when you hear the Dharma, if you are not paying attention, or if you let your mind wander—thinking about work or returning to the family or traveling to the beach or around India—there is no benefit. If you let your mind wander to travel like this, you have no idea what teaching the lama has taught. It's like not being in the land of Dharma.

A previous lama's advice is that you must listen to the teachings like an animal whose mind is completely hooked, completely attached to a sound. The animal doesn't move its body; the whole time it sits still and raises its ears to where the sound comes from. Listening to the Dharma, your mind should be one-pointed like that, not distracted. You should pay undivided attention, like when an animal listens to a sound. The animal is so attached to the sound that even if the hunter shoots it, it can't feel it.

Even though the pot is not upside down, if it is dirty or polluted, you cannot enjoy whatever is put in it, no matter how delicious it might be. What was the best quality food becomes inedible. Similarly, even if you listen to the teachings well, if your motivation is only the thought of seeking the happiness of this life, it's no good. Maybe you are listening in order to become an expert, so when you go back to your country you can speak about the Dharma and show other people how much Dharma you know. You do it seeking reputation, rather than with the compassionate thought to benefit others.

When the motive for listening to the teachings is to seek happiness only for yourself, it is like drinking poison. There is no pure motivation, only crazy thoughts. In that way, the teachings don't become beneficial for you.

The third way listening to the Dharma can be incorrect is, even though the pot is not upside down or dirty, it has a hole in it. No matter how much you try to put in it, even the most delicious nectar, nothing stays inside. Similarly, listening to the Dharma, even if you pay attention well and your motivation is good, you are unable to retain the teachings or you don't try to remember them. After you have heard them, you immediately forget.

It might be extremely difficult to remember the whole of the teachings, but by having the root text, the main text, and by having the outline of the lamrim or the complete lamrim text that contains the

subject, you should be able to remember. There are methods to remember, such as discussing what you have just heard among your Dharma friends, thinking about the importance of the main subject.

THE FIRST THREE OF THE SIX RECOGNITIONS

There is also a list of six recognitions, ways to consider how to listen to the teachings.

The first way is *recognizing yourself as a patient*. That is the extremely important one. If you have this recognition, all the other recognitions come naturally. Unless you think of yourself as a patient, that is a mistake. It's no good thinking "I am a patient" while feeling that you have no pain. The serious illness you are suffering from is the deluded way of thinking; this is the great illness in the mind.

Whenever there is attachment, there is pain in the mind; whenever there is anger, there is pain in the mind; whenever there is confusion, there is pain in the mind. When you are confused, when you don't know what to do, what to practice in life, you have mental pain. Then, there are all the other pains, such as the pain of pride and the pain of jealousy—there are so many other deluded minds that are painful.

From that, the second recognition is *recognizing the holy Dharma as medicine*. If you constantly see yourself as a patient, then the wish to be free from that serious disease naturally arises. You can then recognize that the nature of the Dharma is to help you recover from the disease of the deluded views, the unsubdued mind. With this understanding naturally comes the determination to act, by practicing the Dharma, to unblock the obscurations that keep you trapped in your delusions.

You then see the teachings as personal instructions. You might even think, "This teaching is just for me, not for somebody else!" When you know you are sick, of course you seek medicine. Recognizing the extent of your delusions, of course you seek the remedy, the holy Dharma, which is like medicine. It is the only medicine to pacify the disease of the unsubdued mind.

The next recognition is *recognizing the virtuous friend as a skillful doctor*. Without a doctor, the patient can easily make a mistake in taking the medicine. You might know you are sick but not know which medicine to take or you take one that helps at the end of the disease or vice versa, causing great danger to your life. With a serious illness, you must consult a skillful doctor.

It is a mistake to think that just reading the scriptures is enough, without any teacher, without a virtuous friend. If you just read books and meditate, no experience comes; nothing happens to the mind. The mind just becomes more and more unsubdued, and less and less peace comes.

If you want to practice the holy Dharma, you should carefully follow the advice of the virtuous friend, who is like a skillful doctor. Patients who find the correct medicine and the skillful doctor and who know they are going to be cured are extremely happy. They listen to whatever the doctor advises, and they greatly respect the doctor. Like the patient who follows the doctor, after you have found the virtuous friend, you should respect them and follow their advice carefully.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Somebody wrote a question two or three days ago. “Why is being a woman considered a lower rebirth than a male?” Generally, that doesn’t mean in every society, I don’t think. In India, Laos, Thailand, all those countries, why are there so many monks but few nuns? Do you know why? [The students discuss, inaudible]

I think that could bring the answer. Somebody replied that women bear the children. While everybody is the same on a fundamental level, while there is the same opportunity for both to achieve enlightenment, it is not the society that makes the law. There is freedom from your own side. There is no law. It is just a matter of what the individual wishes, of individual choice.

Another way of phrasing the question is whether boys or girls have more opportunity. Your question becomes the answer! I think, in Tibet and in countries where there are as many women as men and where both sexes can choose whether to ordain, even though women have the same freedom to decide on that life, there are still less nuns. I think that’s because there are more hindrances.

For example, if a woman wishes to live alone in a solitary place, it is more difficult somehow. It is more difficult for her to make determination and there are hindrances from outside—so, hindrances from inside and hindrances from outside. Generally men are less scared of being attacked and have less internal and external hindrances. This is a general position. For many women, it is more difficult to make the decision to renounce attachment.

The next question is the number of monks and nuns in the West. I didn’t count them! When I was in New Zealand I did count, and I think there was one monk extra. I think it is exactly the same in the West, it mainly depends on their own capabilities, their education and their understanding.

The next question is whether women have a lower rebirth. There might still be some difference here on how that is recognized. It’s not exactly as it was in Tibet. While monks can have a full ordination, in Tibet, nuns haven’t been given certain ordinations.

However, depending on their way of life and their education, there won’t be much difference. Generally, there will still be something generating more hindrances and a more difficult life and in practicing the Dharma. Generally it is like this, but not for everyone. Overall, it’s the same. Men can become enlightened and women can become enlightened. They are the same.

The next question is whether there have been many women who attained very high tantric realizations. There have been many.

[Another inaudible question] I think it does depend so much on the role of culture. It also depends on the personality. Why there are less nuns, even though they have the same freedom and opportunities, depends on the personality. There are more hindrances, both internal and external, to live their life in that way, practicing the Dharma. The hindrances from outside are also because of the body and things like that. That’s why I think there are less nuns than monks. It’s not as if they are being forbidden from becoming nuns. It can be affected a little bit by society and by people’s attitudes in general, but it always depends on their minds.

Is that enough? Another question. [Question inaudible] The culture is not made by mind? The culture is not the result of karma? Of course! You see, women are also free. They can leave home

and go to live in a monastery. Nobody will stop them. They have the same freedom as men in that regard. So much comes from individual trust; so much comes from individual choice. It's not that somebody is controlling it. Sometimes there are parents controlling them, but mostly it is not like that. It comes from individual determination. So, you have to think about why there are less women becoming nuns. The difference comes from the individual's decision.

I'll stop here.

Lecture 16

November 25, 1980 (morning)

THE EIGHT MAHAYANA PRECEPTS

The reviving and purifying Mahayana ordination is different from the eight precepts of the *pratimoksha*, which is liberation for the self. This one is taken by visualizing being in the presence of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, the holy objects you take the ordination from. That is the difference. Also, the lama who grants the ordination should be visualized as Shakyamuni Buddha, in that aspect, surrounded by numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas.

The second difference from the eight *pratimoksha* precepts is the range of those who can take it. The one-day Mahayana ordination can be taken by full monks or by anybody. Taking this other ordination is no danger to somebody who is living in the thirty-six precepts or higher. Another difference is the motivation. For this Mahayana ordination, the motivation is bodhicitta.

For this ordination to become the cause to achieve enlightenment, please generate the motivation, the precious thought of bodhicitta. Feel this from your heart. As I mentioned in the words on motivation, feel it comes from the heart.

Think this. “I and all sentient beings, numberless times from the beginningless samsaric lifetimes, have been experiencing the general suffering of the suffering and the particular sufferings of the three lower realms. Through the beginningless experience of suffering in samsara, we are still following the wrong conceptions, believing the I to be truly existent, grasping on to the I as truly existent.

“While the body is impure, dirty, containing impurities, I and all others completely believe it to be clean. Even though the body is in the nature of impermanence, we believe the wrong concept of permanence. We have such a short time to live, but we believe the body is going to live for a long time. This is the wrong concept of permanence.

“I and all sentient beings hold the wrong concept that believes that samsaric pleasures, which are only in the nature of suffering, are ultimate, pure happiness. As long as I and all others hold these wrong concepts, we will suffer in samsara endlessly.

“If I think of all the endless suffering in samsara which I will be experiencing through these wrong concepts, it is something that shakes the heart, that causes the heart to crack. To experience the same suffering again and again that I have experienced in the past, on and on endlessly, is something I cannot stand. I need to eliminate these wrong concepts to be free from samsara.

“Buddhas such as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha have taken these Mahayana ordinations, followed the path and became enlightened for the benefit of sentient beings. In the past Guru Shakyamuni Buddha has enlightened numberless sentient beings, and even now he is still guiding numberless sentient beings to enlightenment, including us.

“By revealing just this method, the Mahayana ordination, and by leading us to accumulate merit, by allowing us to keep the precepts, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha can guide us from happiness to happiness, to enlightenment.

“Each of us has the same potential to achieve enlightenment in order to benefit other sentient beings, to do the infinite works for other sentient beings. Just seeking liberation for myself is selfish and no difference from foolish animals, from sheep and goats who seek happiness only for the self. When they find a small clump of grass, the only thought they have is their own happiness, without any concern for the happiness of other sentient beings. Finding water, they drink it thinking only of their own happiness, without concern for other sentient beings. If I were to seek liberation just for myself, there would be no difference.

“The mother sentient beings I have received both the three times’ happiness and perfections from are extremely kind. There is no happiness, great or small, that I can experience without depending on the kindness of mother sentient beings. There is not one single possession that I have received that has not depended on the kindness of mother sentient beings. Mother sentient beings are the kindest, the most powerful condition to enable me to begin my Dharma practice. That is due to the kindness of mother sentient beings. Only due to their kindness will I be able to complete my Dharma practice and attain enlightenment. Therefore, they are extremely kind.

“The kind mother sentient being are devoid of temporal happiness and ultimate happiness; they are forced to endure suffering endlessly. They must experience the three types of suffering continuously.

“I must cause them to be free from every type of suffering and achieve every type of happiness. May I be able to do this. To do that, I must achieve the state of omniscience. Without creating the cause, the omniscient mind will not be achieved.

“To attain the omniscient mind, I must protect my moral conduct, protect my karma, renouncing negative karma and creating only virtuous karma. Therefore, in order to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, I am going to take the eight Mahayana precepts until sunrise tomorrow.”

With that visualization, put your palms together at the heart and take the eight Mahayana precepts.

[Rinpoche gives the eight Mahayana precepts]

Dedicate these merits, thinking that even hearing the name of a place where there are bodhisattvas, may all their prayers be fulfilled. With the bodhisattva prayer, all sentient beings become enlightened. Pray like that.

[Chanting in Tibetan]

Lecture 17

November 25, 1980 (morning)

GANDEN LHA GYĀMA: VISUALIZING THE MERIT FIELD

Don't visualize the merit field like a tongue or a barrel of flesh, some material thing that doesn't give any feeling. You should think it is the essence of the dharmakaya, surrounded by all the buddhas, with your own guru in the aspect of the holy body, like a candle flame in a gold-colored bowl, very golden in color. The buddha's omniscient mind, the dharmakaya, is in this form, like the flame of a candle, very clear and transparent.

The merit field is countless holy beings, not feeling tired! They're not just sitting quietly, not making any comments. The whole merit field is having a very lively Dharma discussion, in their hundreds. It's like in the large monasteries, where there are many hundreds of monks discussing and praying. There is a huge sound, just like a great many monks saying prayers at the same time, or when they have discussions.

Also, white-colored light beams are emitted from their holy bodies, shooting out and coming back.

At the center is Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. The rest of the merit field are sending out light beams, doing work for sentient beings, coming from various points and also absorbing back. There are even countless numbers of buddhas abiding in each pore of their holy bodies. Try to visualize as many as you can. The more you can visualize, the more merit you accumulate, creating the cause to achieve the Buddha's holy body. All the holy beings of the merit field are truly happy to be working for sentient beings.

One of the very close lineage lamas of the lamrim, who had completed the realizations on the path to enlightenment, said that generally there is no time when the holy beings of the merit field are not extremely happy, because they see our potential, even though we might be creating negative actions and causing ourselves suffering.

For example, a mother might have a very disobedient son who does whatever his mother tells him not to do. He goes completely against her advice. But one time, when the son listens to what she advises, the mother is extremely happy with her son, happier than somebody who always obeyed her. So, maybe once we do a little bit of study about the lamrim and offer that little bit of study to the merit field, that would make them extremely pleased.

Also, the holy Dharma—the scriptures and the realizations of all the merit field—should be visualized in the form of scriptural texts. Each syllable of the Dharma makes a sound, which is naturally part of that teaching. It's like in the early morning when you look at a plant and see a drop of dew on it. After the sun has risen, it diminishes naturally. It is the nature of dew.

Visualizing the merit field as extensively as this is according to the all-encompassing jewel tradition.

VISUALIZING PURIFICATION AND ACCUMULATION OF MERIT

After you have finished visualizing the object of refuge, you should then do the practice of refuge, which entails reciting the refuge prayer, taking refuge with your complete heart, relying on the guru and the Triple Gem. Remember the cause of refuge: aversion to or fear of samsara and devotion to the Triple Gem.

That particular way of taking refuge is according to the Theravada. The Mahayana way of taking refuge, on the basis of those two causes, has the additional aspect of generating compassion, feeling how unbearable it is that all the other sentient beings are suffering.

So in the motivation you think, “I must achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, generating love and compassion, feeling how unbearable it is that other beings are suffering. To be able to do that, I am going to take refuge.”

Think that all sentient beings are also taking refuge to Guru Shakyamuni.

Then, with you yourself as the leader of the puja, visualize your father and mother, your friends and enemies, and then all the rest of the sentient beings, in the form of human beings, equaling the infinite space, endlessly, sitting on the ground around you. As you recite “I take refuge in the Guru,” “*Lama la kyab su chi o*” and so forth, all the sentient beings are repeating it together with you.

When you recite “*Lama la kyab su chi o*,” at this time visualize the five nectars beams radiating out and reentering the bodies of the merit field.

If you are going to recite the refuge prayer a hundred times, one mala, then for around fifty recitations, visualize the five different colored nectar beams coming from the five points of the merit field—the forehead, the throat, the heart, the navel and the secret place. The white nectar beams are emitted from and absorb back into the forehead; the red nectar beams are emitted from and absorb back into the throat; the blue nectar beams are emitted from and absorb back into the heart; the yellow nectar beams are emitted from and absorb back into the navel; and the green nectar beams are emitted from and absorb back into the secret place.

For half of the mala, you should do the visualization of purification. Imagine all the hindrances that block realizations, the qualities of the path to enlightenment, are eliminated. Maybe when doing the purification, concentrate on the white nectar beams. The same thing happens with the five different colored nectar beams absorbing into all sentient beings as with you, entering the body-mind of other sentient beings. Visualize that it purifies the general obscurations, the negatives karmas, and particularly the negative karmas and obscurations accumulated in the relationship with the guru, such as causing harm to the guru’s holy body, having broken his advice, having disturbed the holy mind, having generated heresy and having criticized him. All this is emitted, coming out of all the pores completely in the form of black dirty liquid or liquid coal, like when you wash your dirty body in the shower and all the black dirty liquid comes out. In that way, all your own and all sentient beings’ negativities in relation to the guru are completely purified.

For the second half of the mala you should do the visualization of accumulation. Visualize that the qualities of the guru’s holy body, holy speech and holy mind flow into you and all sentient beings and think that your merits and those of all sentient beings are increased immeasurably, including your own and all sentient beings’ lives and fortune, the qualities of scriptural understanding and your

realizations. In particular, you and all sentient beings receive the blessings of the guru's holy body, holy speech and holy mind.

During this time, the part of the merit field you should concentrate on is the five divisions of the lama, with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha at the center and the four other gurus all around, with your root guru in the front. Behind are the lineage lamas who are blessing the practice, the lineage lamas of the extensive path and the whole path. Think the five different beings are at five different points, with the five different colored nectars, coming together like a shower.

There is a place I saw in Brisbane, Australia, where in the middle of a shopping mall there is a central plaza where people can get the feeling of being on a mountain or outside; they can get a sense of nature. They put rocks and water and plants growing about and then had a stream running down the rocks, between the trees. It was a very fine stream.

There are different ways of visualizing the nectar beams. You do it like that or like a shower, with the different colored beams naturally flowing from the different places and coming all together. You can start by concentrating more on the purifying qualities of the white nectar flowing then move to concentrating on the increasing qualities of the yellow nectar and so forth.

With the next one, when you recite "I take refuge in the Buddha," "*Sang gyä la kyab su chi o,*" you should visualization the nectar beams flowing from the deities of the four divisions of tantra. The buddhas are in the nirmanakaya aspect according to sutra. When you do that, think of purifying your negative karma in general and in particular the obscurations accumulated in relation to the Buddha, such as causing blood to flow from the tathagatas with evil thought.

Even if you haven't done that in this life you have done it in past lives, so you are not only purifying the negative karmas of this life, but also the negative karmas from all the past lives, for example, the negative karma of discriminating between the images of the Buddha, such as in statues and paintings, discriminating between what you consider to be bad and good, thinking one is ugly and one is beautiful. Saying that you like this holy object but you don't like that one is discrimination, whereas there is nothing to discriminate between bad and good in the Buddha's holy body.

It is possible to discriminate between the workmanship of a statue or painting, thinking that one is better made than the other, but you must not discriminate about the statue or painting itself, which you should see as the actual holy body. When Lama Atisha was offered a Manjushri statue by a great yogi and asked to check up how it was, he said, "There's nothing to say between bad and good in the statue of Manjushri, but the craftsmanship is not the best; it's in the middle."

However, if you discriminate in this way with the actual holy body, that is a particular negative karma. It's like using the body of a buddha as a material possession, like something of monetary worth, like money you put in the bank. You are buying and selling buddhas, making business with them, seeing them as nothing more than material objects.

Then, [with this purification practice] if you destroyed a holy object with a negative motivation—not in order to repair it and make it better—this type of negative karma accumulated by you and other sentient beings from beginningless samsaric lifetimes is completely purified. As before, visualize it coming out as dirty liquid.

When you visualize in this way, you increase the general qualities of yourself and all sentient beings, such as life and fortune, and the qualities of the scriptures and realizations are developed and increased. Then, in particular, the qualities of the buddhas, such as fearlessness and the other ten powers, are increased.

REMEMBERING BODHICITTA, YOU FORGET YOUR PROBLEMS

Khunu Lama Rinpoche said,

When you are depressed, remember bodhicitta.
When you are scared, remember bodhicitta.
When you suffer, remember bodhicitta.
When you are happy, remember bodhicitta.

When your mind is weak, remember bodhicitta.
When you lose heart doing things for others, remember bodhicitta.
When you become lazy, remember bodhicitta.
When you get upset, remember bodhicitta.¹⁶

This is real advice. All the time we have questions. “I have this or that problem, what should I do?” “My mind is a little bit depressed, what should I do?” “Sometimes I’m too excited, what should I do?” “I’m unable to control my mind. Sometimes my mind is full of fear, full of superstitions and paranoia. I’m terrified that some bad thing will happen to me! Even if nobody is bothering me at the moment, I still think that someone will come and steal my food and possessions!”

You pass your life in that way with many unnecessary fears and upsets. During those times, when you wonder what is the best thing you can do, what is the best practice, what is the best medicine for the mind to stop being upset, remember that the best, most effective, enlightened medicine is to remember bodhicitta.

When you remember bodhicitta, you remember the suffering of other sentient beings. This surely comes. You see the unimaginable sufferings that other sentient beings have, and when you think about this, your own problem is lost. Yours is nothing in comparison. Your upset disappears. When you remember bodhicitta you also see how childish it is to get upset and how it all comes from clinging to this life. So, when you remember bodhicitta you have a broader mind, one that understands that the most important thing is not the happiness of this life but to achieve enlightenment for the kind mother sentient beings. That is the most important, the most beneficial thing that you should think. It becomes easy to see how unimportant and childish the happiness of this life is, how useless it is to you and to all other sentient beings.

The best thing to do when you are upset and suffering is to remember bodhicitta. When there is too much clinging to this life, when you are full of self-cherishing, remembering bodhicitta—meditating on it and trying to generate it—means the self-cherishing thought diminishes; it no longer appears strongly, whereas the thought of cherishing others arises stronger.

¹⁶ *The Jewel Lamp*, vv. 89 and 90.

In that way, the suffering or discomfort you thought was a huge problem, an important problem, becomes so small and insignificant. Also, by practicing bodhicitta, by taking other sentient beings' sufferings and fears upon yourself, upon the self-cherishing thought, and by dedicating your wish-granting body, your pleasures, and your three-time merits to other sentient beings, it becomes the complete enjoyment for whatever sentient beings want to do.

Thinking in this way, when you are happy you dedicate your happiness to all sentient beings. When you have a pleasant experience, you dedicate that to all sentient beings. In that way, whatever you experience in life—happiness or suffering—is transformed into the path to enlightenment. It slowly becomes the method to greatly purify negative karma and accumulate extensive merit.

If you practice with bodhicitta like this, even when you have a happy life, attachment and pride do not arise. The mind doesn't become confused. All the time, whatever happens, the mind is happy because of practicing with bodhicitta. Therefore, even when listening to the teachings, at the beginning it is important to generate the determination to realize bodhicitta. This becomes the preparation for actually realizing bodhicitta.

I'll stop here.

“I'm going to listen to the commentary of the lamrim in order to reach enlightenment for the benefit of all kind mother sentient beings.”

THE THICK-SKULLED CANNOT BE SUBDUED BY THE DHARMA

By practicing correctly, you can cure diseases. Perhaps the doctor has given the patient so many kinds of the best possible medicine for their illness, but they just let them pile up on their pillow without ever taking them. They refuse to do what the doctor told them. Of course, they won't recover. That's not the doctor's fault and it's not the medicine's fault; it's the fault of the patient.

Perhaps you have listened to the virtuous friend, who is like a skillful doctor, as they have given many Dharma teachings, which are like medicine to cure the disease of the unsubdued mind. If you don't do the practice, no matter what profound and elaborate advice you have received, it will not benefit your mind at all. Your mind will not be transformed; it will not be subdued. That is not the mistake of the guru and it is not the mistake of the holy Dharma; it is the mistake of the disciple, you yourself.

As it is said in one of Buddha Shakyamuni's sutra teachings,

I have explained the extremely pure Dharma. If you do not perfectly practice it after listening, then it's like a patient carrying a big sack of medicine [without taking it.] It does not cure their disease and they do not recover.

What Buddha Shakyamuni is saying is that even though the patient has a big store of medicine from the doctor, as long as they don't take it they will never be cured, and similarly, if you don't practice the Dharma you have heard, no matter how many teachings you have taken, it doesn't benefit the mind.

There is a saying by the Kadampa geshe,

The evil ones can be subdued by the holy Dharma, but those who are thick-skulled are unable to be subdued by the holy Dharma.

Tibetans wrap butter in a leather pouch to stop it going rancid. Whereas they treat normal leather with butter to soften it, they don't treat this leather, so while the butter inside remains soft and edible, the hide it is wrapped in is like a football, solid and quite hard. We should not let our mind become like that.

What the Kadampa geshe are saying is that when evil people—like butchers who kill animals or soldiers who kill many hundreds of people—listen to the Dharma, their minds can be transformed through the Dharma. They can regret the negative karma they have accumulated and generate the strong wish to purify. There are many stories about people whose early life was very evil but, through meeting the Dharma, they have been able to transform their minds and become great holy beings.

For example, most of you can remember Milarepa's biography, how he led his early life. He used black magic to destroy the whole ground and the house, killing the guests who were upstairs and the horses who were tied to the posts downstairs. His mother planned that on the wedding day, while the guests were greatly excited, he should use black magic. Immediately afterwards the mother ran out. She put her old trousers on and went up to the roof and put out a banner that said some words like "victory." She was extremely happy to be able to get revenge.

The lama who taught Milarepa black magic was asked to do a puja. When he saw the people dying in the house, it may have changed his mind, so he advised Milarepa to go and see Marpa. That's how Milarepa met Marpa. After that he asked his guru to look after him and to give him both the means of living and the Dharma. Marpa's secret mother asked him which one he wanted. He could only receive one, either food or Dharma, but not both. He followed her advice and cared only for the Dharma, completely disregarding any hardship, such as wounds on his skin from his hard work. Despite all the difficulties, without any heresy to Marpa arising, he built the nine-story house. Marpa then told him to tear it down and put all the stones back where they were before. Then, Marpa told him to build the house again. This happened three times.

He was beaten many times by Marpa; he only received scoldings, never sweet words. Marpa refused to give him teachings for so many years, no matter how many times he asked, directly and through Marpa's secret mother. If Milarepa tried to attend any initiations given by the secret mother, Marpa would see him and make him leave. He spent many years like that.

He experienced many hardships to receive teachings from his guru, Marpa. All these things became his preliminary practices, like doing many hundreds of thousands of Vajrasattva mantras, many hundreds of thousands of prostrations, many hundreds of thousands of mandala offerings, and so forth. Unimaginable obscurations and negative karma were purified by this and he created unbelievable merit. Then one day, his guru Marpa, appearing as the deity Heruka, transformed the whole mandala and initiated Milarepa. By never breaking his guru Marpa's advice, by correctly following him, he achieved the complete path to enlightenment in one lifetime. Another way of saying this is he achieved Marpa.

There are many similar examples, such as Angulimala in Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's time, who killed 999 people but after receiving initiations and teachings, he became a great holy being in later life; his mind was transformed. Even nowadays, there are many meditators who became great pure Dharma practitioners in later life, the complete opposite to how their lives were earlier.

Although even evil beings can be subdued by the Dharma, the thick-skulled ones cannot be. Even if they read Dharma books, nothing goes in. They don't attempt to transform their mind, or they might think that what they hear is not right for their mind. Thinking like this, even if they listen to the teaching, the Dharma becomes a very dull subject, like having the same lunch every day. Dharma just becomes something to think about, not something to practice. No matter how many Dharma courses they attend, checking what new subjects there are for them, they never listen in order to benefit the mind. Or they wait to hear something they disagree with in order to argue about it, not listening to the teaching to benefit the mind, but waiting for the mistake!

If you have a thick skull like this, it is very difficult to be subdued by the holy Dharma. For example, because the thick skin of yaks and ox is very hard and tough, it is not flexible and cannot be used to make shoes and other things unless it is treated.

When I was young, I travelled in Tibet with my two teachers from the village where I was born up to the place where they were planning to go, a place called Pagri. I think it took several months. From early morning until night we walked and stopped on the road to take food. First we had to cross the snow mountains to go to Tibet from there. They were not as dangerous as other snow mountains, but there is one peak that was a little bit dangerous. One day, a Tibetan man let me ride his donkey. I think he felt sympathy for me. In the West, everybody in the family has their own special car to go to their job. In Tibet they have a horse!

They went quite fast. My teacher, a nun and another man had to walk with the entire heavy load on their backs: the Tibetan *chubas* I used to sleep in at night with thick hair inside, Tibetan blankets, firewood and food—they carried the whole load very carefully. They would walk all day on the hard road—and it was very hard—with this heavy load. My teachers were very worried because we were far ahead on horses and they couldn't walk fast because of the load and the pain in their knees. There was one animal skin which was bald in the center and had hairs all around. When I was a child I would pick it! It was full of holes and had no hair in the center. I was similar to the other young boys in this!

My mother says that I didn't get much milk from her because I left home when I was very young. She said something like that. I'm not sure. Anyway, they couldn't catch me. The road was very hard and they were quite old and had pain in their knees. They were very worried that I had been kidnapped by the Khampas. (The Sherpas called all Tibetans "Khampas.") Finally, I reached a Tibetan's house. But somehow my teachers recognized the house, even after it had become dark. This family were quite nice. Because we were exhausted, especially my teachers, the family offered us their own soup with dumplings made of barley flour. It was a pleasant night. The moon was dark and of course there was no electricity, but you could see by the fire. I didn't spend a long time like this.

What I'm trying to say is, when we stopped they had an animal skin which they put on the road and they had black tea. They put some tea in the soft skin and wrapped the skin around it. It's a very

simple way to make tea and it's very tasty. It's a very simple way to fix the stomach. If you don't know how to eat *tsampa* in bowls, then there's this way. Tibetan tea is very precious when traveling and because it's wrapped in the animal skin, nobody knows what it is, so it doesn't get stolen. We even used the skin to sit on.

Every day we had to walk there was so much pain in the two teachers' knees and, as the Chinese cars passed, I would think what an incredibly luxury it would be to travel in a car. As we were walking on the road, they held my hand out to get some money to go in the car. We begged a little and there was a little bit of food that came this way, but it was very little. The Tibetan people we met on the way would sometimes give wine and a little *tsampa*. They didn't know I was a monk.

To make the skin usable, Tibetans put butter on the very dry, thick skin which they work with their feet until it becomes soft and can be utilized to make shoes or whatever else they want to make. Similarly, after an evil person with an unsubdued mind listens to the Dharma their mind can be transformed. If they meditate on emptiness they can easily generate the realization of emptiness; if they meditate on bodhicitta they can easily generate the realization of bodhicitta. And the same with the thought of renunciation. Whichever meditation the mind is trained in, they can easily attain that realization.

On the other hand, the skin which covers the butter has been in contact with the butter for a long time, but no matter how much time it spends with the butter, it remains very hard. Like that, if you study the Dharma or if you live for a long time at the center or at the monastery where you hear the Dharma and see Dharma books every day, it can become kind of normal. It can become nothing special, nothing beneficial for the mind.

Worse than being thick-skulled about Dharma in general is being thick-skulled about the lamrim. If you become thick-skulled about other teachings, you might still be able to be subdued by the lamrim teachings, but if the mind becomes thick-skulled about the lamrim, it becomes very difficult. Then nothing can subdue your mind. Therefore, you have to be extremely careful at this point not to become thick-skulled about the lamrim.

First, you listen to the teaching you are going to practice. Do the listening first. Then you apply the teaching you have listened to, which means meditating on it. This is the best form of meditation practice, applying your mind to the teaching you have listened to. In that way, your mind becomes inseparable with the teaching. Listening, reflecting, meditating—you do them all together. If you are going to practice the Dharma, if you are going to follow the graduated path to enlightenment, it should be like this—listening, reflecting and meditating in this way.

The Dharma king, Dromtönpa, the embodiment of Chenrezig, said,

When I listen, I reflect and meditate.
When I reflect, I listen and meditate.
When I meditate, I listen and reflect.
I do all three together.
I am Kadampa who knows how to proceed
By visualizing the holy Dharma in the path, not set on the side.

Like the Kadampa geshees such as Dromtönpa, you should do all three together—listening, reflecting and meditating—and not setting them aside, making each separate. In that way you will be successful. You should take their way of studying the Dharma and practice like them.

THE FIFTH RECOGNITION: RECOGNIZING THE TATHAGATA IS A HOLY BEING

The definition of generating the fifth of the six recognitions is recognizing that the tathagata is a holy being.

That entails remembering the kindness of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. The Buddha himself actualized the path and achieved the result of the omniscient mind and then he explained the path and the result to sentient beings. Because he completely experienced within himself the teachings he revealed about the path and the result, what Shakyamuni Buddha taught is true, unbetrayable.

Other founders of spiritual traditions can reveal paths that can mislead sentient beings, that don't lead to true happiness. Such a path is misleading and such a founder betrays, but what Shakyamuni Buddha taught is true, unbetrayable, without the slightest hallucination, without the slightest mistake. He has revealed what must be practiced and what must be avoided with absolutely no mistakes or misunderstandings.

Through that, you know the meaning of a human life, how to make a life really meaningful, which is the immediate action, remembering that nonvirtuous actions are the cause of suffering and virtuous actions are the cause of happiness, remembering the actions that bring rebirth in lower realms and those that bring rebirth in the upper realms.

If you have just this much understanding, even though you don't have extensive Dharma wisdom, it is by the kindness of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. By his kindness he has revealed the teachings to sentient beings. If he did not reveal the teachings at that time, if he didn't show the twelve deeds, even if you were born as a human being, your position would be hopeless; you would be the same as an animal, completely ignorant, knowing nothing about how to make preparations for the happiness of future lives. Your mind would be completely dark, like the birds and animals, with not even an atom of Dharma wisdom, without being able to differentiate between virtue and nonvirtue, between the cause of happiness and suffering. When you don't know any different system, something that gives a sense of purpose to being born as a human being, when you are completely working for this life's happiness, you are just like the birds and animals. When you see yourself as important, when you work for your own pleasure, when there is nothing higher, then there is no special purpose to be born as a human; you are living just like a dumb animal.

There are even Buddhist countries without teachings on bodhicitta, where there is no opportunity for people to accumulate infinite merit by practicing bodhicitta. Even their thoughts about reality are completely misguided. They might have some idea about emptiness but not the ultimate emptiness only, that which cuts off the ignorance and grasping at the I, which is the root of samsara. They have no direct remedy to cut this off. Having met the Mahayana teachings, you have an incredible opportunity. You can study the teachings on bodhicitta and you can meditate on emptiness.

Lecture 18

November 26, 1980

PRECEPTS MOTIVATION: UNDERSTANDING SUFFERING GIVES ENERGY TO PRACTICE DHARMA

Numberless sentient beings have been experiencing the general and particular sufferings of the three lower realms from beginningless time. Like them, in this samsara, there is not one single suffering, not one single pleasure, that you have never experienced before. There is no greater pleasure in samsara that you have never experienced, and there is no greater suffering you have never experienced. There is not the smallest pleasure in samsara that you have never experienced, and there is not the smallest suffering you have never experienced. Whatever sufferings and whatever pleasures there are in samsara, you have experienced them numberless times from beginningless past lives.

This is due to following wrong conceptions. While there is no truly existent I on the five aggregates, you believe there is. While the body is impure, you grasp it as completely pure, clean. The pleasure of samsara is always only in the nature of suffering, but you grasp it as pure happiness. While all phenomena are impermanent, changing all the time, you grasp them as permanent.

If you could really contemplate this endless suffering of samsara deeply, thinking of all the suffering you have experienced and all you will have to experience, you would be unable to eat and unable to take even a cup of tea or a drop of water. You need to understand this at a very deep level, not just relaxing comfortably, just carelessly practicing the Dharma, not paying attention, not appreciating how the whole of your past experience in samsara has been suffering, not understanding the shortcomings of samsara, and not seeing the possibility of the end of suffering in samsara.

You might be able to talk about all suffering of samsara, but they are just words, without any feeling from the heart. If it is like that, if you have no strong energy to practice the Dharma, that is because you can't strongly see the shortcomings of samsara, how it is in the nature of suffering.

If you really did take the teachings on the shortcomings of samsara to your heart, it would feel like you were living in the middle of a fire, like being caught in an iron house consumed with flames, where you are oneness with the fire. Even though samsara is completely in the nature of suffering, due to ignorance, you are hallucinated and attached to samsaric things, which keep you continuously tied to samsara.

If you thought carefully about what is explained in the teachings, with that understanding, with that Dharma wisdom eye, how samsara is only in the nature of suffering, you wouldn't be able to stand it for even a minute or even a second, without doing something, without attempting to liberate yourself from it. There is no way you could just lie down and relax and not practice the Dharma.

Shakyamuni Buddha took ordination from his guru and then lived in the precepts. In that way, he actualized the path to enlightenment, became enlightened and enlightened numberless sentient beings. Even now he is guiding you on the path to enlightenment, planting a seed in your mind, by leading you to take the precepts, the cause of enlightenment.

We all have the same potential to complete the work for the self and for others that Shakyamuni Buddha had, so to not use this precious opportunity and practice the Dharma is extremely ignorant.

PRECEPTS MOTIVATION: ALL HAPPINESS COMES FROM OTHER SENTIENT BEINGS

Mother sentient beings are the pure field that you receive all your three-time happiness and perfections from. Therefore, mother sentient beings are so precious, so kind. That you are able to start to practice the Dharma is due to the kindness of mother sentient beings.

In everyday life, any comfort or pleasure you experience has been received by the kindness of mother sentient beings. There has never been even the tiniest comfort or pleasure that has not depended on the kindness of mother sentient beings.

Just as the Buddha is so kind, so precious, because you become enlightened only by relying on his teachings, so all mother sentient beings are so kind, so precious, because without them you have no object of your Dharma practice, no object to train and subdue your mind with. Because of the existence of sentient beings, you are able to practice the Dharma and develop a good heart. To do that you must rely on the object, sentient beings. To generate bodhicitta, you must rely on the object, sentient beings.

If sentient beings did not exist, there would be no object to practice the holy Dharma on, no object to train on, nothing you could use to subdue your mind. They support you; they help you develop a good heart; they help you develop patience.

Therefore, mother sentient beings are extremely precious, extremely kind, like the Buddha. They are much more precious, much more kind than all the buddhas because every buddha becomes enlightened by being born to sentient beings, by depending on sentient beings, therefore every buddha becomes enlightened due to the kindness of mother sentient beings.

THE EIGHT MAHAYANA PRECEPTS

Therefore think, “I should renounce the self, which is the originator of all my suffering, and I should cherish others, who are the origin of all my happiness. With this thought of cherishing others, I must therefore quickly attain enlightenment in order to bring all sentient beings to enlightenment. To be able to do this, I’m going to take the Mahayana ordination.”

There is no need to do prostrations; we’ve done them before. Now, put your palms together and do the visualizations. The lama who grants the ordination is in the aspect of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, surrounded by numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Also remember you have the opportunity to take and keep the ordination, not only for the happiness of yourself, but for the happiness of all the sentient beings. As Chenrezig and the previous tathagatas have all said, by taking the eight Mahayana precepts you can liberate all sentient beings from the suffering of samsara and lead them to enlightenment, therefore think, “I’m going to keep the eight precepts. Despite all the hardships, I’m going to voluntarily undergo whatever I need to in order to obtain happiness for all sentient beings.”

You can also feel you are taking the precepts to pacify the problems of the world, such as danger from wars, which cause life danger to billions of people. You can also do that, in order to prevent those dangers.

In previous times, the bodhisattva king made a law that all the people in the country took Mahayana ordination on special certain days. Everybody kept these precepts and the country became completely changed. There was much more enjoyment, things grew more and the rains came on time, raining when they needed rain and not raining when they didn't. There was never a shortage of food and there was so much peace in the country. People thought much less of harming others.

Last year, when there was fighting in Iran, some students were worried because a third world war might start, so they asked if there could be wrathful pujas done to prevent the war. In the end, the eight Mahayana precepts came out very beneficial, so they took the precepts by themselves for some time.

[Rinpoche gives the eight Mahayana precepts]

Lecture 19

November 27, 1980

PRECEPTS MOTIVATION: SAMSARA IS LIVING ON THE TIP OF A NEEDLE

In the *Sutra of Mindfulness* Guru Shakyamuni Buddha said,

Hell beings experience the most unbearable sufferings of the fire of Mara; hungry ghosts experience the most unbearable sufferings of hunger and thirst; animals experience the most unbearable sufferings of being eaten by others; worldly gods experience the suffering of living as if they are unconscious; and human beings experience the unimaginable sufferings such as shortage of the means of living. Living in samsara is like sitting on the tip of the needle; there can be no happiness at all.

By saying samsara is like sitting on the tip of a needle, Shakyamuni Buddha is showing us how being in samsara is nothing but suffering. As long as you are in samsara, there is not the slightest moment of pure happiness. You must continuously suffer one of the three sufferings: the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change or pervasive compounded suffering.

The second suffering, the suffering of change, refers to what we think of as samsaric pleasure. Say, you are feeling hungry. When you start to eat, in the beginning it seems like a pleasurable experience, but if you continue to eat, it will cause discomfort and then even lead to the danger of death. So, while the first moment seems like pleasure, it is still suffering. As you eat, the pleasure of eating diminishes and it soon changes into the first suffering, the suffering of suffering.

The second suffering can also be related to pervasive compounded suffering, because it came from that. That is what it said in the sutra teachings.

PRECEPTS MOTIVATION: REPAYING THE KINDNESS OF MOTHER SENTIENT BEINGS

Think, “With this body, qualified with the eight freedoms and ten richnesses, I must be liberated from this samsara. It’s not sufficient that I, myself alone, am liberated from samsara. There is not one sentient being who has not been my mother, who has not been kind to me in four ways, who has not looked after me with the four great kindnesses.”

There is not one sentient being you haven’t called “mother,” you haven’t looked into her face, you haven’t put your fingers in her mouth, and made tears come from her eyes. There is not one sentient being you haven’t completely taken refuge in, not one hell being, hungry ghost, animal, human being, god or demigod. Each sentient being has given up their life for you countless times.

They have looked after you with each of the four kindnesses—giving you this body, protecting your life, leading you on the worldly path such as giving you an education, and bearing hardships and creating negative karma so you can have comfort and happiness. For you, they have given up their lives numberless times.

Therefore, even if it costs you your life just to obtain a single temporal pleasure for even one sentient being, it is worth it; it still cannot repay their great kindness. Even if you have to give up your life equaling the number of atoms of this earth for one mother sentient being, still it is nothing; it is still insufficient to repay their kindness.

However, what you are attempting to do now by practicing the Dharma, by taking and keeping vows, is not just to try to obtain some temporal pleasure for one sentient being, but to bring each and every sentient being liberation from samsara and full enlightenment. How extremely worthwhile this is. No matter how many hardships you must endure for no matter how long—for numberless eons even—when it is the hardship of practicing the Dharma it is supremely worthwhile.

Think, “Even if I have to give up my life numberless times to be able to lead all sentient beings to enlightenment, I myself must achieve enlightenment, the omniscient mind, therefore I’m going to take the Mahayana ordination.”

Visualize Shakyamuni Buddha, surrounded by the guru granting the ordination, who is Shakyamuni Buddha in essence and aspect, and numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas. This should be done from the very beginning. When you offer a mandala, from the very beginning, you should start with that visualization.

[Rinpoche gives the ordination]

ACTIONS TO BE AVOIDED AFTER TAKING PRECEPTS

Having taken the eight Mahayana precepts, make the determination to avoid specific negative karmas, those committed in relationship with the precious, sublime Dharma, such as avoiding the holy Dharma. As I mentioned before, because you think of yourself as a Mahayana Buddhist, if for that reason you criticize the Theravada, that is avoiding the Dharma. Or, of the four divisions of tantra, if you practice Maha-anuttara Yoga Tantra and you are disrespectful of Kriya Tantra, putting it down, saying it does not explain the nature of the path, that is avoiding the Dharma. And similarly, if you say your tradition, such as the Gelug, is superior, and criticize the others, that is avoiding the Dharma. To criticize any aspect of Buddhism means you have no knowledge of what refuge means, you have not thought carefully about the very basic practices.

Then, you need to treat Dharma texts respectfully, not putting them on a bed, on the ground or in an unclean place such as the cushion you sit on, without putting a cloth between the text and the surface to protect it. You should not carry a text and your meditation cushion in the same hand. You should not use a Dharma book as a seat. You should not step over a Dharma text. That is avoiding the Dharma. That accumulates negative karma through the ignorance of not knowing karma. Even if you know these things and still do them, that is carelessness and is also avoiding the Dharma.

THE ROOT OF ALL HAPPINESS IS KARMA

Nothing can escape from karma. As is mentioned in the lamrim, in the outline of karma, just as taking refuge is the holy door to enter into the teachings, generating faith in karma is the root of all happiness and perfections.

The lamrim is divided into three levels, the graduated path of the lower capable being, the middle capable being and the higher capable being. The goal of the lower capable being is the happiness of future lives, and the method to obtain that is explained. It has two outlines: refuge and karma. Refuge is the holy door into the teachings and karma is the root of all happiness and perfections.

The subject of refuge is vital because it is very important to know the qualities of the Buddha—his holy body, his holy speech and his holy mind—the qualities of Dharma and the qualities of Sangha. The more you know about the biography of the Buddha, the historical Buddha Shakyamuni, the founder of the present teachings, the more you will see the qualities of Dharma, the Lesser Vehicle arya path and the qualities of the arya bodhisattva's path, the Paramitayana. These are explained in the teachings by the Buddha himself and by the great pandits, those learned lamas who achieved great attainments and completed the experience of the path by studying these scriptures.

You cannot become enlightened without depending on the scriptures. If you are already enlightened, if your mind is already omniscient, then, of course, it's not necessary to do a meditation course! It's not necessary to go all over the place searching for something, doing different trips.

None of us are enlightened, none of us have any experience of the path, not the slightest realization, not even a general quality that ordinary people have, such as correct conduct. When you get sick, you can't see the causes of your sickness and you have to go to a doctor and have X-rays and tests with machines, checking your *pipi* and blood and things like that. You have to take refuge in the doctor. If you were enlightened and had knowledge, why would you need to go there?

There's no other way to understand the qualities of the Dharma and Sangha. It's not your experience, so what else are you going to do but take refuge?

Unless you do that, because you don't understand karma, all your life you are going to ignore it, just forget it. Maybe you think because you don't understand karma, it doesn't apply to you, so you're not worried. You don't let the Dharma disturb you! Anyway, I'm joking!

What can you do? Since your mind is like this, what method is left in order to understand karma, in order to understand the cause of suffering and happiness, and the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha? How are you going to understand it without depending on the scriptures, without somebody introducing it? You need to depend on explanations.

I'm not saying you should have blind faith in every scripture. However, you should think that this is your existence and it is extremely important to understand, in the context of your own life, what makes you happy and what brings you suffering. And, depending on that understanding, you need to understand what makes others' lives happy or suffering, and so know how to benefit them. This all depends on having a good understanding of this subject, karma. This is an extremely important point to know.

If you refuse to believe in karma, that is exactly the same as not believing in what you were taught in school, like in geography you were taught about the different continents or how science explains the evolution of the world. Everything you learn in school has come from people like scientists explaining things and writing them down in books, and then you believe them. They say the world is

round, it has seven continents, people evolved from monkeys—that sort of thing—and you believe it. Where do monkeys come from? [Students' replies are inaudible] Australia?

I remember a book by a psychologist, I don't remember the title, where he said that all beings came from a water bubble in the sea! Of course, I don't think it was a water bubble. If it was, there would be no problem. Anyway, the conclusion is that there are all these stories from scientists, stories from your parents about their parents—your grandfather, your grandmother, and *their* parents, people you've never seen—and there are books and stories about their lives, how they did this and did that. It's written down and you read it and believe it. And you believe what scientists say about the world.

How can you believe all these things that are written down and then read about karma and say you don't believe it? That's something to think about. When you read about something like how disrespecting holy objects creates very heavy negative karma, even though you might not believe in it, it still applies. If, due to ignorance, you avoid the Dharma, you will suffer whether you believe in karma or not.

The reason I'm saying that karma is the root of all happiness and perfections, including enlightenment, is to show that you must protect your karma. All happiness depends on protecting your karma. The point I'm trying to say is karma is the root of all happiness, all perfections, including ultimate happiness, enlightenment.

It comes down to two things. If you don't want to work for other sentient beings, of course, that is something else, but if you want to do perfect work for other sentient beings, you must attain omniscience, which means attaining the whole path, which depends on renouncing all negative karma and doing only virtuous actions. And all that depends on taking refuge and understanding karma and protecting your karma. That is the foundation.

To renounce nonvirtuous actions you must know what they are and the results they will bring if you practice them; how you will lock yourself into suffering and cause other beings to suffer. It also causes others to create negative karma in return and so never be liberated from suffering.

Even if you don't care about yourself, if you are careless about accumulating nonvirtue, you must see how it disturbs others. Not only do you not purify your own negative karma and create more, it also causes others to act negatively in retaliation for your actions and so accumulate negative karma themselves. Continuing to collect negative karma, your mind becomes more obscured with ignorance and you cannot do unmistakable, perfect work for other sentient beings. That's how you disturb other sentient beings.

Even if you're not concerned about your own suffering and happiness, even if you don't care about virtue and nonvirtue, by thinking of others, those you deal with every day, you'll see that you depend on others. You receive all your happiness from others—your food, your clothing, your job, your reputation, everything that brings you happiness is dependent on other sentient beings. Because every comfort and pleasure, even your means of living, comes completely from them, if you don't consider others, it's a very low, disgusting mind to have, a very upsetting mind.

I don't know where it happened, maybe in the West, but there was a mother cat with four kittens. She died and a mother dog took over caring for them. The four kittens were drinking the mother dog's milk. Somehow the mother dog was taking care of them even though she was not a cat. Even

though they are physically so different, the mother dog was feeding the four kittens. Unbelievable things like that can happen, even with animals. It had nothing to do with the four kittens being at risk, but she saw they needed care and she fed them with her milk, despite not being a cat. [*Student*: Did they start barking?] Maybe you can check!

If even animals can do this, why shouldn't we humans be much more concerned with caring for others. We should have the thought, the will, to benefit other sentient beings. So, even if you don't care about karma for yourself, you should be concerned for the wellbeing of others, you should consider the best way to benefit them. And this whole thing comes down to karma; it all depends on karma, on renouncing nonvirtue and practicing virtue.

The conclusion is that you should clearly understand what is virtue and what is nonvirtue. I gave the example in relation to holy objects.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

[There is a general discussion about gold, how it came to the world, how it is found—something like that—but virtually inaudible.]

Rinpoche: How is possible to find gold on this earth?

Student: Well, the best way to find it is to dig for it, either that or go to Lama's house. There's usually some there!

Rinpoche: There are times when you can find gold when you look for it and times when you can't?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: So, there are times when there is gold and times when there is no gold at a certain place? What about people who have a hard time finding gold in that place where there is gold?

Student: After it's been removed, how difficult it is to find it there?

Rinpoche: But why couldn't people find gold anymore in that place?

Student: Because there was no more gold there.

Rinpoche: Yes, but why did those people go to that place at a time when there was no gold?

Student: Because they were too late.

Rinpoche: Why were they too late?

Student: Either they were born too late or ...

Rinpoche: Why were they born too late?

Student: I'm sure it has something to do with their karma!

Rinpoche: The people who were born too late, it depends on their karma? Why were they born at a time when there was no gold in that place? I'm not talking about karma; it's nothing about karma.

Student: They were born too late because their parents were not interested in living that place.

Rinpoche: What? No, what I'm saying is, they were born when there was gold, but couldn't find the place. There were also people born when there was no gold in the place, so of course they could not find any gold in that place. What is the cause for this? Does there have to be a cause or not?

Student: The parents were already busy having children when the gold was around, but the children came later. They couldn't have come at the same time.

Rinpoche: Yes, but why weren't those children born before, when there was plenty of gold?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: I think it comes to the same point. It's not normal to think like this in the world, so it's hard to believe, but actually it's the same business. If you think carefully about something, it comes to the same thing. When you don't have the karma for something to happen, it won't. If you buy a car or something and it breaks down or is stolen, it's the same thing. So many people have a difficult time. They buy things to be happy but they don't have enough time to enjoy them. There are many people like this.

Student: I've read that in this world nothing happens randomly. There is a normal way; there are apparently many certain limitations, many conditions that apply.

Rinpoche: Yes, I understand. If there were no karma, anything could happen. Without considering karma, even if you wish something good to happen, there are conditions. Say, for example, when you see other people enjoying having a car, you also want one, so you take on a nighttime job to earn enough money to get one. It takes many years to earn the money but finally you have enough. However, before you even have a chance to buy it, you die! For others, having a car is the normal thing, but you haven't created the karma for this to happen, to be able to get the money, buy it and then enjoy it. You didn't create the cause, therefore you cannot experience the result.

The whole thing depends on your karma. If there's karma, even though it's a not normal thing, the result happens. If there is a very particular karma, that particular result comes. Even the everyday normal things in your life cannot happen without having created the karma to experience them. Whether you experience happiness or suffering, whether you experience what seems normal or not, it all depends on karma. For example, it's not normal in the world for people to grow horns on the head, but there are people who have them. Recently in China, one person grew real horns on his head, about three or four inches long.

WHATEVER YOU DO, DO IT WITH BODHICITTA

Khunu Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen said,

If you are going to start something, start it with bodhicitta.
If you want to think about something, think of it with bodhicitta.
If you want to examine something, examine it with bodhicitta.
If you want to watch something, watch it with bodhicitta.¹⁷

Khunu Lama is advising us to practice as he practiced, to practice bodhicitta. This is what he himself did; they are not mere words, not just dry words without experience, without the practice.

His advice is that in your everyday life, whatever actions of body, speech and mind you are going to do, whatever action you are going to start, start it with bodhicitta. The very first thing you should remember is bodhicitta, the good heart, the wish to benefit others. By remembering this, you then start the action.

From morning when you wake up until nighttime, until the very last action of the day before going to bed, you should begin every action with bodhicitta. If you are able to practice in this way, as Khunu Lama advised, the whole action becomes holy Dharma, the cause of happiness of this life and the cause of happiness of future lives.

This not only becomes the method to liberate yourself from samsara, having a bodhicitta motivation also becomes the cause to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of others. When you begin an action with bodhicitta and do it for the benefit of all sentient beings, because other sentient beings are not just hundreds, but billions and billions—an infinite number—the merit you accumulate is infinite. For example, we are keeping the eight Mahayana precepts for the sake of the other sentient beings who are infinite, therefore, for the duration of the vows, we continuously collect infinite merit.

No action begun with bodhicitta is possessed with an atom of the self-cherishing thought. Every action is sincere, pure; it's not just from the mouth. It's not just saying, "I'm practicing Dharma for the sake of others," without any sincerity behind it.

Khunu Lama advises that if you want to examine something, do it with bodhicitta. Unless you do this, in your meditation sessions and especially in the break time, it is so easy for all kinds of superstitions to arise in your mind. If you let them, they will unsettle your mind, and you will spend hours following them. In the gumpa or back in your room, even if you are completely alone, your mind is still so busy projecting your superstitious thoughts, like having your own television in the room. The television transmits the station of the unsubdued, unsettled mind, the ignorant mind that grasps at the I, the minds of attachment, anger and so forth. With all these programs that are transmitted from the television of the unsubdued mind, all kinds of pictures come into your mind.

You can spend hours and hours, even the whole day, like this. You can sit on a chair in the open air, unthinking, forgetting to eat. The result is a mind that is completely unsettled. After several hours following the disturbed thoughts in this way, you go back to your room, depressed and unsettled. This is how you waste your time, your perfect human rebirth.

¹⁷ V. 98.

The same thing can happen even when you are trying to meditate on the graduated path to enlightenment. You can be doing a meditation session in your room, using your bell, dorje and damaru, and other people will believe you are doing something very worthwhile, but it is the same television station. I'm joking.

So much time gets wasted like this. You get closer and closer to the death, without doing any preparations for the happiness of future lives. That's why Khunu Lama says if you examine something you should examine it with bodhicitta. If you want to think about something, sit down and think about it with bodhicitta. Think about others with compassion, instead of thinking all the time, day and night, about your own problems.

If you have a problem with relationships, with a friend or partner, you just cause yourself misery by repeatedly dwelling on it, on and on, the whole day and night. You are lost to that; your whole attention is on that, even though it's insignificant. There is nothing to worry about; there is no point in worrying about it, but still you exaggerate it, creating a bigger and bigger problem the more you think about it. There is even the danger that by obsessing about it you can become crazy, or you worry about it so much it becomes the condition for cancer to happen. Your worry causes your body to become unhealthy.

What's the use of this? What's the use of creating all these hassles? Why do you have to have all these worries when you could be separated from everything at any time, even this minute? No matter how many friends you have—even if every human being on the planet were your friend—no matter how many possessions you have, if you were to die now, at this moment, you would be able to take nothing and nobody with you.

This is the advice you should give your mind. Even if you can't convince yourself that you will definitely die today, at least think that you are surer to die today than to remain alive. And think about what you can carry with you into all your future lives if you were to die at this moment. There is nothing worthwhile you can take with you except the virtue you have created; there's nothing except the holy Dharma.

After death, there are only two places to go; there is no third alternative. It is definite you will be born in one of two realms: either the upper realm or the lower realm. When you think about that, you have to remember that the cause of the upper realm is virtue and the cause of the lower realm is nonvirtue. When you have that set in your mind, whenever some nonvirtuous thought starts to arise, that thought automatically stops it. Whatever meaningless action you were about to do is automatically stopped. It gets transformed into the holy Dharma. Because you see anything you do for this life is utterly meaningless, worrying about it, fearing you will lose it has no essence, and it is immediately stopped. Your actions are transformed into virtue, and the thought to practice Buddhadharma arises. You should always give advice to your mind like this, especially thinking of the sufferings of other sentient beings.

Remember to generate compassion, to think about bodhicitta. Think how you can enlighten all other sentient beings, instead of thinking that you yourself are the most important among all the numberless sentient beings. This stops you thinking that your happiness is the most important thing and whatever happens to others—the suffering or happiness they experience—doesn't matter. When you think, "I am most important; my happiness is most important," you become careless of others, seeing them as kind of insignificant. Instead of this, you should give up this attitude and

remember others instead, those others, whose number is unimaginable and whose suffering is hundreds of thousands of times greater than yours. You ought to remember them, by looking at them and meditating on bodhicitta, thinking, “How quickly can I lead all these sentient beings to every happiness?” Instead of being concerned only with your own happiness, not finding friends or not having enough friends, not having this, not having that—instead of counting all your problems like reciting a mantra, think, “When can I bring all sentient beings to every happiness?”

If you must worry, it is good to change the object of your worry. Instead of only worrying about yourself, switch the object, and worry about others’ suffering. To be able to quickly lead sentient beings to enlightenment completely depends on how quickly you generate bodhicitta.

Therefore, whenever you want to think about something, think about bodhicitta. Whenever you want to examine something, examine it with bodhicitta; whenever you want to watch something, watch it with bodhicitta. From morning until night, you should watch your mind constantly. Without watching your mind, there is no way to practice the holy Dharma. Without awareness of the mind, there is no way to transform your actions into Dharma, no way to practice bodhicitta. As Khunu Lama advised, if you’re going to watch something, watch it with bodhicitta.

You can watch anything; you can be mindful of anything. “Now I’m eating, now I’m putting my spoon on the plate, now the food is going in the mouth, now it’s being chewed, now it’s going inside, now it’s reaching the stomach.” “Now I’m working.” “Now the thorn has gone inside in my flesh.” “Now attachment has arisen for that object and I am stealing it.”

Somebody who steals has to be very mindful. If you wanted to steal something from your boss, for instance, you would have to watch your boss carefully for a long time, seeing where he is, seeing whether he’s asleep or not. Then, you have to know how to take the object you want, whether it’s a hamburger or a precious jewel. You have to recognize where it is and, after you’ve grabbed it, how to make your escape. You have to be mindful—whether it’s better to run down the stairs, jump out the window or sneak out the side door. There’s a lot to be mindful of.

Anyway, the conclusion is that mindfulness alone is not sufficient. When the thief goes to a house to steal, he has the thought to go to stealing. You can be mindful killing something. “Oh, now I’m killing a goat.” You might kind of feel the action is nonvirtue, but that doesn’t stop you doing the action.

Just watching the mind and being aware of whatever arises is not sufficient—“Oh, now it’s anger arising. Now it’s pride arising”—just being aware is not sufficient as long as you don’t practice the remedy of whatever has arisen. Watching the mind alone cannot pacify the unsubdued mind. Especially for somebody like me, whose mind is very untrained in thought transformation, very unsubdued, to just be aware of what is happening in the mind is not sufficient without practicing the remedy. You can be aware pride is happening in the mind and simply continue to follow that pride, continue to create negative karma, even though you are practicing awareness.

To make it short, you not only have to be aware of what’s happening in the mind, but also watch to see whether there is the thought to benefit other sentient beings or not. Is whatever happening in your mind first produced by the thought of cherishing others or of cherishing yourself? Always check whether there is any bodhicitta. “Am I separate from the thought of cherishing others?” Then, watch the mind and see whatever action you do; watch the mind again and again.

For example, if you are doing a sadhana, you may have begun with a bodhicitta motivation. Check whether you are just saying the words or whether, besides the words, you are genuinely trying to generate bodhicitta. Is your mind mixing with the thought of bodhicitta? And even if you have started like that, you should check at different times, like in the middle of the sadhana, to see whether you still have that motivation. You might find you are still doing the sadhana, but now it's purely for your own happiness. Then, you must realize that as long as you do the sadhana only for yourself, that is nonvirtue and it leads to the hell realm. It is the same if you are reciting mantras with self-cherishing.

It can happen that you start with the thought to benefit others but after a while this disappears. You start with some merit but then that fades, and although you are still doing the sadhana, the self-cherishing thought has completely overwhelmed the mind. Then, you must remember sentient beings again, remember you are doing the sadhana in order to benefit other sentient beings. This is the practice of watching the bodhicitta at the beginning, middle and end of the sadhana. It is similar to other instances of watching the mind in general but here you are specifically watching for bodhicitta. If you practice like this, watching for the bodhicitta motivation in what you do, this is the best method to stop the mind from being separated from bodhicitta.

In the thought training teachings, there's a requesting prayer:

May I never separate from the practice of the two bodhicittas for even a second.

This is the way to practice. Praying like this to Chenrezig all the time, as Khunu Lama advised, whatever you pray for will be fulfilled.

I think it's pipi time.

If you can practice like this, as Khunu Lama advised, your mind will become more and more transformed, into more compassion, into the nature of love. Then, you will be able to generate bodhicitta in this present body. You will have fulfilled having been born as a human being; then it becomes extremely worthwhile. But it is still very worthwhile even if you can't do that in this present body; you can still do it in the next life, or in two lives, becoming enlightened without taking much time.

To gradually go through Lama Tsongkhapa's *Hymns of Experience* point by point shows you how to live with bodhicitta. Khunu Lama said that by reciting the prayer, the words of the bodhicitta advice, you can plant an imprint in your mind, some seed of bodhicitta. In that way, it can benefit yourself and others.

***HYMNS OF EXPERIENCE* COMMENTARY: GURU DEVOTION**

I'll read two more verses from Lama Tsongkhapa's text.

Then, the root of creating well the auspicious conditions
For all the excellences of this and future lives
Is to rely properly with effort both in thought and action

Upon the sublime spiritual mentor who reveals the path.

Seeing this we should never forsake him even at the cost of life
And please him with the offering of implementing his words.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.¹⁸

The next verse shows the way of following the guru. It starts with the Tibetan word *den*, which joins it with the previous subject. I don't think it's in the English here. What *den* means is first you should understand all the qualities of the lamrim—the general qualities and the particular qualities—as well as the founder and all the lineage, all these things, and you should understand how this is so precious. Then you should follow the guru's advice, correctly following it by putting effort into the virtuous actions the guru advises.

It is a dependent arising. This is the literal translation of the text, which makes great sense. The root of all the causes that produce happiness is the practice of relying on positive actions, of following the advice of the virtuous friend who reveals the path.

That dependent arising is the cause of every happiness, of all the perfections, of all the goodness, of this life's happiness and future lives' happiness—every happiness and perfection, every goodness beyond this life, up to enlightenment. That dependent arising is the great means. The texts say, “The root of the well-arranged dependent arising is correctly following the holy guru.” “Well-arranged dependent arising” means it is the cause of the multitude experiences of happiness and perfections. Why is it called a dependent arising? Because you create this cause just by depending on the holy, virtuous friend. By depending on this cause, correctly following the holy guru, you receive the result, the multitude experiences of all happiness, of all goodness of this life and beyond this life, up to enlightenment.

In the past, even the buddhas have given up their lives and offered practice in accordance with the advice of the holy guru. If you practice like this, you too will gain liberation and enlightenment. Here, Lama Tsongkhapa said that he himself practiced like this and that we too should do it. We should pray to him, “Please grant me blessings to guide me to be able to practice like you.” For my mind, this is much more effective, because from the practice of guru devotion the result definitely comes.

This is a very brief explanation of the verses dealing with the practice of correctly devoting to the guru. I hope to be able to talk later on the way of meditating on this, the essence of following the guru in thought and action.

PURIFYING NEGATIVE ACTIONS TOWARD THE DHARMA

When you take refuge in the Buddhadharma, the particular obscuration, the negative karma, that you purify is avoiding the holy Dharma, the particular negative karmas accumulated in the relationship with the holy objects, such as seeing the scriptures of the holy Dharma as merely material objects to make a profit from. Besides never doing that, you should not disrespect holy Dharma texts, as I

¹⁸ Vv. 11 and 12.

mentioned yesterday, such as not putting holy texts on the floor or on a cushion without having something underneath to make them a little bit higher.

You should also not put things on the top of the holy texts, such as your mala or your glasses, unless you have no choice. That is also disrespecting the holy texts. Nor should you sell Dharma texts in order to get food to eat. To live on the money of selling Dharma texts is very heavy negative karma; it causes your obscurations to become much heavier and thicker.

Because you live with Dharma texts and other holy objects, unless you are very aware of these particular negative karmas, they are very easy to do. Unless you practice awareness all the time, it is difficult to distinguish what is right and what is wrong in relation to holy objects and therefore very easy to accumulate these particular negative karmas.

There's a story of a great practitioner of Chenrezig who went for a meal at a benefactor's house with four other monks. The family had a text of the Prajnaparamita in one hundred thousand verses, collected in twelve volumes, which they had to sell because their wealth had degenerated. After they had done that, they realized it was wrong, so they invited the yogi and the monks in order to confess.

After the meal, the yogi had great pain during the night. When he examined it, he saw that there was a syllable AH going around inside his body causing the pain. When he called to Chenrezig, asking him why he was in such pain, Chenrezig told him that it was wrong for him to eat that meal, because the food was obtained through money received from selling the Dharma text. Chenrezig said, "Because you have thinner obscurations, you are experiencing the result right away. With those other four monks, however, the reason that nothing is happening with them now is because after this life they are going to be reborn in the hell realm." Chenrezig told him to purify this by writing the entire text in gold.

There are many other stories similar to this on the subject of karma. I have a cousin who was in Kathmandu, but I think he has now left for Lhasa. While he was living in Kathmandu, most of his life he made money by selling Dharma texts and statues. After reading the texts on creating negative karma with holy objects, it became very difficult to go to his house. Sometimes, I had to go with Lama Yeshe. Of course, it's customary that when you go to a Tibetan house, especially if you are a monk, they have to offer you something, even though that is not the reason for going there. So that was the most difficult part. He served tea but, for my mind, it made a big difference. Taking one drop of that tea creates strong negative karma whereas not drinking that one drop of tea, it doesn't happen. It was like climbing Mt. Everest. It was very hard to drink even one drop of tea, because I could see where it would lead. Therefore, I more or less gave up going to his house. Before, we used to go there to make pujas. He must have invited other lamas, later.

One time he came out with fruit and tea in a thermos. Several times, he insisted, but I kept saying that I had had a lot of tea that morning! He finally thought it was strange, that maybe there was something wrong with this tea. I thought of throwing the fruit in the forest after I left. When I make observations, I am often very scared to be invited to somebody's house, especially to a Sherpa's house. There are many Sherpas who are businesspeople. If I go, I soon run away, scared, onto the road!

When you do the visualization, imagine all this gets purified. All the general obscurations, your negative karmas and the particular negative karmas that are accumulated from beginningless lifetimes with the holy objects and the precious holy Dharma, by you and by all other sentient beings, are all completely purified.

When you do the visualization, imagine yellow nectar beams coming into you, and the qualities of your scriptural understanding and realizations increase. Particularly, the true path and true cessation of suffering are generated in your mind and in the minds of all other sentient beings.

You can also think that the whole lamrim path, from guru devotion up to enlightenment, is generated within your mind and within the minds of all sentient beings.

PURIFYING NEGATIVE ACTIONS TOWARD THE SANGHA

When you recite the line taking refuge in the Sangha, at that time you purify the general obscurations, the negative karma, and the particular negative karmas accumulated from beginningless past lives in the relationship with the Sangha, such as causing disunity among the Sangha, causing disunity among a group of four. That negative karma is very heavy. It can be more than four, and it can be a monk or nun or a lay person; whoever has achieved the true path, the true cessation of suffering, and has become an arya being, that person is a full Sangha. It doesn't have to be just four members.

The conventional Sangha are four pure monks or nuns, four pure members of the Sangha. From the point of view of the conventional or all-obscuring truth, the conventional Sangha is any group of four precious, sublime members of the Sangha. If you cause them to become divided, you create the karma of having caused disunity among the Sangha.

It is said that in a place where there has been disunity among the Sangha, even if you meditated there for twelve years you wouldn't be able to attain any realizations. It's like that place is burned; it has very bad vibrations. It's kind of like a dead place. Some monasteries are like this. You feel like this when you go there.

Therefore, it is emphasized how extremely important it is that the Sangha are harmonious. If they are not harmonious, the qualities of the scriptural understanding, the realizations, cannot be developed. They can neither benefit that much nor preserve the teachings.

Then, there is taking without permission things that have been offered to the Sangha. This happens. For instance, for a manager of a monastery, the one who looks after the offerings, such as the food and robes, it is easy to commit this negative karma, taking away things belonging to the Sangha.

If somebody makes, say, a hundred-dollar offering to the community of Sangha, and the manager, because he's a friend of the benefactor, tells him that that's too much, that they don't need that much, and then gives the benefactor back a dollar or five dollars, even though it's done with compassion, it's wrong compassion. That's taking what has been offered to the Sangha. Or if they offer a cake and you take a thin slice and give the rest back to them, thinking the person will be pleased, that is kind of wrong compassion. If you don't offer to the Sangha exactly what the

benefactor offered, if you only offer half and the other half disappears, then you are using things belonging to the community of the Sangha without permission.

There is also the particular negative karma of criticizing the Sangha, such as saying, “These monks do nothing. They just eat a lot and sleep a lot. That’s all they do. While we have to work very hard, they only eat.” If you make a general statement like this, “These monks do this ...” it covers all the monks there are in the country. If there are thousands or tens of thousands, however many Sangha there are, you have criticized them all.

I think in Thailand, Sri Lanka, and countries like that, where there are a great many Sangha, a lot of people have a very limited view when they look at the Sangha; they don’t completely see what they do. The work the Sangha do is to hold the precepts, the thirty-six precepts of the novice monks and the two hundred and fifty precepts of the fully ordained monks. They are very hard to keep. It’s very difficult to face your delusions but, if you don’t face them, there is no way to keep the vows. Keeping the thirty-six or the two hundred and fifty vows that the Sangha hold is actually the hardest work because you have to overcome the unsubdued mind, and that can’t be done without bearing many hardships, without fighting hard. It’s the hardest work but it’s the most beneficial.

Whether there are teachings or not in the country depends on whether there are Sangha keeping their vows purely. If there are monasteries in a country and if there are Sangha living in the precepts, then there are teachings in that country. It is generally defined in another way, mainly, the Vinaya teachings.

But people in those countries, those who do not understand much Dharma, who can’t see how precious it is living in the precepts, can criticize, “Those monks do nothing.” They just believe in the external appearance, completely believing that all the Sangha do is eat and sleep. They don’t see the hardest part of the Sangha’s work, dealing with their delusions, the work they do on their anger, the work they do on their attachment. If they did not face up to those delusions, they couldn’t become a monk or nun. Their vows would definitely degenerate. Depending on how much somebody can face and subdue the unsubdued mind, they are more able to keep their precepts. That shows how hard it is. They are doing the hardest work.

When you take refuge in the Sangha, all these particular karmas—causing disunity in the Sangha, taking things that belong to Sangha without permission and criticizing the Sangha—are completely purified.

When you do the visualization, you are increasing in your own mind the qualities the Sangha have, the qualities the protectors have, the four actions: the pacifying action, the developing action, the controlling action and the wrathful action. Then, the qualities that the dakas and dakinis have, the transcendental wisdom of nondual bliss and voidness. You are increasing the qualities that the arhats have, all the qualities explained in the teachings of the qualities of the arya beings of the Lesser Vehicle. You are increasing in your own mind the qualities of the bodhisattvas on each of the five paths: the meditator on the path of merit, the meditator on the path of preparation, the meditator on the right-seeing path and the meditator on the path of meditation. All their qualities, their lifespan, their fortune, and so forth, as well as the scriptural understanding and realizations and the particular qualities of the Sangha are generated within your mind and within the mind of all other sentient beings.

THE THREE STAGES OF THE REFUGE PRACTICE: PURIFYING, ENTERING AND BEING GUIDED

There's one thing I left out before. When you recite, at that time as the nectar beams flow out, you should concentrate on them coming from the texts held by the merit field. They are the embodiment of the realization of the merit field, and so nectar flows from them and enters you and all other sentient beings, in body and mind.

When you say, "I take refuge in the Sangha," at that time, you mainly concentrate on the bodhisattvas, then the arhats, the dakas, the dakinis and the protectors. You mainly concentrate on the nectar beams flowing from them.

The refuge practice comes in three stages: purifying, entering and being guided. With the first stage you are purified. Then, the second is entering, which means the blessings, the qualities of the Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha have entered you and you have received them. Then, with the third one, being guided, you should think, "Now I'm completely under the guidance of the Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha." You should make this determination.

Reciting this, you should remember or meditate on this meaning, which combines the two practices: refuge and generating bodhicitta. Even in this short prayer, if you know how to do it, if you have an understanding of the complete teaching of the lamrim, while you are saying this prayer, you can do a direct meditation on the whole lamrim. The whole lamrim is contained in this prayer.

When you recite the next lines, "Due to the merits of having practiced charity and the other perfections, may I achieve enlightenment to benefit sentient beings," you should think how you must achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, and therefore you are never going to renounce bodhicitta. Think, "Until I achieve enlightenment, I'm going to practice bodhicitta."

Reciting this three times, the merit field, the objects of refuge, are extremely pleased. Your root guru, in the aspect of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, is extremely pleased that you have generated bodhicitta in order to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. The guru is extremely pleased that you have vows to practice until you achieve enlightenment, never renouncing bodhicitta.

At your guru's heart is Vajradhara, Dorje Chang. At the heart of Vajradhara is the syllable HUM, the embodiment of the dharmakaya. Then, a replica of Vajradhara, who is Guru Shakyamuni Buddha appearing in a different form, descends to you and absorbs into you, and you become one with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha.

Then, from all the pores your holy body—you who have become one with Shakyamuni Buddha—beams are emitted, and on the tip of all the beams are Guru Shakyamuni Buddhas. They come to the head of every sentient being, who are all purified. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, who is seated above their crowns, melts into light and absorbs into them. Their minds become the dharmakaya, oneness with Shakyamuni Buddha. Their bodies become Guru Shakyamuni Buddhas, the holy body, the rupakaya. In that way, they are transformed into Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy mind, the dharmakaya, and holy body, the rupakaya.

Feel great happiness. Think, "How wonderful it is that I could enlighten all sentient beings in the essence of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. How wonderful it is." Feel that. Feel great joy.

Doing this visualization is related to tantric practice. It is a very profound meditation practice, called *taking the result into the path*. When you become oneness with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha that is the result. As the result, it is going to happen in the future, but you visualize it as happening now; you bring it into the present and use it as a path. If you do that, it will definitely happen; you will definitely achieve the result. This meditation practice becomes the path that allows you and all sentient beings to achieve the state of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment. In this meditation, you are utilizing the result as a path.

This is the way to do the meditation on taking refuge

Let's stop here.

***HYMNS OF EXPERIENCE* COMMENTARY: THE PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH**

I'm going to read a few verses from the *Hymns of Experience on the Gradual Path to Enlightenment*.

This life of leisure is even more precious than a wish-granting jewel;
That I have found such an existence is only this once;
So hard to find yet like a flash of lightning it is easy to vanish;
Contemplating this situation it's vital to realize that all mundane pursuits.

Are like the empty grain husks floating in the winds
And that we must extract the essence of human existence.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.¹⁹

This body having all the freedoms and riches is much more excellent than a wish-granting jewel. The whole of the lamrim, the graduated path to enlightenment, comprises three levels of practitioners: the graduated path of the lower capable being, of the middle capable being and of the higher capable being. This subject is part of the graduated path of the lower capable being.

Not only is this body with its freedoms and riches much more excellent than a wish-granting jewel, it is only at this time that you have found such a body. It is extremely difficult to find and it decays extremely easily. It's like lightning.

By reflecting on the nature of your body, you should realize that all samsaric work is just a husk. A husk is what covers the seed inside, but with worldly work there is nothing inside. Samsara is nothing more than the husk. To get the essence, to get the grain that they want, farmers take out the husk. [*Student*: They thresh the grain.]

They thresh the grain, taking it away and leaving only the husks. By reflecting on the nature of samsara, of worldly work, you can see that, like the husk, it has no value at all; it has no essence. Seeing this, you must resolve to take the essence, all day, the whole day, day and night.

¹⁹ Vv. 13 and 14.

Then, Lama Tsongkhapa said, “I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner; You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.”

This body of freedom which is much more excellent than a wish-granting jewel, this human body you have received at this present time, is not just an ordinary human body. It is a human body that is qualified with the eight freedoms and ten richnesses. Because of that, it is most precious. There are many beings who have found a human body but very few who have found a precious human body, qualified with the freedoms and richnesses. To find such a body is extremely rare; it is the most precious of all human beings’ bodies.

Most human beings have not met the Dharma; they haven’t met the virtuous friend who can reveal the Dharma to them. Therefore, for them there is something missing—the eight freedoms and ten richnesses. They have a human body but not a perfect human body.

You have found this perfect human body and with it you can achieve the three great meanings within each day, each hour, each minute: a fortunate rebirth, liberation from samsara and full enlightenment. You can do so much work and achieve whatever you wish, whatever temporal wish and whatever ultimate wish. Within one hour, one day, one month, one year, from now until death, you can achieve whatever temporal or ultimate thing you wish for. It’s unimaginable.

You can achieve the unified state of Vajradhara in this brief lifetime. The only thing blocking you is that, from your side, you haven’t done the practice. That is why this perfect human body is described as being much more valuable than a wish-granting jewel. And you have it almost only this once; it’s extremely difficult to find again. Why is it so difficult to find again? Because its causes are so difficult to create. The causes are the practice of perfect charity and pure morality, supported by the prayer that you take another perfect human body in the next life. Because a perfect human body has eighteen attributes—eight freedoms and ten richnesses—you should create eighteen causes.

In everyday life the mind is always overwhelmed because you are always under the control of the unsubdued mind, thus the texts emphasize how difficult it is to attain this perfect human body and how easily it decays.

When the texts say “decay” it means the lifespan is so short, like lightning in the sky, and then you are dead. But I think this decay can also refer to while you are still alive, how the four elements in your body—earth, water, fire and air—are unbalanced. They are disturbed, which means you easily get sick and so are unable to practice the Buddhadharma.

When there’s something wrong with the body, there are the four non-living external elements and other interferers, living beings, that all further disturb you and cause decay and degeneration. And again, you cannot practice the Buddhadharma. When the mind becomes crazy, you cannot practice the Buddhadharma. When there’s something wrong, when your body is unhealthy, you cannot practice Buddhadharma as you wish. It’s extremely easy for something to go wrong with the mind and body.

When there are hindrances that cause so much degeneration, it’s very difficult to continuously practice the Buddhadharma as you wish. Even if you get a fever or a small headache, you can’t do anything except lie down—or scream! Then, for one or two days you can’t do anything.

And when the body becomes old, when old age diminishes the body's strength, even if you have the understanding, even if you wish to practice the Dharma, you cannot do it as you wish. Something can go wrong with the body incredibly easily and death can come. This can happen at any time; you can never predict it. You can't truthfully assure yourself that from now until tonight you will be completely all right. Maybe even within the next hour you notice a rash on your skin and then you'll be crying out for help.

By seeing how life is so short and how it can so easily decay or death can come, you should try to understand through these examples that life is really like lightning in the sky; just here for the shortest time. Now you are sitting or eating and it might not seem like that, but from the time you were born until now, all that time has finished, and if you check, it just seems like a flash of lightning in the sky. It is gone so quickly. Whether you've been happy or not, whatever you have done, whatever lifestyle you have had, it's gone, finished, just like lightning. Just as from birth until now has been like a flash of lightning, so from now until death will be like a flash of lightning. We all believe it is a long way away, but it's not like that at all.

While you are with your friends, enjoying things, this is just for a short time. It's like objects that are suddenly illuminated on a dark night by a flash of lightning. You see it all clearly for a very short time and then [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] it is completely black, completely dark. It's exactly like this, from now until the time of death. You live your life, seeing your friends and family, studying the Dharma, enjoying your possessions, moving from here to there, and then [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] utterly unexpectedly, all of a sudden, this vision stops. This vision of all these things you are seeing now suddenly stops, like the darkness after a flash of lightning.

This is the example Lama Tsongkhapa gave. I think we'll stop here.

Lecture 20

November 29, 1980

PRECEPTS: TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL SENTIENT BEINGS

While you are thinking about all the sentient beings in the six realms who are suffering, think of how extremely kind they are. Not only have they been kind when they were your mother, taking care of your life with the four great kindnesses, they have been responsible for every happiness you have ever had, all your past, present and future happinesses and perfections, up to the greatest one, enlightenment. You have received every samsaric pleasure due to their kindness, even a cool breeze passing over your body on a hot day. Even the smallest pleasure comes from all these sentient beings who are suffering now, who are experiencing the unimaginable sufferings in the six realms.

Feel this.

[Rinpoche pauses for meditation]

There is no difference at all between all these kind mother sentient beings who are suffering in each of the six realms now and your present life's mother.

Think of all the kind mother sentient beings who are no different from your own mother, all the hell beings, the hungry ghosts, the animals, the human beings, the demigods and the gods. Think of them having to endure the unimaginable suffering of samsara.

[Rinpoche pauses for meditation]

Think of how much they have to experience such unbearable suffering, and how there is no way to escape.

[Rinpoche pauses for meditation]

All the noises you can hear now—the dogs barking, the birds singing, humans shouting—all those noises are the sound of suffering.

Now think: “There is not one sentient being who did not create negative karma for me, in order to take care of me. In past lives I've let each sentient being create negative karma numberless times in order to take care of me.

“So many sentient beings who are suffering now in the six realms are doing so because of the negativity they created taking care of me. At times when they were my mother or father, I let them to create so much negative karma for my own happiness.

“Because of that, what I must do now is free all sentient beings from all sufferings and lead them to the peerless happiness of full enlightenment, and I should do it by myself. That is my responsibility; that is my work—to free each sentient being from suffering and lead them to enlightenment. I should take that responsibility by myself, and ensure it is obtained.

“Therefore, I must achieve the omniscient mind; therefore, I’m going to take the purifying eight Mahayana precepts for the benefit of all mother sentient beings.”

EIGHT MAHAYANA PRECEPTS CEREMONY

Now, repeat this prayer visualizing Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, the cause of all temporal and ultimate happiness and perfections, particularly bringing peace to the world.

[Rinpoche leads the students in the precepts prayers]

The merit you have created, the object of creating that merit—enlightenment—and those you have dedicated the merits to—sentient beings—none of these exist in the slightest from their own side. This is how it appears to your mind, how you think of it, how you grasp on to it. This is the object you grasp on to.

Dedicate the merits to all sentient beings, understanding that all these things—the merit, enlightenment, sentient beings—do not exist at all except what is merely labeled. The subject, I, who is merely labeled, dedicates the merits, which are merely labeled, to obtain the object, enlightenment, which is merely labeled, for sentient beings, who are merely labeled—all are merely labeled by thought.

While you are aware that the whole thing is merely labeled, dedicate the merits in this way: “Due to all these merits collected by me and other sentient beings, may the paramita of morality be completed purely, without degeneration, without pride. May all transmigratory beings have happiness and may their suffering be eliminated forever. Wherever there are bodhisattvas, may all their prayers be fulfilled, immediately. I dedicate all my merits to sentient beings, just as the brave Samantabhadra and Manjushri have dedicated their merits.”

BODHICITTA SUBDUES YOUR MIND

Khunu Lama said,

With bodhicitta you subdue your own mind.
With bodhicitta you subdue the minds of others.
With bodhicitta you respect everybody.
With bodhicitta you see everybody in equanimity.²⁰

Here, Khunu Lama advised that if you have bodhicitta generated in your mind, it is extremely easy to subdue your mind. Because of bodhicitta, unsubdued minds such as attachment, anger and pride will rarely arise. It is possible [for the unsubdued minds to arise], but it is not the same as before you had bodhicitta; there is much less. It’s very difficult for anger to arise.

²⁰ V. 72.

And if you have bodhicitta generated in your mind, because your own mind is subdued, it's also very easy to benefit other sentient beings, to subdue other people's minds. Because your mind is a loving mind, a compassionate mind, if you work for others, it is very beneficial for them. With your speech, even though you just say a few words, it's very beneficial, very effective, for the mind of the listener; it has great impact. It's easy to transform the others' minds, by the blessing of your speech, by the power of your mind of bodhicitta. Whatever verbal or physical actions you do are always done with the motivation to benefit others, so whatever you say will only be of benefit to other sentient beings.

You can feel that whenever you hear advice from those meditators whose minds are subdued by the loving compassionate thought, bodhicitta. Even if it is just a few words, that advice is very effective, very powerful for your mind. Whereas no matter how much you listen to somebody who is highly learned in the scriptures, very intellectual, but does not have realizations, somehow it doesn't move the mind so much; it's not that effective for the mind. You know the difference. If you have bodhicitta, even just a few words of advice can benefit others, transforming their unsubdued minds.

STORIES OF SERKONG DORJE CHANG

The first time we came to Nepal from India, we initially stayed in the Gelugpa monastery, upstairs. We stayed there maybe less than a year. Once, when the monks were doing *nyung näs*, they invited Lama Yeshe and me. This is the two-day Chenrezig fasting retreat where you take Mahayana ordination. Many people attended.

The benefactor invited a lama from Sarnath, but the monks didn't have much interest in him. They didn't want to take ordination from him. Ordinarily, the person you take any kind of ordination from becomes your virtuous teacher, so they didn't want to take it from him.

Staying there, there happened to be a great yogi, Serkong Dorje Chang, who was no different from those previous yogis, Milarepa and Marpa. He was exactly the same as far as realizations, except he was a monk. Actually he, himself, was the embodiment of the reincarnation of Milarepa's guru, Marpa. He passed away more than a year ago. He was a great hidden yogi. Although he didn't reveal the great qualities of his realizations or his scriptural understandings, you could feel it. Just by seeing him, by watching his usual actions, you could easily see that he was no ordinary being.

He was able to communicate with the deities and protectors you visualize in the merit field, the mind-bound protectors or yidam deities such as Tara. Outwardly, he appeared as a very simple monk, nothing special, kind of very foolish. Not even mentioning tourists, even Tibetan people who didn't know him would see him circumambulating a stupa, wearing very simple robes, and they would have no idea of his special qualities, even though inside he was the embodiment of Marpa. They could not see that the quality of the realizations of his holy mind was equal to space. Outwardly, he looked like this, but in effect, there was no resistance for his full knowledge. There was never the slightest worldly thought; every thought was of the Buddhadharma. He never sought reputation or anything like that.

Every year, a benefactor invited Rinpoche and all the monks to his home to do a lot of pujas, such as reciting *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* 100,000 times. This benefactor usually did business in statues, and I think, one day, he stole a famous statue. Right after he did that, he went to see Rinpoche at the monastery. Rinpoche asked him who he was, and when the man replied that he was Rinpoche's

benefactor, Rinpoche said, “I don’t have a benefactor like this. I don’t have any benefactors.” He completely rejected him. Very shamed, the benefactor quietly left the room. Afterwards, he might have screamed at the servants, complaining that Rinpoche hadn’t recognized him.

There was no reason why Rinpoche couldn’t recognize him because every year the man invited Rinpoche and all the monks to make pujas at his house. I think this benefactor didn’t understand why Rinpoche was showing this wrathful aspect. The benefactor became angry and I heard he stopped inviting monks from the monastery to do pujas at his house for some time. Then, maybe afterwards his mind might have changed.

When people went to see Rinpoche, even without asking, straight away Rinpoche told them what was going to happen to them. They might have just gone to receive a blessing but, depending on who went, he would tell them their fortune. Once, a man came from the high mountains to ask Rinpoche for an observation about his business. Before he made the observation and gave the answer, Rinpoche completely shocked the person by telling him he had killed a human being and he needed to make prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas. After that, he didn’t dare ask about his business!

For certain people, Rinpoche gave advice or practice, saying it very straight. It happened many times that he would meet somebody while he was circumambulating a stupa, and even though they didn’t ask anything of Rinpoche, all of a sudden he would turn to them and say something straight off, like the man he told, “You will die next year. You need to do prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas, 100,000 or 300,000 times.” I heard the man listened to Rinpoche and did exactly as he advised. And he did die at exactly the time Rinpoche predicted. I think that has happened to several people.

Only a very few people received very profound explanations of the teachings from Rinpoche, but normally if you asked for teachings, even if you asked to read some scriptures, he would kind of completely reject you as if he didn’t know anything, as if he was completely ignorant.

I had heard this story about him when I was in India, so I had a great wish to see him. The first time I went to see him with Lama Yeshe and our first Western student, Zina. She was Russian and her friend, an English boy, was Lama Yeshe’s English teacher.

When we reached his house, there was a very simple monk coming down the steps. When we asked if His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang was giving interviews, this monk just said there was no need for a short time, or something like that. I didn’t pay much attention to what he said. He went downstairs to another door and we went upstairs and saw the manager, asking him if it was possible to see Rinpoche. Then, the same monk we had accidentally seen downstairs came back and sat down on the bed. He was His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang! I didn’t think that simple monk was Rinpoche, because I expected the head lama of a monastery to be in better robes.

At that time, Rinpoche just once gave some short advice for Zina and Clive, the English boy. They asked for general advice, but Rinpoche talked about guru yoga, how you could do a very short but very powerful guru yoga practice, visualizing the Guru as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. It was very powerful advice. I couldn’t understand how you could do it.

Then Zina asked, “Could you read some of those?” pointing to some piles of texts next to Rinpoche’s bed. She was that kind of person, somebody who asked those kinds of things! She

wanted a few lines from those scriptures, but Rinpoche said he couldn't; he didn't know anything about them, he knew nothing. At certain times Rinpoche told stories and at other times, with other people, he didn't talk.

Rinpoche could even see what I dreamt. Once, after I had had a fearful dream, I went to see Rinpoche. But before I could even explain to him, he already knew. He asked me questions, like, "Did you dream of a little girl"? He knew exactly. Then, he explained what it meant. Like this, there was no resistance. He looked like one thing outside but in effect, he had qualities equal to space. He could see completely all the bad actions you had done and he could tell you about them. If you couldn't remember, he would tell you.

The main point I'm telling you here is that the monks had invited Rinpoche, His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang, to give the Mahayana precepts, and he was supposed to do it, so they didn't want to take the precepts from another lama. Rinpoche came down in the early morning to give the motivation before the ordination. He came down and sat down on the bed, and then said, "If you want to practice the holy Dharma, if the virtuous friend says, 'Lick that *kaka* while it's hot,' then you lick it! Immediately, without hesitation, while it's hot, you lick it. That's the real practice of Dharma." That was all. That was his motivation.

That's all he said! I don't think Rinpoche did the rest of the ordination; he just left. I think we had to take the ordination from the holy object. That's how it happened! It was incredibly effective. He only said a few words, but it was so powerful and so effective. It was unbelievable advice.

Instead of saying many words, he simply exposed the heart of the advice. That's one of the teachings that I received from him during that ordination time.

BODHICITTA SUBDUES YOUR MIND (CONTINUED)

Khunu Lama continued,

With bodhicitta you respect everybody.

With bodhicitta you see everybody in equanimity.

One hindrance that doesn't allow you to respect others is pride. If you have generated bodhicitta in your mind, any pride you have becomes less and less.

With bodhicitta you do not criticize others, you only express the qualities of others, the good things about them, even the enemy who disturbs you. Instead of criticizing an enemy, saying bad things about them—even though their actions might be full of mistakes—a bodhisattva only expresses the good qualities about them.

For us ordinary people in the world, as much as possible we hide the good qualities of the enemy who harms us, who treats us badly. We don't express whatever good qualities they might have; we hide them as much as possible. And then, as much as possible, we stress their mistakes, their bad actions, their negative thoughts, announcing them to other people. Even though a bodhisattva might see another's physical and verbal mistakes, they hide them as much as possible. The bodhisattva compliments the enemy as much as possible and announces their qualities.

You respect the Guru Triple Gem by seeing their qualities; you respect sentient beings by remembering their kindness, like respecting your parents, not because they have realizations, attainment of the path, it's not that, but because they're kind. They are kind to you and so you respect them by remembering that kindness. With bodhicitta, instead of being proud and being careless of others, bodhisattvas respect all other sentient beings by remembering their kindness.

As it is said in the *Eight Verses of Thought Training*,

Determined to obtain the greatest possible benefit
From all sentient beings,
Who are more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel,
I shall hold them most dear at all times.

The respect bodhisattvas have for others is not just from the mouth; they sincerely cherish them from the heart. With the thought that remembers their kindness, they completely respect and cherish all others.

Then, with bodhicitta, you see everybody in equanimity. If you have bodhicitta you have no discrimination, feeling close to those who help and love you, seeing them as friends, and feeling aversion for others, those who harm you, seeing them as enemies. When you discriminate, you keep friends close and enemies distant. From that, attachment arises for those who help and anger arises for those who harm. Discriminating like this creates confusion in your mind, and you believe it is like that. And so, with discriminating thoughts of anger and attachment, you accumulate karma and circle in samsara.

With bodhicitta, a bodhisattva has cut off the thoughts of distance and closeness, with the attachment and anger that discriminate. Because of that, on one hand the bodhisattva sees people such as friends and relatives—those who help, who give food, clothing, money, and so forth—as extremely kind. On the other hand, they also see people who treat them badly, those we would recognize as enemies, as extremely kind. They see that, no matter how terrible the harm, the action of harm itself is so beneficial, and the one who harms is so precious, like a wish-fulfilling jewel. The bodhisattva sees that person as extremely kind.

That simply means a bodhisattva has an equal attitude to all sentient beings, not like our minds, which are full of partiality. Seeing a parent or relative, a boyfriend or girlfriend, you feel very close, but when you see others you feel kind of distant. Without a sense of relationship, there seems no point in benefiting them. If, on the other hand, you had bodhicitta, you would have no confusion. Seeing one sentient being would not cause a sense of closeness and hence causing attachment to arise, and seeing another would not cause a sense of distance and hence causing anger or indifference to arise.

As Khunu Lama said in the first two lines, if you want to subdue your mind, the best thing to do is practice bodhicitta, and if you wish to subdue others' minds, the best method is to first train yourself in bodhicitta.

Having trained your mind in bodhicitta, you can then talk about bodhicitta with others so that they too can practice bodhicitta; that is the best method. Even though there are many other methods to

subdue the mind, to benefit other sentient beings' minds, the best advice is the advice of bodhicitta, talking about it with others, persuading them to also train their minds in bodhicitta.

If you want to accumulate merit by respecting others, again the best thing is to train in and practice bodhicitta. A bodhisattva has an equal mind for all sentient beings; they are utterly devoid of the discriminating thought of closeness and distance. To quickly generate bodhicitta, you must start to train your mind in bodhicitta, right from this moment.

Therefore, think, "I'm going to listen to the teachings of the lamrim in order to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all mother sentient beings." Even with the motivation, you generate the thought of bodhicitta.

REFUGE IN THE SANGHA MEANS IN ALL SANGHA

As I explained in the last few days, when you say, "I take refuge in the Sangha," it doesn't mean you take refuge in the Sangha you visualize in the merit field but you don't have to take refuge in the Sangha you see around you here, in the monastery, doing pujas and so forth. It's not that there are Sangha you take refuge in and Sangha you don't.

There is no difference between one absolute Sangha and four fully ordained monks, four *gelongs*. The Sanskrit is *Sangha* and the Tibetan is *ge diin*, meaning "one who intends to virtue." *Ge* is "virtue" and *diin* is "wish," or "intention," so it refers to those who are intent on gaining nirvana, but it can also refer to enlightenment, according to the practitioner. For a Mahayana practitioner, it can refer to enlightenment.

When you say, "*Ge diin la kyab su chi o*" it means taking refuge in all the Sangha, all the absolute Sangha and all the Sangha who are gelongs in both the Mahayana and Theravadin tradition—the whole community. It does not only refer to the absolute Sangha, the one who has attained the true path and true cessation of suffering.

The four members of the Sangha, four gelongs (or bhikshus in Sanskrit) receives the name "Sangha," and they are no different from one absolute Sangha. So, when you say "*Ge diin la kyab su chi o*," you must remember the whole thing. You can recognize all of them as absolute Sangha; you can think of the whole merit field as absolute Sangha.

Otherwise, when you say this prayer, the Sangha in this monastery are not objects of refuge. So, you are saying you are taking refuge in these monks but not those ones. You would only be taking a particular refuge.

One of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's tutors, almost the same as his guru, was Tsenshab Serkong Rinpoche. Before in Tibet, he wasn't His Holiness' teacher but his "debate partner," somebody who helped His Holiness discuss the Dharma. This is why he has the title "*tsenshab*" or debate partner. Although not his teacher in Tibet, His Holiness took many teachings from Tsenshab Serkong Rinpoche in India. He was the son of Serkong Dorje Chang, who lived in Nepal, in Swayambhunath, and passed away there.

The one I'm talking about now, Tsenshab Serkong Rinpoche, was also called Serkong because of his father. His father Serkong Dorje Chang passed away and, after his reincarnation, he became a disciple of his son. This Serkong, Tsenshab Serkong Rinpoche, the one who is in Dharamsala, was given the ordination name of Serkong.

Rinpoche used to advise us when he was giving a commentary on refuge, when you say “*Ge diin la keyab su chi o*” you must also include those monks in the monasteries in Tibet they call *dob dobs*. I think the tourist books call these “monk police” or something. They have a particular dress; they paint black on their face. Just as some actresses in America paint white around the eyes and mouth—which is very nice theater—they paint black on their face. Their robes are kind of short, with many folds, and they are thick with butter, which the *dob dobs* spread on them. They put ribbons on their arms to kind of protect the monastery, but they also do a lot of work for the monastery. I think they also fight a lot; they compete with each other a lot. I don't know how that tradition happened. They serve the drinks during pujas, but normally they kind of fight and compete a lot, trying to be tough. Rinpoche advised us we even have to remember them in the merit field.

If you practice like this in everyday life, as the lamas advise in the teachings, by remembering the base that is the Sangha, then at all the other times, whenever you see them, the thought to discriminate doesn't arise, the thought to criticize doesn't arise. Even if in your view you see things that they do that you feel are mistakes, you have no thought to criticize them. In that way, you don't accumulate negative karma, and the thought to respect them arises.

AVOIDING NEGATIVE ACTIONS TOWARD THE SANGHA

You must not use things belonging to the Sangha without their permission, even small things like a broom or robes. It is said that those who do things like this create the karma to be reborn in the ordinary hell realm, but in the hells called “Hell like a Broom” or “Hell like Robes” where they are a hell being in the shape of a broom or robes. Some sentient beings are born in the ordinary hell realms having a body in the shape of a pillar because their habit was to spit on the monastery's wall and spit in the pillars. Due to creating that karma, they are reborn extremely thin, looking like a pillar.

When the manager of the monastery receives offering for the Sangha, like food and tea, but he only gives them a part and keeps the rest, even though there is still plenty for the Sangha, this is the sort of result that happens. There is the story of a monk who was reborn as an ordinary hell being in the form of a pot. I don't remember the story exactly, but I think once, in a previous life, while he was mashing medicine in a pot, while having a conversation with another monk he became angry and he broke the pot. Because the pot belonged to the Sangha, he was reborn as a hell being in the form of a pot.

There are also beings reborn as hell beings in the form of sticks. You see beings with all sorts of unbelievable forms in the sea. Once, when I was on a beach near Brisbane, there were very strange sentient beings. They must have been ordinary hell beings in those shapes. Some have little holes inside like mouths, but closed, and when the big waves come the holes open and they suck in the creatures in the water. Then the hole closes very tightly, trapping the creatures inside. I can't say what karma created that—I don't have an omniscient mind—but it's very interesting. You also find beings in the forests with all sorts of different shapes, like leaves or sticks, and so forth.

Think, “I must achieve enlightenment for all the kind mother sentient beings and therefore I’m going to listen to the commentary of the graduated path to enlightenment.” Please listen to the teaching well by setting the bodhicitta motivation and ensuring the right conduct for listening to the teachings.

I think I’ll continue the preliminary practice and the guru yoga, the short *Jorcbö* practice that is done with the Lama Tsongkhapa merit field.

One thing that I didn’t mention yesterday when I talked about the qualities of reciting “*Ge diin la kyab su chi o,*” the qualities of Serkong’s prayer. If you have studied their qualities in detail—the particular qualities of the protectors, dakas, dakinis, arhats and solitary realizers—the twelve qualities and the three higher trainings and the bodhisattvas’ qualities—the six paramitas and those things, what is elaborately explained in the extensive scriptures, if you have studied those and can remember them in detail, then think that they are generated in your mind and in the minds of all sentient beings.

RINPOCHE RECOVERS BY RECITING THE REFUGE PRAYER

There are great meditators who do various actions such as healing sick people just by the refuge practice, without doing the other various tantric practices. It depends on the true cause of refuge, how strong it is within your mind. Once, when I was coming down from Lawudo, I had to run to the airstrip which is very close to the mountain. You have to come down from the cave and then go up again, so that means it takes a little time. Because the plane usually comes quite early in the morning, I thought I might miss it, so I rushed to the closest airstrip, the one built by the Nepalese and Japanese. However, I didn’t get to fly that day because there were some other people there first and the plane was full.

So, the next day, I decided to go to the other airstrip, which can take a day, depending on how fast people walk. However, I couldn’t walk down to that airstrip because I had rushed from the cave to the airstrip the day before, and I was unable to walk normally. I went down to the town, where the check-in office, the immigration and the main post office are—it’s where all the tourists are. It was quite steep, and I couldn’t walk fast because I had a tremendous pain in my leg.

My uncle, who had come with me to carry my things, was worried about me. He was worried how he was going to take care of me for pipi and things like that. I was reciting as many malas of the refuge prayer as I could while I walked. I didn’t recite them for the pain, that wasn’t the purpose, but somehow, the pain completely disappeared, and I was able to walk normally. When I told my uncle the pain had completely gone, he didn’t believe me. He just kept advising me to walk slowly. But after some time, when he saw I was able to walk normally, he could see that the pain had disappeared, and he believed me.

That morning, I stopped at one of a benefactor’s homes on the way, at the family home where there was an old mother who used to come to Lawudo before. I think at that time there was pain. Then, after one mala round of the refuge prayer, when it reached “*Sang gyä kyab su chi o,*” the pain disappeared again. I told my uncle. The first day he was very surprised that it had gone away. He explained to me that he was worried, wondering while we were coming down how he could look

after me at the other people's houses. On the second day, when I recited "*Sang gyä kyab su chi o,*" the pain completely disappeared. The next day, I was able to get a flight.

GURU YOGA: THE FOUR IMMEASURABLE THOUGHTS

With refuge you are able to do various works for others, various actions: pacifying actions, controlling actions, increasing actions and wrathful actions. By taking refuge you are protected from spirit harm. Although doing refuge practice well is not easy, it is very powerful for the success of all your wishes, even temporal ones.

After reciting the Sangha line three times, "*Sang gyä kyab su chi o,*" and taking refuge and then bodhicitta, you should generate the thought that you are utilizing the result in the path. You should do that meditation. Then, feel great happiness, thinking that you yourself will become enlightened in the essence of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, and that all the other sentient beings will also become enlightened in the essence of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Feel great joy, thinking, "Now my wish has been fulfilled."

Then think, "This is just a mere visualization. In fact, I and all my kind mother sentient beings, from beginningless samsaric lifetimes until now, have been circling in samsara and experiencing suffering. That is because of a mistake. What's the mistake? It has been caused by the mind being under the control of attachment and hatred, discriminating some as close and others as distant. That is the mistake."

After thinking like this, meditate on the four immeasurable thoughts to generate and increase bodhicitta. You should feel like a child feels for their mother who is so kind to them. The more they think about how she is suffering, the more compassion arises, and the more they wish her to be free from suffering. That thought becomes stronger and stronger. Similarly, with the thought of love, they decide they must help their mother. That thought becomes stronger and stronger the more they think about how their mother is so kind and how she is suffering. The more you meditate on the four immeasurable thoughts, the more your bodhicitta develops; that wish to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of others becomes more and more powerful. You avoid the mistake of discriminating some close and some distant, causing attachment and anger to arise.

Think, "How wonderful it would be if all the sentient beings were devoid of attachment and hatred, discriminating some close and others distant." This immeasurable wish arises very strongly.

By thinking like this, the immeasurable wish then comes, "How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were to abide in equanimity, free from attachment and anger that discriminates some close and some distant."

Then, "May they abide in this equanimity." That is the next line of this immeasurable prayer.

Then, "I will bring them into equanimity by myself." That is immeasurable will.

Remember that at this present moment you do not have the power to do this, to bring all the sentient beings to equanimity. Who does have that perfect power? The Guru Triple Gem have the perfect power, and the Buddha is the embodiment of all this. Therefore think, "I should become the

Omniscient One in order to bring all other sentient beings into equanimity.” The whole thing depends on first transforming your own mind and generating the whole path, from guru devotion up to enlightenment.

So, finally request, “Please grant me blessings to be able to do this.”

When you transform your mind, when you generate the graduated path to enlightenment, at that time, you receive the blessings of the merit field. That is why you make this request, “Please grant me blessings to be able to do this.” This is the last immeasurable request. With this and with the prayer of the immeasurable love, the prayer of the immeasurable compassion and the prayer of the immeasurable joy, each of these prayers contains four immeasurable practices.

GURU YOGA: THE MERIT FIELD VISUALIZATION

Then, you generate special bodhicitta with the prayer,

In order to benefit all my mother sentient beings quickly and more quickly, I must achieve the precious state of perfect and complete buddhahood.

Saying “quickly” twice refers to the various classes of tantra. The first “quickly” refers to the first three classes: Kriya, Charya and Yoga Tantra. By practicing one of these types of tantra you will attain enlightenment far more quickly than by following the Paramitayana. The second “and more quickly” refers to practicing Highest Yoga Tantra, Maha-anuttara Yoga Tantra, the highest path of Secret Mantra. By practicing this, you can attain enlightenment in one brief lifetime, or even in twelve or three years.

In effect this is saying that Highest Yoga Tantra is the quickest way to achieve enlightenment. As Manjushri advised Lama Tsongkhapa, “Without need to explain in more detail, study the teachings and then practice the *yidams*—the mind-bound deities—and even the protectors, and you will attain enlightenment in one brief lifetime of these degenerate times.”²¹ Manjushri gave this profound advice to Lama Tsongkhapa. This is the meaning of “quickly and more quickly.”

Think, “I’m going to meditate on the commentary of the lamrim, the profound path of Guru-Buddha yoga.”

After having generated special bodhicitta, the merit field is again extremely pleased by this. Then, the whole merit field gradually absorbs: all the lineage lamas of the blessing of the practice up to Vajradhara, all the lineage lamas of the extensive path up to Maitreya Buddha, and all the lineage lamas of the profound path up to Manjushri.

Vajradhara, Manjushri and Maitreya Buddha also absorb into Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, and then all other deities of the merit field who are around also absorb from the crown gradually upwards. Then, all the gurus absorb to the root guru who is in front of the Buddha, Lama Losang Thubwang Dorje Chang, and the root guru absorbs into Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s heart.

²¹ In other courses, Rinpoche has quoted Manjushri’s advice as specifically practicing three yidams: Yamantaka, Heruka and Guhyasamaja.

Then, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha descends and absorbs into you at the very center of the two eyebrows, the same place where the Buddha has that single hair, *dze bu* in Tibetan, one of the holy signs of a buddha. He melts into light and absorbs into you between your two eyebrows, blessing your mind.

From this, visualize Lama Tsongkhapa as you can see in the thangka. Lama Tsongkhapa is in the center, surrounded by his two main disciples: on the right is Khedrub Je and on the left is Gyaltsab Je. Khedrub Je is in the aspect of being a little bit wrathful and Gyaltsab Je is in a more peaceful aspect, and a little bit older. They are sitting on a raised throne on a lotus and moon disc, supported by snow lions, the same as with the refuge merit field. If there are four snow lions supporting the throne, this signifies Buddha's quality of the four fearlessnesses; if there are eight, that represents the Buddha's quality of the eight types of control.

Lama Tsongkhapa wears the three types of robes, saffron colored. He is smiling, with a very pleasing aspect to his face. The color of his holy body is like rose—his complexion is whitish with a little bit of red. He sits in the vajra posture and his hands are in the mudra of expounding the Dharma. Both hands hold the stems of a lotus; the lotus in the right hand has a sword and the lotus in the left hand has a Prajnaparamita text. You can visualize this according to whatever you are studying at the time. For instance, if you are studying a tantric text, to make it auspicious for you to understand the meaning of those teachings, you can visualize the text as that the tantric text you are studying.

Then, you should visualize the pure realm of Tushita, where Maitreya Buddha resides. To visualize this, generally Mount Meru has four levels above the ocean where the demigods reside. The lowest of Mount Meru's four levels is inhabited by nagas, the second by garudas, the third by rakshasas and demons and the fourth by the treasure-guarding yakshas.²² The highest of the four levels of Mount Meru above the water is the Heaven of Thirty-three.²³

I think, however, a description of the different levels of Mount Meru where the worldly gods reside is another subject. It is not the object of our eye, not something we can see, but we can be born in one of those realms due to karma. On the other hand, with their psychic powers, beings like Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and his disciples, Maudgalyayana and Shariputra were able to travel to these realms without any hindrances.

This is similar to how something we see as water is seen differently by beings with other levels of mind. What to us is a bowl of water, is nectar to a buddha or a god, whereas a hungry ghost does not see it as either water or nectar, but as a bowl filled with pus. We human beings only have the karma to see it as water; the hungry ghost only has the karma to see it as pus.

There are certain places that are recognized as holy places. Some highly fortunate meditators, who have very thin obscurations, whose karmic obscurations are purified, will see such a place as a pure

²² Nagas are snake-like beings of the animal realm, who can protect the Dharma or bring great harm. Garudas are bird-like beings, often associated with Vajrapani and depicted in iconography with a snake in their beaks, symbolizing their ability to protect humans from naga harm. You will see garuda depictions throughout South-east Asia. Rakshasas are human-like beings, usually depicted as being very evil, even man-eaters. Yakshas are spirits, usually described in Tibetan Buddhism as blood-drinking, flesh-eating cannibals, but in other forms of Buddhism they can be either malevolent or benevolent.

²³ The thirty-three refers to the main gods of the realm (thirty-two are presided over by Indra) but just generally refers to the fact there is a pantheon of gods there. According to Vasubandhu, the gods of the Realm of Thirty-three are half a *krusha* tall (about 1,500 ft.) and live for one thousand years, each day of which equals one hundred of our years, so that means 36 million of our years.

realm, with dakas and dakinis there. What they see will be completely different from what we see. And those whose have very thick karmic obscurations will see the same place very differently; they will just see bare mountains covered in rocks and thorn bushes. They will see it as a very ordinary place.

Similarly, the place called Shambhala, Kalachakra's pure realm—if you have a strong karmic connection with Kalachakra and if you don't have thick karmic obscurations, you can travel there, you can see it as a pure realm. With their same body those yogis can travel there and see Kalachakra's pure realm, Shambhala. For us, ordinary people who don't have a karmic connection and who have very thick karmic obscurations, no matter how much we travel, we will only see snow mountains, nothing else. We can circumambulate the place, on and on, but we will see nothing, not even a tiny part of the pure realm of Shambhala.

In the sutra teachings, it is very much emphasized that all existence comes from mind. It is like this. I think scientists said before that there were no beings on the moon but recently they have started to believe there are.

The side of Mount Meru that faces the southern continent—our continent—is lapis lazuli, blue, so the brightness of that makes our water and sky blue. The side of Mount Meru that faces the eastern continent is silver, so in the eastern continent the color of the water and the sky is white, not blue like ours. The northern side of the Mount Meru is gold, so in the northern continent the color of the sky and the water is yellow. And the western side of Mt. Meru is made of rubies, so in the western continent the color of the sky and the water is red. So each different continent has different colored water and sky.

You can check whichever reasoning is more logical—what the scientists say or what is explained in the teachings. However, the main point here is to do the visualization to collect merit, to purify obscurations and to generate the path to enlightenment; that's the purpose of doing the visualization.

On the very top of the fourth level of Mount Meru there's the Heaven of the Thirty-three and then, higher than that, in the space above the Heaven of the Thirty-three, there is the celestial realm comprising the four heavens of the sky-dwelling gods. Below this, demigods can come and fight, but here they can't, so the first realm is called the Heaven of No Dispute. The second is Tushita (Tib: *Ganden*), the Heaven of Contentment. This is the god realm of Tushita, not the pure realm, which is above it in the sky, like a monastery is separated from a city. Then there is Nirmanarati, the Heaven of Delightful Emanations and the fourth is Paranirmitavasavartin, the Heaven of the Delight in the Illusory Manifestation of Phenomena.

Tushita pure realm is the place where the thousand buddhas of this fortunate time descend to this earth from. There are bodhisattvas in this pure realm. The base is golden and all the ground is in the nature of lapis lazuli, as smooth as the palm of the hand, like glass, not like the ground on this earth, sometimes up, sometimes down, with stones and thorn bushes and things like that. It is very comfortable, without any stones or bushes or any kind of ugly, undesirable objects. To step on it is like stepping on your spring bed at home, where your feet go down and come up, something so comfortable to sit on. Here, there are people with very soft beds who put blankets on them and sit on them because that's much more comfortable than sitting on the floor. It's more fun, more

relaxed. The ground in Tushita is very even, very comfortable, of a blissful nature, without stones and bushes and undesirable objects like that.

The golden base has lapis lazuli drawings done with lapis lazuli, round, like the shape of an eye. There are many beautiful flowers, like lotuses, not tiny, huge, each petal the size of a bed. You can lie down on a single petal. Then, there are extremely beautiful lakes and ponds surrounded by wish-fulfilling trees, granting you whatever you need, whatever you request. On the bottom of the lakes, the sand is made of various jewels and gold and things like that. There are various beautiful birds flying around those ponds and lakes; with their songs they continuously make very beautiful tunes of the Dharma.

The whole space is continuously filled with very scented smell. Just seeing it, just remembering it, brings an incredible sense of bliss in your mind.

In the very center of this pure realm, which is complete with all these riches, there is a beautiful palace, a mansion of Dharma. In the front of that is the place where Maitreya Buddha gives teachings, Kunga Dawa. In the center of this is a jeweled throne, held up by snow eight lions. On the throne is the Teacher, the King, the Undefeated, the Savior, Maitreya Buddha, whose holy body is the color of gold, like refined gold, radiant like 100,000 suns rising. He has one face and two arms, and his hands, which at his heart, are in the mudra of turning the wheel of Dharma, the same as Lama Tsongkhapa.

He holds the stem of a naga tree with flowers. In the flower on the right there's a Dharmachakra [Dharma wheel]; in the flower on the left side, there's a vase, the same vase that the thousand-arm aspect of Chenrezig holds. Chenrezig's vase is filled with purifying nectar pouring from it, signifying that Chenrezig is purifying true suffering and the true cause of suffering but I'm not sure of the exact significance of the vase that Maitreya Buddha holds, maybe to spread the Dharma teachings.

The holy body is well adorned with jewels, jeweled ornaments and scarves. Above his crown is an enlightenment stupa, which signifies Shakyamuni Buddha. That is because, due to the kindness of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, Maitreya Buddha becomes enlightened in the essence of Shakyamuni Buddha. Even when he becomes enlightened, he will still respect Shakyamuni Buddha as his guru. This is similar with Tara and the other buddhas. Tara has Amitabha Buddha at her crown to show respect to the guru, because she became enlightened by the kindness of the guru.

Maitreya Buddha is seated on the throne in a sitting position, signifying his promise to descend right now in this world. He looks at you with a very pleasing smile.

I'm going to stop here.

Lecture 21

November 30, 1980 (morning)

GREAT EQUANIMITY IS CHERISHING ALL BEINGS EQUALLY

You need to train the mind in all-obscuring bodhicitta and absolute bodhicitta. The training in all-obscuring bodhicitta has been handed down from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha to Nagarjuna and then to Shantideva. According to this advice, you train the mind in equalizing and exchanging yourself with others. This has two thoughts: the thought of seeking enlightenment and the thought of seeking to do the work for others. In order to generate the thought of seeking enlightenment, first, the thought of seeking to do the work for others should be generated.

According to the seven points of cause and effect technique, in order to generate the thought of seeking to do the work for others, you should first train the mind in equanimity, which means cutting off attachment and anger, the minds that discriminate friend as close and enemy as distant. This equanimity meditation does not mean equalizing the thought of anger and attachment toward all sentient beings. It doesn't mean this. Some think it is like that, but that's completely wrong.

It's like having a field that is unfertilized and covered in rocks; you can sow seeds in the field but nothing will grow. Like that, if the mind is not trained in the equilibrium meditation—cutting off anger and attachment, discriminating sentient beings as friend or enemy, as close or distant—then whatever love and compassion you generate will be partial. You won't be able to generate love and compassion equally toward all sentient beings, only a limited number, only those who help you, who do not harm you.

According to the Mahayana thought training of equalizing, within the practice of equalizing and exchanging yourself with others, this great equanimity is different from the equilibrium meditation which is preliminary to the seven points of cause and effect. However, the other meditation technique, which goes inside this meditation, is contained in this equalizing and exchanging yourself with others. The other one, the equilibrium meditation, is just cutting off, just renouncing the attachment and anger that discriminates some close and others distant, that's all. This great equanimity is cherishing all sentient beings equally. The conclusion, the essential thing is that you cherish all sentient beings just as you cherish yourself.

It includes seeing the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought and the benefits of cherishing others, which contains the kindness of mother sentient beings. This way of meditating on kindness is stronger than remembering the kindness according to the other bodhicitta advice. In this context, the benefit of cherishing others, remembering their kindness and wishing to repay that kindness are combined in these meditations.

The actual practice of exchanging self and others is doing the tonglen practice, by particularly remembering the object of love and doing the practice of giving, and then remembering the particular object of compassion and doing the practice of taking other sentient beings' sufferings. Tonglen not only contains the practice of great love and great compassion, it also contains the practice of special intention, carrying the responsibility to do the work for other sentient beings, the

determination to be able to fulfill this. This is the strong thought, “I *must* achieve the omniscient mind.”

The meditation on equanimity that involves cutting off anger and attachment, discriminating friend and enemy, discriminating close and distant, is the general way of generating equilibrium. It is not particularly a Mahayana meditation; the followers of the Theravada path also practice this.

The meditation on equalizing yourself with others that is the preliminary of exchanging yourself with others is different from the other equanimity and very different from the mind that we have now, which discriminates close and distant, and which causes you to do some actions that benefit others, to eliminate the sufferings of only some sentient beings, but not all sentient beings. You must overcome this unequal mind, making it equal, one that cherishes all the sentient beings equally, just as you cherish yourself. You must wish to benefit all sentient beings equally and wish to eliminate all the sentient beings’ sufferings and offer benefit and happiness to all the sentient beings.

THE EIGHT MAHAYANA PRECEPTS: MOTIVATION AND CEREMONY

I thought, as a motivation, it might be beneficial for some of you—not everybody—to follow Lama’s advice on the different techniques of equalizing and exchanging yourself with others. Every morning, this will become the motivation for the ordination.

Think, “I must achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all the kind mother sentient beings, those who are experiencing unimaginable suffering now in the six realms. Therefore, I’m going to take the Mahayana ordination.” By remembering the visualization, repeat the prayer.

Think, “By living in the perfect enjoyment of living in the eight precepts, I am creating so many causes, all these hours and minutes, to be able to effortlessly do unmistaken perfect work for other sentient beings, from now until all sentient beings have become enlightened.” Feel great joy by remembering this.

Think, “Just as previous bodhisattvas have done, I’m going to protect these eight Mahayana precepts until sunrise tomorrow for the sake of each sentient being, to protect each sentient being and lead them to every happiness.

[Rinpoche gives the eight Mahayana precepts ordination]

It’s good to make the vow. If you’re going to keep silence, remember at this time that you are going to keep silence in order to abstain from the negative karmas of speech, such as gossiping and telling lies. That way, when delusions arise which might mean you would say something negative that might harm others, you can refrain from it.

If you make a vow in front of a holy object, in front of the merit field, it is much stronger, much more powerful than just deciding in your mind to refrain from doing something, such as not speaking, without having made a commitment in front of somebody you have devotion to.

Generally, as with any other precepts, one of the big differences between taking precepts and just making a decision in your mind that you are not going to do something, is that you have made that

decision in front of somebody, your guru or a holy object. That makes a big difference in the mind. It is so much more powerful when you vow in front of somebody you would feel ashamed of breaking their trust. It helps to be able to practice. It's the same with the other precepts, such as not wearing perfumes, malas or ornaments.

Lecture 22

November 30, 1980 (afternoon)

THE POISON OF SELF-CHERISHING

Khunu Lama Rinpoche sees working for the self as poison.

How could someone in whom bodhicitta
of the supreme vehicle exists ever turn
toward the poison of self-cherishing, even for a moment?
How could they give up the nectar of cherishing others?²⁴

It's not just an ordinary poison like the one that grows in the mountains. I don't know the name but if somebody takes it, they die very quickly. [Rinpoche asks a student] Do you remember? It's a particular poisonous plant and if humans eat it, the whole body becomes horrible and you can die very quickly. It's a very powerful poisonous plant. I think it's the same name as used in the thought training text, the *Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, when it talks about the poisonous plant in the forest. Do you remember? What is it called in English, or in American language? [Students' replies are inaudible]

It causes hallucinations. We had a lot growing in the mountains, and when the goats ate it they made a very nice sound! But I don't think human beings can eat it. On the mountains, a lot of it grows in the potato fields, near where people live, and the goats and other animals can eat it, but people can't. Maybe Tibetan doctors use it for medicine, I'm not sure.²⁵

One of the students tried it when he was staying up in the mountains at Lawudo for six months. I think he was just curious. I think he heard the story about the Buddha and I guess he wanted to suffer! He was the same person as in the story about wanting to kill the dogs. He cooked a big-sized pot of it—I think he might have used the biggest pot—and he invited another student, Massimo, to try it. At that time Massimo had come to attend a Vajrasattva retreat that we were doing with a geshe in a cave nearby, beginning at three o'clock in the morning. The geshe was a fast one and had already finished the mantra count but neither I nor Massimo had finished so he moved to a different room.

This student invited Massimo to have some. He tried a little bit but he couldn't stand it at all. I think the other student tried very hard to eat it. He usually came to the cave every day, but at that time he didn't show up at all. It was kind of quiet and I didn't know what was happening. Maybe he was having a blissful reaction.

After a couple of days he came down. When I asked what had happened, he explained that he had almost died. He saw bugs everywhere, the place was full of worms; the whole place was moving, like an old dead dog whose body is crawling with maggots. He could also hear people talking all around,

²⁴ V. 162.

²⁵ Rinpoche is referring to datura, a poisonous plant which grows prolifically in the Himalayas. See also <https://www.lamayeshe.com/article/hallucinating-mind>.

even though there was nobody. I never knew he was having this kind of reaction. He couldn't get up for the whole day but the next day he felt better. That might have caused him to give it up!

He had electricity in his tent, even though on the mountain nobody had it. He had some special thing that had special powers to catch the heat, like a recharger, like rechargeable batteries. I asked how he managed to have electricity in his tent, and he said in the daytime, if he was very fortunate and it wasn't not foggy, the sun would recharge his batteries and then at nighttime he used them to have light in his tent. It wasn't that powerful but it was very comfortable, very nice!

There's a purple flower that grows quite high that the animals can eat even though it is a poisonous plant. For them it becomes a means to stay alive but for us I think it causes a shortage of life.

A bodhisattva always sees working for the self as like a poisonous plant. We don't dare eat a dangerous poison, where even smelling it makes us sick and eating it causes death. Just as we immediately throw this poisonous plant when we understand its dangers, a bodhisattva renounces working for the self. Working for the self is the object to be completely renounced. Just we dare not eat even a tiny bit of that poisonous plant when we understand its shortcomings, a bodhisattva feels the same about the self-cherishing thought that always works for the self. They don't dare follow the self-cherishing thought, even for even a second. On the other hand, a bodhisattva always sees working for others as nectar. That way they are able to bear great hardship to do the work for others with great perseverance.

WITH SELF-CHERISHING THERE IS NO PERSEVERANCE

The perseverance of a bodhisattva is unbelievable. An hour is made of sixty minutes; twenty-four hours added together make a day; thirty days make a month and twelve months make a year. Then year after year, you can count a whole eon. A bodhisattva will persevere an eon just to generate one realization on the graduated path to enlightenment. These eons are different from normal eons, the ones that can be counted; these are an incredible amount of time. If a bodhisattva can only generate one lamrim realization each eon, they have to endure so much hardship to do that. But they can do it without depression, without agitation.

Whereas for us, when we hear it takes fifty years, or seventy years, to study the Dharma, we give up completely, even though that length of time is nothing. Following the path for even ten years, enduring hardships in order to become enlightened, seems unbearable. To us, it doesn't seem unbearable that sentient beings are suffering in samsara but it does seem unbearable that we might not be happy if we don't become enlightened, that we won't achieve our own happiness.

We should have the mind that feels it's unbearable to waste even a second. Instead we should feel that we must do everything we can to liberate sentient beings from samsara, to enlighten them. It should feel unbearable that other sentient beings have to wait to be freed from samsara, therefore we can't wait even a minute to lead other sentient beings out of samsara. This is the mind we should try to generate.

On the other hand, what we normally feel is completely the opposite. We can't stand not working for our own pleasure, our own comfort, for even a minute. We are careless when it comes to others'

pleasure but, when it comes to our pleasure, if we have to wait to get it for even a minute, even a second, it's unbearable.

Even if it takes a bodhisattva an eon to generate one kind of realization in order to benefit sentient beings, no matter what hardships there are or how long they have to experience them to follow the path, it will seem like nectar to them. They will feel so happy, like drinking nectar. For the benefit of others, for the sake of even one sentient being, a bodhisattva would give up their life; they would make charity of their holy body not just once but countless times, equaling the number of dust particles on this earth. Working for others is like nectar for them.

WITH SELF-CHERISHING, YOU WASTE YOUR LIFE

When you see other sentient beings happy, enjoying the good life, the luxurious life, having a better life than you have, you feel jealous. Instead of rejoicing in others having a comfortable life with samsaric perfections, a good job, many friends and so forth, instead of feeling how wonderful it is for them, wanting your kind mother sentient beings to be happy, you feel just the opposite. You feel jealous and upset because you don't have their possessions, their happiness, you don't have the position that gives them power. You feel you are poor, powerless, not like them, a sense of dislike arises for them and you feel jealous.

Even if you are equal to them in power, position and possessions, you feel competitive and you are still not happy. There is still a problem. You might have the same position or the same car as they have, but it's not right. You are the only one who should have it! Whether you say it or not, you dislike others who are equal to you because you want to be special. You want to be the only one with the money, the possessions, the car, the property and so forth. Because of your self-cherishing, when others having the same things as you—the same power and rank, the same rich apartment—jealousy and dislike overcome you.

Normally, as long as you have enough in life, as long as you have all the things you want, you feel happy. But when others have more, there's a problem. It's like the people in California—although my visualization of California is very limited—where everybody has lots of friends, expensive cars, swimming pools and so on, and everybody has a good time, but when they see somebody with more than they have, it becomes an unbelievably big problem; it's like they are living in the hell realm in comparison. They decide there must be something wrong with them and perhaps the only solution is to have a short life. These kinds of thoughts come.

There was a lady in New York or Washington about two or three years ago who went to the top of the tallest building and jumped off. I think she wanted to express her feelings. However, she hadn't created the cause to die, and because the cause wasn't created, the result couldn't be experienced. She planned it, going into the building and up to the very top and then jumping from the roof, but because it was so high it was very windy and so she was pushed back into a window. She smashed through the window, breaking all the glass, and ended up back in a room in the building. Maybe she chose the highest building because she thought if she jumped from a low one she would only break her leg or something and her suffering would continue, whereas if she jumped from a high building her suffering would cease. However, because her karma to be in a human body had not finished, she did not die. Karma is definite; she had not created the karma to die and so she did not experience that result at that time.

Even though you might have a precious human life, if you are unable to make it meaningful, you can finish your life without friends or money, just worrying about yourself, about the comforts of this life. If you end your life feeling very depressed, upset and fearful, if you haven't made your life meaningful, all these things come from the self-cherishing thought. On the other hand, even if you were unable to practice the Dharma when you were younger, if at the time of death you can have a peaceful mind, ending your life happily, with a good heart, I think I can say with confidence that you will have a good rebirth.

As Khunu Lama Rinpoche advised,

When you have bodhicitta
You see self-cherishing as poison and stop it.
When you have bodhicitta
You see cherishing others as nectar and embrace it.²⁶

In your everyday life, you should work less for the self and work more for others. You should try to do this more and more, day by day. You should try to follow the bodhisattva's actions as much as possible, and in this way develop a good heart.

Developing a good heart is not like pressing a button—one press and the whole room lights up. You can only develop a good heart gradually. That is the way to train the mind in bodhicitta. So, generate the bodhicitta motivation, thinking, “I am going to listen to the commentary on the graduated path to enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.”

I think we'll have a pipi break.

GANDEN LHA GYĀMA VISUALIZATION

This is how to practice the profound path of guru yoga called the *Blissful Realm of a Hundred Devas, Ganden Lha Gyāma*, the secret advice passed down from the lineage lamas year to year. With this practice, you can practice mahamudra and the second level of Highest Yoga Tantra, the completion stage, which has five stages. It contains the secret advice of the practice of the Maha-anuttara Yoga path, which cannot be explained without having received a Maha-anuttara Tantra ordination.

There is also a danger to the Lama if they explain it to those who are unqualified. So, by leaving out those parts, those four particular profound practices of the Mahayana tantric path, I will just give a general explanation of practice of the guru yoga of the *Blissful Realm of a Hundred Devas, Ganden Lha Gyāma*.

Without needing to repeat what I explained yesterday about how to visualize the pure realm of Tushita, which would mean it would kind of become long, you can visualize the essence. Then, it will be very simple. Once you have understood the essence, it's not necessary to remember every single word. You should make your visualization of the main points of the pure realm of Tushita as

²⁶ V. 257.

beautiful as you can. Doing that, you then naturally also generate the wish to be there. That itself becomes the cause to be born in the pure realm.

On the right side of Maitreya Buddha, there is Lama Atisha. In Tushita, he's in the aspect of the deva's son Nanga Trime (Stainless Space). On the left side of Maitreya Buddha, there is Lama Tsongkhapa, in the aspect of the deva's son Gyaltsab Jampael Nyingpo (Son of the Victorious One). These are the names of the holy places in Tibet that they are called in the pure realm.

They are the principal ones. Then there are a multitude of surrounding bodhisattvas in the ten directions, coming from the buddha realms; there are unimaginable numbers surrounding them. Maitreya Buddha is giving Prajnaparamita teachings to uncountable numbers of surrounding Sangha and disciples. You should think as if you are hearing him giving these teachings, and it is an extremely enchanting tune. It's not that you are outside visualizing it all and you can't hear what he's teaching. You are there and you can hear it all. You should think like that.

Then, the wish-granting trees are blown by the wind, making the beautiful, sweet sound of the holy Dharma, the enchanting sound of the holy Dharma. There are the various beautifully colored birds flying around and on the ponds, and there are beautiful flowers filling the whole space with the incredible, beautiful sounds of the holy Dharma. They not only make sounds there; you can also clearly hear those beautiful sounds of the Dharma. And the meaning of the holy Dharma appears in your mind; you have that kind of understanding.

The whole space in Tushita pure realm is filled with scented smells. You can also experience those smells. Your visualization should be as if you are actually clearly seeing Tushita, with all beautiful features and the particular decorations. It is as if you are actually seeing all the qualities of the place and the particular deities so clearly; it is as if you are actually there.

After you have visualized this, make a strong, dauntless request from the heart to Maitreya Buddha and the surroundings deities for them to also guide you there. If you make requests like this then when you do the *Ganden Lha Gyäma* practice, visualizing the pure realm like this, it becomes the cause to not be born in the impure realms but rather to be born in the pure land. It also becomes preparation, training, to transfer the consciousness at the time of death to Tushita pure realm.

Then, visualize this. At the heart of Maitreya Buddha is a golden mandala base. In the scriptures there is different idea, it's like a very shiny golden table. What's it called? [Rinpoche discusses with students] I don't know. Is that the real name? In Tibetan, it doesn't matter.²⁷ There is this reflection at the heart. On this is a heap of white clouds, piled up, like you see above the peak of Mount Everest, extremely fine, very beautiful. The essence of this is the transcendental wisdom that has great compassion for all of us who are on this suffering planet. Yesterday I said "country" but I think that's wrong; I think you should use the term "planet"—all of us on this suffering planet.

Then, above that is your own kind root guru. I didn't follow the English. I didn't make the complete meaning. That's not the way to begin. Like the Tibetans, I try to follow the Tibetan language.

²⁷ Rinpoche's 1986 Tushita teachings on *Ganden Lha Gyäma* refer to this as "a clear reflection of the infinite knot appearing in a very clear golden mandala base."

In the center of that cloud is the Dharma King of the three realms, Tsongkhapa, father and sons, with the three piles of transcendental wisdom beings who are essence of all the buddhas' omniscient compassion and power, inseparable in essence from your own kind root guru. They are seated on the throne, lotus and moon disc. It becomes so clear it is as if you have actually met them.

I just mentioned the three piles of beings, but I will check whether I need to explain it or not. This is one of the practices of Maha-anuttara Tantra. If it needs to be explained, I'll do it next time.

Then, you should sweetly chant the invocation, with a dauntless request from the very depth of your heart, as if you have reached there in front of Maitreya Buddha and you are requesting him,

I have no fortune in this life
To come to your pure land,
So please, descend to this world
To be my savior, my leader.²⁸

Having made the request to Lama Tsongkhapa in Tushita, he hears the invocation, your beautiful chanting. Have no doubt that he will descend, right in that second, even between the time it takes to uncross your legs. Lama Tsongkhapa hears this and understands this immediately. This is something that even bodhisattvas who have achieved the great path of merit and have attained the concentration of continual Dharma cannot see. With their clairvoyance, they can see unimaginable distances and with the clairvoyance of the deva's ear they can hear things unimaginably far away, so why shouldn't Lama Tsongkhapa, who is omniscient, be able to see that you are invoking him?

I think I'll stop here.

BRINGING THE LAMRIM INTO YOUR LIFE IS THE REAL CURE

Khunu Lama Rinpoche said,

Meditate upon bodhicitta when afflicted with disease.
Meditate upon bodhicitta when sad.
Meditate upon bodhicitta when suffering occurs.
Meditate upon bodhicitta when you get scared.²⁹

This is the way to meditate on bodhicitta. Whenever you get sick, whenever you are unhappy, miserable, scared, whenever there is great fear in your mind, this is how to bring thought training, tonglen, into your practice. This is the essential method—by clearly visualizing sentient beings who are devoid of happiness as the objects of your practice of love, and then dedicating your body, surroundings, possessions and merit to those, and then, as the objects of your compassion taking their suffering by visualizing it clearly as black smoke entering you.

²⁸ In the 1986 Tushita teachings, this is translated as: "I am requesting you, the Dharma King, Omniscient One, Losang Dragpa, and Sons, /who are seated on the top of the water holders like piled-up white curd, / to descend here at this place from the heart of the Savior of the Hundred Devas of Tushita."

²⁹ V. 175.

You may have read about this method many times in books or heard it from the holy speech of the virtuous friend, but if you apply this thought training method whenever there is confusion, it is the best medicine to eliminate that confusion; it is the best therapy.

I remember seeing autistic children in Brisbane, Australia. There was a place where they keep them together. Most of them looked very nice, kind of intelligent. They really didn't seem to have any mental problems. Usually, when somebody has mental problems you can tell from their appearance, but this was not so for these autistic children.

There was a little boy called Michael. He had several teachers, but one teacher told us kind of proudly that she had read some teachings of Nagarjuna, some philosophy. As she was playing with Michael, she said she was going to do some psychotherapy. I didn't realize exactly what she meant, what kind of method she was talking about. Then, we watched as she started playing cards with the boy, getting him to tell stories or describe the figures from the playing cards, deciding what they meant. I guess she was trying to bring him back, to make his mind more normal so that he could communicate.

This lamrim meditation is very practical. The practice of thought training is an extremely profound, highly skillful method; it benefits in so many ways. It's just made of that one practice, bringing the mind inside and applying the remedies. It's a matter of whether you practice it or not, whether your mind becomes familiar with it or not.

Without talking much, even though people have read many books and heard many teachings on these practices, when they meet problems they go to a psychologist or somebody to deal with their problems. Even after many years of listening to the teachings and reading Dharma books on the profound Mahayana thought training methods, as soon as they have a problem, such as a relationship problem, they go to a therapist or a psychologist.

Going to talk to a lama is like going to a therapist. If they know the lamrim, if they are living in the practice, when you receive advice from them, it is the remedy for many mental problems. It is the remedy to cure the unsubdued mind. In that way, it can be far more valuable to receive advice from a meditator who lives in the practice than from a professional psychologist.

What they will tell you is just something you have heard before or what you have read in the books. It's just a matter of seeing the mistake you have been making—not putting the advice into practice. Lama Tsongkhapa said at the very beginning of the *Lamrim Chenmo*, the *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* teachings, his great commentary on Atisha's *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, that you listen to teachings, you listen, listen, listen, listen, and you study them, you study, study, study, but when you want to meditate, you do nothing with the teachings that you have heard. What you meditate on is something completely different than what you have studied. It has nothing to do with the practice. It's just for reputation, just to be able to debate well or write books and be a scholar. It has nothing to do with the practice of taming the unsubdued mind.

When you want to practice, after all this listening and studying, you then go to ask somebody, “Oh, how should I begin to practice the Dharma? Shall I begin from enlightenment?” You can begin with the enlightenment that is the complete realization of guru devotion! Anyway, I'm joking.

Lama Tsongkhapa used this example. When you train a horse, before you race it in a horse race, you show it the road, so that on the actual day of the race you can take it where you want it to go; it will know and not wander all over the place. You won't end up racing in the forest or over the cliff! Similarly, you listen, listen, listen, and study, study, study. Then, when your horoscope tells you that you only have a year to live, at the time when you really want to practice, you go to ask somebody how to begin to practice the Dharma. This is because you haven't heard the teachings from the very beginning, you don't know how to practice, and so when you want to practice you don't know how to. You shouldn't follow this example. If you have to ask this kind of question, that means you are keeping your everyday life and the Dharma—your lamrim meditations and your thought training practices—kind of separate. You are not living the Dharma; there are gaps between your life and the teachings, so that when a problem comes, the question arises, “What should I think? What should I do?”

WITH TONGLÉN, PROBLEMS BRING HAPPINESS

When you have problems, you need to remember the lamrim and the thought training teachings and apply whichever is more effective. Then, practice the essence of thought training, the tonglén practice, as much as possible, as much as your mind is capable of. When your mind becomes incapacitated by a disease such as epilepsy, you may no longer be able to practice, but, while you are capable, you should practice thought training as much as possible.

When the mind becomes completely incapable, unconscious, with no power or freedom to think on a meditation subject, by practicing thought training, tonglén, using your problem, that itself accumulates extensive merit and purifies unimaginable obscurations. It is the best method to accumulate merit and do purification.

Things such as disease and fears come from negative karma and the unsubdued mind. So, without purifying them, as long as you have the body of the suffering transmigratory being you will have to experience all these problems continuously. Even if you are born as a human, you will still have to experience many problems of body and mind, like getting sick. That shows there is need for purification. However, practicing thought training purifies the causes and so it lessens the results—the diseases, fears, unhappiness and all these things of this life and future lives.

Having to experience suffering, fear and disease becomes very worthwhile, highly beneficial, because you are utilizing the problem and it becomes the cause to achieve enlightenment. When you practice tonglén, by generating strong love and compassion for other sentient beings, you naturally feel very happy, even though your body might be full of disease—even leprosy, which is very scary, which other people run away from. No matter what problems you have, your mind is extremely happy. Before, when you were facing a problem you were naturally unhappy, but with the tonglén practice, because you generate strong love and compassion for other sentient beings, your mind is immediately transformed and you feel very happy.

You can also think like this, “In the past, while I have been practicing thought training, tonglén, I have prayed to experience all the sufferings of sentient beings by myself. Now my prayers are being fulfilled. I have achieved what I prayed for. What I visualized before—taking on others' suffering—has now been actualized. How wonderful it is, how wonderful it is, how wonderful it is. How

wonderful it is that I'm experiencing this for the benefit of all sentient beings." When you can constantly think like this, great happiness arises in the mind.

Usually, when you face problems such as disease and fears, you exaggerate the problem. You think about it over and over, and it becomes greater and greater. The more you dwell on it, the more terrible it seems. You think, "How terrible this is!" You recite it over and over like a mantra. Obsessing about it like this makes the problem even worse; you become more unhappy, more scared. By exaggerating, your mind makes it worse, heavier.

While you are experiencing those problems and practicing tonglen, on the other hand, depending on how strong your love and compassion is for those you are doing the practice for, you experience less and less fear and worry. The more you cherish others, the less this happens.

Not only that, meditating on bodhicitta completely eliminates the cause of the disease, making it impossible for the results to manifest, the disease itself and the causes of unhappiness, karma and delusion. Bodhicitta makes it impossible to experience the true suffering and the true cause of suffering. When you practice bodhicitta, you do unimaginable purification and collect extensive merits, quickly and easily realizing the infallible right view, emptiness only.

Bodhicitta becomes the indirect cause of emptiness, the direct remedy to the true cause of suffering, karma and delusion. If you meditate on bodhicitta, you can quickly make it impossible to experience all these things. Therefore, it is extremely important in your everyday life to train the mind as much as possible in bodhicitta.

***HYMNS OF EXPERIENCE* COMMENTARY: THE TRANSIENCE OF LIFE**

This morning I thought to continue Lama Tsongkhapa's *Hymns of Experience* from where I stopped.

It is said that when you are in undesirable circumstances, the best method is to meditate on bodhicitta. Also, you should listen to lamrim teachings with a good heart, with a bodhicitta motivation. Think, "I am going to listen to the commentary on Lama Tsongkhapa's *Hymns of Experience* in order to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all mother sentient beings."

I'm not going to repeat the previous stanzas.

This life of leisure is even more precious than a wish-granting jewel;
That I have found such an existence is only this once;
So hard to find yet like a flash of lightning it is easy to vanish;
Contemplating this situation it's vital to realize that all mundane pursuits

Are like the empty grain husks floating in the winds
And that we must extract the essence of human existence.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.³⁰

³⁰ Vv. 13 and 14.

Instead of thinking of reincarnation as just a Buddhist concept, you should relate it to that American lady who discovered there is a life after this one. This is happening to many people in the West these days. Even though they haven't been to Dharamsala or Kopan and met the Tibetan lamas, they have discovered there is a life after this one. There are many books by people who have had this experience.

One book I brought from the West three years ago describes a lady from America. I didn't try to read the whole book from the beginning; I just read the very last part. The book describes how after she was clinically dead she left her body and what she saw while she was out of her body. She saw her family and realized that there was some work she hadn't finished, I think to do with her son, some property or something. Anyway, there was something she had not finished, so she had to go back.

The conclusion she reached at the end of the book was that she had definitely discovered there was a life after this one. And she said that she clearly saw that all she had done in this life was completely meaningless; she had completely wasted her time. When she discovered there was a life after this one, she saw that all the work done one-pointedly only for the happiness of this life was not enough. There was no preparation for the happiness of future lives. In that way she discovered that her whole life had been meaningless.

It is very effective to think about Lama Tsongkhapa's advice in this way. First of all, have a strong conviction that every happiness comes only from Buddhadharma, nothing else. Happiness doesn't come from negative karma, from nonvirtuous actions, only from virtuous actions, from the Buddhadharma.

Since that is the only the cause of every happiness and perfection, and since you want every happiness and perfection, ask yourself this question: "Am I able to practice the Buddhadharma or not?" If you consider it, of course you are able. From your side, all the conditions are perfect. You have attained a perfect human body, you have met a virtuous friend who has revealed the teachings to you, who has revealed *this* Buddhadharma, so all the conditions are perfect. There is no true reason at all why you can't practice the Dharma. If you are not practicing the Dharma, it is only because from your side something is missing, from your side you are not practicing.

How can you possibly feel that is still OK not to practice the Dharma even though all the necessary conditions are there? If you don't practice the Dharma in this life, you certainly won't practice it in future lives. You need four determinations. The first is that you do really have the right conditions. The second is that, because you have them, you therefore must practice the Dharma. The third determination is that, because death is definite and when death comes, depending on the positive or negative karma you have accumulated, you will transmigrate to either another body of a happy transmigratory being or a lower realm suffering being—there is no third alternative—you must therefore practice the Dharma now, in this body.

The last determination, the fourth one, is that, because you understand that the actual time of death is indefinite—it may even occur tonight or within the next few hours or minutes—you must therefore start to practice the holy Dharma right now. It's very effective to think in this way.

We'll stop here.

Lecture 23

December 1, 1980

DEVELOPING EQUANIMITY

Start with the bodhicitta motivation, thinking, “I must achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all mother sentient beings. Therefore, I’m going to listen to the commentary of the graduated path to enlightenment.”

The subject is the way of training the mind in bodhicitta through equalizing and exchanging yourself with others. This advice has been handed down from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha to Nagarjuna to Shantideva.

The day before yesterday I started this as a motivation for the morning motivation, so I thought to do a little bit like this, spending time on the advice given by the lamas, the teachings put together on the practice of equalizing yourself with others. Since this hasn’t been done in the mornings because we are taking ordination each morning, I thought we could do this in the afternoon sessions.

In case there’s somebody who didn’t hear the beginning part, maybe it has been taped or whatever it is, and you can listen to it from that.

The way of meditating on the equanimity of yourself and others is this. You need to equalize the partial mind where anger arises toward your enemy because they have harmed you and attachment arises toward your friend because they have helped you. Because of that, you discriminate friend and enemy, between friend who is close and enemy who is distant.

The way of equalizing these discriminating thoughts of attachment and anger is to see your enemy as your closest relative. Think like this: “When my enemy has given me harm and I start to distance myself from them, when feelings of anger start to arise, I should think that among all my relatives—my cousins, uncles, aunts, nephews and so forth, and closer than all of these are my mother and father—but among all these relatives, my enemy is the closest relative. Why? At this particular time they have harmed me a little and because of that I have labeled them ‘enemy.’ Just because of that I harbor hatred in my heart toward this person. This is shameless; it is very ungenerous.

“If I do that I am no better than the wild tiger in the forest. What’s the difference between me and this very vicious tiger? Whenever another animal harms a tiger a little, it discriminates, seeing that animal as an enemy, feeling hatred for it. With that thought of anger, it retaliates as soon as it can. So, what’s the difference between me and the tiger?

“I’m supposed to be a human being! That is a tiger. It is not called a human being, but a tiger. I’m supposed to be a human being, but if I carry on like this, what’s the difference? There is no difference between me and this vicious, wild tiger, or a very vicious, harmful spirit.”

Having thought this, hook the mind inside, determining that when you act in this way there is no difference. There is no point at all in generating such an evil thought, no point at all. Thinking like this, you can cut off your anger.

Then, consider how you determine who is your friend and how you develop attachment for them, holding them close. Think, “This person has given me a little help, and because of that I have become attached to them, calling them my friend. In that way, I have discriminated friend from enemy. Because of that, there is no difference between me and the cheating cannibals.”

The story of the cannibals comes in the commentary on the Mahayana ordination. Without going into the particular story, when you first meet a cannibal, they seem very sweet, very kind, showing you a loving disposition. They tell you they love you very much. Hearing this, you begin to completely trust the cannibal, thinking that what they are saying is really true. You think they do really love you and they will always really love you. It will always be like this. You get together with this cannibal but after some time, after the children are born, the cannibal eats you!

The story goes that in a previous time there were five hundred businesspeople who together went to an island in the Atlantic to get jewels. When they reached the land of the cannibals, they lived with cannibals for a long time. The cannibals showed them much kindness and told them they loved them, and they even had children together. But after they had made babies with the cannibals, the cannibals made an enclosure of a very big iron fence and put the businesspeople in it. Then, they ate them. There were hundreds but none of them ever returned. At different times, other groups went there but they too never returned.

On special full-moon days, a skillful and wise horse went to where the cannibals held the businesspeople. Every full-moon day it flew down from the deva realm to the human realm to drink water in that area. It rolled over and rubbed its back in the sand, like dogs do, and made a special noise in space that meant anybody who wanted to go with it back to Dzambuling could do so.

The people who had not yet been eaten by the cannibals tried to escape with the horse. The horse told them to hold its tail or the fur on its body. They had to look straight ahead as they were escaping and never look back at the cannibals. But as they were leaving, the cannibals followed, calling to them, asking them, “How dare you leave us, those you love? How can you leave the whole family, even your children? Don’t you feel any compassion for your children?” The cannibals were very skillful in deceiving them like this. Some people were deceived and were unable to pull themselves away because of their attachment. Afterwards, they were eaten. Others never looked back but held the fur of the horse or the tail, and the horse was able to carry them back to the human world.

The reason I’ve given the example of cannibals cheating, even though this is the example the lamas use to talk about attachment, the country where you live is full of examples like this. The essence is that somebody at the beginning seems very sweet, and you learn to completely trust them, but then you are completely cheated by them. In the end, because you trusted them, you drown in a quagmire of problems, completely cheated.

That’s the essence. With attachment, think, “What’s the difference between me and a pig? A pig also gets attached to the swineherd, the one who gives them food. So, what’s the differences between me and the pig? No difference.” Thinking like that, you see that there is no point at all in being attached. In that way you can cut off attachment.

The third category is sentient beings that you feel indifferent toward. If the thought of renouncing these sentient beings arises, if you feel you have no connection with these beings, you should think, “From beginningless past lives, these sentient beings have been my relatives and friends numberless times and they have given me much benefit. And it’s definite that in the future they will again be my relatives and friends and benefit to me again. Therefore, I shouldn’t give up on them.”

As Khunu Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen told me, this is the meaning of equanimity, recognizing all beings as having been your mother. By thinking like this, you are able to cut off the discriminating thoughts of anger and attachment.

To train your mind in equalizing and exchanging yourself with others, you should think well about the reasons. To obtain happiness and eliminate suffering, you need to equalize both your mind and your actions towards the enemy, the friend and the person you feel indifferent to—to *all* sentient beings, without any discrimination. You should think this way when you train in this great equanimity, as a preliminary for the thought training practice of equalizing and exchanging yourself with others.

THE THREE REASONS WE AND OTHERS ARE EQUAL FROM OUR SIDE

As is explained in the *Guru Puja*, there are various reasons why we and all sentient beings are equal: three from our own side and three from the side of others based on conventional or all-obscuring truth, and three based on ultimate or absolute truth. The three conventional reasons from our own side are:

- we are all equal in wanting to obtain happiness and avoid suffering;
- we are all equal in needing help;
- we are all equal in being tormented by delusions.

The three conventional reasons from the side of others are:

- we depend on sentient beings for all happiness;
- we depend on sentient beings to attain liberation and enlightenment;
- sentient beings are equal to the buddhas in the help they give us.

The three ultimate reasons are:

- “friend,” “enemy,” and “stranger” are merely concepts conceived by our deluded mind;
- “friend,” “enemy,” and “stranger” appear permanent, but they are not;
- I and others are interdependent, like “here” and “there.”

The first one is that there is no difference at all between us and all other sentient beings in wanting to have happiness and satisfaction. None of us wish even the slightest suffering, even the slightest dissatisfaction at all; we are all exactly the same in that. Therefore think, “Because of that, please grant me blessings that I may be able to bring all beings comfort and happiness.”

Just as none of us ever wishes the slightest suffering, we all wish to only have happiness. Everybody only wishes for happiness—you do and so do all others, those you see as friends, those you see as enemies and those you see as strangers, those you are indifferent to.

For that reason—that we are all exactly the same in only wanting happiness—think, “How can I carelessly only look after my own happiness. That is something shameful. Just as I have a right to be happy, so do all others, in exactly the same way. It seems that to eliminate my own suffering and attain my own happiness is the most important thing and that whether others suffer or are happy is of no importance to me, but that is a shameful attitude, one I must renounce. Just like me, all others want to be free from suffering and to have happiness, and just like me they deserve this. There is not the slightest reason my happiness is any more important than theirs. It is just as important that their suffering is eliminated immediately, without delaying even a minute.”

The conclusion is that all beings—yourself and all others—are exactly equal in wanting happiness and to avoid suffering, therefore you simply cannot carelessly look to your own happiness and renounce the happiness of others. You can't think that one beggar is very handsome, very beautiful, so polite and therefore give him a few dollars or a cup of coffee and a sandwich, but another one is really ugly, so you scold him and send him away without anything. They all came begging to you, each wanting some money from you, so there is no point at all in discriminating, seeing some as close and giving to them and seeing others as distant and refusing to give to them.

All sentient beings are like that. Leaving aside uncontaminated, undeluded happiness, for them to receive even an atom of contaminated happiness is extremely rare, like a star in the daytime. All sentient beings are exactly the same in being devoid of happiness and always seeking happiness. There is no point at all in discriminating between them, seeing some as distant and deserving happiness and some as distant and not deserving happiness. Therefore think, “I must offer happiness and benefit equally to all sentient beings, without discriminating.”

Thinking like this is very effective for the mind, because people always do the opposite. Somebody who is very sweet to you, who respects you and always says nice things seems very attractive and you easily give them help. Conversely, if there is somebody who has an ugly body and who doesn't respect you, you simply don't care whether they are happy or not; you certainly don't offer to help them at all. Or even if you do give them something, it's the worst possible quality—you save the good quality thing for the person you like the most. Even though each person has the same right to receive something suitable, you discriminate who gets what.

Not only are we all equal in wanting happiness and avoiding suffering, we are all equal in needing help. Instead of beggars, you can imagine there are ten patients, each equally pitiful, in agony, needing to be cured. There is no point from your side in being attached to some of them and angry at others, wishing to cure those you are attached to and not the others. This is a very unworthy attitude. If you do that, it is your own mistake. Therefore think, “Like me, all sentient beings are sick and in agony, under the control of delusions and karma, of the three poisonous minds, therefore all sentient beings must experience the general and particular sufferings of samsara, the three types of suffering. We are all exactly equal in that. Therefore there is no point in discriminating, offering help to some and not to others, trying to remove the suffering of some and renouncing others.”

THE THREE REASONS WE AND OTHERS ARE EQUAL FROM THE SIDE OF OTHERS

If you mistakenly think that because we are all equal then there is no use taking responsibility for anybody—let alone everybody—that it doesn't make any difference to you, it is very good to go over the three reasons you are equal to all others from their side: we depend on sentient beings for all worldly happiness, we depend on them for the happiness of liberation and enlightenment, and sentient beings are equal to the buddhas in the help they give us.

It is impossible to have not just worldly happiness but even nirvana and enlightenment without depending on the kindness of the mother sentient beings. In that way, they are extremely kind.

Besides that, they have been incredibly kind by being your mother. From your beginningless past lives, each sentient being has been not only your mother but also your friend or relative, and they have benefited you numberless times. So, from your own side, how can you discriminate this one as enemy and this one as friend? How can you accept someone and renounce someone else?

The second point is that although they might have occasionally harmed you through those countless lives, the number of times they have benefited you is incalculable. You can check, even in this life. Check and see that sentient beings are always benefiting you, directly or indirectly. Therefore think, "When all sentient beings have benefited me so much, how can I discriminate some sentient beings as close and some as distant? How can I accept some and give up on others? Such an attitude is undeserved and unworthy."

The third point is that it is pointless to discriminate because it is not only definite you are going to die but the actual time of death is indefinite. It could be tomorrow. Imagine a group of criminals due to be executed tomorrow. For them to spend their last day squabbling, angry at some criminals and siding with others, to show that sort of partisan attitude is extremely silly and very childish. In the same way, you and all others are in the mouth of the Lord of Death, utterly unsure when the mouth will close and consume you—it may even be today—so there is no point at all in having attachment for some beings and aversion for others, seeing some as close and others as distant.

Therefore think, "Because of this, I must equalize my thoughts and actions, working only to eliminate the suffering and attain the happiness of all sentient beings, whether they appear as friend, enemy or stranger. Therefore, without any discrimination of close and distant, of friend, enemy and stranger, I must work to eliminate all the sufferings and obtain all the happiness for my kind mother sentient beings.

"To be able to do this by myself, I must achieve the state of omniscience. Without creating the cause of omniscience, it is impossible to attain the omniscient mind. Therefore, I'm going to take the Mahayana ordination for all mother sentient beings. This is the infallible method to be able to eliminate all the sentient beings' sufferings and to cause them to obtain every happiness."

Just by keeping the eight precepts from today until tomorrow with a bodhicitta motivation becomes the cause of omniscience. This is the method to be able to do extensive and effortless work for all sentient beings. Therefore you should feel great happiness that you are following the incredible method that enables you to do work for other sentient beings.

[Rinpoche gives the eight Mahayana precepts]

GANDEN LHA GYĀMA: VISUALIZATION OF LAMA TSONGKHAPA

There is no contradiction at all between emptiness and dependent arising. Those two are unified, not separate. Achieving enlightenment is a gradual practice. It requires passing beyond the graduated path of the lower capable being and the graduated path of the middle capable being, and then completing the graduated path of the higher capable being. These three paths are signified by the three fingers standing upright in the mudra expounding the Dharma. Relating to the guru, this is the way Guru Lama Tsongkhapa guides us sentient beings who are the objects to be subdued, by revealing these three levels of the path. It's up to us to listen to the teachings on these paths and do the meditation in order to generate all the realizations of the path.

That will gradually lead to enlightenment, the stage of the unification of wisdom and method, or the unification of the holy body, speech and mind, signified by the other two fingers, the thumb and the forefinger, touching.

While keeping his hands in this mudra, Guru Lama Tsongkhapa holds a sword and a scripture. The sword signifies cutting through our confusion, our ignorance, and the text, the scripture, signifies the complete teachings, from guru devotion to enlightenment, that the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha have already generated and that we will generate within our minds. This text, in the form of letters, makes the sound of the Dharma, as I explained in the refuge part.

There are two upali flowers, one holding the sword and one holding the text. One signifies great love, wishing all sentient beings, without discrimination, to have all the happiness, and the other signifies great compassion, wishing all sentient beings, without discrimination, to be free from all suffering. Holding the stems of these flowers at his heart signifies the great love and great compassion that Lama Tsongkhapa has for us sentient beings within his holy mind.

Lama Tsongkhapa's holy body is adorned with three robes, signifying that he lives in all three levels of vows completely and purely: the moral conduct of keeping the pratimoksha vows, the moral conduct of keeping the bodhisattva vows and the moral conduct of keeping the tantric vows.

Lama Tsongkhapa wears a golden-colored pandit's hat, signifying that even though in his holy mind scriptural understanding and realizations are equaling space, there is not the slightest stain of pride. It's not like how most of us might have studied and learned one Mahamudra text or something at university, but there still is a huge gap between the teachings and the mind; they somehow never touch our mind, they never communicate.

Even though we might have memorized a few words and can talk about them from a book—even just one word—we feel such pride, greater than Mount Everest. Or we have read a few introductory Buddhist pamphlets and immediately think we know everything there is to know about the Buddhadharma. “I've ready everything about Tibetan Buddhism. Now what should I do?” I have some friends in America like that! It's like, after reading those few pamphlets, there's nothing left to do, and you kind of expect in that minute to become enlightened. All of a sudden you should have some power or levitate or something.

Even though Lama Tsongkhapa has such unimaginable qualities of understanding, power and compassion, there's not the slightest stain of pride. That is the quality of somebody who is really learned.

The golden color of the hat signifies that Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings are like very refined gold, gold that has been checked in three ways. It has to be known to a valid consciousness; no other valid consciousness contradicts it; and no ultimate analysis contradicts it.³¹

To come to a valid understanding of a Dharma subject, you must start from an inference, relying on a scriptural quotation, and then discover the truth through reasoning. For instance, how do you come to understand that pizza is impermanent? By using the valid reasoning that it changes within each second because it is under the control of the cause. That is the nature of the object, the power of the object. With that reasoning you discover that pizza is impermanent.

This is the first point, the common inference, something that we ordinary beings can ascertain through reasoning. And it's the same with the other two examinations.

Then, Lama Tsongkhapa's pandit hat is very pointed, signifying he has realized right view of emptiness only, not the wrong view. This is the incredible view that puts together emptiness only and dependent arising, seeing them as one, without separation. The view of the absolute nature that Lama Tsongkhapa realized is infallible, and from that he gave infallible teachings on the nature of emptiness only.

This is the middle way, devoid of the two extremes: the extreme of nihilism and the extreme of eternalism. Eternalism means something is permanent, that it continues forever. [*Student*: Are the four elements eternal? They are unchanging.] Unchanging! That's good. We can all be eternal gods! I'm joking. The extreme of eternalism means permanent, which is the opposite of impermanence. And nihilism is nothingness. So the middle way is devoid of these two extremes. This is what Lama Tsongkhapa realized and what he taught; this is the right, perfect view. When you practice what Lama Tsongkhapa taught on right view, you are able to see and touch the nature of emptiness only, the middle way that is devoid of the two extremes.

This is what having a very high and pointed hat signifies. By studying Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings on emptiness, you are able to reach the very pinnacle of the right view.

Lama Tsongkhapa sits cross-legged in the vajra posture, signifying he has actualized the unification, through the practice of the four vajras. This refers to the completion stage practice of Highest Yoga Tantra. The four vajra postures are the posture of the drop, the posture of the wind, the posture of the channel and the posture of the body. Lama Tsongkhapa had actualized the unification of clear light and illusory body using these four vajra postures. This is what sitting in the vajra posture signifies.

³¹ Tsongkhapa, *Lamrim Chenmo*, vol. 3, p. 178.

Lecture 24

December 2, 1980

GANDEN LHA GYĀMA: VISUALIZATION OF THE THREE STACKS

Think, “I must achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all mother sentient beings. Therefore I’m going to listen to the commentary on the guru yoga of the *Hundred Deities of the Land of Joy*.”

Please listen to the teaching well by generating bodhicitta as your motivation as well as observing right conduct while listening to the teachings.

I think I mentioned three stacks before. This is a particular advice given by Lama Atisha to Lama Tsongkhapa on guru yoga.

Visualize Lama Tsongkhapa. At his heart is Manjushri, and at Manjushri’s heart is the syllable DHI. Lama Tsongkhapa is the samaya being, Manjushri is the transcendental wisdom being and the syllable DHI is the concentration being. These are the three powerful beings.

On Lama Tsongkhapa’s right side is his main disciple Gyaltsab Je. At his heart is Chenrezig and at Chenrezig’s heart is the syllable HRIH. On Lama Tsongkhapa’s left side is his other main disciple Khedrub Je. At his heart is Vajrapani, and at Vajrapani’s heart is the syllable HUM.

Your own root guru is in this aspect, as Lama Tsongkhapa and his two disciples. This was Manjushri’s particular advice when he explained how to realize your own root guru is the essence of all the buddha’s omniscience, power and compassion.

If you meditate like this and you are able to feel that your own guru is the essence of all the buddhas’ omniscience, power and compassion you will be able to see your root guru as Manjushri, Vajrapani and Chenrezig. In this way, you see your guru as the embodiment of all the buddhas. This is the main reason why Manjushri gave this advice to Lama Tsongkhapa. This goes with the visualization of the guru practice prayer we recited yesterday.

Don’t think that Lama Tsongkhapa is something separate from your root guru. Don’t think there is no contact at all between your guru and Lama Tsongkhapa. Seeing your own guru in the aspect of Lama Tsongkhapa is the main meditation. Then, on the basis of this meditation, you think of all the amazing qualities of the holy body, holy speech and holy mind, and it becomes a guru yoga meditation.

Then you recite the *Migtsema* to Lama Tsongkhapa, whose essence is your root guru,

Chenrezig, great treasure of non-objectifying compassion;
Manjushri, master of stainless wisdom;
Vajrapani, destroyer of the entire host of maras;
Tsongkhapa, crown jewel of the sages of the Land of Snow,
To Losang Dragpa, at your feet I make requests.

Although the prayer says “Land of Snow” meaning Tibet, you can think of this whole earth, of the three realms. Lama Tsongkhapa, who is one with your guru, has all these qualities, as does Chenrezig, the essence of all the buddhas’ compassion, and Manjushri, the essence of all the buddhas’ wisdom, and Vajrapani, able to destroy the multitudes of maras. These are not only the external maras that interfere with the practice of the Dharma, but also the maras that are the 84,000 delusions, the mara of grasping onto the I as real, as well as the rest of the unsubdued minds that arise from that. There are the six root delusions and the twenty secondary delusions—all of which arise from the ignorance that grasps onto the sense of a truly existing I.

The unsubdued mind has two types of obscuration: the disturbing-thought obscurations, that block you from liberation, and the obscurations to knowledge, that block you from enlightenment. These maras are the conceptions of true existence and the dualistic view. These are the multitudes of maras that Vajrapani, the essence of all the buddhas’ power, can destroy.

Chenrezig is the essence of all the buddhas’ compassion, the perfect compassion that feels the unbearable suffering of the non-truly existent sentient beings. Like that, Guru Lama Tsongkhapa is also essence of all the buddhas’ perfect compassion, perfect understanding and perfect power. So, you meditate on Guru Lama Tsongkhapa having these qualities.

In this way, you see that Guru Lama Tsongkhapa is the special meditational deity, that he is Chenrezig, he is Manjushri, he is Vajrapani. Indirectly, this makes you feel that Guru Lama Tsongkhapa is the embodiment of all the buddhas. You can visualize Manjushri, Chenrezig and Vajrapani as decorating Lama Tsongkhapa’s holy body.

Generally, when you recite *Migtsema*, you can meditate in this way. Then, with the last line, “To Losang Dragpa, at your feet I make requests,” what are you requesting? You are asking Losang Dragpa, another name for Lama Tsongkhapa, to have those perfect qualities of compassion, wisdom and power, in order to do perfect work for other sentient beings.

As you visualize Lama Tsongkhapa and his two disciples, the essence of these three is your own root guru, and you can see that they are the embodiment of all the buddhas.

After this, visualize Maitreya Buddha at the heart of Manjushri, and say the prayer:

You who emanate from the heart of the savior of the hundred devas’ Joyful Realm,
On the peak of a cloud (water holder) resembling clumps of extremely fresh white curd,
The king of Dharma, omniscient Losang Dragpa, with your sons:
I request you to come to this place.

There are different invocations, invoking from dharmakaya, from pure realms or from sambhogakaya. The father and sons (Lama Tsongkhapa and his disciples) descend on an extremely white cloud and absorb into the three you have visualized before. If you can always remember the significance of this, it is very effective for the mind.

Lama Tsongkhapa’s holy body is white shaded with red, which signifies the unification of method and wisdom. This is similar to the visualization you do of tantric deities in union—the father and mother embracing—that also signifies the unification of method and wisdom, of bliss and voidness.

Lama Tsongkhapa's mudra is the mudra of turning the Dharma wheel, both palms turned out like this, [Rinpoche shows mudra] which signifies there being no contradiction between the causal vehicle, Mahayana Paramitayana, and the resultant vehicle, the Vajrayana.

Today is Lama Tsongkhapa day. It celebrates the day the crown jewel of the sages of the Land of Snow—as well as the Dharma king of the three realms—reached the highest attainment. What we are listening to, studying and meditating on are his teachings; it is his advice that has the power to transform our minds.

Today also commemorates the day Lama Tsongkhapa passed away in Ganden monastery. So tonight we are remembering the kindness of Lama Tsongkhapa, how he is still guiding us through his teachings. Whatever benefits we have received have been from understanding Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings.

Lecture 25

December 4, 1980 (morning)

THE FOUR IMMEASURABLE THOUGHTS

To do a meditation on the four immeasurable thoughts, visualize all sentient beings around you: your family, your friends, your enemies and all other sentient beings in their own forms. Or you can do it like in the refuge practice where you visualize them in human form and all having the nature of suffering—whichever is more effective for you.

It is good while you are generating each of the immeasurable thoughts to feel like you are writing a letter to them: to your parents, to your friends and so forth. In the teachings it says to place your friend in front and your enemy behind you, but you can do it whichever way is most effective, such as having the enemy in front and your friend behind. As I say, here you generally visualize the beings of the other realms in their own forms, as opposed to the refuge practice, but again, it's up to you.

First is the thought of *immeasurable equanimity*. Think, "How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were to live in equanimity, free of hatred and attachment." Think about your parents, friends and enemies.

On the whole, you should think this. "May they always remain in equanimity." Think this from the very depths of the heart. [Then, "I will cause them to remain in equanimity."]

Then, remembering the object of refuge, the merit field, request them, "Please Guru-Deity, bless me to be able to do this."

Think of how wonderful it would be if all these different kinds of beings, not just human beings, were to live in equanimity—not just the human beings on this earth, the human beings who are always fighting each other, harming each other, destroying billions of creatures, and not just destroying their lives but destroying their perfections as well.

For example, in one city, human beings and animals together work so hard to create a whole city and then a whole country, putting so much effort, energy, expense into actualizing these perfections, just to have it completely destroyed in an hour by either one person or another country. Just think about this.

Then think how wonderful it would be if, in this world, human beings could remain in the state of equanimity, with neither attraction nor anger and repulsion, holding some close and some distant. It would be so incredible, so fantastic, if all human beings could be like this and live in equanimity. Then problems of the world would be stopped. Having their minds abide in equanimity is like no longer having the creator of the problem, anger and attachment. The creator of the problem would no longer exist.

Even if you cannot think about all the sentient beings in the six realms, if you can get a feeling of the human beings on this earth, you can see how wonderful it would be if their minds were in equanimity. Try to feel that very strongly from the heart. Remembering this meditation becomes

very effective for the mind. That includes your enemy. Think, “May they always remain in equanimity.”

Think of somebody you dislike. If it’s somebody who is in China or Tibet, it’s very easy to find them. But you can think that way, thinking about somebody who has shown that aspect to you, who has given that bad vibration to you. If they are actually sitting in front of you, that is very kind of them. You can then request them to sit on your crown!

Then, think of the object of refuge, the merit field, and make the request, “Please Guru-Deity, bless me to be able to do this.”

In daily life people often turn a small irritation into a big anger; dwelling on it so that it becomes bigger and bigger. If you do like this, it becomes the opposite of the prayer, the opposite of meditation. It shouldn’t be like this. How you live your life and the prayers you say and the subject you meditate on should be as similar as possible. How you think and your conduct should accord as much as possible with what you pray about and meditate on. Then it’s very good, it’s very practical. “Please Guru-Deity, bless me to be able to do this.”

If even half of the human beings living on this earth could live in equanimity, think of how few problems there would be. If *more* than half, say three quarters, could live in equanimity, there would be so much more peace; there would be the greatest peace, instead of always killing each other, fighting each other, discriminating white and black, hating somebody because they have another religion—all those things. For thousands of years this thought of discrimination—discriminating friend and enemy—has led to attachment and anger, to people fighting each other, causing their minds to become more and more unsubdued.

This happens between countries and between two people—attachment, anger, fighting each other. If they could live in equanimity, their minds would become subdued and they would live in peace.

Next, generate *immeasurable love*. “How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings had happiness and the causes of happiness.”

The practice of the worldly person, their view, is to harm the enemy as much as possible, to destroy them if possible. You certainly don’t offer them any benefit. However, the Kadampa geshe’s advice is that you should do exactly the opposite. They say that if you act according to the way of worldly people, that is not the holy Dharma. On the other hand, if you act in the opposite way to how worldly people act, that is the holy Dharma. Speaking from their hearts, this is what the Kadampa geshe explained.

Therefore, if it is the view of worldly people that you harm your enemy as much as possible, the Dharma view is that you help them as much as possible. This is also the advice of the kind founder, Shakyamuni Buddha. Offer your enemy as much happiness and benefit as you can, with all the power and knowledge you have. This advice from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is very effective for the mind because there is not one sentient being who doesn’t need happiness and benefit, who doesn’t seek happiness and benefit.

So, think, “May they have happiness and its causes. I will cause them to have these. Please, Guru-Deity, bless me to be able to do this.”

You should think like this about all sentient beings, including your parents, your friends and enemies. You should dedicate any merits for all sentient beings to meet the teachings and actualize the path and achieve enlightenment. That is very good.

Think of those you have a blood relationship with, your parents or children, those who are at home, those who don't have a Dharma wisdom eye. Think how they are under the control of mara, how because of ignorance, they don't appreciate the difference between right and wrong, what to practice and what to avoid. They are ignorant about the path to enlightenment.

One of the best things you can offer them is to introduce them to the infallible path of Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings, which are the unification of sutra and tantra, to become the cause for them to enjoy the Dharma.

***HYMNS OF EXPERIENCE* COMMENTARY: THE IMMINENCE OF DEATH**

Think, "May I continue the stainless work of the teaching of Lama Tsongkhapa in order benefit all the kind mother sentient beings. Therefore, I'm going to listen to the commentary on the graduated path to enlightenment."

Please listen to the teachings well by generating the good heart, a bodhicitta motivation, and remembering the right methods for listening to the teachings. The subject is Lama Tsongkhapa's *Hymns of Experience of the Graduated Path to Enlightenment*.

This life of leisure is even more precious than a wish-granting jewel;
That I have found such an existence is only this once;
So hard to find yet like a flash of lightning it is easy to vanish.³²

Our lifespan is very short, like lightning in the sky, and not only that, death will definitely occur. Even when life happens, it is so brief and it can be stopped at any moment. You have life and then [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] it is stopped, just like that. You are living your life, seeing so many people, possessions and things, but then life stops—it can happen any time. The actual time of death is indefinite.

Life is like a brief flash of lightning. You have this vision of this life; you are eating, sleeping, traveling, meditating, studying, reading, all that is as if within a flash of lightning. You are doing all these things and then, while you are in the middle of doing them, your life is stopped. It could be at any moment. After the flash of lightning, it becomes completely dark. Similarly, the vision of life can stop in any second.

Reflecting well on Lama Tsongkhapa's advice, you can see how pointless it is to be involved in the works of this life, to be completely distracted by them. It is utterly childish. It's like there is a huge dam in front of your house, about to bust, about to tear your house off its foundations and sweep it away. Although you are aware of this, you still cling to your house, your property, your possessions. Even when the flood waters are about to destroy all this, you are still planning where to build your

³² V. 13.

new swimming pool and how to make a new garden around the house. You are so absorbed in this, so distracted by these plans, clinging to all this, that you have no concern for the danger that will happen at any time.

The water is rushing toward your house, but you are still unaware of it. You plan your development of the house, you invite friends around for coffee and tea. Once the water inundates your home, you will have no place to run. You and all your possessions will be destroyed.

Meanwhile, others around you are aware of what is about to happen and have cut off their clinging and are completely ready to run away. Having checked ahead of time and seen the danger, they have made preparations, carrying their possessions to a safe place—their clothes in a suitcase, their money in a pocket, they leave with enough time to escape. That is recognized as a skillful, wise person.

When you are completely occupied with the works of this life, when you never make preparations for the happiness of future lives, when you completely cling to this life, you never think of impermanence and death. Then, suddenly, there is no time. When you are possessed by death, when the karmic vision of death appears and you have to experience the pain and suffering of dying, even if you think of death then, no matter how much fear there is, it's too late.

You must make preparations before death happens. You must practice the Dharma, especially remembering impermanence and death frequently. This protects the mind, keeping it in the Dharma. By remembering impermanence and death, your mind will continuously reside in the Dharma no matter what happens. It's like a trained rider who can keep their horse on course. If it starts to run in the wrong direction, they can whip it and correct its direction. If later on it again goes the wrong way, again they can whip it and correct its course. Like this, before death happens, as much as possible, while you have freedom to practice the Dharma, just as the rider whips the horse, you whip the lazy mind by continuously thinking about impermanence and death, filling the mind continuously with the Dharma. In that way, you persuade the mind to practice the Dharma.

Unless you do that, whether you are a king or a beggar, when death comes you take nothing with you. Unaware of death, you are like a child who has built a sand house, unaware that a huge wave is coming, about to completely wash it away. It's coming nearer and nearer but you only become terrified when it's right above you and you see it. At that time, there is nothing you can do. You cling to the house, thinking it is the source of your happiness, but when the wave goes over it and washes it away, it's of no use to you at all. No matter how much fear you have, it's of no use.

It's the same thing with your life. Before death, when your body and mind are well, you can do whatever Dharma practice you want to, you can do a practice of purification or whatever. When you are well, if you do nothing, if you completely waste your time through being distracted in obtaining the meaningless perfections of this life, one after another, day after day, one day, when death unexpectedly comes, you are overwhelmed with fear, but no matter how much fear and worry you have, it is completely useless.

The wise thing to do, the skillful thing to do, is to make preparations. Just as a child might run away before the wave hits because they have seen it coming, if you have made preparations for the happiness of future lives, taking the essence of this precious human body, if you have prepared for death by remembering impermanence and death, that is a highly skillful thing to do.

By understanding impermanence and death, by knowing that death is definitely going to happen, and by fearing it now, without ignoring it, and because of that, protecting your mind with the Dharma, when the actual time of death arrives, you won't have any fears or worries. You will have complete confidence that you won't be going to the lower realms. Actually, you will have complete confidence that you will be going to a pure realm *for sure*; there will be signs of that. You will at least be able to attain the body of a happy transmigratory being and not be reborn in the lower realms. There will not be the slightest fear or worry in your mind. You will be a most confident, most skillful person.

I'll stop here.

Lecture 26

December 4, 1980 (afternoon)

GANDEN LHA GYĀMA VISUALIZATION: LAMA TSONGKHAPA AND HIS DISCIPLES

With a pure bodhicitta motivation, think, “I’m going to listen to the commentary on the way to practice the guru yoga of the *Hundred Deities of the Land of Joy*.”

Visualize all three, the father and the two sons, the three powerful beings, like this. Both sons, Gyaltsab Je and Khedrub Je, have their right hand in the mudra of expounding the Dharma. Their left hand holds a scripture, with the mudra of meditation. They are adorned with three robes and beautified with a golden-colored pandit’s hat; their two legs are in the vajra posture.

On Lama Tsongkhapa’s right is Gyaltsab Je. His aspect is a little odd. The color of his holy body is slightly white, but with a bluish tinge, and he has round eyes, like balls.

It is said that if you are able to visualize him like this, it is auspicious for you to be able to comprehend all the teachings of the Buddha, to be able to receive them and practice the entire graduated path to enlightenment.

On Lama Tsongkhapa’s left is Khedrub Je, wrathful looking. The color of his holy body is similar to Lama Tsongkhapa’s, white with a reddish complexion. His eyes are a little bit wrathful, kind of a little bigger, bulging. If you remember His Holiness Ling Rinpoche, when Rinpoche looked at somebody he sometimes had wrathful eyes like that. Khedrub Je doesn’t sit completely straight, but his body is twisted a bit, like Tara.

This body posture is significant. It’s an attitude you see with Kadampa geshe, those with first class degrees. When they debated, their bodies and expressions were like that. People would challenge Lama Tsongkhapa’s stance on a subject, and Khedrub Je was the one who defended it, defeating them by debating and discussing the subject. It is said that there was nobody who could debate like he could, clarifying all the points of Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings in particular. So this posture of his holy body signifies how each of his words completely stops others’ wrong conceptions.

It is said that their holy bodies³³ are so beautified that no matter how much you look at them you can never be satiated. And their holy speech is adorned with the sixty qualities so that no matter how much you listen you can never hear enough; you just want to listen to more and more, never getting bored. Their holy minds are qualified with the twenty-one divisions of uncontaminated or undiluted transcendental wisdom, having the extensive, profound, depthless qualities.

Just remembering them has power to not just eliminate the sufferings of samsara but also to liberate you from the blissful state of peace, lower nirvana.

Each of their pores transforms into the various remarkable forms that best benefits sentient beings. Each of their pores shows the fields of buddhas, having unimaginable secret actions, actions that

³³ From now on, it is unclear whether Rinpoche is referring to all three or just Lama Tsongkhapa.

ordinary sentient beings cannot figure out. Their holy bodies are transformed in all the pure realms of the buddhas, they cover all the pure realms, which absorb back into their holy bodies. Then they are able to perform unimaginable secret actions, known only to the buddhas, actions that sentient beings cannot figure out. Their aspect is very pleasing to you.

ONLY OUR DELUSIONS STOP US SEEING THE BUDDHAS

When you visualize a buddha and do an invocation, you should not think that this is just a visualization and that there is actually no buddha there. You don't have to think like that. Wherever you visualize the buddha, above your head, in your heart or in front of you, in that place there is the buddha.

There is nothing that is not the object of a buddha's omniscient mind. There is not one single aspect of existence, without the break of a single instance, that is not the object of their omniscient mind. Their omniscient mind sees the whole of existence forever.

The term "the unified stage of Vajradhara" signifies there must be two things that have been unified. These two things weren't unified before but are now. Here, it is the unification of the Buddha's holy body and the Buddha's holy mind, unified in the state of Vajradhara. Each and every single instance of existence is the object of the omniscient mind; it is covered by the omniscient mind, and wherever there is the omniscient mind, there is the holy body. The two are unified, inseparable. You can understand this by looking at how your very subtle mind manifests at the time of death. From that you can understand how deities manifest in tantric meditation.

This is clear in the story of Asanga, who meditated for twelve years in a cave, trying to see Maitreya Buddha without success. When he left the cave after all that time, he saw a wounded dog on the road and the most unbearable compassion arose for that dog. Seeing the wound covered in maggots, he thought to remove them, and he cut a piece of flesh off his leg to put them on so that they wouldn't be harmed, but then he realized he could harm them by removing them with his fingers. So, instead of the fingers, he used the tip of his tongue to pick the maggots up and put them on the flesh. In that way, he completely renounced himself and, with unbearable compassion, cherished the wounded dog and the maggots instead.

He had closed his eyes to do this and then he realized that suddenly there was no more wounded dog. When he opened his eyes, he saw Maitreya Buddha. He cried out to Maitreya, "For twelve years I've been trying to see you but never could. What happened? Where have you been?" Maitreya Buddha replied, "I have been there in the cave all the time, but you couldn't see me. Now that unimaginable compassion has arisen, it has purified your obscurations, and therefore now you are able to see me. Before, because of the obscurations, you couldn't see me. I was there all the time. I can prove it to you." Maitreya Buddha then showed Asanga the marks on his robe where Asanga had spat while he had meditated for those twelve years in the cave.

I think there are many times when our mind is heavily obscured by delusion and karma and many times we are like Asanga seeing only the wounded dog and can't see what is there. We see what seems to us to be a crazy person, but it's because we only have the karma to see that aspect. We don't know. A buddha manifests in many aspects.

There is the story of the butcher who went to Lhasa. There is a famous Shakyamuni Buddha temple in Lhasa, the Jokhang, where people go to see the most famous, most precious statue of Shakyamuni Buddha in the sambhogakaya aspect with crown ornaments, not the usual nirmanakaya aspect. People travel for months and months, coming on foot, arriving every day from all over Tibet to see this statue. They come with many offerings, butter to offer for the butter lamps and things like that. Every day the temple is so crowded.

However, when this butcher went to see the statue, he couldn't see anything in the temple. The things other people could see, he couldn't; it appeared completely dark. He couldn't even see the light offerings. He was so depressed about not seeing anything that he went to a lama, I think Chosang Rinpoche, to ask advice. The lama did a divination and told him that this was due to having very heavy karmic obscurations and he had to do prostrations to purify them. After he had done the prostrations, he returned to the Jokhang but he still couldn't see the Shakyamuni Buddha statue. However, he could now see the light offerings around, the big golden butter lamps.

In another story, there was a lama who was giving the oral transmission, the lung, of the complete Kangyur, all hundred volumes. While everybody else there could see the lama reading from the texts and turning the pages, there was one person there whose karmic obscurations were so thick, he just saw huge piles of meat and the lama eating the meat.

Lama Tsongkhapa's holy mind is omniscient, so he is always here. From his side he always sees us. We can't see him only because of our karmic obscurations.

When you have actualized the great path of merit, what is called the *concentration of continual Dharma*, at that time you will be able to see the buddhas in their nirmanakaya aspect. There is the story of Kadampa Geshe Chayulwa³⁴ who served his guru, Geshe Chengawa with complete devotion. It is said that when he was offering mandala, even before he had put the middle ring out, if he heard Geshe Chengawa's voice, he would stop immediately and go to offer service to him.

Every day he correctly offered service to his guru; every day he cleaned his guru's room. One day, after he had cleaned the room, he put all the garbage into the folds of his robe and started to go down the stairs to throw it out. However, when he was on the third step, he attained the practice of guru yoga, all his obscurations were purified and there, on that step, he attained the concentration of continual Dharma. Then, immediately, right there on that spot, he saw an uncountable number of buddhas in the nirmanakaya aspect. Other people there couldn't see anything, not even one buddha. This was because with Geshe Chayulwa's perfect devotion, the perfect service he offered his guru, so many karmic obscurations were purified and the path was generated in his mind.

In the same way, when we attain the concentration of continual Dharma on the path of merit, we will be able to see uncountable buddhas in their nirmanakaya aspect. That does not mean the buddhas are not there until that time. You must remember the meaning of unification of the buddha's holy body and holy mind. There is no existence not covered by the omniscient mind, and wherever there is the holy omniscient mind there is the holy body. Therefore, there is no place where there isn't a buddha.

³⁴ 1075–1138, also known as Zhonnu Ö; a Kadampa geshe renowned for his impeccable devotion to Geshe Tölungpa and Geshe Chengawa (1038–1103). See *The Heart of the Path*, pp. 109–110.

By remembering this, you can understand that while, due to your karmic obscurations, it just seems like an imagined image and you cannot actually see Lama Tsongkhapa, because Lama Tsongkhapa's omniscient mind pervades everything, then Lama Tsongkhapa is there.

GANDEN LHA GYÄMA: THE FIRST LIMB, WISHING THE GURU TO HAVE A LONG LIFE

After visualizing like this, you accumulate merit with the seven-limb practice. This practice is extremely important; it is the essential method for purifying and accumulating merit. Whoever wishes to accumulate merit should do the seven-limb practice and the mandala offering, otherwise there is no way to achieve enlightenment. Each limb is like the wheels of a horse and carriage, carrying you to enlightenment. Each limb is an important cause for enlightenment.

The purpose of doing this visualization of the merit field and making the invocation to them is to accumulate merit and purify your negativities. Although the seven-limb practice usually starts with the limb of prostration, this practice, *Ganden Lha Gyäma*, the *Blissful Realm of a Hundred Devas of Tushtita*, starts with requesting the root guru to have a long life. By requesting this from the merit field, you are purifying the negative karmas you have accumulated in relation to the guru, by disturbing the holy mind of the guru. These negative karmas that prevent you from seeing the guru either in this life or in future lives are purified with this limb. It also causes you to have a long life, to be able to practice the Dharma while you are in samsara and ultimately to achieve the vajra holy body of a buddha.

The reason this limb of requesting the guru to have a long life comes first is that it emphasizes just how important the guru is. Losing your relationship with the guru is like a pitiful, sick person being without a doctor. To be cured of their illness, they need to meet and not be separated from the doctor. For you to be cured of all suffering, to liberate yourself from true suffering and the true cause of suffering, and to attain the multitude of goodnesses and all the perfections, you must meet and not be separated from the guru. This is the very root; this is wholly dependent on the guru.

People are so reliant on electricity. It is the power source that enables you to live in a city and do the many activities you want to do. You can ride in an elevator, you can take a cable car or a tram and you can shop in brightly lit shopping centers. It enables you to have whatever enjoyment you want, giving you light and power for everything. All this comes from the electricity that runs through the wires and all these wires are connected to the main generator at the power station.

If for some reason the wires were not connected, there would be no electricity and no way you could do what you want. Whatever activity of enjoyment you hoped to do would be impossible. If the lights went out for a few days, the markets would stop and the stores would close. Maybe it would be like it happened in New York a few years ago,³⁵ where the number of babies increased!

In the same way that all the electricity which powers a city and makes it work is totally dependent on the power station, the very root of your attainments is totally dependent on the guru. Seeing how vital it is to never be separated from the guru and to receive teachings from them is the inspiration for doing this practice of wishing the guru to have a long life. This is like the extremely sick patient never being separated from the doctor and receiving the correct medicine.

³⁵ Rinpoche is referring to the two-day New York blackout that occurred in July 1977, when the crime rate and the birth rate soared.

With this inspiration, make the requests to the guru and the merit field.

In the sky before me, on a lion throne, lotus and moon disk,
The perfect, pure lama smiles with delight.
Supreme field of the merit of mind's devotion,
I beg you to abide for a hundred eons to increase the teachings.

First of all, your happiness and the happiness of all sentient beings depend on the teachings. Whether it's temporal or ultimate happiness, it all depends on the holy teachings.

To even attain some degree of temporal happiness is dependent on having created the right cause, which means having done some virtuous action, and that depends on having an understanding of the Dharma. No sentient being can eliminate their suffering, their problems, and attain any temporal happiness without protecting their karma, which means renouncing nonvirtue and practicing virtue. They cannot do that without recognizing the correct causes.

If you want to benefit other sentient beings, if you want to lead them from suffering into happiness, you have to know the causes of suffering, what will make them fall into the lower realms, and you have to be skilled in explaining this to them, so they can see how to find another body of a happy transmigratory being. You have to understand yourself so you can explain subjects such as karma—how karma is definite, what the possessed results of karma are and so forth. Only then can you guide them from suffering and bring them to enlightenment. To do that, to plant the seeds of the realizations of the graduated path to enlightenment in their minds, you need to fully understand the teachings. It all depends on you actualizing the teachings yourself.

In order to do this perfectly, successfully, first you need to attain enlightenment yourself. That depends on completely realizing all the pure teachings without the slightest mistake—understanding the words and meanings and actualizing them, which is not easy. To be able to do that you need to rely on the guru, those who can perfectly reveal those teachings to you.

Therefore, according to your own karma, if the guru doesn't live long, they will not be able to reveal the extensive teachings to you. That is one reason why it is so important to make the request to the merit field for the guru to have a long life.

The second reason is that this is the best way to accumulate merit. Developing realizations of the teachings requires accumulating extensive merit and purifying the unimaginable obscurations; creating the cause to spread the pure teachings in the minds of others requires accumulating extensive merit and purifying the unimaginable obscurations. The best way to do this is through offerings and so forth to the holy beings of the merit field and the very best object of merit is the guru. It is with the guru that you do the most extensive purification and accumulate the most extensive merit.

You can accumulate great merit from doing positive actions toward parents, Sangha, arhats, bodhisattvas and buddhas, because they are such powerful objects of merit for you, but the highest, the best field of merit and object to purify with is the guru.

The guru is like the captain of a ship who saves you from drowning in the ocean. Samsara is like a bottomless ocean, and the guru saves you from drowning in the sufferings of samsara, from drowning in the unimaginable suffering of the lower realms.

The guru is like the sun. Just as the sun dispels the darkness of night, the guru dispels the darkness of ignorance, the inner darkness that has been there from the beginningless past lives.

The guru is like the doctor, eliminating the chronic disease of delusion, the unsubdued mind, that has been there from the beginningless past lives.

The guru is like a parent or a great relative who always guides you with love, [protects you] from all the harms and gives you every benefit.

Meditating on these analogies is very effective. For instance, you can think about how a doctor can eliminate a chronic disease you have had for many years, something so scary that people avoid you. The doctor, however, because of their great kindness, is about to treat you and cure you. This is the special kindness of the doctor. When you have contemplated how the doctor can do this, you can see it is the same for the guru.

Say, because of this disease, you have been given up on by many doctors; everybody has decided you will die and there's nothing they can do for you. However, from your side, you feel there is still hope. You have heard from others that there is one particular doctor who is supposed to be the most beneficial, the most expert and skillful, like the king of doctors. You go to them and plead, saying that from the depths of your heart, from the depths of your bones, until you have recovered you will completely rely on this doctor.

This is how it is in these degenerate times. All the other buddhas have given up on us, thinking that there is no way our minds can be subdued. We are guideless, unable to find anybody to help us subdue our minds. Only our guru has not given up on us, and so we place all our reliance on the guru, making the request for them to live long, for a hundred eons.

Lecture 27

December 5, 1980

PRECEPTS MOTIVATION: FRIEND AND ENEMY ARE NEITHER INTRINSIC NOR PERMANENT

There are various reasons why you should view friend, enemy and stranger as equal and work equally to eliminate the suffering and obtain the happiness of all beings, whether they are friend, enemy or stranger.

[As we saw before, there are six conventional reasons and three ultimate reasons we and other as equal. The three ultimate reasons are that “friend,” “enemy,” and “stranger” are merely concepts conceived by our deluded mind; that “friend,” “enemy,” and “stranger” appear permanent, but they are not; and that I and others are interdependent, like “here” and “there.”]

The first reason is that it is our deluded, illusory mind that labels these beings, labeling those who help us as “friend” and those who harm us as “enemy.” Having labeled them as such, we believe they exist as this, as the absolute friend and absolute enemy. If that were really the case, that there is an absolute, intrinsic friend and enemy, then even the buddhas and bodhisattvas would see them as such, but this is not so.

For a buddha, if somebody on one side of them is offering respect to them and putting sandalwood perfume on their hair, while on the other side somebody is angrily cutting their flesh into pieces with a sharp knife, from the buddha’s side there is no difference. They see both with equal love. The lack of any discrimination at all in a buddha’s view between friend, enemy and stranger shows that these are only concepts of the distorted mind, the illusory mind, the hallucinatory mind. In fact, they do not exist at all.

The second reason is that although we see friend, enemy and stranger as permanent, they are not at all. They are impermanent phenomena. To our view, the friend should not change, the enemy should not change. They should stay that way forever. But nothing stays unchanging in nature. Those we label friend and enemy don’t stay that way. Over our lives, father becomes son, mother becomes wife, enemy becomes friend. Nothing is definite in samsara.

This is exemplified by the story of the Buddha’s disciple, the arhat Shariputra who went one day to a family’s house on his alms round. When he looked in the door, he saw this. He saw the father who used to fish in the pond behind the house was now a fish that had been caught by the son and was being eaten by the family, while the mother who was attached to the house was now a dog, at the son’s feet, chewing the bones of her former husband. Meanwhile, the son was cradling his former hated enemy—now their child—in his arms and beating the dog, his mother, with a stick. When Shariputra saw this, he said, “Eating the father’s flesh, beating the mother, cuddling the enemy, samsaric existence is laughable.” That means he laughs at how in samsara everything is always changing.

Like this, all the people (and even animals) in your life that seem to you to be fixed, permanent, will sooner or later change, becoming something totally different. Therefore there is no point in clinging to this belief in friend and enemy, thinking, “This is my friend and will always be my friend,” and

“This is my enemy and will always be my enemy.” There is no point in only helping the friend and renouncing the enemy.

You can then think back to the first reason, that “friend” and “enemy” are just concepts created by your hallucinated mind; that they do not exist at all. Therefore you should conclude that there is no point in discriminating, clinging to those labels “friend” and “enemy”, accepting and helping the friends and giving up on the enemies. There is no point at all.

You should think, “I will give equal benefit to all, endeavoring to eliminate the suffering of all the sentient beings, who are the field I receive all my three-time happiness and perfections from. To be able to do this, without the slightest mistake, I must first achieve state of omniscience. Without creating cause for that, it cannot be achieved. Therefore I’m going to take the Mahayana ordination.”

[Rinpoche gives the ordination]

***HYMNS OF EXPERIENCE* COMMENTARY: EXTRACTING THE ESSENCE**

With at least a motivation of effortful bodhicitta, think “I must achieve enlightenment for the sake of all my mother sentient beings, therefore, I’m going to listen to the commentary on the graduated path to enlightenment.”

The subject is Lama Tsongkhapa’s *Hymns of Experience*, his experience of the gradual path to enlightenment.

At this time, you have found a body qualified with the eight freedoms and ten richness, which is much more precious than wish-granting jewels equal in number to the atoms of this earth. With this body, you can take the essence of this life, making it most meaningful, day and night. Lama Tsongkhapa said,

This life of leisure is even more precious than a wish-granting jewel;
That I have found such an existence is only this once;
So hard to find yet like a flash of lightning it is easy to vanish;
Contemplating this situation it’s vital to realize that all mundane pursuits

Are like the empty grain husks floating in the winds
And that we must extract the essence of human existence.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.³⁶

Whatever great works you want to do, whatever great meaning you wish in your life, you can do it with this precious human body. You can take the essence all the time, day and night. However, while you have this incredible opportunity, instead of making the most of it, instead of taking its essence, if you waste it, if you go from day to day and week to week without being able to take the essence of

³⁶ Vv. 13 and 14.

this life, then your whole life becomes completely empty. And when your life is finished, you have nothing but an empty, meaningless life.

You need to understand how important it is to take the essence and, instead of living a wasted life, live a life practicing the holy Dharma, trying to generate realizations on the path and trying to do extensive work for sentient beings.

Each minute of your life, each hour, each day, each month that you fail to make meaningful is a waste of this precious human life; it is time consumed by the evil thought of the eight worldly dharmas, the eight worldly concerns. Whatever action of body, speech and mind—the three doors—that you don't make a Dharma action is an action controlled by worldly concern, clinging to the happiness of this life. Such actions are not only most harmful, because they are possessed by the evil thought of the eight worldly dharmas, they are causes to be reborn in the lower realms.

Understanding this, you can see how vital it is to use this precious human life that is only found once, and make it meaningful all the time, without wasting even a minute, let alone an hour, a day, a week, a month, a year. You must do whatever you can to cut off the thought of the eight worldly dharmas. There should be no place in your mind for them.

The fundamental advice of the Kadampa geshe is that if you are going to take the essence of this life, however much of your life is left, you must make it equal to your Dharma practice. It must not be that your life is longer and your Dharma practice is shorter. That means that however long you have until you die, that amount of life and that amount of Dharma practice should be the same; your life becomes equal to your Dharma practice.

There is a practice done by the Kadampa geshe called the *Ten Innermost Jewels of the Kadampas*. If you want your life and your Dharma practice to be equal, you should follow this practice. When you read the biographies of the Kadampa geshe, you will see that they lived like this. If you make these innermost jewels like a precept, then everything you will do will be Dharma. Eating breakfast, eating dinner, living in your house, living on your bed, sleeping, will all be living in these ten innermost jewels. Whatever you do, you will never separate from them. Then, when your life and your Dharma practice are equal, there will be no confusion and there will be great peace all the time. The ten innermost jewels are:

1. entrust the depths of the attitude to the Dharma
2. entrust the depths of the Dharma to the beggar
3. entrust the depths of the beggar to death
4. entrust the depths of death to the cave
5. the uncaptured vajra
6. the shameless vajra
7. the transcendent wisdom vajra
8. expulsion from the rank of human beings
9. achieve the rank of the dog
10. achieve the rank of the divine beings

Like the Kadampa geshe, you should rely on the innermost holy Dharma, that relies on the beggar, that depends on death, that depends on the dry cave. Maybe that should be the beach! For

Westerners maybe the cave should be transformed into a beach. When you have an idea of these innermost jewels, you have a definite goal.

Then there are the three vajras. Being expelled from the ranks of humans. That doesn't mean all human beings; it doesn't include the Kadampa geshees or those who are living in pure Dharma. It means being expelled from those who seek only the happiness of this life; being out of line with worldly beings like this.

Then there is achieving the rank of a dog and achieving the rank of a deva. In that way, you can attain the highest state, enlightenment. By renouncing this life and practicing only the holy Dharma, you are able to achieve the highest state, the state of omniscience, in one brief lifetime.

Last year or the year before, I explained the Kadampa geshees' *Ten Innermost Jewels*, so this time I'm not planning to talk on it. For those of you who wish to understand it and practice it, there are many books. You can read them and check whether this practice is beneficial for you.

REALIZING IMPERMANENCE AND DEATH, ALL ACTIONS BECOME DHARMA

The very essence of all the Kadampa geshees' advice, the *Ten Innermost Jewels*, is to remember impermanence and death. Reflecting on impermanence and death is the weapon to cut off the evil thought of the eight worldly dharmas. It makes your life most meaningful at the beginning of your Dharma practice. In the middle it gives you the determination to continue, and even at the end, it is needed to achieve omniscience. The more you reflect on impermanence and death, the less the evil thought of the eight worldly dharmas will arise. If you are able to remember impermanence and death constantly in your everyday life, however much you can do that, to that degree your actions will become the Dharma.

Previously, you would have said that you had no time to practice the holy Dharma whereas there always seemed to be plenty of time to work for the happiness of this life. Now, remembering impermanence and death, it's reversed. You have no time for the work of this life and plenty of time to practice the Dharma. And this is before you have even realized impermanence and death. After you have generated the realizations of impermanence and death, then there will be no time at all to work for this life, to create nonvirtue. All your time will be spent in practicing the Dharma, so it will be the complete opposite to how it is now. No longer overwhelmed by the eight worldly dharmas, your mind becomes the Dharma and you have perfect freedom to only commit virtuous actions.

As Lama Tsongkhapa said, when this happens, you constantly take the essence of this precious human life qualified by the eight freedoms and ten richnesses, day and night, without wasting a second. Here, Lama Tsongkhapa advised you to reflect on impermanence and death, which is the best remedy for the evil thought of the eight worldly dharmas. When you do this, any action you do with your three doors effortlessly becomes the Dharma. Every action—eating, working, sleeping, listening, reflecting, meditating—everything becomes the Dharma.

MILAREPA TRANSCENDED THE FEAR OF DEATH

The great yogi, Milarepa, said,

I fled to the mountains through fear of death,
And once there, I realized the absolute true nature of the mind.
Now, even if death comes to me, I won't be afraid.

This came out of his own experience. You should use this as an example if you, too, want to not waste this precious human body qualified with the eight freedoms and ten richnesses. Then, like Milarepa, your life and your Dharma practice will become equal.

Milarepa's meaning here is that at first, when he reflected on impermanence and death, he was afraid. Because of that fear, he escaped to the mountain. That can have two meanings. One is the external mountain—literally giving up his worldly life and escaping into the mountains in order to practice the teachings he received from the holy speech of his guru on how to realize the nature of the spontaneous mind, that which is empty in nature. That fear of impermanence and death gave him great perseverance to be able to bear the hardships he faced in the mountains as he tried to realize what he had been taught.

When he realized the emptiness of phenomena, clinging to this life and clinging to the sense of an inherent self vanished. He was able to completely cut them off. With every impure concept gone, then, even if death happened, he would have no fear.

Previously, the great yogi Milarepa was overwhelmed by samsara, under the control of the cycle of death and rebirth, like we all are. If you don't try to remember impermanence and death while you are in good health and not too old, while you are still able to practice the Dharma, when will you? Not remembering impermanence and death, there will certainly be great fear when the time of death arrives, whereas if you can remember it, your mind will be completely relaxed. Death will definitely happen. It might be this year, this month or today, but when it does, you will be relaxed, without fear or doubts. Even though you might not have been able to practice the Dharma purely, you will still have no fear of being born in the lower realms. There is no danger of that.

It is completely useless to be overwhelmed by fear and worry at the time of your death. This happens when you haven't made preparations. You need to prepare ahead of time, during your lifetime, preparing for a happy future life. Rather than thinking that now that there is no time to practice the Dharma and spending all your time on working for this life, which will mean you are totally unprepared for death, you need to prepare now. Without it, you will be terrified when death comes, screaming, crying, your tears flowing out. You will be terrified that you are leaving your loved ones, your possessions, everything. You will be full of regret that you have wasted your life, thinking you could have spent your life in a much better way, trying to cut the worldly concerns, trying to subdue the mind. But, if you only have these thoughts at the time of death, that is utterly useless.

When the signs of death begin, you will see how your whole life has been completely empty, how you have done nothing meaningful at all. You will look for any ways you benefited others but you will be unable to find even one single instance. Tormented with regret and with the assurance that what will come will be awful, you will be terrified. This is how worldly people die. This is a completely useless, wrong way to die.

Milarepa said that by remembering impermanence and death he overcame the mara of laziness and whatever he did became Dharma. We too should follow the example of Milarepa and always remember impermanence and death.

Lecture 28

December 6, 1980 (morning)

THERE IS NOTHING GREATER THAN WORKING FOR OTHERS

Please listen to the teachings by generating a pure motivation, at least effortful bodhicitta. Just saying the word “bodhicitta” is very meaningful and thinking about its meaning is very effective for the mind. It means the mind that wishes to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of other sentient beings. That is so much more important than trying to work for this life, trying to obtain happiness in this life.

It means renouncing working for this life and putting all your effort into working for others, spending all your time trying to achieve enlightenment for others, not working at all just for the happiness of this life. Trying to attain enlightenment for the sake of all others is far more important than working for this life; it is even far more important than trying to achieve the blissful state of peace, nirvana.

Others are uncountable, infinite. That is why, even among all the Dharma work, this is the most important. There is nothing more important than attaining enlightenment in order to be able to reveal the infallible method to others, showing them perfectly how to obtain temporal and ultimate happiness, using whatever method suits the disposition, the personality, of each sentient being. Therefore think, “For the sake of all sentient beings, I will practice the holy Dharma and attain peerless enlightenment.”

This is the most beneficial thing you can do in your life. It is beneficial for all sentient beings and it is beneficial for you. So, think, “Even if I have to give up my life for many hundreds of eons, by practicing the Dharma, no matter what hardship I might encounter, I will never renounce the work to attain enlightenment for the sake of all my kind mother sentient beings. Just as a river constantly flows, I will constantly attempt to attain enlightenment.”

If you can generate great will like this, then the hindrances to your Dharma practice will diminish. Hindrances caused by delusions, the unsubdued mind, will not overwhelm you. Neither the outer hindrances nor the inner ones—the outer maras or the inner ones—can defeat you. Have the determination that, whatever happens, you will never stop until you have completed the path to enlightenment.

With such determination and will, think, “No matter what happens, I must achieve enlightenment for benefit of all my beloved, kind mother sentient beings. Therefore I am going to listen to the commentary on the graduated path to enlightenment.”

Please listen to the teachings with a motivation like this, also listening in the right manner.

***GANDEN LHA GYÁMA* COMMENTARY: CONTEMPLATING THE SEVEN-LIMB PRAYER**

The subject is the Lama Tsongkhapa guru yoga practice of the *Hundred Deities of the Joyful Realm of Tushita*.

When you make a request for the long life of the guru, if you understand the seven-limb practice from this *Ganden Lha Gyäma*, it is similar for any other prayer or sadhana, even if the merit field is different. Because it is the best, quickest method to accumulate extensive merit, it's extremely important to understand the benefits of practicing it.

There is a Kadampa saying,

A practice without the accumulation of merit is like a seed without wetness.
A practice without the accumulation of merit is nothing more than the drawing of a flame,
not the flame itself.

I think what this means is that a painting of a flame on the wall cannot function as a flame; it can't give light to dispel the darkness. Similarly, if you don't practice accumulating merit, you can't effectively eliminate the darkness of ignorance. Meditating without accumulating merit is like a very dry seed that is without any moisture, the condition it needs to make it sprout and become a plant and bear fruit.

Therefore, it is completely wrong to think that the limb of accumulating merit in the seven-limb practice and the mandala offering is just some traditional thing without worth, just some ritual or custom that has nothing to do with real life. It is wrong to think that you don't need to do this, that the only necessary thing to do is the meditation alone. Just as it is very difficult for a dried-out seed to sprout and become a plant, it is very difficult for your mind to be subdued just through meditation without any accumulation of merit. No matter how long you meditate for, no correct experience comes in the mind.

Of course, there might be experiences that happen due to your meditation, but they will not be the correct pure experiences, the ones that will advance you on the graduated path to enlightenment. You might meditate for thirty or forty years, but still nothing will happen in the mind; it will still be the same or even worse. You might become more stubborn, more thick-skulled.

So, it's very important when you are doing the seven limbs alone to take your time over it if possible, and remember which limb relates to which remedy of which delusion. Doing it very slowly while contemplating is very effective for the mind; it forces your mind to become very happy. When you are happy doing the seven limbs, you won't be bored, and remembering the benefits purifies your delusions. In that way, the practice becomes very enjoyable. Unless you think of the meaning and the benefits, it will probably seem quite boring.

That's why I do the seven-limb practice and the mandala offering very slowly. Rather than just saying the words, it's more effective if you think of the meaning, if you think what each meditation contains. Saying the words alone does not become the practice of the seven limbs. If you chant it nicely, it might become an offering, but without meditating on the meaning, just saying words alone, it doesn't become a seven-limb practice. It's just like a parrot reciting the words.

If you are really determined to transform your mind into the Dharma, to free it from the control of attachment to samsaric perfections, to secure it on the path to full enlightenment and not just to

attain the blissful state of peace, lower nirvana, you must rid yourself of the self-cherishing thought. To do that, to gain a pure experience of the realizations of the graduated path to enlightenment, you must purify the delusions that block you and accumulate extensive merit. You should never think these practices are insignificant and that you can ignore them and go straight to some very high practice, thinking you can achieve the tenth ground of a bodhisattva without all the practices that precede it. You shouldn't think that because enlightenment is what you want, any practice below that is not worth considering. Thinking that only the practice of a great yogi about to achieve the unified state of no more learning is worth doing is very deluded thinking. Every step on the path to enlightenment is vital, and so you should put great effort into practices such as refuge, the seven limbs and the mandala offering—all the preliminary practices—and do them very carefully.

***GANDEN LHA GYĀMA* COMMENTARY: THE LIMB OF PROSTRATION**

As you say the prayer requesting the long life of the guru, visualize holding the throne in your hands, whatever you can visualize. The throne is raised up by the eight snow lions and has a double vajra. Visualize it as similar to the one within the merit field, like the visualization done during the prostrations. You can think that there are numberless bodies of yourself, transformed, and each of them makes offerings of the throne.

Relating to this particular visualization of Lama Tsongkhapa and his two disciples, the throne then absorbs into the father and sons. Think that this is your own guru in the form of these three. Think that they have accepted your request.

As is explained in the teachings by the lineage lamas of the lamrim, there are two ways this happens: accepting your request in a rupakaya way and in a dharmakaya way. With the rupakaya way of accepting, because you have pleased the holy mind, the merit field accepts it and they verbally say yes, with smiling faces. With the dharmakaya way, there is nothing visible; the holy mind accepts it in silence.

The second limb is the limb of prostration.

Your holy mind understands the full extent of objects to be known.
Your eloquent speech is the ear-ornament of the fortunate ones.
Your holy body is glowing and glorious with fame.
To you, who is meaningful to see, hear, and remember, I prostrate.

THE QUALITIES OF LAMA TSONGKHAPA'S BODY, SPEECH AND MIND

Here you are admiring the qualities of Lama Tsongkhapa's holy mind. With a buddha's omniscient mind, it's not just that they can see and understand many existent objects. Lama Tsongkhapa, with his omniscient mind, can see each and every all-obscuring truth and each and every absolute truth, and can see these simultaneously. For instance, when Lama Tsongkhapa sees chocolate, he spontaneously and simultaneously sees the chocolate's absolute truth and its all-obscuring truth, the chocolate itself. This is something even very advanced arya bodhisattvas cannot do. While absorbed in the meditative equipoise on the absolute nature of reality, they cannot see the all-obscuring truth at the same time. While concentrating one-pointedly on absolute nature, they cannot do work for

sentient beings, revealing the teachings and so forth, like putting water in water. This is something only buddhas can do.

Lama Tsongkhapa's holy mind, while spontaneously concentrating on absolute nature, can also see the conventional truth, the all-obscuring truth, at the same time, as well as being able to do various works for sentient beings with the holy body and the holy speech. This is something not even a tenth bhumi bodhisattva can do. Even though they might be just seconds from attaining enlightenment, this is still beyond them.

When the text says, "Your holy mind understands the full extent of objects to be known," it shows that Lama Tsongkhapa is fully enlightened, because this is something only a buddha can do.

The next line says, "Your eloquent speech is the ear-ornament of the fortunate ones."

As I mentioned before, Lama Tsongkhapa's sutra and tantra teachings are pure, like refined gold. Just like refined gold, they can be examined in three ways and still seen as faultless. Because they reveal the infallible path, whoever hears them are the fortunate ones.

Here, the text calls them the "ear-ornament of the fortunate ones." Just as worldly people use diamonds or whatever precious jewels they have for earrings, to show off to others and feel proud, these pure teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa are like precious jewels for the ears of those fortunate enough to be able to hear them. They are the best ornament of a Dharma practitioner. To be able to hear the pure teachings, you are among the most fortunate of all. Therefore, you should rejoice; you should feel great joy that you are able to hear and study these teachings that show the infallible path, the path that definitely leads to whatever goal you wish, liberation or enlightenment—if, of course, from your side, you practice.

The number of people in the world who can hear any of the various Dharma teachings is very small, and the number who can hear the Mahayana teachings is much smaller than that. Even smaller is the number able to hear the teachings of the Vajrayana, the tantric vehicle. Even for those who can hear the infallible path, most will not hear it in its entirety. There might be teachings on one meditation practice, one aspect of sutra or tantra, but it is not complete. Even if it's about meditation, it might just be ordinary mindfulness, just one-pointed concentration. While it is correct and beneficial, it is not the complete, infallible path.

In this world, there are so many more people unable to hear and accept even that. They find it generally very easy to accept and follow wrong views, but very difficult to accept infallible teachings that teach on correct views, such as the worldly beings' right view of karma and the ultimate reality, the right view of emptiness, the view that allows you to realize the ultimate truth and eliminate the sense of a truly existing self, and eliminate the fundamental ignorance, the root of suffering. This is because they don't have enough fortune to hear and accept such things.

Instead, they hear many incorrect teachings—teachings that say you don't have to keep any precepts, teachings that refute karma, saying there is no need to watch your actions, avoiding some and developing others. Out of such deluded views, their minds just become even more unsubdued. Not knowing that some actions lead to suffering and should be avoided and some lead to happiness and should be cultivated, they do just the opposite, and when they hear teachings on the correct view, which emphasize the opposite of how they think, they are unable to accept them. In that way, their

life is continually in confusion. Even after fifty years, it's still the same thing; they are still living in the same confusion.

On the other hand, the texts say that we are the fortunate ones because we have been able to hear not just the correct teachings but Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings, the "ear-ornament of the fortunate ones," the pure and infallible teachings where there is nothing missing, incorporating both sutra and tantra. We are truly highly fortunate. For that reason we are called "insiders." We are those fortunate beings who are "inside" these infallible teachings.

These teachings are the best ornaments, the ones that beautify your body, speech and mind. By practicing what Lama Tsongkhapa explained in these teachings, you can transform your body, speech and mind into the vajra holy body, vajra holy speech and vajra holy mind of a buddha.

The way Lama Tsongkhapa expounded the pure teachings, they become the ear ornament for all bodhisattvas, from the new bodhisattvas who have just attained bodhicitta, up to the bodhisattvas on the tenth bhumi, those who are just about to attain enlightenment. It's not that Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings are just for ordinary bodhisattvas; what he expounded is what bodhisattvas have to practice from the beginning all the way to enlightenment.

The "fortunate ones" the text refers to here are the bodhisattvas, those who have generated bodhicitta, but you too are incredibly fortunate, having been able to hear his teachings. Therefore everything you do in this life should be to try to join this fortunate group, the bodhisattvas. Lama Tsongkhapa's holy speech perfectly fits any being of any level of intelligence who is a suitable object to be subdued. Any being no matter what level of intelligence—lower, middle or higher—will benefit from his teachings.

Lama Tsongkhapa's holy mind, being omniscient, has overcome all obscurations. Even bodhisattvas on the tenth bhumi have very subtle obscurations and have the four unknowing minds,³⁷ unable to perceive things that only buddhas can perceive. For instance, you will remember the story that Lama Lhundrup told you about Maudgalyayana, one of the Buddha's two main attendants, who, despite having incredible psychic powers, wasn't able to see karma created eons before. He still had subtle delusions that blocked omniscience.

Lama Tsongkhapa has overcome these four unknowing minds; he has eliminated all subtle delusions. You can admire Lama Tsongkhapa in the same way you admire Yamantaka. Just as Yamantaka is a wrathful aspect of Manjushri, Lama Tsongkhapa is an embodiment of Manjushri. Lama Tsongkhapa is actually Manjushri, who is the embodiment of all the buddhas' understanding, so, by admiring first his holy mind, you receive the blessings of the holy mind. Lama Tsongkhapa, who is inseparable from Manjushri, enters your mind and, by receiving the blessings of his holy mind, your Dharma wisdom increases. Being able to thoroughly understand the teachings, you are able to thoroughly explain them, and so that is the blessing of your speech.

First of all, by thoroughly understanding the qualities of Lama Tsongkhapa's holy mind, you receive the blessings of his mind. Then, because of that, your wisdom grows, and you are more able to

³⁷ The four types of very subtle ignorance that arhats and higher bodhisattvas still have that a buddha does not, due to the subtle imprints of delusions not yet fully eliminated. They are: the inability to see the secret actions of a buddha, the inability to see the subtle karma of sentient beings, the inability to see things that happened a very long time ago and the inability to see very long distances.

skillfully and correctly explain them without any resistance, without any doubt, which is the blessing of your speech.

As all these qualities enter your body, you become like the great pandits, learned in the Dharma, and you are able to explain the teachings without doubts or fears, without any difficulties at all. In that way you can do work for other beings. Therefore, for those reasons, you prostrate to Lama Tsongkhapa, which is the last line of the verse, “To you, who is meaningful to see, hear, and remember, I prostrate.”

Remembering the qualities of Lama Tsongkhapa like this is highly meaningful because it leaves very powerful positive imprints on your mind, creating the cause for you to become like Lama Tsongkhapa.

HYMNS OF EXPERIENCE COMMENTARY: IMPERMANENCE AND DEATH

Lama Tsongkhapa explained how it is highly meaningful to remember impermanence and death.

This life of leisure is even more precious than a wish-granting jewel;
That I have found such an existence is only this once;
So hard to find yet like a flash of lightning it is easy to vanish;
Contemplating this situation it's vital to realize that all mundane pursuits

Are like the empty grain husks floating in the winds
And that we must extract the essence of human existence.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.³⁸

You need to generate the strong thought of remembering death, not just talking from the mouth, but feeling it from the depth of your heart, feeling that you could die tomorrow, or even today. When you conjoin that with whatever Dharma understanding you have, it becomes obvious that there is no point in becoming attached to things. The things you currently have—your family, friends, possessions—you won't be with them much longer, so why cling to them? In that way, the thought that clings to the happiness of this life is transformed.

With this thought of impermanence and death, you automatically want to prepare for death by taking the essence of this precious human body. There is no point in working solely for this life; the happiness of future lives becomes much more important. If you could really feel that death will definitely happen today—if you could feel completely certain of that—the wish to prepare for future lives would spontaneously arise.

If you could really bring into your heart this thought of impermanence, then you would clearly see how all the effort you put into obtaining the worldly dharmas—material possessions, comfort, fame, reputation—is meaningless, how such a life is utterly without essence, like the husk of a seed once the seed has been threshed. To put all that time and effort into obtaining the worldly dharmas is to completely cheat yourself.

³⁸ Vv. 13 and 14.

Understanding that, it becomes very easy to transform your actions, no longer creating negative karma by doing negative things, and instead only doing positive actions and creating positive karma. You are able to take refuge and therefore continually create virtue by protecting your morality, practicing charity and such things. You will respect your karma in that way.

You will see that your body, your possessions, your reputation—all these things—are essenceless, and you will see what has essence. By remembering impermanence and death strongly, from the heart, you will be able to practice the holy Dharma and truly take the essence of this precious life. Then, you can even take the essence from your essenceless possessions.

By taking the holy essence, you are able to reach the highest holy state, the state of omniscience and then you are able to lead all other sentient beings into that same state. You can accomplish the greatest meaning. There is no greater meaning than this. That is what Lama Tsongkhapa is saying.

The body and the possessions of this life are essenceless. They are like a water bubble, a mirage or a flower. A flower might look beautiful to begin with but it soon decays—second by second it is decaying. On the first day it looks very nice but by the next day it looks terrible, completely undesirable. Without choice, the petals that were joined together separate and fall. Similarly, our body and our possessions can't last; they decay second by second. That is why they are in the nature of suffering.

However, even though they are essenceless, if you generate the pure thought of impermanence and death, you are able to take the essence from this essenceless body and these essenceless material possessions.

Even this is enough, without mentioning all the other benefits of remembering impermanence and death. Remembering impermanence and death is the door to all perfections, both temporal and ultimate. The purpose of being born as a human being is to practice the holy Dharma, to develop a good heart and to be of extensive benefit for other sentient beings.

You have heard of the three levels of capable beings—that is the meaning of the term “capable being.” As Lama Atisha mentioned in the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, the person who has aversion to this life and practices the ten virtues and renounces nonvirtue in order to attain the perfections of future lives is a practitioner on the graduated path of the lower capable being.

The person who has aversion to the whole of samsara—who has left behind all samsaric perfections—and who seeks to achieve the true cessation of suffering and the attainment of nirvana by practicing the three higher trainings of morality, concentration and right view, is a practitioner of the graduated path of the middle capable being.

A practitioner of the graduated path of the higher capable being is one who has renounced the self-cherishing thought and generated bodhicitta, and who is practicing the six paramitas, the six perfections.

If you don't have even one of these goals, if you don't do any of the practices to bring about any of these goals, if you only work for the happiness of this life, then you are not recognized as a capable being, no matter how much worldly people might think of you as smart or intelligent. You might be

skilled in business or able to defeat others in battle, you may have a good job and make lots of money, with a beautiful apartment and many possessions—everything that worldly people see as positive—but without one of these goals you are out of the line of one of these three capable beings. You might be considered capable, but it is not this type of capable; you are not a lower, middle or higher capable being.

It is only at this time that you have the chance to become a capable being; only now do you have that special freedom. Lama Tsongkhapa said that most of the time we live in one of the realms of the suffering transmigratory beings. Even if you manage to occasionally come up to a realm of the happy transmigratory being, it is only ever for the very shortest time. And mostly, when you attain such a state, you still have no freedom to practice the Dharma.

And even if you have somehow managed to find a precious body where you can practice the Dharma, and furthermore you have the wish to practice the Dharma, you are still unable to practice it completely and purely. The whole mistake in your thinking, the thing that blocks you from practicing the Dharma completely and purely, is the thought, “I won’t die.” Lama Tsongkhapa said,

The thought that you will not die is the source of all deterioration, and the remedy for this is the mindfulness of death, the source of all that is excellent.³⁹

Lama Tsongkhapa called this mistaken attitude the door of all the degenerations, meaning you are not only unable to practice the Dharma completely and purely, but it also leads to all the problems you face in your everyday life. They all come from believing you won’t die, taking the side of undying, being friendly with undying. Therefore, the remedy for this is to remember death. If the mind taking the side of undying is the door to all the degenerations, the remedy of remembering death is the door to all perfections.

Lama Tsongkhapa said it is wrong to consider the meditation on impermanence and death as just a beginner’s meditation, that it is not for those who have profound Dharma subjects to meditate on; it’s not for those who meditate on emptiness or bodhicitta, who practice the Vajrayana, the Six Yogas of Naropa, or Mahamudra. You shouldn’t think meditation on impermanence and death is not for such people; that it’s just for those ignorant beginners. Even if you consider impermanence and death as a meditation subject, you shouldn’t think it’s not worth meditating on it much, and just spend a little bit of time at the beginning. Lama Tsongkhapa said you shouldn’t think like that! You should understand how important it is to remember impermanence and death. It’s important at the beginning, it’s important in the middle and it’s important at the end. That is Lama Tsongkhapa’s advice.

There are different ways about thinking about death. What is the correct way? It shouldn’t be fear that you will be separated from your friends and relatives and your possessions, the things you have strong attachment for. Of this Lama Tsongkhapa said,

For those who have not practiced the path at all, the fear of death manifests itself as the worry that they will be separated from their relatives and so forth. This fear is caused by their strong attachment.⁴⁰

³⁹ *Lamrim Chenmo*, vol. 1, p. 147.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

That is not the kind of fear that should arise when you contemplate death. Most people don't fear death because they think they are not going to die; therefore they will never be separated from their possessions, surroundings, friends, relatives and so forth. But if they ever do think of death, then that fear they get is because of thinking of that separation.

When you think of death in this way, of course you are terrified. But consider all the bodies you have taken since beginningless rebirths. They have all been under the control of karma and delusion, the unsubdued mind. None have been beyond death. Death is definite. Therefore, even if you are terrified of death, there is nothing you can do to prevent it; you cannot cease the cycle of death and rebirth while under the control of karma and delusion.

Not until you reach the definite perfection of nirvana will this cycle be ceased. For that, you need to work for the happiness of future lives. Without having done the work to assure rebirth as a happy transmigratory being, you will never cease the cause to be reborn in the lower realms. So, you need to create the causes for another perfect human rebirth and then progress to the definite perfections of nirvana and enlightenment.

I think they are called “definite perfections”—the literal translation is “definite goodness”—because even finding the body of a happy transmigratory being, as a human or a god, is never definite. You might achieve such a state, but there is no guarantee you will not later be reborn in the lower realms. However, once you have achieved liberation or enlightenment, it is definite you will never have to experience the suffering of samsara again.

Until you have completed the work for attaining another higher realm, there will certainly be fear when you think about death. On the other hand, when you contemplate impermanence and death in the correct way, there will be fear, but it will be wise fear, a kind of cautious fear. It's like the caution you have when you are driving along a dangerous road, or when you see a drunken driver coming toward you. Knowing the potential danger that is there, you are very cautious. You pay utmost attention to ensure your safety, maybe deciding to take another road because that one is just too dangerous. It is the fear of what might happen, the danger you see ahead, that makes you careful and makes you seek a method for avoiding the danger.

Lama Tsongkhapa said that when you contemplate death correctly, and you can see the danger you are facing, you will do whatever is needed to avoid it. He said,

If you consider your fear about this, it is within your power not to be frightened at the moment of death because there are things you can do to secure your future welfare.⁴¹

⁴¹ *Lamrim Chenmo*, vol. 1, p. 148.

Lecture 29

December 7, 1980

GANDEN LHA GYĀMA: OFFERINGS TO THE MERIT FIELD

All happiness—all temporal happiness and ultimate happiness, all the perfections—comes from merit. The visualization you do with *Ganden Lha Gyāma* of the gurus, buddhas and bodhisattvas is called a merit field because it is the “field” where you plant merit, meaning by using this you can get whatever happiness you wish. Therefore, it is precious.

Even just making light offerings to the merit field has many benefits. The texts summarize them, abbreviating them into ten, for instance, receiving the “flesh eye,” the different types of clairvoyance such as being able to see very distant things, even seeing things through objects such mountains, without resistance. And if you want to develop Dharma wisdom quickly, knowing what to practice and what to avoid, you should make many light offerings to the merit field. It is said this will dispel the darkness of ignorance; even while you are still wandering in samsara, you will wander in places where there is light.

Then, you will have perfect enjoyments, receiving whatever you wish, as well as finding the body of a happy transmigratory being in future lives, and without effort being able to understand very profound, very extensive teachings, comprehending not just the words but the meaning as well. This is the benefit of offering even one light to the merit field.

There are similar benefits mentioned for the other offerings you can make to the merit field, such as offering incense, perfume, flowers, tormas cakes and so forth. Each has ten benefits which are in general similar but which still have some differences.

Offering these things purifies the mind of miserliness, the mind of being attached to having unceasing enjoyment. I don't remember which path it is, but on one of the five paths you gain complete control over this. At this time, you can visualize the whole of space filled with offerings, including things that belong to you and things that don't belong to you—all the flowers in the fields, all the waters on this earth, the lakes, ponds, oceans, and the sun, moon and stars—you can make offerings of all these things in their general groups.

If you are doing a Highest Yoga Tantra practice and you transformed yourself into the deity of that practice at the beginning, you can visualize the whole of space filled with very beautiful offering goddesses that have emanated from your heart.

If you want to make the offerings more extensive still, you can visualize outer, inner and secret offerings, as described in the *Guru Puja*. You can make offerings in the elaborate way, according to the Highest Yoga Tantra practice.

GANDEN LHA GYĀMA: CONFESSION

Then, after this, the confession.

Whatever nonvirtues of body, speech, and mind,
And especially actions opposite to the three vows
That I have created from beginningless time,
From the bottom of my heart, I regret and fervently confess them all individually.

Making a confession like this purifies your unsubdued mind, your karma, eliminating the imprints of actions done with the three poisonous minds and the two obscurations. Then you achieve the ultimate result, the transcendental wisdom of the dharmakaya. This is similar to the ultimate result obtained from the limb of prostrations.

What you are confessing here is having done the complete opposite of what you have pledged in the three levels of vows you have taken: the pratimoksha, bodhisattva and tantric vows. In order to understand when you have transgressed those vows, you need to fully understand what they are. Lama Tsongkhapa warns us to know the definitions of all the vows and to be extremely careful to never let them degenerate but always keep them purely. Therefore this confession prayer is particularly to do with any vow of the three levels of vows that you have transgressed.

I think we'll stop here.

Therefore think, "It is only the holy Dharma that liberates me from death, which is caused by karma and the unsubdued mind. The holy Dharma is the only method that allows me to cease death. Therefore I must practice the holy Dharma." Like that, you should generate the strong thought to practice the Dharma.

To clarify that a little bit, another way of saying it is this. The cycle of death and rebirth is caused by the unsubdued mind and the karma it produces. Therefore this body, which is under the control of karma and the unsubdued mind, is born by being under their control. You are born without choice and, when you die, your death and rebirth are also without choice, being controlled by karma and the unsubdued mind.

The holy Dharma is the only method that can cause you to overcome this, to cease death and rebirth. Therefore you *must* practice the holy Dharma. You must subdue your mind. You must never give your unsubdued mind, the delusions, the opportunity to arise; you must never give it any freedom at all. That means the only thing you can do is practice the holy Dharma.

Even if you have a fear of death now, death hasn't yet happened, so you still have the chance to practice the method; there is still the opportunity. If you do, when the time of death arrives and death happens, you will have no fear.

Lecture 30

December 8, 1980 (morning)

THERE IS NO ULTIMATE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SELF AND OTHER

To attain happiness, you need to equalize yourself with others, and to eliminate the suffering of others you need to equalize yourself with others. We have already looked at why I and others are equal conventionally, but there are also three ultimate reasons why this is so: that “friend,” “enemy” and “stranger” are mere concepts; that they appear permanent whereas they are not; and that they are interdependent, like “here” and “there.”

The third reason is that your sense of “I” depends on the sense of “other.” As Nagarjuna said in *Precious Garland*,

When there is this, that arises,
Like short when there is long.⁴²

What Nagarjuna is saying is that you consider wherever you are to be “this side” or “here” and you consider over there to be “that side” or “there.” But if you went over there then you would consider there to be “this side” or “here” and where you were originally to be “that side” or “there.” There is no inherent “here” or “there.” It depends on where you are; that is why it’s called “merely labeled.” They are just names you give to a place close to you and one far from you. Although there is nothing truly existing at all on this side or that side, that is how it appears to you and that is what you come to believe in.

This is the same with “I” and “others.” In exactly the same way, I can only exist depending on others and others can only exist depending on I. From your side, you are “I” and everybody else is “other,” but from somebody else’s side, they are “I” and you are “other.” There is not the slightest degree of true existence in either, but you see yourself as “I” and you believe it is truly existing, and you see other sentient beings as “other” and you believe they are also truly existing. The I is nothing more than what is labeled on the aggregates, which are the base to be labeled. And “other” is the same, just the label placed on the aggregates of another sentient being, the base to be labeled.

If there were a truly existing I, then there would also have to be a truly existing other. That would absurdly mean that this would never change. Just as in the case of “this side” and “that side” where that place would be fixed no matter where you stood—when you move from “here” to “there” your new position would still be “there” and your old one still “here”—this is true of “I” and “other.” Your “I” would be the only “I” forever, and other beings would be “others” forever, even to themselves. Because it was truly existing, it could never change depending on the viewpoint of the person who is labeling it. You believe your own sense of self to be a truly existing “I” and the otherness of others is also something that is truly existing, therefore they must also see themselves as “other.”

⁴² V. 40, quoted in Hopkins, Jeffrey, *Meditation on Emptiness*, p. 673, Wisdom Publications.

There seems to be something from the side of the object that is inherent, truly existing. This is how you apprehend an object and this is what you believe. Although the I is merely labeled on the aggregates, it feels like there is something there from its own side. The I seems to be there absolutely. But if there is an absolute I there must be an absolute other. That means that all sentient beings who are separate from you are others inherently, not just something you have labeled by thought and name.

If your “I” doesn’t exist in this way, there is no way you can label other sentient beings’ aggregates as “other.” Without an inherently existing “other” there cannot be an inherently existing “I.” This holds for all phenomena. How things appear become just a different way of looking at them.

For instance, one person could be friend, enemy or stranger, depending on the viewpoint of who is observing them. To one person they are a friend; to another they are an enemy; and to a third they are a stranger. It’s the same person but seen differently depending on the different viewpoints of different people.

Similarly, you might see someone as ugly whereas someone else sees them as beautiful; you might dislike someone whereas someone else likes them very much, and maybe a third person only likes them a little. These are just different subjective ways of seeing.

Therefore, after considering the six reasons depending on the all-obscuring or conventional truth and the three reasons depending on the ultimate truth, your conclusion should be that you never accept some sentient beings and give up on others. You must make the determination never to do that. How could you? It’s unworthy to discriminate in any way, seeing some as close and others as distant, accepting some and giving them benefit and giving up on others and not giving them benefit or even harming them. There is no justification at all for this.

This discriminating thought is the root of attachment and anger, the root of the hundreds of harms and sufferings of this life and all future lives. It is like the prison guard that keeps you locked in the prison of samsara, never letting you become liberated. Like the butcher that leads the animals to the slaughter yard, it leads you to the lower realms. It is the executioner that leads you to the fires of the hells. It is a chronic disease that doesn’t allow you the slightest comfort, even during your sleep.

Therefore you must root out this evil thought, just as you must pull out a poisonous plant by the roots, throwing it far from your garden so it cannot poison all your other plants. You can’t just pull off the leaves and leave the roots intact. It must be completely taken out, root and all.

Practicing the thought that does not discriminate—that equalizes yourself and all sentient beings, working to obtain happiness for all sentient beings and to eliminate their suffering completely—will bring you great benefit, both temporarily and ultimately. To have this thought is highly meaningful.

Attaining bodhicitta through equalizing and exchanging the self with others is the principal path taken by all the past, present and future buddhas. This concern for others that all buddhas and bodhisattvas have is the heart of the holy mind.

Therefore you should think, “From my side, whatever sentient beings do to me, whether they help me or harm me, I must never give up on them. I must renounce all attachment and anger and all discriminating thoughts, holding some as close and some as distant. I must have the mind that

works equally for all. Everything I do in thought and action must be to obtain happiness for sentient beings and eliminate their suffering. I must attempt this with all my heart.”

This is the additional advice of the lineage lamas of the lamrim teachings, advice that was scattered among the other teachings and which have been put together in the powerful teaching on equalizing your thoughts and actions so that everything you do is to bring other sentient beings happiness and eliminate their suffering. The more you think about these six conventional and three ultimate reasons why you and all other being are equal, the more powerful your determination will become to cultivate this equal attitude, and you will find more and more reasons to attain it.

I'll stop here.

THE EIGHT MAHAYANA PRECEPTS

Keeping the eight Mahayana precepts is the cause of so much temporal happiness and samsaric perfections while you are in samsara as well as ultimate happiness, the complete attainment of buddhahood.

Think that by keeping the precepts you have created so much cause to be able to do extensive, effortless work for all the sentient beings. In that way, you are able to benefit all the sentient beings so much.

Through living in the precepts, you are abstaining from all nonvirtuous actions and, because of that, you are not the cause for other sentient beings to create negative karma. This is an example of how taking the precepts benefits both directly and indirectly.

And by taking the precepts you are making preparations to be able to do effortless, extensive work for all sentient beings. Feel great happiness that at this time you are taking the precepts so that you will become a bodhisattva and then a higher bodhisattva, able to do more and more work for sentient beings, to benefit sentient beings more and more, and then become a buddha. There is no need to talk about the extensive, effortless work you will be able to do for all sentient beings when you become a buddha. Even now you are doing the best preparation to bring direct and indirect benefit to all beings, therefore you should feel great happiness.

[Rinpoche gives the eight Mahayana precepts]

THE MUD OF THE UNSUBDUED MIND

It is difficult for somebody whose mind is disturbed, unsubdued, to generate bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is like the lotus that grows from the mud, whereas the mind of the unsubdued person is that mud. If your mind is always stirred up by delusions, it's like when you stir fry vegetables. The unsubdued mind is made solid by delusions; it's not soft. There are always delusions swirling around in the mind: anger, jealousy, attachment, all the poisonous minds. In such a state, any condition can trigger a negative emotion. One or two words you don't like will cause anger to arise. Any small thing that upsets you becomes like kerosene poured onto a dry bush and your anger is the match. Suddenly the whole place becomes full of flames.

Anger can consume your body, completely possessing it from head to foot. Even if you are usually beautiful, your appearance becomes fearful when you are angry; nobody wants to be near you. It's kind of scary.

Anger has a color. Depending on the person, sometimes it seems to be very dark, sometimes it makes you turn red—your ears turn red, your face turns red, your nose turns red. Your hair stands up and your body seems to become bigger, stronger, heavier, your muscles bulging. You walk with a heavy tread, your footsteps making a crashing sound on the floor. Eating, you crash your spoon on the plate, making a lot of noise. You slam the door violently when you close it, making a huge noise unless you have already broken it. Reading a book, you turn the pages violently, tearing them or making them wrinkle.

What was I talking about?

If you are that sort of person, somebody who gets impatient or angry easily, flaring up at just a couple of words somebody says or a slightly different way of looking, you can easily become consumed by that anger, like kerosene thrown over a bush. In your mind, the other person caused you to become angry; they are the enemy and they deserve to be harmed. You wish them harm.

When you look for the cause of anger, you see that for people who have strong anger or other disturbing thoughts such as pride, it comes from the selfish mind, from the self-cherishing thought. Because there is too much clinging to their own happiness, the slightest hindrance to that happiness, the slightest change in how somebody treats them, will make them impatient or angry. The slightest disturbance causes great unhappiness to arise, and from that, comes great anger.

Selfish people are like that. It stems from the selfish mind, and all the other problems come from that. Such a person is always disturbed; like mud in turbulent water, their thoughts are always stirred up by the unsubdued mind. With a mind like that, it is extremely difficult to generate bodhicitta.

A lotus grows from mud. It cannot grow from a place where there is no mud, such as from a pillow on the bed, or on a table. It needs the mud. But the inner lotus, bodhicitta, cannot grow while the thoughts are stirred up by the unsubdued mind. The greatest hindrance to generating bodhicitta is the self-cherishing thought. It cannot develop while there are thoughts like self-cherishing, anger and so forth, while the mind is unsubdued.

Other unsubdued minds like anger are not as harmful as self-cherishing, which is the complete opposite of bodhicitta. The nature of bodhicitta is cherishing others; the nature of self-cherishing is cherishing ourselves, only wishing ourselves to be happy and devoid of suffering, the complete opposite. While bodhicitta always has the thought to benefit others—to not harm them but always help them—the nature of anger is to only harm them. So, self-cherishing and anger are the two greatest enemies to generating bodhicitta.

Therefore to make space in your mind to be able to generate bodhicitta, the practice you need to do in your everyday life is to always remember the shortcomings of self-cherishing, how it is the door to all your suffering. When you constantly remind yourself of its shortcomings through listening to teachings on that subject as much as you can, your self-cherishing will slowly diminish, becoming weaker and weaker and weaker.

As well, in your everyday life you should always remember the benefits of bodhicitta, of cherishing others. In that way your wish to develop bodhicitta will become stronger and stronger. You should work on these two opposing thoughts—developing the thought of cherishing others and diminishing and eliminating the self-cherishing thought.

When your wish to benefit others increases day by day, when you can make it as powerful as possible, the thought to give harm to others, anger, will naturally diminish, becoming weaker and weaker. You should work to make it as small as possible.

How can you practice these twin thoughts? On a daily level how can you practice so that the self-cherishing thought, the thought to give harm to others, becomes less and less? How can you subdue this thought that harms yourself and others and how can you increase the thought that cherishes others, that wishes to bring them happiness, peace, all the perfections? You need to understand that the object of your practice is other sentient beings, especially those around you in your daily life, those beings you need to deal with every day. These are the people you can really develop your mind on, practicing patience with them, renouncing your own concerns and cherishing them instead.

Perhaps beings such as worldly gods were objects of your anger in previous lives, but in this life you have no immediate connection with them. Because you don't see or think of them, they are too abstract to really help you develop your bodhicitta. You are currently a human being and they are not the object of your anger at present because they are not around. Perhaps if you find that some harm you are experiencing comes from nagas or spirits, you might become angry with them, but the sentient beings you really need to use to develop your mind are those who are around now, who are currently bothering you. First, there are the human beings around you, and then there are the other creatures that you can see with your eyes who disturb you, who are the current objects of your anger.

The people you encounter every day—those you talk to, you listen to, you eat with, you live with—these are the ones you should particularly practice the holy Dharma on, the ones you should practice the good heart on. If, day by day, you work on developing your good heart with them, the practice of the good heart will get better, day by day, month by month. This leads to the opportunity to quickly generate the ultimate good heart, bodhicitta.

***GANDEN LHA GYÄMA* COMMENTARY: PROSTRATIONS**

Please think, “In order to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all the mother sentient beings, I will listen to the commentary on the *Ganden Lha Gyäma* with a bodhicitta motivation.

We have reached the guru yoga practice in the *Ganden Lha Gyäma*. If you want to do prostrations, you can do them at this point.

You begin the prostrations with the mantra, OM NAMO MANJUSHRIYE/ NAMA SUSHRIYE/ NAMA UTTAMA SHRIYE SVAHA. This has great benefits. It increases the benefits of the prostrations a thousand times. If you do this with the prostrations every day, you will quickly generate the right-seeing path, the third of the five paths, where you can no longer be harmed by others.

The essential point of prostrations is that they purify obscurations and negative karmas of body, speech and mind that have been accumulated since beginningless samsaric lifetimes, and they transform the body, speech and mind into the vajra holy body, vajra holy speech and vajra holy mind. Because this practice is Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga, it therefore relates to transforming your own body, speech and mind into Guru Lama Tsongkhapa's vajra holy body, vajra holy speech and vajra holy mind. You transform your own three doors into the three vajras.

Making a prostration can mean just putting your palms together at your heart, doing a half prostration, or a full-length prostration, where you stretch your whole body out on the ground. There is also the prostration of the speech, which means saying prayers, such as reciting the holy names of the buddhas and prayers admiring the qualities of the merit field, those who are objects of prostration. When you recite the qualities of the merit field's holy body, holy speech and holy mind, that is speech prostration, and when devotion arises, that is mind prostration.

When you make prostrations of the body, it's not like physical exercise, like people do in America. There are so many benefits of making prostrations. It not only makes your present life's body healthy—this body you only have for a few months or a few years—it not only relieves muscle pains and joint pains, there is also the ultimate benefit. If prostrations are done correctly, they completely purify true suffering and the true causes of suffering, where all the diseases of mind and body come from. Even the root cause of suffering is purified by correctly making prostrations.

The main benefit of prostrating to remember is this. As the Buddha explained in the *Lankavatara Sutra*, when you do a full-length prostration, with your hands fully extended, the number of atoms your body covers, from the surface of the ground right down to the center of the earth, that many atoms, you create that much merit to be born as a wheel-turning king a thousand times. Just one atom of ground covered creates the cause to be born as a wheel-turning king a thousand times so think of how many atoms of ground your body covers with a prostration, and then think of how that is not just the surface but all the way to the center of the earth. It is unimaginable.

Of course, the purpose of doing prostrations is not necessarily to be born as a wheel-turning king, but that is just to give an idea of how much merit you accumulate by making even one prostration. A wheel-turning king, such as the kings of the pure land like the king of Shambhala, has incredible power; he controls one or two continents as well as the god realms. You need to have created unimaginable merit to be born a wheel-turning king. So you can see how when one prostration creates the merit to be born a wheel-turning king a thousand times for each atom of ground covered, that is utterly unimaginable.

This of course depends on how you dedicate your merit. Just as a horse will turn whichever way you pull the reins, however you dedicate the merit will determine the result. If you dedicate the merit to achieving enlightenment, that will be the result. You don't necessarily have to become a wheel-turning king!

The texts talk about the general benefits of prostrating as well as the particular ones, such as the ten benefits. For instance, even while you are in samsara, you will have a beautiful body, like Guru Shakyamuni's body that is a pure holy body, golden in color, and you will possess a very sweet voice. And you won't have any fear or worry when you attend assemblies, such as when you have to give teachings to sentient beings. All humans and worldly gods will be very happy to see you or hear you.

Instead of being in the company of ignorant friends, you will always enjoy magnificent company, such as arhats and bodhisattvas. You will always accompany them. You will always have great enjoyments and always find the body of a happy transmigratory being and be able to achieve nirvana and enlightenment.

Generally, even while you are in samsara, you will attain whatever temporal result you wish for.

Keeping your palms together like this at the heart signifies the core practice of method and wisdom of the Theravadin path as well as the core practices of method and wisdom of the Mahayana path. Relating to the Vajrayana or Secret Mantra, one palm represents wisdom, clear light, and the other represents method, the illusory body. Joining them together represents the unification of the paths of training and achieving the final path, the path of no more learning. Therefore it also signifies the result you will achieve, the dharmakaya and rupakaya. The space between the two palms signifies the dharmakaya and the palms themselves represent the rupakaya.

Keeping the two thumbs inside signifies offering jewels. If you just put your palms together without placing the thumbs inside, that is not the Buddhist mudra of prostration.

When you prostrate, you place the two hands at the crown, throat and heart, which purifies the negative karmas of body, speech and mind and causes you to achieve the vajra holy body, vajra holy speech and vajra holy mind. It creates the cause to attain all the qualities of the merit field, especially the nirmanakaya aspect, in order to work for other sentient beings. It also creates the cause for the holy signs of a buddha such as the *ushnisha* and the curled central hair between the eyebrows.

While you are doing the prostrations, it is very good, if you can, to remember the significance of this and relate it to the whole path, from guru devotion up to enlightenment. It is very effective for the mind.

If you can remember as I explained it now, when you put your two palms together, visualize beams of light flowing from the merit field into you and all your numberless previous lives' bodies in human form that you have visualized surrounding you. They also absorb into all the sentient beings, purifying all the obscurations, the negative karmas of body, speech and mind, collected from beginningless samsara lifetimes.

Then, as you stand up the second time, replicas of Lama Tsongkhapa and his two spiritual sons absorb into you, into all your past lives' bodies and into all the sentient beings surrounding you, and the body, speech and mind of you and all others become oneness with their holy body, holy speech and holy mind.

This is the main visualization when you do prostrations to any merit field. It's the same when you are reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas' prayer for prostrations. Even if you don't physically make prostrations, you can do the same visualization—the nectar beams coming and purifying yourself, all past lives' bodies and sentient beings, and then, after each holy name that you recite, a replica of each buddha absorbing into you. With each name, you do the purification and the absorption like this.

GANDEN LHA GYĀMA: OFFERING

The next limb is offerings.

Beautiful drinking water, various arranged flowers,
Fragrant incense, light, scented water, and so forth;
Actually performed and mentally transformed oceans of clouds of offerings
I offer to you, the supreme field of merit.

In the past we have often translated *tsog zhibing* as “guru tree” or “assembly tree” rather than its correct translation of “merit field.” Even though you visualize it as a tree, a wish-granting tree where the merit field sits, the term “merit field” has great meaning.

The field of merit is called a “field” because it is like a field where you plant crops. Just as you obtain the food you live on from a field sown with crops, you obtain your merit from the Guru Triple Gem. Therefore, the merit field is extremely important. Just as you can’t survive without food collected from the field, there is no way to obtain any happiness without relying on the merit field. All your three-times’ happiness—past, present and future—is received from the Guru Triple Gem when you plant the crop of virtue.

HYMNS OF EXPERIENCE: REMEMBERING DEATH

It is not sufficient just to have a liking for the holy Dharma; if you wish for your three doors to become the Dharma, you must practice it, without the mind becoming weak. You might have read many Dharma texts and decided there are many good points in it, many truths; you might see how it clearly shows the nature of suffering and the path that leads to overcoming suffering. However, that alone is not sufficient. You must practice the holy Dharma.

It’s like lying on your bed or sitting on a chair, dreaming of how much you like ice cream, thinking of how delicious it is, but not doing anything about it. If you just lie on your bed, there is no way you can taste the ice cream. If you want it, you have to go to the refrigerator and open the door. Even if the refrigerator is full of ice cream, you won’t get the slightest taste of it unless you do that. If it’s still in the shop you have to go there; if you don’t have the money, you have to work for it.

This is similar to saying that the Dharma is very good, very effective, but not actually practicing it. As long as you don’t make continuous effort to practice the Dharma you will reach nowhere.

In *Hymns of Experience* Lama Tsongkhapa gave this advice.

This life of leisure is even more precious than a wish-granting jewel;
That I have found such an existence is only this once;
So hard to find yet like a flash of lightning it is easy to vanish;
Contemplating this situation it’s vital to realize that all mundane
pursuits

Are like the empty grain husks floating in the winds
And that we must extract the essence of human existence.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;

You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.⁴³

If you live with the belief that you won't die today, even that you *might not* die today, that is a mistaken conception. You are looking at your life in exactly the wrong way, because with that kind of attitude you won't make any preparations for your future life. All you consider are this life's concerns. Then, you will easily become attached to the affairs of this life, to reputation, possessions, comfort, the surroundings and so forth. And then, in order to obtain these things, you commit many negative karmas.

Being attached to worldly things, the unsubdued mind arises and deluded thoughts abound: anger, pride, jealousy and so forth. Then, instead of accumulating virtue and making preparations for the happiness of future lives, you accumulate nonvirtue and ensure that you will experience the suffering of the lower realms after you die. And even while you are alive, you have to experience so many problems, with your mind full of strong confusion.

While life goes on in this way, you suddenly come face to face with death. At that time, because you have accumulated so much negative karma from your past nonvirtuous actions of this life and previous lives, you are terrified. As your death approaches, terrifying karmic visions appear, a sign that you are about to be born in the lower realms. According to the karma you have accumulated during your life and in previous lives, you experience fearful karmic visions, even before your breath stops and while you are still able to speak. Seeing all kinds of terrible things, you scream out in horror.

A disciple of one of the Kadampa geshe had caused disunity in his monastery during his lifetime and before his death he didn't confess it or purify it. So at the time of death he experienced the karmic vision of being trapped, with the whole monastery weighing down on his body as it was consumed by fire. It was a karmic vision but for him it was real.

There was also a Tibetan person in Dharamsala who had killed many sheep when he was in Tibet. As he was dying he was screaming in terror, having a karmic vision of being completely surrounded by sheep who were attacking him. His friends around him couldn't see anything but he was terrified. There are many stories like this of karmic visions happening at death related to the karma done during that lifetime, where the person is overwhelmed by terror, thrashing their limbs about, darting their eyes this way and that, tears pouring down their faces. Due to negativities done in that life they cannot hope to have a peaceful death; they must face a terrible death with so much suffering.

Even if you think you are not going to die and don't make any preparations for your death; even if you think you won't die today and plan only for the happiness of this life and not for future lives, death will still come. Therefore Lama Tsongkhapa advised that you must act as if you are going to die today. If you are aware of how imminent death is, then you will live your life very carefully. He gave this example. Say you hear that your enemy is coming in a very short time—say seven days, but Lama Tsongkhapa didn't say that—and when they arrive they will definitely kill you. During that time you will be incredibly aware of how little time you have, and you will be very careful with everything you do.

⁴³ Vv. 13 and 14.

Even if you knew your normal lifespan would be a hundred years, death is still uncertain; you would still have no idea when it might happen. Within those hundred years, or the number of years you have left from that, death could happen next year, or next month, or next week, or tomorrow. It could happen this minute. You have no idea. It will certainly happen within what's left of that hundred-year lifespan. When it happens is completely uncertain.

Lama Tsongkhapa said that if you can determine when you wake up that today is the day you are going to die, that is excellent. If you *do* die today, that is excellent because you will have spent the day preparing for your next life. During those hours you had left, you have spent every moment in preparation by practicing the Dharma diligently. And if you determine you will die today and you *don't* die, that is also excellent, because you have spent your day aware of death and because of that you will have also made so many preparations for your next life by practicing the Dharma diligently. You don't have to feel disappointed you didn't die even though you had planned for it; you should feel so happy you have used your time so constructively. Actually Lama Tsongkhapa didn't say that last bit. I added that, but he sort of implied it.

It's like you are staying here at the moment, but in a couple of days you will be flying back to the States. In that case, you wouldn't put a lot of effort into your life here—how much flea powder you should buy, how many buckets you need—all you would be thinking about would be getting back home.

With the thought of impermanence and death, you have little concern for dealing with the problems of this life but you are always aware that you will soon be in another life and so you must make the best preparations for that. You're only spending a night or two here, so you have already packed your things. Where you will spend your future life becomes a lot more important than where you are now.

The Kadampa geshees say that unless you remember impermanence and death right after you wake up, then whatever you do during the rest of the day does not become the Dharma. If you do remember impermanence and death in the morning, then all your actions become the Dharma. It's the first meditation you should do in the morning. And if you remember impermanence and death at noon, then the rest of the day becomes Dharma. This advice comes from the experience of the great meditators who have meditated on impermanence and death.

Lama Tsongkhapa said that the most important thing to think is that, because the time of death is indefinite, every morning when you get up, you should determine that today you are going to die. Then, during the day, if your mind slips back into thoughts about worldly concern, you should remind yourself, generating the thought again and again that you will die today. In that way, even if there is something really complicated going on and there is much confusion, it will become small. It will seem so insignificant.

Sometimes you get an idea that the affairs of this life are essenceless, that they hold no importance for you. If something should happen or not, it doesn't really matter; it doesn't make much difference to you. Mostly, though, people see the affairs of this life as the most important thing—obtaining happiness in this life is the only goal—whereas the future life is unimportant. You need to reverse that and learn to see that obtaining the happiness of future lives is the most important work you can do, whereas working for this life is unimportant.

Even worldly people put the comfort and happiness of the future years ahead of today's happiness and will work incredibly hard, wearing themselves out and facing many difficulties in order to be happy in their future years. They are so busy earning money for the future they are careless about the present, thinking that today's comfort is unimportant. If it happens, it happens; if it doesn't happen, it doesn't matter. That is the attitude you need, not for a comfortable future in this life but for the happiness of future lives. You need to change your mind and let go of being concerned only with the happiness of this life, now or in a few years' time.

When you are concerned for the happiness of future lives rather than this one, you are on the graduated path of the lower capable being. However, Lama Tsongkhapa cautioned that you must still stabilize this thought through remembering impermanence and death. If not, the thought of future lives will degenerate.

HYMNS OF EXPERIENCE: THE IMPORTANCE OF REFUGE

In the next verses of *Hymns of Experience*, Lama Tsongkhapa said,

There is no certainty that after death we may not be born in the lower realms;
The protection from such terror lies in the Three Jewels alone;
So we must make firm the practice of going for refuge
And ensure that its precepts are never undermined.

This in turn depends on contemplating well the white and black karma
And their effects, and on perfect observance of the ethical norms.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

If death were to happen now, right this minute, could you be certain you wouldn't be reborn in the lower realms? This is a question you should ask yourself. I think for most of us there wouldn't be any certainty at all. Here, Lama Tsongkhapa explains that unless you are completely sure, you need to find some security against it happening; you need a refuge, a method to save yourself from the lower realms.

Then the question arises, "Who can I take refuge in?" Who has the power to save you from the fear of the lower realms? When you investigate, you will see that only the Triple Gem has that power. Lama Tsongkhapa's fatherly advice is that by taking extremely strong refuge in the Triple Gem you will have no fear of rebirth in the lower realms. Refuge is something you always need. It's not just something you do for a day, a month or a year. It's not like something you do but then over time it fades away, like a car disappearing from view over the horizon. You need to practice refuge without degeneration, all the time, making sure it is never undermined.

I think Geshe-la has already explained refuge to you, about how the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha guide you, and about the specific and general precepts that go with taking refuge, so I don't have to go over that again. I won't need to explain it when we give the refuge ordination.

The general advice for the refuge precepts is listed as six:

- 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

By remembering again and again the different qualities of the Triple Gem, you should take refuge again and again with that thought. By remembering the benefits of refuge, you should recite the refuge prayer three times during the day and three times at night. Whether you say the words or not, you must take refuge in your mind three times during the day and three times at night.

Then, the second thing is by remembering Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's kindness, before you eat or drink anything, you should offer it, visualizing Shakyamuni Buddha at your heart. That's what the texts say, but I believe it is also possible to visualize him in front of you or on your crown. Do it whichever way suits you, but you must first remember that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is the embodiment of all the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and then making offerings with the thought of remembering his kindness.

The third precept is to guide other sentient beings into refuge with compassion in order to save them from the lower realms. And the fourth is to listen to the teachings as much as possible.

The fifth one is to always rely on the Triple Gem. By relying on them, whatever work you do will have less hindrances and be more successful.

Finally, you must never give up the Triple Gem, even if it costs your life, nor should you even make a joke about giving up your refuge. There is the story of a monk who was threatened by somebody who said he would kill the monk unless he gave up his ordination. I'm not sure whether it was his ordination or refuge, but anyway the monk refused, renouncing his life rather than his refuge. Even though he was killed, he was born in the deva realm; he was saved from rebirth in the realms of the suffering transmigratory beings.

So, those are the six general refuge precepts. They are all methods to ensure that you benefit yourself, that you obtain happiness for yourself.

Then Lama Tsongkhapa explained that, by taking refuge in the Buddha, you should practice the essential advice of the Buddha, which is that even if you are unable to offer benefit to others, you must at least not harm them. This is the practice of protecting your karma, of only creating white or positive karma by doing virtuous actions and never creating black or negative karma by doing nonvirtuous actions.

If you do the opposite and create only black actions rather than white ones, there is no way you can ever be happy. These precepts are like medicine you have been prescribed. The doctor has clearly shown you what will help, what you should take, and what is poison that you should not take because it will harm you. If you ignore the medicine and take the poison, going against the advice, there is no way the doctor can help you. Similarly, you must "reflect well on the white and black karma and their effects."

You should try to understand the teachings on karma as the Buddha explained and generate faith in them, then practice correctly to not create new negative karma and purify whatever negative karma is on your mindstream.

Because there is no certainty that you won't be born in the lower realms after you die, as Lama Tsongkhapa said, you must seek refuge from that. It's definite that it is only the Triple Gem that can save you from this. This is his advice about what to do to prepare for death. As he said, "I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner; you, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise."

The best thing to do to prevent an unfortunate rebirth is, at the time of death, to take refuge in Shakyamuni Buddha or whatever different aspect of the enlightened mind you are familiar with, whatever aspect of the buddha mind you usually meditate on. If it's Chenrezig then you take refuge in Chenrezig; if it's Tara or Manjushri then you take refuge in them. Take refuge in whatever deity you already practice.

You must also remember your guru, that one you made Dharma contact with, the one you have received initiations, teachings and commentaries from. You might have many gurus, but it is good to focus on your main one and remember him or her. It is said in the tantra teachings that if you can remember your guru for even a second as you are dying, you will attain enlightenment earlier. Even if you led an evil life, having created incredible amounts of heavy negative karma, such as having killed many people in your early life, if you can be skillful, careful, at the time of death and remember the guru, you will be reborn in a pure land and attain enlightenment there. It is said you will attain enlightenment much earlier than somebody who doesn't practice like that.

[Dedication prayers]

Lecture 31

December 8, 1980 (afternoon)

HYMNS OF EXPERIENCE COMMENTARY: PURIFICATION AND THE FOUR OPPONENT POWERS

Again, generate a pure bodhicitta motivation, thinking, “I must achieve enlightenment for the benefit of my kind mother sentient beings. Therefore, I’m going to listen to the commentary on the graduated path to enlightenment.”

In *Hymns of Experience* Lama Tsongkhapa said,

Until we’ve obtained the most qualified form to pursue the excellent path
We will fail to make great strides in our journey,
So we must strive in all the conditions without exception of such a form;
Thus these three doors of ours so sullied with evil karma and downfalls,

Since it is especially essential to purify their karmic defilements,
We must ensure to cherish the constant application all four powers.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

You need a perfect body to achieve the supreme path, and for that you need to create the causes for that body. Therefore it is extremely important to purify whatever stains there are on your three doors of body, speech and mind by applying the four opponent forces.

That perfect body is the one qualified with the eight freedoms and ten richnesses. With such a body you can complete the supreme path, the path to enlightenment, which contains the sutra path and the tantra path, making it possible to attain the unified stage of Vajradhara in one brief lifetime in this body. Or, like Lama Tsongkhapa, who showed the aspect of becoming enlightened in the intermediate state. If not, you can become enlightened within two or three lifetimes.

In that, men and women are exactly equal. Nowadays a woman can be a police officer, just like a man. She can stand by the side of the road directing traffic, just like a man, or work in an office. If a man can be a soldier, a woman should be able to be a soldier. Then, just as a man has the power to kill other human beings, a woman also has that power.

In that way, you can say that women have liberation at last, but that’s not real liberation; that’s not real women’s liberation. When a woman or man is free from confusion, *that* is liberation! When they are free from samsara, that is real, ultimate liberation.

Whatever worldly people say about liberation, screaming about women’s liberation, marching up and down, it doesn’t matter. What matters is taking care of your mind, never wasting your time, always making every moment highly meaningful by developing a good heart. That is the way to find relief from confusion.

As you continue practicing the holy Dharma, year by year, your experience of the path will become greater and greater. Then, at the time of your death, you can look after yourself, you can take care of yourself. That is what is called “self-supporting.” You need to become self-supporting before you die; then you are really taking care of yourself. Then, you can take the path you wish at the time of your death and you can give yourself liberation. Like this, the graduated sutra and tantra paths will gradually increase in your mind.

Even if you cannot achieve enlightenment, the unified state of Vajradhara, in this brief lifetime, you will be able to do so within seven lifetimes, or within sixteen, or three. If you are able to do that, that is the greatest liberation.

There are different explanations according to Theravadin and the Mahayana about how the body is transformed into an enlightened body, but according to Vajrayana, enlightenment is possible because men and women in this southern continent are born from the womb and the body consists of six elements, coming from the mother’s seed and the father’s sperm. Because both men and women have these six elements, supported by the pure practice of sutra and tantra, in this body they can both attain enlightenment, the unified state of Vajradhara. Men can achieve enlightenment like this and women can achieve enlightenment like this. Both are able to complete the path of the Secret Mantra with the support of sutra and tantra.

I have no time to explain what that means, but it is explained in some of the higher tantras, like in the mother tantras. From your side, whether you are a man or a woman, unless you take care of yourself, you cannot guide yourself. If you don’t try as much as possible to practice the holy Dharma with a good heart, if you don’t try to generate bodhicitta in this life, if you don’t try to gain realizations in future lives and generate the path that liberates you from samsara, you will have to experience problems endlessly, as a man, as a woman, whatever it is.

As much as you possibly can, you need to plant the seeds in this life to generate realizations in future lives. That is the only way to be free from being trapped endlessly in samsaric suffering. From beginningless lifetimes until now, every problem you have had to experience, and all the problems you hear about that happen in the world, all come from not giving yourself freedom. So, it is vital now that you don’t cheat yourself.

It says that you need to create the cause of the perfect human body, to find the perfect body able to practice the sublime path, one that does not fall short of any of the eight freedoms and ten richnesses. If there were one of those eighteen qualities missing, you would need to find what the cause of that quality is and do whatever you can to create it. But you have found a perfect human body because you have created the perfect causes in your previous lives without missing one, and so in this life you have the perfect conditions to actualize the supreme path. Therefore, you must utilize this precious opportunity.

If you don’t make use of this opportunity that has come about only after so many hundreds of lifetimes of hard work and prayer, of making offerings to the Triple Gem, of making so much charity to sentient beings and observing pure morality, if you can’t even utilize this chance you have, there is nothing more foolish, nothing more ignorant. As Shantideva said,

After having found this freedom,
If I do not train my mind in virtue,

There is nothing more deceptive,
There is no greater folly than this.⁴⁴

There is no greater loss than this; there is no way you can cheat yourself more than this. Whatever attainment you cannot complete in this lifetime, you must strive to complete in the next. Like that, from life to life, you can progress through all the stages, from guru devotion all the way to enlightenment. But with any other body there is no way to do this. Even if you can attain another human body you will not be able to practice the holy Dharma, the supreme path to enlightenment. Therefore, now that you have this perfect human body with all the qualities, one that will enable you to complete the supreme path, you must use it to attain enlightenment. You must use this body to make preparations to find another perfect human body in your next life and in all your future lives.

It is extremely important to understand what blocks your ability to do this. What stops you generating bodhicitta? What stops you understanding and realizing emptiness? What disturbs you and interferes with you quickly generating renunciation? Why do you find it difficult to understand the teachings? In short, you must understand what interferes with your development on the graduated path to enlightenment.

It is the negative karmic imprints on your mindstream, the obscurations that cloud your mind. Because of them, no matter how much you try to meditate, nothing happens in the mind. You are incapable of getting anywhere near any attainment; you cannot approach the path. This is due to having very thick karmic obscurations.

That is why Lama Tsongkhapa strongly emphasized how important it is to purify your karmic defilements, the delusions that cloud your mind. The various negative karmas you have accumulated from beginningless lifetimes are incredibly powerful, and without finding remedies powerful enough to counter these, there is no way you can hope for another perfect human body in the future. At the moment of your death, whichever karma is the most powerful—positive or negative—will determine your next rebirth, so if your negative karma is more powerful, you can only expect to be born in the realm of the suffering transmigratory beings.

Lama Tsongkhapa explained that the most powerful way to purify the karmic obscurations that stain the three doors of our body, speech and mind is by the four opponent powers. It is not sufficient to do a purification practice using these powers for a day; it's not sufficient to do it for a month or three months. Even three years is not sufficient. Lama Tsongkhapa said that you must do it all the time. That's not in this translation, but it's there in the Tibetan and it has unbelievable meaning; it contains so much.

It is extremely important to purify the three doors that have been stained by the negative karma, the downfalls of the vows. You must cherish the constant practice of the four powers, following them completely, constantly. You must live in the four powers. The word “follow” makes sense because this is something you always do. You need practice to be able to do this and it is extremely important. Cherishing the four powers means you need to keep this practice in your heart constantly.

⁴⁴ Ch. 4, v. 23.

For example, if you kill a louse and you don't use this practice to purify your negative action, it doubles the next day and then doubles after that and after eighteen days the karmic result of that deed is huge. It's like planting potatoes on a mountain. You plant half a potato, one that has eyes and has the potential to grow, and then when you dig it up there are ten potatoes there if the conditions are there. From one you get many. Or you plant one grain of rice and you get a whole field of rice in return. Like that, after killing one louse and not purifying, after eighteen days it's the same as having killed 132,000 lice. It multiplies that much if nothing is done to purify it. That's why, when Lama Tsongkhapa tells you to practice this all the time, it has great meaning.

Unless you do a purifying practice like the Thirty-five Buddhas confession prayer or the Vajrasattva practice at night to purify whatever negative action you have done in the day, it become double the next day. When you do a practice like that with the four opponent powers, it stops that happening. Any negative action you have done is purified and cannot multiply the next day. Therefore, this is something you must do every day.

You should do this three times during the day: in the morning, in the afternoon and at night, at the end of the day. If you can't do that you must at least do the practice of confession with the four powers at the end of the day, before going to bed.

If you can do that, you can not only purify the negative karma accumulated that day and stop it from multiplying the next day, the negative karma you have accumulated from beginningless rebirths becomes thinner; it can never increase, so that is a great advantage. Even if you don't manage to do any other practices, if you can continue this practice every day until your death, you will be able to feel very happy when you die, so this practice is incredibly meaningful.

No matter how busy your life is, you must at least make sure this practice is done every night. You must follow Lama Tsongkhapa's advice to cherish the constant application of the four powers. It is an extremely useful way to save yourself from the lower realms and quickly generate the realizations of the path to enlightenment.

One of the four opponent powers is the power of the remedy. There are many different ways you can practice that, such as reading scriptures like Shantideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, the *Heart Sutra* and the other teachings of the Prajnaparamita sutras, or the teachings on emptiness. You can also make buddha statues or *tsa tsas*. I think Lama Tsongkhapa did that, but I can't remember.

I think Lama Tsongkhapa practiced in the daytime, after breakfast or morning tea, making charity to the hungry ghosts by making pills with tsampa, barley flour, mixed with curd and white food. The first thing he did when he got up was do an extensive self-initiation in Yamantaka, even before breakfast, and when he had finished that he did many Kriya Tantra practices.

Then, before twelve, he did many purifying practices, such as making big statue molds of buddhas and making statues of them out of mud. You can also do this in the water, with a block making a print on the water and counting each number. Although the image doesn't stay on the water, you not only purify in this manner but the image of the buddha in the water also blesses the water and purifies the creatures that are in the water. You can do that or do a deity practice.

At sunset Lama Tsongkhapa made offerings to the protectors and then at around midnight he did a complete Chakrasamvara self-initiation. In between all this, he gave teachings, wrote scriptures and

commentaries and received many learned geshe who came to discuss the subtle points of sutra and tantra that they didn't understand. All these different practices, giving Dharma teachings, reading scriptures like the Kangyur and Tengyur—these were just some of the things that Lama Tsongkhapa did in one day.

And while doing all these various activities, his mind was continually in the yoga practice of tantra, the well-stabilized yoga of the gradual path, the concentration on the mandala of the deity. We can't even get a clear visualization of the deity for a minute! Even in the daytime, when he was working or having a meal, his holy mind spontaneously saw everything as illusory, as empty of true existence.

If you recite the prayer of the *Confession of a Bodhisattva's Downfalls to the Thirty-five Buddhas*, the prayer itself contains the four opponent powers. As long as you say the prayer and your mind follows the meaning of what the prayer says, then you are practicing the four opponent powers. When your mind follows the meaning of the prayer, you are living in the complete four powers, you are always being reminded to practice the four powers.

When you recite the *Heart Sutra* or do a Vajrasattva practice, even though the words don't mention the four powers, you are still purifying. When you do the Vajrasattva mantra with the four powers to stop negative karma increasing, you should do the long one twenty-one times or the short one, OM VAJRASATTVA HUM, twenty-eight times.

The *Hymns of Experience* says,

So it's vital to seek true renunciation of disenchantment with existence
And to recognize which factors chain us in the cycle of existence.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.⁴⁵

This is the general practice of the middle scope. Then the practice of the higher scope.

Generating the mind is the central axle of the supreme vehicle path;
It's the foundation and the support of all expansive deeds;
To all instances of two accumulations it is like the elixir of gold;
It's the treasury of merits containing myriad collections of virtues;

Recognizing these truths the heroic bodhisattvas
Uphold the precious supreme mind as the heart of their practice.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.⁴⁶

People use the terms “lower scope,” “middle scope” and “higher scope” but somehow, if you retranslate it into Tibetan it's very funny. It doesn't come out. The Sanskrit actually means “being of a lower capacity” and so forth.

Giving is the wish-granting jewel that satisfies the wishes of all beings;

⁴⁵ V. 20.

⁴⁶ Vv. 21 and 22.

It's the best weapon to cut the constricting knots of miserliness;
It's an undaunted deed of the bodhisattva giving birth to courage;
It's the basis to proclaim one's fame throughout all ten directions;

Knowing this the learned ones seek the excellent path
Of giving away entirely their body, wealth and virtues.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

Morality is the water that washes off the stains of ill deeds;
It's the cooling moonlight dispelling the burning agony of afflictions;
In the midst of people it is most majestic like the Mt Meru;
It draws together all beings without any display of force;

Knowing this the sublime ones guard as if they would their eyes,
The perfect disciplines which they have chosen to adopt.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

Forbearance is the supreme ornament for those who have power;
It's the greatest fortitude against the agonies of afflictions;
Against its enemy the snake of hate it is a garuda cruising in the sky;
Against the weapon of harsh words it's the strongest armor;

Knowing this we should habituate ourselves with
The armor of excellent forbearance by all possible means.
I, a yogi, have practice in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

If the armor of unflinching perseverance is worn,
Knowledge of scripture and realization increases like waxing moon;
All conducts become fused with good purpose;
And whatever initiatives we may begin succeeds as hoped for;

Knowing this the bodhisattvas apply great waves of effort,
Which help to dispel all forms of laziness.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

Concentration is the king that reigns over the mind;
When left it is as unwavering as the king of mountains;
When set forth it engages with all objects of virtue;
It induces the great bliss of a serviceable body and mind;

Knowing this the great accomplished yogis
Constantly apply meditations destroying the enemy of distraction.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

Wisdom is the eye that sees the profound suchness;
It's the path eradicating cyclic existence from its very root;
It's a treasury of higher qualities that are praised in all scriptures;
It's known as the supreme lamp dispelling the darkness of delusion;

Knowing this the learned ones who aspire for liberation.
Endeavor with multiple efforts to cultivate this path.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

In a mere one-pointed concentration I fail to see
The potency to cut the root of cyclic existence;
Yet with wisdom devoid of the path of tranquil abiding,
No matter how much one may probe, the afflictions will not be overcome.

So this wisdom decisively penetrating the true mode of being,
The learned ones saddle it astride the horse of unwavering calm abiding;
And with the sharp weapon of reasoning of the Middle Way free of extremes,
They dismantle all locus of objectification of the mind grasping at extremes;

With such expansive wisdom that probes with precision,
The learned ones enhance the wisdom realizing the suchness.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.⁴⁷

This is Lama Tsongkhapa showing his understanding, his experiences. Tantra is not just a small thing, not just reciting mantra alone, not just playing cymbals. You should study. There are many extensive scriptures of tantra that you should study, showing you how to attain the generation stage and the completion stage without mistake.

What need is there say that through one-pointed cultivation
Absorption is realized? Through discriminative awareness
Probing with precision as well one can abide unwavering
And utterly stable upon the true mode of being.

Wondrous are those who see this
And strive for the union of abiding and insight.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

The space-like emptiness of meditative equipoise,
And the illusion-like emptiness of the subsequent realizations,
Praised are those who cultivate them and bind together
The method and wisdom and travel beyond the bodhisattva deeds.

⁴⁷ Vv. 24–37.

It's the way of the fortunate ones
To realize this and not to be content with partial paths;
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

Thus having cultivated as they are the common paths
Essential for the two supreme paths of causal and resultant great vehicles,
I have entered the great ocean of tantras
By relying upon the leadership of the learned navigators;

And through application of the quintessential instructions,
I have made meaningful human existence that I have obtained.
I, a yogi, have practiced in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should do likewise.

In order to make familiar to my own mind,
And to help benefit fortunate others as well,
I've explained here in words easy to understand
In its entirety the path that pleases the conquerors.

“Through this virtue may all beings be never divorced
From the perfectly pure excellent path” thus I pray;
I, a yogi, have made aspirations in this manner;
You, who aspire for liberation, too should pray likewise.⁴⁸

This translation is very good. Only a few words are missing, otherwise it's a very good translation.

The seven-point cause and effect technique for attaining bodhicitta was explained in quite a lot of detail at the beginning of the course. This is the second time the details are explained. Then there's equalizing and exchanging yourself for others, the bodhicitta thought training technique, where, after the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought and the benefits of cherishing others are explained, there is the tonglen practice. I'm hoping to explain a little bit about that tomorrow, as a preliminary before taking the bodhisattva vows.

I think the bodhisattva vows have already been explained—what the different vows are—so I don't need to say anything about them.

[End of course transcription]

⁴⁸ Vv. 38–47.