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LAMRIM TEACHINGS FROM KOPAN 1997

BY

Lama Zopa Rinpoche



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LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE

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Lecture 1

December 1, 1997

MEDITATING ON THE LAMRIM BRINGS PEACE

Hello! I heard that you've been doing very well and that this year's course is better than last year's! You're doing extremely well, everything is peaceful, and there is very good discipline and very good meditation. I am *extremely* happy to hear that. Because of that, I went for a rest! I went to a beach in Taiwan and to a Singapore beach. It was a very old beach. Anyway, hearing about how you were doing meant I had no worries at all. I was very happy to hear it. So, I would like to thank everyone very much, from the bottom of my heart. I'm trying to say that everyone's been trying very hard—of course, including Venerable Neil!

Since we all want happiness and we do not want suffering, because both happiness and suffering come from the mind, because the cause of these is not outside but within our mind, there is no other way to stop suffering and attain happiness except through the mind. There is no external means. Only our own mind can stop creating suffering and create only happiness. Therefore we have to eliminate the types of thoughts that produce suffering, and that can only be done by the mind itself.

Only with the mind can we cease the cause of suffering, those thoughts we see that produce the suffering of rebirth, old age, sicknesses and so forth. To cease all suffering—all the oceans of human beings' suffering, the oceans of hell beings' suffering, the oceans of hungry ghosts' suffering, the oceans of animal beings' suffering, the oceans of sura beings' suffering, the oceans of asura beings' suffering—to completely stop all that and never experience it again, we need to cease the mind that causes it all. This has to be done by our own mind, by following positive thoughts, by following the Dharma, the Buddha's teachings, the paths of method and wisdom, which are within our own mind.

We can see the proof of how the Dharma can benefit us. For example, some of you who were new to the meditation course here, whose minds weren't familiar with the teachings of the Buddha, as

soon as you started to meditate, as soon as the mind was in meditation, the emotional thoughts were gone. There were no emotional thoughts during that time.

In the West you might even think of positive thoughts as emotional thoughts, but by emotional thoughts, I mean disturbing thoughts, emotional thoughts such as anger or attachment, disturbing thoughts that are by their nature unpeaceful, disturbing our own mental continuum, our life.

However, when we meditate, there is a peace, a calmness, a tranquility. There is peace from those disturbing emotional thoughts that cause agitation, that cause depression, that cause loneliness, that cause worldly fear and so many other things. These are the thoughts that cause unhappiness, disturbing the mind, making not only the mind but even the body unhealthy. But as soon as the mind is brought into meditation, there is peace, because during that time the mind is protected from those disturbing thoughts, those delusions.

By training the mind in meditation, when we are not sitting in meditation but even in the break times, it is easier to experience more calmness, more openness. Our heart is more open and we have more peace.

This is the proof. Here, we are not talking about realizations, just bringing the mind into meditation, just keeping the mind in meditation. Anyway, the conclusion is this. (Normally when I talk there are so many conclusions!) Anyway, what I am going to say is that except for a life practicing the Dharma, every other different style of life leads us to suffering; it is all suffering. That's the conclusion. Whatever lifestyle we lead—except for a life living in the Dharma—is all suffering.

So, you have been meditating for more than two weeks, starting from the perfect human rebirth, the *per-fect* human rebirth. (I'm trying to pronounce it better, but I'm getting worse!) The perfect human body, I think even just that meditation is so precious, just the meditation on the perfect human body; this very first lamrim meditation, the awareness of how our human body is so precious. What an unbelievable opportunity this awareness gives us to achieve every happiness.

What people in the West hear about and try to learn is just the happiness of this life. The only knowledge they acquire is how to achieve the happiness of just this one life, which lasts a very short

time. Even if we can achieve it, it's only for a very short time. That's all; there's nothing else. Every other kind of happiness, such as the happiness of all the coming future lives, is completely unknown.

Now there has been more and more education in the West about reincarnation. In recent years, because people have been talking more about reincarnation and other unknown phenomena, their minds are more open. In recent years, people in the West want to learn about death, whereas in the past they didn't want to think or talk about death. Even if they put something on somebody's grave, they would say that person is "in sleep." "In sleep," is that right? [Rinpoche asks students] I think that means the person worked so hard during his life and now they can take a nice rest in the graveyard! Anyway, I'm joking.

But in recent years people's minds have become more and more open, and they are becoming more and more interested in reincarnation. They want to learn about death, about their own death and also how to help other people when they are dying. There has been so much interest in hospices. I think that people wanting to learn about it is an extremely good change of attitude. It not only gives us the opportunity to learn about unknown phenomena, that which was unknown in the past, but it is also extremely beneficial, extremely needed. It's not just learning about something that the people of our culture are unaware of; it also opens our mind so we can come to know the path that has the ability to completely cease all suffering

As I mentioned before, [suffering comes from] the mind itself, from the negative imprints that project the hallucinations, the imprints that produce the delusions and motivate karma. Suffering comes from there; problems come from there, from the negative imprints and then disturbing thoughts that are within the mind itself. When we learn about the path that ceases the whole of suffering and its causes, we are learning about the main suffering, the fundamental suffering that we should be free from.

You have already gone through what I am talking about. You have already meditated on the three types of suffering of samsara: the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering. The suffering of pain is what people normally talk about, the problems common people in the world can recognize. They are only aware of that one type of suffering, the suffering of pain, such as depression, loneliness and relationship problems, but they are completely

unaware of the other types of suffering. Many people are able to see that no matter how much wealth or how many friends they have, there is still no satisfaction in the heart. But they still don't really see that temporary samsaric pleasures are suffering; they don't understand about the suffering of change. They don't have that education, that realization. And they have no idea about pervasive compounding suffering, the fundamental suffering we all have to overcome in order to achieve real liberation, everlasting happiness.

We not only have to understand the suffering of pain, but also recognize that the suffering of change, temporary samsaric pleasures, are also a sort of suffering that we need to be liberated from. And not just that, we need to be liberated from pervasive compounding suffering, and the cause of suffering, karma and delusions, as you went through when you studied the lamrim outline, the evolution of suffering. I lost my thought! What was I saying?

What I was talking about was how common people in the world, especially in the West, are unaware of some subjects, that there are some things unknown to them. So, it is very good that in recent years so many people have taken an interest in reincarnation, searching to learn new things, things that are beneficial in life. And more than trying to understand unknown phenomena, they are looking for the everlasting happiness of liberation from samsara and especially full enlightenment. Such a state of mind is free from all defilements and has all the qualities, having completed all the realizations. With that mind we can do perfect service for numberless living beings, freeing them from all sufferings and their causes and, not only that, bring them to peerless happiness, to full enlightenment.

So now I'm going back. This precious human body gives us the opportunity to reach all these levels of happiness, not just the happiness of this life but all the way up to enlightenment, which is complete happiness. Then working for happiness is finished, it's completed. With this precious human body we can help the numberless other living beings, who all want happiness and who do not want suffering, to achieve every level of happiness: this life's happiness, the happiness of future lives, liberation from samsara and full enlightenment. We can cause every sentient being to have all this happiness.

So, what I was saying before, just this one lamrim meditation from the beginning of the path becomes very precious medicine to heal the mind, to heal the problems of mind, to heal the sicknesses of the mind: the emotional minds of dissatisfaction, anger, attachment, jealousy, all these minds. There's physical pain and there's mental pain. This very first meditation can relieve all this mental pain: depression, loneliness, hopelessness, thinking there is no meaning in life—instead of looking at things in a positive way, looking at everything as negative. This is due to lack of Dharma education, lack of practice, lack of meditation practice.

What I am saying is that even this very first meditation, coming to know all these eight freedoms and ten richnesses that we have, brings us light. It is extremely rare to achieve each one and we have them all. Each one of the eight is so precious, more precious than diamonds or gold the size of the earth or as many dollars as there are atoms of the earth. This is without talking about the wish-granting jewels that are mentioned in the texts, the most precious of all the external substantial material possessions. Each freedom and each richness we have is unbelievably more precious than those examples of external phenomena. But here we are talking about having all eight freedoms and all ten richnesses. And this is just one meditation from the lamrim that brings light to our mind, to our life. Instead of darkness, it brings light, joyfulness, happiness, Dharma happiness.

Maybe I'll stop here. I thought to go on and on and on! I thought to go on and on until tomorrow, three o'clock, but maybe I'd better not do that. Therefore we should rejoice all the time; we should feel great happiness by remembering all this, especially when we begin the day. We should start every day of our everyday life with that awareness, with that joyfulness in our heart.

Then, we should not just stop there. We should make the determination to not waste our time but to do whatever is beneficial in our daily life, especially for that most crucial, critical time, the time of death. The only beneficial thing to do for that time is to practice Dharma, nothing else, and not only for that crucial death time but also for the next life and all future lives. The only thing we can enjoy in our future lives is the Dharma, nothing else.

As I mentioned before, concerning not only our own welfare but especially the welfare of all sentient beings, the best way, the only way to benefit others is through the Dharma. Now, what is that Dharma? It's having a positive attitude, but there are many positive attitudes, many positive

thoughts. So, what is the most beneficial attitude we should have to all the numberless other living beings? It is bodhicitta, the thought of benefiting other living beings, the thought of cherishing other living beings. It is allowing ourselves to be used by others, to be beneficial for others, to be used for their happiness. Making ourselves useful for other living beings with bodhicitta—this is the best Dharma practice. I'll stop here.

Lecture 2

December 3, 1997

WHAT IS THE DHARMA?

The teachings of the Buddha and the commentaries are very extensive. The texts include the Buddha's root teachings as well as the commentaries by the yogis, the pandits of India. Then there are the texts by the great Tibetan scholars, the highly realized beings like Lama Tsongkhapa and so forth.

There is so much to learn. Even just to learn about the defilements, what we have to subdue, to purify, to cease, what we have to free our mental continuum from—even that in itself, there is so much to learn about. We have to know what is explained in the philosophical teachings within the Mahayana Paramitayana, the sutra path, what is revealed about what the defilements are and how to eliminate them. There are also the particular subtle defilements that only Mahayana Vajrayana or tantra can eliminate.

As I mentioned the other night, whatever style of life we lead, everything is suffering except for a life practicing the Dharma. If we analyze in this way, we can get some idea at this point.

Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo, the great enlightened being, was highly attained. Toward the teachings of the Buddha, he was like a sun rising. He brought extensive benefit, writing so many scriptures and giving so many teachings from his own experience of the whole path to enlightenment.

For example, Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo explained about four people reciting the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* prayer. The first person recites the prayer with the motivation to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. The second person recites the prayer with the motivation to achieve liberation, only liberation from samsara for themselves. The third person recites the prayer with the motivation to achieve the happiness of future lives, such as a good rebirth and so forth. The fourth person recites the prayer to achieve the happiness of this life.

The action of the first person, the one who recites the prayer to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, becomes the cause to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. That means that person's action, with that motivation, becomes the cause of happiness for *all* sentient beings. [The action of the second person becomes the cause of liberation, and the action of the third person becomes the cause of future lives' happiness.]

The action of the last person, however, is nonvirtue. Motivated by this attitude, because the result is suffering, it receives the label "nonvirtue." What makes the action motivated by attachment to this life receive the label "nonvirtue"? It is because it only results in suffering.

On the other hand, a positive attitude such as the thought of renunciation, the thought of detachment, is the opposite. The detached or renounced mind transforms the action of reciting the prayer into a positive action that results only in happiness.

ATISHA

As I often mention, Lama Atisha was not only a great scholar, but highly attained. His holy mind was enriched with the realizations of the path to enlightenment. He was highly respected by the many pandits who resided in Vikramashila, the ancient monastery in India.

Because the Dharma had degenerated in Tibet, the Dharma king, Lha Lama Yeshe Ö, invited Lama Atisha to Tibet to reestablish the pure Dharma there. Lama Atisha had been invited once before but it hadn't happened. The king himself went to look for gold to make offering to Lama Atisha, to invite him to Tibet, but the king was captured by an irreligious king. I'm not sure, but I think it was somewhere in the upper part of Tibet, near Nepal.

When the king's nephew, Jangchub Ö, asked the irreligious king to free his uncle in exchange for the gold, the king [demanded the same amount of gold as the king's body] but when the gold was piled up, it only went up to the neck, so the irreligious king said that was not enough, that the gold the size of the head was missing. The nephew passed the message to the Dharma king in prison, and he replied to not give even a handful of gold to the irreligious king but instead to take all the gold to India and make offerings to Lama Atisha to invite him to Tibet. He told him to tell Atisha that he

would give up his life in prison to invite him to Tibet to spread the pure Dharma and help sentient beings in Tibet. After that, the Dharma king, Lha Lama Yeshe Ö, passed away in prison.

The second time, Lama Atisha was able to go to Tibet. When everything was explained to Lama Atisha, about all the problems in Tibet and how the king had sacrificed his life to invite him to Tibet, Lama Atisha, as he often did whenever he had to make a decision, checked with the deity, Tara, who is the embodiment of all the buddhas' holy actions. Tara advised him that if he went to Tibet, he would be able to offer extensive benefits for the sentient beings and the teachings of the Buddha, but his life would be shortened by seven years. Lama Atisha thought that if going to Tibet was going to be highly beneficial, he didn't mind that, so he went to Tibet.

When the Dharma king's nephew, Jangchub Ö, met Lama Atisha, he explained all the problems happening in Tibet, and all the misconceptions there were about sutra and tantra. There was so much confusion, with [people believing] one person could not practice both sutra and tantra as the graduated path for one person to achieve enlightenment. The people thought that if they practiced sutra, they could not practice tantra, and conversely if they practiced tantra, they could not practice sutra. They regarded sutra and tantra as like hot and cold. Because there was so much misunderstanding, people were unable to integrate the sutra and tantra teachings for one person to practice.

Jangchub Ö requested to Lama Atisha, saying, "We Tibetans are very ignorant, so please give us a very simple teaching." He requested teachings on refuge and karma, the very basic teachings. Because he didn't ask for very high teachings such as tantric subjects or initiations or things like that, Lama Atisha was very pleased. So, Lama Atisha wrote the teaching that is called the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*.

The *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* integrates the entire teachings of the Buddha: the Lesser Vehicle or Theravadin teachings, the Mahayana Paramitayana teachings and the Mahayana Vajrayana or tantric teachings. All the eighty-four thousand teachings taught by the Buddha were integrated and made very simple by Lama Atisha, setting them all out in a graduated path, the lamrim, so that we can attain enlightenment.

What we call the “lamrim” started from that time. It encapsulates the extensive sutra and tantra teachings of the Buddha and the commentaries by Indian pandits and yogis, and so forth. The whole path is explained there and he was able to not only integrate it but also simplify it, so it is easy to understand and to practice, without any confusion. With Lama Atisha’s special text, the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, it is so easy to know how to go about attaining enlightenment. So anyway, as I mentioned Lama Atisha, that story just happened.

After that, Lama Tsongkhapa wrote the *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment (Lamrim Chenmo)*, which is a commentary of this text of Lama Atisha. Then, not only that, many other great, highly attained scholars, many other Tibetan lamas who actualized the path to enlightenment, wrote many lamrim commentaries, both elaborate ones and short ones.

Because of Lama Atisha reestablishing pure Buddhism in Tibet, countless practitioners, like collections of stars in the sky, by practicing Lama Atisha’s text and all those commentaries by Lama Tsongkhapa and other lamas, actualized the path and became enlightened.

THE BENEFITS OF STUDYING THE LAMRIM

Not only that, other great Tibetan masters have been teaching lamrim not only in the East but also in the West. This has been happening more and more in recent years, and not just from Kopan.

The first meditation course started in Kopan with maybe, I’m not sure, ten or fifteen people, something like that. It was for five or seven days. Anyway, that’s a long time ago. Which year? Seventy-one? The first course started in 1971. Counting from that, this present course is the thirtieth, number three-zero.

For some years, we did the one-month course twice a year. Then, maybe it became too much! I think there wasn’t enough time, so we cut it down to one one-month course a year, and it’s been like that up to now. There are many other courses of a week or fifteen days during the year, mainly done by Venerable Karin.

Hundreds and thousands of people in the East and West have [met the Dharma] during that time, both here and in the hundred or so centers there are [in FPMT organization]. They are mostly

meditation centers. There are some centers that offer social service, but most are meditation centers, and the basic meditation practice or teaching is the lamrim, the steps on the path to enlightenment. Many thousands and thousands of people have been able to find meaning in their life from this. From thinking there was no meaning before, after hearing the lamrim teachings, so many have found that their lives are so meaningful. They know where to find the answer in life, something we cannot find in Western science.

Not just Western science, we cannot find the answers on how to live our life in science or in Western culture. However, by understanding the lamrim, we have so much freedom in life, so much freedom in our hands. Practicing Dharma not only gives us peace and happiness in our daily life, but it also allows us to make preparations for death. Even if we cannot reach the level where we have completely overcome death and never have to experience the suffering of the cycle of death and rebirth at all anymore, we can still die without fear. We can die with a peaceful, happy mind by knowing how to use death as the path to enlightenment. We can use death to overcome delusions and make death useful for ourselves and for all living beings. We can use the death to achieve enlightenment, to be able to liberate all other living beings from all suffering and bring them to full enlightenment.

We have so much freedom. We can stop reincarnating in the unfortunate realms, the realms of the hell beings, hungry ghosts and animals, and we can attain the body of a happy transmigratory being. We have so much freedom. We can have whatever we wish for, the happiness of this life and, by ceasing the cause, karma and delusions, we can achieve the complete cessation of the entire suffering of samsara. This is such incredible freedom; it is very precious.

The other incredible freedom we can achieve is full enlightenment. We can achieve the state that is the cessation of all the mistakes of the mind and the completion of all the realizations. Then, with this omniscient mind that has perfect understanding, perfect great compassion that embraces all living beings and perfect power, we can cause all sentient beings to attain every happiness. We can guide them from happiness to happiness to the highest happiness, full enlightenment. Without the slightest mistake, we can do perfect work for all living beings.

By meeting the Buddhadharma, by coming to Nepal and attending this course from its very start, many thousands and thousands of people have been able to have all this freedom. Then, there are all the other centers within this organization, as I mentioned before, all those meditation centers where there are many extremely qualified resident teachers who are pure, compassionate and learned in all aspects of Buddhadharma. All this is due to the kindness of Lama Atisha. Without talking about Asian people, in recent years so many people in the West have been able to make their life meaningful by understanding and practicing the Dharma and especially the lamrim.

Of course, there is no question about the importance of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, the founder of the present Buddhadharma, but here I am talking about Lama Atisha's kindness, his holy actions of having written this text, the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* and benefiting us in our everyday lives. Because of that, we can purify any negative karma that causes sufferings on the path, that causes obstacles to realizations, obstacles to happiness, even the happiness of this life. We have the incredible opportunity to create the unmistakable cause of happiness. We can collect so much merit in our everyday life, creating the cause of happiness in this life and in future lives, liberation from samsara, and full enlightenment. We can create so many positive actions every day that help us to free numberless other sentient beings from every suffering and cause them to have happiness, especially enlightenment.

CLINGING TO THIS LIFE BRINGS SUFFERING

To finish the point that I started, when Lama Atisha was in Tibet, Lama Atisha's translator was Dromtönpa, who is also embodiment of Chenrezig, the compassionate buddha. Dromtönpa asked Lama Atisha, "What will be the results of actions done with the attachment clinging to this life?" Lama Atisha answered, "The results will be rebirth in the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm or the animal realm."

Nagarjuna also explained in *The Precious Garland*,

Desire, hatred, ignorance, and
The actions they generate are nonvirtues.
Non-attachment, non-hatred, non-ignorance,
And the actions they generate are virtues.

From nonvirtues come all sufferings
And likewise all bad transmigrations,
From virtues, all happy transmigrations
And the pleasures of all lives.

In other words, those transmigratory beings born in the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm or the animal realm do so due to having committed negative karma, whereas beings born in the fortunate realms, the happy transmigratory beings, are born due to having created virtuous actions, non-attachment, non-hatred, and non-ignorance.

Just to conclude, of course we can meditate in order to be healthy, to have a long life, wealth, power and so forth with the motivation to benefit other living beings. That is a good heart; that is the pure Dharma, unstained by the self-cherishing thought. But here I am talking about meditating with attachment, seeking the happiness of this life. When we do such actions as meditating, reciting prayers and so forth with this motivation of attachment, clinging to this life, all those actions become nonvirtue.

No matter how many years we spend doing breathing meditations with this nonvirtuous motivation, with attachment, clinging to this life, even if we spend hundreds of years, it all becomes nonvirtue. If our meditation is watching the sensations, focusing on the mind itself, looking at the conventional nature of the mind or the ultimate nature of the mind—of course there are huge differences between them—if those meditations are done with a nonvirtuous motivation, to gain power, to become a famous yogi or a great meditation teacher, to achieve a good reputation and so forth, then, no matter how many eons we meditate on these things, it all becomes totally black, totally nonvirtuous.

Here, I'm talking about how meditation, reciting prayers and so forth become nonvirtuous. Of course there is no question that all our other activities—doing a job, walking, talking, sleeping—when done with this motivation, are all nonvirtuous. I'm relating this to even these specific meditations, which many people spend all their life doing. They spend their whole life doing breathing meditations without actually knowing how to meditate, how to practice Dharma. They

believe they have been practicing Dharma for thirty, forty, fifty years, but actually they have no idea how to meditate, how to practice Dharma.

EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON THE MOTIVATION

Just because we know the subject of meditation doesn't mean we know how to meditate. Having an object to meditate on doesn't explain how to meditate. The key [is the motivation]. It's like having different TV channels. We tune in to one station and we have fighting, killing, wars, destroying the houses, bombing, people killing each other—so much violence. On another station, people are singing or playing rock and roll! Then we tune in to a totally different channel, one that is the opposite to all the violence and killing, and there are people relaxing, enjoying themselves. Maybe there can even be one channel where people are the opposite of fighting and killing, they are relaxed and aesthetic, but with a big guitar!

So, like that, we choose our channel. Whether we make our life happy or whether we make it suffering depends on which channel we choose; it depends on our motivation. As I mentioned before, the action of the fourth person reciting the prayers, the one doing it with a nonvirtuous motivation, is nonvirtuous, even though it appears to be a Dharma activity. Therefore, of course, with that motivation all worldly activities such as working, eating, sleeping and talking, are nonvirtuous. Even though our actions might look virtuous, the channel we have chosen is nonvirtuous. By watching the mind, seeing what is virtuous and nonvirtuous, we can change the channel and transform the very same actions into virtue, into Dharma.

We can do that through breathing meditation. It is explained in the lamrim texts that when we have a very disturbed, destructive mind, one that is nonvirtuous, by doing a breathing meditation we can make our mind neutral, like having to clean a cloth before we can dye it any color we want. Once we have made our mind neutral, we can then transform it into a virtuous one. Then, all our actions—our prayers, meditations, and so forth—become Dharma. What positive result comes from these actions of course then depends on our level of motivation, whether it is the happiness of future lives, liberation from samsara or enlightenment.

Without mentioning the self-cherishing thought or the ignorance not knowing the ultimate nature of I and phenomena, when we have not even renounced samsara, then whatever we do becomes the

cause of samsara, which means it becomes the cause of suffering. This includes doing prayers, meditation, eating, walking, sleeping, working—everything becomes the cause of suffering. And when we cannot even renounce our attachment to the happiness of this life, then doing meditation, prayers, eating, walking, sleeping, working and all these things become the cause of the lower realms, the cause to be reborn as a hell being, a hungry ghost or an animal.

When we go shopping, normally the motivation for buying each of the many objects we buy is attachment, clinging to this life. Every shopping trip we take without the lamrim, without the renunciation of this life, becomes nonvirtue. Every step on that shopping trip becomes nonvirtue and so the cause of the lower realms.

I'll make this smaller. With even one plate of food, unless each bite we take is done with the mind living in the first level of lamrim, renunciation of this life, it becomes nonvirtue. With every glass of water or mug of tea, every sip becomes nonvirtue, the cause of the lower realms. Then, if we are not living in the lamrim, not practicing the lamrim, the bigger the mug, the greater the cause for the lower realms.

This is an example but we can elaborate in the same way about anything, such as people playing football or whatever, that white thing they hit far away—golf—it's the same thing. Without the first level of lamrim, without the mind renouncing this life, everything becomes nonvirtue. When we talk, if we are not living in the lamrim, even the very first level of lamrim, detachment, every word we say becomes nonvirtue, the cause of rebirth in the suffering lower realms.

That is why I say that any style of life is only suffering *except* the life practicing the Dharma. We can understand this by knowing this secret point, how a suffering life comes from the mind, how a happy life comes from the mind, how everything comes from the mind, from the attitude we have. Therefore, the need to practice the lamrim is unbelievably important in our daily life, more important than food, than money, than clothing, than a house—more important than anything else.

I'll stop here. We'll do the dedication.

Therefore, the lamrim, practicing the good heart, becomes the most important thing. Then, eating with that attitude makes our life beneficial for other sentient beings. With the good heart, whenever we eat, we can do the action by seeing ourselves as a servant to all sentient beings, in order to bring them happiness. We can also use it to make offering to the Triple Gem, either the internal or external Triple Gem.

Lecture 3

December 4, 1997

GOATS AND VEGETARIANISM

I thought to mention here about the goats, about the life story of the goats. I'm joking! I'm joking!

Yesterday I went to see one of the well-known top Tibetan lamas. There are four Tibetan Mahayana traditions: Sakya, Kagyu, Nyingma and Gelug. Within the Sakya tradition there are many different traditions and there are quite a few top lamas, head lamas of the Sakya sect. His Holiness Chogye Trichen Rinpoche is also one of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's gurus. He taught His Holiness the Dalai Lama what is called Lamdré from the Sakya tradition teachings as well as giving various deities' initiations. Over the past years, I have taken many initiations from Rinpoche. His Holiness Chogye Trichen Rinpoche is one of the top lamas, one of the existing, well-known, great holy beings of Tibet, one of the top lamas.

So I went to see Rinpoche and then I went to the stupa to do a little prayer. On the way back, there were these goats. There was a table with goat meat, already chopped, and below the table were these goats, tied up. On top of the table, there was the goat meat and below the table the live goats.

One time in Varanasi... Sorry, the story is already getting longer! The last time I was in Varanasi I went to Sarnath. In Sarnath there were some goats tied up by the road. So, I thought to buy them but there was no place to put them. I thought I could ask the head lama who built the old Tibetan monastery at Sarnath if he could take care of them. He was the only one I knew around there that I could ask but I wasn't sure whether he would do it or not. On the way back from visiting Sarnath, the goats were gone—probably they were already killed—so I missed the opportunity to save them.

Imagine if that was human beings there [instead of goats]. It would be terrible to be tied up there next to a table with all the pieces of human flesh and knowing that you could be killed at any time. Three or four human beings tied up there—that would be the same thing. Here, in Kopan, we have had a few goats in the past, from time to time, but they probably passed away. Maybe they all went

to a pure land. Or maybe they all went to the West! Maybe some went to Africa and others went to the United States. No, I'm joking.

[A student asks Rinpoche a question, inaudible]

You can't say that Buddhists eat meat, because there are many Buddhists who don't eat meat or fish. Among the Tibetans there are many who don't eat meat. And especially Chinese Mahayanists don't eat meat. Among the Tibetans, in the monastery there are people who eat meat, but there are also people who don't eat meat. So it's not that *all* Tibetans eat meat. According to my knowledge, there are many vegetarians among the Tibetans.

I try to be vegetarian except when I go to see my gurus. When they give me meat, I will eat it, but normally, in my own house, I'm vegetarian. That doesn't mean I regard those who eat meat as bad. Even though I don't eat it, I don't use that as a reason. We cannot judge bad and good from the outside; we can only judge bad and good if we can understand the other person's motivation, the other person's level of realization, their level of mind. Only then can we judge that person's actions, not only eating meat but any action—working, sitting, sleeping, even eating vegetables! We can't understand whether just eating vegetables is good or bad, whether it's a harmful action, in the sense of negative karma. If it's negative karma, it's harmful, even though it might just be eating vegetables or drinking tea. If it becomes negative karma, it's harmful to the person and it's harmful to others. Therefore, we can only judge whether an individual person's actions are bad or good by understanding their level of mind, their motivation. Otherwise, it is difficult.

The best way to judge is by having an omniscient mind, by being an enlightened being. Then we see everything directly, without the slightest mistake in our perception. Then we have the clairvoyance to be able to read and judge others' levels of mind. Otherwise, it is not easy to judge whether it's bad or good. It's not an easy subject. We can only judge a hundred percent that something is bad or good, including eating meat, by understanding the person's level of mind, the motivation.

Generally speaking, even with vegetables, so many insects die when the land is plowed. There are so many worms and other insects in the ground that have to be killed [to produce the vegetables]. For example, rice. One grain of rice grows from another grain of rice, which in turn has come from

another one. To get all that rice, animals like buffaloes, as well as the people, have to be out in the very hot sun, and there are countless insects in the ground who die in the rice harvest. During that time, so many sentient beings suffer or are killed, and many others create negative karma to obtain this rice. But then, the rice from this harvest has come from rice [from previous harvests], and again many sentient beings suffered and died for that. Everything is like that, you see. When we check the continuity of even one grain of rice we have on our plate or our spoon, we can see that numberless sentient beings have suffered so much or died and others have created so much negative karma to produce it. For just that one grain of rice that is in our mouth, in our teeth, on our spoon, on our plate, countless numbers of sentient beings have died and suffered, and many others have created negative karma by harming them.

REPAYING THE KINDNESS OF OTHERS

Even in a glass of water there are so many tiny beings, so small they can only be seen with a microscope. When the water is boiled, they die. So generally it's like that; it's not just meat. Numberless sentient beings suffer and die, numberless create negative karma for us to have any food.

All our happiness, our comfort and our everyday survival completely depend on these numberless sentient beings who died or created negative karma for our welfare. Because of them, we have the opportunity to learn the method, the path, to cease all sufferings, to stop the cycle of death and rebirth, to never again experience it, by ceasing the cause. Because of them, we can come to know what samsara is and what all the different levels of suffering of samsara and its causes are. All this—our happiness, our survival each day, the opportunity to practice Dharma and create the cause of happiness—is totally by the kindness of all these numberless sentient beings. That is how it happens, by so many of them suffering and creating negative karma.

Look at this temple and where we sleep here in Kopan. This is the place where every day we purify our mind, by meditating on the lamrim and especially bodhicitta, and by doing various practices such as prostrating and reciting those precious powerful buddhas' names. Every day, we purify so much negative karma and collect so much merit, skies of merit, by generating a bodhicitta motivation and especially by meditating on bodhicitta. In this place, we learn the path to enlightenment, and we

direct our life toward enlightenment. Because this place was built, we have this unbelievable opportunity and all the comforts of sleeping and so forth.

However, just like our home in the West, all this comfort and protection for our lives has come from so many sentient beings who suffered when the foundations were laid and during the construction. Many sentient beings died and were harmed and many, such as the builders, created negative karma.

It's the same with the clothes we wear, even if they are not made from silk or from the fur of an animal that has been killed, even if they are made from wood! Whatever our clothes are made of, so many sentient beings suffered and created the negative karma of harming others for us to have them. When we look at the evolution of the clothing, we can see this.

There is no enjoyment, no comfort that we have ever experienced without depending on the kindness of sentient beings, absolutely none. Numberless sentient beings have suffered or created negative karma by harming others for all of the comfort and happiness that we experience from having shelter, food and clothing.

The conclusion is this. Including our everyday survival, to be able to be a human being and have this precious human body, everything totally depends on the kindness we received from mother sentient beings. Therefore, when we think about this, it becomes impossible to live for even one day without the thought to benefit others. We must at least have some concern or thought to benefit those numberless sentient beings who died and suffered so much or who created so much negative karma in order to give us all this comfort and enjoyment, and even our survival. We have got to do something to benefit them.

Even if we can't [physically help] for a whole day, or even an hour, a minute, a second, if we can think of their kindness—there are many ways to meditate on the kindness of sentient beings—even just that is part of repaying the kindness. It is unbearable to live our life only with the thought of seeking happiness for ourselves alone, thinking only of our own happiness. To do that for even an hour, a minute, a second, that is something we cannot stand.

We have no choice. It would be very shameful to do otherwise. We must practice a good heart; we must make our life useful for other sentient beings. We have to keep this in mind in our everyday life. As I mentioned the other day, in our everyday life, when the day begins, we must generate the thought to not harm others and to benefit them. We must have that as our main aim in the bottom of our heart, that our life is to benefit others, to cause them happiness. The purpose of our life is not just to obtain happiness for ourselves, not just to solve our own problems, but to free all our kind mother sentient beings, who equal the limitless sky, from all their sufferings and to bring them to every happiness including the highest happiness, full enlightenment. Not just the happiness and comfort of this life, not just the happiness of every life, not just everlasting happiness, liberation from samsara, not just that, but the highest happiness, full enlightenment.

We can do this even if we are not a Buddhist. Even if we don't think about enlightenment, we can think that our life is to cause other living beings happiness, to free them from suffering and problems. Even a non-religious person can have this attitude to benefit others. We can still practice a good heart even if we are a non-religious person, with no particular faith. We can generate this thought of benefiting others, the good heart, by thinking about the meaning of life.

Right after we wake up, we should rejoice, thinking, "So far I have not died. Today I am still a human being and have this perfect human body. I have the opportunity to practice Dharma." Then, we can think of the purpose, the meaning of life. Then comes the determination, "This is the meaning of my life. My job, my responsibility is to serve others, to cause others to have happiness and to free them from the suffering. That's my job. That's my duty, my service. I have this responsibility."

When we have a good heart, compassion, loving kindness, numberless sentient beings, starting from the nearest, our own family members, and all the rest, don't receive harm from us. That is peace. The absence of harm is peace for them. Numberless beings receive so much peace from us. Then, as we develop our good heart, numberless other living beings, starting from those nearest us, also receive so much help, so much benefit from us. There is so much peace and happiness from us.

OUR EGO BLOCKS US FROM REPAYING THEIR KINDNESS

Unless we generate a good heart, the attitude in our heart is the self-centered mind, egoism. That's what happens. Without a good heart, the ego takes over. Then, when there's ego, harmful thoughts such as anger, desire and jealousy can easily arise, which give rise to actions that harm others.

Directly or indirectly, from life to life, from these attitudes, these negative thoughts, the actions that come out are negative, harming others and harming us. That means we harm ourselves and all the numberless beings from life to life. We might just be one person not transforming the mind, not practicing a good heart, but it is extremely dangerous because numberless other sentient beings will receive harm from us, directly or indirectly.

As I normally mention, historically it has often happened in this world that one person who was very influential did not practice a good heart, did not get the education of the good heart, compassion. Because of that, many millions and millions of people suffered, were tortured and put to death. If, on the other hand, that person had not only that much power but also had the education of a good heart and practiced compassion for others, then totally the opposite would have happened. Instead of millions and millions of people in the world receiving so much harm, they would have received so much happiness. Because of that person's power and influence, there would have been so much benefit to the world. On top of influence and power, if there had been a good heart and compassion, many millions and millions and millions of people could have benefited. That's just one example.

Really, even if just one person doesn't practice a good heart, compassion, then numberless sentient beings will receive harm from that person from life to life, directly or indirectly. It can happen, like those people in history who had such influence and killed many millions of people. Therefore, it becomes crucial, it becomes unbelievably urgent—the most urgent—that each of us practice the good heart.

Even if every one of the numberless other living beings gets angry with us—every human being in the world, every animal in the world, every living being—even if they harm us, even if they kill us, we are just one person. No matter how much we want to have happiness and to avoid suffering, we are just one. The others are just like us in wanting to have happiness and to avoid suffering, and they

are numberless. So, even if everyone gets angry at us or even kills us, they do it because they want happiness. We might believe we are so precious, so important, but we are just one, whereas others, who equally want happiness and do not want suffering, are numberless. Therefore, the others who are numberless are most precious, most important.

Therefore, in our daily life, whether others practice patience and compassion or not, from our side we *must* practice patience and compassion. In other words, first we ourselves should practice patience and compassion. We become an example, an inspiration for others, and then others will learn from us. In that way, through our example, more and more people will transform their minds, becoming good human beings.

Changing our attitude is how we can benefit the world, how we can bring so much peace and happiness to the world, to the whole entire universe, to all sentient beings. We can transform our negative thoughts that cause others suffering, that torture them, into positive thoughts. We can renounce our disturbing thoughts that bring so many problems, so much confusion in life, to ourselves and to others. We can transform our mind into a healthy mind, one with a positive, peaceful, attitude. Then we can develop a good heart, compassion, loving kindness, bodhicitta, the thought of cherishing others. And then wisdom, transforming our mind from ignorance into Dharma wisdom, particularly the wisdom realizing the ultimate nature, emptiness only, recognizing what is the hallucination, recognizing what is false and what is the truth. The realization of wisdom is an extremely important education.

All our happiness and comfort, all these incredible opportunities to practice the Dharma, to cease the whole of suffering completely, including the cause, and to achieve everlasting happiness, especially fully enlightenment—all these things happen totally due to the kindness of the numberless sentient beings. What I mentioned about their kindness of others is just one small part. Therefore, we should lead our life by dedicating it to benefit others, by doing good things for others. That is the general advice. Now I will give specific advice.

SERVING OTHERS IN THE BEST WAY

I normally mention that although benefiting others by causing them to have happiness in this life is very good, that alone is not enough. We should give food to somebody who is dying of starvation;

we should give medicine to somebody who is sick; we should give shelter to somebody who is homeless. If we have money, we should give some to those who don't have any in order to help them. We should give all these things for the happiness of this life. These are just examples. We should be happy to give to others. Whether it's a small thing or something big, of course, we should attempt to do it. We must try, but that alone is not enough. That alone does not solve their problems.

I'll put it this way. This life's happiness is not only the happiness they need. This life only lasts a short while—a few years, a few months, a few days—so they need happiness not only in this life, but also in all future lives. Therefore, we need to cause that. Long-term happiness, the happiness of all the future lives, is more important; to benefit them in that way is more important.

It is more important that we help them completely end their suffering, the cycle of death and rebirth, educating them so they no longer have to reincarnate in samsara. That means they don't have to suffer anymore: they don't have to get sick anymore; they don't have to have operations, abortions, anymore; they don't have to worry about big expenses anymore, such as all the debts from going to university where they have to borrow money and do nighttime jobs. They don't have to do any of these things anymore. All their sufferings are completely finished; all the problems, all the suffering, the karma and delusions are ceased. This service, this benefit, is the ultimate benefit. Helping others cease all suffering and its cause and achieve everlasting happiness is the ultimate benefit we can offer them. It is extremely important; it is what they need.

Now, even *more* important than this is the perfect bliss of full enlightenment, the state of mind that is the cessation of all mistaken minds and the completion of all realizations. To bring sentient beings to full enlightenment is the most important benefit we can offer them.

There are so many different levels of benefiting others. To be able to achieve all this happiness, including liberation from samsara and full enlightenment, they have to actualize the remedy and attain the path. Even if we ourselves had all the realizations, we could not transplant our realizations into them, not like we could transplant our brain or heart or kidneys to others. The way we liberate other living beings is not that way. They *can* be totally liberated from all suffering and its causes and even from the subtle mistakes of mind and achieve liberation from samsara and enlightenment, but

for that they have to actualize the entire path to enlightenment through method and wisdom. That is the actual medicine that removes all the gross and subtle delusions.

In other words, in order to achieve liberation from samsara and full enlightenment, they have to actualize the realizations of the graduated paths of the lower capable being and the middle capable being and achieve the renunciation of this life and the renunciation of future life's samsara. They need to have the renunciation of the whole of samsara. They need to practice the higher training of moral conduct, the higher training of concentration, *shamatha*, and the higher training of wisdom. To even be liberated from samsara, from the whole of suffering and its causes, these are the fundamental realizations they need. Then they have to actualize bodhicitta, which is the door to the path to enlightenment, and they have to practice the complete paramita of morality. They have to practice the six perfections: the perfections of charity, morality, patience, perseverance, concentration and wisdom.

According to the Mahayana Paramitayana, the Sutra path, they have to complete the five Mahayana paths and the ten bhumis. Then on the basis of the three principal aspects of the path—renunciation, bodhicitta and the right view of emptiness—on the basis of these common paths, there is the particular path, the Vajrayana path, which they have to actualize to achieve enlightenment quickly.

Even if they only practice the Mahayana Sutra path by following the five paths and attaining the ten bhumis, at the very end, in order to achieve enlightenment, they will have to take a highest tantra initiation that will allow them to cease the gross mind and actualize the extremely subtle mind, the clear light. Only then can they achieve full enlightenment, otherwise they cannot.

This is just an example. For us to free all living beings who are suffering in samsara, to liberate them from the whole of samsara, we must reveal the truth to them. They have to realize the ultimate truth, emptiness. Only with this wisdom can they eliminate the root of samsara, the root of all suffering, ignorance, the mind that is unknowing of the ultimate nature of the I and the aggregates. Unless they know this, they cannot be liberated. Without realizing the ultimate nature of their own self and aggregates, the ultimate nature of their own mind, they cannot be liberated from samsara. For that we need to reveal the teachings on emptiness to them and show them the ultimate nature.

This is how the Buddha liberates us sentient beings from suffering, by giving us the teachings and revealing the truth.

To show all these paths, we ourselves must first actualize them. For example, in order for a doctor to teach others to become doctors so they can cure many sicknesses, they themselves must be fully qualified. They should have all the education, all the training, all the experience, so that they can educate others to become fully qualified doctors. In exactly the same way, to liberate all sentient beings from samsara and bring them to full enlightenment, we ourselves need to actualize all these paths to liberation to enlightenment.

Therefore the best service we can do for others is to learn the Dharma, to practice the Dharma and to have all realizations of the path to enlightenment. Now you can see how this becomes the best benefit we can offer. The ultimate benefit we can give others is to learn and practice the Dharma and have all the realizations of the path. Then we can directly guide them, liberating them from all the suffering and the causes of suffering and bringing them to liberation and enlightenment.

Now I'm not going to repeat any more. I think I've repeated enough! Somehow, I got distracted.

SNAKES CANNOT CEASE THE CAUSE OF SAMBARA

I would like to give the *final* answer to Sharon's question! There are many things to explain about eating meat, but the final answer is what we should do. Maybe I'll bring up a story!

Some years ago in Singapore, we bought a lot of animals, including four or five snakes. No, we didn't use them for food! They weren't *snacks*! There were many frogs and *so* many different types of fish, and many different turtles. Some turtles eat other fish. What's the other name? Tortoise. The problem I found was when we bought a few snakes, if they were left in the shop, they were killed. They were skinned alive and because they were very long, they suffered so much. But if we bought them from the shop and liberated them in the water, they ate the frogs and fish, and if we liberated them in the forest, they ate the mice.

So what do you do? There is not much you can do! They cannot meditate. They cannot come to the course. We can explain to them what meditation is, what is the cause of suffering, what is the cause

of happiness, virtue, nonvirtue, the four noble truths and so on—we can explain all that to them for eons and they would still not understand! Because they don't have a human body, because they have taken an animal body, they have *blocked* the opportunity to understand the meaning of the teachings.

We can train animals. When we give them food, they do things for us and they follow what we tell them. From outside gestures, they follow. I'll put it another way. How can they be liberated from samsara? How can they cease the cause of samsara, karma and delusions, so that they don't have to reincarnate anymore as a snake, as a mouse, as a frog, to be eaten by others? But also as a human being, so that they harm others and create negative karma for themselves and for others? As an animal, we have suffered so much and harmed others; as a human being, we have suffered so much and harmed others. We have to finish everything so we and others don't have to suffer. That's the solution. Otherwise, it will always be like this, where one eats the other. In the animal realm, it's always like that. One animal becomes food for another one. And it's the same in the human realm, where people are always harming each other.

The solution is to be free from samsara, by ceasing the causes of karma and delusions. That is what we should attempt for ourselves and that is the aim that we should have for others. For example, if we ourselves become liberated from samsara—not even enlightened but free from karma and delusions—we won't have to reincarnate anymore, and then other living beings, other human beings and animals, won't have to suffer for us. We don't give them trouble and they don't have to suffer for us. This is what we should think, otherwise whatever we try is just a temporary solution. It doesn't solve the problem because karma and delusions are still there.

At that time, it was so hard to know what to do with the snakes. Of course, we chanted mantras, we blessed the water with many powerful mantras, sprinkling it on the animals to purify their negative karma and help liberate them. Although a lot of negative karma might be purified, that doesn't mean it becomes impossible to be reborn in the lower realms, but it becomes much less likely for them to be reincarnated in the lower realms and suffer so much. But it's very difficult to not harm others and to not suffer. That is the nature of samsara. That is the nature of life. That is the karma of sentient beings. There is no other choice.

Some people keep snakes as pets. In Australia, I think, one couple kept a snake as a pet. They kept it for how many months? A few years or something. But one day, after the owner and the snake had been together a long time, the snake bit the owner.

[Recording ends]

Lecture 4

December 5, 1997

THE THREE TYPES OF SUFFERING

If there are one or two questions?

[A student asks about refuge and taking lay vows. Mostly inaudible.]

Well, for example, when we are sick, we rely upon a doctor, medicine and a nurse, right? To get an education, to become a qualified teacher, a professor or whatever, we go to school, college, university and we rely upon the schoolteacher, we rely upon the education. To get the education being taught in a university, we rely upon the professor. Whatever qualifications we want to have, we must rely on those who already have them to teach us—a doctor, a teacher or whatever. So it's exactly the same. When we're sick, we rely upon a doctor, the medicine and the helper, the nurse.

The purpose of taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is very, very deep. The meaning is very profound. The purpose of taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is to be completely liberated, to be completely free from the entire suffering of samsara, which comes in three types. The first level of suffering is the suffering of pain, which includes the suffering of death, rebirth, old age, sickness and all the problems between death and rebirth. The purpose is to completely overcome all those sufferings.

And not only that, the purpose is to be completely liberated from the second type of suffering, which is unknown to common people. This level is the temporary samsaric pleasures, which is the suffering of change, so called because the nature of that feeling is only suffering.

When we analyze it, when we meditate on that feeling, on a temporary samsaric pleasure, we discover it is only suffering. But when we thoughtlessly let our mind be hallucinated, the nature of that feeling appears as pleasure. Our hallucinated mind, our concept, makes up the label "pleasure" associated with that feeling. When we analyze it, we discover it is only suffering, but when we do not analyze it, when our mind is hallucinated, it appears as pleasure.

At that time, if the mind is not living in the lamrim, the renunciation of samsara, we see this samsaric pleasure that is only in the nature of suffering as pleasure. So, when the mind is not in meditation, there is no protection and attachment arises. When there is not the protection of renunciation—the first of the three principal aspects of the path—attachment arises and takes over the mind. It clings to that pleasure by believing that it is real happiness. That becomes cause of samsara. That ties us again into samsara, the suffering realm. Attachment is this mental chain that makes us reincarnate again and again in samsara.

By using this as an example, we can get some idea of how temporary samsaric pleasure is in the nature of suffering. This meditation is extremely important. Even though we naturally have an aversion to the suffering of pain, if we don't have an aversion to or a determination to be free from the suffering of change, temporary samsaric pleasure, by realizing how this is in the nature of suffering, we will never be liberated. We will never be liberated from this samsaric suffering, temporary samsaric pleasure.

For example, when we feel hungry and we start to eat, what happens is that there is a comfort, a pleasure at that time. The heavy suffering feeling of hunger, of not having food in the stomach, is stopped. But when the action of eating starts, a discomfort also starts, right after the food enters the stomach. At that time, this discomfort is unnoticeable because it is so small and for that period the feeling is labeled “pleasure” or “comfort.” The discomfort has already been created by the action of eating, but it is small. However, as the action of eating continues, the discomfort gradually increases. It grows and grows and grows. So, one suffering has been stopped but another suffering has begun. The previous heavy suffering of hunger is stopped but because the new suffering [of discomfort] is still so small, we label the feeling as “pleasure,” it appears as pleasure as we believe it to be pleasure. However, if we analyze it, we can see the feeling is like that. The reason the pleasure, the comfort, does not last is because the feeling on which we have labeled “pleasure” is in fact only suffering.

When we feel hot from the sun, because we desire the comfort of coolness, we jump into the river, into the cold water! That heavy feeling of the body being exposed to the heat of the sun is stopped by the action of entering the water. At that moment, the discomfort of coldness starts immediately, but it is so small it is unnoticeable. At first, we label this feeling “pleasure,” and it appears as

pleasurable. But by continuing the action of staying in the cold water, the feeling of coldness becomes grosser until it is noticeable and then it becomes unbearable. Then we are too cold. What was desirable at first becomes undesirable.

This is the way it is in samsara. Not eating is suffering, eating is also suffering; being under the sun is suffering, being in the water is also suffering; not sleeping is suffering, sleeping is also suffering; standing is suffering, sitting is also suffering. Whatever activity we do in samsara, whatever style of life we have, it's all suffering.

So, what is not suffering? As I mentioned before, the life that is not suffering is practicing the lamrim, practicing the renunciation of samsara, practicing that which liberates us from samsara, that which makes us achieve liberation from samsara. It is practicing right view, meditating on the ultimate nature, emptiness, which cuts the root of samsara—the root of all suffering, the root of the entire cause of suffering, karma and delusion. It is practicing bodhicitta, renouncing the self and cherishing other sentient beings. It is practicing these things and actualizing the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment. On top of that, it is practicing the quickest path to achieve enlightenment, the quickest way to liberate all our mother sentient beings from all suffering and its causes, the two stages of Highest Yoga Tantra.

Actualizing these realizations is not suffering. Living in the higher training of morality, the higher training of concentration, shamatha, and the higher training of wisdom—this fundamental path to achieve liberation—this is not suffering. To lead a life like this is not a suffering life. Practicing Dharma in this way is not a suffering life. Living any other way, all the rest is only suffering. Whatever we do, whatever we experience in samsara is only suffering.

Therefore, we take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha to become completely free forever, to never again have to experience the suffering of pain, which is the cycle of death and rebirth and all the problems between. Not only that, we take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha to become completely free forever from the second type of suffering, the suffering of change, the samsaric pleasures whose nature is only suffering.

Now, not only that, there is a third suffering, pervasive compounding suffering, which is the base. This level of suffering covers, pervades, becomes the foundation for the previous two sufferings, the suffering of pain and the suffering of change.

What is this suffering, this association of body and mind, these aggregates that receive the label “I?” Why do we have to experience suffering? Why does this body have to experience the suffering of old age, sickness and death? Why does the mind have to experience fear, worry and all those mental pains? Why don’t we have a body and mind that is totally bliss, never, ever experiencing suffering?

It is because these aggregates, this body and mind, are created by impure causes. They come from karma and delusions. If these aggregates, this body and mind, were not created by karma and delusion, there would be no reason at all why this body and mind would have to experience suffering. There would be no cause for this body and mind to experience suffering. Why these aggregates, this body and mind, experience all these sufferings is because they are caused by karma and delusion, created by the impure mind.

SEARCHING FOR THE I: THE OBJECT OF REFUTATION

The very root is the impure mind, the mind which is totally hallucinated. While there is no I at all, there is no self at all on these aggregates, [we believe it exists.] The I is totally nonexistent inside the body, totally nonexistent on the aggregates. There is no I at all on the aggregates, the association of body and mind. The I that exists is what exists in mere name. While there is an I that exists, it’s not talking about one inside the body or on the aggregates.

Anyway, the conclusion! Just by saying this for a while makes it a little uncomfortable so I’ll clarify the I that exists. There is no I in this body; there is no I on these aggregates that are the association of body and mind. But that does not mean that the I does not exist. The I exists. The I exists in mere name, or merely labeled by the mind. These two mean the same thing.

So, what is this I? This I that experiences happiness and suffering, this I that creates virtue and nonvirtue, this I that does actions such as walking, sitting, sleeping? It is that which is merely labeled by the mind. That is the I that exists. But even though it exists, it does not exist anywhere in the body, anywhere on the aggregates, the association of body and mind.

This is the reality. Therefore, if we look for it, if we analyze it, we cannot even find the I that does exist, the I that is merely labeled by the mind.

Usually the texts say “*on* the aggregates.” Whether the I exists on the aggregates or not, it appears to us that there is an I on the body, on the mind, on the mental continuum. When we think about reincarnation, there appears to be an I on the aggregates, the aggregation of body and mind. However, the I that appears is totally nonexistent. That is what we have to realize, what we have to discover.

Especially those of us who haven’t realized emptiness, we have fixed concept that there is an I on the aggregates, inside this body. We have this fixed idea or belief, but normally we don’t use the term used in the texts, “*on* the aggregates.” Even though the concept is there, we don’t say it that way. When somebody punches us or calls us a name, or when something sad happens or we lose something, people put both their arms around us like this. Of course, if we are very, very happy, very excited, then it’s also like that. “I’m so happy!”

In Japan or somewhere, I think they point to the nose to indicate the I. Huh? What? [Some students advise Rinpoche] What? Oh, I see. In Taiwan? Nose? In Taiwan, they point to the nose! No, I don’t think it’s the inside of the nose. Just on the outside! Anyway, I haven’t yet heard of anybody pointing to the big toes to show they are so happy!

When the people in Taiwan are angry, do they point to the nose? Even at that time? When they talk about the I and they are very angry. “How dare you say that to me?” At that time, do they still point to the nose, or here? Huh? Huh? Maybe when the mind is peaceful they point here and they are very angry they point there! No, I’m just joking.

Actually, when we have a strong emotion and we point our finger at ourselves, at [the heart or the nose] where we intuitively think the I is, we are pointing our finger at the I that is to be refuted. We are not aware of it, but this is exactly the object to be refuted. To put it another way, we are pointing to the I that is not there at all but that we believe is there. We are pointing to the I that is the object to be refuted, the I that doesn’t exist.

This I we are pointing at is the one we must realize is empty, totally empty from there. Even without saying “there,” it is totally empty. It is totally empty anywhere. It is totally nonexistent anywhere. At that time, we are not pointing to the I that exists; we are not pointing to the merely labeled I; we are pointing to the emotional I, the I that is not merely labeled by the mind. That means we are pointing to the I that doesn’t exist at all. It exists *nowhere*, neither inside the body nor anywhere else.

During that time, we are living with a total hallucination. The way the I appears and the way we apprehend the I is totally wrong. It is a total hallucination, totally nonexistent. Our idea of the I, what is the self, is totally wrong.

So, to go back. The I that exists, that experiences happiness and suffering, that creates virtue and nonvirtue, that does actions such as walking, sitting, sleeping, is merely labeled by the mind.

There is not even this merely labeled I in the body, which is the concept we normally have of where the emotional I is. That is just the emotional I, not even the merely labeled I. That emotional I, that which is not merely labeled by the mind, is the hallucination; it is the object to be refuted. I think there are many other hallucinations, there are many other very gross ideas of the I, much grosser than that.

Even the merely labeled I is not on the aggregates. Even the merely labeled I, which is the base that receives the label “I,” is not there on the aggregates.

That is the reality. Normally we talk about truth and falsity and this is the truth. On the other hand, in our normal life, how the I appears to us, the way we apprehend it and believe it to exist, that is false. We believe there is a real I in this body, appearing from there. Even believing that there is a merely labeled I, the I we label, that is there on the aggregates, that is a wrong concept. That concept is totally false. When we analyze it, we discover that this concept is totally false, that I is totally nonexistent. When we analyze it, we do not discover there is an I existing from its own side, not merely labeled by the mind. We realize exactly the opposite, that the I is totally nonexistent.

While the reality is like this—that there is not only no emotional I but also no merely labeled I existing on the aggregates, which is the base of the labeled I—we have the appearance of such an I. While the truth is like this, in our everyday life we have the appearance of the I on these aggregates or in this body. There is the appearance of the I, but not appearing as merely labeled by the mind. That means that the I appears as existing from its own side.

This is introducing the most subtle hallucination, the object to be refuted.

SEARCHING FOR THE I: THE LABEL AND THE BASE

How does this happen? Why does our mind make up the label “I”? There is no other reason at all except that there is the base, the aggregates, this association of body and mind that we have. This base exists.

If somebody asks us what we are doing, we reply, “I am sitting,” or “I am listening,” or “I am talking.” There is no other reason to believe the I is doing this except the aggregates, are doing these things. The body is doing the action of sitting now, so the mind makes up the label “I.” Because there is the base, the aggregates, the mind makes up the label “I.” This body is doing the action of sitting, so I am sitting. In that way, the I is merely imputed by the mind.

It’s the same with listening. The mind—the primary sense consciousness—is doing the action of listening and, because of that, we impute that “I” am listening. Again, it is merely imputed by the mind. The same thing with talking—because the aggregates are doing the action, again the mind makes up the label “I.”

The aggregates are doing the different activities, or are going to be doing the different activities, or have done the different activities in the past, so we make up the label “I,” thinking that this I does or did these activities. This I is merely imputed like this, and we do this continuously, twenty-four hours a day. We do it every day from birth up to death.

This includes birth itself. When we think about birth, it appears to our mind as a real birth, something that has nothing to do with our mind. We think the birth never came from our mind; it

came from its own side. We think birth exists from its own side, not merely imputed by the mind. This is how it appears to us.

It's the same with death. When we think about death, again, we have a totally false view of death. It seems to be a real death, a death that never came from our mind, a death that totally exists from its own side. Again, that is a totally false view. Such a death is totally nonexistent. That death we normally believe, our idea of death, is totally nonexistent. What is death? The death that exists is what is merely labeled by the mind. Death comes from our mind, it is merely labeled by our mind, and it's the same for birth. So, birth and death exist but they are totally empty.

As I mentioned before, because of the aggregates, our mind makes up the label; it merely imputes the I on those aggregates. The actions we do are also merely imputed, relating to the activities of the aggregates, which are the base. From beginningless rebirth up to enlightenment it has been like this. The I that exists is completely like this, totally empty from its own side. So, what exists is merely labeled by the mind.

Now, to finish this subject, to pack this subject up! What makes our mind make the label "I"? Is it because there is a base, the aggregates? Our mind is continuously making up the label, merely imputing the I, merely imputing doing this and that. But the problem starts like this. After our mind has made up the label, we believe in that label and then whatever we label appears back to us.

That's how it is for our whole life, from birth, from the time we first opened our eyes, from the time our senses contact an object: our eye sense contacting form, our ear sense contacting sound, our tongue sense contacting different tastes and so on. This has happened from the time we left our mother's womb and opened our eyes and our senses started contacting objects, and it will continue like this until our death, when the senses absorb. For that entire duration of time there is the view of the eye sense, the view of the ear sense, the view of the tongue, body and nose sense.

These are all appearances. These appearances are our whole world: what is bad, what is good, what is beautiful and ugly, what is desirable and undesirable, what is dirty and clean and so forth.

Everything is to do with the view, this appearance. The whole thing comes from our own mind. Our mind makes up the label and we believe in it. Everything comes from our mind; it is all our view,

our appearance, not just the I. It is all a creation of our mind, merely imputed by our mind. Not just the I, but everything else.

How does the appearance of I come from the mind? Because without the mind labeling it, there is no I. It is easy to understand. There is no appearance of the I without the mind labeling it. The I comes from the mind. The appearance of the I comes from the mind.

THE MIND IS THE CREATOR: EVERYTHING IS A REFLECTION OF OUR MIND

From this example of how the I is merely imputed by the mind, how it comes from the mind, we can understand how it is the same for all other appearances. All objects appear to us in this way; they are our appearance, the view of our own mind.

From this analysis, from this discovery, we can understand how, when somebody criticizes or gets angry with us or upsets us, all this comes from our mind. The creator is not out there; the creator is our mind. Even if we see that somebody is angry with us or is criticizing us, even if we have this view of what people are doing, it comes completely from our mind.

There are two things. One is that our mind makes up the label and we believe in that appearance, and then we create our view of that object. If our mind is pure, we see a pure object, we label it pure, we put it in a pure light. If our mind is impure, our label is impure and our view of the object is impure.

How we see things, how we see living beings and nonliving things, is the same thing. I'm making too many words! How we see an object, whether pure or impure, or how pure or impure, is totally a reflection of our mind. You can say these are a description of our mind, of the quality of our mind, how pure or impure it is. What we see, the view of our senses, is a description of our mind, of the quality of our mind. It is like we are seeing the reflection of our face in the mirror. Whatever shape we see in the mirror—beautiful or ugly, clean or dirty, whether the nose is straight or crooked—is all a reflection of our own face.

It is exactly like this. Not only what we see but what we hear, smell, taste and touch, the whole thing, the entire appearance, comes from our mind, and whatever quality we see in the object is a description of our own mind, a reflection of the quality of our mind.

Since our mind is the creator, whenever we encounter problems, whenever we experience some undesirable things, there is nothing external to blame.

So, of the two things, how things come from our mind, how they are a creation of our mind, is one thing. We make up the label and believe in it, and then there is the appearance. That's one way we experience the sense objects in our everyday life.

THE MIND IS THE CREATOR: APPEARANCES ARISE DUE TO IMPRINTS

The other thing is this. Behind the appearance is the imprint. A positive or negative imprint is left on our mental continuum, and then this imprint manifests. For instance, a negative imprint manifests and suddenly we have a car accident. We think because we are completely healthy and young that everything will always be OK, but suddenly a car accident happens, we are horribly injured, and our life totally changes. Or we have a beautiful house and everything looks OK, but suddenly a fire breaks out and the whole thing changes. Or somebody is a very close friend and it seems kind of impossible for them to become an enemy, but suddenly from being a close friend one minute, they turn and become totally the opposite, a hated enemy, angry with us, giving up on us or leaving us.

These are just examples. So many positive imprints are left by positive actions, good karma, prostrations, and so many negative imprints are left by negative actions, bad karma.

All the desirable objects we see, all the things desirable to our senses, are products of our positive imprints, the seeds on our mental continuum, being experienced. It is like having planted various flowers or fruits in the garden or field, and then whichever is the more powerful grows first; it manifests first by having gathered all the conditions together. Similarly, whatever desirable or undesirable sense objects we experience, all these manifestations are products of the imprints manifesting.

This is one explanation of how everything comes from mind. It is like a TV show or movie. What manifests, what is actualized there on the TV or movie screen, comes from the TV station or the projector, by putting a roll of movie film into the projector and shining light through it. The story we watch comes from that roll of film. No matter how far away the scene is, it comes from that film that is projected onto a screen. All those mountains or different countries, all those wars with fighting and killing, all those people playing music, all those happy and unhappy people, all the many different things are printed onto that roll of film. Our mind, the mental continuum, is exactly like that roll of film, with all the positive and negative imprints left by the positive and negative actions we did in the past.

When we put the roll of film in the projector and shine the light through it, we can see the story on the screen. In the same way, in our everyday life, the imprints left on our mind are being constantly projected out, causing us to have positive or negative experiences.

So, this is second way to understand how everything comes from the mind. We can meditate and realize how what we see, what we hear, what we smell, what we taste, what we touch—all the objects of our senses, come from our mind.

That's why, during his lectures in the West and the East, His Holiness, the Dalai Lama always emphasizes that Buddhism doesn't believe in an external creator, somebody separate from us who creates our life, our happiness and our problems. His Holiness mentions this all the time. We can understand this from our everyday experiences, how it is all up to our concepts.

How we see things depends on how we label, what kind of label we make. Therefore, if the label we create is a negative one, we have a negative appearance. Whether it's a person or a non-living phenomenon, the object appears to us as negative, and we see it as negative.

There is a whole evolution before we see the object as negative, as bad. It's not just seeing something that is negative like this. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] A whole evolution comes from our mind, causing us to see the object as bad, as negative. Then, when the object appears to the eye sense as bad, that affects our feelings. We see the object as bad and we get an unpleasant feeling from the contact.

Due to that, the emotional mind arises and creates a negative label again, and so it creates circles. It creates more problems like this. The more our mind creates a negative label, the more we see things—people and other phenomena—as negative. As I mentioned before, instead of pleasure and comfort, we have more unpleasant feelings, and this makes our life unhappy.

Therefore, we need to train our mind to always look at our life's situations in a positive light, as good. Whatever circumstances happen, we should always look at them as good, as positive. By thinking of the benefits of a problem, we can see it as positive. Problems have benefits. They can benefit us by purifying our mind and allowing us to collect powerful, extensive merit, to develop our mind on the path to enlightenment. They can especially benefit us to develop compassion, loving kindness and bodhicitta for other sentient beings and to develop the realization of patience.

These are the benefits when we encounter problems in life. Thinking of those benefits makes us label the problems as positive. Then we see the problems as positive; we see nothing bad, and that creates a pleasant feeling. It makes our life happy, secure and stable.

Anyway, that part just happened. That part was just additional. But to come back to her question. I'm not sure she's still there! I guess she's still there!

THE MIND IS THE CREATOR: IGNORANCE IS THE ROOT OF SAMBARA

The I is merely labeled by the mind, but when the I appears back to us, it doesn't appear as merely labeled by the mind. It doesn't appear back as it is, merely labeled by mind. As I mentioned before, that's how the problems start.

Yesterday, I mentioned about negative imprints. There is an imprint left on the mental continuum by past ignorance, by the mind that is unknowing to what is false and what is truth. This unknowing mind does not know that the I does not exist from its own side, that it is empty from its own side. We believe the I exists from its own side, but the reality is that the I is empty from its own side. For those of us who haven't realized emptiness, the way we apprehend the I is as existing from its own side. But the reality is that it is empty. The I does not exist from its own side. That is the ultimate nature of the I, the very nature of the I.

So, when the I appears back to us, it appears back as something totally the opposite, as something not merely labeled by the mind. There seems to be something from its own side. This subtle hallucination is the object to be refuted. That false I is something slightly more than what is merely labeled by the mind. In our perception, the way the I appears to us, and the way we believe it to be, is something slightly additional to what is merely labeled by our mind. That means it exists from its own side. There is something just *slightly* more, something from its own side. That is the false I.

How does this false I happen? How does this appearance—the hallucination of an inherently existent I—happen? This is decorated over the merely labeled I, projected by the negative imprint that is on our mental continuum, left by the past ignorance.

The subtle false I, the object to be refuted, is something slightly beyond what is merely labeled by the mind. But this appearance is still not the root of the problem. What is the root of the problem? Where does all the suffering of samsara come from? Why do we have to die and be reborn? Why do we have to experience old age, sicknesses and all those problems, the oceans of suffering of human beings, suras, asuras, hell realm beings, hungry ghosts and animals? Where does the cause of suffering, karma and delusions, come from? It all comes from this wrong concept, ignorance.

We apprehend the I as being slightly more than merely labeled by the mind and we believe this appearance one hundred percent. That is why ignorance is called the unknowing mind. It is unknowing that the I that appears as something more than what is merely labeled by the mind is totally nonexistent, empty. We cannot see this, and because of that, we believe the way we apprehend the I; we think that it exists from its own side, that it exists inherently.

I'll repeat this just one more time. We believe the way the I appears to us, as not just merely labeled by mind but something more than that. This wrong concept is the principal cause, the root that makes this body experience suffering. That's why, in a place like this, there is pain. Even when you sit, if you're not careful, immediately there's pain. Probably already now, after a couple of hours! Anyway, I'm joking. Even here at this place, I'm sure, there is a lot of pain!

OUR AGGREGATES ARE IN THE NATURE OF SUFFERING

That shows that all the aggregates are in the nature of suffering. The aggregates are caused by past karma and delusions and are contaminated or defiled by the seed of the disturbing thoughts. Lama Tsongkhapa, in his lamrim text, explained that this is the definition of what samsara is.

The main cause of the defiled aggregates is karma and delusions. The meditator who has attained the path of meditation on the five paths to achieve liberation still has samsara but doesn't have to reincarnate. The continuation of their aggregates doesn't circle to the next samsara, unlike our present life's aggregates that have to continue into the next life and keep circling within samsara. Because our aggregates are caused by past karma and delusions and contaminated by the seed of disturbing thoughts, they are in the nature of suffering; they are pervaded by suffering.

Therefore, not only are the aggregates the container of all the problems of this life, they become the foundation of this present samsara and all the suffering of the coming future lives.

How does that happen? Because this seed of delusion is there on the mental continuum. And the seed of delusion is there because we haven't actualized the remedial path. There are five paths to liberation, without talking about the five Mahayana paths, such as the third path, the right-seeing path, and the fourth one, the path of meditation. On the right-seeing path we cease the intellectually created delusions and on the path of meditation we remove the simultaneously born delusions. So, until we have actualized those remedial paths, the seed of delusion is still there.

In our everyday life, if we are not practicing mindfulness—watching the mind and applying the antidote as soon as a delusion arises by applying the appropriate lamrim meditation—since we are not living in the practice of lamrim, there is no protection. If the mind is not living in the realization of lamrim—renunciation, bodhicitta, emptiness—then by meeting the object, the seed gives rise to a delusion.

Then the delusion motivates an action, karma, which leaves an imprint, a seed, on the mental continuum. This then brings a result that is actualized in the future samsara. There are many seeds left on the mental continuum from the past lives which have the potential to bring results in the

future samsara. With these present aggregates, when the delusions of craving and grasping arise that leaves imprints on our mental continuum, ready to throw us into the result of the future life in samsara.

That's how these aggregates compound our future samsara. These present aggregates, this samsara, compound the future samsara by compounding the cause of the future samsara. This is the third type of suffering, the pervasive compounding suffering. It is the continuation of this present samsara and how, being under the control of karma and delusions, it circles to the next life. Then, according to the karma, we reincarnate and take on the aggregates of the future samsara, in the hell realm or as a hungry ghost, an animal, a sura, an asura or a human being. And then we have to experience the sufferings of each of those realms again and again, again and again. Our experience of the suffering of samsara becomes endless. Only when we can cease the cause of samsara, karma and delusions, can we break the continuation of the aggregates circling from one life to another, samsara.

Pabongka Dechen Nyinpo explained that it is like being naked, having to carry on our back a thorn bush or big load of barbed wire, tied with ropes. Being stuck with this rope, wherever we go, in the snow mountains like Mount Everest, in the countryside, in a city or wherever, East or West, we constantly have to experience pain and suffering. Another example is having to carry a great pile of burning firewood on our back, tied with the ropes.

Until we cease karma and delusions, we are always stuck with this samsara, these aggregates, which are totally in the nature of suffering. We are always bound to this samsara by karma and delusions, from the tip of samsara, the fourth and highest realm of the highest realm of samsara, down to the lowest hell realm, the inexhaustible hell, whichever state we reincarnate in, there is never one second's break from suffering. There is no pure happiness for even one second.

IS SHAMATHA A SAMBARIC PLEASURE?

In the formless realm there is no suffering of pain or suffering of change, samsaric pleasures. That should be examined. In the form realm, is there the second type of suffering, samsaric pleasure? Is there? What do you think?

[Students respond, inaudible]

So, the form realm also has samsaric pleasure because it has the suffering of change? What about the formless realm? When you meditate on bodhicitta, when you generate the thought of benefiting others, you feel pleasure, you feel peace and joy. Is that samsaric pleasure?

[Students answer, inaudible]

There are many things. Is the ecstasy, the bliss of the body and mind, achieving the shamatha meditation, samsaric pleasure? Is that samsaric pleasure? [Students reply] So, that depends on the motivation whether it is samsaric pleasure or not? So that bliss is suffering? The bliss achieved from shamatha meditation is suffering? Is it contaminated bliss? Is it suffering or not? The bliss is one example. The other example is experiencing bliss through tantra meditation, such as in the Six Yogas of Naropa. Is that samsaric pleasure or not?

[Student answers, inaudible]

So, if the person has no realization of emptiness, that's samsaric pleasure? Hmm. Through the Six Yogas of Naropa, you generate some sort of suffering? If somebody were to have an experience of great bliss, without the realization of emptiness, that would be samsaric suffering. Hmm? Until you realize emptiness, it is samsaric suffering. *Any* experience of happiness is samsaric suffering until the person has an understanding of emptiness. So, all happiness is samsaric suffering?

Samsaric pleasure cannot be completed, but *that* pleasure can be completed. The bliss derived from the Six Yogas of Naropa can be developed and it can be completed. So, there are differences. Samsaric pleasures cannot be developed or completed, but the bliss from meditation can be continued and can become completed. When we achieve enlightenment it is completed. So, there are big differences.

[A student asks a question, inaudible]

No, just experiencing bliss doesn't mean that the happiness is completed. Here the definition of completed doesn't mean just the experience of bliss. It means by completing the path. So, don't the beings of the formless realm have pleasure? [Student replies] Do the beings of the formless realm have pleasure? They have pleasure. They have the suffering of change; they have samsaric pleasure.

Are you saying that as long as a person doesn't have an understanding of emptiness, all the peace that they experience through meditation is suffering? [Student answers] I didn't say all bliss is suffering. I didn't mention that. Unless you want to hear that! I'm joking.

Kendall was saying that if there is no understanding of emptiness, then all bliss is suffering. I'm saying that all the inner peace we develop through meditation, as long as we don't have an understanding of emptiness, is the suffering of samsara. Anyway, that can be checked.

REFUGE FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS

So, to conclude. Even if we are in the form or formless realms, even though there are times we do not experience the suffering of pain and the suffering of change, we still have to constantly experience pervasive compounding suffering, which refers to these aggregates caused by karma and delusions and contaminated by the seed of disturbing thoughts. This continuation that circles to the next life is always there.

From beginningless rebirths until now, there has not been even one second's break from this third type of suffering of samsara, the continuation of these aggregates. There has not been even one second to experience pure happiness. Therefore, because this is the main suffering we have to be liberated from, we should put all our effort into being completely liberated from it. As long as we are not liberated from this, as long as we have this type of suffering, that makes it possible to experience the two other types of suffering: the suffering of change and the suffering of pain, and all those other problems. One meaning of pervasive compounding suffering is that it becomes the foundation for those two other sufferings.

This is the main reason we take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. As I mentioned before and I'll repeat again, we take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha not just to be liberated forever from the suffering of pain, not just to be liberated forever from the suffering of change. The

fundamental suffering to be completely liberated from forever is pervasive compounding suffering. That means to be free from samsara forever.

Because this suffering comes from its cause, karma and delusions, that means only by ceasing the cause of suffering, karma and delusions, can we be completely liberated from all sufferings. This is the ultimate liberation.

Is this possible to achieve or not? It is possible to achieve. Why? Because there is a path. Why? Because there is a method. There is a path. Since the beginning of this course, every meditation we have done is the path, the path to the cessation of all suffering and its cause, karma and delusions. Not only that, since we have also been meditating on bodhicitta, this is the path to enlightenment. Not just liberation from samsara but liberation from even the subtle defilements, to achieve enlightenment and to free all sentient beings from all suffering and bring them to full enlightenment.

The whole path to liberation and enlightenment is based on the method, the meditation practice that we have been doing since the beginning of the course up to now. What we have been experiencing, meditating on, is the fundamental path. Renunciation is the foundation of bodhicitta and bodhicitta is the foundation of the Mahayana path to enlightenment. We can achieve this because the method exists. And we have already been practicing the method during this one month.

To give a simple example. When we meditate on bodhicitta, we only meditate on compassion, feeling compassion for others. When we meditate on loving kindness, we feel [love for others]. When we meditate on renunciation, we see how samsara is in the nature of suffering and we get the wish to be free from samsara. When we meditate on impermanence and death, we become free from attachment to this life. That is renunciation to this life.

Whatever meditation we do, our mind is transformed into the path, from emotional negative thoughts, the cause of samsara, into the cause to achieve liberation and enlightenment. Even if it is a small experience, that shows that we can achieve the realizations. This might be a small experience, but when we meditate on each of these subjects, our mind is transformed, becoming a positive, healthy mind, a pure mind, during that time. When we meditate on the perfect human rebirth, we

feel that this body is unbelievably precious and that there is nothing more important than practicing Dharma. That is more precious than all the material possessions in this world.

We get this feeling, which is called effortful experience. The fact that our mind can actually be transformed into the feeling explained in the meditation, even with this small experience, proves that if we continue the meditation and if we practice correctly, with all the necessary conditions such as purification and collecting merit, we can achieve the realizations of the path to enlightenment.

The path is like medicine. The path to liberation and enlightenment is the medicine to cure the sicknesses, the actual remedy to cease karma and delusions. Or in other words, it can completely cure all mental sicknesses and then, through that, cure all physical suffering.

The path to liberation and to enlightenment, and the scriptures that explain the entire path, is the conventional Dharma. The absolute Dharma is the true path of wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, and the cessation of suffering. This is the actual refuge, like the actual medicine to cure all disease. It is the foundation. This is what we have already been practicing. So, it's like we have already been taking the medicine because we have already taken refuge in the Dharma from the heart.

That means that we have naturally taken refuge in the Buddha as somebody who has revealed the path. Just as when we rely upon treatment, we naturally rely upon doctors, in the same way, we naturally rely upon the Buddha who revealed the path.

And then, we need the support of the Sangha, those who follow the path; we need their inspiration, teachings and example. They are like the nurse who helps with the treatment. To practice Dharma we need the support of the Sangha. We naturally rely on the Sangha, who are the helpers to actualize the actual Dharma refuge within our mind. So like this, we just naturally rely upon the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

When we practice the path taught by the Buddha, when we meditate, this naturally happens. As I've explained before, this refuge is not like any other form of refuge. This refuge is so important, so urgent, just as when we have heart attack or something we have to immediately go to the emergency

hospital. Taking this refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, trying to be completely liberated from karma and delusions, the cause of all suffering, is a billion times more important than that emergency hospital!

This is for our own liberation, but on top of that, there are numberless sentient beings suffering in the same way, just like us. To free those numberless other sentient beings, to liberate those numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering, we need to actualize the path. For all this, we need to rely upon the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Therefore, there are these two reasons why we want to go for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The first reason is so that we ourselves can become completely liberated from the whole of suffering and its causes. We're not taking refuge in a cow; we're not taking refuge in a rock or a tree, or the sun and moon! We're not taking refuge in a buffalo! We're taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, who can guide us. We're taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha to be liberated from all suffering and its causes because they have all the qualities that allow us to be liberated, so we can rely on them.

The second reason is that they have all the qualities to allow us to not only liberate ourselves but to liberate all sentient beings from all suffering and its causes and bring them to enlightenment. That's why we take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and we don't take refuge in a buffalo or a cat or a dog! What else? We don't take refuge in a mouse! The Buddha, Dharma and Sangha have all the qualities to liberate us.

I just want to mention one more thing and then we'll stop. Sorry. It went on and on! I have completely broken all the rules!

To just not get reborn in the lower realms—the hell, hungry ghost or animal realm—can happen without needing to take refuge in all three. By taking refuge in just the Buddha, even by just thinking of the name, by just remembering the Buddha, if we die with just the thought of the Buddha, we will not be reborn in the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm or the animal realm because that thought protects us. Even if we die remembering the *Heart Sutra* or another Dharma text, no question if we are thinking about renunciation, emptiness and bodhicitta, even just relying on a Dharma text, taking

refuge in a Dharma text, means we won't be reborn in the lower realms. And if we remember a Sangha member we have faith and devotion for, a nun or monk or somebody, at the time of death, if we die with that thought, we will never be reborn in the lower realms. Just remembering that Sangha we have faith which saves us from reincarnating in the lower realms. It's very powerful.

I also want to say this. I quite often mention this. The scientific knowledge that has allowed us to cure diseases benefits mankind. However, will all that scientific knowledge help at the time of death? Will it help stop us reincarnating in the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm or the animal realm? At the time of death, it is very difficult to be saved from reincarnating in the lower realms. It's extremely difficult. But here, if we just remember the Buddha, if we die with the thought of the Buddha, that protects us from the lower realms. If we remember just one monk or nun we have faith in, if we die with that thought, we are saved from the lower realms, we don't get reborn in the lower realms. I'm talking about these objects of power that are of great benefit at this most crucial time, death. In regard to the effect they have, there is a huge difference.

Now here, we are thinking about becoming completely liberated forever from samsara; liberated from the whole of suffering and its causes forever. For this, we need to take refuge in all three, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Just taking refuge in one alone is not enough.

On top of that, we are practicing the Mahayana teachings. Therefore, our refuge involves compassion. We don't take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha only out of renunciation, to free ourselves from samsara, by fearing samsara and understanding that they have the qualities, the power to help us do that. With these two causes, fear of samsara and faith in the power of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, taking refuge with our whole heart in that way is the Hinayana way of taking refuge. According to the Mahayana way of taking refuge, on top of that we need one more cause of refuge, which is compassion. We see that numberless sentient beings, like us, are suffering, and we generate compassion, determining to free them from all suffering and bring them to enlightenment.

To be able to do that, we rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. We understand and fear our own samsara, we have faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and compassion for other sentient

beings, wishing to free them. Then, with our whole heart, we take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. That is the Mahayana way of taking refuge.

THE BENEFITS OF TAKING REFUGE

You have already taken the actual refuge in your heart since you are seeking the path to liberation and enlightenment. The actual refuge is already taken. But now, this refuge is taking the refuge vow. To make certain you rely upon the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, you take the refuge vow in order to devote yourself to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

There are refuge practices that come from that, but I'm not going to speak about them until tomorrow! Usually, when I give refuge, I emphasize taking at least one lay vow, which is abstaining from killing. That means abstaining from intentionally or purposefully killing. You vow not to do that. Of the five lay vows you can take, I always emphasize you should take at least this one. The reason I emphasize this normally is because taking refuge in the Dharma involves not harming others, and of all the harm we can do others, killing, the taking of others' lives, is the most harmful one, generally speaking.

But still, if you cannot take any of the five lay vows, that doesn't mean you cannot take the refuge vow. You can still take the refuge vow. Without taking any of the five lay vows, there are refuge instructions and practice to do.

Living in the vow is protecting your life, like taming a crazy elephant. A crazy elephant is totally without discipline, running everywhere and harming itself and others. When you discipline your mind, you no longer harm yourself or others. Life does not become dangerous for yourself, and it does not become dangerous for others.

So, taking and living in the vow means receiving protection for your life. You are protected from creating negative karma that brings so many problems in this life, in the life after this and in all future lives. Even in the god and human realms it brings so many problems, so much suffering and loss. Living in the vow means you have protection from all suffering, including problems of this life.

Not living in the vow means there's no protection in your life. When you are sick, depending on the disease, the doctor will tell you which food not to eat and which to eat, which behavior is harmful to your health and whether you should do this or that exercise. If you want to get better, you follow the doctor's advice.

Taking precepts is similar, but this is not just for health. As I mentioned before, this is to completely liberate yourself, so you are totally free from all suffering and its causes, from the oceans of each samsaric suffering. And not only that, it's also the foundation to complete the path and achieve full enlightenment.

To be able to liberate all sentient beings from all suffering and bring them to enlightenment, which is the goal of somebody practicing the Mahayana path, is the purpose of taking and living in the vows. It is to achieve enlightenment in order to benefit the numberless other sentient beings.

Now the specific reasons. Without taking and living in the vows there is no morality, no discipline, then the person engages in many negative karmas. Without talking about the results of those negative karmas—all the problems now and in the future—those negative karmas obscure the mind and that makes it more difficult to have realizations.

The specific thing is, the purer you can live in the vows, whether as a lay or ordained person, the more your mind will be disciplined and the more you will live in morality. That means you will have better meditation, a clearer mind and a better memory.

It will also help you to not become a vegetable in your later life. There are many people in the West in their sixties or seventies who have that disease. What's it called? Huh? [Students prompt] Alzheimer's disease. You will not have to experience Alzheimer's disease. That is according to my view. It is just my own analysis. Due to not living a pure, disciplined life, the mind becomes more and more unconscious, and that leads to Alzheimer's. That is just my analysis. Why? The other way is the person who lives to sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety, but has a very clear memory. For example, like the geshes or any of the high lamas, the texts they memorized in Tibet thirty, forty or fifty years ago, they never forget the texts. Even though they haven't recited them since then, they can

remember all prayers they memorized in Tibet, because they have lived very pure, moral lives. That is why they have such a clear memory. If you check how they have lived, you can find out.

For those not living a pure, moral life, it is the opposite. Although I haven't checked, I haven't done like they do in the West, researching the life of a person with Alzheimer's. Actually, if you did research those people's lives, how they lived when they were young, you may find many had similar behavior or lifestyle. I think it's very important to research this. From that, you could help in society, especially educating young people how to stop these things happening.

When I talked with a student in Manhattan who does consultations with people, I said it was very good to do research with people who are sick with Alzheimer's, researching their life story, so that you can help educate other people about the cause. If you can get some idea of what causes this, you can educate others to not engage in those activities. This is a very important contribution to the world.

There are other examples. Millions of people die of AIDS in so many different countries. It also helps to live in the vows; it helps to have not so many people dying with this extra disease in the world. I think some of you can remember, people often asked His Holiness the Dalai Lama about AIDS and the increase in the world's population and how it causes difficulties for the economy. Many people asked him things like that and he always answered, "Become a monk or nun!" That's the solution His Holiness always gave, the solution to not increase the population so there would be no problem for the economy, and also for AIDS.

Living in the vows, with purer morality there is much clearer meditation and it is much easier to accomplish meditations such as shamatha. To achieve perfect concentration is much easier. By having stable concentration and then by realizing emptiness, by combining shamatha with emptiness, you are able to overcome all delusions. That leads to the higher path, the right-seeing path and then the path of meditation. That's how you get liberated from samsara. You overcome death and rebirth and all these sufferings. This is just talking for yourself. Then there's the Mahayana path to benefit sentient beings.

There are two more reasons for taking the vows and then we're finished. Then it's completely finished. There are two advantages I would like to mention.

You can take one vow, two vows, up to all five of the five lay vows. If let's say you take one of the *pratimoksha* vows, from the time you take it until your death, continuously day and night, including however many hours you are sleeping—eight hours, ten hours, twenty-four hours—even during your sleep you continuously collect good karma, merit, the cause of happiness. Even if you just take one vow, you continuously collect merit, good karma, the cause of happiness, while you are eating, walking, trekking, going up and down! You are continuously collecting merit and your life is never meaningless; it doesn't become meaningless by living in this one vow. Even during the hours you spend lying down at the beach in the sun, you continuously collect good karma, the cause of happiness, all the time. That's the great advantage. Even if you go into a coma for three or four years, even a longer time, your life is not meaningless because you continuously collect merit by living in the vow.

Of course, the more vows you take, the more merit you continuously collect. It makes life meaningful; it continuously gives meaning to your life, becoming useful at least for you.

Actually, this practice, taking refuge and taking vows, is the most practical way of taking care of yourself. How can you take care of yourself? The best way to take care of yourself is by practicing Dharma. That means to abandon creating negative karma, which would mean you have to experience the result of that negative karma, suffering. When you stop creating negative karma and collect good karma, the cause of happiness, the result you experience is happiness. So, the best way to take care of yourself is to practice Dharma. When you are not practicing Dharma, you are not taking care of yourself; you are not loving yourself. When you are practicing Dharma, you are taking care of yourself and protecting yourself from suffering. The best way to take care of yourself, the best way to love yourself, the real way to protect yourself, to guide yourself, is only Dharma. And living in the vows is the essential method for that. It is the one very practical Dharma practice to protect yourself from suffering and its causes.

That is the first thing, remembering the benefits of taking and living in the vows. The other one, it is said by Buddha in the *Heap of Flowers Sutra (Metog Tsekpai Do)* (Sometimes I get mixed up with

another story!) that if all the three realms' sentient beings—the beings of the desire, form and formless realms—all became the most powerful, wealthy kings, wheel-turning kings—which means not just kings of one country or one continent but of the universe—and they all made offerings to the Buddha of oceans of butter and mountains made out of wax for light offerings, and if we compare that merit that all those wheel-turning kings make to just one person living the vows making a tiny offering to the Buddha, such as the wax for a light offering the size of a mustard seed, that one person would collect far more merit than all those wheel-turning kings.

By having taken even one vow, whenever you collect merit, virtuous actions, by prostrating, by making offering to the Triple Gem, by making charity or doing good things for other sentient beings, anytime you collect merit in everyday life the merit increases to that degree, as I have just explained, greater than all sentient beings as wheel-turning kings making all those offerings to the Buddha but who are not living in the vows.

The second benefit to remember is that the merit increases. Whatever virtuous action you do in everyday life, the merit increases so much. Therefore, the greater number of vows you take and live in, of course the merit increases more and more, more and more. It's like buying a rosary for one rupee but with that rosary you get a thousand or a hundred thousand or a million rupees or dollars.

That is the second benefit, the incredible, unbelievable advantage of taking and keeping the vows, making it so easy to create the cause of happiness in everyday life.

I think, that's all! We'll stop here.

Lecture 5

December 6, 1997

LOOK AT ALL CAUSATIVE PHENOMENA AS LIKE AN ILLUSION

Do not commit any nonvirtuous actions,
Perform only perfect virtuous actions,
Subdue your mind thoroughly—
This is the teaching of the Buddha.

Then, the next advice of Buddha to us sentient beings is this.

A star, a defective view, a butter lamp,
An illusion, a drop of dew or a bubble,
A dream, a flash of lightning, a cloud—
See causative phenomena as such!

Causative phenomena means everything in our life: our body, our material possessions, the surrounding people such as family, friends and enemies, and all sense objects. The Buddha is saying to look at all these causative phenomena as transitory, like a star that shimmers at dusk, or like the object of somebody whose vision is defective, who hallucinates, like having visions of hairs dropping in their vision. When you eat you can have the vision of hairs falling but there are no hairs; it's an illusion. There is no such thing in reality.

Then causative phenomena can be compared to a flame that is flickering in the midst of wind and can be extinguished at any moment. It's like we are carrying a lit candle outside in the wind, conscious the flame could go out any time. Due to cause and conditions, causative phenomena can be stopped, can be destroyed, any time.

We should look at the causative phenomena as like an illusion. Yesterday, I described what is the truth and what is false, particularly relating to the I. Which is the I that exists and which is the I that

doesn't exist, the false I? Just as I mentioned yesterday, now we look at all causative phenomena as illusions.

The next one is to look at causative phenomena as like a drop of dew. One minute a dew drop is there and the next it's not. Similarly, we should look at causative phenomena as like dew drops, transitory. Or like a water bubble that can be popped at any time. Like that, causative phenomena are transitory; they can be stopped at any time.

Then, we should look at them as like a dream and like a flash of lightning. There are two things to understand here. Looking at causative phenomena as like a dream. For example, the day when death comes on us, the vivid appearance of this life, having possessions, property, a house, family, friends, enemies, including our own body—the vivid appearance of all these things, it happens and then it's gone. When death comes, this vivid appearance happens and it's gone. Having had all these things, they are now gone; they are all transitory, impermanent.

The person who passed away just becomes an object of memory. And everything becomes like that, objects of memory. So, that's one thing. It's like last night's dream that has happened and now it's gone. In the dream, all those vivid things happened, but now they are nothing.

In a dream we travel, we find a friend, then we have a party. Then we get children and then problems happen in the dream, so many worries. Or in the dream we have so much wealth. We buy a huge apartment, with many swimming pools and many Mercedes. What's the new car? What? [Students prompt] Exis! So, we buy many Mercedes or Exis. Huh? Oh! *Lexis!* We buy many Lexis. We become so wealthy, we have so many things, we achieve so much. And then suddenly we wake up. Then, there's nothing!

So you see, there are all these vivid appearances in a dream, where we had all these things, we had kind of a whole life in the dream, and when we wake up they are just objects of memory. Our life is the same. Even though we cannot realize now how this life is like a dream, causative phenomena are like a dream, transitory. When the day of our death comes, we realize it is like that. At the time of death, we see our life like that, as if we woke up from a dream, transitory.

That is one way to understand how causative phenomena are like a dream, by seeing how they are transitory—there for just a short time and then gone.

The other way to understand how this is like dream, is that, as I mentioned yesterday, everything that appears in a dream came from our mind, even the dream. Our mind makes up the label, we believe in the label and then it appears back to us. This is true of all these things—friends, enemies, possessions, all this property, all this extreme luxury, the apartment or the house, the Mercedes or Lexis or whatever—all this comfort, this enjoyment and all these things, all these appearances. How they started is that first, our mind made up the label, then we believed in what our mind labeled and then it appears back to us as that. All these objects we see in a dream, all these appearances come from our own mind. They don't come from their own side, they come from our own mind. And it is same with everything. Everything is merely imputed by the mind, but everything—all those things in a dream, our I, our body—everything appears to us as *not* merely labeled by the mind. Everything appears as something real, a real I, a real body, a real Mercedes, a real Lexis, a real house. They seem to have nothing to do with our mind. They appear not merely labeled by our mind.

So, all causative phenomena, including our I, our body, all these things, are exactly the same. How they exist is being merely labeled by the mind. In a sense, being merely labeled by the mind is exactly the same as what we see in a dream. These causative phenomena including our I, our self, our body, our material possessions, our friends, enemies, strangers, the surrounding families—the whole thing, all objects of the five senses—are exactly the same. What they are is merely labeled by the mind. In that way, they are exactly the same as the sense objects in a dream.

Everything we see in a dream, even though it comes from our mind and is merely labeled by our mind, it appears inherently existent. It appears to us *not* merely labeled by our mind. In exactly the same way, all causative phenomena, including our own I, appear back to us as not merely labeled by our mind.

They appear as something real, appearing from their own side, but if we look for these truly existing things we cannot find them. If we analyze all these things, including the I and all the rest of the causative phenomena, all which appear not merely labeled by mind, as something real appearing from there, when analyzed, they cannot be found anywhere, neither on the base nor anywhere. But

when they are not analyzed, it looks like they actually exist. They are just like the things we see in a dream, appearing that way, even though they are merely imputed by the mind.

DOES A DREAM HAVE A BASE?

The Buddha tells us to look at causative phenomena as like a dream. The only difference is... I'm not sure. Maybe there *are* no differences! So, what are the differences in the dream? Huh?

[Student responds, inaudible]

Rinpoche: In your dream there's no base? In your dream there's only the label but there's no base. Is that what you're saying? Huh? You don't feel pain in the dream. What about bliss? What about pleasure in the dream?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: Pleasure? You can explain pleasure? So, what is it? In the dream you can feel pleasure but no pain? Hmm? Maybe we should live our whole life in a dream! Maybe we should never wake up!

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: In the dream there's no pain. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. I think maybe you haven't had enough dreams! Some people very rarely have dreams, you know. In a dream there's no base? In a dream, is there a label?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: What makes you have a label in the dream? Huh?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: So, in the dream the label definitely exists, but the base doesn't exist, yeah? So, is there a base in the dream?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: It's not a base base. It's a valid base, no? I thought it was something but it's not a base on the base. If you label something in life, does that mean your life is a dream? Thank you very much!

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: So you're dreaming now? You've got your cap on! You're dreaming you're a human being? You're not a human being but you're dreaming you're a human being? Is there a time when you don't dream? Which time?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: Do you have parents? Or not? You don't have parents? You were born without parents?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: Your I is born from parents but you are not born from parents? You said your I is; you said you don't have parents. Hmm? Do you have parents? Are you born from parents or not?

Student: I don't know!

Rinpoche: So you're not sure whether you have parents. You're not sure whether you have a nose. Do you have a nose?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: We have one person at the course without a nose! You don't have ears? That means you also wouldn't have ears. If you don't have a nose, you wouldn't have ears!

Do you see where I'm touching? I'm not pointing to the lake! Do you have a body? A mind and a body?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: So you don't have mind as well.

Student: I don't know.

Rinpoche: The mind is not sure about having a mind but you don't have a body, yeah? Then you don't need an airplane ticket! You don't need food, you don't need shelter, you don't need an airplane ticket, you don't need a car. You don't need any of these things because you don't have a body. So it's a great profit. You save a lot of money! You don't need money either if there is no body. And you don't need a job because you don't have a body.

So, *conventionally*, you have a nose. Conventionally, you have everything! You have a body, you have a nose. You have parents, right? So conventionally...

Which country are you from?

Student: Norway.

Rinpoche: In a dream, if you become the president or prime minister of Norway... What do you have in Norway? Do you have a king? So, if you become Norway's king in a dream—if you dreamt that you became the king of Norway—does that mean you become a king? Say, tonight you had that dream where you become Norway's king, conventionally you become Norway's king, does that mean tonight you're going to become Norway's king?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: Then Norway has two kings! One is the other one, the one everybody recognizes, and the other one is you! Norway has two kings.

Student: I think Norway would be in trouble.

Rinpoche: There is a story where something like this happened. There was a family where the son was a kind of a fool, not a complete fool who could not speak, but a fool. The parents wanted their son to get married to another family's daughter. Before they took him to see the other family, they taught him to pretend to be clever so the daughter's parents would accept him for the daughter. They taught him to say, "This is oak," and point to the wood of the stairs as he was going upstairs, but it didn't work. He did that, he said, "This is oak," as he went up the stairs but then he said the same as he pointed at all the wood in the upstairs room, even though a lot of the furniture was made of different wood. So instead of showing him to be clever it showed him to be a fool. Anyway, I just remembered that story.

What's your name?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: What you said at the beginning about it conventionally existing is correct. But when you came to the dream, it became too much! That reminded me of this story.

Anyway, even if you dream tonight that you become Norway's king, that doesn't mean that Norway has two kings? That you're going to have two kings tonight? Which one is the king? Who is the king and who is not the king?

This is the analysis we have been doing: defining what is false and what is truth, what exists and what doesn't exist.

So before—what's your name?—you said in the dream, there's a label but no base. And what do you say to that? [Rinpoche asks a Tibetan teacher nearby] What did the venerable say before? Did you hear what he said?

He has been studying philosophy, debating, in the Sera Monastery. Having studied philosophy, the Buddha's teachings, he can slowly clarify the point.

Now, in the dream, if the guru or the Buddha blesses you, does that mean you receive the blessing or not? If the Buddha, if a deity initiated you, or your guru initiated you in a dream, does that mean you have received the initiation or not?

IS THE DREAM IMAGE PERMANENT?

Let's say you're riding on a golden elephant in a dream. Why is the base that is labeled "elephant" not valid?

Student: Because it's permanent.

Rinpoche: Huh? Permanent. Which one is permanent? The valid base or the label "elephant?" Oh! Impermanence! What? You mean the appearance of the dream. Is the appearance, the view of the dream permanent or impermanent? Is the dream elephant impermanent or permanent?

Student: Permanent.

Rinpoche: Huh. Permanent. The dream elephant is permanent. Is the elephant permanent? The elephant is per-man-ent!

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: First of all, why is the elephant *not* permanent? Because it's produced? Isn't the elephant in the dream produced? Doesn't it come from causes and conditions? So, the elephant appearing in the dream doesn't come from causes and conditions?

Student: No.

Rinpoche: Then Thomas says no. You said the appearance of the elephant does not come from causes and conditions? If the appearance exists, that means the elephant should exist, is that right? So, the appearance of the elephant in the dream doesn't have causes and conditions, right?

Isn't it the imprint on the hallucinated mind that produces the appearance of the elephant in the dream?

Student: No.

Rinpoche: No? OK. Those who say yes, you can stay! Say yes! Now you see, people who dream of an object they are attached to in the daytime, who see it in their dream, isn't that appearance due to the imprint left on their mind from attachment to that object having arisen previously? Because the mind is habituated to being attached to that object, it keeps coming up in dreams. So, isn't that appearance a production of the attachment and the imprint left on the mind? What is the difference between the dream and the appearance?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: The dream is the mind. It's a mental aberration. If the appearance of the object of attachment that happens again and again in the dream is not caused by the attachment, what causes it to happen like that? Why does it happen again and again?

I'm talking about the appearance of the object of attachment. I'm not just talking about general appearance but the appearance of the object of attachment. What's the reason for it happening again and again if it's not due to attachment and the imprint left by the attachment?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: Not because of attachment but because of one's own mind?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: So it is not by attachment but some other mind.

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: It's not produced by the mind? That appearance of the object of attachment is not caused by the mind? It didn't come from the mind? Doesn't the appearance of the hell come from the mind?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: So, the appearance of the hell realm comes from the mind; it's caused by the mind, produced by the mind. By what mind? Can it be produced by attachment as well? Or is it still not attachment?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: In the daytime, the object of appearance that you are attached to, in reality, isn't it that you are attached to your own view, that the view of that object is your own mind's view? Not in the dream time, but in the daytime when you're not sleeping, you're not dreaming, but having the appearance of the object of attachment. At that time, in reality the appearance of the object is the appearance of your own mind, isn't it? Did the appearance come from your own mind or from outside? Does it exist from its own side or does it exist from inside your mind?

Student: From the mind.

Rinpoche: Yeah. So, when you're attached to a person, at that time, in reality, what you are attached to is the view, the appearance of your own mind. Isn't it?

Student: I'm not sure.

Rinpoche: You said it came from your own mind. You are attached to the view of your own mind, right? When you are attached to an object or a person, in reality, you are attached to the view of your

own mind. It is the view of your attachment. That view came from your mind, particularly attachment.

When you're not sleeping, you're not dreaming, the appearance of the object of attachment, a person or thing, is the appearance of your own mind. That appearance has come from attachment; it is a creation of attachment; it's produced by attachment. Right? Is it a projection of attachment?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: It's *not* created by attachment?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: What becomes permanent? But do you accept that the appearance is projected by attachment, it is created by attachment?

Attachment does not create the object! Does anger create the enemy or not? Maybe, according to him, it doesn't create the enemy! What creates the enemy if anger doesn't create the enemy?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: The enemy is *not* produced by anger. Is that what you're saying?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: The enemy is not directly produced by anger but indirectly. So, the enemy *is* produced by anger. If you don't have anger, will you have an enemy? If you have no anger at all arising in this life, will you still have an enemy? Will you see an enemy?

Student: Yes.

Rinpoche: So, *you* will have an enemy. All right. Does the Buddha have enemies? Does the Buddha see enemies? Does the Buddha have friends and enemies? [Students discuss between themselves]

Even though you don't have anger at all in this life, you still see enemies, yeah? You can still find enemies. From your side, you will still see enemies? You still have enemies? [More discussion between students] If you don't have anger at all in this life, you don't find enemies. You don't see enemies. If you don't have anger at all, only patience. Do you see?

Here the question is, if you have no anger at all in your life, do you still see enemies? We are not talking about what other sentient beings see. Do *you* have enemies or not? Do *you* see enemies?

Going back to the point, the appearance of the enemy is produced by anger, right? Just as the appearance of the object of attachment is produced by attachment. It's the same thing, right? Here we're not talking about the appearance of the object of attachment in a dream, where it is also produced by attachment. In the same way, the appearance of the enemy is produced by anger.

Which is impermanent and which is permanent?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: So, it is a projection, a creation of mind. But then you say it isn't created by causes and conditions. Doesn't it have a cause? Doesn't this appearance of the object of attachment and the appearance of the enemy have a cause? Don't the attachment and the imprint cause the appearance of the object of attachment?

Anyway, take these two instances. First, there is the appearance in the dream. You are riding the elephant or you have won a billion dollars. Then, not when you are sleeping, in the daytime, there is the appearance of the person who is actually riding the elephant or who has actually won a billion dollars. This is now something remembered in a dream—a dream ride on an elephant or a dream billion dollars—but these have actually happened. Are these two appearances the same? The person who has actually ridden the elephant or who actually has a billion dollars. That person's appearance exists, right? So, what about the appearance in the dream? What about the person who doesn't have

an elephant but is dreaming of riding an elephant, or who doesn't have a billion dollars but is dreaming of having a billion dollars? Are they both the same? [Students respond]

So then, tell me, what's not the same? [Students reply] Yeah. Does the appearance in the dream exist or not? The person dreaming of riding the elephant or receiving a billion dollars, does that appearance exist or not? Does the dream elephant or dream dollars exist?

Is the dream elephant and daytime elephant the same? Is it the same appearance as the appearance when you're not dreaming?

Student: There's no valid base in the dream.

Rinpoche: In the dream. You say there's a base but no valid base, so how do you define a valid base?

THE THREE CRITERIA OF CONVENTIONAL EXISTENCE

How do you define a valid base? Is it one a buddha has to see? Or one society has to believe in? One society has to agree to? In that case, whether a base is valid or not would be according to society's decision, right?

For example, the hell that a buddha sees, isn't that the hell that sentient beings see, that sentient beings label as hell? In the case of hell, this is what sentient beings see and what sentient beings label as "hell" and this is what a buddha sees. They're the same.

How about when one society thinks something is bad and another society thinks it is good. What about that? For example, in Tibet they think this gesture is good [Rinpoche makes a gesture] but in China they think it is bad. There are phenomena that one side thinks is one thing and another other side thinks it is something else. They have different views. So that thing receives harm from the other society. So, is this thing good or bad? [Students respond]

If this is neither good nor bad, then everything is the same. Whether something is clean or dirty, good or bad, everything is the same. But there are many different views. One society thinks it's good

or clean and the other thinks it's bad or dirty. So do good and bad exist or not? [Students seem to think they exist.]

So good and bad exist. That is according to the conventional mind, right? Good and bad exist according to the conventional mind. But what does a buddha see? Does a buddha see good and bad? Anyway, that's better!

Whatever appears to a buddha, whatever comes into contact with a buddha's senses, is only a pure appearance. Whatever appears to a buddha's senses is only clean, only pure, for the buddha. Since there are different aspects of buddha, male and female, we can say according to him or her, it is only pure appearance, only pure bliss.

Other than that, what a buddha sees as pure, a sentient being will judge as good or bad. A sentient being will discriminate like this and a buddha sees that this is how the sentient being discriminates, seeing something as good or bad.

Isn't it like that? Anyway, we'll stop here.

Student: What about suffering?

Rinpoche: A buddha sees sentient beings' suffering. To a buddha's senses, there is only pure bliss, only pure appearance, but a buddha sees what sentient beings experience. Like blissful tea!

Now I'm just playing a game. But it is mentioned in the philosophical teachings that appearances in the waking state and in a dream are the same. Appearance exists. The appearance of the dream exists, but the objects we see in the dream don't exist. The appearance of the dream exists, it's permanent, but the objects we see in the dream don't exist.

It's the same with the object of the hallucinated mind and the dream. Like people who take drugs and then see many people talking or the whole ground filled with worms. The appearance exists but what we see does not. The worms or the many people talking don't exist.

Now, the objects we see in a dream or when the mind is hallucinated with drugs or possessed by spirits—worms or people talking, running over the cliffs or all kinds of hallucinations—for these objects to be able to exist, there must be a valid base, one that shouldn't receive harm from other conventional, valid minds, un-hallucinated minds. It should not receive harm from either another valid mind of a sentient being or the valid mind of a buddha. Neither should it receive harm from the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness. If the object receives harm from that wisdom, it doesn't exist.

So, for the things we see in a dream or with a hallucinated mind to exist, they should have these three criteria: a valid base, not receiving harm from other valid minds and not receiving harm from the wisdom realizing emptiness. If those three criteria are there, the object exists.

Now we dedicate.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me and by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and sentient beings, may the bodhicitta which is the source of all the happiness and success for me and for all sentient beings be generated within my own mind, in the minds of my family members and in the minds of all sentient beings, without delay of even a second. May the bodhicitta which has been generated increase.

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

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and sentient beings of the three times, that which is merely labeled by the mind, may the I who is also merely labeled by the mind...”

Here, we have to understand that being merely labeled means it exists. Until we understand the exact meaning of that, it sounds like it doesn't exist. When “merely labeled” is mentioned, it sounds like things don't exist, but actually what it's saying is they do exist. Saying “merely labeled” actually

clarifies what exists—the I and the three times’ merits that are merely labeled are what exist. And by showing what exists, the term “merely labeled” also shows what does not exist—the I that is not merely labeled by the mind and the merits that are not merely labeled by the mind, the enlightenment that is not merely labeled by the mind and the sentient beings who are not merely labeled by the mind. None of these exist.

The way to understand it is this. If we haven’t studied well those essential points, if we don’t know the real meaning of merely labeled, then it might sound like things don’t exist. It sort of implies that things do not exist, but actually, by specifically mentioning merely labeled, what it is emphasizing is that these things exist: the I exists, the merits exist, the sentient beings exist, enlightenment exists. They all exist by being merely labeled by the mind. All those things appear to exist from their own side, as *not* merely labeled by the mind, however, by saying that they are merely labeled this shows that they are not inherently existent.

It shows that the three times’ merits, I, enlightenment, sentient beings—all these are the unification of emptiness and dependent arising. They are all empty and, at the same time, while they are empty, they exist. They exist in mere name. And while they exist, which means existing in mere name, they are empty from their own side.

That is the same as what we recite in the *Heart Sutra*, “form is emptiness, emptiness is form.” That is the same meaning. Like this, all phenomena are empty, and emptiness is all phenomena. In this way, it shows the middle way view that is free from the two extremes: the extreme of eternalism and the extreme of nihilism. Eternalism means what is inherently existent, believing there is something additional, something extra than what is merely labeled by the mind. Nihilism is totally the opposite, believing that nothing exists, and even conventionally things do not exist. Here it shows the middle view, free from the two extremes.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and sentient beings, who are merely labeled by the mind, may the I, who is merely labeled by the mind, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, which is merely labeled by the mind, and lead all the sentient beings, who are merely labeled by the mind, to that enlightenment, which is also merely labeled by the mind, by myself alone, who is also merely labeled by the mind.”

Thank you.

Lecture 6

December 7, 1997

CAUSATIVE PHENOMENA ARE IMPERMANENT

Causative phenomena do not last even within a second. They decay even within every second. That is the reality of causative phenomena, how they are, but they do not appear to us in that way. What we can see are the very gross changes, such as decay, like flowers wilting after some days. We are only aware of changes that happen gradually, such as getting older, even though all these changes are happening not only minute by minute but second by second, and within the second. This is the way our life is, but we don't see it that way. Because of that, things appear to us as permanent. Causative phenomena, including our body and even beautiful flowers, appear to us as permanent.

As I mentioned the other day, the appearance of inherent existence is decorated over or projected onto the merely labeled object, merely labeled by our mind and from the negative imprint. The reason I call the imprint negative is because it projects the hallucination and therefore hinders us achieving enlightenment. It hinders the mind from becoming fully enlightened and from being able to see the whole past, present and future existence directly. This negative imprint is left by the past ignorance, the unknowing mind. It is something to do with the mind, a creation of mind; it has come from the mind.

Similarly, the appearance of permanence is not something that comes from the side of the object. It comes from the mind. This hallucination of holding impermanent phenomena as permanent also comes from the mind; it is projected by the mind.

As it is mentioned in the texts, causative phenomena are defined as “that which are impermanent because they are changing from second by second.” That is their nature but they do not appear to us in that way. They appear to us as not changing second by second, as permanent, which is the opposite to how they exist.

This then becomes the basis for attachment in this life and for all those emotional thoughts such as anger. Without talking about karma and long-term suffering, creating samsara, even just these everyday emotional minds rise up and torture us. They don't give us any peace of mind.

As I normally mention, we do the meditation on impermanence to realize the impermanent nature of causative phenomena. If we can do that, we can control the disturbing thoughts, stopping them from arising. That is the immediate experience, and then, eventually, we can be liberated from the cause of all suffering, karma and delusions. That is how it gives us the everlasting happiness of liberation and not only that, but also ultimately full enlightenment. So, this is the advantage we get from meditating on impermanence and death.

On the other hand, if we don't realize the nature of impermanence, if we don't practice this kind of mindfulness, we let our mind be hallucinated and we believe in these hallucinated appearances. Then, what we get is the opposite of liberation; it is only suffering, only samsara, only the problems of this life and subsequent lives—many, many lifetimes of suffering.

These are the advantages we gain by meditating on the four noble truths. Each truth has four characteristics and by meditating on each of these characteristics we gain all these advantages.

THE REQUESTING PRAYER OF THE LINEAGE LAMAS VISUALIZATION

This morning, we will do the *Heart Sutra* meditation prayer, and then make strong requests to the lineage lamas of the path to grant us their blessings so that we and all sentient beings can gain all the qualities, all the realizations, within us.

Normally, when we do the requesting prayer to the lineage lamas, the visualization is the root guru seated on our crown, and then, with mindfulness of the guru as the embodiment of all the buddhas, from our side we motivate to achieve all the realizations of the path to enlightenment in order to be able to liberate all sentient beings from all suffering and bring them to full enlightenment.

This is the greatest benefit we can bring to ourselves and others, and for that we see the virtuous friend as an enlightened being, whether they actually are. By having devotion that this is so, however, from our side, we will be able to achieve the greatest profit, achieving all the realizations of

the path, attaining all the *bhumis* and attaining full enlightenment. Then, we can also bring numberless sentient beings to the peerless happiness of full enlightenment. For that purpose, we practice mindfulness, devotion, looking from our own side at the virtuous friend as the embodiment of all the gurus and the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Looking at the virtuous friend as the manifestation of all the buddhas is in order for us to be liberated from all suffering and brought to full enlightenment.

So, normally the visualization is this. With the root guru seated on our crown, in front of us there is all the merit field. If we do the elaborate visualization of the merit field, we visualize all the lineage lamas, starting from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, then the lineage of the profound path, starting with Buddha Shakyamuni and then Manjushri down to our own direct root guru, and then the lineage of the extensive path, starting with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and then to Maitreya Buddha down to our own direct root guru.

In the center, we can visualize Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, with Buddha Vajradhara at his heart and the concentration being, the syllable HUM, at Vajradhara's heart. Behind Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, there are the lineage lamas of the blessing of the practice; on his left, there are Manjushri and the lineage lamas of the profound path, and on his right side there are Maitreya Buddha and the lineage lamas of the extensive path.

After that there are the three groups of Kadampa geshe: those who try to achieve enlightenment by studying the extensive scriptures; those who try to achieve enlightenment by studying and practicing the lamrim rather than the extensive scriptures; and those who try to achieve enlightenment by relying on the oral instruction teachings and putting them into practice.

Below them is Lama Tsongkhapa surrounded by his followers, the followers of the new Kadam tradition, who are on the right and left of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. In the front of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, the root guru is seated, flanked by other direct gurus.

Below them are the deities of the Maha-annutara Yoga Tantra—Yamantaka, Chakrasamvara, Guhyasamaja, Kalachakra and so forth—and the deities of Yoga Tantra, Charya Tantra and Kriya Tantra. After that are the Thousand Buddhas of the Fortunate Eon, including the Thirty-five

Buddhas and the seven Medicine Buddhas. Then, below that are the eight types of bodhisattvas, the sixteen arhats, the dakas, dakinis and Dharma protectors, the protectors of the graduated path of the lower capable being, of the middle capable being and of the higher capable being. The three main protectors are in the front and then the other protectors are around them.

All these are on a very extended, golden throne, beautifully decorated, with eight levels of lotus petals that they are all sitting on.

Then, there are four guardians that are not on the throne but on the edge; not on the throne but on clouds.

There is also a second merit field we visualize the second time we go over it while we are doing the preparatory practices, when we do the seven-limb prayer, the mandala offering, the outer, inner, secret and absolute offerings according to the *Guru Puja*, then we make requests to the lineage lamas to grant us blessings to gain realizations on the path to enlightenment. We visualize this merit field with the ocean of milk and the wish-granting tree, but all the rest is the same.

We can visualize the merit field as it is shown in the thangkas, according to Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo's vision, how he saw the entire merit field, with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha at the center and then, relating this to tantra, at his heart is Buddha Vajradhara and at Vajradhara's heart is the syllable HUM.

The other thing is that that we can visualize it as in the *Guru Puja*, with our own root guru in the aspect of Lama Tsongkhapa, inseparable from Lama Tsongkhapa and inseparable from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, who is at the heart of Lama Tsongkhapa. Then, at the heart of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is Buddha Vajradhara with the syllable HUM at his heart.

The HUM can be said to be the holy mind of all the buddhas, the dharmakaya, the nondual bliss and voidness, the absolute guru. There is the absolute guru and the conventional guru, so we can also visualize it this way, as our own root guru in the aspect of and inseparable from—these mean the same thing—Lama Tsongkhapa, Shakyamuni Buddha and Vajradhara.

It's the same with the other visualization of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, with Buddha Vajradhara at his heart and the syllable HUM at Vajradhara's heart. With that our own root guru is in the aspect of Shakyamuni Buddha, the founder of the present Buddhadharma, and Vajradhara and the syllable HUM. It is in the shape of a HUM but it is the holy mind of all the buddhas, the dharmakaya, the absolute guru, which is eternal, which has no beginning and no end, which pervades all existence.

Because the holy mind of all the buddhas, the dharmakaya, the union of nondual bliss and voidness, which pervades all existence, which is everywhere, because it is bound with infinite compassion embracing all us sentient beings, never giving up even for one second, this dharmakaya, this absolute guru manifests in the various aspects of the Buddha, the various tantric deities, the various nirmanakaya aspects of the buddhas, such as the Medicine Buddha, the Thirty-five Buddhas and so forth, Then, each different aspect of the Buddha reveals the path of each deity to us.

To even guide one sentient being to enlightenment needs many different aspects of the Buddha, to do different functions, to overcome different obstacles. For even one sentient being, the dharmakaya, the absolute guru, manifests in so many different aspects, as the deities, the buddhas, like this.

Because our mind is currently so obscured, so impure, so deluded, we cannot directly see all the buddhas and receive teachings and guidance directly from them. There is no opportunity at the moment. Therefore, the dharmakaya, the absolute guru, manifests to us in an ordinary form. "Ordinary form" means manifesting as being impure, having mistakes, having anger, having attachment, having delusions, having the sufferings of samsara such as birth, old age, sickness and things like that, whatever problems there are in samsara. The guru shows the aspect of having whatever happens to ordinary people. Without manifesting to us in this way, there is no way we could see the guru because we are so obscured, so deluded. There is no other way we can directly receive guidance from the guru, no way we can gain peace.

In that way, the guru leads us, not only saving us from falling into the lower realms but also protecting us from the whole of samsara, liberating us from the danger of being caught in lower nirvana, where there is peace for ourselves but where the complete cessation of all our defilements is not completed, so we cannot do perfect work for all sentient beings.

It takes an incredible length of time to achieve enlightenment, so [by manifesting in an ordinary form, the guru] protects us from being caught in lower nirvana, by guiding us on the path to enlightenment, on the steps of the lamrim, liberating us from not only gross, disturbing thought obscurations, but even from subtle obscurations. At the moment, we have no other way to do this without depending on the guru manifesting in an ordinary aspect. There is no other way to receive guidance from them. If they were any purer, with our delusions we would not be able to see them.

The Essence of Nectar says,

Until we are free from our obscuring negative karma,
Even if all the buddhas without exception descended directly in front of us,
We have no fortune to see the sublime holy body adorned with the holy signs and
exemplifications—
Only this present appearance.

“Only this present appearance” means appearing in an ordinary aspect, having delusions, immorality, showing mistakes in actions, and then experiencing all the suffering of samsara such as birth, old age, sickness and death, and so forth.

The verse starts, “Until we are free from our obscuring negative karma” meaning that until our mind becomes pure, there is no other way to see the guru and receive guidance directly. Only when our mind becomes free from the obscurations of negative karma will we be able to see the Buddha in a pure aspect, the supreme holy body adorned with the thirty-two holy signs and eighty holy exemplifications. Only then will we be able to receive guidance directly from the Buddha.

SERKONG DORJE CHANG AND MILAREPA

There is an extremely inspiring life story of Serkong Dorje Chang. Because most of you are quite new, before I mention what Serkong Dorje Chang said, I will mention who Serkong Dorje Chang is, otherwise it doesn't mean much! Serkong Dorje Chang is a reincarnation or embodiment of the great enlightened being, Milarepa, the great Tibetan meditator who became enlightened in a brief lifetime of these degenerate times. For ordinary people, Marpa, Milarepa's guru, appeared quite

ordinary. After Milarepa had been taught black magic by another guru... I'm not getting involved in that story, because it gets longer and longer! I was not planning on talking about realizations but, because we were going through the requesting prayer for the lineage lamas, it happened.

Just to be very brief, Milarepa was born in a very poor family. The father had passed away, so there was his mother, sister, aunt and uncle. The aunt and uncle gave them such a hard time that the mother really hated them. So, she instructed Milarepa to go to learn black magic from a lama in order to harm them. He made a hole in the ground on the mountain in the same valley and did a retreat for seven or nine days, then he did his black magic when his uncle and aunt were having a wedding party.

Downstairs there were many horses and upstairs there were many people dancing and drinking. While this was happening, Milarepa did the black magic, causing all the pillars of the house to collapse and all the people upstairs and the animals downstairs were killed. His mother, who had been watching, put her pants on a stick, like a flag, and went on the roof! She was excited, rejoicing, and she screamed various things.

Afterwards, Milarepa felt regret. The lama who had taught him the black magic said that if he wanted to practice Dharma he should go to see a lama called Marpa Lotsawa. That's how Milarepa was guided to this guru by the lama who taught black magic. When Milarepa saw Marpa, even though Marpa was already an enlightened being, Hevajra, Buddha Vajradhara, on the outside he had the appearance of a farmer, as nothing special, just an ordinary person with dirt on his clothes and body. He was plowing the field with his animals, drinking *chang*, wine, just a very ordinary farmer. Milarepa did not see the enlightened being, Hevajra, but still he offered himself, saying. "I have come from the north of Tibet. I am a very evil person; I have created so much negative karma. I now offer my body, speech and mind to you because I have nothing else to offer. Please give me Dharma as well as food and clothing."

So anyway, Serkong Dorje Chang is the embodiment of Milarepa's guru, who made Milarepa become enlightened in one brief lifetime of these degenerated times, within few years, by the way he guided him, the way he gave Milarepa so much hardship. For instance, after he got Milarepa to build a nine-story tower with his own hands, he made him tear it down again and put all the stones back

where he found them. Then he told Milarepa to build it again, and then tear it down again. He got Milarepa to do this three times, causing him to bear so many hardships. Through carrying all those heavy stones, the skin on Milarepa's back became blue and hard, callused, kind of worn out.

For a long time Marpa refused to give Milarepa any teachings; he only scolded him and beat him. If he found Milarepa sitting with the other students for teachings or initiations, he would kick him out. It was only after many years of Milarepa having to bear all these hardships, building houses and things like that, that Marpa's secret consort mother begged Marpa to start giving Milarepa initiations. After teaching Milarepa, he sent him to a cave in the mountains as it was a good place to meditate and do the practice, to escape all the distractions. Milarepa went there, did all the practices advised by Marpa, and so achieved enlightenment in that life.

Now, because he has become famous, not only in the East but also in the West, from even just remembering Milarepa's name or reciting the mantra of Milarepa we get liberated from the lower realms. Just hearing his name has this great advantage.

So, Serkong Dorje Chang is the embodiment, the incarnation, of the enlightened being Marpa. It was his skill that guided Milarepa to become enlightened quickly.

Now, *this* Serkong Dorje Chang... Now it's lunch time! [Laughter] Serkong Dorje Chang is the embodiment of the enlightened being Marpa. This was not the one who lived in Nepal and passed away. This Serkong Dorje Chang was the one who lived in Tibet, a Gelugpa lama in the Lama Tsongkhapa tradition, who the Thirteenth Dalai Lama respected and recognized as a great yogi. In order to complete path enlightenment, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama allowed Serkong Dorje Chang to have a secret mother because of his realizations of the very high level of the tantric path.

There's an extremely inspiring life story of him, how he practiced Dharma and benefited sentient beings so much. In it, he talks about His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I don't remember the connection, but it says that His Holiness is showing an ordinary aspect, meaning whatever happens to an ordinary person happens to His Holiness. Serkong Dorje Chang explained what that meant. While I was reading Serkong Dorje Chang's life story, it hit me like an atomic bomb. I found it so effective.

The absolute guru, this dharmakaya, is bound by infinite compassion, therefore the guru manifests in this ordinary aspect in order to guide us sentient beings. Without this conventional guru, without the dharmakaya manifesting in this ordinary aspect, our life would be totally lost, guideless. We can only communicate and receive teachings from the guru in this ordinary aspect; we can only receive guidance and go on to liberation and to enlightenment.

Maybe I'll stop here.

DEVELOPING COMPASSION: EXPANDING OUR SCOPE

Maybe one or two words on what I was mentioning this morning.

When we have compassion for others, we don't harm them; we only wish them to be free from the sufferings, to not have problems. Not only is there that wish, but we also try to do something to help those we have compassion for. We can relate that to our own feelings. When we have compassion in our heart for a human being or an animal, we try to help that being.

Now similarly, bodhisattvas have trained the mind in compassion toward all the sentient beings without exception. They have generated compassion not only for the poor and the sick, not only for the animals, not only for sentient beings who are experiencing the suffering of pain, not only for sentient beings who are experiencing the suffering of change, the samsaric pleasure, they have also generated compassion for sentient beings who are experiencing even the third type of suffering, pervasive compounding suffering. That means they have compassion for the numberless samsaric beings without exception—the numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animal beings, human beings, sura beings and asura beings—in other words, the numberless desire realm beings, the numberless form realm beings, the numberless formless realm beings. No samsaric being is free from pervasive compounding suffering. Then, on the basis of this suffering, they have to experience the suffering of change and the suffering of pain, depending on which samsaric realm they are in.

The compassion that bodhisattvas generate is not just for friends, for sentient beings who love and respect them, who say nice things to them. They also generate compassion for those who are dangerous, those who hate them, who criticize or even harm them.

Even a very new bodhisattva, somebody who has just generated the realization of bodhicitta today, has completely changed their attitude in that instant. In the past, they renounced others and cherished themselves. The main concern was for themselves; they sought happiness only for themselves; they worked for themselves. But once bodhicitta is actualized, their mind is completely transformed and their attitude is totally changed. Instead of renouncing others and cherishing themselves, with the realization of bodhicitta, they now cherish nothing except other living beings.

DEVELOPING RENUNCIATION

[We develop compassion for others] by first seeing how the whole of samsara is in the nature of suffering and training the mind in the renunciation of samsara. Seeing how our own samsara is totally suffering, we meditate on the shortcomings of samsara, all the sufferings: the general sufferings and the particular sufferings of each realm. Then, we meditate on the cause of suffering, the evolution of samsara, such as the twelve related limbs. In that way we develop a realization, an aversion to our own samsara, seeing all of samsara as like a prison that we are caught in.

Then, the wish spontaneously arises to be free from that prison. We can't stand being caught in it for even a second. It is so unpleasant; it's like we have fallen into the middle of a raging fire. Just as a prisoner doesn't feel the slightest attraction to being in prison, there is not the slightest attraction to samsara. Or, as is mentioned in the teachings, it is like being caught in a nest of poisonous snake. What do you call those poisonous snakes? [*Student: Cobra.*] Cobra. Anyway, being in a nest of poisonous snakes is so unpleasant; it's such a fearful place that there is not the slightest attraction to be there, for even one second! There is the wish to be constantly free from this. We realize that samsara is just like that. Having realized all the shortcomings of samsara, all the different types of suffering, we see just how terrifying it is living in samsara.

With a strong aversion to the whole of samsara, with a wish to be free from it all, we cannot find attraction for even a second in any realm, not just the human realm but even the god realm, no matter how incredible the sense enjoyments are there, millions and billions of times more than the riches of the most developed country or the richest human being. Their places are much more beautiful compared to what we humans would think is the most beautiful place. Our world seems very primitive, incredibly poor in comparison. Without talking about the god realm kings, even just

one god's sense enjoyment is beyond anything we can imagine. Even so, the god realm is still samsara; it is still in the nature of suffering, in the same way that the hell realm is.

Seeing how unbearable our own samsara is, with this realization of the renunciation of samsara, when we look at others we clearly see their suffering, how unbearable that is too. We are able to see and feel the suffering of others, just as, if we ourselves have AIDS, we understand how others with AIDS must feel, how they must go through life with this sickness. From having experienced AIDS in our life, we naturally feel great concern for other people who have AIDS and we want to help them. We want to join the organization that helps those with AIDS.

THE SPECIAL ATTITUDE OF BODHICITTA

So, by having the realization of renunciation of our own samsara, when we look at others we see all their sufferings very clearly and we feel it is unbearable. That is how compassion is generated for others. That is how we achieve the realization of compassion for other sentient beings. And, because of this unbearable feeling of compassion for the suffering sentient beings, we can attain bodhicitta. Understanding how we must experience our own samsara due to our mind being obscured, we see how it is exactly the same with them—their obscured minds are under the control of karma and delusions, making them experience the sufferings of samsara.

From that arises the special attitude, the determination, “I myself will free them from all the sufferings and cause them to have happiness. Those who do not have temporary happiness, I will cause them to have temporary happiness. Those who do not have ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara, I will cause them to have ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara. And those who do not have the peerless happiness of full enlightenment, I will cause them to have the peerless happiness of full enlightenment. I am going to do this work by myself alone.” In that way, we take the responsibility completely on ourselves.

This is the special attitude, the attitude that is vital if we are to attain bodhicitta and then enlightenment. Without it, without achieving the state of omniscient mind ourselves, we cannot do perfect work for other sentient beings. At the moment, we cannot perfectly guide even one sentient being. Even the arhats, who are completely liberated from all suffering and have ceased all karma and delusions, including the seeds of the delusions, even though they have skies of incredible

qualities, such as psychic powers and clairvoyance, they still cannot do perfect work for other sentient beings because they still have subtle obscurations, the subtle negative imprints left on the mental continuum by past delusions, such as the wrong concept of inherent existence. There is still a subtle defilement that hinders their mind, causing them to make mistakes when they are guiding sentient beings.

For example, even the very high arhats cannot see the subtle karma of sentient beings because they have not abandoned the *four unknowing minds*. They cannot yet see the inconceivable secret actions of the buddhas. These actions are called secret because only buddhas themselves with their omniscient minds can see them. No matter how many realizations they have, no sentient being can see these secret actions because they still don't have omniscience. And they cannot see the subtle karma of sentient beings. I think the other two unknowing minds should be checked, but my guess is that one is the inability to see things that happened an unbelievably long time ago, and the other is the inability to see things that are incredibly far away. These last two should be checked. [Rinpoche was correct] Therefore, even though those arhats have skies of unbelievable qualities, so many realizations, they still have not abandoned the four unknowing minds. Because of that, there is the possibility of making mistakes when trying to do perfect work for sentient beings.

This is true not only for arhats but even for bodhisattvas on the tenth bhumi, those who are close to achieving enlightenment. There is no question an arya bodhisattva on the tenth bhumi has unbelievable qualities, so much more than an arhat. But even the tenth bhumi bodhisattvas who are close to achieving enlightenment still have subtle defilements, the negative imprints that project the hallucinated appearance of inherent existence. That is the imprint and part of that hallucinated appearance, the obscuration to the omniscient mind, the obscuration to a fully knowing mind, called "obscuration to knowledge," in Tibetan *she drib*.

Because there is still the possibility of a tenth bhumi bodhisattva making mistakes when trying to do perfect work for other sentient beings, the only way we can do this perfect work is by achieving omniscience. Therefore we *must* achieve omniscience.

It's only when we meditate that we feel this. When we don't meditate, it doesn't happen. So, we must first meditate on the renunciation of our own samsaric suffering. And then, on the basis of

that, we use whichever technique we want to train our mind in bodhicitta, either the seven techniques of the Mahayana cause and effect or equalizing and exchanging the self with others.

The seven-point technique starts with equanimity, realizing how all sentient beings are equal, and then recognizing how all sentient beings have been our mother, remembering their kindness, generating the thought of repaying their kindness and then generating loving kindness, which can be translated as the loving kindness of seeing sentient beings in beauty.

This beauty has nothing to do with the body, with the beauty of the shape of the body. This beauty is seeing how that person is so precious, how they have been so kind to us, and because of that we see their beauty. With that perception, we feel loving kindness. Then there is compassion and then the special attitude, where we take complete responsibility upon ourselves for other sentient beings. After that, there is bodhicitta.

The feeling of bodhicitta will only come when we do these techniques of the seven-point Mahayana cause and effect or the other technique, equalizing and exchanging self for others. Whichever technique we use, the feeling will come, otherwise the feeling will not arise.

That is what is called “skin bodhicitta.” You know when you buy candies, there is the candy, the actual confectionery, and then there is the wrapping. If you lick the wrapping, there’s some sweetness on that, isn’t there? Maybe not on all of them! The analogy we normally use is the skin of a sugar cane. We only feel the thought to achieve enlightenment for others when we meditate, but after we stop meditating, after the session, we don’t feel it. That’s called “bodhicitta like the skin of the sugar cane.” It’s not the actual realization of bodhicitta; it is what is called the effortful experience of bodhicitta, feeling bodhicitta when we are meditating on it but not when we are not. Of course, it has to happen like that at first.

Then, by continuously training the mind in bodhicitta, we start to feel it all the time, continuously, day and night. Not only during meditation, but even when we are not meditating, our mind remains in that attitude. We naturally feel that. Our mind naturally, spontaneously arises in that attitude all the time, while we are eating, working, talking—all the time, day and night, spontaneously, the thought arises to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. Whenever we see any living being—

human being, insect, animal—we spontaneously have this thought to achieve enlightenment for them. That is the realization of bodhicitta. That is like the actual sweet, not the skin of the sugar cane, but the inside sugarcane itself, the actual sweet.

Bodhisattvas who have the actual realization of bodhicitta feel this so strongly; they cherish others like we cherish ourselves. Every other single sentient being is so precious; every one is the most important one in the bodhisattva's life. That is how a bodhisattva feels. Therefore, whatever they do they only do with this attitude, nothing else. There is no thought at all of working for the self, no thought of seeking happiness for themselves. The only thought is seeking happiness for others.

GEN JAMPA WANGDU

There was an old meditator in Dharamsala, who is one of my gurus. His holy name is Jampa Wangdu. Before he passed away, I received from this meditator the oral transmission of *chu len*, the technique you can use if you are going to a solitude place for a long time to do a retreat. If you are far away from a city and it is difficult to get food, if you are retreating in such places, using this technique you can live on pills, without eating food. But it is not like eating rice, not big piles of pills! You don't subsist by eating big piles of pills. You only take very few pills. This is one way to save time for meditation. You are not wasting time on cooking and eating, so you have plenty of time for meditation. There are fewer distractions.

Gen Jampa Wangdu did this himself and attained shamatha, calm abiding, which has nine levels. Only by attaining shamatha can you have perfect meditation, free from attachment, free from attachment scattering thought and sinking thought. Sinking—S. I. N. K. I. N. G.—sinking, not singing and dancing! There is no other way to have perfect meditation.

Anyway, to make the story short! Gen Jampa Wangdu attained all nine stages of shamatha. He was the best Dharma friend of Lama Yeshe and me. Every time he came to see us, when he came from his cave, it was one of the best times, because he had so many inspiring, interesting things to say. Sometimes he talked about his life, how he was naughty when he was young in the monastery. Rather than study, he played and fought, beating up the other monks! He wasn't the type of person the talk about his realizations. He hid his qualities, never revealing his achievements to other people. However, he often talked about other meditators who had realizations, in Dharamsala and other

places. He would tell us that so-and-so had achieved this realization and so-and-so had achieved that realization.

The reason he had all this information was because he heard it from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Many of the meditators, especially those who lived in the mountains near Dharamsala and other places, went to His Holiness to report their realizations to His Holiness or to His Holiness' guru, Trijang Rinpoche, depending on who they regarded as their root guru. They went to them and made offering of their realizations. When somebody had informed His Holiness, His Holiness would then tell Gen Jampa Wangdu.

Whenever Gen Jampa Wangdu went to see His Holiness, I think probably he knew the right time to see His Holiness from his side. Every time he went to see His Holiness, he never needed to go through the office by talking to the secretary, he just went straight through to see His Holiness, because he was somebody who had very successful realizations on the path to enlightenment and was therefore one of His Holiness' heart disciples. Because he was very close, he didn't need to go through the normal channels that most people had to go through. The only time that he said he had to go through in that way was when I requested to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama to request him to give the initiation of Gyalwa Gyatso, the secret Compassion Buddha. That was when I was living in Dharamsala for a long time, after Lama passed away. When I asked Gen-la, he said that this one time he may have to go through the secretary. I think this was because it was for an initiation and the office had to deal with the public.

Anyway, any information that His Holiness received from meditators who had achieved realizations of lamrim or highest tantra, he passed on to Gen Jampa Wangdu. Sometimes he also told stories of realizations of other meditators, and sometimes political things as well that others didn't know he heard from His Holiness.

Each time Lama Yeshe and I spent time with Gen Wangdu was always a most enjoyable time. It was also very inspiring talking about Buddhadharma subjects, because he talked from experience and not just from books. During one of the conversations he mentioned that he had never been to anybody's house in the previous seven years for his own sake, for his own benefit. He just said that much. He didn't say that he had never been to anybody's house, but that he had never been thinking

of his own happiness, thinking of his own benefit. He just brought up one example like that. That means no activity he did in those seven years ago was for his own benefit, which implies that he had generated the realization of bodhicitta seven years before.

He was a great meditator who passed away some years ago. He not only attained the lamrim realizations, the three principal aspects of the path and realized emptiness, he also completed the Six Yogas of Naropa, a very high tantric practice, and the generation stage and completion stage of highest tantra, where the meditator experiences the five stages, including the clear light and illusory body, becoming completely free from the cycle of death and rebirth. When you achieve the clear light and illusory body in highest tantra, you have overcome death. You are free from the cycle of death and rebirth.

LAMA YESHE WAS A YOGI

It was the same thing with Lama Yeshe. In Lama Yeshe's case, there's no story of living in a cave or hermitage. His external lifestyle was totally different than those meditators in Dharamsala who live in the caves or hermitages, not seeing people and so forth. Although his external life was totally different, he had all the realizations, the achievements. Even in my ordinary view, he had the realization of the three principal aspects of the path and the generation and completion stage realizations: the realizations of the isolation of body, the isolation of speech, the isolation of mind, the illusory body and clear light.

He had all these realizations of the highest tantric path, so he actually qualifies to receive the label "yogi." Yesterday, your teacher was talking about the valid base. Lama Yeshe had the valid base that actually received the label "yogi." He achieved all these realizations just as the yogis who live in caves can. He was not physically living in a cave but mentally he was. Mentally he was in a cave, a hermitage, even though he lived an extremely busy life outside, travelling around to all the meditation centers and giving teachings. Not only that, at the same time, he also sometimes wrote Dharma texts from his own experiences and guided all the students. He took care of all the students like a father, not just a Dharma teacher. He didn't just teach the Dharma and leave, he guided all the students, perhaps maybe even more than a physical father, guiding all those who had problems and needed help.

Even when it was very late, he would teach and meet people, giving them lifetime advice. Even after midnight, he would still be advising students through correspondence, writing many letters to students who needed help in their Dharma practice or who had many personal problems. He gave consultations by letter to students in many parts of the world. For example, morning and afternoon he would go to watch the monks. At that time, there were far fewer than there are now—many are now coming from monasteries in India where the conditions are not so healthy, and even Tibet.

Lama showed so much concern for the monks. He went and watched them in class a lot while they were studying, then he watched them at lunchtime. He watched the food being served, tasting it and checking how it was made. In the morning after breakfast, he would also spend time in the garden, watering the flowers and vegetables. Lama liked gardening very much, both here and at Tushita Dharamsala. The main thing was so that when people came to the center, they would enjoy the place.

He also washed the dogs. We don't have small dogs now, but we did before. In Dharamsala there were about thirteen new dogs, small ones who made a squeaky noise! Some were supposed to be half Pekinese and half Lhasa [Apso]. Even though he was so busy, Lama found the time to wash them to make them healthy and comfortable, and so make them happy.

So, Lama was extremely busy, taking care of so many things, but at the same time he found time to meditate. With all these many things, with all this extremely busy life, what you can really admire is that Lama was at the same time able to develop his mind on the path to enlightenment. His inner development, his mind travelling on the path to enlightenment, was never missed out because he was busy.

No matter how busy he was externally, every single thing he did was Dharma. Every activity was Dharma with renunciation, Dharma with bodhicitta, Dharma with the lamrim. Every activity was done with the lamrim. It's the most fantastic thing, to be able to develop mind on the path to enlightenment in the middle of such a busy life. There was no loss of the inner life; there was always a gain.

We wouldn't normally see Lama doing many prayers or sitting in a meditation position. Lama's practice was hidden. The whole time when he was sleeping was a meditation session. It's all a meditation session for those tantric practitioners who have reached the higher levels of the completion stage. For them, the entire time spent sleeping is time to develop the mind on the path to enlightenment. It's an extremely important time.

Every afternoon after lunch Lama used to take what he called a rest, where he slept for at least an hour. Because of his heart disease, he needed to rest. That is what it seemed like to others but in reality all that time lying down in the afternoon was a meditation session. Externally, people knew that he was resting because of his heart. At that time, we couldn't make any noise at all. It was very sensitive. There are other people who don't want to hear any noise when they sleep. During that time, they cherish their sleep so much and they get angry if there is any noise. But with Lama it was not like that, it was different. In Lama's case, it was a meditation session.

Some time ago, I think maybe the last time Lama was here or the year before that, a Tibetan family came to see Lama. They were close friends of Lama's and I think one of the men was a monk in a sister monastery in Tibet. The day they visited, however, Lama missed out on what he called his rest hour and, after that, he sort of showed that he had lost something very precious. The reason was that it was the time where he was developing his meditation on the clear light, within the highest tantric path. It is the meditation to do with the extremely subtle consciousness, where the gross mind absorbs through meditation and then the extremely subtle consciousness manifests. Generally speaking, that meditation is to cease the defilements, to work for enlightenment.

The talk has extended and extended, getting longer and longer!

Anyway, publicly Lama Yeshe was not known as a great meditator. Only those Lama discussed his experiences with knew. As far as his practices, they were hidden practices, hidden realizations. Of course, other people could feel Lama was special. They could sense many qualities in him, but his realizations were hidden in the sense of not being revealed to others, not made public, like "I have this realization and that realization."

He was very different from those other meditators in that he led an extremely busy life. Other meditators lived an ascetic life, in a cave or hermitage, without possessions. Lama always used to tease those other meditators who lived in the mountains, saying “My way of practicing the Dharma is by just enjoying it.” They were Lama’s friends, and he teased them when they came down from the mountains.

There was also Geshe Thubten,¹ who lived in Switzerland, who was in the same class as Lama. While Lama was in Switzerland, he studied a little bit from Geshe Thubten. He was a very close friend and student from Buxa and maybe also from Tibet.

He also teased Gen Jampa Wangdu. Lama would tease those who were his friends, who meditated in the mountains, saying that was their way of doing it but with his way of practicing Dharma, the whole world came to him. His way of practicing the Dharma was by having and enjoying everything to practice the Dharma.

That was Lama’s style. His mind was clean, without attachment to this life, without attachment to even future lives’ samsara, without ego, the self-centered attitude; it was clean because of his bodhicitta. And there’s no question about the realization of emptiness. Because of that, his attitude was like the bodhisattva kings, who have everything—however much wealth and power, however many thousands of children and wives they have, everything is to benefit other sentient beings. In Lama’s case, since his mind was clean, however much comfort, enjoyment and possessions he had was purely for others, to benefit other sentient beings.

With such a lifestyle, while his life was extremely busy, he was still able to develop his mind on the path to enlightenment. He was still able to continuously practice. You can understand how somebody living in hermitages in the mountains can do that, but somebody living such a busy life mixing and working with people and at same time practicing Dharma, and especially having successful realizations—that was an incredible quality.

¹ Rinpoche may be referring to Geshe Thubten Thinley.

I think I was actually supposed to talk about guru devotion. I meant to but it happened that this came up and I thought to make a little clarification, but somehow the short talk became very long! Anyway, it doesn't matter. I'll stop here.

[After a very long pause] Anyway, sorry, maybe I'll just conclude with this one point. Otherwise it's just hanging in the sky!

EXAMPLES OF THE BUDDHAS' ENLIGHTENED ACTIVITIES

For a bodhisattva, day and night, continuously, there is nothing else except cherishing others, benefiting others. Their actions only benefit other sentient beings. It is like this even for a very new bodhisattva. Therefore, there is no question this is true when we talk about buddhas, enlightened beings.

Bodhisattvas have realized compassion but have not completed the mind training in compassion. Only when we become enlightened, only at that time have we completed the training in compassion. The main reason we can trust the buddhas and rely on them is because they have completed their training in compassion. Because of that attitude, there is no danger of misleading us sentient beings, of cheating us in any way. As I mentioned before, if even the bodhisattvas don't have the slightest thought of seeking happiness for themselves, of cherishing themselves, there is no question about the buddhas. Therefore, there is no danger of them misleading or cheating us sentient beings.

Now, on top of having completed the mind training in compassion, with their omniscient minds they can directly see every sentient being's mind, all our different characteristics, all our wishes, all our different levels of karmas, everything. And not only *that*, their omniscient minds can see all the various methods needed to guide us, to reveal the path to us that is suitable for our propensities and intelligence. The buddhas' holy body, holy speech and holy mind also have perfect power to be able to manifest in numberless forms to do the various activities that exactly fit us sentient beings.

The holy mind of the buddhas can do the function of the holy body, and the holy body can do the function of the holy mind. For us, our mind cannot do the function of the body and the body cannot do the function of mind. Our body cannot do the function of perceiving objects and our mind alone cannot do the function of the body. Without talking about a buddha, even before

becoming a buddha, for a very high tantric practitioner, after having achieved the unification of clear light and illusory body, their body can do the function of the mind. There's no resistance. I have some idea it says that in the texts although I'm not a hundred percent sure. I have a vague idea that I've seen in it the scriptures and commentaries on tantra. Anyway, with buddhas, even the body can do the function of the mind and can see all of existence, past, present and future.

Each pore of a buddha's body manifests so many numberless forms to do work for sentient beings. In each pore there are pure realms. The qualities of the holy body of a buddha are something beyond our imagination. It just doesn't fit our concepts. It's inconceivable. Each beam that emanates every second from a buddha's holy body liberates numberless sentient beings from suffering and leads them to happiness.

In India, in Magadha² (where Bodhgaya is now), during the Buddha's time, there was a couple where the husband was Hindu and the wife was Buddhist. One day the wife wanted to invite the Buddha and offer him a meal. Even though the husband didn't believe that the Buddha would come, she said he would. So they prepared lunch, everything, and she stood at the door of the house, holding incense in her hand and making the invocation prayer we normally do. It is the same one in the original course book, called *The Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun*. Maybe we need another book now, maybe *The Wish-fulfilling Golden Moon*! Anyway, I'm joking! You can find this prayer in this ancient Kopan course book; it's what we normally recite as the beginning prayer. First of all, there is the refuge prayer, then bodhicitta, then purifying the place, then blessing the offerings. Then, after that, there's the invocation prayer, invoking the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Savior of all beings without exception;
Perfect knower of all things;
Divine destroyer of the intractable legions of Mara;
Bhagavan and retinue, please come here.

Standing outside her house at the door, she chanted this prayer, holding incense in her hand. When she did this prayer inviting the Buddha, first all the arhats and disciples came from the sky with their

² Magadha, situated in present-day Bihar, was a kingdom in ancient India where the Buddha spent most of his life.

psychic power, riding on the different animals. Each one was so glorious, so magnificent, that the husband thought maybe this was the Buddha, but she said no. Then another one came and he thought maybe *this* was the Buddha, but again she said no. Then, maybe another one came and the same thing happened. Anyway, after all these disciples had come, the very last to come was the Buddha. The text mentioned the name of the place the Buddha came from, but I don't know how far away that was. Anyway, it was very distant, but the Buddha traveled from there in the length of time it would take us to stretch our arms, which is a very short time! As the Buddha traveled to her house, going over valleys, the numberless animals, the numberless sentient beings in the forest on the ground were liberated, just in that short duration. So you see, like that the Buddha has the power to liberate sentient beings. With each beam he liberates so many sentient beings, even in one second.

Once, there was a king who played the violin. He spent his whole life playing the violin, thinking with unbelievable pride that he was the best in the world. One day, the karma to subdue his mind and meet the Dharma ripened, and the Buddha appeared, manifesting as a beggar outside the king's house, playing the violin. When this king playing the violin heard the sound of the other violin, he thought it sounded much better than his, much sweeter, much more enchanting than his own music. He thought that there was somebody who was able to play better than him and he went out to see. Usually it takes many strings to produce the different sounds of the violin, but when he went out, he saw this beggar was playing with only one string! So many sounds came from that one string. When the king saw that, his pride was completely subdued.

In this way, the Buddha is unbelievable skillful in guiding sentient beings. To overcome the unbelievable pride of the king, he manifested as a beggar with a one-string violin from which he produced many beautiful sounds. According to that method, he guided him to liberation and enlightenment.

There is also the story of Nanda, the Buddha's younger brother, who was unable to be separated from his wife. He was so attached to her that he could never leave his house. I'm not talking about divorce, but he couldn't leave her for even a second; he was always with her. One day, his time to practice the Dharma ripened. On his daily alms round, the Buddha went to Nanda's house to beg alms, but when Nanda came out with the food, the Buddha walked away. Nanda followed him,

thinking the Buddha might turn back and receive the alms, but the Buddha kept walking on and on, and Nanda continued to follow him, until finally they reached the monastery.

The Buddha then told him to shave his hair [to become a monk] but after another monk had started to shave his head Nanda told him to stop. He was left to look after the monastery while the other monks went on their alms round, but he tried to escape back to his wife. However, when he closed one door of the monastery, another door opened, and when he closed that door, another door opened. Doors never stopped opening and closing. The Buddha wasn't there in person—he was in town on his alms round—but this was his skillful means to keep Nanda in the monastery.

Anyway, then Nanda went down a road which he thought the Buddha would never go down, but as he was escaping, he saw the Buddha coming back. Nanda tried to hide from the Buddha under some banana leaves, but as the Buddha passed, all the leaves flew up, exposing him. That was due to the Buddha's skillful means.

In the *Sutra of the Meeting of Father and Son* the Buddha said,

I will work for sentient beings by manifesting as Indra and Brahma
And sometimes in the form of a mara,
But people in the world will be unable to recognize me.
I will also manifest in the form of women and even in the animal realm.
Even though I don't have attachment, I will act as if I have attachment;
Even though I do not have fear, I will act afraid;
Even though I am not crazy, I will act crazy;
Even though I am not blind, I will act as if I am blind.
With various forms, I will subdue sentient beings.
To sentient beings with strong anger, I will manifest as having strong anger.
To sentient beings with great attachment, I will manifest as having great attachment
in order to guide them.
Like this, I will manifest in whatever form fits sentient beings.

There are quotations by the Buddha himself, showing these ordinary forms for the benefit of us sentient beings; there are many quotations like this, where the Buddha manifests as a king, a minister or a judge. For example, in Tibet during the reign of the Dharma King of Tibet, Songtsen Gampo, they made the law to practice the ten virtues. Then there were the sixteen human dharmas³ that were made into law to help the people live according to the Dharma.

Two men traveled from the lower part of Tibet to receive teachings from, I think, Songtsen Gampo. However, they saw that many people had committed negative karma, breaking the law, and their heads had been cut off and piled on the ground. Seeing that, the men were completely shocked and they developed heresy. Because of that, they didn't take teachings from Songtsen Gampo. What happened was that Songtsen Gampo gave them a sack of earth each to take back with them. When they got back home, they opened the sacks and saw the earth had turned into gold. It seems they had the karma to become enlightened by taking teachings from Songtsen Gampo, but because they saw the bodies of all the people who had broken the law, they developed heresy to Songsten Gampo and so didn't become enlightened.

In reality, nobody had been killed. Songsten Gampo was himself the Compassion Buddha. In order to make the other people abandon negative karma and follow the ten moralities, he himself manifested as many criminals engaging in negative acts, and he himself killed his own emanations, cutting off the heads and piling them on the ground. But the ordinary people didn't realize they were his own manifestations and actually no other sentient beings had been killed. If those two people hadn't developed heresy for Songsten Gampo's Dharma, they would have become enlightened in that life. But what they got instead by going to see Songsten Gampo was just a sack of gold.

Like that, the Buddha manifests as a judge, a king, a criminal, a prostitute, a crazy person, a beggar or a spirit. There's nothing fixed. The Buddha manifests into various forms, whatever fits the minds of sentient beings to guide them from happiness to happiness to enlightenment.

There are many quotations where the Buddha said he would manifest as this or that. In the Hevajra tantra subject, he said that in the future time he would abide in the form of the guru, the *lobpon*, the

³ These sixteen rules have been adapted to become the Sixteen Guidelines for Life, part of the Foundation for Developing Compassion and Wisdom's main educational strategy. See 16guidelines.org.

vajra master. It also mentions that in order to benefit sentient beings, he will abide in an ordinary form, as a child or various other forms. He said, “I who am called Vajradhara, in order to benefit other sentient beings, will abide in ordinary forms.”

There are many quotations like this. The Buddha not only works for human beings, he also works for animals and other non-human beings, guiding all sentient beings.

Therefore, we should think, “I have received a precious human body, with which I can communicate, I can understand the meaning of the teachings. Not only have I received a perfect human body, I have met the Buddhadharma. Because the Buddha guides other sentient beings, and not just human beings, the Buddha *must* guide me. He must be guiding me now, I who have more opportunity to learn and understand the Dharma.”

As I mentioned before, if we have compassion for somebody, if we help that person, this is through the activities of the buddhas. By developing and completing their compassion, the bodhisattvas became buddhas. So now, with their omniscient minds, with all their power, the buddhas must *definitely* be working for sentient beings, so for sure they must be working for us.

THE GURU IS AN EMANATION OF THE BUDDHA

We should think like this: “All these virtuous friends who give me vows and ordination, who give me oral transmissions, commentaries and initiations, who give me explanations on tantra and instructions on the practice, what all these virtuous friends do for me is they definitely lead me to enlightenment.”

Even without talking of other things, just hearing the sound of an oral transmission, a mantra or a prayer, just hearing the sound of the words of the Dharma from the guru, from the virtuous friend, leaves a positive imprint on our mental continuum that ensures in the future we will receive a good rebirth, the body of the happy transmigratory being, a human being and we will meet the Dharma again. Then, it will be easy to understand the words and the meaning of the scriptures. Not only does receiving something like an oral transmission or a teaching from the virtuous friend in this life make it very easy to meet Dharma in the next life and understand the words and the meanings, the imprints left on the mind help us have realizations on the path that were revealed by the teachings.

Just hearing those words helps us cease our gross and subtle delusions and attain omniscience. Even just receiving an oral transmission of a mantra or a teaching definitely has that effect; it definitely brings us to liberation and enlightenment. If that is so, then of course receiving all those commentaries, instructions and initiations and of course receiving vows definitely leads us to liberation and enlightenment.

All the activities of the virtuous friend, whatever they do for us, definitely brings us to liberation and enlightenment. Therefore, if that is so, the way to meditate is to see that there is no conclusion we can reach other than the virtuous friend is a manifestation of the Buddha. There is nothing else we need to find out—this is the Buddha’s manifestation and they are guiding us all the way to enlightenment. We need all these things to attain enlightenment—oral transmission, the various levels of vows, commentaries, initiations, explanations about tantra and so forth—and we can’t point to anyone else than the virtuous friend who can give these to us.

Nobody else can do this for us; nobody else can bring us to enlightenment. Therefore, the virtuous friend, the guru, is definitely a buddha, manifesting in an ordinary form showing mistakes, in order to guide us and all sentient beings. They must be this; they *must* be the embodiment of all the buddhas.

When we get this point in our examination, it is very good to recite the names of all the gurus we have, making sure that nobody is missing, that we include every virtuous friend we have made a Dharma connection with. Then we make the conclusion that each of them *must* be the embodiment of all the buddhas. Each is Tara, each is Shakyamuni, each is Manjushri, each is Maitreya Buddha, each is Heruka, each is Vajrayogini and so on. All the gurus are all the enlightened beings, all the buddhas.

After we have become firmly convinced of this, we should not just rush to the next subject. We should examine how our gurus guiding us in this way proves they are embodiments of all the buddhas. However, because of our obscurations, we are unable to see them as such, therefore they must manifest in ordinary form in order to guide us. At that point, our mind is truly transformed into devotion for the guru, looking at the guru as a buddha and seeing a buddha. When that happens, we should not just stop our meditation but continue on, making our devotion stronger.

We should repeat, “Each of these virtuous friends is all the buddhas; each of all these virtuous friends is all the buddhas,” reciting it like a mantra for a mala or half a mala. Doing that strengthens our devotion, transforming our mind into one of strong guru devotion and allowing us to continuously keep our actions pure. This further strengthens our devotion to our virtuous friends, by seeing each of our virtuous friends is all the buddhas.

We can also recite, “Every action the gurus do is the action of a buddha, every action the gurus do is the action of a buddha,” again reciting it for a mala or half a mala, keeping the concentration on that. Before we did an analytical meditation on why the guru is a manifestation of all the buddhas, and now we are doing a fixed meditation. After the mind is transformed into this pure thought of devotion, this fixed meditation keeps the mind in that experience. It is very good to do it like that.

I think I’ll stop there.

The last part! No, I think maybe that’s enough for tonight. I think I’ll maybe mention the last part another time, maybe another year!

Anyway, the last part comes back to what I spoke about this morning. The idea was that, anyway. This is a good way to start to understand how the buddhas definitely guide all of us. At first, we use ourselves as an example. Then, when we have loving kindness and compassion for others, seeing how those qualities allow us to help others, we can expand that to see how bodhisattvas and buddhas, with their perfect qualities, can perfectly guide others. That can help us understand how buddhas can guide us. We should go through all the qualities of the buddhas as extensively as we can, learning all their stories, all the qualities they have to benefit sentient beings. The more we can understand this, the stronger our devotion becomes. We gain firm faith that the buddhas definitely work for us, which helps our guru devotion, which then helps us attain the realizations of the whole path to enlightenment.

But here, I’m not advertising that I am a buddha! It’s not that. This is how we can meditate to make our mind pure. That is the point.

BASE AND LABEL QUESTION AND ANSWER

There is the mere appearance of the base. For instance, with a stick of incense, there are many different factors, the light, the smell and so forth. How does the incense come into existence? First, you see, there is the mere appearance of the base, the mere appearance of the base that can be lit with the purpose of producing a pleasant smell, maybe to stop bad smell! So, there's the mere appearance of the base, which functions to produce a smell, and then the mind makes up the label "incense." Is that right?

Student: You said that only the mere appearance of the base, then what happens to the incense smell?

Rinpoche: What makes the mind make up the label "incense?"

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: The imprint on the mind. You mean from a past life? It's only the imprint?

Student: Imprints from a past life?

Rinpoche: No, imprints from tomorrow! To be able to make up the label "incense," you have to see something.

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: Now, there's different juice, OK? There are different glasses: one has Coca-Cola, one has orange juice, one has lemon juice, one has water. What makes your mind make the label "Coca-Cola?" There are different drinks and one drink is Coca-Cola.

Student: I didn't mean the difference between Coca-Cola.

Rinpoche: Besides that, do you need somebody to tell you every time that this Coca-Cola? All the time, everyday, do you need somebody to tell you this is Coca-Cola, this is orange juice and so forth?

Student: No, I was wondering, if there are a hundred juices, you decide in your mind that this is Coca-Cola. Then, the imprints are there, again and again, then when you see the base, that matches the mind's [imprint].

Rinpoche: So, other people are telling you once is enough? You don't need them to tell you again and again, every day, all the time, whenever this is Coca-Cola?

Student: No, one time is enough?

Rinpoche: One time is enough, yeah. Therefore, that's the first thing. But what about if somebody tells you it looks like Coca-Cola, it's similar to Coca-Cola, but it's not?

Student: Like Pepsi!

Rinpoche: If somebody tells you Pepsi is Coca-Cola because it's black like Coca-Cola? Do you still see Coca-Cola or not?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: So, you believe in your label? You labeled that one is "Coca-Cola" and you see Coca-Cola?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: You see Coca-Cola? You see Coca-Cola and you taste Pepsi! That's very nice. So, you can enjoy two things. You can enjoy Coca-Cola by looking, and Pepsi by drinking! What did you say? You see Coca-Cola?

Student: Pepsi appears as Coca-Cola.

Rinpoche: So that person sees Coca-Cola. Anyway, let's leave that one. Leave out that part. Now, we'll go back to the other one.

Other people are educating you for the first time, this is Coca-Cola, this is incense. By telling you only once, is that the only thing that makes you make up the label “Coca-Cola” or “incense?” You mentioned before, I think, that you see the base, right? Other people tell you and then you see the base. Therefore I’m saying it is the mere appearance of the incense, the mere appearance of the base. Then, on that mere appearance of the base, your mind makes up the label “incense” because what the base—the design, the shape—does, what its function is, is to produce the smell. On the mere appearance of this, the base, your mind makes up the label “incense.” Is that right? Is it like that?

Student: If there is the mere appearance of the base, the base is supposed to be form, so if the base is mere appearance, it can’t be form.

Rinpoche: OK, leave out the word “mere.” In reality, it is mere appearance of the base, then you make up the label “incense” on this mere appearance. On the particular taste and particular color, the mind makes up the label “Coca-Cola.” If that makes it complicated, there is the appearance of Coke, the appearance of that base—that liquid that has a particular taste and color—and then your mind makes up the label. Similarly, the label “incense” is given on the appearance of the base, right?

Student: The label “incense” is given on the base.

Rinpoche: Not on the appearance? So, you differentiate between the appearance and the base?

Student: Yeah.

Rinpoche: There’s a base? Right?

Student: Yes.

Rinpoche: I see. I’ll go this way. In order to label it “incense,” the base has to appear to your mind. Only then, you make the label “incense,” right? The base must have already appeared, then your mind makes up the label “incense.” Therefore, when you label, you label on that appearance of incense. Without the base appearing, there is no way to label it.

Student: Isn't there a difference between the appearance of the base and the base?

Rinpoche: You're the person answering and I'm the person questioning! The base appears, and then your mind makes up the label "incense." Is the incense imputed on the appearance of base?

Student: No.

Rinpoche: Is there incense other than the view of sentient beings? Does incense exist without the view of the sentient beings, without the view of the base? Without the appearance of the base of the incense, does the incense exist?

Student: No.

Rinpoche: So, is there incense other than the view of incense?

Student: No, I don't think so.

Rinpoche: Huh? There's no incense other than the view of incense. OK, *great!* Now, there is no base, there is no incense, there's no base of the incense other than the view of the base of the incense. These two are exactly the same. Right? There's no base of the incense other than the view of the base of the incense, right? Therefore, when you label "incense," you label on the view of the base of the incense. OK! So now we'll go back to the dream!

Now, the appearance of an elephant in a dream. (I think you like elephants!) India has many big elephants. The appearance of the elephant in a dream is labeled exactly like this. The dream elephant is labeled on the appearance of the base: this big body with a piece of tail, long ears, strong, like that. The elephant is labeled on the appearance of the base of the elephant, right? OK. So now, does the elephant in the dream exist?

Student: No, it doesn't exist.

Rinpoche: Yes, it exists.

Student: No!

Rinpoche: Why shouldn't it exist? Because the base exists.

Student: Oh no, no, the base doesn't exist.

Rinpoche: In the dream? The base?

Student: It doesn't exist.

Rinpoche: Very good. It doesn't exist.

Student: Therefore the valid base for the elephant doesn't exist in the dream.

Rinpoche: Yeah, OK I see. Then, the valid base doesn't exist, but the base exists?

Student: Yeah. There's the appearance of the base.

Rinpoche: So, in the dream, the valid base doesn't exist, but the appearance of the base exists.

Student: The base exists.

Rinpoche: You mean the base you see in the dream exists?

Student: We don't see the base as it actually is in the dream.

Rinpoche: Huh?

Student: Like the base in the dream?

Rinpoche: Yeah, that base you see in the dream, does it exist?

Student: The base in the dream is only like the mental image of the elephant.

Rinpoche: What you see in the dream, does it exist?

Student: Oh, it exists.

Rinpoche: The base you see in the dream exists? OK, so if you dreamed last night that somebody gave you an elephant, did you have an elephant last night? That is the base you saw in the dream, so it exists. That means the elephant you saw in the dream exists. It's the same thing. If you saw it, the base that you saw in the dream exists.

Student: It exists, but I didn't see it in the way it exists.

Rinpoche: Huh?

Student: It exists, but I didn't see it in the way it exists.

Rinpoche: What?

Student: The base that appears to us in a dream exists.

Rinpoche: Does that mean the elephant you saw in the dream exists?

Student: No.

Rinpoche: What is the difference?

Student: Please?

Rinpoche: Did you take precepts yesterday?

Student: No.

Rinpoche: No. OK. If you had taken the eight Mahayana precepts yesterday and then last night you dreamed you were eating food, that would mean you had a meal and broke your precepts. That's because the base of the food exists. What you saw in the dream exists. If the base exists, the label has to exist; if the base does not exist the label does not exist. That is one definition, the main logic, why the label exists, because of the base. Why does the watch exist? Because of the base. If the base you saw in the dream existed, then, of course the label would have to exist.

Normally, what we say is that the only reason that the I exists is because of the aggregates; there's no other reason. The logic is that there is the base, the aggregates. There is no other reason why we label the I, why there is an I. It's only because there is the base, the aggregates. The aggregates are the base that receives the label "I" and, because that base exists, the label "I" exists. Do you agree with that?

Student: Umm.

Rinpoche: Yes? The I exists because it has base and the base, the aggregates, exists. Therefore, in the dream, if the base you see in the dream exists, the label also has to exist.

Student: But it's not...

Rinpoche: If base of the elephant you see in the dream exists, then the elephant has to exist. The label "elephant" has to exist. It's the same thing. Say, somebody gives you a million dollars, but you don't have a million dollars but you have the papers. You have all those papers that have been printed with all the dollars, but you still say you don't have a million dollars! So, it becomes the same.

So, anyway, what happened to the dream? You say the base of the elephant that you see in a dream exists, yeah?

Student: No, the base of the elephant which you see in a dream doesn't exist.

Rinpoche: So it doesn't. But doesn't the definition of the existence of a label depend on the existence of the base? Why "elephant?"

Student: Why?

Rinpoche: In India there are many elephants. We say that there are elephants in India, because there are many bases. The aggregates, that shape of the animals' bodies, exists.

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: What determines that there is an animal, an elephant, in India is defined by having the base of the elephant in India, right?

Student: Yeah.

Rinpoche: So, the base exists in India. The base of the label "elephant" exists in India.

Student: Yeah. You need the base and the label both.

Rinpoche: So why the label "elephant" exists in India is because the base of the label "elephant" exists in India, right?

Student: Why the elephant exists is because the base exists, yeah.

Rinpoche: Hmm. Therefore the elephant in the dream exists.

Student: No.

Rinpoche: It exists because the base exists.

Student: No.

Rinpoche: Then the base of “elephant” in India doesn’t exist.

Student: No, that doesn’t exist. No.

Rinpoche: That’s why the elephant in the dream doesn’t exist.

Student: Yes.

Rinpoche: The elephant in the dream doesn’t exist because there’s no base of the elephant, other than your view of the elephant, the appearance of the base. There’s no base of the elephant other than the appearance of the base, at that point.

Student: It has to...

Rinpoche: Therefore, the appearance of the elephant in the dream exists, yeah?

Student: Yes.

Rinpoche: Yeah. So there’s no other base than the view of the base.

Student: There’s no other base.

Rinpoche: There’s no base other than the appearance of the base.

Student: Yes, but it has the appearance that is according to reality, that is concordant with reality.

Rinpoche: Is there no base other than this appearance of the base?

Student: No. There’s no base other than the appearance of the base.

Rinpoche: Yeah.

Student: But just because there's the appearance of the base doesn't mean that there is the base.

Rinpoche: What? What did you say?

Student: Just because there's the appearance of the base doesn't mean that there is the base. If it's the appearance of the base, it doesn't mean that it is always the base.

Rinpoche: It doesn't mean that there is a base?

Student: Not always.

Rinpoche: OK. You can have the appearance without the base. So, in the dream when you label "elephant," there's no base.

Student: There's a base.

Rinpoche: In the dream when you label "elephant" there's no base.

Student: There is a base.

Rinpoche: There is a base?

Student: Yes!

Rinpoche: So, there is a base, yeah?

Student: Yes.

Rinpoche: So, the base that you see in the dream exists?

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: OK, now you label “elephant” on the view or the appearance—these are just different words for the same thing. You label “elephant” on the appearance of the base.

Student: Yes.

Rinpoche: Right? OK, so now the elephant exists. Now the elephant in the dream exists.

Student: No.

Rinpoche: It exists! It exists because the base exists. Basically because the appearance exists.

Student: The appearance exists?

Rinpoche: Is there permanence?

Student: There’s no pervasion.

Rinpoche: Remember yesterday, we talked about permanence.

Student: There’s no pervasion!

Rinpoche: The base exists, so then, how is possible the label doesn’t exist, that way? The appearance of the base exists, so the label “elephant” has to exist.

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: There’s not even impermanence.

Student: But the base is not there.

Rinpoche: There’s not even impermanence. It is permanent! What exists, even that is permanent, therefore the elephant becomes permanent! Not only does the elephant in the dream exist but the

elephant becomes permanent. Everything else is impermanent, but the elephant is permanent. Anyway, I just thought to analyze this.

Student: The final teaching? Is there a conclusion?

Rinpoche: There doesn't have to be a conclusion. You need to analyze. If you make the conclusion too easy, it doesn't help! [Laughter]

I think I'll stop there.

PROFOUND ANALYSIS IS NEEDED TO MAKE REALIZATIONS STABLE

One purpose of studying the philosophy, the extensive teachings of the Buddha, is to gain the realizations of the path. The other purpose is to use all the reasoning, all the logic, to help our understanding become stable, unshakeable. Then, we cannot be easily cheated or misled by other people with wrong explanations about the path to liberation or enlightenment. Whatever [their philosophy] is called, "achievement" or "hidden this and that" or whatever, with this extensive understanding of each of Buddha's teachings, with the reasonings, our understanding is very clear and very deep and nobody can cheat or mislead us, nobody can have us accept wrong views. With the depth and clarity of understanding, our correct understanding becomes very stable and unshakeable and cannot be changed by other wrong explanations. Otherwise, even though our understanding might be correct, somebody could tell us something and our mind could easily be switched. Without a firm, logical understanding of Buddhism, we could be brainwashed by another explanation, we could be easily misled. If that happens, we not only waste our life, making it meaningless, we also create so much extra negative karma because of the wrong concepts.

The study of extensive philosophy is important, especially Lama Tsongkhapa's tradition, where debating [is emphasized] to help preserve the Dharma purely, not corrupted in any way, not mixed with misconceptions. When we can preserve the Dharma purely like that, there's more freedom; we can explain the Dharma to others. For those who are more intelligent, we can explain it extensively, in depth, according to the level of their intelligence. For those who have middle intelligence or those who have lower intelligence, we can reveal the simple essence. To satisfy the needs of the various

sentient beings of differing levels of intelligence, we can explain it in whatever way benefits them the most.

So, I heard Venerable Fedor [Stracke] debating very well at Sera Monastery. [Ven. Fedor is among the students.] Anyway, through the study of philosophy, we can gain a wider view about what is right and wrong. The more extensive our study, the more understanding we have of what is right and wrong, and then the less mistakes we make in our practice. For example, if somebody hasn't learned all the aspects of how to drive a car, they can make mistakes, and when there is a problem they are unable to fix it. Anyway, something like that.

I think that's all. Goodnight!

[Background noise and murmuring]

Sorry, I wanted to ask something. Could people take turns with the three goats, like the other day, with three people circumambulating the temple and stupa here. If you could take turns, even during the lamrim retreat that May Won's daughter is going to complete, but there also needs to be another two people. Sorry, I meant to say five times around the monastery and maybe six times around this stupa, and three times around this one. If you can take turns it helps you and the goats.

Lecture 7

December 8, 1997

THE FOUR ASPECTS OF KARMA: EXPERIENCING THE RESULT SIMILAR TO THE CAUSE

[The beginning of the recording is missing] When we create good karma by living in morality, abstaining from negativity, this results in happiness. We can experience it like that.

Then, there is the completed negative karma of committing heresy, which has four suffering results. The ripening aspect result is rebirth in the lower realms, and then there are the three other suffering results we will have to experience when we take rebirth in the human realm.

With experiencing the result similar to the cause, we have no interest following the virtuous friend, no interest in following the right path. On the other hand, we are attracted to following nonvirtuous friends, wrong guides. We like evil friends, nonvirtuous friends. Instead of being attracted to the right view, we like wrong views, such as believing that there is no reincarnation or no karma. The mind becomes so stubborn, clinging on to wrong views, no matter how totally wrong they are, not making any sense at all, even though they give so much suffering to other sentient beings, such as the practice of sacrificing animals or human beings. For many of the followers of other religions, this is a path, a way of worshipping. Engaging in such heavy negative karma gives so much harm to them and to other beings.

This is just an example; there are many things like that which don't make any sense at all, but somehow people can be so stubborn and nothing can help them change. The mind is so strong, so fixed in its ideas, believing that this is the right path, no matter how much suffering it causes others, even though it is totally wrong. Many people have strong faith in wrong paths, so fixed and unchangeable. This is the result of the past karma. When the past karma ripens, it's like that, the mind believing so strongly in something that is totally wrong, and not only is it very hard to change, it is also very hard to understand that it is wrong.

Then there is creating the result similar to the cause, where again we engage in heresy, and then the possessed result, the environment we live in in the human realm. For instance, where we live, before many precious things were produced like gold or oil, but then, in our time, these completely stop. We have hallucinations, such as seeing dirty places as clean. We cannot find a place to live or we have many difficulties because we cannot find a guide, we cannot find refuge, somebody to help us, somebody we can rely on. This is the possessed result of the negative karma of heresy.

If we commit the complete negative karma of heresy today, as long as it's not purified, as long as we don't live in vow abstaining from that, we will have to experience four suffering results, one of which is creating the result similar to the cause. That then brings the other four suffering results again. Then it goes on and on, like this. So, this one negative action makes us experience endless suffering.

THE FOUR ASPECTS OF KARMA: KARMA IS DEFINITE AND IT EXPANDS

Not only is karma expandable, karma definitely brings its own result. Having committed one negative karma, we have to experience the suffering result of that so many times in this one life, for so many years, and for so many lifetimes—hundreds of lifetimes, thousands of lifetimes. We have to experience the suffering result of that one negative karma so many times for an incredible length of time, not only in one life but in hundreds or even thousands of lifetimes.

It is mentioned in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* that if somebody with a negative mind makes a comment to a monk saying he resembles a monkey or he eats like a dog, the person who said that has to be born as a monkey for five hundred lifetimes. There are many stories like this, showing how we experience the suffering result of one negative karma for so many lifetimes. It is mentioned in Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Stanças*... Sorry, I made a mistake! I think it is in Nagarjuna's teachings, *Letter to a Friend*, his advice to the king, where he mentioned that if we cheat a sentient being just once, we have to experience the result of this one negative karma by being cheated by others for one thousand lifetimes. Cheating a sentient being once results in being cheated by others for a thousand lifetimes. This is how karma is expandable. For one negative karma, we have to experience the result again and again, for such a long time. There are many other stories about how karma is expandable.

Another aspect of karma is that we cannot experience the result if we have not created the cause. Another is that the karma we have created never gets wasted, it never gets lost. Even though it takes hundreds of eons, it doesn't get lost. Whenever the conditions come together, we will have to experience that karma, no matter how long it takes.

THE SEVERITY OF BREAKING VOWS

For those of us who have taken the pratimoksha, bodhisattva or tantric vows or who have taken full ordination, for example, as a fully ordained monk, there are five types of downfall we can experience. Each one causes us to be reborn in the hot hell realm. The heavier the downfall we commit, the greater the suffering in the hot hell realm.

Breaking the bodhisattva vows is much heavier than breaking the pratimoksha vows, the vows of individual liberation. Then there are the tantric vows. Besides [the fourteen root downfalls] there are eight secondary downfalls that are considered heavy, called *bompo*. For example, by eating food without blessing it, we receive a bompo. Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo explained that breaking a bompo is a hundred thousand times heavier than breaking a bodhisattva vow. However, when Holiness Zong Rinpoche was giving the instruction to the monks at Ganden Shartse on how to do the Yamantaka retreat, he explained that if we eat or drink without blessing it after having taken a Highest Yoga Tantra initiation, then we receive a bompo, and I think His Holiness mentioned it was seven times heavier than breaking one of the four pratimoksha root vows.

With the bodhisattva vows, there are eighteen root downfalls and forty-six secondary vices we must abstain from. With the tantric vows there are fourteen root downfalls as well as the secondary vices such as the eight bompos that we must abstain from.

The great enlightened Pabongka Rinpoche explained in his lamrim teachings that if an ordained person, somebody living in ordination, carelessly breaks a vow, thinking it doesn't matter, they collect heavier negative karma than a lay person who kills a hundred horses and a hundred human beings. This is how heavy the negative karma an ordained person collects. I don't remember a hundred percent, but more or less it is the same as a lay person killing a hundred horses and a hundred human beings—heavier or the same, that part I don't specifically remember.

THE BENEFITS OF DOING VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

Even though many of us have taken vows and are living in the vows, we can still collect very heavy negative karmas [if we break the vows], therefore, we should always examine our motivation. For example today, when we get up in the morning, while we are dressing, we should ask ourselves what is our motivation for dressing. For a person like me, with attachment, clinging to this life, the act of dressing becomes total negative karma. When we wash, what is our motivation? What is the attitude at that time? Again, generally there's nothing special, just attachment, clinging to this life and so, again, washing becomes negative karma.

Normally it is like that in everything in our daily life. When we go to work to do our job, what is our motivation at that time? What is the motivation for doing our job, for beginning in the morning and working for those seven or eight hours? Again, generally there's nothing special, only the attachment, clinging to this life, and so, again, all those hours of working become negative karma. Then, at night, going to sleep, the last action of the day, what is our motivation at that time? Generally, there's nothing special there, just ordinary attachment, clinging to this life, seeking comfort for this life. So again, all those hours of sleeping become negative karma.

When we examine any action we do during the day—talking, walking, sitting, whatever activity—we will see that either *everything* becomes negative karma or most of it does. Even somebody who is trying to practice Dharma, who intends to practice Dharma, most of the actions done during the day become negative karma.

If we check every activity, most become negative karma because they are done with attachment, clinging to this life, which is a nonvirtuous motivation. Here, we're talking about just one day, but when we consider weeks, months, years, we can see how much negative karma we create during our life—and not just in this life, but for beginningless samsaric rebirths. There is so much negative karma that has already ripened and we have experienced the suffering result, but there's *so much* not yet ripened from beginningless rebirths that we have yet to experience.

It is said in the teachings that the only positive quality that negative karma has is that it can be purified. As Manjushri explained, in order to have realizations of the path to enlightenment, it is

crucial to do the practice of purification. This was also the advice of the great meditator Gen Jampa Wangdu, whose story I mentioned yesterday. He said that in our daily life we should mainly attempt to purify. This advice comes from his own experience and he is somebody who actualized the three principal aspects of the path and the generation and completion stages of highest tantra. I think that has great meaning. We should mainly attempt to practice purification, so our negative karma is purified and there are no obstacles to realizations.

That means there is incredible need for the Vajrasattva practice. It is mentioned that even if we break the root vows of a fully ordained monk or the highest tantric root vows, by reciting the Vajrasattva mantra a hundred thousand times we can completely purify all our broken vows, in fact all our pratimoksha, bodhisattva and tantric vows. Of all the vows, breaking the root vows of highest tantra is the heaviest karma, but even that is completely purified if we recite the Vajrasattva mantra a hundred thousand times.

A geshe in Tibet taught that it was better not to take tantric initiations, saying we don't have to take all those high tantric vows, all those root and the secondary vows, because they are extremely difficult to protect. His view was that if we broke them we would create so much negative karma, therefore, it's better not to take a highest tantric initiation.

I think Lama Atisha responded to that type of thinking, saying, "That is due to the mistake of not knowing that tantra has a special technique called Vajrasattva, which is like one stone that can chase away hundreds of birds." Even though our highest tantric vows, even the secondary ones, are so difficult to keep that we break them so many times, meaning we collect so many vices or so many negative karmas, doing Vajrasattva practice allows us, in one practice, to purify all our negative karmas and broken tantric vows at the same time.

For example, after having taken a Highest Yoga Tantra initiation that involves vows, we are supposed to visualize our body as the pure deity's holy body, the place as the pure appearance of the mandala and any object we see as having pure appearance. However many seconds we don't maintain this pure view—we see our body, the place and things as ordinary rather than pure, as pure appearance—for that many seconds we collect vices with all these objects. It's like having just cleaned our car but then we leave it in a very dusty environment; in a very short time the car will be

completely covered in dust again. If we allow our mind to slip back into its ordinary view, seeing our body, the place and the things around us as ordinary, it becomes very difficult to continue with the practice.

Of course, after a long time, with mind training we will be able to keep our mind in that pure view all the time, but, as a beginner, without having achieved those realizations, it is so difficult to always look at everything as pure. This means if we have taken the vows, vices pour down like heavy rain. Lama Atisha said that with this special method called Vajrasattva, *all* those vices, *all* those negative karmas, are completely purified, all at once. So, we should not avoid taking a Highest Yoga Tantra initiation because we are afraid of breaking the vows. We have this incredibly powerful purification method.

As I often mention, unless we practice Vajrasattva at the end of each day, that day's negative karma doubles on the following day and then triples the day after that, multiplying every day. The great enlightened being Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo mentioned that if we killed a tiny insect today but we don't purify it with Vajrasattva, by dawn tomorrow this negative karma will have become double, and it will increase every day like that until after fifteen days that tiny negative karma will have become as heavy as having killed a human being. After eighteen days, this negative karma will have increased 131,072 times. Then, as the months and years go by, this one small negative karma keeps increasing day-by-day, week-by-week, month-by-month, year-by-year, until it becomes like a mountain. It becomes like the size of this earth.

Now, there is not only this negative karma. Over one day we collect so many negative karmas with our body, speech and mind. And each of these negative karmas keeps multiplying day-by-day unless it is purified, especially with a practice such as Vajrasattva. Over the months and years, each negative karma just from today becomes like a mountain, like the size of this earth. Then, when death comes, the amount of negative karma we have to carry with us into the next life becomes unbelievable.

However, reciting the long Vajrasattva mantra twenty-one times before going to sleep has the power to purify today's negative karma and stop today's negative karma increasing and becoming double tomorrow. If you cannot recite the long one, you can recite the short one, OM VAJRASATTVA HUM twenty-eight times. This also has the power to purify today's negative karma and stop it increasing

tomorrow. Not only that, reciting the Vajrasattva mantra purifies this life's negative karma. Not only *that*, it purifies our past lives' negative karma. So, it is incredibly beneficial to do the Vajrasattva practice.

I think it's time to dream about the elephant!

Maybe we'll stop here. Maybe it can be done tomorrow evening. Tomorrow evening? Is there anybody leaving tomorrow? [Response from the students suggests there is something planned for the next evening] That's a smart answer! But I still think tomorrow. So, maybe have a good sleep. Maybe the initiation helps. No, you know I'm joking! Anyway, we'll try again tomorrow.

Lecture 8

December 9, 1997

WE NEED MINDFULNESS TO ASCERTAIN IMPERMANENCE

When we look at things—friend, enemy, stranger, the five sense objects—we see that they are transitory; it is their nature to change, to decay, not only day-by-day, hour-by-hour, minute-by-minute, second-by-second, but they even change within a second. Therefore, these phenomena can be stopped at any time.

Unless we practice mindfulness and see that causative phenomena are in the nature of impermanence, [we will naturally see them as permanent]. On the other hand, if we can practice mindfulness, seeing and realizing causative phenomena are in the nature of impermanence, we will immediately be able to overcome our disturbing thoughts, the cause of samsara. The mind that is under the control of disturbing thoughts, overwhelmed by them, immediately no longer arises. And eventually, by developing the mind on the path, we will be able to completely cease even the seed of delusions. Particularly, by developing the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, by actualizing this, we can completely cease even the seeds of delusions, making it impossible for disturbing thoughts to arise again. In that way, we can achieve everlasting happiness, the complete cessation of the whole of suffering and its causes.

And due to practicing this mindfulness meditation on impermanence, realizing how causative phenomena are in the nature of change, we can not only achieve liberation from samsara for ourselves, because this is part of the section on renunciation in the lamrim, one of the three principal aspects of the path, from this we can also attain bodhicitta and then complete the Mahayana path and achieve full enlightenment and bring all sentient beings to full enlightenment.

Unless we practice mindfulness, looking at how impermanence is the nature of these causative phenomena, unless we look at them according to their impermanent nature and realize this, our mind will be invaded by the concept of permanence. It will be overtaken by the concept of permanence, just as one country is invaded by another, just as Tibet was invaded by the Communist

Chinese. Invaded, overtaken by this, we are controlled by the concept of permanence. And then, because causative phenomena appear permanent, they look as if they will last for a long time.

On the basis of that, desire, the mind that exaggerates the positive qualities of the object, clings to these causative phenomena, which then continuously ties us to samsara with attachment. Due to that, we experience the oceans of samsaric suffering—the oceans of human beings' suffering, the oceans of gods' and demigods' suffering, the oceans of the lower realms' suffering, the suffering of the hell beings, hungry ghosts and animals. We must experience this again and again.

Our continuation of the samsaric suffering did not have a beginning and while we continue to hold this wrong concept of looking at causative phenomena as permanent and, because of that, generating desire that clings on to these objects, samsaric suffering will be endless. Unless we can do something in this life, unless we can make some change to our mental continuum in this life, we will have to continuously live our life with the same old mind, with this wrong concept of permanence, looking at impermanent phenomena as permanent and generating desire for them. That clinging, that attachment makes samsara endless.

So, we can concentrate on this. We can look at how the nature of all causative phenomena is impermanence.

[Long pause]

Not only causative phenomena, but for all phenomena, permanent and impermanent, nothing exists without the mind that labels it. Without the mind that labels the object, without the mind that perceives it, nothing exists. Everything comes from the mind. Subject, action, object—the subject, the mind that perceives the object; the action, the cognizing of the object; and the object, that which is perceived—all these come from the mind. Nothing exists completely from its own side; everything is merely labeled by the mind.

Therefore, everything—the mind that knows, the action of knowing and the object to be known—the way every phenomenon exists is being merely labeled by the mind. Therefore, all phenomena—including the mind that knows, the action of knowing and the object to be known—do not exist at

all from their own side; is they are totally empty from their own side. Any object that is known is totally empty; it does not exist from its own side.

Concentrate intensively on emptiness like this, looking at yourself as empty, at your actions as empty, and at all objects, all phenomena, as empty from their own side.

[Long pause]

VISUALIZATION OF THE MERIT FIELD OF THE LINEAGE LAMAS

The other day we were doing the requesting prayer to the lineage lamas to receive the realizations of the path to enlightenment, so I gave a brief description of visualization.

We can continue with the refuge merit field from the beginning, visualizing the elaborate visualization of the refuge merit field but without the ocean of milk, just with the throne and the lotus petal. With this visualization we can continue the lamrim practice or do it according to the *jorcbö* preparatory practice or the *Guru Puja*, doing the elaborate visualization at the beginning when we do the refuge practice.

Then, after refuge and generating bodhicitta, generating the four immeasurable thoughts and the special attitude of bodhicitta to practice tantra, after this is done, all the refuge merit field absorbs into Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Then Guru Shakyamuni Buddha absorbs into us. If we are practicing tantra and have received a great initiation of the [lower] tantra or a highest tantra initiation, when Guru Shakyamuni Buddha absorbs into us, we visualize ourselves becoming the deity. Then, after generating ourselves as the deity, we begin the rest of the practice.

Before practicing the seven-limb prayer and the mandala offering, making the four types of offerings, we make requests for realizations to be granted within our mind and within the minds of all sentient beings. In order to generate the realizations of the path to enlightenment, we make requests to the merit field of the lineage lamas.

Then, if it is the *Guru Puja*, when we take the four initiations, the guru enters our heart and we make a request. By reciting the prayer, we do a direct meditation on the whole path to enlightenment,

requesting the merit field to grant all the realizations from guru devotion up to enlightenment, the unified state of Vajradhara, the unified state of no-more-learning.

According to the *Guru Puja*, after we do the prayer to have all those realizations, then on the basis of the realizations of the common path, the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment, we pray to have the realizations of highest tantra's two stages in order to achieve enlightenment in this life. If that doesn't happen in this life, if death happens before actualizing these highest tantra realizations and achieving enlightenment in this life, on the basis of the generation stage and completion stage, the clear light, the illusory body and their unification, we pray to be born in the pure land of our own deity. In that way, if we are able to reincarnate in a pure land such as Amitabha Buddha's pure land, it becomes impossible to be reborn in the lower realms again.

The purpose of reincarnating in a pure land is to quickly achieve enlightenment there. If we cannot become enlightened in this life by visualizing those highest tantric paths, then we reincarnate in a pure land and become enlightened there for the benefit of sentient beings.

If that doesn't happen, we pray to become the heart disciple of our guru in future lives, to continue being able to serve the guru and to actualize the rest of the realizations of the path that we haven't completed.

The very last request we make is to request to the guru, who pervades the whole merit field, or who is the principle of the merit field, that we will be their very first disciple wherever or whenever they show their holy deeds. Just as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha showed the twelve holy deeds, becoming enlightened in India, in Bodhgaya, the center of the religious country, in the same way, we pray that at the time and place when our guru shows the holy deeds, becoming enlightened, may we become his or her very first disciple of all the surrounding disciples, and then receive teachings and become enlightened for sentient beings.

That is according to the *Guru Puja's* meditation prayer, which shows the whole path to enlightenment from guru devotion up to enlightenment, the unified state of no-more-learning.

Then, at the end, again the merit field absorbs. Lama Losang Thubwang Dorje Chang, who we have been meditating on, the guru, who is oneness with Lama Tsongkhapa, oneness with Guru

Shakyamuni Buddha, oneness with Vajradhara, one absorbs into the next and then enters our heart. Then we do the dedication and the auspicious prayers. That is just roughly the arrangement of the practice of the graduated path according to the *Guru Puja*.

What I'm trying to clarify is that after the refuge merit field absorbs into us and we generate ourselves as the deity, then again we visualize the merit field to do the rest of practice, collecting merit by practicing the seven-limb prayer and purifying the mind, making the mandala offering and so forth. The second merit field, with the ocean of milk and the wish-fulfilling tree, is very extended. There is the trunk and all the branches with all the eleven levels of petals. First there is one layer and then another layer and another layer, up to all eleven levels.

As I mentioned before, there are three groups of Kadampa geshe. In the center is Kadampa Geshe Potowa, surrounded by lamas of the *Kadam Zhungpawa Lineage*, those who achieve enlightenment by studying the extensive scriptures. On one side of them is Kadampa Geshe Gönpawa, surrounded by the lamas of the *Kadam Lamrimpa Lineage*, those who are trying to achieve enlightenment by studying the lamrim, which is the heart of the entire Buddhadharma. On the other side, in the center is Lama Geshe Tsultrim Bar, surrounded by the lamas of the *Kadam Män Ngagpa Lineage*, those who try to achieve enlightenment by practicing the oral teachings, those instructions received orally from the holy mouth of the guru, which they try to put into practice and gain realizations from. There are the three groups like this and then, after that, there are the new Kadampas, [the *Kadam Serma (Gelug) Lineage*].

The meaning of “Kadam” is whatever teachings were taught by the Buddha. *Kha* means “teaching” and *da* means “instruction.” So, this refers to how the Kadampas see whatever was taught by Buddha as instructions, whether it is the Hinayana teachings, whether it is Mahayana Sutrayana teachings, or whether it is the Mahayana Paramitayana teachings. Whichever level of teachings taught by Buddha is included here, even one syllable from the alphabet, besides those different teachings that need interpretation.

For instance, there are instruction in the Lesser Vehicle and the Paramitayana about abandoning alcohol and meat, whereas in highest tantra alcohol and meat are used. One person, the Buddha, at one time gave different instructions—don't do this, don't do that, don't eat this and so forth, and at

another time, in highest tantra instructed the practitioner to do these things. It's not that different teachers gave these different instructions. They all came from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. He saw that these practices were dangerous for those of us with lower levels of mind, whereas within a highest tantra practice, where the practitioner's mind is much more advanced, the practices were beneficial; they became supportive to complete the rest of the realizations and achieve enlightenment in a brief lifetime of degenerated time.

The Kadampa geshees see all these different levels of teachings, these different instructions given by Buddha, as a teaching for themselves to achieve enlightenment, even those that appear to be contradictory. They don't see any teaching as contradictory. Besides a whole text or teaching, even one syllable appears to them as an instruction from the Buddha for them to achieve enlightenment. Therefore they're called Kadampas, one who see the teachings of the Buddha, *kha*, as instruction, *da*. *Everything* the Buddha said is advice for them to achieve enlightenment.

Where we visualize in the center Lama Tsongkhapa and the followers of the new Kadampa tradition, in the last row at the end, there is an empty seat. Visualizing the empty seat is for auspiciousness. I think having the empty seat is creating the causes for us to have a guru in our future lives.

And then, in the center there is the root guru. The way to meditate on this is to visualize, and to realize, that our own root guru is oneness with Lama Tsongkhapa and oneness with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, who is at the heart of Lama Tsongkhapa, as well as being oneness with Vajradhara, who is at the heart of Shakyamuni Buddha. Then there is the syllable HUM at the heart of Buddha Vajradhara, the concentration being. Concentration *being*, not the concentration camp! This visualization is called the "three piles of beings," visualizing Guru Shakyamuni Buddha at the heart of our own guru [in the aspect of] Lama Tsongkhapa and Guru Vajradhara at the heart of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. And then at Vajradhara's heart there is this concentration being, the syllable HUM.

This visualization is according to Highest Yoga Tantra. It's an extremely profound visualization with a very special, very profound meaning. I think I already mentioned the other day, the HUM might

signify the absolute guru, the absolute dharmakaya, the holy mind of all the buddhas, that which pervades all existence and which is eternal, with no beginning and no end.

Since I mentioned this now, I want to mention the rest.

This is bound with infinite great compassion for all sentient beings, including us, in order to guide us, to save us from the lower realms and even from the whole of samsara, from falling into lower nirvana, the blissful state of peace for ourselves alone, and in order to lead us to full enlightenment. [The absolute dharmakaya] manifested as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and gave the Lesser Vehicle teachings and the Mahayana Sutra teachings, and then, by manifesting as Vajradhara, gave the tantric teachings. Manifesting as Lama Tsongkhapa was to reveal the entire 84,000 teachings of the Buddha, integrating all those extensive teachings, making them so clear and so simple, in the form of the lamrim, which we are learning. Not only that, Lama Tsongkhapa clarified many other unbelievable teachings, especially explaining those difficult ones, the extremely profound subjects such as tantra, the ones where many meditators easily made mistakes. He especially clarified all those points. All this manifests as all the lineage lamas.

Lama Losang Thubwang Dorje Chang is in the center [in the aspect of] Shakyamuni Buddha with Vajradhara [at his heart and the syllable HUM at Vajradhara's heart]. Behind Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, there are the lineage lamas of the blessing of the practice. On his left, the lineage lamas of the profound path, the lineage of mahamudra, all in the form of Manjushris; and on his right side there are Maitreya Buddha and the lineage lamas of the extensive path, the lineage of Yamantaka.

Then, on one side is Guhyasamaja and on the other is Chakrasamvara. Then, I think, on top must be Lama Atisha, and all the lineage lamas of the Kadam tradition, the sixteen drops. That is what is behind the principle: the guru, Lama Tsongkhapa, Shakyamuni Buddha and Vajradhara.

You can visualize it as it is depicted in the thangkas, just as Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo, the great enlightened being, saw it in one of the Kadampa geshe's caves. It might have been Kadampa Geshe Puchungwa's, I'm not one hundred percent sure. Pabongka Rinpoche was in this Kadampa geshe's cave in Tibet, in a place called Pembo. His attendants were waiting outside when they heard some noise or some voices coming from inside. Pabongka was saying something. It is said that at that time

he saw the entire *Guru Puja* merit field in the hermitage, with all these groups on the right and left sides and all those different colored rainbow beams emitted from the Lama Tsongkhapa, Shakyamuni Buddha, Vajradhara and the syllable HUM. So we can also visualize in that way.

In front of Guru Tsongkhapa, Shakyamuni Buddha and Vajradhara is seated our root guru. The definition of the root guru is, among all the gurus we have received a Dharma connection from, that is the person who is most beneficial to our mind. That's the root guru, the person who brought our mind into the Dharma, who directed our mind toward the Dharma, who benefited us the most.

For example, Lama Atisha had a hundred and fifty-seven gurus, but the main one, his root guru, was Lama Serlingpa, from whom Lama Atisha received the complete teachings on bodhicitta for twelve years. I'm not hundred percent sure that it was only by meeting Lama Serlingpa that Lama Atisha then generated the realization of bodhicitta. It sounds like he might have achieved the realization of bodhicitta by meeting Lama Serlingpa, but I'm not one hundred percent sure whether he had it before. However, among Lama Atisha's one hundred and fifty-seven gurus, Lama Serlingpa was the one who benefited Lama Atisha's holy mind the most. It was from him that Lama Atisha received the complete teachings on bodhicitta. Whatever Lama Serlingpa had in his holy mind, he granted Lama Atisha everything, like one vase filled with jewels or nectar being poured into another vase, filling it. Lama Serlingpa knew all the teachings, especially on bodhicitta, and he granted them to Lama Atisha, who correctly devoted himself to Lama Serlingpa, and received the whole teachings for twelve years.

Another main guru is Lama Dharmarakshita. With Lama Serlingpa, these two are regarded as the main gurus of his one hundred and fifty-seven gurus. So, the one who benefits our mind the most is considered our root guru.

THE ROOT GURU IS THE ONE WHO HAS BENEFITED US THE MOST

We visualize the guru seated on a throne which is in front of Lama Tsongkhapa, Shakyamuni Buddha and Guru Vajradhara. We can visualize the implements the root guru is holding according to our own needs. The guru's left hand, in the mudra of concentration, is holding a long-life vase filled with long-life nectar. Due to that auspiciousness, we will have a long life. The right hand is in the mudra of revealing the Dharma, the three fingers standing there signify revealing the Dharma

through the lamrim teachings and in particular the graduated path of the lower capable being, the graduated path of the middle capable being and the graduated path of the higher capable being.

The two fingers touching, [the thumb and the first finger], signifies the goal of the path, the unification of the complete pure holy body and pure holy mind. By revealing Dharma, particularly the lamrim, the guru brings the disciple through the graduated paths of the lower capable being, the middle capable being and the higher capable being, and then to full enlightenment, the unification of the holy body and holy mind. Normally, when a lama reveals the Dharma, they do this mudra at the beginning as they recite particular verses at the beginning of the teaching, so it has that meaning.

The root guru's right hand in this mudra holds the stem of a lotus [which blooms] at their ear, where there is a Dharma text and a sword. To create auspiciousness, we can visualize the Dharma text as what we are studying so we can learn it well. If we are studying the lamrim, we visualize it as a lamrim text. Whichever Dharma text we are studying, we visualize that is what our root guru is holding.

Our root guru is in front of Lama Tsongkhapa, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and Vajradhara, and our other gurus are surrounding them. Those gurus who have passed away are seated on the lotus, sun and moon discs, but for those who have not passed away, it is advised to visualize them on a cushion. If normally the guru's holy body is limping, or they are blind or have some physical imperfection, when we visualize the gurus in the merit field, it is advised to not visualize them in that way, but to visualize them in perfect health, with no organs missing. Guru devotion involves training the mind, making our mind pure, which means seeing the guru as an enlightened being, having ceased all mistakes and only having all the qualities. Seeing the guru as an enlightened being in this way transforms our mind, making it pure. With this, devotion comes. Then, because of the cause, the devotion, we receive the blessing, and because of the cause, the blessings, we receive the realizations. Because of the cause, the blessing of the guru received in our heart, *then* we receive the result, the realizations of the path to enlightenment in our heart. From that, we are really able to benefit others, to do perfect work for all living beings.

After the gurus, there are the Highest Yoga Tantra deities. According to one instruction, we visualize Guhyasamaja in front, Yamantaka on the right, Chakrasamvara on the left and Hevajra behind. That

is one instruction. Another specific instruction says that Yamantaka is in the front, Guhyasamaja is on one side and Chakrasamvara on the other, with Hevajra behind. Then down below and in the front are Kalachakra and the other Highest Yoga Tantra deities, then the Yoga Tantra deities, the Charya Tantra deities and the Kriya Tantra deities.

I mentioned before about the absolute guru by talking about the syllable HUM. The main focus here however is the root guru. No matter how many different visualizations there are, it's all one, the root guru. When we think of the root guru from our heart, that is what to recognize.

So that particular aspect, who is of the most benefit to our mind? That is the one we recognize, we label the root guru. But what understanding should we have in our heart when we think of the root guru? What is the essence of that? The understanding we should have is that the root guru uses the ordinary aspect of that particular human form that benefits us the most. Our understanding of who they are should be the dharmakaya, the transcendental wisdom of nondual bliss and voidness, the holy mind of all the buddhas. How the root guru appears is in this particular ordinary aspect, in human form, the form that benefits us the most, directing us to the Dharma so our mind is transformed into the Dharma.

The root guru is the one we have received the Dharma connection from, on the basis of the recognition of guru and disciple—we ourselves are the disciple and they are the guru. On the basis that this person is the one who has most benefited us in that aspect, we hold the understanding in our heart of who the root guru is, that the root guru is the dharmakaya, the transcendental wisdom of nondual bliss and voidness, the holy mind of all the buddhas. That is not only in the case of the root guru, it is the same with all the gurus.

Whatever ordinary human aspect the guru shows—ordained or lay, male or female—the feeling or the understanding that we, as the disciple, should hold in our heart for that particular ordinary aspect is that the holy mind of the guru is the dharmakaya, the holy mind of all the buddhas.

ANYBODY WHO HAS GIVEN US THE DHARMA IS OUR GURU

When we look at it this way, this refers to not only the root guru but all the gurus we have established a Dharma connection with. We should see that they are the guru and we are the disciple.

On the basis of that recognition of having received a Dharma connection, we take vows—not only the refuge vow and the five lay vows but also the eight Mahayana precepts—as well as oral transmissions, initiations and tantric commentaries and specific instructions on how to meditate on the path to enlightenment. On that basis, we recognize that this teacher is our guru and we are the disciple, even if we have just received teachings. With even just one verse of teaching, even just the oral transmission of one verse of teachings or a few syllables of a mantra, the Dharma connection is established.

The tantric text *Commentary on the Difficult Points of the Krishnayamari Tantra* mentions,

A person who does not regard as a guru
Somebody from whom they have heard even a single verse of teaching
Will be reborn as a dog for one hundred lifetimes,
Then as a human being of lower caste.

The last word, *mi se chen*, has different interpretations. In his teachings Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo defines it as “lower caste.” Lower caste probably means nothing to Americans or Europeans! But, if we have created the karma, we will be born in countries where society puts us down, like the untouchables in India, also called neo-Buddhists. They are one caste that the rest of society in general looks down upon. People don’t respect you when you are low caste, they don’t let you have high positions, so there is much less freedom to do many things than those of a higher caste. However, according to His Holiness Zong Rinpoche, the last word is not “lower caste” but “scorpion.” So even after being born as a dog for a hundred lifetimes, we then get reborn as a scorpion.

This does not refer to anybody we have heard one verse of teaching from. It’s not saying that. It means having the recognition of us being disciple and the person who gave that one verse of teaching is our guru, whether they are ordained or lay, male or female. Then, after having established the Dharma connection, if we don’t practice guru devotion toward that virtuous friend, [we must experience this negative result]. Here, it’s not talking about generating heresy or anger toward the virtuous friend, just failing, after having made the Dharma connection, to remember them as a guru with devotion, seeing them as a buddha and following with devotion.

This is because we either have no knowledge of the guru devotion practice or, if we do, after having met the guru and made the connection, we give it up. Giving up that Dharma connection is the heaviest negative karma. So, I think this verse refers to after having made the Dharma connection with the guru, either not knowing the guru devotion teachings or forgetting or failing to devote to the guru. Then, these shortcomings will happen—we have to be born as a dog for a hundred lifetimes and then [as a human of low caste], or as His Holiness Zong Rinpoche says, a scorpion.

This is just to give some idea about what problems occur, without talking about how this hinders us from having realizations of the path to enlightenment.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GURU DEVOTION

Because many of us are beginners, just starting out fresh, it is very important to know as much as possible about the teachings of guru devotion. Why? By knowing the teachings of the practice of guru devotion *well*, we make less mistakes from the beginning and then there will be less problems, less shortcomings and more success.

The real success that comes from this is achieving realizations. So much of the success in the world, what ordinary people regard as success, is success in creating negative karma. It's how much you can defeat others, how much you can destroy or kill your enemies. That is the common people's definition of success, those who are not practitioners of Dharma, but in reality that is only success in creating negative karma.

The real success in our life is how much we can practice Dharma, how much we can benefit others, how much we can achieve realizations. That's the real success. The best success is being able to achieve the realization of bodhicitta. Among all the realizations, that is the best success. Of realizing emptiness or realizing bodhicitta, the one we regard as more successful is realizing bodhicitta, because with even a direct realization of emptiness the highest we can achieve is arhatship, not enlightenment. We cannot even become a Mahayanist; we cannot even enter the Mahayana path without bodhicitta, therefore we cannot do perfect work for sentient beings.

So coming back to what I was saying about real success, the greatest success is having realizations of the path to enlightenment, therefore this is the most important thing in life for us and for other sentient beings. Making mistakes in relation to the gurus becomes the heaviest obstacle to our inner development, and the most important thing in our life is having realizations on the path to enlightenment in order to be able to benefit other sentient beings.

Therefore, it is very important, especially as we are just beginning to follow the path, to start from the beginning correctly, with as many teachings on guru devotion as possible in order to avoid making mistakes. Otherwise, if from the beginning there is no understanding of how to devote to the virtuous friend—all these incredible advantages of correctly devoting to the virtuous friend and all the unbelievably heavy shortcomings of making mistakes in our relationship with the gurus—without understanding from the beginning how important it is, there is no opportunity to put it into practice. But if we can put it into practice, everything goes very smoothly. Life goes very smoothly; it is very stable and there is so much peace and happiness in our heart. We achieve so much satisfaction. It is very easy to have realizations without hardships, with very little effort. We might think that gaining realizations requires so much hardship and takes so many years, that we have to overcome so many obstacles, but it not like that. Even by doing a very short meditation, even just thinking about the subject a little bit, then it becomes very easy to have a realization. Just thinking about that subject for a very short time, the effect is so strong—everything goes very smoothly and it is very easy to have realizations.

Then not only this life, but also from life to life, we progress even more; it becomes so much easier in the next life. We are able to meet gurus like Lama Tsongkhapa, like Manjushri, like Maitreya Buddha, like Guru Shakyamuni Buddha; we are able to meet gurus like that in the next life and in our future lives, gurus who have all the qualities. We are able to meet them and see all these qualities, and we are able to achieve enlightenment quickly.

If we don't understand the great advantages of correctly devoting to the virtuous friend and the heavy shortcomings of making mistakes in our relationship with the virtuous friend; unless we understand the entire teachings on guru devotion, knowing how to devote correctly to the virtuous friend, we make mistakes with one guru and then, when we meet another guru, we also make mistakes. In that way, we become habituated in making mistakes with other gurus.

Then, the rest of our life can become very messy; it can not only be very difficult to achieve realizations but many problems can happen in this life. Because the object, the guru, is the most powerful object among the powerful objects, a small negative karma in relation to the guru, such as showing a little disrespect, becomes so heavy that we start to experience its results in this very lifetime. Conversely, even a small positive thing we do in relation to the guru, such as showing a little respect, becomes very powerful positive karma, so powerful we start to experience the positive results, the happiness, in this life.

It is not only difficult to have realizations when we make mistakes in our relationship with the guru, we also encounter so many problems in this life. Besides there being no happiness, even the little experience of meditation we might have had, the little understanding of the Dharma, degenerates completely; we lose it completely. Our mind becomes very hard, like a stone in the ocean which, however long it has been in the water, never becomes soft. It remains hard for a hundred thousand years. The mind is always hard, completely blocked; nothing is working, nothing is happening in the mind.

Therefore now, because many of us are beginners, before we make all those mistakes, we need to start correctly from the beginning. If our relationship is good from the beginning, all the rest of the realizations up to enlightenment become successful, and then all the work we do for sentient beings becomes most extensive, most successful; we can be of great benefit.

If in our guru devotion practice we make mistakes in correctly devoting to the virtuous friend, as I mentioned before, it becomes a blockage to all the realizations up to enlightenment. We are then unable to benefit sentient beings; it becomes a blockage to being able to offer great benefit to sentient beings. All the other successes are dependent on this one. That's why guru devotion practice is called the root of the path to enlightenment.

THE INSEPARABILITY OF THE GURU AND ALL DEITIES

Now to finish. All the lineage lamas starting from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha are manifestations of the root guru. All the deities of the four levels of tantra are manifestations of the root guru, all these are the root guru. The thousand buddhas of this fortunate eon, the Thirty-five Buddhas, the Seven

Medicine Buddhas, all these are also manifestations of the root guru. Whichever way it is said, it is the same. All the bodhisattvas are also the root guru. As I mentioned in the beginning, we should think, “All these manifest in order to save me from the lower realms and bring me to full enlightenment. The root guru manifests as all these lineage lamas, as all these tantric deities, as all the thousand Buddhas, as the Thirty-five Buddhas, as the Seven Medicine Buddhas, as all these buddhas, for me. The root guru manifests as all these bodhisattvas, as all these arhats, such as the Sixteen Arhats, to guide me. The root guru manifests as the dakas and dakinis and as the Dharma protectors to protect me from obstacles.”

One thing to mention here, in the merit field that we visualize, it is only the protectors who are beyond samsara and who also show that aspect of being beyond samsara. The protectors can be visualized on the throne. There are other Dharma protectors who, even though they are beyond samsara, do not show the aspect of being beyond samsara but show a worldly aspect. Those are not visualized there on the throne, on the lotus. I don't think this is a problem for Westerners. I don't think there are proud protectors in the West. Maybe some protectors make doughnuts or hamburgers! Even if they are beyond samsara but rather than show that aspect, they show a worldly aspect, you don't visualize those on the throne. In a thangka of the merit field, those protectors are not drawn there.

So, we can think of all those lineage lamas and think, “The root guru has manifested as all those protectors to protect me, so that I can actualize the extensive path and the profound path within myself.” For example, we can think, “The root guru has manifested as the dakas and dakinis for me to generate bliss and voidness and the tantric realizations, the simultaneously born bliss and clear light. And the root guru has manifested as the Dharma protectors for me to grant me the four actions—pacifying, increasing, controlling and wrathful.” We can think that the functions they do are manifestations of the root guru, done for us, to guide us to enlightenment. There are so many different aspects, but no matter how many hundreds or thousands are there, the essence is just one being; in reality they are all just one being, the root guru.

HOW PRECIOUS THAT THE GURU MANIFESTS IN AN ORDINARY ASPECT

The last thing. We should then think, “I cannot see all these buddhas directly and receive teachings and guidance from them because my mind is so obscured, so defiled, so contaminated with negative

imprints. Therefore, out of unbearable compassion for me, the root guru has manifested in this ordinary aspect, showing the aspect of having mistakes, of experiencing whatever happens to ordinary people, having all the problems and suffering, doing all the mistaken actions. The root guru has manifested an ordinary aspect like this for me, one that I can see directly and receive guidance from. With my present level of mind, it is only such an ordinary aspect, with all the suffering and mistaken actions and so forth, that I can see and receive guidance directly from. Anything purer than that I would not be able to see. Worse than this, like animal forms or others, I would not be able to receive guidance from them.”

A Kadampa geshe, Chengawa Lodrö Gyaltzen, said,

Since our karmic obscurations are so heavy,
We should be happy to see our guru even in a human form.
We have great merit not to see him as a dog or a donkey;
Therefore, generate heartfelt respect, son of Shakyamuni.

There are more verses but I don't remember them, only this one, the essence, I remember.

We should think, “Unless my gurus show these ordinary aspects, I am totally lost in samsara, totally guideless. Even if I had a human body, there would be no opportunity to practice Dharma. In that case, I would have a human shape but an animal mind; I would be no different from the animals. However, it is not like that; I have all this incredible opportunity to learn the Dharma, to practice the path not just to liberation but also to enlightenment. Especially lamrim that definitely shows the unmistakable path not only to the happiness of liberation but also enlightenment. That I have this incredible opportunity not only to benefit myself but also numberless other sentient beings is due to the kindness of the gurus who show these ordinary aspects, allowing me to directly see them and receive guidance and teachings from them.

“Each of the gurus showing these ordinary aspects is so precious in my life. All the buddhas communicate with me and guide me through each of these ordinary aspects, the conventional gurus who have taken these ordinary aspects. So each of these aspects that show making mistakes is so precious in my life.”

Then, as I mentioned yesterday, we should recite like reciting a mantra, “Each guru showing an ordinary aspect of having mistakes is so precious, so kind, so precious, so kind.” We can repeat that over and over, for half a mala or a mala or more, to stabilize the devotion we have generated.

With this very special technique of guru devotion that Lama Tsongkhapa explained, with this way of meditating, even seeing mistakes in the guru becomes the cause, the support, for developing devotion within us disciples.

So there are two things here. One is that the guru shows mistakes because at the moment that is the only way we can be guided to enlightenment because of the present level of our mind, which is impure and which can only see the ordinary aspect, the aspect that shows making mistakes.

[The other is] to see that the ordinary aspect, the mistakes and suffering of the guru that we see are just appearances of our own mind. That one is a very important protection for the mind, allowing us to have a stable realization of guru devotion. Without this awareness, negative thoughts such as heresy, anger, and many emotional minds can arise, and we create negative karma like rainfall, like hailstorms, making our life unbelievably heavy.

We have this impure mind, therefore we have no other way to see the guru other than in this aspect, which means the guru is purer than that. Worse than this, in their pure aspect, the guru cannot guide us; we cannot receive teachings directly. Therefore, the guru has manifested in this ordinary aspect, having mistakes, exactly according to the level of our impure, mistaken mind, so that we can receive teachings directly. Only like that can the guru communicate directly with us.

This is the reason why the guru is so precious and kind, by showing us this ordinary aspect, having mistakes. It becomes a reason to realize how extremely kind the guru is. Therefore, seeing mistakes in the guru becomes supportive; it becomes beneficial for developing devotion within our mind. So, to count like this is very good. As I mentioned before, when we come to this conclusion, that the guru has shown this ordinary aspect of having mistakes, we should think, “That the guru has shown this ordinary aspect for me, having mistakes, is so precious, so kind.” Thinking not only of the root

guru but of every guru, we should repeat this over and over, half mala or one mala or more, to develop our devotion and make it stable.

Then after that, we should think that all the holy actions the guru has done toward us—giving vows, commentaries of sutra and tantra, giving oral transmissions and initiations, giving instructions and advice on how to live our life, on how to practice the Dharma—all this definitely leads us to enlightenment. Then, for each virtuous friend we have, we should repeat over and over, “How kind they are, how precious they are; how kind they are, how precious they are.” Concentrating on the activities they do for us definitely brings us to liberation and enlightenment, so we should repeat this over and over while intensively concentrating on their activities. This is very good.

My talk has become very long again! There is a little bit more to mention but maybe another time. Actually the meditation is very short; I just made many words but actually if you know the meditation it's just this and this and this and this. Each one is extremely important, very effective and beneficial, but to introduce it took many words.

First, before talking about the ordinary aspect, we need to analyze our mind and see how impure, how obscured it is. After doing analysis, when we talk about the guru showing an ordinary aspect it becomes more effective. We can really appreciate how, because our mind is like this, the guru shows us this ordinary aspect of having mistakes. We can feel just how precious, how kind the guru is.

I think tea is manifestation of dinner! [Laughter]

Anyway, first enjoy the dinner then see what happens. Maybe enlightenment will come after dinner! In that way, we achieve enlightenment without needing to practice the Dharma. Enjoy.

[End of recordings]