

KOPAN COURSE NO. 31

LAMRIM TEACHINGS FROM KOPAN 1998

BY

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Lightly edited by Gordon McDougall, December 2021
Archive # 1087

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LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE

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Lecture 1

Please note: Because the tapes were undated and not broken into different teachings, the lecture numbers and dates are approximations.

December 2, 1998

THE BEGGAR AND THE BILLIONAIRE

[Break in recording]

This other person only has ten rupees but is so satisfied with that. They don't look for more. We can use the example of beggars. There are many whose minds are so peaceful, not depressed at all. When they beg and get enough money for lunch on that day, they are so satisfied, so happy, with that. Even though there's nothing there for tomorrow's food, or next year's food, there's no expectation. They have peace of mind because there is no desire, because the mind does not follow the desire that wants more. That gives satisfaction, peace in the heart. It's not only that they have no problem, that the mind doesn't make up the problem, but there's peace and happiness in the heart.

This is one way of looking at the situation. There is the other person who has billions of dollars but they have put a negative label to their life's situation. They put the label, "What I have is too little, it's no good." That's what makes them upset. One way of looking at it is that they have put a negative label instead of a positive one. Instead of making a positive label, "This is good," they put a negative label. Then, by believing in that negative label, they become depressed, sad.

Now, you can see the problem comes from that person's mind. You can see by putting a negative label on the situation and believing in that, they make their mind upset. To them, the situation appears bad and so they are upset. In other words, the negative label they believe makes them depressed, upset. So actually, it's not the shortage of money; it's the concept that creates the negative label that depresses them, that makes them unhappy.

The other person—the one who is so happy with ten rupees, with no expectation to get more—makes up a positive label and believes in that. With the positive label, seeing their situation as positive, they are happy and satisfied. That gives them peace of mind, peace in the heart.

It is exactly the same with our beloved, heart friend, the one we rely upon most or think of the most in our heart, when their mind changes toward us, when their way of thinking changes toward us, when it is not the same as before. Whether it changes from loving kindness or from attachment, whether it changes from liking us, taking an interest in us, it's just a different way of thinking than before. Now this becomes a very interesting point.

HOW TO DO A TEA OFFERING

Anyway, we'll stop there! You know on the TV, when it comes to the point where they show the advertisements, where they advertise dog and cat food and other things. Anyway, here I think I want to advertise offering practice.

Especially since the course has already been going for more than two weeks, I think it's very important to do this practice of offering before we eat and drink. It's very good to do the offering together here before lunch. By doing it in a group, it not only reminds everybody, the benefit is that everybody get the practice done. Everybody collects merit—good luck or good karma or merit. To do it individually might be more difficult. For those who normally practice offering, of course, it becomes a daily practice. It's like brushing your teeth every day; it becomes an everyday thing. But those who have not been practicing, maybe not everybody will remember to do it. So it's very good. And it's short!

First think, “The purpose of my life is to free all sentient beings from all sufferings and its causes and bring them to happiness, especially to full enlightenment.” That means you are specifying what is the *most* important, highest benefit for others, which also includes for yourself. That is the most important, the peerless happiness, the completed, perfect bliss or happiness. “For that I need to achieve full enlightenment. Therefore, I'm going to make the tea offering.”

“Because I need to achieve enlightenment, I'm going to make the tea offering,” looks like it doesn't make sense! It looks like there's no connection. It might sound like, “My head feels cold,

so I'll wear shoes!" Anyway, I'm joking. It might sound like it's not connected. "Because my feet are getting cold, I'll wear a hat!"

Enlightenment is not independent. Enlightenment exists by depending on causes and conditions. The cause is the path. Because of that, we need to actualize the stages of the path to enlightenment, and that depends on accumulating merit. It depends on collecting the necessary conditions, accumulating merit and purifying the obstacles, the defilements, the negative karmas, that hinder us achieving the realizations of the path to enlightenment.

We do this through the Buddha, just by thinking of the Buddha—whether it's a statue of the Buddha, or a picture of Buddha, or a visualization of the Buddha. Just thinking of the Buddha, making offerings to the Buddha, has inconceivable benefits, because the Buddha has ceased all delusions, all the emotional disturbing thoughts, both gross and subtle, the cessation of the mistakes of the mind, and the holy mind that is fully awakened, fully enlightened, has completed all the realizations.

There are infinite qualities that the Buddha has achieved, infinite qualities of the Buddha's holy body, holy speech and holy mind. Because of those inconceivable qualities, making tea or food offering to the Buddha—even by visualizing or thinking of the Buddha—brings inconceivable benefits. The benefits are infinite because of the infinite, inconceivable qualities that Buddha has achieved.

The result of this good karma, first of all, is that as soon as we offer to the Buddha, by thinking of the Buddha, that immediately becomes the cause for us to achieve full enlightenment. Then, by achieving full enlightenment, we can then liberate *all* the other numberless sentient beings from all the sufferings and bring them to full enlightenment. It's not just that we ourselves achieve enlightenment. The benefit doesn't just stop there. All the numberless other sentient beings continuously get *skies* of benefit from us after we become enlightened. We are able to bring all sentient beings from happiness to happiness to enlightenment.

This association of body and mind is in the nature of suffering. For example, the mind experiences loneliness, depression, fear, all these things, and the body, which is also in the nature of suffering experiences so many problems: old age, sicknesses and so forth. This association of body and mind which is the nature of suffering is compounded or created by impure causes, by

delusions and their actions, karma, causing the continuation of these aggregates which circle from this life to the next life, and then *that* continuation circles to the life after that and so forth.

Until we break this continuation by ceasing the karma and delusion, we must continuously circle in this samsara, experiencing suffering without end. There are always the same problems. There are the oceans of problems: the ocean of sufferings of human beings, the ocean of sufferings of gods and demigods, the ocean of sufferings oceans of the hell beings, the hungry ghosts and the animals. We have to experience all these sufferings again and again and again and again. Just as its continuation did not have a beginning, it goes on and on without end.

Making the tea or food offering to the Buddha, besides immediately becoming the cause of enlightenment, it also become the cause to be totally liberated from this samsara by the way. And not only that, by the way, this offering to the Buddha causes us to achieve a good rebirth, not just once, in the next life, but, because karma is expandable, for hundreds and thousands of lifetimes. From one good karmic action we can experience the result for so many times, for hundreds and thousands of times in one life or in many lifetimes. Therefore, even though it's a very small practice, it is an extremely important practice, one that makes our daily life so meaningful, so rich. When we offer with a bodhicitta motivation, generating to achieve enlightenment for all sentient beings, at that time we collect merit, good karma, good luck, as limitless as the sky.

We can visualize the Buddha in our heart, on our forehead or in the front of us, whichever way we feel a particular connection with. It can be just Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, or if we feel a stronger connection with the Compassion Buddha or Tara, with a particular aspect of the Buddha, we can visualize that. Then we can think that all the buddhas' compassion, all the enlightened beings' compassion, manifests into this form in order to guide us and all other sentient beings, to liberate us all from suffering and its causes. We can think like that.

SEEING THE GURU AS THE DHARMAKAYA

The other thing is, if we are making the offering within the guru yoga practice, we can think of all the buddhas' holy mind, the dharmakaya, the absolute guru. Because they are bound with infinite compassion to us and all sentient beings, they manifest into this form. Then, if we are making an offering, we can think in this way. The guru has [two aspects]: the absolute guru and

the conventional guru. The absolute guru is the Buddha's holy mind, the dharmakaya. This ultimate wisdom is the absolute guru, and so because it's bound with infinite compassion to us sentient beings, this is what guides us and all other sentient beings by manifesting, in some way. Since our mind is impure, since the karmic obscurations are not purified, we have no other way to see the guru [except in this impure aspect.] It's like covering the eyes with red glass and seeing everything white as red, or, if we wear blue glasses, we see everything, all white things, as blue. Because of our impure mind, because we are obscured by impure karma, we cannot see the pure aspect of the Buddha.

The absolute guru manifests into the deity's form but we cannot see it in that aspect. The only way that we can see the absolute guru and the absolute guru can communicate with us, and this means all the buddhas, is *only* through this impure aspect. Only with this can we communicate. They communicate with us through this ordinary aspect and we communicate with them by depending on this ordinary aspect. The absolute guru guides us by manifesting in this ordinary form, which means having a samsaric, suffering body and mind and making mistakes in action. In this form, the absolute guru manifests and guides us, giving us vows and precepts, initiations, commentaries, instructions and so forth—the various means to lead us from happiness to happiness to enlightenment. Whether we use the term “absolute guru” or “buddhas” it means the same thing, because they are manifestations of the absolute guru. When the absolute guru and the buddhas manifest in this ordinary aspect, or *through* this ordinary aspect, they liberate us from suffering and guide us to enlightenment.

If we do the practice of offering within the guru yoga, with this understanding, that means that there is no differentiation in our view, in our mind, between this Buddha that we visualize and the conventional guru that we can actually see and communicate with. All the buddhas can communicate with us through this conventional guru, guiding us through this aspect. So, understanding the inseparability [of the conventional guru and the dharmakaya], we make the offering with devotion.

We can do the offering practice in a very short time. It doesn't even need to take a minute, just within a few seconds, think that this is all the guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. We can visualize, we can think of all the ten directions' holy objects, all the ten directions' statues, stupas, scriptures, and we can offer to them. If we can think more extensively like that, it's like the very wise businessperson who collects inconceivable additional merit. By thinking in this way, if we

make offerings to all the gurus, all the ten directions' buddhas, all the ten directions' Dharma and Sangha, all the ten directions' holy objects, like this, within these few seconds we collected merit like the sky, so much good karma, the cause of happiness.

Then, after that, we can offer again by elaborating. We offer to all the gurus, to all the ten directions' Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, the ten directions' statues, stupas, scriptures. We can offer like that. Before we integrated everything into this aspect having all the qualities, and now we offer to all the ten directions. It is just a way to take the opportunity in our life.

I started the subject about the beginningless rebirth, but what I'm trying to say, relating to the offering, we may not have this unbelievable opportunity again and again to collect such good karma all the time, to create the unmistakable cause of happiness. We won't have this opportunity much. In every life, it's very difficult and even in this life it's not sure. Therefore, *now* is the time. Now we have all the opportunities, this is the time to do the *best* in our life, to collect extensive merit and to purify the mind as much as possible. We must take the opportunity as much as possible to do this unmistakable practice, one that will definitely lead us to the goal, which has been experienced not only by Shakyamuni Buddha but by numberless buddhas and numberless yogis, pandits who have completed the path. Numberless beings have practiced this path correctly and proved its worth, achieving full enlightenment and enlightening other sentient beings. Collecting more extensive merit each time, we become closer to liberation and closer to enlightenment, closer to total freedom, everlasting peace and happiness.

Then, if possible, after the offering, while you are eating and drinking, you should visualize the Buddha. Those of you who engage in the practice of tantra, the Mahayana Secret Mantra, Vajrayana, you have to visualize yourself as the deity to enjoy the sense pleasures. Then, making offerings to yourself as the buddha, you don't allow anything to become the cause of samsara, the cause of suffering; everything only becomes the cause of enlightenment. All the sense pleasures are only to develop the path within your mind quickly. With the skillful means of tantra unified with wisdom, having sense pleasures, enjoyment, becomes the quick path, the quick way to achieve enlightenment.

So now, I think it really is time to have tea! Or very delicious hot water!

Having this opportunity to practice Dharma and liberate ourselves, at least from the cause of sufferings, and not only that, to liberate the numberless sentient beings from all their suffering and its causes and bring them to enlightenment—having this opportunity to practice Dharma is completely by the kindness of all these numberless sentient beings who have suffered, who have accumulated negative karma, who have had to die. This is the situation; this is how it is.

Now the conclusion is this. By having these enjoyments—food and drink, shelter, and so forth—by using these, the purpose is to serve others, to make our life useful for other sentient beings. That is the second reason. The first reason is that every sentient being, including our enemy, is cherished like a jewel in the heart of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, who see them all as the most precious, the most important one. They cherish them in this way. Then the second reason to serve others is because *every single* happiness, comfort, enjoyment, day-to-day survival in our life, our organization—everything is by the kindness of sentient beings, especially the opportunity to practice the Dharma.

So I think I'll stop here. I'm not going to complete the other talk. I'd like to do that tomorrow. I think maybe that's enough, otherwise after some time, you may not be able to get up! You might have to call the ambulance!

Lecture 2

December 3, 1998

SUBDUING THE MIND

Engage in perfect wholesome actions,
Do not commit any unwholesome actions,
Subdue your mind thoroughly;
This is the teaching of the Buddha.

Engage in perfect wholesome actions, do not commit any unwholesome actions—it's normally the other way around! However, this is the essence of the Buddha's teaching. It is the essential practice of the Buddhadharma, to abandon harming others and to only benefit them. The next lines say that we should subdue our mind, that this is the teaching of the Buddha.

This also shows how we can stop engaging in negative karma and how we can engage in perfect, wholesome actions, how we can stop giving harm to others and benefit them instead. It's all up to the question of subduing the mind. If we subdue the mind, these things happen. If the mind doesn't get subdued, if we don't watch the mind and take care of it by applying the remedy, the meditation, if we don't practice the Dharma, then there is no remedy. We can't protect our mind; we can't protect ourselves. Unless we practice the Dharma, we cannot look after ourselves. Unless we practice the Dharma, we are not taking care of ourselves. Put it this way. If we *are* practicing the Dharma, we are taking care of ourselves. The best way, the *real* way to take care of ourselves is to practice the Dharma.

External actions—changing our outside dress, moving from the city to the mountains, being in a church or temple, doing prayers—these things depend on how we do it. Just being in a temple or just being in a cave, changing our clothes into a religious form or saying prayers, that alone doesn't mean practicing the Dharma. That alone is not the definition of practicing the Dharma, even though what we do with our hair or what clothes we wear might be regarded as important in other traditions. For example, we might change into an Indian sari! We might wear an Indian sari, wrapping it around and going up! We might put colors on the forehead. I don't mean going to a shop in the West to get made up, but as a spiritual practice when you put paint on the face. In other traditions, if we take on that culture, that is regarded as a spiritual practice. Shaving our

head and putting colors on the face or the body is regarded as very important, as a spiritual practice.

However, according to the Buddha's teachings, that alone doesn't define practicing the Dharma. It is mentioned in the teachings that these external changes are not the real change. From this, we can understand that anybody can have a deity to meditate on, anybody can recite mantras, but that does not mean they are practicing Dharma; they might still be unable to practice the Dharma.

Similarly, even if we physically change from the city, from New York or Chicago to a Himalayan cave, maybe one at a very high altitude, the problem is still not practicing the Dharma. I think I need to change my nose! Each piece of the body has a different function, so it must be important to have a nose. What would happen if there were no nose? A body without a nose. Then there would be no problem with operations on the nose and having to take care of the nose. But somebody made up the nose. I don't think it was the parents who made it. They happen to be a condition. I was talking yesterday about the four conditions. So then, somehow things got spread out from that!

KARMA AND THE BODY

But the human body is very interesting. It's not the parents that made it up, like a person makes a watch by putting everything together. The parents put all the parts of the body together, all the pieces inside, like making a watch. It's not that. It's a really amazing phenomenon. This human body might be similar to an animal body.

The human body is like a machine, where all the pieces depend on each other to function, like a car or an airplane. There are so many pieces inside. Just even the head. Inside this head there is the brain, whose shape is like a tree without branches. Is it like that or not? A tree, but with no branches and no leaves! How the body works is amazing, how the blood circulates, how, after eating and drinking, the body kind of separates things and disposes of the garbage part. After eating food, the body works to get rid of the garbage part. The essence goes inside, and all the parts of the body including the heart, work together by depending on each other. It is a very interesting phenomenon that is like a machine in how it functions. Each part has a different job, from the head down to the toes.

Since this body is a causative phenomenon, before this result is actualized, the cause should already exist. Result and cause. The result of *this* particular cause and the cause itself don't arise together. The cause doesn't happen after the result; the cause must happen *before* the result, before this body is actualized. So, the cause already exists before the conception. The cause of this body exists before the conception.

What is explained by the Omniscient One, by the Fully Knowing One, is karma. Karma is the cause of this. There are positive actions and negative actions, virtuous actions and nonvirtuous actions, and this human body is the body of the happy transmigratory being. Therefore, the action, the karma that exists before this, has to be virtuous; it cannot be nonvirtuous. And that virtuous action, that good karma, is motivated by a virtuous thought. This body that is studied for many years in hospitals, researching all the sicknesses, all the different things that this body experiences, as I explained before, from the tip of the hair down to the toes, the whole thing is a description of karma.

When we see a tiny flower, it seems so artistic. Within even that tiny flower there are so many colors and patterns. One tiny flower has so much art, so many shapes and colors. Just as when we think of this body, this tiny flower is a description of karma, a description of *our* karma because *we* are seeing that flower. It's an object of our senses, so it's our karma, that tiny flower that has all those incredible patterns, all those shapes and colors. It is a sense object that is the object of our eye sense. So even *that* is an explanation of our karma, a manifestation of our karma.

If it is something ugly, it is a manifestation or description of our negative karma. If it is a beautiful, desirable object of the senses, it is a manifestation or result of our own good karma, an explanation of our own good karma. Twenty-four hours of our life, whatever ups and downs there are, as I mentioned yesterday, it depends on how we think, it depends on how we make up the label, on what kind of label or name we make up continuously in our daily life, a negative label or positive label. Depending on that, it affects our mind. If the label our mind makes is negative, there's the appearance of something negative. We have this negative appearance, and we create a negative world for ourselves. Having the negative appearance, the object we view seems negative and *that* affects our mind, that upsets our mind. That brings our spirit down.

On the other hand, if our mind makes up a positive label, thinking something is good, we have a positive or good appearance. Then what appears to us is a good or beautiful object. Seeing that makes the mind happy or excited. Twenty-four hours a day, the negative label that comes from our mind upsets us, whereas the positive label that comes from the mind makes us happy. It's like that for the whole twenty-four hours, always up and down. The whole creation during all the twenty-four hours comes from our mind, affecting our ups and downs.

So here we can even understand from this example what the Buddha said, "Engage in perfect wholesome actions, do not commit any unwholesome actions, subdue your mind thoroughly; this is the teaching of the Buddha." The teachings of the Buddha tell us to subdue our mind. So now here, even from this we can understand why the Buddha emphasizes the mind. The main practice the Buddha teaches is subduing the mind. By applying the remedy, meditation, and not allowing negativities to arise, we don't allow ourselves to be controlled by the afflicted emotions or the disturbing thoughts. No longer overwhelmed by the delusions, the disturbing thoughts, we are protected.

Then, by applying the meditations, by practicing the Dharma, we not only stop those afflicted emotions from arising, we also make it impossible for them to ever arise again by ceasing even the seed of delusion. We must destroy that seed. Otherwise, even though we don't feel angry now, if we encounter an undesirable object, without watching our mind, without applying the meditation, without practicing the Dharma, we have no protection in our life, we are not looking after ourselves. When we meet an undesirable object, anger rises. Because the seed is there, it gives rise to anger by encountering an undesirable object.

THE NEED FOR GREAT COMPASSION

This is the subject that I began yesterday. Was it yesterday? I was inquiring, while there is no desire for that object or no anger for that object, suddenly attachment or anger for it arises that we didn't have before. I was trying to inquire into what causes that? We don't have attachment or anger now, but we encounter an object, and attachment or anger suddenly arise for that object. The afflictive emotions suddenly manifest. I was inquiring yesterday what causes this? How does psychology explain it? I went on and on yesterday, and then the real tea came and the real monk, or the empty tea and empty monk! But the purpose of bringing up this issue was to explain that the anger that arises does not happen independently, without causes and conditions.

There are four conditions, including the main one, the cause of this anger, which is the seed of anger, in the nature of an imprint that is left on the mental continuum. Therefore, if we get angry today, it is useful to practice patience, tolerance. If we get angry today, that leaves an imprint again, it plants the seed of anger again on our mental continuum. So, the more we get angry, the *more* seeds of anger are planted on the mental continuum. That makes it even harder to practice patience, a good heart, in the future. The more seeds, the more imprints left on the mental continuum by anger, the easier it is to get angry and the more difficult it is to practice patience. It makes us more impatient in the future, in both the near future or in our future lives after this. Not only that, anger destroys our peace of mind now, our happiness, and causes us to engage in heavy negative karma.

Leaving more negative imprints on our mental continuum, it becomes harder to practice the Dharma in the future. I'm not sure whether you have meditated on the sufferings of the lower realms, particularly the hell realms. If you have meditated or read the teachings on the sufferings of the lower realms such as the hell realms, [you will know the importance] of meditating in order to liberate yourself from the cause of samsaric sufferings, to liberate yourself from the three poisonous minds by knowing the shortcomings of anger, desire, and all these things.

To be able to totally liberate ourselves from all suffering and its causes, particularly the suffering of the lower realms, we have to overcome the delusions. That is very important but it's still a limited reason for meditating on suffering. The main purpose of meditating on suffering, including impermanence and death, is to develop compassion toward all sentient beings. By meditating on our own samsaric suffering—the suffering of pain, the suffering of change (temporary samsaric pleasure) and pervasive compounding suffering—by understanding these three types of samsaric suffering and by doing meditations that include the sufferings of the lower realms, we are able to generate not just compassion but *great* compassion. The main aim is great compassion, not only wishing others to be free from suffering but wishing that we ourselves can be the cause for that to happen, to free every sentient being, whose mind is obscured and whose experience is only suffering, even though everyone wishes only for happiness.

Great compassion becomes so important. Because great compassion is really the main force for us to help all sentient beings, it is of the utmost importance. The great compassion that we

generate for sentient beings makes us liberate all sentient beings from all suffering and its causes, freeing them from all the defilements and bringing them to peerless happiness, full enlightenment, that state which is perfected in all the qualities of cessations, free from all the mistakes of mind, the gross and subtle defilements, and which is perfected in all the qualities of the realizations, in order to bring sentient beings to that peerless happiness, full enlightenment.

Because great compassion is what forces us to do this, it is the highest benefit, the best service to all sentient beings. The skies of benefit we can offer numberless other living beings comes from our compassion, particularly from our great compassion that takes the full responsibility to do the service of freeing others from suffering by ourselves. It is what makes us actualize the whole Mahayana path to enlightenment, because to enlighten others, to cause all these skies of benefit for sentient beings, there is no other way except that first we ourselves become enlightened. At the moment we can't guide even one sentient being, we can't even liberate one sentient being. We can't even guide ourselves.

Therefore, the solution is to first achieve full enlightenment. We must achieve all the qualities of the Mahayana path, starting from the realization of bodhicitta, which is the door to the Mahayana path to enlightenment. We must achieve all the qualities, having all the realizations and ceasing all the mistakes of the mind. This comes from compassion, our compassion that is the force to be able to offer skies of benefit to all sentient beings.

BODHISATTVAS WELCOME SUFFERING

Unless we know all our own samsaric suffering in all its different types, we cannot see all the different types of suffering of others. Then our compassion becomes very limited. We cannot really generate compassion. Even though we might feel compassion for those other beings who are experiencing the suffering of pain, because we don't know that samsaric pleasure is temporary and is only in the nature of suffering, and equally because we don't especially understand pervasive compounding suffering, we cannot generate compassion. We might generate compassion only for those who have the suffering of pain but be completely blind to those other sufferings. Then we cannot develop compassion, especially for those sentient beings who do not experience the suffering of pain but experience the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering. Because we are unable to feel compassion for them, we don't

do anything for them. Then we are not making our human life most productive. We are not becoming useful for all the living beings.

WHY ARE WE SCARED OF HELL?

Anyway, I'm just going back. What I think is that the imprint of delusions is much, much more terrifying than the suffering of the hell realm. No matter how unbearable it is, we must experience the hell realm for a certain length of time and then it is finished. However, the imprint of anger, the imprint of desire, the imprints of those delusions are much worse than the hell suffering, which we find so terrifying we can't even bear hearing about them. Beside meditating on them, we don't like even to hear the name "hell." Why? There's an interesting reason. There's something very interesting in the heart. Not in the nose! Not in the ear! Anyway, it's a very interesting reason if you analyze this.

There are only two reasons why we don't want to hear the word "hell." I don't think there's third reason. One reason is that there are many people who not scared of death, even in the West, even those who have never met Buddhadharma or meditated. There are many people that I have heard of or I have met who are not scared of death, for whom death is not a heavy thing.

For them, death is just a label, just a change of life. It doesn't bother them at all, even though they have never heard of Buddhism or meditated. The main reason is because they have lived an ethical life. They have lived their life with sincerity, trying to lead a good life, usually trying to not harm others. Their practice in life is nothing sophisticated; it is very simple. They lead a very simple life, in which they usually try to not harm others. Because of that, they haven't created much cause for death to be scary for them.

I can put it the other way. What causes us to be afraid of death? It is the opposite of an ethical life or the opposite of not harming others. The person didn't create many of those causes.

This kind of person doesn't want to hear the word "hell" because they don't want to hear about other sentient beings' suffering. They can't stand to think of others suffering in hell because they have so much compassion. They strongly want to hear no such thing. Here, in this case, it is positive because it is to do with others.

The other reason why we don't want to hear the word "hell," why we don't want to think about hell, is because, as I gave the example, for some people death is not scary. For some people death is something exciting. For great practitioners, death is exciting because for them it's a path. (If they are English, it's a "path"; if they are American, it's a "parth!") Anyway, for those great practitioners, what is called "death" is exciting because they can use that as a quick path to enlightenment. By applying the most skilled meditation of highest tantra, it becomes the quick path to enlightenment.

Even for the bodhisattvas, to die for others is an unbelievable pleasure. Without talking about tantric practice, bodhisattvas who only practice sutra, because they have a realization of bodhicitta, when they see there is great benefit to die for others, it becomes an unbelievable pleasure. On the other hand, to totally free themselves from the oceans of sufferings of human beings—what we see all the time on TV, in newspapers and magazines, as well as all the sufferings of the gods and demigods and the hell beings, the hungry ghosts and the animals—to be totally free from all that is nonsense for bodhisattvas. Even achieving everlasting happiness doesn't make any sense to them. It's nonsense to achieve that *just* for themselves. Even if they can achieve it in this life, in this year, for them it is not a pleasure. For those holy beings, the bodhisattvas, who renounce the self and only cherish others, who only work for others, this not happiness, this is not pleasure.

For them, even if they have to be born in the hell realm—and not only that but the inexhaustible hell, the hell with the most suffering and that lasts the longest, for an intermediate eon I think—when they see the benefit for other sentient beings, being born there is an unbelievable pleasure. For them it brings limitless skies of bliss, unbelievable pleasure.

No matter how long and how much they have to suffer for others, it's like drinking nectar. It's unbelievable pleasure; it brings skies of happiness, of bliss. Achieving everlasting happiness, the total liberation from all suffering and its causes, which means from now on it is impossible to experience the suffering of samsara, that everlasting happiness, nirvana, the sorrowless state, for bodhisattvas it is utterly uninteresting. It is not a pleasure at all. It's like used toilet paper!

Since I brought up this subject, since I came to this point, there is a story of a bodhisattva, a monk called Metog Datse, who lived in the forest, maybe not in the United States! I'm joking. He lived in the forest surrounded by seven thousand bodhisattvas. I'm not sure of the numbers.

Then he saw that if he taught the Dharma to all the creatures in the palace of the king—I've forgotten the numbers, but it was something like ten times one hundred million—they would all become liberated and then enlightened. He saw this benefit but he also saw if he did this the king would kill him. After seeing the benefit, he went to the palace and for seven days and nights, he didn't sleep. He circumambulated the stupa that contained the Buddha's nails. All night he circumambulated the stupa without sleep and during the day he gave teachings. Then, after seven days the bodhisattva monk was killed by the king.

For his mind, it was unbelievable pleasure. It is normally said of bodhisattvas that no matter how many hardships they must suffer to serve others, no matter how long it takes or how hard it is, if they can benefit others, it's like a swan entering a pond or a swimming pool. You know a swan? I think that might be the example used in the text, but maybe we can say it's like a person who is exhausted after working so hard or with so many problems, looking forward so much to going to the beach to relax or get into the water. Anyway, that is just to give some little idea.

What I was saying—I have to return many times—what I was saying before about hell, the normal reason somebody doesn't want to hear the word "hell" is because there's a fear of hell. Other people don't have that fear. Those other people, those who don't have a fear of hell are bodhisattvas, as I explained, who think that to be in hell for the benefit of others is unbelievable; it brings skies of pleasure and bliss. There are also other people who are not like that, but who also have no fear of hell. As I mentioned before, they are those who have lived a sincere life, an ethical life, with a very simple practice to not harm others.

The common reason people don't want to hear the word "hell" is, even though they are unable to explain it, they fear it. Why? Because the cause of fear has been created through engaging in negative karma, in nonvirtuous actions, through not having practiced morality, not having abstained from harming others. Even though that person cannot explain it, this is the reason, this is the explanation why there's a fear of hell, why they don't want to hear the word "hell."

Of course, to just try to stop hearing the word "hell" doesn't solve the problem. That is totally nonsense, because not hearing it doesn't stop them from being reborn in hell. That's not the way. If we are afraid, the way to not be reborn in hell is to *purify* the cause of the fear. If we are afraid, we should purify the cause of the fear and not create the cause of the fear again. We should not create the cause to be born in hell again. That's the solution. And what is that? That is

Dharma practice. That is doing practices that purify our past negative karmas, those negative actions that cause us to fear the hell realms. That means living in the morality of abstaining from those nonvirtuous actions, those actions harmful to others. Living in morality means living in the precepts. Even if we cannot preserve all [the precepts], whatever ones we can keep in our own life, is the solution.

HAVING A GOOD HEART IS THE BEST BENEFIT

What is the answer to all our problems? The *one* answer to all the problems of life is to have a good heart. There are so many different forms of practice to do, so many meditations to do in life, but the one answer to solve everything is to have a good heart, to have the thought of benefiting other sentient beings, the practice of bodhicitta. We should live our daily life with a good heart, with the thought of benefiting others, bodhicitta, as our main practice, as our heart practice. Living our life with this attitude *is* the main practice. This is our *main* meditation. This is our *main* purpose for living.

So, even though there are thousands of practices to do, what makes our life most productive, most beneficial, is to live it not only for ourselves but for all living beings. From this, everything happens: purifying so many eons of negative karma and collecting merit like the sky, attaining realizations. With a good heart, we don't harm others; with a good heart, we benefit others. In that way, besides no longer creating negative karma, we collect the most merit. Similarly, we no longer harm ourselves but only benefit ourselves with a good heart. Having a good heart is the *best* benefit for ourselves.

From this come all realizations, the whole path to enlightenment—everything comes. The more we can lead our life having a good heart, the less obstacles to realizations there will be. The more we have a good heart, the more merit we naturally collect, day and night. Even if we are alone, we create so much merit. If we are with others, we only do positive actions because our attitude is the thought of benefiting other sentient beings. So therefore, naturally, whatever we do, we always naturally collect merit, good karma, good luck. Good luck doesn't come from outside. Good luck must come from our mind.

From this, everything happens: the happiness of this life, the happiness of future lives, liberation from samsara, enlightenment, and then the ability to cause this for all sentient beings; the ability

to not only cause them to have the happiness, comfort, and the pleasure of this life, but also the happiness of future lives, long-term happiness, and to not only have ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara, but even the highest happiness, full enlightenment. We are able to cause others to have all this.

Anyway, I still want to come back to what I was trying to say before.

FROM IGNORANCE ALL DELUSIONS ARISE

Having an imprint [of a negative action] is much heavier, much more terrifying than the suffering of hell because having the imprint makes the emotional mind arise, anger, attachment, ignorance and so forth. It makes it arise again and again and again. Each time the motivation, the karma arises again, we create negative actions again and that produces samsara again, and again we experience suffering in that realm. By being in that realm again, because the seed, the delusion, is always there, the delusions arise again and again, so many times. The motivation, the karma, again creates samsara. And so it goes on. Even in one day, out of ignorance, the unknowing mind, [this happens so many times.] I think Geshe Lama Konchog has already introduced you to the twelve dependent-related limbs or the twelve links of dependent origination, in Tibetan called *ten drel yen lag chu nyi*. Geshe-la has already gone over these with you.

The root of all suffering is the mind that is unknowing of the very nature of the I, the ultimate nature of the I. The mind that doesn't know how the I exists, that doesn't know the very nature of the aggregates, the association of body and mind, This ignorance is the root of delusion, the root of all the suffering.

In our daily life, we encounter ugly, indifferent, and beautiful objects. However, we do not practice meditation, especially the lamrim—not just the meditations on watching the breath or watching the sensations of the feet walking or the stomach going up and down, but we have not done the meditations on the three principal aspects of the path: renunciation, the meditation that frees our mind from the attachment, bodhicitta, and right view, emptiness. Because of that, whenever we encounter these objects, because the seed is there, ignorance is there. This root delusion is there. Due to the seed of the delusions, all these other delusions arise. These afflictive emotions, these delusions arise. Then that motivates karma, and that karma leaves an imprint, a

seed, on the mental continuum. Whenever these imprints, these seeds, manifest, we experience samsara.

Like that, in twenty-four hours, we create so many samsaras. With this ignorant, unknowing mind, in every twenty-four hours we produce delusions that then motivate karma which creates samsara. In one day we start so many twelve dependent-related limbs. We start so many in one hour. This is because we do not have the realization of the lamrim. Without the meditation on the lamrim, the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment, there's no protection. Even if we don't have the realization of the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment, at least by doing the meditation our mind is transformed by putting effort into the meditation. Then we feel renunciation, we start to cherish others or have the wish to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings.

I was giving those examples yesterday but I did not continue after the example of the flower. Anyway, by looking at those hallucinations as the hallucination that they are, we can see that the objects in our view, the view of this ignorance, are all hallucinations. The way these objects appear—the I, the action, the object—is [distorted] like when we have taken alcohol or drugs or cigarettes or whatever, so we need to look at these as hallucinations because they are hallucinations. Yesterday I used the example of looking at the dream as a dream, rather than believing the dream is something real. Here, in the same way, we look at things as hallucinations because they are hallucinations. So, we practice mindfulness in this way, which gives the understanding in our heart that this is all empty. All this is empty.

We might not have renunciation, the detachment that frees our mind from grasping that makes separating from the object so difficult, so painful, but just by looking at the object as a hallucination immediately frees our mind, making it detached. Doing this lamrim meditation is one way of protecting our mind from negative karma. Not only that, it protects us from the obstacles to realizing the path to liberation and enlightenment, especially for the benefit of sentient beings. Not only *that*, it causes us to have a clear memory, a clear mind. And not only *that*, it takes care by the way of what people, in the world and in the West, are normally concerned about: a long life, a healthy body and a healthy mind—everything is taken care of by the way. As we take care of our negative karma, we take care of our own liberation and enlightenment and benefiting other sentient beings. Besides taking care that, it takes care of a long life, a healthy body and a healthy mind, everything.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

I think today maybe we'll have a holiday! Is there one question?

Student: Dear Lama, as you are speaking, I think that you have met many things. Is that right? What have you seen?

Rinpoche: I wish to say nothing! I wish to say that I have seen nothing. You thought I went into a supermarket? I went into a Spanish supermarket? No, I'm joking! A Pisa supermarket! I guess that's all. Yeah?

Student: Dear Rinpoche, there are many new students who are maybe struggling to sit for so long. Have you compassion for them?

Rinpoche: No compassion! I think I left my compassion in the other room. Do you have so much pain? Now I understand. After your request, I'll try to develop compassion and make it shorter! There's another person there somewhere.

Student: What's the difference between the Buddhist idea of a mental continuum and the Hindu idea of a soul?

Rinpoche: Basically, I think it depends on how you interpret "soul." It's a label but it depends on where you put the label. I think the meaning of soul seems to be as something permanent. I think according to Hindu philosophy, it's a permanent I. But what the Buddha explained, and this is also in reality, the I itself is an impermanent phenomenon, which exist by the force of causes and conditions. The force of the causes and conditions is what makes it changeable. The I is transitory, changeable. It's not permanent, but in Hindu philosophy (I think in Hindi it is *atman*) it is permanent.

There are five divisions of sutra texts. One of them is called *Pramanavarttika*, the logic treatises that talk about reincarnation, analyzing how there *is* reincarnation, giving all the proofs, all the valid logic and reasoning. It doesn't just give somebody's idea but uses valid, logical reasoning. It

explains that the cause of this mental continuum is not the physical body. The mind is not caused by the physical body, because it has its own continuation and it existed before this life.

Anyway, that's one chapter. There are many other chapters. One is how the Buddha is a valid founder, how we can trust him, how we can rely on the Buddha using all the logic, the reasoning. The main reason is by talking about his qualities from so many lifetimes, how his holy mind has completed the training in compassion for all sentient beings, that there's no discriminating thought. Then besides all the other qualities, because there is the omniscient mind and so forth, total wisdom, total understanding, there is no cheating sentient beings. There is no misleading sentient beings. His teaching is valid, not misleading, not cheating. There are many reasonings like that.

Then there are many analyses that the I is impermanent, negating the philosophies, the wrong views, that think that the I is permanent. There are many things like that. The main thing is that the I is impermanent, that it's transitory, changing, not only minute by minute, not only second by second, but even within a second it changes. That is due to being under the control of causes and conditions. That's the philosophy. Maybe you can meditate on it and see what you can see.

Student: Is there any kind of meaning in the fact that there is so much suffering in existence?

Rinpoche: The meaning of suffering?

Student: What is the meaning of the suffering?

Rinpoche: What's the meaning of suffering? The unpeaceful feeling, the unbearable, unpeaceful, undesirable state—that's suffering. The feeling that is unpeaceful, that we find not only unpeaceful but also undesirable. That is the base that normally our mind makes up the label "suffering." That is the base. Then, due to the base, by thinking about that base, the mind that thinks of that base then makes up the label "suffering." Using that as a reason, that mind makes up the label "suffering." Is that OK? Or maybe that's happiness! Maybe that is happiness?

Student: Do you think a student should wait until they have a foundation in lamrim before taking an initiation?

Rinpoche: That's best, yes. Not just to take an initiation, but also to practice tantra, it's best to have a realization of the renunciation of samsara, bodhicitta and emptiness. After that, if that's not possible, for example, when you meditate on impermanence and death, you're able to feel in your heart that life is very short and that it can be stopped at any time, that the actual time of death is uncertain. You actually feel that in your heart. Even though you don't have a realization, when you meditate, you're able to feel that. Similarly, when you meditate on bodhicitta, whether through the seven techniques of Mahayana cause and effect or the equalizing and exchanging oneself for others, whichever method you use, when you meditate on bodhicitta, even though you don't have a realization now, you have the feeling in your heart to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings.

And similarly with right view, you must have some idea. Even though there's no actual realization, you must have some idea. Normally what is said in the teachings, even though you don't have an actual realization but with some feeling of renunciation and bodhicitta, the tantric practice becomes correct. Then you are able to direct your meditation toward enlightenment, to achieve enlightenment and also to overcome samsara so it doesn't become an obstacle to achieving liberation. Instead of being an obstacle, it helps you to be liberated from samsara. So, tantra practice is helpful for becoming liberated from samsara instead of it being a cause. Otherwise, without an understanding of the lamrim, of the three principal aspects of the path, even though you practice tantra, you cannot practice it correctly; it doesn't direct your life toward enlightenment and it doesn't liberate you from samsara. It becomes a cause of samsara, not the remedy to cut the root of samsara.

So, by having some idea, some feeling of renunciation, bodhicitta, and emptiness, with that, you can take the initiation. Otherwise, sometimes taking an initiation and practicing tantra helps the lamrim. Due to the blessings of the guru-deities, practicing tantra helps you to have a realization of the renunciation of samsara, bodhicitta and emptiness. That is also possible. By practicing the deity, due to the deity's blessing, you can have a lamrim realization more quickly.

The other thing is that because tantra is more skillful than the Mahayana Paramitayana, the bodhisattva path, you can achieve enlightenment in one lifetime. Whereas in the Mahayana Paramitayana you have to collect merit for three countless great eons, if you practice tantra, even with lower tantra you can achieve enlightenment within one life. Especially if you practice highest tantra, it has even greater skill, it is most sophisticated. It's like the most modern

technology that can do things very fast. Because highest tantra has the greatest skill, by practicing highest tantra, you can achieve enlightenment within a brief lifetime of this degenerated time.

“Degenerated time” means a very short time life. Nowadays, the majority of the people live sixty or seventy years. Those who are able to live to a hundred are not common. A long time ago it was maybe common, but now there are very few. So, even in this degenerated time, within some number of years, you can achieve full enlightenment.

That’s how tantra is the short cut path to enlightenment, how you can quickly enlighten all sentient beings. The main aim to practice tantra is so that you can enlighten sentient beings quickly. Otherwise, the longer you take to become enlightened, the longer other sentient beings have to suffer. The other sentient beings you have a karmic connection with, those who are dependent on you to become enlightened, to be guided on the path, they have to suffer for longer. So, the main reason here again is compassion for others.

In this fortunate eon, there are one thousand buddhas who descend on this earth but not every buddha teaches tantra. Shakyamuni Buddha is the fourth, and this is the first time that tantra has been taught on this earth. The three previous buddhas didn’t teach it. It is said that the seventh buddha, who is the embodiment of Lama Tsongkhapa, will teach tantra but after that no other buddha will do so. The very last buddha promised that he will teach all the Dharma that the previous buddhas taught, so it is assumed that the last buddha might teach tantra. So, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha taught it and the seventh buddha will teach it. So, it will only happen three times. None of the other buddhas teach tantra. It’s not that they don’t know tantra. They don’t teach it because sentient beings don’t have the merit, they don’t have the good karma to meet tantric teachings and to practice tantra. That’s the main reason why the other buddhas don’t teach tantra. This is the quick way to achieve enlightenment and the quick way to enlighten other sentient beings.

Therefore, it is regarded that meeting tantric teachings is *much* rarer than actually meeting the Buddha. This is emphasized. And also, not every human world, every human continent has the opportunity to practice tantra. Only this, our continent, the Southern Continent. Therefore, in one way it’s emphasized very much how it is so rare to meet tantra, and how important it is to take the opportunity to meet tantra and to practice tantra as much as possible in this life. Even if we are unable to achieve realizations, at least we can plant the seed, the imprint of tantra as much

as possible, so that in the near future lives, we can again meet and achieve tantra. This causes us to meet tantra again in the next life and to actualize the path. In that way, we can quickly achieve enlightenment. That's one emphasis [or reason] for the practice of tantra. But also, without any practice of lamrim, we cannot practice tantra, because without lamrim practice, tantric practice doesn't become correct.

DEDICATIONS

“Due to the past, present and future merits collected by me, by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may bodhicitta be generated within my mind, in the mind of all my family members, and in all sentient beings.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all sentient beings, in whichever universe, country, city, and area I am, just by being there, may it cause all the sentient beings who are in that universe, that country, that area, to never ever be reborn in the lower realms, and immediately be liberated from all the disease, spirit harm, negative karma, obscurations, and may they achieve enlightenment quickly, by actualizing the whole path, especially bodhicitta. May they all have perfect happiness.

“May those who are blind be able to see. May those who are deaf be able to hear. May the lame be able to walk. Just by my being there, may I be able to cause this. May those who have obstacles to practice the Dharma be free from obstacles. And may those who need a guru be able to find a guru. May those who have relationship problems be free from them. May they achieve all the happiness.

“And may those who are having back pain and knee pain by listening to my teaching! Mind pain, body pain, they can't stand it! May they immediately recover.”

I guess that means by me stopping talking! Maybe not praying, but stopping talking.

In our daily life, this is also a very good way of dedicating. The essence is from now on may your life become wish-fulfilling and bring all happiness to all living beings. Just being in that area, sentient beings who are in that universe, that country, that area, those with cancer, AIDS, in a coma, so all those problems such as sicknesses are all immediately healed, just by you yourself

being in that universe or country or that area. It's very good. If you pray like this, it can gradually happen due to the power of the mind. Many bodhisattvas are able to benefit like that because they did prayers like this in many past lifetimes. This is due to the power of the mind.

“Due to the past, present and future merits collected by me, by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all sentient beings, may I able to offer benefits like the sky to all sentient beings, just as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and Lama Tsongkhapa did, by having the same quality within me as they have.

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

[Rinpoche chants in Tibetan]

Thank you so much.

Lecture 3

December 4, 1998

THE EMPTINESS OF THE TALL FINGER

That is similar to the chicken and the egg! The chicken and the egg. Can you repeat it? What's your name? [Student replies.] Eric asked about that yesterday, and I made a big noise about the label and the base, yeah? So how is it possible to clarify the base not being labeled? Is what I'm saying correct?

Do you have children? No children. In the future? No, I'm joking. Now I'm going to use that as an example. You are the son and how you relate to your parents. You are the son, but if you have a child then you are the father. Right? You're the son of your parents but that doesn't mean you are a son to your child, right? In relation to your son, you're the father. Then if your child has another child, anyway, it's similar, like that. It's similar if the parents have a daughter, and then the daughter has a child. Relating to the parents, she is a daughter, but relating to her child, she's the mother. So that is the same.

Now take a very thin person. I was going to use somebody as an example, but that person is not here today! So anyway, let's use Roger. If we compare another person who is even skinnier than Roger, Roger is fat. He's fat compared to the other person who is skinnier. Right? He's fat, he's a fat monk compared to another person, the one who is skinnier. But compared to somebody who is fatter than him, he is skinny. When somebody asks us about Roger, what he looks like, whether he is skinny or fat, we don't say, "He's both, skinny and fat." We don't normally say that. We say one thing or the other, whatever you feel, either "fat" or "skinny." We don't say "skinny fat."

Or like this. We're not questioning the whole hand. Of two fingers, we're asking which is taller and which is shorter. This one is taller. Right? This one is taller, so we call it "tall" in relation to something else. We're labeling this "taller" in relation to this shorter finger.

These are good examples to understand dependent arising, to understand how things exist being merely labeled by the mind. It helps us understand emptiness, how things have no inherent existence, how things do not exist from their own side. These simple examples are quite useful to

get an idea how things come from the mind, how things exist in *mere name*, how they do not exist from their own side—how everything comes from the mind. Everything comes from the mind in the sense of everything being merely labeled by the mind, as in the example here of a taller finger. Without comparing something, there's no way to make the label, "this is taller."

By seeing these other fingers and comparing them to this finger, our mind makes the label, "taller." That's solely how "taller" exists, how something tall exists. That's all. There's nothing else. We label it and we believe in that. That's it. There's nothing more than that. There is nothing more to how "tall" exists. From this analysis—I will repeat it—from this we can understand that "tall" comes from the mind. There is no "tall" there. Our mind sees and by comparing it with others, our mind just makes up the label "tall" and believes in that. The "tall" is not there; it is not on this. When we do not analyze the nature of the phenomena, how they exist, it appears as if "tall" is there on this finger, but when we analyze it, we see how this "tall" came into existence. Especially when we analyze in a subtle way how it exists, how it is just the thought, by seeing this finger and comparing it to those others, then the mind just makes up the label, the name "tall" and believes in that. That's it.

In reality there is no "tall" there. On this finger there is no "tall." Maybe I don't need to use the other fingers, just this one! This is a good example for us to realize what is the false view, to recognize what is called in the texts the "object to be refuted." It is the false view, the false object. What is the inherently existent appearance of the object is that which is called the object to be refuted. It's *that* which we have to realize is empty, as it is totally non-existent in reality.

Now, if that is true, when we do not meditate, when we do not analyze how "tall" exists, in daily life when we let our mind be hallucinated, after the label "tall" is merely imputed by the mind, there's the appearance, which is a projection of the inherently existent "tall" finger. After the label, there's the appearance of "tall" to us. We have the view of the tall finger.

While that appears to our mind as merely imputed, how does it appear back to us? Does it appear back to us as merely labeled by our mind? Or does it appear as having nothing to do with our concept? Nothing to do with our mind, nothing to do with our concept, with the mind labeling it. When the tall finger appears back to us, it appears as if it never came from the mind, it has nothing to do with our mind. It appears as coming completely, totally from its own side. It exists totally from its own side, which is *totally* not true, which is completely false! Right after our

mind labels “tall,” immediately after that, we have the false view of “tall.” The way “tall” exists is what is merely labeled by the mind, but it doesn’t appear to us as that. It appears back to us as totally nothing to do with the mind, not in the slightest way. It appears as totally existing from its own side. There is a tall finger there completely existing from its own side.

That is a very gross hallucination, a total hallucination. That real tall finger completely existing from its own side is totally non-existent. It is totally false according to reality, according to the way it exists.

Not only that, even the view that the tall finger is labeled by mind, this view should exist, it should have something from its own side. There should be something from its own side. How is it possible that “tall” or “tall finger” exists in mere name? It’s not possible. Even though we might understand that it is labeled by mind, we can accept that, it should have something. Therefore, it’s not merely labeled by the mind.

In that way, we accept some dependent arising, but not this very subtle dependent arising. We still can’t see how this is merely labeled by the mind, how this tall finger exists being merely labeled by mind. What blocks us is believing that there should be something that exists from its own side. That wrong notion blocks us from seeing the emptiness of the “tall,” the very nature of the “tall.” It blocks us from seeing that “tall” doesn’t have any inherent existence at all. This tall phenomenon doesn’t have even the slightest inherent existence; not even one atom exists from its own side.

Seeing the very nature of “tall finger” or “tall,” seeing its emptiness is blocked by incorrectly thinking that it cannot exist in mere name, that there should be something from its side. There must be something slightly more than what is merely labeled “tall” by the mind. There must be something slightly more than that, something not just merely labeled by the mind.

This is a very subtle hallucination. This incorrect way of thinking—the wrong concept, the ignorance—as well as the appearance appearing there, this object to be refuted is very subtle. Even though we might not accept that this tall finger does not completely exist from its own side, that it depends on the mind labeling it, that it is empty of existing from its own side, we still feel there should be something extra than what is merely labeled “tall finger.” There should be

something additional than what is merely labeled by mind. Believing this projection of the very subtle hallucination is ignorance, an unknowing mind.

I'm using the example here of "tall," but if we use that same example on the I, on the self, we are satisfied that the I exists in mere name. There's a projection, there's something extra, something *beyond* that I. Where the I exists is something beyond what is merely labeled by the mind. So there's this projection, this very subtle hallucination there. This is what is called the very subtle object to be refuted, according to the last of the four Buddhist schools of philosophy, the Prasangika Madhyamaka school. The first school is Vaibhashika or *Jedrag mawa* in Tibetan, then Sautrantika or *Do de pa*, then Mind Only school, Cittamatra or *Sem tsam pa*. Then there is the Madhyamaka or Middle Way school, which has two subschools, Svantrantika Madhyamaka school, *Rang gyu pa*, *Um ma rang gyu pa*, and Prasangika Madhyamaka or *U ma thäl gyur pa*.

This very subtle false view is that the way the I exists is not just merely labeled by mind but something slightly beyond from that, something more than that. Here we are describing that the appearance exists from its own side. It is not just merely labeled by mind but something slightly more than that, then that's what happens—it exists from its own side.

This should actually be explained from the four schools. From the first, second, and third schools, it starts from a very gross false view. Maybe that can be another time. But now this, the way the I appears to us as something slightly more than what is merely labeled by the mind, this projection, this false I that is not there, this is the very subtle hallucination.

THE DEFINITION OF IGNORANCE

It has been projected by our own ignorance, by the unknowing mind. How? The ignorance, the mind that is unknowing, does not realize that the I that appears in this way, as slightly more than what is merely labeled by the mind, that this is totally non-existent, totally empty. It's not there. It's totally non-existent. It is not space but like space.

This ignorance does not realize that which is the truth of I, the ultimate nature of the I. This ignorance, the mind not seeing this, leaves a negative imprint on the mental continuum. The reason it is called negative is because the result is negative. The result is samsara, it is suffering. That's why I call this imprint negative. Having left a negative imprint on the mental continuum,

this imprint projects this hallucination, this I that is not just merely labeled by the mind, that exists by its nature, that exists from its own side.

In our daily life, we have not realized this emptiness of the I, what the I, the self, is, and we do not even practice mindfulness in this, looking at how the I is empty of existing from its own side, or we do not practice mindfulness looking at how the I that appears to us is a total hallucination, how it is false. We do not look at that which is false as false; we do not look at that which is a hallucination as a hallucination. I mentioned this yesterday and at other times. Even this mindfulness meditation is not there.

The minute we let our mind to hold on to and believe that this projection, the I existing from its own side, is true, without a meditation practice, there's no protection for our mind. We also lack the mindfulness that sees the subtle dependent arising, how the I is a dependent arising, so there's no protection for our mind. The minute, the second we let our mind believe that this is true, we create the cause of samsara. At that moment, with that concept of an inherently existing I, that ignorance, we create the root of samsara, the root of all suffering, of all the delusions, of all afflicted emotions and karma.

This ignorance that is the first limb of the twelve dependent related limbs, the first one, this unknowing mind is a mental factor, which is *sem jung* in Tibetan. I don't think "mental factor" is a satisfactory translation. It's very rough. Words like "mental factor" and "consciousness" help but they are not exact translations. [

A mental factor is a mind that arises with a principal consciousness, harmonious in five ways, in aspect, object, time, substance or essence, and maybe element, I'm not sure. Again, there are slight differences. I don't remember clearly, but the *Abhidharmakosha* and different texts explain that some of the things are different, that there is a slightly different way of explaining them. Anyway, the definition of a mental factor, *sem jung*, is that which arises in five ways in harmony with the principal consciousness.

Anyway, with this *sem jung*, this mental factor, that which is ignorant, the way of apprehending the object is totally the opposite to wisdom, to the wisdom realizing selflessness. For example, relating to the I, the emptiness of the inherently existent I is realizing that the self is totally non-existent. This mental factor of ignorance apprehends the I in a totally contradictory way, the

complete opposite of the wisdom realizing that this I is empty. Empty of what? Not empty of the I, but empty of the additional thing that is not there, empty of inherent existence.

There may be one word for it, I'm not sure, but this is the general definition of the root of samsara, the definition of the first limb of the twelve dependent related limbs. If we talk about this samsara, this human body, it has twelve limbs. The evolution of this samsara happens through twelve dependent related limbs, and the first limb of this human rebirth is ignorance, [the root that creates] beginningless ignorance, beginningless suffering. Knowing this is so, how can we stand that everything is like this? We must get out, we must be free from all this, liberated from all this. It is unbearable for even a minute, for even a second to not be free, to not be liberated from this ignorance, this hallucination, from all these sufferings.

The way we can be liberated from this is the lamrim, through studying and learning the lamrim. Studying doesn't just mean studying words but studying includes gaining experience on the path. That has to come through meditation. Meditation is not just thinking, not just sitting like this. Even if we know the subject of the whole path to enlightenment, even if we know all the teachings of the entire path, even if we know by heart the entire scripture, the hundreds of volumes of sutra and tantra taught by the Buddha, if we can remember them all, that alone cannot allow us to achieve realizations. Just thinking of the path alone is not enough. Our mind needs to be free from obstacles, from defilements, from negative karma. Therefore, we need to practice purification.

Then we need to create the necessary conditions, which means collecting merit. This is like putting water on the field. When the rain comes, when we water the field, the seed can grow by being moistened by the water. All the realizations come from buddha nature, but for all the realizations to come out we need the blessings of the guru. And for that, we need to practice guru yoga or guru devotion, correctly devoting to the virtuous friend. And for *that*, we need to find a guru.

After we have met the guru, through correctly devoting to the virtuous friend with a guru yoga practice, from our side, from the disciple's side, we see the guru as a buddha. Whether the guru is a buddha, whether he or she is a bodhisattva or not, by looking at the guru as a buddha, this pure mind of devotion causes us to receive the blessings of the guru. With that we see their

inseparability from the Buddha. And then, from that, all the realizations come, up to enlightenment. Then we are able to do perfect work for all sentient beings.

There's one word left, then I'll stop!

One word. So, you see now, our mind with ignorance holds very intensely onto the belief that this I is true, that there is such an I. Due to the support of the practice of purification, reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas, which is unbelievably powerful, and doing prostrations, or a Vajrasattva practice, and so forth, the negative karmas are purified. Those are the main ones but there are also other purification practices with sutra and higher tantra. However, with this help, by doing the analytical meditation, looking at the guru as a buddha from our own side, we develop strong devotion. When the devotion is very strong, so many obstacles, so many negative karmas are purified.

When the mind is in such a very positive state, due to all these conditions coming together, then even hearing just two words of a teaching on emptiness or an explanation of what is the object to be refuted, just one or two words from the guru, it just clicks. It awakens our mind when our mind is in such a positive state, when all these conditions are brought together.

For example, from the instruction of an experienced guru, even just two or three words like, "There's a vase on the vase" or "There's the I on the I" or something like that, this suddenly awakens our mind. Generally however, "vase on the vase" doesn't make any sense! "I on the I" doesn't make sense! But at that time it makes sense. It's not talking about putting one vase on top of another vase. It doesn't mean that. It's an analysis, describing the false view.

During such a time, it doesn't depend on the whole text, we just hear one or two words and it clicks; it awakens our mind. Suddenly we are able to feel, we are able to identify, like when we see a picture of a person, we are able to identify with that person. Due to a few words from an experienced lama, we are able to identify the meaning of what the text is talking about.

THE FEAR OF REALIZING THERE IS NO I

We can start with external objects such as colors. Because the colors are very bright, it's easy to recognize the false view, the false object, the object to be refuted. For example, looking at the

colors in the room, whatever color there is, there are especially bright objects. It's very useful to use those to recognize the object to be refuted, to recognize the false object. From the colors of a brocade, like a brocade around a thangka, we can see exactly what these two or three words mean. We actually see in that way. Then we identify an external object, and immediately, when we analyze the I, it is like that. The refuting object, the false I, has always been there but we have not recognized it as false. From beginningless rebirths, and from our birth [in this life], we have never discovered that I, that which is false, is false. Suddenly we start to see the I is also that way.

I thought it might be twelve o'clock! I'm just trying to finish but it's kind of taking time.

At that time, after this recognition, we suddenly discover that which we haven't discovered before. "Oh, this is the false I. This is what is called the object to be refuted in the teachings." We identify with that. Right on top of that, with single-pointed concentration, we see that in everyday life, with the language that we commonly use, when we say "I" we mean the real I, the I that appears from its own side, and we think that this I is there. As I mentioned before, we believe it exists on these aggregates or in this body.

In everyday language, we call this the "real I" but Western psychology calls it the "emotional I." In the Dharma texts, this object is called the "inherently existing I." It appears to exist by its nature, to exist inherently, to exist from its own side. This is the object to be refuted. Describing the false I in the texts, it's exactly like that. But when we are able to recognize the false I, all these words mentioned in the philosophical texts are exact.

Before that, although we may be using these terms, our recognition of it may not be the same. Before we actually identified those words with our own view, the view of the I, even though we may be debating about this subject, talking about it, in our heart the real recognition is not there. It's like there is a thief in the house but we recognize the thief as somebody else, as somebody who is not the thief. We regard the person who is not the thief as the thief, but we regard the one who is thief in a positive way. We don't regard the one who is the real enemy as an enemy, but the one who is not an enemy we regard as an enemy. It's like that. With that wrong recognition, with that incorrect kind of thinking, there's no way to meditate on emptiness correctly.

However, after single-pointedly concentrating on this I, this emotional I, we can now recognize how it is false, it is the object to be refuted. While we are single-pointedly concentrating right on that, at the same time, we practice the mindfulness that this I is a hallucination. We then think about the meaning of the hallucination, that it doesn't exist.

At that time, it's just a second. What we see in that second is that this I cannot stay. This I that we have been holding onto so intensely, without choice, without freedom, because it is false, it doesn't exist *at all*. At that time, it doesn't go anywhere. It's not as if it was there but we cause it to go somewhere else. This I doesn't go anywhere, it's just non-existent. The I doesn't go anywhere, it doesn't come out of the ears or the hands. It's just here and we have been holding onto it. But suddenly there's nothing there. There's no I there. Suddenly there's nothing to hold onto, there's no I to hold onto.

It is extremely important to remember this, because we have been holding onto this I, not just from this morning, not just from the time of birth, but from beginningless time, from beginningless rebirths. We have been holding onto that there is something there. That there is a real I to hold onto. From beginningless rebirths, we have been holding onto this.

Only *now* we can see it is non-existent. Therefore, when they see this, those who have less merit, lower intelligent beings, have unbelievable fear, like no other fear. It's not the fear of somebody threatening you. This fear is a much, much deeper fear because we have been believing this from beginningless lifetimes. Sorry! I'm repeating it over and over! But because we have been holding onto this as true from beginningless rebirths, only now, we see this I which is non-existent as non-existent. So, of course, unbelievable fear would come. Not for everybody though. It is said in the teachings that the higher intelligent beings, whether they are bodhisattvas or not, those who have much merit, for them there is incredible joy. There is so much joy, there are tears and the hairs stand up. I'm not sure which hair! I don't think it's this hair that stands up!

For them, there is unbelievable bliss or joy. Tears come out. But for those who have less merit, who have lower intelligence, unbelievable fear comes at that time. So, at that time, we have to be very careful. Therefore, it is very important to have a complete understanding of the teachings on emptiness. We need to have received the teachings as extensively as possible and know how to guide ourselves.

Unless we have a complete understanding of the teachings on emptiness and especially what happens to the mental state when we start to realize emptiness, this unbelievable fear comes. Then we are *so* scared as we start to realize emptiness. We are just about to really become the most fortunate being, but then, because we don't have guidance, because we have no idea what's happening to us, what we are going through, unbelievable fear comes as we start to lose the I.

Because we haven't heard of this experience, we fear we might be falling into nihilism. Actually, we are starting to become the most fortunate being by realizing emptiness. This is the time we cut the root of samsara, the root of the oceans of samsaric suffering. But, not having received or not having understood the teachings of this experience, we may make a huge mistake, thinking that this is not realizing emptiness but falling in nihilism. Then we may try to escape, try to stop the experience. Stopping the experience becomes an obstacle to realizing emptiness.

The fear is something very intense. What can happen is we are so fearful we don't want to think about it, to analyze the emptiness of the I. An example is having eaten some food that makes us so sick for weeks and months, that almost kills us. After that, we don't want to even think about that food. Anyway, that's an example. What can happen is that we completely stop. Nobody is stopping us, but we stop. We become an obstacle to ourselves realizing emptiness. This is the only way we can achieve liberation from samsara, the only way to be totally liberated from all suffering and its causes, and we become an obstacle to this.

What should we do? We should remember the teachings if we have received them, especially the experiential teachings, the teachings on what kind of experience will happen at that time. Then, if we are of lower intelligence, we will already know this incredible fear will come and we will know that we will have to go through it in order to realize emptiness. It's like crossing a river. So, there is no problem. We don't have to become an obstacle to ourselves.

The Buddha said

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

This is how the Great Ones guide sentient beings, not by washing the negative karma of sentient beings with water, not like taking a thorn out with the hand, and not by transferring their realizations to sentient beings, like in a hospital transplanting the brain or heart from a monkey's heart into a human or a human heart into a monkey. The way the Buddha guides and liberates sentient beings from suffering is by revealing the truth.

As we are about to realize emptiness, this is what is happening to us. Now we are realizing the truth that the Buddha revealed, we are experiencing it. Therefore, if before we go through this, if we don't have an idea beforehand, our attitude can become a great obstacle to realizing this very precious truth. That is the purpose of the Buddha coming into this world, why he descended in this world. He revealed the truth of suffering and the truth of the cause of suffering, karma and delusion.

Realizing the object that this ignorance apprehends and holds onto is the way to cut this ignorance. Our ignorance holds onto this I, not this merely labeled I that exists but this real I, which appears to exist from its own side. We hold onto this real I and believe it is true a hundred percent.

Why is this mental factor a wrong concept? Why is this a false mind? Because if we analyze, the minute we analyze whether this object that ignorance believes in and holds onto is really there, it becomes unclear. Instead of finding that it really exists, instead of discovering it is really there, it immediately becomes unclear. The existence of that real I, appearing from there, becomes unclear. When we start to analyze, what we discover is that it is not there. Not the slightest atom of it is there. It is totally non-existent.

There is no part of the inherently existent I that exists. Not even the slightest atom of it is there; it's totally non-existent. When we analyze, when we do the meditation, what we have to realize is that it's totally non-existent. That disproves the concept that believes in the projection of the inherently existing I, the mind that thinks the aggregates, the association of the body and mind, are the I and makes up the label, "I." The mind first thinks of these aggregates, the base. *Now* I'm coming down to the base!

The mind thinks of the base, the aggregates, and then makes up the label, "I." That mind merely imputes the I. Then, right after that, the negative imprint left on the mental continuum by the

past ignorance decorates, projects inherent existence. It decorates the inherently existent appearance on the merely labeled I. I often use the example of putting paintings or the frames on the wall or putting a carpet on the floor or a brocade on the table, covering it. It's similar to a movie camera taking pictures of many people, mountains, countries, so many objects, then it leaves a negative on a roll of film, then later through a projector, with electricity, this machine is able to project the images on a movie or TV screen.

Also, with photos, using chemicals and things, I don't know how it is done exactly, many things can be printed from the negative film. That's like the imprint left on the mental continuum by ignorance. Now, from that negative roll, when it's processed with chemicals or liquid or whatever, it gets printed on paper and appears back to us. So the photo happened, then appears to us. Like that, the past ignorance left an imprint on the mental continuum and, right after the mind that thinks the aggregates, the base, exists, it makes up the label "I." Then depending on what the body or the mind does, it also makes up the label, "action" for the I—walking, sitting, sleeping, working, and so forth.

The moment the mind merely labels the I, the negative imprint left by the past ignorance immediately projects this hallucination, this inherently existent appearance. Actually, when the I appears back to us after being merely labeled, it should appear back as merely labeled by the mind. It should appear back like that, but why doesn't it?

There's a big question there, a very important question. When it appears back to us, when it comes into existence, it's merely labeled by the mind but when it appears back to us, why doesn't it appear merely labeled by the mind? Why does it appear as something else that is totally the opposite, as *not* merely labeled by mind? There is a big pile of hallucinations on that. There are many levels of hallucination. It is because we have many wrong concepts. There is the very subtle one I explained before. Realizing that very subtle one, something which is a little extra than what is merely labeled by mind, by realizing that, *only* realizing that very subtle hallucination is an empty object, that is the object to be refuted, according to the Madhyamaka school, the fourth one, especially, particularly the subschool, the Prasangika school. In that school's view, that is the object to be refuted.

By *only* realizing this, the emptiness of that little something left there, after all these analyses, it shows the many other wrong views held by the other schools. When we see this is empty, only

then can we realize the ultimate nature of the I, only *then* can we see the middle way view, the Madhyamaka view. Otherwise, we either fall into nihilism or externalism. Nihilism is where nothing exists; there's no I. If we fall into nihilism, it is extremely dangerous. There's no I, no karma, no reincarnation, all these. The other dangerous view is externalism, seeing the I in a very gross way, like the *atman*, something that is permanent, inherently existent. Here we're talking about something very subtle, the I not merely labeled by mind, existing from its own side. We fall into the other extreme, externalism. Both of these views are false.

When we analyze what the ignorance holds onto, I mentioned about the projection on the merely labeled I. Why is there this hallucination? Why does the I appear not merely labeled by mind? Because there is a projection of inherent existence on the merely labeled I from the negative imprint left by ignorance. That is the reason why, in our view when we do not analyze, when we let our mind be hallucinated, there is the appearance that there is a real I inside this body. However, without adding the word "real," there is an I inside this body, on this group of the five aggregates, on this association of body and mind, like a tablecloth covering a table.

That is the reason why we have this view that there is an I there, inside this body—I'm not sure where, maybe inside the chest or somewhere—or on this association of body and mind. There is an I there on this base. But when we analyze we don't find the I there. There are two types of I and we cannot find either. We cannot find the false I, the inherently existent I, the independent I, the one not merely labeled by the mind, the I on this base inside the body. We cannot find it anywhere, from the tip of the hair down to the toes. Besides that, we cannot even find the I that exists, that which is merely labeled by the mind. We cannot find the inherently existent I, the I that appears to us not merely labeled by mind, which means a real I appearing from there, and besides that we cannot find the one on the base, the aggregates, the association of the body and mind. Neither on these nor anywhere. We cannot find this anywhere.

But we can find the merely labeled I in this world. We can find it now in Nepal. We can find it at Kopan. During these few days this merely labeled I is in Nepal, it's in Kathmandu, at Kopan. Maybe it can be found at Kopan! It can be found in this gompā, in this meditation hall on this cushion!

But you cannot find it in this body. We can find the merely labeled I even on this cushion but we cannot find it in this body. We cannot find the merely labeled I on this association of the body

and the mind, or the base that is the collection of the five aggregates. We cannot even find it on this. What normally exists is the merely labeled I, but even this we cannot find in this body, on this association of body and mind, on these aggregates, on this base. This collection of the five aggregates is the valid base that can receive the label “I,” but this I cannot be found on this base; it doesn’t exist on this base.

The two analyses are that. Since we were born, since this morning, according to our recollection, the I that has been appearing to us is the I in this body or the I on these aggregates. We assume that there is an I on these aggregates, on this base. As I mentioned before, this is the projection, the hallucination, the inherently existent appearance not decorated by the ignorance. It appears like this to us, and then we apprehend it that way, we believe that, we hold onto that, thinking it is real. Our mind thinking this is true and holding onto it is the ignorance.

This has been happening not only from this morning, not only from birth, but from beginningless rebirths. Why? Why are we born in our mother’s womb holding this package of hallucinations and wrong concepts? Why did we come from our mother’s womb like this? Why were we conceived in our mother’s womb with this ignorance, with this hallucination of a false I?

That is because in previous lives we didn’t realize emptiness and therefore we are now unable to recognize that this false I is false. We have also never ceased the imprints by actualizing the remedial path, method and wisdom. We have never ceased the subtle imprint of the ignorance, this unknowing mind, by actualizing the remedy, the whole path. If we had been able to destroy that imprint by purifying it with the remedy, the path of method and wisdom, we wouldn’t have any more hallucination. There wouldn’t be this dualistic view, this projection of an inherently existent appearance, because there would be nothing to project from the mind, there would be no negative imprint. That subtle negative imprint that projects this hallucination would not be there. We would be totally free from this hallucination. But because that didn’t happen in our past lives, we have been born into this life with all this total hallucination and ignorance.

From time without beginning we have had this hallucination. Even the Buddha’s omniscient mind cannot see the beginning of our hallucination, the beginning of this ignorance. That means there is no beginning. That shows how long we have been suffering. Without beginning, we have been reincarnating in samsara, we have been suffering of samsara.

SEEING THIS HALLUCINATION BRINGS COMPASSION

I started this talk a few days ago but never completed it. I meant to emphasize how to do the best in our life, but I didn't mention that. I mentioned the conclusion but although I meant to talk in this way, to bring this out, it didn't happen.

Anyway, this how our life has been. The continuation of our suffering of samsara has no beginning. The cause did not have a beginning, the continuation of the cause—the ignorance, the hallucination—did not have a beginning. When you think about it, it's unbearable, unimaginable. It's like a prisoner caught in a prison who wants to be free. Every second, they want to get out of this prison. Like that, we can't stand it for even a second, we want to be out of this. If we analyze like this, thinking how much we have been suffering by being in samsara with all this hallucination, this ignorance, we can't stand being in samsara for even a second.

Then of course if we think of other sentient beings, who are numberless, they have been suffering in exactly the same way from time without beginning. So of course, then we feel it is so unbearable and, besides that, when we meditate on their kindness, we feel they are so precious. Besides meditating on their kindness, we feel them in our heart. By feeling how unbearable their suffering is, we develop compassion. Having renunciation to our own suffering and the cause of suffering helps us generate very deep compassion.

This is not just compassion for somebody who is sick, for a sick dog or cat, or for a bird or a butterfly—a compassionate butterfly! It's not like that. This is also compassion for our enemy, for the one who abuses us, who treats us badly, very unbearable compassion. As I mentioned yesterday, that compassion makes us have bodhicitta because it makes us want to bring them to enlightenment, to free them from all their suffering. Our compassion makes us do the work for others, to lead them from suffering and bring them to enlightenment.

There are two aspects of the altruistic mind. The first is seeking to work for others due to the compassion that comes, to bring them to enlightenment. Then, the second is the means to do this, the thought of seeking enlightenment for ourselves to be able to do this. So before that, there is the thought of seeking to work for others. Because of that, there comes the thought of seeking to achieve enlightenment. So there's bodhicitta. By having that realization, we enter the Mahayana path. Then we become a real holy being, a real fortunate being. We take responsibility for the numberless sentient beings: the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts,

the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless gods and demigods, and the numberless intermediate state beings—to free the numberless obscured, suffering sentient beings from all the sufferings and to bring them to enlightenment. We take that total responsibility on ourselves, determining, “I will do it, I will do it by myself.”

Having that attitude, taking universal responsibility from the heart, we become a bodhisattva, a really holy being. Even if every person in the world, even if every sentient being criticizes us, becomes unhappy or angry with us, even if they don’t love us, from *our* side, by having this realization, we feel only compassion and loving kindness toward them. We feel even stronger compassion for those who abuse us. Even if everyone criticizes us, is unhappy with us or hates us, from our side, we especially feel even stronger compassion; we cherish them even more. That stronger bodhicitta makes us achieve enlightenment more quickly and be able to enlighten other sentient beings more quickly so that they don’t have to suffer for a long time.

What I was trying to say at the beginning of the talk was how important it is to do this course. That was what I was going to say before! This is a lamrim course, not just what is called meditation. There are many things called meditation. Unless we really know the Dharma, we really know what Dharma is, how to practice the Dharma or how to meditate, even these simple things, we may believe we have been meditating our whole life, but actually we have completely wasted our life. We may believe we have been meditating for thirty, forty or fifty years, but actually we have been totally wasting our life. Even the action of meditating did not become virtue. Our whole life meditating has become nonvirtue, just another additional negative karma, another cause of samsara, even of the three lower realms. If we don’t know how to meditate, even on the very basic understanding of what the Dharma is, we can waste our whole life while believing that we have been meditating all the time.

So now, here comes the importance of the lamrim. With our own experience, we first realize the truth. Then, with our own wisdom, we can liberate other sentient beings from the oceans of suffering of samsara. And not only liberate, but by revealing the skillful means, bodhicitta, the Mahayana path and then the six perfections, we can bring other sentient beings to enlightenment.

So, I think I’ll definitely stop here.

Lecture 4

December 5, 1998

ZINA AND MUMMY MAX

Our room [in Buxa] had a door on one side, with my bed [next to it.] Every week, I watched monks carry the bodies of those monks who had died to the cemetery. In each college there were many sections, and those from the same section would carry the body and go to cemetery to pray, before they burned the body there. So, every week we saw these processions passing through. Some monks went crazy, I think because of having lost Tibet and all their things. Many things happened.

We [met Zina when we] were staying at the new monastery of Domo Geshe Rinpoche—there were two that belonged to him, built during his past lifetime. One was old, one was new. The new one was on the road from Ghoom to Darjeeling. Lama Yeshe stayed there with me, even though he wasn't a monk from that monastery. I was a monk from [Domo Rinpoche's monastery in Tibet], along with the monk who took care of me in Tibet and also in India, in the early times, the one I also called my actual teacher, even though I only learned the *Praises to Twenty-one Taras* orally. That is all that I remember, what I was taught.

So, Lama Yeshe and I were there in this monastery. Usually tourists came to take pictures. Some went inside the temple to take some pictures, and sometimes they just stayed outside. Many tourists came; there were seasons. One day, a monk called Sound of Dragon from that monastery came to say somebody was there. He actually misunderstood, probably because he didn't know English well. Zina was looking for Domo Geshe, but when she asked this monk where Domo Geshe was, he thought that she was looking for us, that maybe she was my friend because I used to speak some English at that time. Because of his misunderstanding, he brought her to our small room. Normally she didn't drink Tibetan tea. She didn't like it, but that first day when she came inside, my manager or the teacher who took care of me, offered her a big mug from the monastery's public tea which is kept in a big pot. Because it was butter tea, made with butter and salt, normally she wouldn't drink it, but that day she drank it completely. It was the first time.

Then, she said she had bought a book and she was looking for Domo Geshe Rinpoche and she asked some questions. Because I spoke some broken English—it's still broken English anyway—she asked questions which Lama answered, and I tried to translate. After that, she started coming every day from about nine o'clock for two hours. She asked many questions from this book about psychic powers and astral trips and this and that! Huh? Astral travel, not astral trekking! She also had a small baby. I think she came every day for about a month, I'm not sure.

Then she asked us to come down to stay with her so she could continue to receive teachings. Where she stayed belonged to a Maharaja, a rich Indian family. The Indian family lived upstairs and she lived downstairs. In the garden, there was a tiny tea-room. I think the family used the room to drink tea. It was a small room with glass around. There was Lama Yeshe's bed and my bed and between Lama and myself there was a table, and there was the door. For nine months, she spent time with us, mainly in the mornings. At that time we didn't know—I mean, at that time *I* didn't know, that after getting up in the morning, she spent an hour in the bathroom fixing herself up, then she came for the teaching. That was her normal style!

But there weren't many teachings. Most of the time, she told us her stories! She had an unbelievable life with *all* kinds of experience. Anyway, then it was lunch time! So often, the days were like that. Then, in the afternoon, Lama Yeshe studied English and astrology. Darjeeling's weather was very heavy, very, very wet and foggy, with rain. But Lama had so much inspiration, so he went to learn English from two very old Christian or Catholic people. Their bodies were very old, bent like this, but they were still trying to learn Tibetan language. Even though their bodies were very old, they were still able to spread Christianity and still trying to learn Tibetan. Lama went there to learn English from them.

At other times, he went to learn astrology, like the [astrological] calendar, with all the details about the planets, about the right and wrong times [to do things], with all those details, down to the hours and minutes. There was so much to learn. A Tibetan calendar has so much information, so many details in one day. He studied with a very learned Sherpa. I think maybe he was a monk, one of those who produced the calendars. He was one of the learned ones, a very nice person, a very straight person. No, I think maybe he *wasn't* a monk. He drank *chang*, wine, and Tibetan tea and snuff? What? [Student corrects.] Snuff. Beside the window there was snuff and wine and Tibetan tea, butter tea. That was his manner, but he was quite a spiritual person. I think when he passed away, he died in a meditative state.

So, Zina took care of Lama Yeshe and me for many years. Then, after that, Mama Max, who was a Negro. She had been an American school teacher for many years at different places. So, maybe she did it here for a long time. We met her due to Zina, then she took teachings from Lama. I sometimes translated for her. Later she took care of us for maybe seven years, something like that. At that time we built the two monasteries: Lawudo and here [Kopan].

RINPOCHE IN A HINDU CEMETERY

Anyway, to go back to the finish! In Delhi, near where the Tushita center had started, there was a cemetery. Once, Lama and Mama Max went to the center, but I didn't go, I waited. I was standing at the cemetery, watching what people did with the body. When rich people came, they came with hundreds of people, with motorbikes and cars. So many people came and they had special, chopped wood, so the body would burn very easily. Before they burned the body, everybody surrounded it and paid respects to it. But when poor people brought a body, only two or three people came, and the wood was not like the rich people's wood, but old wood, in very big chunks, and it didn't burn easily; it took a long time.

At that time, as I was watching a very rich Indian family with many people—I think a lady brought the body—there was one man, maybe the father or husband, I'm not sure. At that time their faces were different. He asked me, "What are you doing here? Are you doing research?" I don't remember what I said. Praying or watching, I'm not sure. So, I felt that this was the best moment to talk about Dharma to the Indians. While the family's body was there, that was the time to discuss the reality of life. All the rest of their life is completely distracted with sense pleasures, completely occupied with worldly activities, where the mind completely thinks of something else. But now, today, this is the reality of the life, death. Because death had happened to one of the family members, their attitude was kind of so sad that this had happened, but the mind had no solution. This thing had happened, this reality of life had happened, but they didn't know what to do. They had no answer for what to do. They were kind of lost. So I thought, normally it is very difficult to talk about the Dharma because they, especially the rich people, have no interest to listen, or they are too preoccupied with business, too preoccupied by distractions, by sense pleasures. But now today, at that time, they had time to think, they could see the reality of life. I felt that was the best time to talk to them. When death is there, it is very easy to talk about the Dharma.

I'm just talking on and on and on again. I apologize.

But it wasn't true, because the object that the mind believes doesn't exist. I explained yesterday why that ignorance, the concept of inherent existence, the concept of an inherently existent I, is a *wrong* concept. It's similar here. This concept of permanence, regarding these things as permanent, is wrong, because the object the mind grasps on to, what it believes, is not true. These phenomena are not permanent. Their nature is transitory, even second by second, even within a second. Our mind only sees change when it becomes very gross, like when flowers wither and the colors change, when they become old, wrinkled. Only when the change becomes very gross does it become noticeable to our mind. Our mind is only able to notice the extremely gross part of the change. This is another reality of our life, another hallucination that we have in life, another hallucination in the world, looking at things as permanent, including the I, looking at the I as permanent while it is an impermanent phenomenon.

THE CONCEPT OF PERMANENCE CHEATS US

I heard a story about a Japanese boy who died in California, I think in Boulder Creek, or somewhere. Anyway, around there, Boulder Creek or Santa Cruz, a Japanese boy died. I guess he was healthy. However, he thought the world had cheated him because when death happened, it happened suddenly. Suddenly he came to know that he was dying, which he didn't expect to happen. Therefore, as he was dying, he thought that the world had cheated him. I don't exactly know what that means. Did it mean that the world didn't tell him that he was going to die? Or did it mean the world didn't advertise that he was going to die! The world didn't advertise on TV or in the city that he was going to die. So he thought the outside world had cheated him; he thought like that.

But what he said was very interesting. He thought the outside world had cheated him because he never thought he was going to die, he didn't really think about death before, the reality of life that he would have to go through. Then, suddenly it happened to him. Actually, the reason I say it is interesting is not necessarily because what he said was correct, but I found his comment interesting because the cheating, actually here it is not this. This concept of permanence, looking at impermanent phenomena as permanent, is just one of the hallucinations that we have. It is the long-lasting, simultaneously born thought arising that even animals have. It happens even when

we are babies, before going to school, before going to kindergarten; we are born with this thought. Like the other one, the king of delusions, ignorance, the unknowing mind, the concept of an inherently existing I and so forth, just as we are born with that, we are born with this concept of permanence, with this hallucination.

The reason I find what the boy said interesting is that actually the cheating didn't come from the outside, the cheating came from his own mind. His mind cheated him, his own concept of permanence cheated him. His concept of permanence is not the one thinking that permanent phenomena are permanent, not that one, but the concept holding onto or apprehending impermanent phenomena, transitory phenomena, as permanent. This wrong concept cheated him. This concept made him think every day that he was going to live for a long time, that he was going to live for many years. He was thinking that [he would live for a long time] even in the same year, the same month, the same week that he was going to die. While death was about to happen, even the same year, the same month, the same week, he was still thinking that he would live for a long time, for many years.

For us, this concept doesn't allow us to think of the reality of life, how life is impermanent and that we have to experience death. This concept of permanence doesn't allow us to think about this, to look at the nature of our life, the nature of its impermanence. It doesn't allow us to think that not only are we going to die but that the death can happen at any time. It doesn't allow us to learn about death, which is definitely going to come, which is going to happen to us; to learn about *our* death, which is going to happen, before it happens and to make preparation, to learn the methods we need to apply when the death happens. This concept of permanence doesn't allow us to make preparations for death.

This concept makes us think that we are going to live for many years, and that delays our practice, it delays our retreat. Even though we think it is a good idea to do a retreat, to do some practice, to meditate, this concept tells us that first we need to do this or first we need to do that. First, we need to go trekking! Or first we need to do business or finish all these projects, depending on what our involvement is. "First, I will finish this project or construct this building, then later, in the future, when things are OK, I will do a retreat. When everything's OK, I will practice Dharma!"

On the basis of the concept of permanence, attachment arises, the attachment clinging to this life, to the comfort of this life, to the pleasure of this life. Then, this mind of worldly concern is strong and the thought to practice the Dharma is weak. So, instead of thinking to practice the Dharma now, with the thought of worldly concern, with attachment, we think, “First I will do this, the work for this life, then I will do the Dharma practice later.” And so we do the work for this life, to obtain the happiness of this life.

With this idea that only when everything is OK will we practice the Dharma or do a retreat, we think like that this year and we think like that next year and the year after that. Then one day, suddenly death happens to us. Before we begin our retreat, before we begin our Dharma practice, death happens and we miss out. Death happens before the Dharma practice or the retreat or whatever, and it’s finished, life is gone, this most precious human life is gone, especially the perfect human life that is qualified with the eight freedoms and the ten richnesses, which is *much* more precious than all the wealth there is in this world. If we compare the value of our perfect human body with the value of all the wealth that there is on this earth, it’s nothing compared to the value of our perfect human body.

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF THIS BODY

[The value of this human body is] even more than the whole sky filled with not just gold, diamonds and billions of dollars, but the whole sky filled with wish-granting jewels. The texts use the wish-granting jewel as an example but generally we can use whatever our mind thinks of as the most precious material. Whichever one we feel is most precious is nothing compared to the value of the human body, especially the perfect human body. In the past, bodhisattvas or those who had so much merit were able to find these wish-granting jewels, collecting them from under the ocean. They then did three types of cleaning, the first one to clean off the mud and the last one with cotton to clean the bad smell. Then, they put this jewel on top of a banner on a full moon day, the fifteenth of the [lunar] month. Is it a full moon day or a full moon night? [*Student:* It can be both.] Anyway, on the day of the full moon night or the full moon day, or whatever, they put this jewel on top of a banner, and then whatever you pray for, any enjoyment you pray for, you are able to receive. If you want to get a Mercedes, you can. There’s another one, not a Mercedes, a new one. What? A Rolls Royce. Anyway, whatever enjoyment you request or pray for, you are able to get. The material has a power, but mainly it is because of the person’s good

karma. The main answer is that the person has collected good karma in the past. That is the source of the success.

Good karma is the actual wish-fulfilling gem; it is the real wish-fulfilling gem. The real wish-fulfilling gem is the good karma, the merit created in the past with a positive mind, with a virtuous thought, having done a nonvirtuous action. Sorry! I said with a virtuous thought in the past, we did a nonvirtuous action! It just slipped out! Anyway, in the past, with a *virtuous* thought, we did a virtuous action, we created that merit. That good karma we created is the real precious one; that is the real jewel because our happiness only comes from that. Our happiness only comes from good karma, not from nonvirtuous actions, so that good karma is the real jewel. The real inner jewel is that.

This is similar to how, by praying to a holy being, our sicknesses are healed or we have success in business. That is similar. The idea is the same. Again, we need to have good karma from our side. So, if we have good karma, if we already have a bank of good karma, if we have opened a bank for good karma in the past, then our prayer will quickly be successful because we have already created the cause in the past. Therefore, on the basis of all that good karma, if we then make the prayer, it becomes very effective, very successful. With our good karma and the power of the enlightened beings, success comes. Whatever success we wish for, healing a sickness such as cancer and so forth, every success comes.

Now here, they [the enlightened beings] become the condition, and *we* are the main creator of the cause of the success. This is similar to the wish-granting jewel, how by praying we get all the enjoyments very easily—this is mainly due to our good karma, the very rich good karma we have collected. Just by wishing, just by thinking about them, we can get them. Just by thinking, things happen to us. It happens within a few days or even within the same day, or even after a few hours or even after a few minutes, things happen even without putting much effort into thinking about it.

The wish-granting jewel here is a condition. It has its own power, and that become a condition. So now, among all the materials, what is the most precious thing that we can use? We can use this comparison to realize how this precious human body, especially one qualified with eight freedoms and ten richnesses, is so precious. In order to realize this, we use something very rare, very difficult to find, or something very precious, an external phenomenon. There is nothing

there among the material possessions that is the same value as our perfect human body, but the highest, most precious among all material things is the wish-granting jewel. Even though it cannot become the path to enlightenment and therefore doesn't have the same value as our precious human body, it's used as the only example, the most precious one among the possessions. Therefore, the wish-granting jewel is used in order to realize how precious our precious human body is, especially one qualified by eight freedoms and ten richnesses.

So now here, the sky filled with wish-granting jewels and our precious human body, even that much wealth of jewels is nothing, the value is nothing when we think of the value of our precious human body, especially the human body qualified with the eight freedoms and ten richnesses. Even the value of that much wealth, the sky filled with wish-granting jewels, is completely lost, it is nothing when we think of the value of our human body.

Why? Even though we don't have one tiny jewel, let alone a wish-granting jewel, even though we don't have the slightest atom of the gold, diamonds or any of those precious things, we own none of those precious materials, by having this precious human body, especially the perfect human body with its eighteen qualities, we can stop rebirth in the lower realms, the hell, hungry ghost or animal realm, and achieve the body of the happy transmigrator beings, a god's or a human body. Achieving the perfect human body, the body that has eighteen qualities, we can practice not only Buddhadharma, but we can practice Great Vehicle teachings, the Mahayana, and not only the Mahayana bodhisattva path, but the Mahayana tantric path, Secret Mantra, Vajrayana. With this perfect human body we can practice tantra, the Mahayana Secret Mantra, Vajrayana. And if we wish, we can be born in the pure land of a buddha where there are no sufferings of rebirth, old age, sickness and death, where there are none of the sufferings, the problems we have in the human world and in the other samsaric realms. The pure land of these buddhas, such as the one of Amitabha Buddha, has no suffering. That is what defines a pure land, why it is called "pure." It is because it is devoid of suffering. In a pure land there are none of the problems we experience.

So, if we wish to be born in one of these buddhas' pure lands, especially the pure land of Amitabha, once we are born there, it's *impossible* to be reborn in the hell, hungry ghost or animal realm. That's the end; that's finished. It is impossible to reincarnate in the lower realms once we are able to be born in the pure land of Amitabha Buddha. Then, if we are able to reborn in a pure land such as the Kalachakra deities' pure land, Shambhala, we can become enlightened.

There's the opportunity to practice tantra, so we can become enlightened in that pure land in that life. And then, if we are able to reincarnate in the pure land of the deities such as Heruka, Vajrayogini and so forth, which are very blessed, very precious deities, in the pure lands of these deities, we will *definitely* become enlightened in that life there. That is the quickest way to achieve enlightenment. Reincarnating in such a pure land is the quickest way to become enlightened. Therefore, the practices of these deities, such as Heruka and Vajrayogini, are unbelievably precious, so unbelievably precious.

THE QUALITIES OF A PRECIOUS HUMAN REBIRTH

Other than that, we should strive to achieve another precious human body in our next life, which has seven qualities. Some countries have the culture of the caste, which is why [one of the seven qualities] talked about here is caste. It's according to the countries where they have the culture of discrimination, accepting a caste system. According to those countries, if we have a pure or higher caste, we have much more freedom, and then we can be of more benefit to other sentient beings. Because others listen to us and respect us, that kind of thing, we can benefit others more. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, Lama Atisha and so forth, many were born of high caste. In India, because they believe so much in the caste, those who wish to be of benefit choose to reincarnate in the higher caste so that they can most benefit others, so others will listen to and respect them. So, the main reason is to have more freedom and to be able to benefit others. That's the main reason why somebody is going to be born in those countries. That's why caste comes into these seven qualities.

Another quality is having a human body with a beautiful, perfect form. If we have perfect sense organs, a perfect body, that allows us to practice the Dharma if we wish to, especially taking the vows, the ordination. The other thing is that we can benefit others more. Others will follow us more, so we can benefit others more. Then having wealth and power, all this is to benefit others. Then, having the wisdom able to discriminate what is right and wrong, Dharma wisdom, the wisdom able to learn things. And then having a long and healthy life, without sickness. That's the last one, having no sicknesses so that we can practice without obstacles.

Then also, if we wish to achieve a perfect body in the next life, having the four Mahayana Dharma wheels. That is being in a harmonious place, an environment in harmony with our

Dharma practice, an environment that is also a healthy place, one that does not cause sicknesses, a good place. That is also one thing.

The other thing can be also an environment that is harmonious, in that there are no obstacles to our Dharma practice. So, it is harmonious in that way. Then there is relying upon the holy beings. If we rely upon holy beings, we become a holy being. If we rely upon the Buddha, we can then become a buddha. Normally, we rely upon a pop singer, so if we rely upon Michael Jackson, we become Michael Jackson! What's the tall man? The basketball player. [*Students*: Michael Jordan.] The tall, the very tall man. Geordie? Michael what? Michael Georgie. The basketball player, the tall man? [*Students*: Michael George.] Michael George. Oh, there's the tall man for running, the world's fastest runner... What? [*Student*: Carl Lewis.] Carl Lu?

If we rely on Carl Lu, the world's fastest running man, we become that! Anyway, having the most perfect human body, abiding in a harmonious environment, with good, virtuous friends—I think this refers to virtuous friends, not in the sense of the guru, but good friends who help us in our Dharma practice, who help us to be a good human being or a good practitioner—these are the four Mahayana Dharma wheels. I don't know whether I've mentioned all four or not. Did I say four? [*Students*: Three.] Three? I don't know the fourth one! I don't remember. Maybe practicing the Mahayana teachings, I'm not sure. It's gone. Do you remember? What? [*Student*: Inaudible.] Oh, that's right! You're right. Collecting merit. Merit and prayer, I think. Yeah, there's collecting merit, but I think there's also prayer.

So, if we wish to achieve a perfect human body that is living in the four Mahayana Dharma wheels, we can achieve that. Then, with all these conditions and without obstacles, we can successfully have the realization of the Mahayana path and then achieve enlightenment without much hardship, without taking much time.

We can also achieve [another] precious human body, which has the eight ripening aspect qualities. These are normally explained in the lamrim teachings, having a perfect body and a long life, having wealth and power and all these things. How to create the cause for each one is also explained. It is very important to know the causes of each of these qualities. Lama Tsongkhapa mentioned that in *A Hymn of Experience of the Path to Enlightenment*. Whose experience? Lama Tsongkhapa's, *his* experience of the path to enlightenment.

This body of leisure, more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel,
Is found but once. Though difficult to obtain again,
It finishes as quickly as lightning in the sky.
Having reflected in this way, realizing that all worldly activities
Are like winnowed chaff,
You must take its essence day and night.
You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way.
I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way.

I don't remember the whole stanza but the essence of what it's saying is that until we achieve the precious human body, the precious body that has eight qualities, we can't have great achievements of the path, meaning we can't achieve very high realizations. Therefore we must practice the causes of those qualities, without missing one. They have been explained in the lamrim and they are *very* important, so you should write them down in your notebook, in your diarrhea book!

You have a book where you write down how much money you've spent, what you have done today, what you experienced today—that's your diarrhea book! So, if you have these causes written there, it reminds you all the time of those eight qualities and their causes. It reminds you to practice every day. That's very good. Even in your room, even in your house, write down those things, make those notes. Place notes of those eight qualities and their causes around the house, wherever, in the kitchen or the dining room or wherever most people meet, or in your bedroom or even in the bathroom. Put them across from where you sit. It's better than reading magazines!

RENOUNCE ATTACHMENT

In the teachings on impermanence, for example in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, Shantideva said we can't be lazy but should think about death. There are words like this. There is a quotation:

You cannot be sure which will come first,
Tomorrow or the next life,
Therefore, do not put effort into tomorrow's plans

But instead it is worthwhile to attend to the next life.

Death is definite to happen and it is uncertain when it will happen. It will *definitely* happen, because we haven't reached the level of the path where we can overcome death, where we are free of death. Until we reach that level, we have to die, we have to go through the cycle of death and rebirth. When we will die is uncertain; it can happen any time. It can happen on any day, at any moment.

Because we think that we will definitely live tomorrow, we work today for tomorrow's happiness, but we don't work for the happiness of future lives, the happiness after this life. Then, before tomorrow arrives, if death suddenly happens, it is all finished. We have missed the *most* precious opportunity to achieve every happiness in our future lives, up to enlightenment. We have missed out on this most precious opportunity. We could have practiced the Dharma with this perfect human body, which is to achieve all those happinesses in the next life, but we missed that out; it didn't get done. There was only the attitude of working for tomorrow's happiness, which is working for this life. Working for this life's happiness is attachment, which is a nonvirtuous attitude. Then all the actions we do, all the work we do with our body, speech and mind becomes nonvirtue, it all becomes negative karma. And the result is that there is no happiness, only suffering. The result is something we don't like, something we cannot *bear*. If the result were something that we liked, that we enjoyed, that would be OK, but it's not that. It's something that we cannot *bear*. It's the opposite to our wishes; it's only suffering.

Therefore, it is worthwhile to work for the future lives, which means working for our future lives' happiness. That means practicing the Dharma today, practicing the Dharma right now.

The other one is, by thinking "I won't die today," that doesn't mean we cannot live a comfortable life. It's like thinking that if we practice renunciation we must forsake comfort and happiness. It's similar here. We have to understand the meaning of this quotation. I'll try to translate it according to what the prayer says. It may *sound* like we can't have happiness, but it's not saying that. What it's saying is that we shouldn't be lazy, we shouldn't have a grasping mind attached to comforts, attached to this life's happiness. Being lazy in this way, not practicing the Dharma, we waste our life, spending it in distraction, with attachment. With attachment, we spend our life creating negative karma. We are using this most precious body to create negative

karma, the cause of the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm and the animal realm, besides the cause of the general sufferings of samsara. This is what the quote means.

In teachings such as the *Thirty-seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*, it talks about renouncing home, renouncing our birthplace, renouncing so many things and going to a solitary place, relying on a solitary place. This is about what we do in the beginning; they are the preliminaries before we do the actual practice. It talks about that in the section on renunciation.

For example, when somebody is an alcoholic or drug addict, no matter how much their health is ruined, it is almost impossible to stop taking drugs. If we have no attachment, no desire, grasping onto these pleasures, even if we are living in the midst of people, in the city surrounded by hundreds of thousands of people taking drugs and so forth, no matter what happens around us, we have no problem, we are free. No matter how bad the environment we are in, we are free because we don't have attachment grasping for those pleasures. We are free from all those problems, even though we are in this environment where everybody else is engaged in these addictions. But if we have attachment, if we are overwhelmed by the dissatisfied mind of desire, this painful mind that gives us so much pain, that only tortures us instead of giving us peace. Instead of giving us freedom and satisfaction, it only gives us dissatisfaction, it only gives us pain. Attachment only tortures us, nothing else. What it does to us is of no benefit; it only tortures us, making our life more and more difficult. It suffocates us, bringing more and more difficulties, more and more problems, like being completely drowned in the mud, like being totally drowned in the quagmire. With attachment, we become totally drowned in problems, in so many problems.

If attachment is there, even if there are no friends taking drugs, because we have the desire grasping for this pleasure, we will go to look for that. Even in a physically isolated place where there are no drugs, we might be far from the city, but we are not far from desire. We are just physically far away from the city, not far away from attachment. The attachment is there with us wherever we go, even to the highest Himalayan mountains or on the top of Mount Everest! Wherever we go, even to a place where we cannot find drugs, we are still not free from the pain. With attachment, there is so much pain grasping for this pleasure. This painful attachment makes us suffer; it tortures us.

Even if we change our external appearance—we shave our head, we wear robes—if our mind has not changed, again there is the same problem of desire, attachment and grasping, that gives

us so much pain. Despite the moral discipline, the moral laws, because the mind has not changed, and there is the attachment, the strong grasping onto pleasure, no matter how far away we go, there is still pain. Attachment tortures us, making life so difficult. The worst thing is not separating ourselves from attachment.

I think maybe it's time to stop. I don't remember now what I was talking about. I forgot! What did I say? What? Yes! If we don't separate, split away from attachment, if we are a friend of attachment, if we always follow it, the pain is always there, stronger and stronger. It even causes physical problems, health problems, what the Tibetans call wind disease, *lung* (I don't know if there's a Western term for this.) Usually after you meet Tibetan Buddhism, you become familiar with *lung*! Sooner or later, you learn about *lung*! *Lung* is very famous among the Western students who meet Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism!

The worst thing is to commit suicide because we are unable to apply the meditation, especially the meditation on impermanence and death, that we might die today. That is the best meditation, that we will die today, or within even this hour or this minute. We should not just think about death, but what happens after death in the lower realms, because of negative karma we have created not only in this life but since beginningless past lives. After death, thinking the lower realms awaits us is not a happy thing. Thinking of them is unbearable, terrifying. Why? Because of the negative karma, the negative thoughts, the negative actions of this life and of past lives. Otherwise, just thinking, "I will die" doesn't mean much. We might know the special lamrim meditations on renunciation, bodhicitta and right view, but we don't practice them, we don't apply them. Then, when our attachment becomes more and more, the worst thing we can do is to kill ourselves, commit suicide.

WE CAN ACHIEVE ENLIGHTENMENT ONLY WITH THIS PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH

We currently have this perfect human body, which gives us an unbelievable opportunity to utilize our buddha nature. As I mentioned before, with this human body we have the potential to achieve all the happiness of future lives, including being born in a pure land where we can be enlightened, or by receiving another perfect human body where, in that life, we can reach enlightenment and achieve the Buddha's qualities. With a perfect human body we can achieve ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara. Not just that, but with this perfect human body we can achieve peerless happiness, full enlightenment, for other sentient beings. Not only that, we

can cause every happiness for all our future lives. We can achieve all this with this perfect human body and by utilizing our buddha nature. This causes the happiness of numberless sentient beings, their happiness in this life and their happiness in future lives, including liberation from samsara and the peerless happiness of full enlightenment.

All this is stopped when we commit suicide. We lose the opportunity to use our buddha nature to cause the happiness up to enlightenment for ourselves, and the opportunity to cause the happiness up to enlightenment for all sentient beings. The opportunity to offer benefit like the sky to all sentient beings stops. That's what it is when we think of committing suicide.

Since I mentioned this part of the subject, within the six realms—within the realms of the asuras, the humans, the hell beings, the hungry ghosts and the animals—we can achieve enlightenment in one life only as a human being, and even that is not all humans. Only in this one human world where we are, the Southern Continent, do we have the opportunity to achieve enlightenment. Not in the Eastern Continent, the Northern Continent or Western Continent, as in the mandala offering practice. No human beings in the other continents have this opportunity. Only we have this incredible opportunity to achieve enlightenment in this one life. How? By depending on practicing the Mahayana and the Secret Mantra, the Vajrayana. When I say “mantra” it's not chanting mantras, not like that. It's the whole tantra path to achieve enlightenment. Of course, the whole path is contained in mantras, the words we recite. Achieving enlightenment in one life happens only by practicing tantra. Through sutra we have to gather merit through three countless great eons. As I mentioned the other day, highest tantra gives us the ability to reach enlightenment quickly.

By practicing highest tantra we can achieve enlightenment even in a brief lifetime in these degenerate times. Our designated time is very short, like sixty or seventy years, even shorter than that, but humans born in the Southern Continent can achieve enlightenment within that time by practicing highest tantra. Why? Because to practice higher tantra we need a special body that is constituted of six elements, with three things from the father and three things from the mother. From the mother, there is blood, flesh and maybe skin (I'm not sure, I don't remember!); then from the father there is sperm, bones and marrow. Our bodies are made up of these six things, and we need this body made of these elements as a vehicle to practice highest tantra. By using the tantric method to achieve enlightenment quickly, we are able to quickly cease the dualistic view, the subtle defilements and the subtle negative imprints.

On this foundation, we practice the highest tantra that helps to actualize, to experience the subtle wisdom called the clear light, which is like an atomic bomb. That is the quickest way to cease the defilements. If we are able to actualize that in this life, that means we can not only become liberated from samsara but achieve enlightenment in this life. Therefore, with this human body made of six elements, in the Southern Continent where the tantric teachings still exist even now—they have not yet stopped—there is an incredible opportunity to achieve enlightenment in this brief lifetime. This makes this human body unbelievably precious.

In this Southern Continent, in this world, there are twenty-four holy places of Heruka or Vajrayogini. When we practice tantra with this perfect human body, such as the body mandala practice, the highest tantra practice called Mother Tantra practice, there are numberless dakas and dakinis in those twenty-four holy places, and the minute we do this meditation, the numberless dakas and dakinis enter our body, no matter how far away we are from those holy places, as soon as we do the body mandala meditation. As they see us doing this practice, they immediately enter our body and bless our chakras, winds and drops. That makes it very easy for our chakras to function and to draw the wind into the central channel from 1,072 veins, to abide there and absorb. Then from within, the subtle wisdom or clear light is experienced, and developing that ceases the defilements, not only the gross defilements but the subtle ones too. It is so powerful that the defilements are ceased very quickly. That's how, by being in the world with these holy places, we are able to achieve enlightenment very quickly. Nepal is one of those places where there are many of these holy places. Nepal is a very special, very holy place, especially the area around here.

The beings of the Northern Continent have fixed lives; they all live for one thousand years. They have fixed lives and they are all very wealthy and have so much enjoyment, but in the Southern Continent, in this continent where we are, there are wealthy people and poor people, and there are various degrees of happiness and suffering. We can experience so many varieties of life, we can see the suffering and can realize suffering very easily. There is happiness, but there are also many problems, therefore it is easy to realize how samsara is in the nature of suffering. That makes both our renunciation very strong and our compassion for other suffering sentient beings very strong. Therefore, generating bodhicitta in us human beings in this Southern Continent is very strong. Because bodhicitta is stronger, that makes achieving enlightenment quicker. In the text it is said that the bodhicitta that we human beings in this continent can achieve cannot be

achieved by asuras or other beings. Even if I remember the whole verse, some of the terms are difficult to translate. The other reason that karma is very powerful in this Southern Continent is that if in our early life we create negative karma we experience suffering in the later part of our life; and if we create good karma in the earlier part of our life we experience the result, happiness, in the later part of our life, so if the karma is stronger it also helps us to have realizations more quickly.

Now I'm going to stop here.

THE CONCEPT OF PERMANENCE CHEATS US (BACK TO)

Going back to where I started, before I was talking about how, even if we don't own the slightest thing—besides not having a wish-granting jewel, or any gold, diamonds or jewelry—if we have this perfect human body, we can achieve all these things. That was what I was trying to say. But now the other way round: even if we have skies filled with diamonds, billions of dollars' worth of gold, especially wish-granting jewels, but if we don't have a perfect human body, with that much wealth alone we cannot stop rebirth in the lower realms, with that alone we cannot achieve a good rebirth in the next life, with that alone we cannot achieve future lives' happiness or liberation from samsara. Even if we have that much wealth, we cannot achieve full enlightenment. All that wealth, that many wish-granting jewels filling the whole sky but—now I am able to complete the sentence—the conclusion is, the value of that is nothing compared with the value of this precious human body, especially this perfect human body.

Going back to what I was talking about before, the concept of permanence, that we are going to live long, thinking this every day, thinking this every hour, looking at impermanent phenomena, including our own life, as permanent, that cheats us. It makes our life totally empty. Therefore, when death suddenly happens, it becomes a shock and causes great fear. Suddenly we have to leave everything. Those around us leave us; everything is separated from us and we are separated from everything. We have to leave everything. Even this body that we have cherished the most is left behind; only the bare consciousness goes to the next life. Suddenly there is so much torment, fear and anger, because we think the world has cheated us.

But actually, the cheating comes from our own mind. To the Japanese boy I talked about, it looked as though the outside cheated him, but actually, even though he was quite intelligent, he

didn't see that he was cheated by his mind, not by the world. Things appear inherently existent, not transitory or impermanent, but lasting. So of course, if we believe this is the truth, that cheats us. But even though impermanent things appear as inherently existent, as permanent, if we don't believe they are, then there is no way we can be cheated.

Therefore, every moment of this perfect human body that we waste—which means not practicing the Dharma for even one moment, the mind not becoming the Dharma, neither renunciation nor bodhicitta nor right view—wasting this perfect human body is a much greater loss than losing a whole sky filled with wish-granting jewels. When a businessperson loses a million dollars, when their business collapses, they have a nervous breakdown or want to commit suicide by jumping from the roof or from a bridge, but that is nothing compared to spending even one moment not practicing the Dharma. If we don't get to practice the Dharma for even one moment, which means our attitude of life is not doing Dharma in that one moment, this perfect human body is wasted, and that is a greater loss than having lost a sky full of diamonds, dollars and even wish-granting jewels. Therefore, as I explained before, every moment—not every day but every moment—is the time to do our best, to practice Dharma, especially bodhicitta. The best practice is bodhicitta.

So let's stop here.

To practice the Dharma as much as possible, to take the opportunity to learn as much as possible—even reading a philosophical Dharma text we cannot understand—does not waste our life. Reading the Buddha's teachings always leaves a positive imprint on the mind, whereas reading magazines, newspapers, watching TV, gives rise to anger, attachment and so many negative thoughts; it gives rise to so many delusions, leaving so many negative imprints on the mind. You remember I mentioned that the imprints left by anger and attachment on the mind are much more terrifying and much more harmful than the actual hell realm, because these negative imprints left by anger and attachment cause more and more anger and attachment to arise again and again in the future, not just in the next life but from now on, from this moment on, it makes our future life difficult. Being motivated by negative karma creates hell, creates the lower realms. We have to experience all those sufferings. If there are negative imprints, this is what happens.

The hell realms are a projection of these negative imprints. Hell is just one problem that comes from negative imprints left by anger or attachment, but it's not the only problem. There are many other suffering results that come from negative imprints. Therefore, because the negative imprints left by anger are the most terrifying, it's so important to practice patience when we are in danger of getting angry. Similarly, with attachment, we need to practice renunciation, nonattachment, right view, and especially to practice compassion and bodhicitta instead of attachment. When attachment arises, we need to generate compassion, loving-kindness and bodhicitta.

We need to do this even if we don't really understand the Dharma, like many Chinese people I have met, especially old people. I haven't been to Mainland China, but in Singapore and Taiwan, people read sutras in the temple. For hours they stand reading the Buddha's sutras like the *White Lotus Sutra* or *Amitabha Sutra* or the *Medicine Buddha Sutra*. They read them at home or in the temple, wearing long black robes. Even though they might not be able to understand them, there is so much benefit. It leaves so many positive imprints, and what the imprints do is, sooner or later, we are able to understand the words and the meanings, and we are able to have the realizations of the path contained in those words. Then, that brings us to liberation and enlightenment. So reading the Buddha's teachings, or even just listening or reading, has incredible benefit. It's not like reading novels. People spend so much of their life reading books that talk about war or sex, so many things which give rise to delusions. People spend so much of their lives reading these things, in planes, at home, whenever they have time!

So now let's dedicate.

ALL PHENOMENA ARE LIKE ILLUSIONS

Today is Nirvana Day! Today maybe we should go over the bodhicitta technique, the instruction given by my root guru His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche's on the six ways to equalize ourselves with others, the technique that has been passed down from the Buddha through to the great bodhisattva Shantideva, that of equalizing and exchanging oneself for others.

The six ways are by depending on conventional truth and depending on absolute truth. There may be three ways [for each], but it will come at that time. My root guru His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche put together these different techniques, and I thought to go over that today. So before

that, today we will do some of the preliminary meditation prayers, requesting prayers to the lineage lamas of the path to receive blessings.

Do not engage in any unwholesome actions,
Engage in perfect, wholesome actions,
Subdue your mind thoroughly.
This is the teaching of the Buddha.

The next stanza:

A star, a defective view, a butter lamp flame,
An illusion, a dew drop or a water bubble,
A dream, a flash of lightning, a cloud—
See all causative phenomena like this.

In Tibetan, *rabrib* refers to somebody who has a defective eye, like when eating food, seeing hairs falling, through hallucinations. So these things are not as they appear to our hallucinating mind; they are not like that in reality. Then like a flickering flame as a candle burns out, or a butter lamp in the midst of a wind, which can be stopped any time. All these causative phenomena, these sense objects, including our own life, even this body, everything is like a flickering light or a candle flame in the midst of the wind that can be stopped at any time. Not only that, they are changing second by second or minute by minute; they can be stopped at any moment. These things are like an illusion, they don't exist as they appear to a hallucinating mind, as permanent or inherently existent. There are many hallucinations like this.

Feelings appear as pleasure. In reality they are suffering, but they appear to our hallucinating mind as pleasure. They are samsara, and even though samsara's nature is only suffering, it can appear as pleasure, as if there is no suffering at all in the aggregates, in the body, as if we don't see any suffering, only happiness, only pleasure. There are so many hallucinations. As it says in the *Guru Puja*, we look at samsara, this suffering realm, as a beautiful park. We look at it like that, grasping like that.

The body is the container of many dirty things, like a toilet or a septic tank that receives everything from the toilet and bathroom, but we look at the body as if it collects all the blessings,

all the things from the temple. This body is like a septic tank or a toilet, filled with a bad smell and all those dirty things. This body is like that, but we look at it as though it is completely pure and clean.

So we should think that all these appearances we have are not correct; they are mistaken, like illusions. These causative phenomena are all like dew that can be stopped any time, like a bubble that can be popped, that has no essence. All these causative phenomena are very perishable, like a dream.

While all these causative phenomena are completely empty, while they do not have inherent existence even the size of one atom, they appear as if they are inherently existent, so relating to the hallucinations like being like a dream, what we see in the dream appears but is not true. There are appearances in a dream but they are not true, they don't exist. When we think of the past, like yesterday's life, yesterday becomes like a dream. It's happened and is gone. From birth to now has happened and it's gone. When we die there was an appearance of this life, but it's gone; it's happened and it's gone, like a dream. Like lightning, it happened and is gone. Having a human body, possessions, relatives, friends, family—all these appearances have happened, and they are gone. They have happened to us and have stopped, like lightning. During a flash of lightning, people and our possessions vividly appear around us and then are gone; they are stopped. All these causative phenomena are like that, like lightning. Then they are like clouds, there one moment but not there the next moment. They are continuously decaying and changing; they do not last.

The conclusion of this is that therefore getting angry in our daily life is total nonsense. It's our own hallucination, but because we believe that it's true, that it exists on the outside, from its own side, we get angry at that person but that doesn't make sense; it's total nonsense. Also getting attached to these phenomena doesn't make sense; having emotional afflictions, thoughts, toward these objects doesn't make any sense; it's childish. This includes ignorance, the root of delusions, the concept of inherent existence, holding onto the inherently existent "I" by believing that it's one hundred percent true, as well as the aggregates and other phenomena.

ANIMAL LIBERATION

It seems that animals like the frogs and pigeons can hear, because wherever I travel, we normally liberate many thousands of animals. So many times I have seen that when we recite mantras to them, the frogs all look at us with big eyes! Every one of them is so alert, so quiet and they look at us with big eyes. I have seen that many times, so I think they can hear. Then also birds such as pigeons, when we recite mantras, they all suddenly stay very quiet, and they listen very alertly, so I think they can hear. But other animals, I'm not so sure. Like the shell animals such as conches and those that are so small we buy a huge sack of them. Those ones we bless water and then pour from the top, then the water goes through; those small shell animals that people eat, by frying, then picking up with chopsticks.

When I first went to Taiwan, we were put in a hotel, maybe a government hotel, I'm not sure. It was arranged by a Tibetan lama. One day, other Tibetan lamas came from India, some that I knew from the past and some that I didn't know. They arrived before I came. In the hotel there was a quiet place where there was a revolving table. At that time, when dinner was served, the cook made a long fish from carrots, and different animals from carrots and other vegetables. He made a sheep from carrots or radish. What was that big one? Anyway, there were some special things which they brought around to the tables so that everyone could see. At that time, for those who were not vegetarian, they served conch shells, those small shell animals, fried with garlic. There was almost nothing there, just two or three shells put in a bowl with the chopsticks, but with loads of garlic and onion to make it very tasty.

Anyway, we bless the shell animals like that, so the water goes through and purifies them. It's very good.

The other really best thing to help the animals, the best help we can offer to them, besides helping purify them with blessing water, is the practice of animal liberation we normally do in places in Asia, especially Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan. This practice started many years ago, so now they liberate animals at those centers every month.

If there's a way to circumambulate [the holy objects] at the center, they bring the animals to the center, then everybody carries boxes of fish, insects, crickets, worms in a packet—whatever it is—carrying them around. If there is a way to go around the altar at the center or outside the gompas, all the people carry things, while chanting mantras. Because [the animals] can hear, they

take them around as many times as possible. Or they take many holy objects, such as *tsa tsas*, statues of the Buddha and stupas, to a beach or where you can liberate animals. They set up a large table and then, if possible, they put another table on top, and then put around many, many holy objects. On the edge, offerings are beautifully set up, with glass bowls or whatever, and beautifully arranged sets of offering flowers of all the colors, and so forth. It's like a puja for the animals. They make these offerings to the merit field, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the buddhas, bodhisattvas, gurus, and then they dedicate the merits for the animals. Like we do puja for sick people or something like that, they do puja for the animals.

If there are few people and many animals, they take turns: some people carry some of them and go around certain number of times, then put them down and do the same with others. But if there are enough people, then everybody carries them.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HOLY OBJECTS

So, the thing is this. Normally, for our actions of body, speech and mind to become the cause of happiness, first our mental attitude, which causes the action, has to become the Dharma, pure and positive. Only then can our action become the Dharma, the cause of happiness. The cause of happiness and the Dharma have the same meaning, virtue. This is the normal procedure. If we want our actions to become the cause of happiness, we first must make our motivation, the attitude that brings about the action, into the Dharma, then the action becomes the Dharma. Then we can experience the result, happiness, either in this life or in future lives.

This is the normal procedure, but not in every case. There are exceptional actions such as circumambulating statues, stupas or scriptures of the Buddha. We are not talking about the actual Buddha, but even those holy objects, even the statues, scriptures or stupas of the Buddha. If we circumambulate them or prostrate to them, make offerings to them, even if the mind is totally delusional, totally black, full of negative thoughts, even if it's done totally out of anger or the attachment clinging to this life, that action—circumambulating, prostrating, making offerings to holy objects—becomes virtue, and not only virtue, Dharma, the cause of happiness, but that action *immediately* becomes the cause of enlightenment, the highest success. And, by the way, it becomes the cause of liberation from samsara and, by the way, the cause of a good rebirth in the next life. And not just one time, not just this next life, but to have a good rebirth in all the coming hundreds and thousands of future lives.

This one action is the cause of not only the happiness of future lives, but it purifies negative karma, it purifies our mind. And because all the problems of this life came from negative karma—relationship problems, cancer, problems in the job, all these things—that negative karma is purified by this practice. Health problems, life obstacles, depression, being abused or badly treated by other people, all these problems come from negative karma, our negative karma, so because this practice purifies our mind of all these negative karmas, by the way, it also takes care of this life, helping us have a long life, health, wealth, everything. It takes care of everything because we collect merit. All good things have to come from good karma, and here we are creating good karma.

This is how these actions become Dharma, the cause of all happiness up to the cause of enlightenment, even though our motivation is totally nonvirtuous. How? The reason, the logic, here: it's not due to our mind, not from the side of our mind, but from the side of the power of the holy object. These actions become virtue, even the cause of enlightenment, because of the power of these holy objects. The explanation is that, the power of the holy objects.

There is a story. One time, at a stupa, I don't know either in India, Nepal or Tibet, a pig, chased by a dog, went around the stupa. It happened to do one circumambulation, only because it was chased by the dog. What happened was, after the pig died, it was able to be born in Tushita, in the deva realm, the Realm of the Thirty-three. Instead of reincarnating in the lower realms, it was born in the higher realms. There was no Dharma motivation, just the action of trying to escape, running away from the dog by going around the stupa, which became a circumambulation. That became virtue, which was the cause to have a good rebirth in the next life.

Then, there was also an old man who only began to practice Dharma when he was eighty years old but he still actualized the arya path, the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, and in that life was able to be free from samsara. He entered in the five paths to liberation and was able to be liberated from samsara. Why did this eighty-year-old man have such incredible success? The Buddha explained that an *unimaginable* length of time ago, in one of his lives he was a fly. There was a stupa and there was cow dung around it! So the fly followed the smell of the cow dung. The motivation was purely attachment, but actually, because the fly followed the smell of the cow dung around the stupa, it became a circumambulation. That one circumambulation, that

small merit, the Buddha said, was the cause to become a monk and in that life achieve all these realizations.

Then, after he became an arhat, when that karma finished, he entered the Mahayana path. The Buddha sends a light and there is a verse to inspire arhats to enter the Mahayana path. Then, by entering the Mahayana path, he achieved enlightenment, then he enlightened numberless other sentient beings. But before he became enlightened, before he entered the Mahayana path, before he was an arhat, before he became a monk, by going back to see how he was able to become a monk and practice, inconceivable lifetimes ago when he was a fly he once followed the smell of cow dung around a stupa and it became one circumambulation, even though the motivation was totally attachment, totally nonvirtuous. From that merit, all these things happened. From that merit, this whole process happened—the realizations of the path to liberation, becoming totally free from samsara, entering the Mahayana path, becoming enlightened, then being able to enlighten numberless other sentient beings. All this comes from this small good karma, created when he was a fly following the smell of cow dung. That is the story the Buddha used to explain the power of the object, how the merit comes not from the virtuous motivation but from the side of the power of the object, the stupa.

Therefore, when we take the animals around a holy object, if in a plastic bag we are carrying a hundred crickets or worms or whatever, or a thousand worms, each time when we go around the holy object, we are giving each of them the cause of enlightenment. If we go around once carrying a thousand worms, we are giving enlightenment to those thousand worms. So, if we go around twenty times or a hundred times, then we are giving them the cause of enlightenment twenty or a hundred times. It's like giving enlightenment one hundred times to those thousand worms. Even if there's *one* stupa or *one* statue of the Buddha, it's like that. But if we have a hundred or a thousand pictures of the Buddha or statues or stupas, whether it's pictures or whether it's statues, then, even if we are carrying one animal—a mouse, a rat or an ant or a small insect—by taking this one animal around the thousand pictures or statues of the Buddha, we are giving them one thousand causes of enlightenment. And the same thing, we are giving them a thousand causes of liberation from samsara, a thousand causes of good rebirth in the next life. This is what the animal, the insect, the ant, creates if we carry them around. This is the best thing we can offer them to help them. In this way, from this, sooner or later they get a good rebirth. Like the example of the old man, they get a good rebirth in their next life, they meet the Dharma, they actualize the path, become liberated, and then they achieve enlightenment. This is

the best gift we can give them, giving them a good rebirth in the next life, liberation and enlightenment.

I stayed sometime recently in America, trying to do some retreat at Big Sur. We found a small house near the ocean. Because there were many ants coming in the kitchen of the house, I wondered what would make it very meaningful for their being in the house. This was during a retreat, so I put three tsa tsas in the kitchen so the ants could be put in a plastic garbage bag gently with a tissue paper or with a soft cloth. The idea was to hold the three tsa tsas [in one hand] and the bag with the ants [in the other] and circle the tsa tsas with the bag of ants. This is exactly the same as a circumambulation. Then they were put outside. In this way, it makes the lives of those insects, the ants, coming into the house so meaningful. It's worthwhile for them to come into the house.

For example, many human beings on this earth, many billionaires, have never met the Dharma. In this life they have never had a chance to create the cause of enlightenment, even once. Leave aside bodhicitta, they are like these animals; they have no knowledge of how by going around holy objects they create cause of enlightenment, liberation, and a good rebirth in the next life. There are many human beings on this earth who have never met the Dharma in their life. They have no knowledge of karma; they don't even have a chance to go around holy objects, to purify the mind, to create the cause of enlightenment. Therefore, by their coming in the house, this makes these animals' lives extremely worthwhile, extremely beneficial.

Anyway, this side talk happened because I was talking about the monkeys in Dharamsala. Then, these things started. But if you can do like this at home, it is very good. Therefore, it is very good to have as many holy objects as possible at home, as many pictures of the Buddha, as many statues, as many tsa tsas, as possible. The more you have, the luckier you are, the richer you are inside. Inside your life becomes much richer, rich with merit. The more of these holy objects you have, the more merit you have.

Many of our old students or Sangha took teachings in the early times in Dharamsala from a great Tibetan lama, Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, because Geshe-la was a teacher at the Tibetan Library at Dharamsala. When the students were kicked out of Nepal [because of visas], they went to Dharamsala to study at the Tibetan Library. Geshe-la was there for many years. In *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* I think it says that if we give our holy objects away we lose our fortune. I

think that might be the reason that Geshe-la kept any picture of the buddhas or gurus that people gave him, not Tibetans, mainly I think Western students. Geshe-la kept every single thing that was given by people. That is what I heard. I didn't see it but I heard he kept everything. That is probably because in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* it says that if we give holy objects away, we are giving our fortune away. Anyway, I guess it depends on the motivation, whether or not we give them away to others in order to collect merit, to bring them to enlightenment.

We get skies of benefit from one small statue or picture of the Buddha. If we circumambulate, prostrate or make offerings every time we see a picture of the Buddha, it plants the seed of enlightenment. It brings us closer to enlightenment, to liberation from samsara. The benefit we get on our mental continuum from each holy object, even a small picture of the Buddha, is like the sky. Therefore, my usual presents to students or other people are Buddha pictures or statues, because they are very precious, very important for the mind. We can use these to fulfill all our wishes, all the happiness up to enlightenment, if we use these holy objects, by circumambulating, prostrating, offering to them or by looking at them with devotion, if possible every time we see them. When it talks about the six preparatory practices, about setting up the altar, *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* mentions about holy objects, that we should not think we just know what we have in our meditation room. We shouldn't think like that. Every morning we should look at all our holy objects with palms together, with devotion. It mentions that, with the two palms together prostrating, when we look at all the holy objects, there are skies of benefit; it plants the seed of enlightenment in our mind. So if possible, each time we enter our meditation room, shrine room or temple, as we are looking around, we put palms together at the same time. As we go inside, we look around with palms together like that, with this prostration.

It said that, even if there is only one statue of the Buddha, if we put our palms together like that, we immediately achieve eight important benefits. There are also ten mentioned in the sutras. However, the eight are that (1) we immediately create the cause to achieve a perfect body in the next life. Then (2) we have all the freedom to practice any Dharma, even taking ordination and so forth. (3) With a perfect body we can benefit many sentient beings. Then (4) we have perfect surrounding people who all do according to our wishes. They all help our Dharma practice. They all help us serve the teachings of the Buddha, to help other sentient beings. These perfect surrounding people all support us.

Then next, (5) we are able to live in pure morality in the future, which can be in our future life or even in this life. Without pure morality there are so many obstacles to achieving the realizations of the path to enlightenment. Morality becomes the foundation for the realizations of the path to liberation and enlightenment. Then, we have devotion. Without devotion we can't receive blessings. Without blessings we can't receive the realizations of the path to enlightenment. So we need devotion. Then, we have a brave heart. If we don't have a brave heart, we cannot do extensive work for other sentient beings. The next one (6) is, instead of rebirth in a lower realm, we get born in a deva or human realm. Then the next one, (7) we achieve the arya path. Of the five paths of merit, preparation, right-seeing, meditation and no more learning, if we achieve the third bodhisattva arya path, the right-seeing path, we are free from death. At that time, we have completely overcome death, old age, sickness and rebirth. That is an incredible achievement. Then next one (8) is enlightenment.

Even if there is only one statue of the Buddha in our meditation room or in a temple, if we do like this, making a prostration mudra, we immediately get these eight benefits. The last one is enlightenment. Therefore, if we have many pictures or statues of the Buddha, if we have a thousand in our meditation room on our shrine, at our house or in a temple, if we look at every one like that, we have created these eight benefits a thousand times. By depending on each stupa or each Buddha, whether it's a painting or statue, by depending on each one, we create the eight benefits a thousand times. Especially when we go into holy places, temples, on pilgrimage. In one temple there are so many statues and paintings. Each temple is full of paintings or statues of buddhas—so many in one hall—that we should use them skillfully with all the understanding that we have of how to collect the most extensive merit and purify our mind and find the quickest way to achieve enlightenment. We should use them in this way. We should at least look with a devotional mind, prostrating like that. In those few seconds, within that very minute, we create many thousands and thousands and thousands of causes of enlightenment, and all these benefits.

Therefore, if it's allowed or convenient having holy objects at home—if there's no problem with other family members—we should have many, many holy objects outside and inside, but they should be respected. Once, in California, during the teaching of the *Jewel Ornament of Nagarjuna*, there were many small thangkas of the Buddha, arranged by the center, covering the wall behind where His Holiness the Dalai Lama was teaching. His Holiness mentioned that if they were put

there just for decoration, that was creating negative karma, but if was done sincerely with devotion, it collected merit.

Putting buddha statues in the garden, with a motivation of just decoration, I think, is Japanese style. But we can put them there with a different motivation, that we ourselves, our family members or other people who come outside will collect merit, by going around them. Even for animals, going around them or seeing them plants the seed of enlightenment. Circumambulating them creates the cause of enlightenment. Because the holy objects have all these benefits, we should put them a little bit higher, out of respect. If we put them there in this way, with this motivation, there's no problem. We collect so much merit; we benefit so many other sentient beings. But if we put them kind of very low in the rocks, like a sort of decoration, this is disrespectful and creates negative karma. We should understand that putting a holy object very low, on the floor, is also negative karma. Negative karma is not only killing people or killing insects, not only that, harming others; this is also negative karma. So there are many different types of negative karma that we have to recognize.

Anyway, going back. These animals are only objects of compassion. When we think of the meaning of “transmigratory being” as related to these animals, it has to cause compassion to arise; there is no choice. When we think of the meaning of “transmigratory” with specific animals, especially those we are afraid of, that terrify us or we don't like or hate, that they are transmigratory beings, we see that they are completely caught in suffering, completely overwhelmed by karma and delusion. There is no choice, compassion has to arise. Due to the merits of having collected charity and so forth, we dedicate to achieve enlightenment in order to benefit *all* the transmigratory beings. In our mind, we think of each hell being, each hungry ghost, each animal, each sura being, each asura being, each human being, all who caught in samsaric suffering, under the control of karma and delusion. In this way, while we are reciting the words “in order to benefit of all the transmigratory beings,” we have this feeling in our heart. The meaning of these words is in our heart, and we feel compassion for them. And our compassion gives us a reason, it makes us free them from all suffering and bring them to enlightenment, and that makes us want to achieve enlightenment. That is bodhicitta, without going into many details, generally speaking that is bodhicitta.

From compassion for sentient beings, bodhicitta comes. With that, we're going to do the recitation of the bodhicitta prayer, wishing to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. This is

according to this stanza, as I explained the meaning of the meditation. With that meditation, we will recite the prayer very slowly, then do the meditation on this. We not only recite the holy words with the mouth, but also with the heart we feel the meaning of the words as much as possible. We let our heart be transformed into the meaning of the holy words, the meditation prayer. So, remember we are practicing the resultant refuge and the causal refuge. In order to have a successful resultant refuge, we are practicing the causal refuge.

Lecture 5

December 6, 1998

THE VARIOUS WAYS OF TAKING REFUGE

The first lines of the refuge prayer are this.

I take refuge until I am enlightened
In the Buddha, the Dharma and the Supreme Assembly.

When we meditate on the extensive meaning of what is contained in the term “transmigratory beings,” we should remember the evolution of samsara, the twelve links, which explains how we transmigrate in samsara from one realm to another continuously, from beginningless rebirths up to now. That is how we ourselves and others have been suffering in samsara, always under the control of karma and delusion and therefore having to experience all the sufferings of each realm over and over, again and again. Until we cease karma and delusion, until we cease the continuation of the twelve dependent related limbs, we will have to continue experiencing the suffering of each samsaric realm again and again without end. This is our situation but then, thinking of others, thinking of the numberless other sentient beings, we see that like us, they are suffering in a similar way. Seeing how the others who are suffering are numberless, then they become unbearable objects of compassion.

Then the next lines:

By my merits of generosity and so forth,
May I become a buddha to benefit transmigratory beings.

Every human being, every samsaric human being is suffering. Every obscured human being is a transmigratory being. Every god and demigod is obscured, suffering; every one is a transmigratory being. Then every hell being, hungry ghost and animal is a transmigratory being. As we think of them, we go through the sufferings of the lower realms, the general suffering of samsara, and then the particular sufferings of each realm. We try to remember the whole idea of the sufferings of each realm in particular and the general suffering of samsara.

I take refuge until I am enlightened
In the Buddha, the Dharma and the Supreme Assembly.
By my merits of generosity and so forth,
May I become a buddha to benefit transmigratory beings.

Now we'll chant the same prayer in Tibetan.

[Rinpoche and students chant in Tibetan]

When we say this prayer of taking refuge and generating bodhicitta, there's a Hinayana way of taking refuge and a Mahayana way of taking refuge. With the Hinayana way of taking refuge, by perfecting our own mind in the cause of refuge, we understand the fear of samsara, the useful, beneficial fear of samsara and understand devotion to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha by seeing their qualities, the powers they have to save us, to liberate us from the entire suffering of samsara, including the cause, karma and delusion. Perfecting our mind in these two, with our whole heart, we rely upon the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. That is the Hinayana way of taking refuge.

With the Mahayana way of taking refuge, the additional thing is compassion toward other sentient beings. On the basis of perfecting our own mind in these two causes of refuge—the useful fear of samsara and devotion to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha because of their qualities, their powers to save us—we have compassion by looking at how others are also suffering in samsara as we are, how they are also caught in samsara and experiencing suffering. We feel unbearable compassion that there are other sentient beings suffering in samsara. So, perfecting our mind in these three causes, with our whole heart we rely upon the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. That is the Mahayana way of taking refuge.

Therefore, whether we chant in Tibetan or English, whatever way, when we do this practice of refuge, we should try to have the Mahayana way of taking refuge. First we should think of how we ourselves are suffering, how we are caught in samsara and suffering. Then we should think of all the numberless other sentient beings who are in a similar situation, experiencing so much suffering. And then, generating a feeling of compassion, we think that there is nobody else who has the power to save me and sentient beings from all these oceans of samsaric suffering.

WITHOUT THE GURU, THERE IS NO BUDDHA

When we add “Guru”, saying “Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha” or even just “Buddha, Dharma and Sangha”, when we say “Buddha,” the way to understand that is that there is no Buddha other than Guru. To succeed in actualizing the whole path to enlightenment depends on the very root, guru devotion. We need this to be completely successful, to complete the two great purposes, working for ourselves and working for others. One interpretation of working for self and working for others is that the former refers to the qualities of the cessations, [ceasing] the mistakes of the mind, the defilements—that is working for self—and working for others refers to the complete qualities of the realizations. The other interpretation is that achieving enlightenment is working for self, and actually being enlightened and liberating other sentient beings is working for others.

To complete these two, working for self and working for others, depends on the very root, guru devotion. Without this, there can be no attainment of the path to enlightenment, whereas if this is done well we can achieve all the realizations of the path to enlightenment. That is why guru devotion is vital. We need to analyze this and, after we have found this is true, after we have made the connection, we need to correctly devote to the guru with thought and action.

We look at it with quotations, logic and personal experiences of the master, and try to look at [the guru] as the Buddha. When we see him as the Buddha, there is devotion. We see no mistakes in reality, even though there is the appearance of mistakes, of having delusions, suffering and all that, but in reality there is no delusion, no suffering, no mistakes. When we see the guru in this way, devotion arises. This devotion is what brings all the causes. It is what makes it possible to cease all the mistakes of the mind and to complete all the realizations, and to be able to do perfect work for the numberless other sentient beings, to liberate them from all the oceans of sufferings of samsara and bring them to liberation and enlightenment. Therefore, this is called the root. Guru devotion, this realization, this experience realizing, seeing the guru is the Buddha from our own side is the root of the path to enlightenment.

Even if we just say, “Buddha, Dharma and Sangha,” just using the words without “Guru,” the guru is contained there, when we say “Buddha.” Sometimes we recite, “I go for refuge to the Guru” first, and then we say “Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.” “I go for refuge to the Buddha, I go for refuge to the Dharma, I go for refuge to the Sangha,” like that. Sometimes, like this prayer, it’s “Buddha, Dharma and Sangha”, but that doesn’t mean because there’s no word

“Guru,” that guru yoga practice is left out. Those of us who normally practice guru yoga, when we say “I’m going for refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha,” when we think of the Buddha as we say “I’m going for refuge to the Buddha,” we think of the guru; when we think of the guru, we think of the Buddha. For those who know how to practice correctly, this is how they meditate, how they think.

I have about twenty-five gurus, something like that, gurus from whom I have received oral transmissions or commentaries or initiations, vows and various teachings. One of the gurus I have received many initiations and commentaries from, especially commentaries on deities, is His Holiness Zong Rinpoche. Since Rinpoche was invited a few times, first by FPMT organization, our own organization, then later by other Dharma organizations, many Western students have had the great fortune to be able to meet him and to hear teachings on sutra and especially tantra from such an enlightened being, from somebody with real living experience, who has the realization. After Rinpoche was invited to the FPMT centers, more tantra teachings were able to be spread in our centers. They had happened before, but the depth and number of teachings on tantra increased after Rinpoche was invited to the Gelug centers.

During a commentary on the preparatory practice, *Jorchö*, Rinpoche said that this is the practice that causes us to have lamrim realizations in our mental continuum. The preparatory practice, *Jorchö*, frees our mental continuum from the obstacles that interfere with having realizations of the path to enlightenment. Rinpoche explained this, especially during the time he was giving commentary on the refuge practice, on the visualization of the merit field, the principal of the merit field, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, thinking that the essence of the guru is the Buddha. He explained that that meditation visualizing this aspect of the Buddha makes us receive greater blessings more quickly, even this aspect. We stop the ordinary aspect, having suffering, having delusions, all that, and then visualize the pure aspect of the Buddha. That causes us to receive blessings more quickly. This is what Rinpoche explained.

Without the guru there is no Buddha. As the great yogi or highly attained lama in Tibet, Khedrub Sangye Yeshe, explained,

When there is no guru not even the name “Buddha” exists.

In other words, the Buddha doesn't exist before the guru. That means all the buddhas come from the guru; it contains that meaning. That also includes the Dharma and the Sangha. We have to understand that because the Buddha comes from the guru, it's the same with all the buddhas, the Dharma and the Sangha. There is nobody else who has the power, the qualities, to guide us and all sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering and its causes, only the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, who are abiding in front of us. Then, with our whole heart, we rely upon them.

What I was trying to say here is that, even though there is no guru mentioned, just "Buddha, Dharma and Sangha," when we say, "Buddha," it is contained within that.

Since I brought up this subject of the guru, maybe I should mention this key point. Whether more details will happen or not happen, I don't know, but just the key point. Of course, in the thought transformation teachings there is an instruction to look at sentient beings as the Buddha. Somehow that helps us to have respect for them, to not get angry with them. It becomes psychologically helpful, helping us respect them, when we look at everybody as the Buddha. Respect comes naturally and it becomes easy to not get angry, to not harm sentient beings. This helps us protect our karma.

However, whether we are able to see other people's gurus as the Buddha or not, when we relate to ourselves and to our guru, seeing the guru as the Buddha, there is nothing to talk about. There is no discussion whether our guru is the Buddha or not. From our side that is the practice. That is the root practice. It is the foundation of all the other practices of the lamrim, how, from our side, we see our guru. No matter how much others might debate that our gurus are not the Buddha, from our side there is no question.

If we want to have profit in our life, if we want to make our life useful, if we want the lamrim realizations, to cease all the mistakes of the mind and to complete all the qualities of the realization, and especially if we want to benefit other sentient beings, to liberate them from all the sufferings and bring them to full enlightenment, this is the practice we must do. If this is what we want, this is what we have to practice. We can only have success from this practice, from this transformation of mind into guru devotion, by looking at the Buddha, by seeing the Buddha. Through this, everything comes. So, if we want all this profit, we have to do this. But if we don't want all this profit, all the realizations of the path to enlightenment, all this profit for

ourselves, all this benefit for all sentient beings, if I don't want all that, then that's a different thing. If we only like to be in samsara, if we are happy to be resident in the lower realms, to get a green card for the lower realms, a passport, that's a different matter! We have been a resident of the lower realms and samsara from beginningless lives, so if we still want to be in samsara, then it's a different thing. Here the question of practicing guru devotion is that.

It's like this. Without learning ABCD, we can't go to college, we can't go to university. Like the example, without the guru devotion practice, we can't have all those other realizations.

Padmasambhava said that if we don't realize the guru is the Buddha, we cannot be liberated by the blessing. We must reflect on the qualities and request to the guru.

When he is talking about the guru here, he is not talking about the general guru, what is called "guru" in the world, he's talking about *our* guru. If we don't see them as the Buddha, that means there is no guru devotion, and that means there is no way to receive the blessing of the guru in our heart. And without the blessing, there is no way to have the realization of the path. Then there is no way our mental continuum can be liberated from the dualistic views, the subtle negative imprints or delusions, from karma; we cannot be liberated from samsara. These things won't happen. So that means we cannot complete our work and we cannot complete the works for others.

Therefore, we should reflect on the qualities of the guru, looking at their holy mind, looking at them as having no mistakes, free from all the qualities. Sorry, I mean free from all the mistakes. Sorry! I think I have many negative imprints left from the past. Free from all the mistakes and having all the qualities. "To reflect on the qualities" means that. Having ceased all the mistakes and completed all the qualities, especially the ultimate one. The Buddha is that one, so therefore, by looking at the guru as the Buddha, we are naturally able to see them this way. By looking at the guru as the Buddha, we will be able to see them as free from all the mistakes and having all the qualities. So, we reflect on the qualities, and then to that guru that we see as the Buddha, we make requests. We request to receive the blessings and the realizations of the path to enlightenment, to develop our mind in the path to enlightenment.

What Padmasambhava explained shows why there is the need of a guru. To do this practice we need a guru. The first thing we need to do is find a guru. Then, after we have analyzed, after we have met and established a Dharma connection with them, we must correctly devote to the

virtuous friend with thought and action. Correct devotion with thought is this one, looking at the guru as the Buddha, seeing they are the Buddha. At the beginning we do the analytical meditation, with the quotations and logic, and then, with all that, then our mind is transformed. We prove to this mind that doesn't see the Buddha that the guru *is* the Buddha. By that, our mind is transformed into pure thought, into the devotion that sees the guru as the Buddha.

But again, when we are not doing the analytical meditation, using the quotations and logic, the devotion of seeing the guru as the Buddha disappears; it doesn't last when we are not doing the meditation. However, through continuing the meditation where this mind is transformed into devotion, this happens more and more. It becomes stronger and stronger and stronger and stronger and lasts longer and longer and longer. After some time, it becomes very stable, not just that we feel that the guru is the Buddha for a few minutes or a few hours, not like that, but *very* stable. *Very* stable. That experience is not just for a short time, but very stable. When there is some experience like this that lasts a very short time, that is a sign of receiving blessings of the guru. Even for a short time we feel like that a hundred percent from the bottom of our heart, but it doesn't last a long time. That is still the blessing of the guru. It's a sign that our mental continuum is blessed by the guru.

By training again and again with this analytical meditation and the fixed meditation, after we have transformed our mind into the devotion seeing the guru as the Buddha, we try to keep our mind in that feeling, in that state of devotion, for as long as possible. By training the mind like this more and more, it becomes very grounded or very stable. Then, at that time, according to those who have a realization of devotion, from that person's side, each buddha is all the gurus and each guru is all the buddhas. There are numberless buddhas; each guru is all the buddhas and each buddha is all the gurus.

Whenever that person thinks of a buddha or says the word "buddha," in the heart there is the understanding that it is the guru. Whenever they see the guru, whenever they hear the guru, whenever they think of the guru, in the heart, there is the understanding that what they have is only the Buddha. For those who have a realization of guru devotion, it's like this. There's no separation of those two. For those who have a realization of guru devotion, whenever they say the word "guru," or think of the guru, or see the guru, there is only the Buddha, nothing else. This is the understanding those meditators have in their hearts. Then, complete trust comes.

Because of the devotion, seeing the guru as the Buddha, there are no difficulties in following the advice, no hardships in following the advice.

To finish this point, with such a realization, whatever subject we meditate on, it is so easy. The mind is like dough—flour dough, not *dope* like the sadhus take! It is like flour dough; we can form it into any shape. With dough, we can make it into bread or noodles, you can make it into any shape. Especially by having the realization of guru devotion, whatever subject we meditate on, we feel it happens easily. Normally, when we recite a prayer, the words we recite and our heart are totally the opposite. But then, at this time, our heart is living in the meaning of the words we are reciting, our heart is transformed into that. If we are reciting words of the prayer about compassion, our mind feels compassion. When we are reciting the words of impermanence and death, we easily feel that, and the same with emptiness or bodhicitta, whatever. Our mind becomes so easy to tame, like a dog. Because the mind can be transformed into whatever we meditate on, it is very easy to gain realizations and, in this way, delusions cannot arise. Due to guru devotion, that realization, in daily life delusions will not easily arise. And even if they arise they can be easily overcome. They might still arise but they are weak, they are not strong. Then, it is very easy to practice the Dharma.

THE NEED FOR GURU DEVOTION

What happens without this guru devotion practice? Of course, as I mentioned before, there is no cause to receive the blessings of the guru. And that means, without blessings there is no realization of the path to enlightenment. That's the first thing to understand.

Now the next thing to understand, without the method or the remedy of guru devotion in the mind, what happens is that, because there is not that pure mind of devotion of looking at [the guru] as the Buddha, there is no protection. Our mind has no protection. So delusions and negative thoughts arise. Negative thoughts arise toward the virtuous friend, the guru. Without this pure mind of guru devotion, the thoughts we have of the guru are only ordinary thoughts, impure thoughts. With only ordinary, impure thoughts, we project, we see the guru as only ordinary. "Ordinary" means having mistakes, having delusions, having suffering, doing mistaken actions. The definition of ordinary form is that.

Even if from the side of the guru, they are a buddha, without this devotion from our side, without this pure thought, this devotion that looks at the guru as the Buddha, even if from the side of the guru they are a buddha, a fully enlightened being, because all we have is this ordinary thought, we project [the ordinariness onto the guru], seeing them with our ordinary thoughts as only ordinary, having mistakes.

There are so many other stories. For example, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's disciple, Lekpai Karma [Skt: Sunakshatra] was a monk who served Guru Shakyamuni Buddha for twenty-two years, but he never saw him as the Buddha. Even though he lived with the Buddha for twenty-two years, he never saw Shakyamuni Buddha as the Buddha! What he saw was only a liar. This fully ordained monk, Lekpai Karma, despite being the Buddha's attendant for twenty-two years, saw Shakyamuni Buddha as an ordinary person who made mistakes. In his view, he only told lies, even though from Buddha's side, he was enlightened an inconceivably long time ago.

Even though according to the Theravadin tradition, the Buddha was enlightened in Bodhgaya, and that was the first time he achieved enlightenment, according to the Mahayana tradition, that was just enacting the twelve deeds for us sentient beings, showing us how to practice the Dharma. He showed us that suffering comes from a cause, delusion and karma. That is why there is suffering. And because there is a cause, it can be ceased. Because it can be ceased, because there is a path we can practice, we can achieve liberation. He enacted becoming enlightened in order to show the four noble truths and how we can achieve enlightenment, to inspire us sentient beings.

After enlightenment. how is it possible for there to be death? Even arhats, who are free from samsara, don't have death. So how is it possible for the Buddha to have death? The Buddha explained that the Buddha doesn't have death, but shows enlightenment, and after all that, he gave us the heart teaching of impermanence and death in order to destroy our concept of permanence, which blocks us from practicing the Dharma, to persuade us to practice the Dharma. We must practice the Dharma because life is impermanent, because there is death. It's not just death, but everything behind death, which means all that suffering, karma, the lower realms. So, the Buddha showed death at the very end, the very last thing he enacted or showed us sentient beings was death, the very essential advice why we should practice the Dharma. The Buddha enacted all this, even though he achieved enlightenment an inconceivably long time ago.

But this attendant, Lekpai Karma, who served the Buddha for twenty-two years, living with him, didn't see an enlightened being from his side. Even though, from the Buddha's side, he was an enlightened being, from Lekpai Karma's side he only saw a liar, only an ordinary being, he didn't see an enlightened being.

There are many other stories like this. For example, the great Indian yogi, Naropa, who became enlightened in the intermediate stage, I think. He was looking for a guru. He was already a great scholar, having realizations. He was very learned but Naropa was told by dakinis, in a dream or something, that he should look for his guru, Tilopa; he should receive teachings from Tilopa. The story is that Naropa thought he was extremely learned in this and that, showing the aspect of a little pride or something like that, so when the dakinis during the night predicted that Naropa still had more to learn, and predicted to go to see Tilopa, he went to look for Tilopa.

I don't remember the name of the area in India, but by asking other people, he found Tilopa. There was water, where fish lived. One story was that Tilopa was eating all the intestines left by the fishermen next to the water. Or the other story was that when he saw Tilopa, Tilopa was burning the live fish on the fire, eating them like a barbecue! [So Naropa doubted] whether this was Tilopa or not. Naropa thought he might not be Tilopa because of what he was doing and the way he looked. He asked him if he was Tilopa and Tilopa replied "No" but when he asked again, Tilopa then replied, "Yes." Depending on Naropa's attitude, having doubts or not, he gave different answers. When he had doubts, Tilopa said, "No, there's no Lord Tilopa," which was kind of a projection, according to the appearance of Naropa's different thoughts.

Anyway, the end of the story is that Tilopa was an enlightened being, the deity Heruka, the Buddha Vajradhara. The way Tilopa guided Naropa to purify so many eons of negative karma and to achieve enlightenment very quickly was to make Naropa bear twelve great hardships. Each of the twelve hardships has a story where Tilopa asked Naropa to do something that almost made Naropa die. "Hardship" in this case means almost dying! And when he was almost dying, Tilopa came and blessed him and he became alive again or recovered. Then again Tilopa told him to do something, then again he almost died. This was a very heavy thing Tilopa asked Naropa to do. He didn't ask him to go to a cave and meditate.

One of the hardships was to jump from a very high roof into a hole. He almost died, but then Tilopa came and blessed him and he recovered. One day Tilopa asked Naropa to go to

somebody's house where they were making soup, *thukpa*, in a pot, to bring the whole pot to him. He went there without hesitation but the family beat him so badly he almost died. Then Tilopa came and blessed him and he recovered. One time Tilopa asked Naropa to go to where there was a wedding, where the husband and wife were sitting in the carriage or on a horse, I'm not sure. Tilopa asked Naropa to run there and rub the lady's breast! He did that immediately without hesitation but he was beaten by all the people. Again, he almost died. Then Tilopa came, blessed him, and he recovered. There were twelve great hardships and twelve small hardships. As an enlightened being, Tilopa knew the skillful means of purifying many eons of negative karmas, defilements, to achieve enlightenment quickly. So Naropa achieved enlightenment in the intermediate stage after passing away.

I found a book of Naropa's life story in Melbourne, Australia. I don't know how I got the book, but I read it once. Anyway, that's the story. I read a little bit of Milarepa's life story when I was very small, I think maybe five, six or seven years old, something like that, in Solu Khumbu. I had to read texts all day long with my uncle-teacher who taught me, who was my second alphabet teacher. I had to read texts all day from dawn until evening, before sunset, except during mealtime or when I went for *pipi*. I spent a little bit of time when I went for *pipi*, looking around. Anyway, I think when I was young, my mind was probably clearer. When I was reading texts, they seemed to make [a deeper] impression.

So anyway, Tilopa responded according to Naropa's state of mind. When Naropa got some faith that he was Tilopa, at that time, Tilopa responded that he was Tilopa. But when he did certain things like burning live fish in the fire and eating them, Naropa doubted he was Tilopa, and Tilopa denied he was. That's like the story that I told of Lekpai Karma who served the Buddha for twenty-two years but didn't see Shakyamuni Buddha as an enlightened being. He only saw mistakes during those twenty-two years. This is what happens to our mind if there is no protection, no guru devotion, no pure thought. There is a huge problem if we become angry with the guru or if we have heresy. Here the "guru" means after having established a connection.

In the guru devotion meditation, there are eight benefits of correctly devoting to the virtuous friend and eight shortcomings of making mistakes with the guru. If we don't have a guru, we don't receive these eight benefits. That's a powerful shortcoming. Not receiving these eight benefits without a guru, we should understand the shortcomings of being without a guru.

Now, making a mistake with the guru, there are eight shortcomings. If we criticize the guru, if we give up the guru, the karma is as heavy as having criticized or given up all the buddhas. Even if it's just one guru we have criticized or given up, it's very heavy karma, the same as having criticized all the buddhas.

The second shortcoming is that if we get angry at our guru, even for the duration of a youthful person's snapping the finger... According to the Hinayana, the Vaibhashika school, one second is divided into sixty-five parts. According to the Mahayana, the second is divided into three hundred and sixty-five parts, like when you click the shutter on a camera. What is said in the commentaries by the great enlightened being, Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo, the shortcomings of having heresy or anger to the guru, even for that smallest part of a finger snap, which according to Mahayana is one-three hundred and sixty-fifths of a second, for that many eons, we are reborn in the hell realm and have to suffer there. So, the number of eons equaling however many parts of a second we were angry with or had heresy toward the guru, the parts of the snap of the fingers, for that many eons we reincarnate in the hell realm and have to experience the suffering there for that length of time.

And not only that, there are two more. For that number of eons equaling the parts of a snap of the fingers, our realizations of the path to enlightenment are delayed. And the other thing is the merits are also delayed.

If a non-bodhisattva gets angry with a bodhisattva for even a second, it creates negative karma. It destroys the merit collected by having made offerings, practiced charity, morality and so forth for a thousand eons. All the merit collected for a thousand eons gets destroyed. This is for somebody who is not a bodhisattva getting angry with a bodhisattva for as short a time as a second. All the merit we have collected in the past thousand eons gets destroyed. This is mentioned in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*.

The guru we have established a Dharma connection with is the most powerful object among all the powerful objects. For that number of eons, as many as the shortest time like this duration of the snapping finger divided into three hundred and sixty-five that we have heresy or are angry with the guru, for that many number of eons, the realization is put off, delayed.

The third thing is that so much more than that happens when a non-bodhisattva gets angry with a bodhisattva for one second, even *much* more. For however many parts of a second we get angry with the guru, for that many eons equaling those shortest times, our merits get destroyed.

Therefore, when we have negative thoughts such as heresy or anger toward the guru, they become the heaviest obstacle for realization. There is no heavier obstacle than this. It is not only causing us suffering during the human life—all the obstacles, the sicknesses, the many disasters, whatever happens—not only that, but all the sufferings of the hell realm. Not only that, but many eons of merit are destroyed and the realizations of the path are delayed for that many number of eons. Therefore, this guru devotion practice, this pure mind of guru devotion, looking at the guru as free from all the mistakes and having all the qualities, looking at the guru as a buddha, having this degree of devotion becomes *extremely* important. We have an unbelievable need for protection; it is so urgent. This is besides what I said before, that it is the cause of receiving blessings and realizations.

That's why Lama Tsongkhapa's way of presenting the lamrim, his way of guiding the disciples in the path to enlightenment, is to first introduce guru devotion. At the very beginning he introduced guru devotion, and then he introduced the perfect human rebirth and the graduated path of the lower capable being, the middle capable being, and the higher capable being. This way that Lama Tsongkhapa presented the lamrim teachings to guide the disciples is very skillful and very important. From the very beginning the disciples are aware of the way to have quick success and all the realizations and what are the greatest obstacles to that. From the beginning they are aware, they know how to practice the Dharma.

In the West, in America, I think nowadays, there are people, when they have meetings or they do meditations on the path, they feel that guru devotion, guru yoga, is not necessary. They feel this is a practice from the old times, from Tibet, but the United States doesn't need it! The people who give lectures or are involved in teaching meditation, they meet and they think that the path is not necessary. But there are also stories of problems happening, people facing difficulties. I think it also has to do with that. People who say these things really do not know what this practice of guru devotion is for, they don't know the purpose, the importance of it. It appears they have missed out the real importance of it, the usefulness of it in life, the richness of it, how when we do it, we receive all the profits like the sky. I think maybe because they didn't get the very point, this guru yoga thing appears sort of like cultural, like it doesn't have much value or

importance, it's kind of like, what? Is there is some word there? I don't know, it seems to them something that doesn't have a logical reason. I don't know the term to use.

So anyway, they think it's not necessary, that we can meditate on the path without it. I guess the people who are saying these things don't know the real meaning of guru devotion, the real purpose of it and how it is connected, how it is necessary for the realizations of the path to enlightenment. I think, I don't know that exactly, people have problems in the West and so they decide to not have this practice, thinking it's not necessary. They think you should just meditate on the path.

Therefore, before making the Dharma connection with a guru, we should analyze. That's why it becomes important. If the analysis is done carefully at the beginning, later there is much less danger. Even though there might be danger, it depends on how much the disciple has an understanding of the guru devotion practice, how to practice it. It depends on how skillful the disciple is, how much merit and how much understanding of guru devotion the disciple has. It also depends on understanding how important guru devotion is and how to do that, and the merit gained, all these things. So, after the connection is made, it depends on how much we can devote to the guru, how much we are able to practice guru devotion, undisturbed, unchanging, how much stability we have. All these things also depend on the individual, on how much merit, how much good karma the disciple has. For those who have a lot of merit and an understanding of how to do it, their devotion cannot be shaken, cannot be disturbed. Their devotion cannot be changed very easily; it is very strong. So then that disciple creates less obstacles, they have more success.

As I normally explain, first of all, this life's parents are more powerful objects to us than outside people. If we do even a small service for this life's parents, a little respect, the resultant good karma is very powerful because the object is very powerful, so powerful we can start to experience the result, the happiness, in this life. That means it will continue in future lives. On the other hand, if we disrespect this life's parents even a little bit, that is very heavy negative karma, because this life's parents are very powerful objects, and we can start to experience the problems in this life.

After that, a more powerful object is an ordained person. Even if it's an ordinary being living in ordination, an ordinary Sangha, they are a more powerful object. Then, an arhat is even more

powerful. But one bodhisattva is more powerful than the numberless arhats. It is said in the teachings that if we look at a bodhisattva with a respectful mind, a very calm devotional mind, this merit is much more than if we were to give charity of our eyeballs to all the sentient beings of the three realms: the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm. If we give the charity of our eyeballs to all those sentient beings and then we look at a bodhisattva with a devotional, calm mind, in a peaceful way, we create much more merit. But if we look at a bodhisattva with an angry mind—I always have difficulty with this word—if we peer at, glare at, yeah? Glare? If we glare at a bodhisattva with a nondevotional, angry mind, that negative karma is much heavier than taking out the eyeballs of all the three realms' sentient beings. This shows how a bodhisattva is so powerful.

Now of the numberless bodhisattvas and one buddha, one buddha is much more powerful than the numberless bodhisattvas. Now, of the numberless buddhas and one guru, this one guru is more powerful than the numberless buddhas. How does this happen? As I normally mention, even if from the guru's side they are not a buddha or even a bodhisattva but just an ordinary being, how does this being get all this power? The minute there is the recognition from the disciple's side that one is the guru and the other—ourselves—is the disciple, with this recognition of guru and disciple, when the Dharma connection is established, when we hear even one stanza or verse of teachings, even a few syllables of a mantra or an oral transmission or whatever—we don't have to receive a whole teaching but even a verse or a few syllables of a mantra—the minute that relationship or the Dharma connection is established, even if the other person is not a buddha or even a bodhisattva, that being becomes the most powerful being in our life, the most powerful one related to us, not to others. Others might not have made a Dharma connection, but we have, so that person is a most powerful being for us. Relating to us, they are more powerful for us than the numberless buddhas.

I normally give this example. A battery won't give a torch any light until we place the positive and negative electrodes together and the light happens. With the recognition of the guru, when the disciple receives any teachings, even one verse or a few syllables of a mantra, the power is created. Because the power comes from that, that other person becomes most powerful to us.

Our parents are powerful but this is the most powerful object. That guru becoming our guru, becoming the most powerful object, happens due to dependent arising. It happens due to causes and conditions, then that power happens. As I explained regarding the parents, how a small

service, a little respect creates very powerful good karma, but a small harm or a little disrespect becomes very heavy negative karma. Now, there's no question that this is the same with the most powerful object, the guru. This is the explanation that I gave before.

This is the reason why there's so much emphasis on guru devotion in Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism. In Mahayana Buddhism, there is a whole volume, I think it's called *Dong po kō pa'i do*.¹ Again, the guru devotion practice is not something that Tibetan lamas made up for their benefit. There is a whole sutra taught by the Buddha, and when we read lamrim teachings on guru devotion, there are so many quotations from the pandits and yogis and from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings. There's a whole sutra text, a volume, talking about the guru, called *Dong po kō pa'i do*. It may sound like guru yoga is kind of like a Tibetan lama's trip, something they made up for their benefit. It's not like that. There are pure quotations from the Buddha's teachings that verify this.

SEEING MISTAKES IN THE GURU

I'll recite this quotation from the Fifth Dalai Lama on how to practice guru devotion. When we find difficulties in the guru devotion practice or when we see mistakes, it shows us how to handle it so that it doesn't become an obstacle for developing our mind on the path to enlightenment. Instead of becoming an obstacle, we see an apparent mistake as a cause of inspiration for us to develop devotion. Seeing a mistake not only does not become an obstacle to developing our mind on the path to enlightenment, it becomes an inspiration to developing devotion to the guru. That is a very important meditation technique. This is the solution. So I often mention what the Fifth Dalai Lama said in this stanza. It's a very effective instruction, a very powerful, very clear practice, that when we see an apparent mistake, we turn it into something positive, so it does not become an obstacle. We do not allow that to become an obstacle to developing our mind on the path to enlightenment. It doesn't become an obstacle for our happiness.

The Fifth Dalai Lama said,

¹ *Stem Array Sutra* (Skt: *Gandavyūha*; Wyl: *sdong po bkod pa'i mdo*) is the final lengthy chapter of the *Avatamsaka Sutra*. The narrative follows a young layman, Sudhana, and describes the inner qualities and external displays of miraculous powers that have been attained by the fifty different teachers whom he meets. You can read or download this sutra at the [84000 Reading Room](#).

In the view of your hallucinated mind, your own faults appear in the guru's actions. All this shows is that your own heart is rotten to the core. Recognizing them as your own faults, abandon them like poison.

If there is some poison that makes us sick, if there's something in the food that can kill us, we immediately stop eating it. If there's a poison, something that makes us sick or kills us, we immediately throw it away because it's harmful; it's dangerous for our health or life. We discard it like used toilet paper. By understanding that "all this" means all those appearances, all our own mistakes, we need to abandon them like poison.

In the guru devotion meditation there are all the reasons, all the quotations. There are many quotations from Shakyamuni Buddha. Guru Vajradhara said,

In the degenerate time, I, who am called Vajrasattva, will abide in the form of the spiritual master. With the aim of benefiting sentient beings, I will abide in ordinary forms.

There are many quotations like this. The Buddha himself said that in the future degenerate time, which means our time, he will manifest as an abbot or a teacher, and even though he is not blind, he will manifest as blind, even though he is not lame, he will manifest as lame, in order to benefit sentient beings. There are many quotations from the Buddha like that.

When he was a bodhisattva, the Buddha made so many prayers, five hundred prayers, in front of Buddha Rinchen Nyungpo, that in the quarreling time, the time of the five degenerations, in this world, when human beings lived to a hundred and there were no other buddhas to guide these sentient beings because they were so difficult to subdue, at that time he vowed to guide them, to look after them. The Buddha generated such strong compassion and made so many prayers in the past when he was a bodhisattva in the presence of this buddha. Now, *this* is the quarreling time and we are those sentient beings who are in the quarreling time that the Buddha made so many prayers for. The Buddha generated so much compassion for us and said he would guide us. There are so many quotations like this that said the Buddha will guide us.

Who is this Buddha? Who is this Buddha guiding us? Where is this Buddha guiding me? There is nobody else to point to *except* these gurus who guide us to enlightenment by giving vows, such as

the pratimoksha, bodhisattva and tantric vows, by giving us commentaries and oral transmissions, and by giving initiations and so forth. In this way, they guide us and bring us to enlightenment. There is nobody else to point to; this is the Buddha who is guiding us. It *has* to be these [gurus]. They are the ones who, with these activities, are definitely bringing us to enlightenment by helping us cease the mistakes of the mind and complete the qualities of the realizations.

I think, by using quotations such as these, by analyzing, by reasoning and with the quotations, we look at that virtuous friend, free from all the obstacles, free from all the mistakes and having all the realizations. When, from our heart, we look at [the guru as] a buddha, when we do that, whatever mistakes appear to us, we see this appearance of mistakes is only the appearance of our own impure mind. In this way, even if we have the appearance of mistakes, there is no belief that that is true, that the virtuous guru has mistakes. There is no such belief, even though we might have that appearance. This is similar to having the appearance of inherent existence but not believing it to be true.

The other thing is that this helps, this protects our mind so that the appearance of mistakes cannot destroy us. Because there's no belief in it, it cannot destroy us, it cannot harm us. But if the belief returned and this ordinary mind believed that it was true, it could destroy our enlightenment, it could destroy our liberation, it could destroy our realizations.

The next thing, I don't remember a hundred percent, but maybe in the text called *Essence of Nectar* by Yeshe Tsöndru, it 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
exemplification—
Only this present appearance.

That means that until we have purified all the defilements of negative karma, even if *all* the buddhas were to actually come in front of us, we could not see them as buddhas, in the aspect of a buddha. We could only see them in their present appearance, as ordinary beings in samsara,

having all the delusions, all the suffering, making mistakes in their actions. We would have no way of seeing them in the pure aspect of a buddha.

This is how the situation is. Because of our mental state, we cannot see anything purer than we are. If somebody manifests as pure, we cannot see them. If they manifest as purer, better than this, we don't have karma to see them. If they are lower than this, like an animal or something, they cannot communicate or receive guidance. Therefore, if we even have the opportunity to see the many qualities in the guru, we are so fortunate. That's the instruction given by Yeshe Tsöndru.

The way the Buddha or the guru guides is the same. "Guru" here refers to the absolute guru; it refers way back to the creator, the originator, whether we say "guru" or "Buddha." If these numberless buddhas, or the guru, didn't manifest in this ordinary aspect—having delusions, making mistakes in action, suffering, in whichever way exactly fits our present state of ordinary, impure mind—we could not see them or communicate with them. There is no other way.

We are totally lost in samsara, totally guideless, like a baby left in the jungle where there are many dangerous animals. Like that, our life is totally guideless, lost. Therefore, it is unbelievably kind that they manifest in this ordinary aspect of having mistakes. They are so precious, so precious in our life. Because with this, we can receive teachings, guidance, all these vows, initiations, commentaries, and we can communicate with them. Then we can achieve every happiness including liberation and enlightenment, and we can enlighten all sentient beings. So this ordinary aspect, this mistaken aspect, is unbelievably precious in our life.

Visualizing all those gurus we have made a connection with, by thinking of all their aspects and how precious they are, we can recite mantras. After that we can think twenty times, or fifty times or one mala, "How precious, how precious, how precious." We can try to get a strong realization of that. Then, after that we can recall all the actions they have done for us: guiding us to enlightenment by giving those different vows and initiations or by giving commentaries on tantric or sutra teachings.

Every single word brings us to enlightenment. Every single word or mantra we receive leaves a positive imprint in our mind and that causes us to have realizations later—sooner or later—ceasing the defilements. That's how it makes the mind enlightened. Every single word brings us

to enlightenment. So, how precious, how kind they are. We generate that feeling, either twenty-one times, or half a mala, or a whole mala.

So now here, seeing a mistake in the guru, instead of causing heresy and anger to arise, it becomes a cause of inspiration, a cause of appreciation, a cause to think of their kindness and to develop guru devotion. This is Lama Tsongkhapa's special technique, that even seeing a mistake in the guru through this meditation becomes a cause of guru devotion, a cause to attain realizations in our mind.

I think I'll stop here. Sorry, the refuge precepts didn't happen. Tomorrow afternoon! I think the dinner's gone! I think dinner has become breakfast. Anyway, my subject tonight somehow turned out this way. However, if you can write down these things, you are better able to remember them. Even though I didn't go through the whole subject according to the outlines of the lamrim, this talk contained very important points of the guru devotion meditation practice, why and how and all those things.

KNOWING THE CAUSE OF HAPPINESS AND SUFFERING

I am mentioning this because it helps. Now, we are just beginning to practice the Dharma, so from the very beginning we must be very careful to practice correctly, to make sure from the beginning that we can always purify. Any negative karma can be purified. There is always the chance to become enlightened, but it is better from the very beginning to practice correctly by knowing all the dangers, all the important points, what brings all the success of realizations. From the beginning it's better to have the knowledge of what is important in order to achieve enlightenment, and then to enlighten all sentient beings. From the beginning, if the practice becomes messy, due to lack of knowledge or carelessness, our life then continues to be messy. Instead of having realizations, we continue to make so many mistakes and have many obstacles.

That's the one reason why it is important to explain this, to know this. In other words, if we put it into ordinary language, this is psychology, protection for the mind. Of course, it sounds very strange to tell other people that they should visualize the Buddha. But we can explain this with compassion. It's not that I have compassion, I'm not saying that. With compassion, we can explain guru devotion to protect the disciple from these biggest mistakes, the heaviest negative karmas. It's necessary to explain this. If it's explained with compassion, there is no problem.

Even if we ourselves are not a buddha, as I mentioned before, if it's explained with compassion, in another sense it's psychology. It's a very profound psychology that has benefits like the sky.

In our daily life, there are things like how to meditate, but knowing how to meditate is not the only thing. If we know how to meditate, then we also come to know how to eat, how to sleep, how to wash, how to do our job. Knowing how to meditate, we know how to do all the rest. If we don't know how to meditate, how to practice the Dharma, we don't know how to eat, how to sleep, how to do our job and all the rest. We are ignorant in all the rest; we don't completely know how to do things. We may know *externally* how to do them, but we don't know how to internally do them, the mental aspect. We may be professional, externally knowing how to do our job, how to do cleaning, how to be a waiter in a restaurant, in a five-star or a ten-star hotel, how to teach in a school and so forth. But if we don't know how to meditate and how to practice the Dharma, then we don't know how to do all the rest. We may know externally how to do something professionally, but we really don't completely know how to do any action.

We have to know whether any action we do is the cause of happiness or the cause of suffering. In order to result only in happiness, our action has to become virtue. If the action becomes nonvirtue, it only results in suffering. What defines an action becoming the cause of happiness or the cause of suffering is not defined by being professional, by knowing how to do it externally. If we are not professional at how we do the cleaning, or how we work at being a secretary or how we work in an office, not being professional does not make the action nonvirtue. Or being professional, that alone doesn't make the action to become virtue, the cause for it to only result in happiness. It doesn't depend on whether the action is done professionally, whether it is sleeping, eating, working, enjoying lying down for many hours at the beach in the hot sun, or riding over the big waves on a board, getting blissed out!

A guy in Australia told me that riding the waves you can also generate bliss, you can experience bliss. I think he said clear light or bliss! He said when he experienced bliss, he thought of the Tibetan lamas who had no idea of that experience. They didn't have the experience of riding over the waves, maybe he meant the Australian ocean waves. I think he was probably saying that the experience we can have through the Six Yogas of Naropa is the same as by riding over the waves! He was saying that in highest tantra, just as you generate the four blisses, while riding over the waves, standing on the board, you can generate bliss. Maybe that was just for himself.

If what we want is only happiness and if we don't want suffering, our actions must become virtue, and in order for the action to become virtue, our motivation, our attitude to life, has to become virtue, it has to become the Dharma. When that action has become the Dharma, it can only result in happiness, not suffering. Like wanting to watch a particular TV channel, we turn the switch on and it lights up. Or we press it again and then it stops. Similarly, our attitude of life, our motivation is like that. With one attitude it is only suffering, it's opening the door for suffering. The mistaken way of thinking is having a wrong attitude, a wrong motivation. Because the attitude of life is wrong, we open the door for all suffering. Like flicking this switch and the television shows only wars, only violence. We must turn the channel so it shows peaceful programs, enjoyable ones with many beautiful things, like mountains, flowers and people enjoying themselves. Our attitude of life is like that switch. We press and the whole room, the whole house, becomes completely dark, without light. If our attitude to life becomes nonvirtuous, it's like that.

Then, even in this life, there are many worries and problems, so many things. The nature of that mind is not peaceful, it's unhappy, due to the nonvirtuous thoughts, the afflictive emotions. When we transform your mind into virtuous thoughts, into the Dharma, it's like pressing the button and the whole room, the whole house, lights up. When that happens, where there was no light, suddenly light comes, bringing joy and happiness. With a virtuous thought it is like that.

FOUR PEOPLE RECITING THE TARA PRAYER

You have probably gone through this many times, but especially in case somebody's not aware of this or needs it clarified, I'd like to emphasize this. The usual example is what is mentioned by the great enlightened being, Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo, in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*. He uses the example of four people reciting the Tara prayer, the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras*, because it is very common among the Tibetan people to recite this prayer. Now reciting the Twenty-one Taras practice is even becoming common among the Western students who practice Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism. So Pabongka generally uses this example.

Four people are reciting the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras*. The first person recites the Tara prayer with the motivation to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. Because of that, that person's action becomes the cause to achieve enlightenment for all sentient beings. The next person recites the Tara prayer with the motivation, not to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, but

much lower than that, to achieve liberation from samsara for only themselves. That person's action does not become the cause of enlightenment, it does not become the cause of happiness for all sentient beings, it only becomes the cause to achieve liberation, the ultimate happiness for themselves. The third person recites the prayer, not to reach enlightenment, not to achieve liberation from samsara for themselves, but just to achieve happiness in their future life, just that. That person's action of reciting the Tara prayer does not become the cause of enlightenment, it does not even become the cause to achieve liberation from samsara for themselves. It only becomes the cause to achieve the happiness of their own future life, only that.

All the actions up to here are Dharma. The action that becomes the cause of enlightenment, the action that becomes the cause of liberation from samsara for oneself, and the action that becomes the cause of future lives' happiness, all those three actions become Dharma.

The fourth person recites the Tara prayer with the motivation to be healthy in this life, to have a long life, power, wealth, reputation and so forth in this life. That means the fourth person has recited the prayer with the motivation that is attachment clinging to the happiness of this life. Therefore, this fourth person's action of reciting the Tara prayer does not become Dharma. Even though the subject is Dharma, the action is not Dharma because the person is reciting the Tara prayer with the attachment clinging to this life.

Although there can be prayers whose subject is not Dharma, here the subject is Dharma, but the person's action does not become Dharma because the motivation for the action of reciting the prayer is the attachment clinging to this life. It becomes nonvirtue. Because the prayer has power due to the blessings, the power of the deity, it might heal a disease like cancer and so forth, it might pacify life obstacles, it might help to have the success in whatever they are looking for in this life—reciting such prayers helps, but not necessarily—however that still doesn't mean that the person's action of reciting the prayer becomes Dharma. The prayer might help just as when we take medicine we can be healed. If we have a headache, taking aspirins or those painkillers can stop the pain. That doesn't prove that taking this medicine is Dharma, that it is virtuous. Even though it can heal the disease, it doesn't mean that action, having treatment is virtue, Dharma, which results only happiness. That alone doesn't prove it. That totally depends on our motivation, whether the attitude of taking medicine is done with Dharma or not, whether that becomes Dharma or not.

It is mentioned in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* by the great enlightened Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo, when a practitioner of tantra, who was practicing Yamantaka, died, he was born as a hungry ghost in the same shape of Yamantaka, very similar looking, with many arms and heads. He tried to go from India to Tibet but Lama Atisha didn't allow him to enter Tibet, where he would harm other beings. Lama Atisha gave *torma*, a cake, with the meditation to this spirit who was then dispelled and not allowed to come into Tibet.

He also mentions a meditator who did many years of retreat on the deity, Yamantaka, then died and was reborn as a hungry ghost similar in form to Yamantaka. His friend, another meditator, burned *tsampa*, barley flour—the main, *real* Tibetan food, not *thukpa* or *momo* noodles, which come from China and are not real Tibetan food. Tsampa, barley flour, is the *real* Tibetan food. In the evenings, his friend practiced making charity of the smell of tsampa to the spirits, to the smell-eaters, and to the intermediate state beings. If people died, while they were in the intermediate state, he made charity for them in this way. It's a short practice but a very effective one to make charity for those spirits and intermediate state beings, but actually the charity is made for all the six realms' sentient beings. He also made offerings to the Triple Gem. It is not just the smell, it transforms into the various sense objects, form, sound and so forth. It is the perfect smell which has the qualities of the five sense objects. He made offering to the Triple Gem, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and also made charity to all sentient beings, particularly those beings who live on smells. Because it liberates them from those suffering realms, there is great benefit in doing this charity.

One day, when this meditator was doing this practice, the other meditator, his friend who died and was born as a hungry ghost, similar to the deity with many arms, came to get this smell. Even though he had done many years of retreat, reciting lots of mantras, he was born as a spirit. Why? It's because he didn't know how to meditate. He did a lot of mantras, he did visualizations of the deity for many years, but he didn't know how to meditate. The mistake is *not* because he hadn't visualized deities or thought about the deities or because he hadn't recited mantras, it's not that. It's because while he was meditating, there was no renunciation of samsara, there was no bodhicitta, there was no right view. These things were missing. He recited mantras and visualized the deity for years, but the lamrim was missing. There was no lamrim within his tantra practice. While he did the sadhanas, the lamrim was missing, the three principal aspects of the path, the very fundamental practice of Buddhism, was missed out. Then instead of instantly

achieving enlightenment by practicing tantra, he achieved the lower realms, the hungry ghost realm.

It's easy when people have some subject to meditate on, something to think about, either breathing meditation or something else to think about. But that's not sufficient. Even visualizing a tantric deity is not sufficient. If we just have a mantra to recite, that's not sufficient, it's not enough. It's so important to know *how* to do it.

IS BREATHING MEDITATION DHARMA?

I normally also say this. We can spend our whole life doing breathing meditation, spending so many years just doing breathing meditation, just watching the breath. If the motivation is to cease the delusions such as anger, attachment and ignorance, then doing a breathing meditation is similar to achieving liberation from samsara. Here we are doing the breathing meditation with the thought of renunciation, renouncing the delusions. So, of course, that action becomes a cause to achieve liberation from samsara, liberation from the cause of suffering, the delusions.

Now, the person who is doing the meditation for day-to-day life peace of mind, the peace of mind of this life, is that virtue? Is that Dharma?

Student: If they are calm, they may not harm others as much as they may have.

Rinpoche: That's similar to not harming others when we are asleep! When we get so angry, when we're nagging, nagging, nagging, when we're so angry and nagging at somebody, screaming at somebody, drilling in their ear, instead of doing that we go to sleep, it's very useful, isn't it? Or even if we just go away, just go out of the house for a walk alone!

Is that virtue or not virtue, is that Dharma or not Dharma? Doing the meditation for peace of mind of this life. Yeah?

Student: Not Dharma.

Rinpoche: Not Dharma, there's no Dharma. If a person doesn't think about future lives, doesn't think the happiness beyond this life, just wants to have peace of mind now, today. There's no Dharma.

Student: But what if you use that peace of mind to practice the Dharma? If you use it to pray or to create the conditions for being in touch with the Dharma in the future, I think that could be Dharma.

Rinpoche: That becomes small Dharma! Tiny Dharma!

Student: But it must be better than just sleeping away the time, isn't it? Because it was really one very little seed.

Rinpoche: My question is that the person doesn't think of the happiness after this life. There is no motivation of the happiness after this life; they are just wanting today's peace of mind.

Student: What if the person does it to benefit other sentient beings? For example, if I do it to calm my anger so I won't get angry at anybody else and be unable to generate compassion. Even though I do it with the motivation for only this life, I do it with the right motivation, so I would say that that is Dharma because it's to benefit others?

Rinpoche: You see, if a person is trying to stop anger, that's Dharma. If you are trying to stop delusion, that's Dharma. Of course, that is good quality Dharma. The definition of Dharma is the action, the thought that becomes a remedy to the delusions. That's one definition of Dharma that is usually mentioned by the Kadampa geshe, that which becomes remedy for the delusions. Here, the person is trying to stop anger, they are trying to practice patience. Of course, that's *real* Dharma. That's renunciation, renouncing the cause of suffering, delusions. That's *real* Dharma. But here, the person is doing the meditation just for peace of mind, to be calm. It's more like a sense of comfort, in that way. Not so much thinking, "Oh, I'm going to stop my desire or renounce anger." It's not renouncing delusions; it's not clear like that. Just looking for peace of mind, just looking for comfort. Is that actual meditation Dharma or not? Is that virtue or not?

What about a person doing a meditation because of the pleasure of meditation? Just doing a meditation because of the pleasure of meditation. Is there no Dharma? Hmm? Isn't there a state

of peace, a liberation; isn't that the pleasure of meditation? The state of peace, liberation, nirvana, the sorrowless state—isn't that the pleasure of meditation?

Student: Yes, but it's not the purpose of that.

Rinpoche: So, is it for the pleasure of meditation? That is the pleasure of meditation, the sorrowless state. But that's not pleasure? That's suffering! Liberation from samsara, liberation from the sufferings of suffering. Liberation from the suffering of suffering, right? So in the same way, enlightenment is always suffering? When you meditate, there's inner peace, right? If you meditate to achieve that, that is nonvirtue?

Student: Depending on my motivation for finding peace.

Rinpoche: The motivation is just to seek that peace, to achieve that peace from meditation.

Student: That's not Dharma. Just to seek peace is not enough.

Rinpoche: So that is not Dharma. I see. Hmm. Then in the same way, meditating in order to achieve liberation from samsara, that's also not Dharma?

Student: For myself and others, yes, that's Dharma.

Rinpoche: If you are meditating in order to liberate yourself from suffering and the cause, delusion and karma, that's not Dharma?

Student: Yes.

Rinpoche: Hmm, that's Dharma? So, meditating in order to achieve the inner peace from meditation, that's Dharma. It's the same, because if you're doing meditation in order to achieve liberation from samsara, from suffering and its causes, if that's Dharma, then same thing, in order to achieve inner peace from doing meditation, that also is Dharma. No? Because it's the same, huh? Liberation from samsara is inner peace, it's total inner peace, yeah? So, in order to achieve inner peace which comes from meditation, doing that meditation, that's Dharma, that has to be Dharma.

Anyway, the person seeking liberation, seeking nirvana in this life, and doing meditation for that purpose, is that Dharma? That is not Dharma because the person is seeking liberation in *this* life, which is for the happiness in this life.

Student: They're using this life to seek liberation, which is good.

Rinpoche: But anyway, the person is not thinking about future liberation in the next life but achieving liberation this life. That is the happiness of this life. It's the same thing with becoming enlightened in *this* life, that person is seeking the happiness of *this* life!

That has to be analyzed, whether the inner peace, the quietness, the stillness, meditating in order to achieve that pleasure, whether that is Dharma or not, whether there is virtue or not. If that is nonvirtue, then with that kind of motivation, we spend our whole life meditating, and our whole life is totally wasted. Not only does the meditation not become virtue, all those actions become totally nonvirtuous. It's not only that life becomes empty, but all those actions become nonvirtuous, the cause of suffering.

The other thing is when we get so annoyed or so fed up living with other people, we go away alone, we stay alone in a cave in the countryside or on a mountain alone, then there's peace.

Student: One can associate peace of mind with getting rid of delusions.

Rinpoche: Even if we go far away, we can still have delusions. While we are alone in the cave and doing meditation, we have peace of mind and we are really enjoying it and we become really attached to that. What about that? Meditating with that mind. Also what about when a person's state of mind is in bliss, due to kundalini? That is the function of kundalini and so forth, when the mind is in a state of bliss, an experience of bliss, if the person is doing the meditation for that experience, in order to experience that in this life. What about that? Is that virtue or nonvirtue? The person is really looking for that experience, that bliss. They have had that experience and they really want to stay in it all day long! They don't want it to stop that experience, so they meditate for that. Is that virtue or nonvirtue?

Student: Nonvirtue.

Rinpoche: Nonvirtue?

Student: Unless it's part of another practice to burn the desire, and then it could be virtuous.

Rinpoche: Because it burns delusion, because it burns desire. So it's virtue because it burns desire?

Student: If it's part of a practice.

Rinpoche: Because it burns delusion, because it burns desire, so it is virtue?

Student: If it is part of the practice...

Rinpoche: If it is?

Student: Yes, but if the person is doing it purely to experience the...

Rinpoche: Bliss.

Student: Then it wouldn't be virtuous.

Rinpoche: But if it's to finish desire, to burn desire, then that is a virtue. That is the real answer!

Student: But you reach single-pointed concentration, from the Hinayana point of view, that is bliss. From the Hinayana point of view, when single-pointed concentration is reached, there's great peace.

Rinpoche: When you reach single-pointed concentration there's peace, yes.

Student: So that's Dharma.

Rinpoche: So Fabio's saying that is Dharma, right? The motivation is for you to reach that peace of mind through concentration, but then that's the pleasure of this life, that's the happiness for

this life. From one-pointed concentration, *shamatha*, you achieve this peace. Isn't that the happiness of this life? So the person is looking for the happiness this life?

Student: You've saved yourself; it's not for other sentient beings.

Rinpoche: Isn't that seeking the happiness of this life? You are seeking happiness of this life. To experience that, you are doing this concentration meditation. The motivation is peace in this life. The person is seeking the happiness of this life, therefore that is attachment. That is a nonvirtuous thought. Then the meditation is not virtue. A person who is doing shamatha meditation in order to achieve inner peace in this life, that is nonvirtue, right?

Student: A Hinayanist would say that it's virtue but from a Mahayana point of view, it's just selfish. It is ignorance, and to practice ignorance is not Dharma.

Rinpoche: That's very good. That's excellent to think about. Anyway, you can discuss this point.

A VIRTUOUS MOTIVATION IS THE DOOR TO ALL HAPPINESS

Even a meditation one-pointedly concentrating on the conventional nature of mind, which in some traditions is regarded as a mahamudra meditation, a meditation on the ultimate nature, even that meditation does not become virtue if the motivation is attachment clinging to the happiness of this life. It becomes nonvirtue, like that. As I was saying before, the fourth person reciting the Tara prayer with the motivation only seeking happiness of this life, that action does not become virtue; it becomes nonvirtue. Even though the subject of that prayer is Dharma, the action does not become Dharma.

This is clarifying the point that it is the motivation that makes the actions we do in our life become Dharma, that determines whether our actions are nonvirtuous or virtuous, Dharma, the cause of happiness. Without any education on this, without any clarification or emphasis on this, then no matter how long people meditate, even meditating for their whole life, for hundreds of years or eons—for even that length of time—all that action of meditating becomes totally nonvirtuous, just creating more causes of samsara, more causes of suffering.

Therefore, it becomes so essential before meditating to know how to meditate. In the subject of how to meditate, there is the secret point, whether we transcend our life or whether we make our life empty, totally wasted and harmful to ourselves because everything becomes nonvirtuous. Our life becomes the creator of our own sufferings, and not just the problems and confusion in this life, but the sufferings after this life. The great risk in life is that, even though the subject of the meditation is explained, such as how to do the breathing meditation or watch the sensations while walking, we are not taught how to meditate. Even though the subject of meditation is introduced, if there is no introduction on *how* to meditate, meaning the motivation, there is great risk.

The danger is that the door for all the happiness, which is our virtuous motivation, is blocked; it is locked up. That door is locked up if the motivation is not explained. This is something to be aware of. It's *the most* important thing to learn before spending our life meditating. In order to practice Dharma, the very first thing to learn is the definition of Dharma, what makes our actions become Dharma and what makes our actions become non-Dharma, nonvirtuous, the cause of suffering.

So now, for every day in our daily life, there are two things. We must not only know how to meditate but also how to wash, how to sleep, how to eat, how to do our job, how to dress, everything we do. If we are driving a car, we have to know how to drive; if we are cooking, we have to know how to cook. If we are working as a secretary, we have to know how to write. There are these two things. First, how to do the external things, which we can learn from schools, colleges, universities. But there is the most important thing: how to do the inner life, and that's the motivation. That's the most important knowledge of how to do something. As I mentioned before, we can only do this by knowing the definition of Dharma, what is Dharma and what is not Dharma, what is virtue and what is nonvirtue, what is the cause of happiness and what is the cause of suffering. By knowing what is Dharma and what is not Dharma, we come to learn what is the cause of happiness, what is the cause of suffering. This is the most important thing; it is the first thing in the life to learn. *If* we want happiness and if we don't want suffering, this is what we have to learn first in life.

Without knowing this internal knowledge of how to have the correct motivation, we have no freedom to transform our mind into the Dharma, into virtue. Then what happens is all the time our mind is in nonvirtue and all our actions, whatever we do, everything becomes nonvirtue.

That nonvirtuous attitude is the obstacle to achieving happiness in this life and in future lives. The only result we achieve is suffering, only undesirable things. Therefore, it is not enough to just be able to do the actions professionally, externally, just that knowledge is not enough. We need to know how to do the actions from the inside, which is to do with the motivation.

As I often mention, when we practice Dharma, even when we chant prayers like this, it is similar to the other activities in our daily life—eating, walking, sitting, sleeping, doing our job and so forth. If the actions are done with a bodhicitta motivation, they will become cause of enlightenment. All those actions become the cause of happiness for all sentient beings. And if they are done with the renunciation of samsara, the thought of seeking liberation from samsara for ourselves, those actions become the cause of liberation. Then if the motivation is the renunciation of this life, detachment to this life, the actions become Dharma; they become the cause of happiness of future lives. Even if there's no motivation of the renunciation of the entire samsara, but renunciation for this life, detachment for this life, they become the cause for happiness in this life. Then, if they're done only with attachment seeking the happiness of this life, all those actions of every twenty four hours become only the cause of the lower realms. They just become nonvirtuous actions and just the cause of the lower realms.

THE BASE AND THE LABEL

I thought to answer a little bit from the question about the base and the label. I just went off somewhere, so I didn't finish that answer. Of course, the answer is that it's like this, that the I that is the label is merely imputed. Because there is the base, which are the aggregates, these are the base to be labeled "I" and these aggregates are also labeled. These aggregates are also merely imputed.

The aggregates are also merely that base which is the base to be labeled "I." They are also merely imputed, because there's the collection of the five aggregates. The general aggregates, which are the base to be labeled "I" are also merely imputed because they are a collection. Among the aggregates, there is the aggregate of form, and *that* is also merely imputed because there is a base. All the collections are part of form.

So the analysis goes like that. It continues down like this, down to the atom. That base is the label and *that* base is the label and so on. Just as the "I" is the label that is imputed because there

is the base of the aggregates, these aggregates are also a label; they are also merely imputed because there is the collection of the five aggregates. And each aggregate is the same: the aggregate of form, of feeling, of cognition, of compounded aggregates and consciousness. And so on, the same analysis goes down from the label to the base, that base becoming a label depending on its own base, right down to the atom. As far as form, it goes down to the atom. So even the atom, there are different schools which accept [indivisible] atoms or [partless] atoms. There are different schools that have different philosophies. Some accept atoms as having particles and some schools think atoms have no particles. I think Madhyamika Prasangika school asserts that atoms have particles. I think that is also similar to science, that atoms are also collections of smaller parts. So now an atom is also a label. What is an atom? An atom is that which is merely labeled by the mind, because there's the *base*, all those smaller parts.

It's the same thing with consciousness. This life's consciousness depends on all of this year's consciousnesses, which depends on all these months' consciousnesses and all these weeks' consciousnesses, and the hours', the minutes' and the seconds' consciousnesses, then the split second's consciousnesses. These are all labels. It's the same as before. This life's consciousness is labeled on all those years' consciousnesses; all those years consciousnesses is labeled on all the months' consciousnesses and so on, like that, going down to a minute's consciousness labeled on the number of seconds, right down to the shortest time within a second's consciousness.

Like this, in reality, everything, *every single thing*, starting from the I, starting from the self, *everything* exists in mere name. *Everything* exists in mere name in reality, like Lama Zopa. This "Lama Zopa" exists in mere name. Think of your own name. That's merely imputed by the mind. It's the same, all of it down to the atoms and even the particles of the atoms and with the consciousness down to each second and to the shortest time of consciousness. Everything exists in mere name. The whole thing exists in mere name. That's the reality. *But* we don't see it that way. That's the reality, but it doesn't appear that way, we don't see it that way. We don't realize it that way.

This is because we have all these hallucinations projected by the negative imprints left on the mental continuum by the past ignorance, projecting inherent existence on all these phenomena, starting from the I down to the atoms and particles of atoms and the shortest moments of consciousness, on all these merely labeled things. As I mentioned the other day, right after that is projected, the inherently existent appearance covers all those merely labeled phenomena; they are completely covered by this hallucination.

Because of this hallucination of inherent existence, when every merely labeled thing appears back to us, starting from I down to the particles of the atoms and the shortest moment of consciousness, they don't appear as merely labelled by mind. They falsely appear back to us as inherently existent. Everything appears in a hallucinated way. Because of this, even this is not there. Starting from the I, the I is not on these aggregates, as I think I mentioned. I'm not sure what I mentioned before. We cannot find the I, the self, on these aggregates. We cannot find it on this base *at all*—that's the reality—but we have a hallucination that it is there. In our daily life we have a hallucination all the time that it is there on this base.

We have this incredible heavy hallucination it is there because of this projection, this inherently existent appearance projected onto the merely labeled I by the negative imprint left on the mental continuum by past ignorance. It's because of that. While it is not there, we have the hallucination that it's *there* on this base. In reality, from form down to the atoms and the particles of atoms, nothing is there. Each of these things is *not there* on that base. In the same way that the I is not there on this base, everything is not there on its base, down to the atoms. The atom is not there; there is no atom on the base of those particles. So starting from the I down to the atoms and the particles of atom, everything exists in mere name. Things exist, but they exist in mere name. As I think I mentioned already, even the merely labeled I is not on this base, and it's the same with the aggregates and from there down to the atoms and particles of atom—everything is not there. In reality, it's not there on this base. Nothing is there on the base. Each of the labels that is imputed down to the atoms and the particles of atoms is *not on the base*.

Even the atoms and the particles of atoms, even the merely labeled ones do not exist on the base. That's the reality, but we have this total hallucination, this completely heavy hallucination there is this I on these aggregates, that there is this inherently existent I on these aggregates. These two terms have the same meaning. Then, down to the particles of the atoms, it is like that. And the seconds of consciousness and even the shortest moments of consciousness in each second, it is like that. We have this total hallucination, this projection, that they are all there on the base, inherently existent, something real. *All* these things starting from the I appear to us as something real, appearing from that.

Then we not only have that appearance, but we let our mind hold on to it as true. We make it very concrete. Our concept makes everything appear inherently existent and by holding on to

this, we think all these things are *real*. We make everything concrete. That's how the delusions and all the other emotional afflicted minds arise on the basis of this.

So that's the reason why in Buddhism, *everything* exists being merely labeled by the mind, everything exists in *mere name*. Everything exists in mere name, merely labeled. That's the answer to the question, "What about the base? The I is the label but what about the base? Is that a label or not?" So, you see, it's like that.

SUFFERING REFERS TO ALL ASPECTS OF SAMSAARA

There was one question about the meaning of suffering one day. That made me think that, of course, we always talk about suffering. When we talk to the people we meet every day, we always hear about suffering. We talk to other people outside and we hear about their sufferings. We hear about a lot of suffering. And also in the meditation course, there is suffering! Also in the lamrim meditation course. There are many courses called Buddhist courses but they don't talk about suffering. They just emphasize concentration but they don't talk about suffering. But if it's a meditation course on the actual fundamental Buddhist teachings, which are the four noble truths, then of course the teachings on suffering and the cause of the suffering have to come. By knowing that, we come to understand what liberation means and that there is a solution, that there is a path, a method to achieve that.

So anyway, the question made me think about the meaning of suffering. What is meant by suffering? Even though we always talk about it and hear it. Still the answer I gave before, which I think included the suffering of change, may not be complete. What did I say? [*Student*: It was something that we don't want.]

An undesirable feeling, that is suffering. I mean, a person who has renunciation for the whole of samsara, also renunciation for all those samsaric pleasures, that becomes undesirable for that person, for the meditator who has renounced all this, who sees that the temporary samsaric pleasures are only in the nature of suffering. They have renunciation for that, a detached mind that sees even the samsaric pleasures as undesirable. That's because the renunciation of samsara is a detached mind.

And not only that, not only those two feelings, the suffering of suffering and the suffering of change, not only temporary samsaric pleasure, but even these aggregates, the contaminated seed of disturbing thought and that which experiences the problems, that which is the container of the problems, that is also undesirable. They have a mind that sees the samsaric aggregates as undesirable.

So anyway, I thought to give another definition for suffering. The other one—feelings that are undesirable—is very gross. Of course, in the view of the hallucinated mind, when our mind is hallucinated, these samsaric pleasures are not unbearable. They are bearable. They are something we want, that our hallucinating mind wants, that it has attachment for, that it clings to. But when we are not hallucinating, when we are meditating on the renunciation of samsara, during the meditation when we are analyzing the feeling, we see that samsaric pleasure is only suffering.

The renounced mind especially sees that pleasure as totally the nature of suffering. It fully realizes that it is the same as pain, the same as the suffering of suffering, the first very gross level of suffering. For that renounced mind, this samsaric pleasure has become undesirable. So it depends. When our mind is hallucinated, this samsaric pleasure becomes desirable, but when our mind is not hallucinated, when it is in state of renunciation, seeing these pleasures as only in the nature of suffering through meditation, through analysis, we see they are undesirable.

So suffering is the feeling that is undesirable, but I would like to add that it is the feeling that doesn't give any satisfaction. This is suffering in a wider sense and here the definition includes all samsaric pleasures. Suffering is the feeling that is undesirable *or* that doesn't give any satisfaction. This covers more. Probably if you watch your stomach now, it may be easy to realize!

Dharma happiness gives satisfaction. We can complete Dharma happiness; we can finish the work. There's an end to practicing Dharma. But samsaric pleasure never gives any satisfaction and the work we need to do to get it is endless.

After these two—that suffering is undesirable and doesn't give satisfaction—what is left is the aggregates. If we want to cover everything, we include the contaminated aggregates that experience suffering. So I guess that covers what suffering is. That question, “What is suffering?” is not a common question. Even though we always hear about suffering, all over the world, we talk about it, how we suffer in this life, and also in lamrim courses there is suffering, but

suddenly when we have to think about what suffering means, rather than thinking of suffering just as some kind of pain, we need to think about it in a broad way.

So now here, I thought to introduce a little bit on emptiness, and then maybe introduce the Wheel of Life before doing the refuge and precepts. However, maybe we can leave it like that. I just wanted to get this done today, but we can maybe leave that part as I want to get the refuge and precepts done. Anyway, it gives deeper meaning of what it means to take refuge and precepts, a deeper meaning when we hear about the broad view of what is samsara, the evolution of samsara, and the description of the Wheel of Life that comes into the four noble truths: true suffering, true cause of suffering, true cessation of suffering, and true path. Everything is described there in the Wheel of Life, what is the achievement and what is the path. So by going over this, it gives you an extensive view and not only of the suffering of pain. The suffering of samsara is not only the suffering of pain, there is also the suffering of change, which we sometimes see as pleasure, and there is pervasive compounding suffering. By knowing the broad view of the suffering of samsara, the purpose of taking refuge and taking precepts has a very deep reason.

Lecture 6

December 7, 1998

THE IMPORTANCE OF REFUGE AND PRECEPTS

When we see that taking refuge and taking precepts has a very deep reason, we see how this is the most important thing in our life. We come to know that by meditating on this, by knowing about samsara, this is the immediate solution. What to do now? After hearing about samsara and all this, the solution, what to do immediately, is this. The immediate thing to get liberated from samsara by taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Because we cannot do it by ourselves, we need to rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, who have the power, who have all the qualities to save us, to liberate us from samsara. By relying on them, as well as by doing the practice, we can liberate ourselves from samsara.

We not only need to take refuge, but we also need to do something very practical, something we can do right now, which is taking precepts to stop the cause of suffering in the lower realms. Right now, that is what we can do, the immediate thing to protect us from the lower realms, because death is definite and it can happen at any time, any day, any moment. Therefore, we need to be prepared, and the first thing is to make sure we are not reborn in lower realms. Otherwise, if we were to be born there, there would be no opportunity to practice the Dharma. And once we are born there, we could never be sure when we could come back because, reincarnating in those lower realms, again there would be no opportunity to practice Dharma and we would continuously create negative karma. This is besides the negative karma that we create in the human realm, and besides the negative karma created from beginningless past lives, which we have not finished experiencing. Therefore, we can't be sure when we could come back to the human realm and have the opportunity to practice Dharma.

Therefore, something really practical we can do in our life to get out of samsara is to not only rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, but to do something *in action*. And that is protecting our karma by taking a number of vows, precepts, to stop creating the cause of the lower realms. Not only that, living in the vows means we also stop that many harms to other sentient beings. So we should understand that. Otherwise, we could cause great harm to the world, to other sentient beings. And that means [by taking precepts] we also stop the many harms to ourselves.

It's all the same thing—harming others is harming ourselves. We have to experience all the problems, all the results, suffering, on ourselves. So, harming others means harming ourselves.

So right now, without delaying a minute or even a second, to make preparation for death, to protect ourselves from reincarnating in the lower realms, the immediate thing to save ourselves is to take the vows, the precepts. That doesn't mean to become a monk or nun, it doesn't mean that. It means as laypeople, doing whatever we can, taking whatever number of vows we can practice.

THE KARMA OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

We have already gone through this part of the subject of karma, so I just want to emphasize this, just to give an idea, an example that might be helpful for meditation, when we meditate on karma or when we do a practice such as Vajrasattva, and especially the preliminary practices, the prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas or a Vajrasattva retreat, or even a daily Vajrasattva meditation. Then, this is very good to remember so we can feel very strong repentance. This repentance is very useful repentance. There can be useless repentance and useful repentance and this kind is useful, beneficial repentance. Useless repentance is repentance that feels sorry for having practiced the Dharma, feels sorry for bearing hardships in practicing the Dharma. That kind doesn't help, it only harms. But this kind of repentance only purifies any negative karma we have done, so it is useful repentance.

So anyway, I'll give the example of one negative karma of the body, such as sexual misconduct that we have completed with the four things: base, thought, action and goal—all four things are completed.

The thought is the deluded motivation. When all these four aspects are complete for that one negative karma, the sexual misconduct becomes negative karma because the motivation, the self-cherishing thought, is negative. The main thing is the self-cherishing thought. What makes the action negative karma is the self-cherishing thought. These three negative actions of the body—killing, stealing and sexual misconduct—and four of speech—telling lies, slandering, gossiping, speaking harshly—what makes those actions negative karma is the negative mind, the self-cherishing thought.

Those bodhisattvas who have a brave heart, who have very strong compassion toward other sentient beings, who have bodhicitta, for them, when they engage in these seven actions that are normally negative for ordinary beings, because they have such unbearable compassion and bodhicitta, totally renouncing themselves and cherishing others, these seven actions only become virtue. For them, the actions only become virtue. For them, it becomes the quick path to enlightenment, not only the path to enlightenment, but the *quick* path to enlightenment. For them, because of the power of the mind, the strong bodhicitta, these seven actions become the means of incredible purification, they become such a *powerful* means of purifying negative karma, to be free from samsara in a much shorter time. These seven actions that are negative for us ordinary sentient beings, for these bodhisattvas become the means of collecting skies of merit. And it causes them to be in samsara for a much shorter time—a hundred thousand eons or forty thousand eons, or whatever, a shorter time in samsara. So, if they are real yogis, on the basis of bodhicitta and having a very high realization of tantra, there's no question it becomes the quickest path to enlightenment. Their actions become pure, transcended by their power of mind, by the pure attitude or the realizations.

So now, just to make an example of this one completed negative karma, which has four suffering results: rebirth in the lower realms and then, even if we are reborn in the human realm after some time, we have to experience three types of suffering in the human realm. These are the possessed result, where we live in a dusty place, where there is nothing green, an unpleasant kind of depressed place, not a healthy place. The environment becomes unhealthy. Even the food has little protein. The crops don't grow or aren't nutritious. The food becomes a cause of sicknesses; we are unable to digest the food.

I made a mistake. I jumped! I'm talking about the possessed result of killing. Sorry! I'm supposed to do the possessed result of sexual misconduct! After experiencing the sufferings of the hell realm and so forth, the *ripening aspect* of the result, then after we are born as a human being in the human realm, we have to experience the three types of suffering. The *possessed result* is that we live in a very unhealthy environment, where there is lots of mud, lots of excrement, a place with a lot of garbage, a filthy dirty place. Sometimes when we travel, we stay in such places, very dirty places, very unhygienic, sometimes where we live and where we stay there are places like that. When we have to stay in such places, that is the result of our past negative karma of sexual misconduct. When we see dirty, filthy dirty places, unhygienic places, we are experiencing the possessed result at that time. Some people somehow happen to live in places where there's

always so much mud, so much dirt, it's always so unhygienic, their life becomes like that. That's the result of the negative karma of sexual misconduct.

Experiencing the result similar to the cause is that the people around us, in the family, in the office and so forth, are set against us. Their minds, their wishes are against us. The disharmony we face makes our life so difficult, with so many hardships, problems. Our friends or our partner become competitive, against us. That makes life very difficult.

By living in the vow, in the precept renouncing sexual misconduct, it's the opposite. The people in the office and the home, everywhere, the people around us always love us; they always think the same way we do; their wish is exactly what we want. That brings harmony; it helps all our wishes be fulfilled, to have success. That is experiencing the result similar to the cause.

We are not abused. I guess the definition of abuse here is somebody doing something to us that we don't like. Either our attachment does not like it or our self-cherishing thought doesn't like it. If we liked what the person did, we would not call it "abuse." If we didn't like it, we'd call it "abuse." It is just up to our mind whether we like it or not. If it's something that our ego or attachment liked, it wouldn't be abuse; if we didn't like it, it would be abuse. So again, abuse doesn't come from out there, abuse comes from our mind. The label "abuse" comes from our mind. We label it "abuse" and we believe in that, so we say "abuse."

We believe somebody abused us. That is experiencing the result of past negative karma of sexual misconduct that we did to another person in a past life. There is a reason why that person is doing that to us. The reason existed on the mental continuum before they met us and engaged in this action. The reason existed on the mental continuum in the form of the imprint left by the past negative karma of sexual misconduct that we did to that person in a past life. Therefore, this is what has forced them to engage in this action. Having created the negative karma with that sentient being in the past was the connection that made them do it. Basically, they have no freedom. The past negative karma we created with that person obliged them to create this negative karma, and by creating this negative karma, they will disappear from the human realm and go to lower realms, to suffer.

Because this is the evolution of karma, this person is *totally* only an object of compassion. Thinking of the process of how this has happened, why this person has done this to us, makes us

develop compassion for that person. That itself becomes a method to practice patience because we no longer get angry when we think of the process of karma, how this happened. Thinking like that never causes anger to arise, only compassion, only tolerance. What I am trying to say here is that this is a result of our past negative karma, that we are experiencing the result similar to cause, something similar to what we did with that person in the past.

In New Zealand, I met a student who had this experience and wanted to know what to do. Her mind was in such pain, filled with so much anger toward the other person. She was completely overwhelmed by these emotions. When she came to consult about this matter, I think that she hadn't been a student for very long and maybe didn't really meditate much on lamrim or really get to study. Otherwise she wouldn't be that way. She had had years of grudging and pain and anger in the heart. I guess it was her father or somebody like that. So I mentioned something like this, that there is a reason why this happened, past karma. I don't remember exactly but it was something like this. After mentioning a few words like this, after having suffered for so many years, only then she felt better. I think she met the Dharma some time before but didn't really get to meditate on lamrim or study in depth. I think it might be that.

Or sometimes the problem is that when we have personal problems, although we know the teachings, we somehow don't use them. We know the teachings intellectually, the texts, but when we have personal problems, we don't apply them; they are left in a book and we somehow never think to use them. This becomes very strange. Even those situations we don't really remember, where there is only some vague idea or some doubt it might have happened in childhood. We don't remember a hundred percent, but we kind of assume it happened to us, and that causes us to generate hatred which was not there before, toward our parents or whoever we think hurt us. Even if we have been studying the Dharma for so many years and even doing many retreats or teaching it, when we have a problem, even if we are not really a hundred percent sure, but we have some feeling it might have happened in our childhood, at that time, somehow we don't think of karma, that it is the result of our karma; that never comes out. Instead we think we might go to see some psychologist to help us. In the lamrim teachings, everything is clearly explained, especially in the section on karma and in the bodhicitta section, it talks about the shortcoming of the self-cherishing thought and the benefits of cherishing others. There is also the explanation that whatever problems we face come from our mind, from our ego. That comes in the extensive teachings on the shortcomings of the ego, the self-cherishing thought, such as in

The Wheel of Sharp Weapons. If we read that, we can understand the extensive meditation on the shortcomings of self-cherishing thought.

But even after many years of listening to teachings, studying and even teaching, even having done many retreats, somehow when we have a problem, at that time we don't even think that this is our karma, this is result of our past negative karma, even *that* doesn't happen. At that time, we think the same way as many Hindus, Muslims or Christians do, seeing the problem as created by somebody else. Buddhism doesn't accept this. His Holiness always explains in public lectures that Buddhism doesn't accept a creator. However, at that time, instead of thinking this is our karma, we practice Hinduism or we practice Christianity! We think we are experiencing a problem that was created by somebody else. This is the same as Hinduism; or Christianity, where God created everything. The very basic Buddhist philosophy is that *we* are the creator, we are our own guide, we are our own enemy. We are the creator of our suffering and we are the creator of our own happiness. It's our mind, our karma. This is the very basic philosophy of Buddhism, but even that doesn't get practiced.

Then, with the four aspects of karma, there is a very dangerous, very harmful result, *creating the result similar to the cause*. Again we engage in sexual misconduct due to past karma. This is worse than having to experience the hell realm, because we engage in the same negative action *again*. This is creating the result not the cause, so that *again*, with this act, we produce the four suffering results. And one of them is creating the result similar to the cause, again engaging in sexual misconduct. Then *that* one causes the four suffering results and one of them is again creating the result similar to the cause, and that again results in four suffering results. Then that one has four suffering results. And so it goes on and on and on like this. From this one negative karma in this life, from one act of sexual misconduct, the result goes on and on and on. It will continue until we can transform our mind, until we can stop this negative karma. If we just leave it up to our mind, to our *old* mind, to the ego, to attachment, the suffering result of engaging again in sexual misconduct goes on and on. Like this, unless we can purify it, the suffering of samsara becomes endless. The four types of suffering of the sexual misconduct become endless.

WE CAN'T JUDGE THE ACTIONS OF OUR TEACHERS

The Dharma king, Songtsen Gampo, had two disciples who came from very far to receive teachings from him, but when they arrived in central Tibet, they saw huge piles of human heads

on the ground, and it appeared that Songtsen Gampo had executed them all. I think these two disciples were young monks living in the thirty-six vows but I'm not a hundred percent sure. It appeared that there were many people engaged in killing, stealing and so forth, in those negative activities. So they didn't take the teachings. Instead, they developed so much heresy toward Songtsem Gampo for killing all these people. When they went to see Songtsen Gampo, he gave them a sack of sand. I'm not sure of the story. They returned home without taking teachings from Songtsen Gampo but when they arrived home, the sack of sand had become gold. If they had taken teachings from Songtsen Gampo and hadn't generate heresy toward him, they had the karma to become enlightened in that life.

Because of heresy, they didn't take teachings because of what they saw and heard. Actually, the people that Songtsen Gampo killed, piling all these human heads on the ground, were all his own manifestations. It's not that he killed other ordinary people. The king himself manifested into many other people and then engaged in those acts, killing his own manifestations, piling up the heads to show the public so they would pay attention, they would be more careful and observe karma. This king is the embodiment of the Compassion Buddha, so these were his own manifestations. But these two monks didn't really realize it and developed heresy. If they hadn't had heresy but had taken the teachings from Songtsen Gampo, they would have become enlightened in that life.

In another story, there was a butcher behind the Potala, killing animals. His Holiness Tsenshap Serkong Rinpoche, from whom I received many initiations and teachings, and who is also from His Holiness the Dalai Lama's school, used to tell this story. In a monastery, a teacher died, a monk, and he was reborn as either a lobster or a frog [so attached to his money] that his disciple found the frog or lobster with its limbs wrapped around the bundle of money. The disciple took the animal and informed a high lama in Sera Monastery, I don't know which one, who was the embodiment of Maitreya Buddha. He suggested that the disciple should take the animal to a place behind the Potala where there was a butcher. When the disciple did this, the butcher immediately put the animal on the chopping board and cut it in half. He ate half and threw the other half into the sky. The disciple returned to the lama and told him this and the lama said that this was OK because although that butcher looked to common people like an ordinary butcher killing animals, he was the embodiment of a deity. In reality he was a buddha, a deity called Red Yamantaka. Throwing half the body in the sky means he transferred the consciousness of that

animal, whose past life was the teacher of the monk. His Holiness Tsenshap Serkong Rinpoche used to tell this story to show that we really cannot judge.

Rinpoche often used to emphasize a lot how we should practice pure view with others because we cannot judge them, we can't use our own views of behavior of the person. We can't use what we see in our view to judge what the person is because our views are ordinary, impure. We can't use this as a reason to prove that it's an ordinary being. So Rinpoche normally gave many stories like this, how somebody appeared to act as an ordinary person but in fact was an actual male or female deity. There are many stories like this.

For ordinary people, when Songtsen Gampo and two princes were dying, all three absorbed into the Compassion Buddha statue. I think it was the one with eleven faces that contained sandalwood and was auspicious for maybe spreading the Dharma in Tibet. Anyway, as the king was thinking that if he put this sandalwood statue into the Compassion Buddha statue, he would not be able to see it, as he was thinking like this, another statue manifested from this sandalwood statue, naturally. So, one statue was put inside the eleven-face Compassion Buddha statue. So this statue, when it started, it still sort of grew up naturally. The artist just started it and it naturally grew up. During the time of the cultural revolution, when the monasteries were destroyed in Tibet, this statue was destroyed. But somebody took the faces of this statue from Tibet and they are now kept in His Holiness' temple at Dharamsala. You can see next to thousand-arm Compassion Buddha statue there's a frame where there are a few faces. These come from this statue that naturally grew up. An artist started it, but it naturally grew up and it was used by King Songtsen Gampo to worship for the success for Tibet, to spread the Dharma. When Songtsen Gampo was passing away, he and the two princes absorbed into this statue. This is how it appeared to ordinary people. So, when this statue was destroyed, I got a big piece from part of that statue. It's very scented because it is made of many precious blessed things. From that I made many blessed pills, and also put small pieces of it in many statues in the centers in the West.

Many Dharma kings that happened in Tibet were manifestations of the Compassion Buddha. Even when the Lhasa temple was built, so many of the carpenters were not ordinary beings. The king himself manifested as all those workers.

There's a story where one of the wives brought wine to offer the king and something happened, I don't know what. The wife spilled the wine from the cup. It's said the king got distracted during that time. The Buddha said that when the main mind got distracted, all the embodiments got distracted, and the old workers who were carving the wooden snow lion face hit the nose of the snow lion. In the Potala, in the Lhasa temple, there's a snow lion at the door with a cut on the nose. I don't know what the point is but something happened, the wife who brought the wine spilled it and the king got distracted, and then all his embodiments got distracted.

Anyway, that's just to give you an idea of how Chenrezig guides sentient beings in all sorts of manifestations, showing various aspects like that. The Buddha explained how the Compassion Buddha would guide sentient beings in Tibet. He explained, in the past the Arya Compassionate-eye Looking Lord, when he was a bodhisattva... I say "he" because generally speaking in Tibet and Nepal, it is in the male aspect. I think it's to do with the karma of the people in that country. In his past lives, when Compassion Buddha was a bodhisattva, doing the bodhisattva deeds, he made prayers to the eyes of the one thousand buddhas. He prayed, "May I lead the sentient beings who are in the outlying country, Tibet, where the buddhas of the three times haven't put their holy feet, and who are so difficult to subdue, may I lead them in the path to enlightenment. And may that outlying country be my field to subdue. Then, may all the teachings taught by the three-times' buddhas, the tathagatas, be spread and developed for a long time in that outlying country." Then he prayed, "May all those sentient beings in the outlying country, Tibet, by hearing the names of the Triple Gem, the Three Precious Sublime Ones, may they all go for refuge to them, and may they achieve the body of the happy migratory being and enjoy the holy Dharma." So, before becoming Compassion Buddha, during the bodhisattva's time, he made these prayers.

A sutra says that, when the Buddha was passing away into the sorrowless state, he was requested by a bodhisattva to not pass away but to live for the sentient beings who are in the north, in the snow-land country, where the Buddha has not put his holy feet, and where the sentient beings there had not been guided with teachings from his holy speech. Although he was requested to not pass away, the Buddha answered, "I have finished the sentient beings who are the objects to be subdued," which means there were no more sentient beings that could receive direct guidance from the Buddha. Sentient beings' merit to receive direct guidance from Buddha was finished. He said, "I have no more sentient beings to be subdued. For the sentient beings who are too lazy

to pursue the Dharma and eliminate the wrong view of the concept of permanence, I will show passing away into the sorrowless state.” The Buddha explained this to the bodhisattva.

Then the Buddha said, “Now in the Snow Land of Tibet, the sentient beings there are all animals. There are no human beings now. Just as snow falling on the ocean just sinks, all those who die go to the lower realms. In the future, when my teachings in India degenerate, those sentient beings in Tibet will be *your* object to be subdued.” So that would be the bodhisattva’s time. Then later, that bodhisattva became Compassion Buddha. The Buddha said at the beginning that the manifestation of the bodhisattva there would be produced, starting the human generation.

There’s a particular place in Tibet near Lhasa. I think it’s on the way to the unbelievable holy place where there’s this protector, Palden Lhamo, who is His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s or the Tibetan government’s protector. There is a lake there that predicts when people ask questions about their past and future lives. It predicts like watching TV, like Tibetan TV. Exactly like watching a movie on TV, if you ask about your next life, you see the answer from the lake in the form of letters or pictures. This is the lake that the reincarnations of many high lamas are checked by the monasteries or by the organizations. When a lama passes away, their attendant or the monastery, or people from government go to the lake to check where that lama will be reincarnated. His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s incarnation was checked there. This is one way of analyzing to find out the correct reincarnation.

So from Lhasa on the way to that lake, there is a mountain. When I was in Tibet, we went straight, we didn’t stop there. There is a mountain where Compassion Buddha manifested as a monkey and Tara manifested as a cannibal. They lived together on this mountain and started the human generation. There is a mountain where this specific story happened. I’m not sure but it seems that most of the Tibetan generations started from this, from the Compassion Buddha and Tara, like that. Manifesting in this form, they lived together and started the human generation.

THE POWER OF CHENREZIG AND HIS MANTRA

So, in the Buddha’s time, the Buddha predicted to this bodhisattva that he was going to be the one who subdued the sentient beings in Tibet, that they would be the objects to be subdued by him. At that time, that bodhisattva became the Compassion Buddha, Avalokiteshvara. Then by

manifesting as king, he guided many different kings at different times, and guided the sentient beings in Tibet, guiding them in the Dharma, making the Dharma law, that everybody should practice avoiding the ten nonvirtuous actions and practice the ten virtues. There's an instruction, the sixteen human Dharmas, that's a kind of law but everything is focused on observing karma, protecting karma, respecting each other. There are many things like the sixteen human Dharmas. This has happened up to now, and the present one is His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who is the Compassion Buddha, but now he not only guides Tibetans. Now, even for people in the West, he is Compassion Buddha. His Holiness Dalai Lama manifests in an ordained human form and many other forms. He guides not only the Tibetan people but also those of us who are also outside Tibet. People from many other countries receive guidance and teachings from His Holiness, either directly or indirectly. They receive guidance from Compassion Buddha, directly or indirectly. Therefore, the Compassion Buddha is not just a statue. We are receiving guidance from the actual living Compassion Buddha.

Reciting the mantra OM MANI PADME HUM once has the power to purify even a fully ordained monk or nun who broke all the four root vows, who received all the four defeats: having sexual intercourse, stealing, telling lies by saying they have realizations when they don't, and killing human beings. Even if these four defeats, the very root of the vows, are all broken, if all the four defeats are received, reciting OM MANI PADME HUM even once has the power to purify all these negative karmas. It's unbelievably powerful to recite Compassion Buddha's mantra. If we recite ten malas of Compassion Buddha's mantra a day, our children and grandchildren and so on, up to seven generations, don't get reborn in the lower realms.

How does that happen? Because reciting ten malas of the mantra a day blesses our body. Because all those children are generations of our blood, our body is so blessed that all those generations carry the blessing of our body. When they die, somehow due to the blessing of the body, they die with a virtuous thought, and that's how, for up to seven generations, their lives are saved; they don't get reborn in lower realms. The mantra has unbelievable power like this. So it's extremely good, especially if we have children, to recite ten malas a day. That benefits everyone from generation to generation.

Also, if we recite ten malas of OM MANI PADME HUM a day, if we go to the beach and go into the water, if we swim in the water, all the water that touches our body gets blessed, and that water purifies the numberless fish, insects and animals in the water. They all get purified. All their

negative karma gets purified and they get liberated, they get a good rebirth in their next life. In the same way, the other people who swim in the water, who touch the water, all get purified. This mantra is so blessed; it's unbelievably powerful.

And every day, if we recite the Compassion Buddha mantra, OM MANI PADME HUM, especially ten malas like that, especially if we are doing healing or massage for other people, when we touch other people's bodies or other people touch our body, everything becomes meaningful. It becomes purification. Whoever's body we touch, insect or human being, it purifies their negative karma. And if they touch our body, it purifies their negative karma, even animals and insects. When we die, when our body is cremated, whoever the smoke from the cremation touches, insects or human beings, that sentient being's negative karma is purified.

A pandit monk broke all the four root vows and received all four defeats. He then generated much regret and recited the Compassion Buddha mantra so much. Then, as soon as the pandit did that, the Compassion Buddha and many deities immediately protected him from the lower realms; they liberated him from the lower realms.

There was a lama who could see Compassion Buddha. He was going to the Potala, the pure land of Compassion Buddha. When he told his benefactor, his neighbor, this, the lama's benefactor family or neighbor said, "If you're going to the pure land of Compassion Buddha, please, we also would like to come. Please take us." He asked Compassion Buddha, but Compassion Buddha replied, "They cannot come to the pure land of Compassion Buddha because they sold holy scriptures. They sold the text of the eight thousand stanzas of the *Prajnaparamita* and lived on that money. They ate food, they lived their life with that money, which they got selling this holy scripture." Then they asked Compassion Buddha what to do and Compassion Buddha replied, "Recite my mantra." So they did a lot of purification by reciting the Compassion Buddha mantra and were able to go to the pure land. Otherwise it would not have been possible. Whatever negative karma they created, all those heavy negative karmas could be purified by this mantra, OM MANI PADME HUM.

Compassion Buddha said, "Whoever recites my mantra, at the time of death, if all the buddhas do not guide them, may I not become enlightened." Compassion Buddha made a vow like that. "Those who recite my mantra, if all their wishes don't get fulfilled, may I not receive enlightenment." Compassion Buddha made vows like this, and since Compassion Buddha

himself became enlightened an inconceivably long time ago, that means it's all true, what Compassion Buddha said. Just the very essence of the MANI mantra, as the Buddha explained in the teachings, the benefits are like the limitless sky that cannot be finished explaining at any time.

THE MEANING OF OM MANI PADME HUM

The main part of the mantra, MANI PADME, MANI refers to the method side of the path to enlightenment and PADME to the wisdom side. What it shows is that MANI is method and PADME is wisdom. The wisdom and method to reach liberation from samsara, from the lesser vehicle path, that method and wisdom is contained in this MANI PADME. And also the whole bodhisattva's path of the Mahayana Paramitayana, the method and wisdom are also contained in MANI PADME. Then, within the Mahayana, the Secret Mantra Vajrayana method and wisdom, the lower tantra method and wisdom and the highest tantra method and wisdom are all contained in this. Such as with Kriya Tantra, the yoga having sign and yoga without sign, that's wisdom. So method and wisdom in the lower tantra is contained in MANI PADME, and the highest tantra method and wisdom, all that is contained in this.

The whole of existence comes in the two truths: conventional truth and absolute truth. And conventional and absolute truth are contained in MANI PADME as well as the method and wisdom of the path to enlightenment. That is contained in this. Then also the base, path and result—the conventional and absolute truth is the base, method and wisdom is the path, and the result is the goal to be achieved: the dharmakaya and rupakaya. And the unification of these two, the holy mind and the holy body of a buddha—the whole thing is contained in this.

Now the meaning of OM MANI PADME HUM. HUM, it is mentioned it is like saying, “Hey,” when we call someone like our mother we say, “Hi Mum.” So when we say “Hi” it makes her pay attention to us. So the HUM is like saying “Hi,” to persuade Compassion Buddha's holy mind to pay attention to us. It could also mean to establish the root of the blessing in our heart. However, by persuading the holy mind, we establish the root of the blessing in our heart and can actualize the method and wisdom contained in the MANI PADME in our heart. Then due to that, by completing the path of method and wisdom, we cease all the defilements including the seed, the subtle imprint of the delusions. So, it purifies our ordinary body, speech and mind.

Then our body, speech and mind is transformed into the vajra holy body, holy speech and holy mind of Compassion Buddha, which is signified by the OM. OM is made of three sounds: AH, U, MA. The three sounds signify the vajra holy body, vajra holy speech and vajra holy mind of Compassion Buddha. By actualizing the remedy, the path of method and wisdom, we purify our ordinary body, speech and mind, which is transformed into Compassion Buddha's vajra holy body, holy speech and holy mind. Then we are able to do perfect work for all sentient beings, to enlighten them. This is just a tiny bit of what the mantra OM MANI PADME HUM means.

From this, however, we can understand that OM MANI PADME HUM contains the entire teachings of the Buddha: the lesser vehicle teachings, the Paramitayana teachings and the tantra teachings. All the teachings of the Buddha are contained in OM MANI PADME HUM.

One thing to mention, especially for those who are new, if this is the first time you have done a course here, the first time you have heard the lamrim, just knowing how to practice for one day, for those who want to continue to do the practice, to make life meaningful. I'll explain like this just to give you an idea. First thing in the morning, there is the practice of integrating the five powers into one lifetime, integrating the practice of five powers. One of the powers is called the *power of attitude*, which is the motivation, how we are going to live our life, how we are going to spend our life. The motivation we have, the power of attitude, making plans for our life. So, the first thing we should do is think like that, and while we are doing this, we can chant OM MANI PADME HUM. The mind does the meditation and the mouth recites OM MANI PADME HUM. In this way, we get two practices done! If we have a commitment, we get the commitment done while our mind is doing this meditation. Anyway, especially if our life is so busy, with so many engagements, and it is difficult to find the time, this is a way of getting things done.

HOW TO PRACTICE THE DHARMA

However, the first thing to do is to think something like, "According to the present state of my mind, which is filled with delusions, with superstitious thoughts pouring down like a shower of heavy rain, according to my present mental state, I would be in the lower realms. But still, I am in the human realm. How amazing is this. I rejoice at how this is *amazing* that I am still in the human realm.

“Since I was born up to now, it has been unbelievably fortunate that I haven’t died. So fortunate. So many people who were born on the same day as me have died already. So many have died and been born in the lower realms. So many didn’t have the opportunity to practice the Dharma. How *incredible* it is that I still have not died and I still have the opportunity to practice the Dharma. It has happened to me so many times that I almost died. It has happened so many times in things such as a car accident. So many times I have been about to die in a car accident, about to fall down, about to be killed, but it’s amazing that I have not died so far.

“To have the opportunity to practice the Dharma for even one second is so precious. Even one second that I have the opportunity to practice the Dharma is more precious than skies filled with wish-granting jewels. So precious. So many people went to bed last night and died and didn’t have the opportunity to wake up this morning as a human being, let alone having the opportunity to practice the Dharma. If that happened to me, what could I do? Life would be already finished and by now I would be in the hell realm or in one of the lower realms.”

It is also good to think, “I have almost died so many times, and if I had died, by now I may be a worm and in the mouth of a bird, caught in its beak. My body could be in the beak of a bird or used by people to fish with. By now, I could be a worm with my body put on a fishhook.” Is a worm dead or alive when it is put on the fishhook? Huh? [Student responds.] It’s alive on the fishhook, moving in the water, and then a fish comes to eat it.

“Or if I had been born as a pig or snake by now, what could I do? Nothing. How much I would suffer, besides having no opportunity to practice the Dharma.” You can also think like that before thinking about how many times you have almost died.

Then think, “Today I have received a perfect human body. I have this perfect human body, which is much more precious than the whole sky filled with wish-granting jewels.” Then analyze even more. “Having met the Buddhadharma is much more precious than receiving mountains of gold, and I have met or have the opportunity to practice the Mahayana Paramitayana teaching, which is much more precious than having received gold the size of this earth. Moreover, I have met and have the opportunity to practice the Mahayana Vajrayana, the lower tantric teaching, which is much more precious than the sky filled with gold. And I have met and have the opportunity to practice the higher tantra, which is more precious than the whole sky filled with diamonds. Then I have met and have opportunity to practice Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings in

particular, which are much more precious than whole sky filled with wish-granting jewels. Why? Because of all the special qualities of Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings on sutra and tantra, because I can hear Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings, I can practice the three deities without separation, Guhyasamaja, Yamantaka and Heruka Chakrasamvara. This allows me to achieve enlightenment much more easily and quickly."

Now, after this, how should we practice the Dharma? The answer to that is on the basis of correctly devoting to the virtuous friend. On the basis of correct devotion to the virtuous friend, we practice the Dharma by listening, reflecting and meditating as much as possible. At least, even if we cannot achieve realizations, even if realizations don't happen in this life, we *at least* need to leave imprints as much as possible to make the preparation for realizations in this life. Even if realizations don't happen, we must at least leave as much of an imprint as possible of the whole path to enlightenment, the Buddha's teaching on the mind. Make a strong determination like this.

The reason the prayer says, "on the basis of correctly devoting to the virtuous friend" is that no matter how much we listen, reflect and meditate, we cannot succeed, we cannot have a realization. We cannot complete the path without this. Therefore, it's very important to think this way. "On the basis of correctly devoting to the virtuous friend, I'm going to practice the Dharma." Then, on that basis, do as much listening, reflecting and meditating as you can, at least to leave as much of an imprint as possible in this life on your mental continuum.

Then after this, think, "I'm going to die today." Decide you are going to die today. As Lama Tsongkhapa explained in the *Lamrim Chenmo*, by thinking, "I'm going to die today," even if death happens, we made our life meaningful because we have done the preparation for death. We have done the preparation for death because, by thinking we are going to die today, we are able to practice the Dharma. Even if death happens today, before that we have been able to make preparations for death. That's the advantage. And even if death *doesn't* happen today but we think we will die today, we are able to make so much preparation for death, we're able to practice so much Dharma. So think, "Today I am going to die." Decide in your mind. Then, what to do? Question yourself what you should do. Then you give yourself the answer, "I'm going to practice bodhicitta, renouncing the I and cherishing others. I'm going to practice bodhicitta." That's the answer to that question.

While you are reciting Compassion Buddha's mantra, either the long one or the short one, OM MANI PADME HUM, you can elaborate on the meditation here by thinking of the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought. There are different ways to meditate on the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought. While you are doing that, you can recite OM MANI PADME HUM. You don't have to think of them all but you can think about some parts today and some parts tomorrow. You can divide the topic. And it's the same thing with the benefits of cherishing others, doing some today [and some tomorrow]. Think of the benefits of cherishing others, the benefits of bodhicitta and how sentient beings are so kind, so precious. Do those meditations. You don't need to think through them all in one day. Some parts you can think about today and some parts you can do tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. Elaborating the meditation on the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought and the benefits of cherishing others makes the meditation stronger, it helps you to see the ego, the self-cherishing thought, as the enemy. As soon as you can see the enemy, you are able to separate from that, you are able to split yourself from the ego. And when you split yourself from the ego, at that time you are able to practice the most pure Dharma, unstained by ego. And at that time there is no obstacle to practicing bodhicitta.

ADVANTAGES OF TAKING VOWS

Just taking and keeping the [lay] vows brings pure peace and happiness. For example today, taking only the vow of abstaining from sexual misconduct, something like that, just one vow just for one day. Because of that you do not engage sexual misconduct today. You don't experience sexual misconduct today and therefore, from that negative karma, you don't experience the four suffering results again and again, going on and on and on, endlessly. That doesn't happen. All this endless suffering from today's sexual misconduct is completely stopped. Because you have abstained from that, all this continual suffering, experiencing the four types of suffering from life to life doesn't happen. This brings unbelievable peace and happiness, success in all future lives. This is by living in morality today.

Not only that, as I mentioned before, there are four happy results from this one vow of abstaining from sexual misconduct today. You can experience so much happiness. Because karma is expandable, creating good karma once, you can experience the result for five hundred lifetimes or a thousand lifetimes. It's mentioned in Aryadeva's commentary, *Four Hundred Stanzas*, if you cheat one sentient being you get cheated by other sentient beings in future lives for a

thousand lifetimes. Why? Because karma is expandable. For one negative karma, you experience *so* many lifetimes of suffering, and for one good karma, you experience *so* much happiness for so many lifetimes.

Therefore, even living a lay life you can take a number of vows and live in good karma, morality, abstaining from several negative karmas, whichever you can. Even if you can't take and practice all five lay vows, from those five, take whichever you can. That's something to do. Every day of this life until you die, that is something to abide in, to live in whatever morality you can. This becomes the most practical thing to do in daily life. It is a very important thing to do in daily life, whether it's one vow of the lay precepts, or two vows, three vows or five, whatever.

The next thing to understand is this. You can see how essential it is, and you can do this immediately. You don't have to have some high realizations. By having taken even one vow up to the death, you collect good karma, merit, day and night *all* the time. Even if you sleep for twelve hours your life is not wasted. You collect good karma continuously, even during sleep. By living in this one vow you are collecting merit all the time. While you are eating, you are collecting merit all the time; while you are walking, you are collecting merit all the time—twenty-four hours a day.

Even if you go into a coma, unable to move the body or communicate, even for years, you are still collecting merit all the time, making your life become meaningful all the time. Like that, you are making preparations for death all the time, creating the cause of happiness of your future lives all the time. It's the same with liberation and enlightenment, depending on the motivation. Then of course if you take more vows there is no question you create more merit.

The next very important thing to understand is that after the vow is taken, even just one, in everyday life whenever you collect merit by benefiting other sentient beings or by making offerings, circumambulations and prostrations to the Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, whenever you collect merit in your daily life, the merit is increased *so much*. Before, when you hadn't taken any vow, the merit was like a handful of water. But now, after you have taken the vow, the merit that you collect with the sentient beings or with the holy objects is like the ocean, like the Pacific Ocean, the merit increases so much. That makes a big difference to your life, like the earth and the sky, a *huge* difference. Even by having taken one vow, when you collect merit in your daily life, the merit increases so much.

Another incredible profit in daily life by living in the vows is mentioned in the sutra called *Heaps of Jewels*. I used to imagine a heap of flowers, but I think that's mistaken. I think it's a jewel heap. The sutra is called *Heap of Jewels*, *Piled up Jewels*, *Heaped Jewels*. If all the sentient beings of the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm were to reincarnate and they all become wheel-turning kings, the most powerful and wealthiest beings in the universe, then each of them make offerings to the Buddha of oceans of butter, Mt. Merus of wax, making light offerings to the Buddha (I think might have mentioned that) for the length of time, eons equaling the number of sand grains of the River Ganga, the river in India. For that length of time, each of them make oceans of butter, Mt. Merus of wax, and light offerings to the Buddha. Now, one person who has taken ordination makes offerings of butter the size of a mustard seed, wax the size of a hair and a tiny light offering to the Buddha. For that person who has taken ordination, their merit is far greater than all those other beings who were born as the most powerful wheel-turning kings in the world and who each make extensive offerings to the Buddha for an incredible length of time. So like this, it makes a *huge* difference. It makes life most profitable.

So now, those who are taking refuge, I normally emphasize taking the precept to not kill because what taking refuge in the Dharma involves is to not harm others. Therefore, I usually emphasize to take the precept to not kill *but* if you cannot take this precept, you can take another precept from the five, whichever is easier. For some, to take the precept to not kill is very difficult but maybe to not to tell a lie is easy or to not take alcohol is easy, or to not steal is easy. So for some people it is possible that stopping killing is difficult, but some other precept is easy. If so, you can take that. The main thing is to do less harm, to create less negative karma. That means less suffering for others and less suffering for you and more happiness.

The other thing is that, even if you take one vow, to abstain from one negative karma, whether it is sexual misconduct, whether it is killing, whether it is stealing, whatever it is, even if you take one vow, that means to not harm others. Therefore from now on, whatever number of precepts you're going to take, that means from today you are not going to harm others. You are not going to give this harm to other sentient beings, by making the vow. That means the human beings, the sentient beings in this world, don't receive that harm from you, whether it's killing, whether it's stealing or whatever it is, the sentient beings in this world don't receive *this* harm from you. That means for the sentient beings in this world, there is *so much* peace and happiness. The numberless sentient beings in this world don't receive harm but they receive so much peace and happiness

from you. The absence of harm is peace that they are receiving. Even just one, abstaining from killing or sexual misconduct or telling lies—whatever it is—numberless sentient beings don't receive that harm from you from today. That means they receive so much peace and happiness from you.

Therefore, however many precepts you are taking, this is the *most* practical contribution for world peace. From today, whatever number of precepts you're taking, this becomes the *real* practical contribution for world peace, including peace for your family, for your country, for the whole world and for all sentient beings. As you take this vow for the benefit of all sentient beings, all the sentient beings get benefit from you.

TAKING THE LAY VOWS

So maybe those who are taking refuge make three prostrations to the Buddha. There's the Shakyamuni Buddha statue at the back. By thinking this is the actual living Buddha, then make three prostrations. After that the lama gives refuge. Make three prostrations. Make three exercises!

By relying upon the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, think of however many of the five lay vows you are going to take, whether it's one, two, all five. If it's all five, just think of taking the full *upasaka* [or *upasika*] vows.

If you are unable to take any of the five lay vows, if it's only refuge, you can take it because the Buddha is so kind, so compassionate for us sentient beings that even if somebody cannot take any of the vows, the Buddha still permits us to take only the refuge vow. By taking refuge, there are the refuge precepts so by practicing the refuge precepts that makes our life every day so meaningful. We collect so much merit, good karma; we create so many causes of enlightenment with that. The Buddha is so compassionate, so kind. He gives us methods that we can practice according to our capacity. The Buddha is so compassionate, so kind, giving us that choice.

So now, so please repeat the ceremony. [Rinpoche gives the students refuge]

Those who are living in higher vows, the thirty-six, the three hundred and fifty or whatever, you should not think that you are taking the upasaka vow. It is normally said that taking the lower

vow makes you lose the higher vow. Even though you can rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in just the normal way of taking refuge, you shouldn't think you are taking the upasaka [or upasika] vows.

[Rinpoche gives the five lay vows]

These practices are very, very important. You make this offering before you eat. Before going to sleep, you make three prostrations, at least a minimum of three prostrations. When you get up in the morning, you make three prostrations to the Buddha, to the Triple Gem. This is the practice of compassion for others. Even if it's a small practice, following this advice of the Buddha makes your life very, very meaningful, very meaningful. It makes life very rich, and because you collect so much merit, you can achieve enlightenment quickly.

[Rinpoche concludes ceremony]

Lecture 7

December 8, 1998

HOW WE ARE GUIDED BY CHENREZIG

This is just a kind of background story of how we are guided by Compassion Buddha, how Compassion Buddha is working for us. When Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was in India—I'm not exactly sure where, I don't think it was the Old Delhi train station! I'm joking—anyway, when the Buddha was in India in the Milk Park, which means the park of the milk-plant, which might be one of those holy places like Sravasti, one day five-color beams emitted from the center of the Buddha's two eyebrows. The beams went to the north, to the Snow Land of Tibet, and as they went, the Buddha smiled in that direction. At that time the bodhisattva *Eliminating Defilements* saw what happened and asked the Buddha what the causes and conditions for this to happen were.

Then, the Buddha said, "*Rays of the Sun.*" Sorry, I think the translation is backwards, because when you translate from Tibetan you have to translate backwards or sometimes it doesn't become correct. This term is *Sun's Rays*. But these rays have nothing to do with the physical rays, they have to do with the mind; they are Mahayana rays, to do with having bodhicitta. So the Buddha said, "*Sun's Rays*, in the future, the outlying country that is filled with ghosts and cannibals, a place where sentient beings have not been subdued by the past three times' buddhas," (meaning all the buddhas of the past, present and future.) "In that place, there will be the holy Dharma like the sun rising. It will be propagated; it will spread and develop. Who will tame those sentient beings who are in that outlying country is the Arya Compassion-eye-looking Buddha, Compassion Buddha, Chenrezig."

How will Chenrezig subdue the sentient beings in that outlying country, the Snow Land Tibet? The Buddha explained that it will be the arya being, the Compassion-eye-looking Lord. I think, for Chinese people, Compassion Buddha manifests in a female aspect, but here, for people in Nepal, India and Tibet, he manifests in a male aspect. Of course, a buddha can manifest in any form. There's nothing that says the manifestation has to be like this, there's nothing definite. A buddha can manifest as a child, as a beggar or a wealthy person, as a judge punishing those engaging in evil karma, purifying them, or as a butcher who then liberates sentient beings. A buddha can even manifest as a prostitute when that action, that manifestation, is beneficial for certain sentient beings, when only that one fits and there is nothing else that will guide and

liberate those sentient beings. A buddha can be a king, a lay person, various kinds of animals, even spirits or ghosts, if that kind of manifestation is the only one that fits those sentient beings. A buddha might even manifest as a crazy person.

WHY THE GURU IS KINDER THAN THE THREE TIMES' BUDDHAS

I don't know which time, but the Dharma king of Tibet, Songtsen Gampo, had the two princesses, one from Nepal and one from China. The one from China was a manifestation of Tara, I think. And the one from Nepal was also in female aspect, in essence the same as Tara but normally in a little bit of a wrathful aspect. Both ladies were enlightened beings but they appeared as ordinary beings, as ordinary ladies. When they were invited to Tibet as the king's wives, each wife brought a very precious holy object with them, one from Nepal and one from China.

The precious holy object brought from China was the Shakyamuni Buddha's statue, blessed by the Buddha himself, that is now in the Lhasa temple. The statue is considered the most precious one in the world because it was made under the Buddha's instruction and blessed by the Buddha himself.

I found out the story of this statue after Lama Yeshe had passed away. Lama Yeshe is kinder to us than all the three times' buddhas, kinder than all the past, present and future buddhas. The reason why he is kinder than the three times' buddhas is that, even though they enlightened numberless sentient beings, because of lack of merit, we—and I am relating to myself here—were unable to be subdued and enlightened by them. Even though the founder of the present Buddhadharma, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, descended in this present eon, we didn't have the fortune to be enlightened by him, to directly receive teachings from him, to be subdued and enlightened by him. We didn't have the karma, the merit. We were unable to be subdued by the Buddha when the Buddha was in India with that aspect.

After that, there were the Six Ornaments and so many pandits and yogis, such as Saraha, Tilopa and Naropa. They happened, but we didn't have the karma, the merit, to receive teachings from them and to be enlightened by them. Because we didn't have that karma, we were left out. Then, when great beings such as Marpa, Milarepa and so forth, as well as Padmasambhava, happened in Tibet, many other beings achieved enlightenment by Padmasambhava revealing the Dharma

to them and guiding them. There were twenty-five direct disciples of Padmasambhava but there were also other sentient beings who became enlightened under the guidance of Padmasambhava at that time. In Milarepa's time, I think there were eight disciples who became enlightened in one brief lifetime of this degenerate time, within a number of years. Then of course there were many who achieved enlightenment not in one life but afterwards. There have been other great yogis from the four traditions who enlightened many other sentient beings but we ourselves did not have the karma to be guided by them and to be enlightened by them.

Even when Lama Tsongkhapa happened, we didn't have the merit to be guided Lama Tsongkhapa. Many of Lama Tsongkhapa's disciples became enlightened and they enlightened many sentient beings by revealing the Dharma, but we didn't have the merit to be enlightened by them. We were left out.

Like stars in the sky, there have been so many enlightened beings—yogis, pandits—who have happened even after Guru Shakyamuni Buddha in different times and they were able to enlighten many other sentient beings by revealing the Dharma but we ourselves didn't have the karma, the merit, to be enlightened by them. We were unable to be subdued, to be tamed, unable to be guided by them, so we were left out.

This is the time just before the Buddha's teachings stop. It is like just before the sun sets. Like that, this time is before the light of the Dharma, the Buddha's teachings, finally stop. During all this time, we have been totally left out; we have been unable to be subdued by *all* those other numberless buddhas and holy beings. So, at this time, we are totally lost or guideless.

Then, in this aspect, Lama Yeshe guided us. So that's why, in the teachings and when we do many refuge practices such as *Guru Puja*, we say, "I go for refuge to the Guru." That one comes first. And then we say, "I go for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha." One explanation is that even though by quality [all objects of refuge] are the same, but by kindness the Guru is kinder. The Guru is kinder than all the buddhas. That is why, when we do the refuge practice, the Guru comes before the Buddha. Some geshe explain it like that.

However, I think there is an extremely important explanation why the name comes before the Buddha. By knowing that explanation, we know how to practice guru yoga. Otherwise there's no way. Without knowing it, we don't know the root, like the very source where all the water in the

rivers and streams comes from. The four rivers in India, for example, including the River Ganga, come from Mount Kailash; that is the root. That's what is explained in the teachings—they all come from Tibet, from the snow mountains.

THE DHARMAKAYA IS THE ABSOLUTE GURU

The holy mind of all the buddhas, the dharmakaya, the transcendental wisdom of bliss and voidness that is eternal, having no beginning and no end, this is pervasive. This covers *all* existence. There is no existence where this dharmakaya does not cover, does not pervade. So, this dharmakaya is the absolute guru. And this absolute guru is bound with infinite compassion so it embraces all us sentient beings.

This absolute guru, the dharmakaya, which has no beginning and no end, which is eternal, then manifests as the originator, the creator, the door. When we say the prayer “*La ma sang gyä la ma chhö / De zhin la ma gen düin te / Kün gyi je po la ma yin...*”—when we say “The Guru is Buddha; the Guru is Dharma; the Guru is Sangha,” we mean the Guru is all the doors. We use this prayer to take refuge and as the prayer to make offerings.

This is not a common prayer. It is not a common prayer to use for offerings or for refuge, even though the same meditation comes, for example, when we say “*Namo Gurubhyah; Namō Buddhaya; Namō ...*” which has the meaning of “*La ma sang gyä la ma chhö / De zhin la ma gen düin te / Kün gyi je po la ma yin.*” Even so, this prayer is not common outside of FPMT. It's a kind of unusual prayer. We normally don't hear it. I think it originally came from a root tantra text. I think this prayer didn't exist during the very first meditation course. Maybe it came into existence when the second meditation course started. I put this prayer there at that time! I found it very effective, very powerful, very meaningful, so I put it there. During the second course, I think I started to explain from the beginning of the prayer.

The verse has very profound meaning, very deep; it has oceans of meanings. It started during the second Kopan meditation course and then it spread out from there to the other FPMT centers.

This absolute guru, this dharmakaya, covers all existence. Whenever a sentient being's karma ripens, without delay of even one second, it is just there. It takes form and guides the sentient beings. Whatever form is necessary, it fits exactly. According to the karma of that sentient being,

it takes form and guides them. This is how the absolute guru—or how the Buddha—guides us sentient beings.

In the *Guru Puja*, when we do the invocation, after we visualize the elaborate second merit field, in the second verse [*Lama Chöpa*, verse 16] it says,

Though phenomena are free of any inherent coming and going,
You arise through your enlightened activity of wisdom and loving compassion
According to the dispositions of varied disciples.
Holy refuge savior, please come forth with your retinue.

Even though in the nature of the existence there is no coming and no going, the absolute guru manifests in any form, *exactly* according to various mentality or the characteristics of the minds of the sentient beings who are objects to be subdued; they do the action of understanding [wisdom] and compassion.

This is talking about the activities of the absolute guru, the dharmakaya, how it guides us sentient beings. When that aspect is no longer needed, when sentient beings' karma changes, it absorbs. When the karma to have that aspect is finished, or a purer karma ripens, then that aspect changes.

So this dharmakaya, this absolute guru, is the one that manifests into the various aspects of the buddhas. It manifests into Guru Shakyamuni Buddha to reveal the sutra teachings. It manifests into the tantric aspect deity, Vajradhara, and all those various deities to reveal the tantric teachings. Then, it manifests into Lama Tsongkhapa and into all those lineage lamas and all the deities of the four classes of tantra. It manifests into the thousand buddhas of the fortunate eon, into the Thirty-five Buddhas and so forth, into all these buddhas. It also manifests into the bodhisattvas, as well as into the arhats, such as the sixteen arhats, to enable the teachings to exist for a long time in this world, for us to be able to practice purely and to be able to live in pure morality for many reasons. It manifests into the dakas and dakinis, to generate the simultaneously born wisdom of nondual bliss and voidness, which is the essential attainment of the higher tantra path. This and clear light have the same meaning. By manifesting into dakas and dakinis, it causes these realizations within us. Then, to pacify obstacles and to support us in our Dharma practice in actualizing path to enlightenment, it manifests into Dharma protectors.

Since our mind is not pure, our mental continuum is not pure but obscured by karmic defilements, by impure karma, we currently cannot see things in a better, purer form, without mistakes. Like me, we cannot see this pure form, so this absolute guru, this dharmakaya, manifests into an ordinary aspect, which means one that has mistakes, as I mentioned the other night. It manifests as having delusions and suffering, exactly like an ordinary person. Manifesting into an ordinary aspect means being exactly what happens to an ordinary person. We see them as having delusions, having the suffering of samsara and making mistakes in actions and so on.

Whatever happens to an ordinary person happens to the absolute guru manifesting in this ordinary aspect, because it is only in this aspect that they can guide us, that they can communicate with us, guiding us to liberation and to enlightenment.

All the buddhas are manifestations of this absolute guru, this dharmakaya, that which has no beginning and which has no end, which pervades all existence. And the door to all this is the guru. When we say, “*Guru lama tè*” we should understand that all our past, present and future happiness, all happiness up to enlightenment, all come from our good karma. And our good karma is the action of the Buddha. There are two types of actions of the Buddha. One is possessed by buddhas’ own holy mind, one is within us sentient beings. So all the virtuous thoughts and virtuous actions are the buddhas’ actions working within us. And all those buddhas are manifestations of this absolute guru, this dharmakaya.

Now we can see that this is the originator. It is the originator of all our happiness, all our past, present and future happiness. The door to all that is the guru. This is the way to understand the absolute guru. Because our karma is not pure, we cannot see the Buddha in the pure aspect, the pure form. Therefore, the absolute guru manifests into an ordinary aspect because, as I mentioned before, this is the only way to guide us, to free us from suffering of samsara and bring us to liberation and to the full enlightenment. *This* aspect is called the conventional guru.

With this explanation it becomes easy to feel that no matter how many gurus we might have, they are all oneness with the Buddha. This helps us see the oneness. It makes it easy for us to realize or see that.

As it is mentioned in the tantric teachings, wherever we generate faith in the channels, in the channels or chakras—I'm not a hundred percent sure of what the next word means; it's something like "muscles"—anyway the essence is that wherever we generate faith in the Buddha, the Buddha is there.

If we generate faith that there is a buddha on our crown, there is a buddha in our crown. If we think there is a buddha in our heart, there is a buddha in our heart. If we think there is a buddha in our palm, when we generate faith that there is a buddha in our palm, the buddha is there. So, one thing manifests into these many forms, in order to guide us. The other reasoning is that, as we generate faith in the absolute guru, the absolute guru manifests into these forms in order to guide us. That's one explanation.

The other thing, as we generate faith, "Oh this is a buddha," as in this quotation, wherever we generate faith there is a buddha, the buddha is there. This is similar in the guru devotion practice when we think this is a buddha, the buddha is there. How? For example, with ordinary spirits, who haven't even entered in the path to liberation, just an ordinary spirit, if we are involved with the spirit through a medium, as soon as we think of the spirit, the spirit immediately enters the body. When we invoke the spirit through a medium, if we want to consult or whatever, as soon as we think of that particular spirit's name, it immediately enters into the medium.

[A section of the teaching is missing here.]

ACTING WITH A BODHICITTA MOTIVATION

Whenever a problem happens, instead of pointing outside to other sentient beings, to other precious sentient beings who are the source of all our past, present and future happiness, instead of blaming them, we should put the blame on the ego, which is within us. We put the blame on that, and then harbor it in our heart. We harbor [that grudge we have against the ego] like when somebody abuses or disrespects or criticizes us, how we normally harbor that, keep it in our mind and think to retaliate. We keep the grudge against the person who harmed us, keeping it in our heart, remembering it again and again in daily life and then we plan to harm them back.

It's the same thing here. Thinking of the ego, we see that that one is only causing suffering to ourselves and others. Then, we put the blame on that one thing and we hold a grudge against it. And we determine to destroy this great demon, this mind that is cherishing the I. So, we can

meditate on these verses from the *Guru Puja* [*Lama Chöpa*, verses 91 and 92]. And *at least* we can recite them to meditate on the shortcomings of the ego and the benefits of cherishing others.

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

The mind that cherishes mothers and places them in bliss
Is the gateway leading to infinite qualities.
Seeing this, I seek your blessings to cherish these transmigratory beings
More than my life, even should they rise up as my enemies.

These verses are extremely powerful, extremely effective. You can meditate on them, elaborating on the basis of these verses. Then, at the same time, while reciting OM MANI PADME HUM, you can think, “Sentient beings are the source of all my past, present and future happiness, including all the realizations, up to enlightenment. Therefore, in my life I should cherish nobody but my kind mother sentient beings. I should work for nobody except my kind mother sentient beings. What they want is happiness and what they do not want is suffering. Therefore, I must free them from all suffering and its causes and lead them to happiness, especially to the peerless happiness of full enlightenment. For the success of that, there is no other means except for myself first to achieve enlightenment. Therefore I *must* achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all the mother sentient beings.” You can think like that to generate bodhicitta.

Then after this, think, “Therefore I’m going to do all actions—doing meditation, doing sadhanas or prostrations, making offerings and so forth, as well as all these other actions such as walking, sitting, sleeping, doing a job and so forth—thinking of others rather than thinking of myself first, in order to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings.” In this way, it becomes the motivation of the cause.

There are two types of motivation: motivation of the cause and motivation of time. This becomes motivation of the cause, which is the motivation before we act. Motivation of time is while we are acting—while we are prostrating, while we are helping others. After the action has started, while we are doing the action, that is the motivation of time. So here, by motivating like

this, with the motivation of the cause, this helps whatever action we do from now on to become virtuous, even working, eating, walking, sitting, sleeping. Besides the virtuous Dharma actions, all those other activities become virtuous and therefore the cause of enlightenment. Even the mundane actions become virtuous, the cause of enlightenment in this way. And nothing becomes a nonvirtuous action. Eating, walking, sitting, sleeping, working, all these also become the cause of enlightenment because we do them with bodhicitta. So this becomes the motivation for all our actions.

By training the mind like this, sooner or later, because your bodhicitta starts to become very strong, even what would have been nonvirtuous or indifferent actions become virtuous. Even nonvirtuous actions, like killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, telling lies, slander, harsh speech and so forth, become virtuous due to the power of bodhicitta. They become the cause of enlightenment.

After this, you can think, “May I be able to benefit all sentient beings, like the sky, like Lama Tsongkhapa, by having the same qualities within me as Lama Tsongkhapa has.” Or you can say, “Due to all three times’ merits collected by me, by the buddhas and bodhisattvas and by all other sentient beings, may I be able to offer extensive merits to all sentient beings, like the sky, like Lama Tsongkhapa, by having the same qualities within me as Lama Tsongkhapa has.” You can dedicate like that.

What you are doing here with the bodhicitta motivation is generating the attitude for life, which makes all your actions from now on become virtuous, which means whatever actions you are going to do is for others. That is what is contained in that. If you are unable to think exactly of these motivations that I explained, you can abbreviate this motivation for life. This is the first thing you should do in the morning after you wake up, the first thing you should think. This bodhicitta motivation directs your life toward enlightenment, giving you a clear direction in life, showing you where you are going.

PROSTRATING TO THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS

After this, you can do prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas, reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas. You may begin with the multiplying mantra, that which increases the strength of each prostration a thousand times, so one prostration becomes [the equivalent of] a thousand

prostrations by beginning the prostration with one of the multiplying mantras. If before the prostrations you can generate the bodhicitta motivation again, that makes it very precise, very powerful. Then, you can generate a very strong thought to purify, because death can happen today and even at this moment, and so you should purify all the defilements, the negative karmas *right* now.

You can first think like this, “If I was now in the hell realm, what would it be like?” Try to see, try to feel that. Besides there being no opportunity to practice Dharma, you are completely overwhelmed by the heaviest suffering.

After that, think, “Death is not only definite but it can come even today, even at this moment. That means I’ll be born in this terrifying hell realm even in this moment. Therefore I must purify all the defilements, the negative karma *right* now. I need to prostrate for this, as well as to free all sentient beings from all the suffering and lead them to enlightenment. Therefore, I’m going to do the prostrations and confession while reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas.”

So, before you begin the prostrations, make a strong thought of [wishing] to purify. Then recite the mantra to multiply the number of prostrations. Then, in the case of reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas, what you do is, if you are able to make time, do the first one, “*Lama la keyab su chhi o*,” “I go for refuge to the guru.” While you keep on reciting, you do a full-length prostration. If there’s no space to do a full-length prostration, you can do a five-limb prostration, but if there’s space then you *must* do a full-length prostration, because the reason here is to purify the defilements and to collect merit as extensively as possible. The more merit you collect, the more extensive merit you collect, the closer you become to enlightenment.

That means you are able to enlighten sentient beings more quickly. Therefore, spread your body out as much as possible. If you have long hair, when you do the prostrations, spread the hair out as much as possible on the ground. Then you collect unbelievable merit. In that way, you can use your long hair for quick enlightenment! It’s mentioned that if your body covers one atom, by doing prostrations you collect the inconceivable merit to be born for a thousand lifetimes as a wheel-turning king, the most powerful, the wealthiest king in the universe. There’s much more description of what a wheel-turning king is, but anyway it means there’s no other king who can compete; this is the most powerful, the wealthiest and there are many more qualities about the wheel-turning king I don’t remember now. So, you collect the merit to be born as a wheel-

turning king for a thousand lifetimes if there is one atom that your body covers when you do one prostration.

Now, if you have a fingernail the size of a rice grain, when you do a prostration, from here down to the center of the earth, that small nail covers an *uncountable* number of atoms. In the text, it says down to the golden base but [that means] from here down to the center of earth, this small nail covers an unconceivable number of atoms.

So, when your hair spreads out on the ground, you cover so many unbelievable, incredible number of atoms from here down to the center of earth. Due to all these merits, the equivalent of however many atoms your body covers, you create the incredible merit to be born as a wheel-turning king for a thousand lifetimes, equaling that many number of atoms. If you understand the first example, then the rest is easy to understand. Therefore, you must stretch out your body as much as possible when you do a prostration.

So I should think that, when the old monastery was there, there is a big difference between doing prostrations there and doing prostrations on top of the hill, because the hill is bigger, so from the top of the hill to the center of earth there are more atoms. Therefore, there's more merit when doing prostrations on the hill. For example, in a hotel, if you can do prostrations either on the floor or on the bed, do the prostrations on the big bed, especially if the bed is very big and you can roll anywhere! In that way, a big bed becomes very meaningful if you do prostrations on it.

Prostrations are not often done in those five- or six-star hotels. However, seeing you spend so much money for a room, if you did some prostrations in that hotel, there is no comparison between the merit you would create and the money you would spend, no matter how expensive it is. What you spend is nothing compared with the merit you achieve by practicing the Dharma, by doing prostrations. And doing it on the bed or on the floor, there are big differences in the amount of merit.

That means, when you do preliminary practices, if you can do them on a higher mountain, at a higher altitude, if you are doing the preliminary practice of doing many, many prostrations, when you do them on a higher mountain, you create more merit.

ADVICE ON DAILY PRACTICE

After that, you can set up offerings on the altar. As you are setting up the offerings on the altar, it's extremely important to recite OM AH HUM to bless the offerings. As soon as you light the incense, you must recite OM AH HUM. As soon as you switch on a light in your house, to make it an offering, you must bless it with OM AH HUM, and the same with candles or fruit, or whatever you put on the altar. As soon as you put them on the altar, you must recite OM AH HUM to bless them. Then, in the mind think that the spirits, the interferers, abiding within the offering are dispelled.

In this way, there is no harm, no damage to your mind. By blessing the offerings, these spirits, interferers, cannot enter your mental continuum and cause many problems to arise, such as a lot of desire, a lot of attachment, making your life become so uncontrolled and making you unable to meditate, unable to practice Dharma. Life has no control. This doesn't happen.

Not only that, there are different problems that happen when these spirits, these interferers, abide in the offerings. These things don't happen, and you collect inconceivable merit from each offering. There are particular benefits from each offering that are explained in the sutras.

Either you do the offerings first and you do prostrations after that, or [the other way around]; it doesn't matter which way. After that, you sit down and do one of the guru yoga practices, either the *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga* practice or the *Guru Shakyamuni Buddha Guru Yoga* practice that I put together in this small book. You can recite whichever one you have more feeling for, the *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga* practice or the *Guru Shakyamuni Buddha Guru Yoga* practice.

As I have already mentioned a few times, this is extremely important. To receive the blessing of the guru and to receive the realizations of the path to enlightenment you *must* do one guru yoga practice. Then, especially you should do a meditation prayer of the whole path to enlightenment, such as *The Foundation of All Good Qualities* or any other prayer. You can alternate them. You don't have to recite the same prayer every day; you can do different lamrim prayers, whichever inspires the mind more. Reciting one lamrim prayer along with the guru yoga every day leaves a positive imprint on your mental continuum. And each day you become closer to gaining realizations, each day you become closer to enlightenment, each day you become closer to enlightening all sentient beings. Each day, as you recite the lamrim prayer, it has this incredible benefit.

The most important thing when you read the lamrim prayer is to read it mindfully. Even if you don't understand some of the subjects, that doesn't matter. It is very important to read it mindfully so that it definitely leaves a positive imprint of the path to enlightenment. If your mind wanders, if it does not pay attention to the words, the prayer cannot leave an imprint. Your mouth recites it, but your mind does not pay attention to it. If you go straight but mindfully through the subject, it becomes a direct meditation.

Then, if you are able to meditate, during this time or after you have finished this, before the merit field absorbs within you, if you are going to do a more elaborate guru devotion meditation, at the beginning of the lamrim prayer there's a guru devotion meditation verse. After you recite that, you can either do an elaborate meditation on guru devotion from the outline of the lamrim, such as in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* or some other short lamrim text, like *Essential Nectar* or something that goes straight. *Essential Nectar* is very good because it gives details without examples or stories. Because it goes straight, the words in *Essential Nectar* are very effective. You can either follow a lamrim outline after having studied *Liberation* or another lamrim commentary, and then meditate using that as a guideline. Then you can elaborate from that. You can elaborate any amount, a little or a lot; you have so much choice. Whichever lamrim meditation you are going to do, a more elaborate one, to train the mind, you do this stanza that contains the meditation in the lamrim prayer. Or you finish all the prayers, then, before the merit field absorbs into you, you do the extensive meditation on the lamrim, whichever meditation you are going to do to train your mind.

As I explained the other day, whatever meditation you do in the morning, if it's a guru devotion meditation, if you can transform your mind into guru devotion in the morning by doing the meditation, then you can continue that experience for the rest of the day. You try to live with that experience of your mind transformed into guru devotion. In this way, you are able to take the essence in your life. Keeping the mind in that experience of guru devotion helps to stop delusions from arising, and then you don't engage in so many negative karmas in that day. While you are doing many activities—walking, eating, drinking and so forth—you continuously keep the mind in guru devotion, and you collect so much merit.

Similarly, by meditating in the morning on bodhicitta, then keeping the mind that has been transformed into this experience, the altruistic mind to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings

or cherishing other sentient beings, for the rest of the day you continue to hold the mind that is transformed into bodhicitta. So again, in the same way, with that thought, whatever you are doing—whether you are working, sleeping, eating, walking—you collect infinite merit, skies of merit all the time. Like this, you always continuously create the cause of enlightenment. That's how you take the essence, by using the morning meditation to transform your mind into the lamrim, and then by living your life with that experience. You are able to take the essence of life so much like that. It makes your daily life very, very meaningful.

As far as the lamrim meditation, first study well one elaborate lamrim text, such as *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* or something like that. At the moment, that's the most elaborate one that is published in English. Study it from the beginning to the end a few times, making yourself very familiar with the whole subject. Then, whichever meditation you do, you know all the background, the whole reason *why* this meditation is important, and that can help bring more inspiration to do the meditation.

While you're studying the whole lamrim from beginning to end two or three times, either while you're doing that or afterwards, do one meditation on guru devotion every day, whether it's ten minutes or fifteen minutes—even something short like that—until you achieve the realization of guru devotion, seeing from your own side that each buddha is all the gurus and each guru is all the buddhas. You feel this from your heart; you have this faith a hundred percent from your heart, very stable and not just for a few minutes, not just for a few days. That's the guru devotion realization, when you see like that, that one guru is all the buddhas and one buddha is all the gurus. Until you achieve that stable realization, you must continue the guru devotion meditation, for whatever length of time, even for ten minutes or fifteen minutes.

On top of that, do another lamrim meditation to train the mind, such as the first part of the lamrim from perfect human rebirth up to karma, especially impermanence and death. The meditation on impermanence and death is very important. It's the most important one in that first part of the lamrim because the more you think of that, the more it helps you to quickly have realizations of those other meditations, like the usefulness of the perfect human rebirth or karma. You need to meditate and train the mind from perfect human rebirth up to karma until you have the realization, no matter how many months or years it takes.

When you have no time, this means you have no time to do meaningless actions. You only have time for meaningful actions. To clarify a little bit. This doesn't mean you stop sleeping or stop eating and drinking. It doesn't mean that. You are still sleeping and eating and drinking but, because you changed your attitude, you no longer have worldly concern; your attitude is only Dharma. There's no worldly concern, there's no eight worldly dharmas. Therefore, you *only* have time for the Dharma, you have only time to practice. You especially cut the eight worldly dharmas by meditating on impermanence and death. By changing the mind, by changing the attitude, you only have time for the Dharma; you have no time for the meaningless works for this life. That is one definition.

The other definition is that your attitude is totally changed. In the beginning, the most important thing you felt in your heart was this life's happiness. You didn't feel the happiness of future lives was important. Now, that has totally changed; it's completely the other way round. The most important thing is the happiness of future lives. The work of this life is utter nonsense, childish. By meditating on impermanence and death and then those other meditations such as perfect human rebirth and so forth, you have cut the thought of the eight worldly dharmas, the attachment clinging to this life.

Then, when the happiness of this life doesn't happen, it doesn't bother you. Whether the comfort of this life happens or not doesn't bother you; it is completely unimportant. In your heart, the most important thing is the happiness of future lives; that is the most important Dharma. At that time, then you have the realization of the graduated path of the lower capable being.

Then, after having that realization, you train the mind in the graduated path of middle capable being. By meditating on true suffering and the true cause of suffering, the sufferings of each realm, you reach a point where day and night, twenty-four hours a day, you have not the slightest attachment to, not the slightest interest in samsara. You see samsara is totally suffering and you have an aversion to it. It's like a person caught in the prison who wants to be free day and night, all the time. The aversion to the prison, the wish to be free, arises continuously, while eating, while in the toilet. This is similar to meditating on true suffering and the true cause of suffering, those kinds of subjects, the thought to be free from samsara arises day and night continuously, spontaneously. You have not the slightest interest to be in samsara even for one second. When

that renunciation of samsara becomes very stable, you have a realization of the graduated path of the middle capable being.

After that, you train your mind in the graduated path of the higher capable being, bodhicitta, so that the altruistic mind wanting to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings arises spontaneously. You see each sentient being, each animal or human being, and feel naturally, spontaneously from the heart, that you want to achieve enlightenment for that sentient being. Like that, the wish to be free from samsara arises so strongly, spontaneously day and night, all the time. Now, the thought to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings arises spontaneously without any effort, day and night, continuously, on the basis of taking responsibility for all sentient beings, to free them from suffering and to cause them happiness. At that time, you have the realization of bodhicitta.

Then, when you have completed the realization of emptiness, having signs of an unmistakable realization of emptiness, you are able to realize the unification of emptiness and dependent arising. You're able to put emptiness and existence together on the I. The I exists, but also at the same time it is empty from its own side. So, the I is a dependent arising and it is also empty. So, when you see that the I is empty, when you unify those two, emptiness and dependent arising, that shows you have an unmistakable realization of emptiness, you have completed the realization of emptiness.

However, you still have to develop wisdom by practicing shamatha, calm abiding, and then achieving great insight by unifying these two, shamatha or one-pointed concentration and meditating on emptiness through analysis. From this is derived extremely refined, rapturous ecstasy. By developing that, you achieve the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, which ceases the different levels of delusions, and you are able to achieve liberation.

By having bodhicitta, you enter the Mahayana and by developing those wisdoms, you cease the defilements. There are two types, gross and subtle defilements, and that's how the mental continuum becomes an omniscient mind. In order to have a realization of bodhicitta, you must first train your mind in the renunciation of samsara. Without that, the realization of bodhicitta is not possible. But that doesn't mean that you cannot meditate on bodhicitta. Here we're talking about, as a beginner not having any lamrim experience, where to put the main effort.

It's good to meditate on emptiness every day, whatever length of time. Whether you recite the *Heart Sutra* or some other teaching on emptiness, such as mahamudra, whether it's one stanza or more, it's good to get something on emptiness done every day; to do some meditation on emptiness. This is very, very important.

Then if you have received a highest tantra initiation, if possible, with the deity you have a karmic connection to, on that deity's path, there is a graduated path of that deity at the end of the sadhana. So, if you have received a highest tantra initiation of the deity that you have a karmic connection with, you should recite the prayer that contains the graduated path of that deity, which is like a lamrim prayer. Reciting it every day leaves a positive imprint on the mental continuum of this tantric realization. That means each day you become closer to the tantric realization of that deity. Then, getting closer to the enlightenment of this deity, you are getting closer to being able to quickly enlighten all sentient beings. This is the fundamental practice to have a quick tantric realization. As a minimum, every day at least, you should recite that deity's prayer of the whole path. That is one advice. You have lamrim, the sutra path, and here you have in tantra a prayer that contains the graduated path of the deity.

Then there is single-pointed concentration, shamatha. To achieve this practice of single-pointed concentration successfully, you need to be in a particular place, a special environment, a conducive place that has no obstacles. There are causes and conditions to succeed in actualizing shamatha, and you need to perfect those causes. If you are going to meditate, to have realization, you need to perfect the causes. For instance, if you don't have pure morality it becomes an obstacle, making it more difficult to achieve shamatha.

You can also practice shamatha, calm abiding, with tantra, such as the Six Yogas of Naropa or *tummo* fire meditation. Using the *tummo* fire as a meditation object for shamatha, you get some experience of both the tantric path and also shamatha, single-pointed concentration. Or the generation stage, when you visualize yourself as deity. In this way, you achieve two things, single-pointed concentration as well as a tantric realization. His Holiness the Dalai Lama especially advises that then life becomes more profitable.

So, in the morning, before meditation, if possible do prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas, by reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas. The other way is to recite the names, one after another, straight through, and then do the prostrations. That's one way. The other way is the

best, if you can repeat one name, “I go for refuge to the Guru”, repeating it over and over until you have put your forehead on the ground. Then, after that, you change, saying “I go for refuge to the Buddha,” reciting it over and over until you have put forehead on the ground. Then, you change, reciting “I go for refuge to the Dharma,” and so forth, until you finish all the Thirty-five Buddhas. If you can add the Seven Medicine Buddhas, that is very good. Then it’s very, very powerful; it makes life extremely profitable.

Then, without finishing the last part of the prayer, go back and start again from refuge. After you have done this three times, it becomes about a hundred and fifteen prostrations. It is extremely good if you can make this a daily practice, maybe not every day, sometimes you might miss out, but generally a sort of a daily practice. Whether you have a commitment to do a preliminary practice or not, if you can do this as a daily practice, it’s *extremely* good. Then, after that, you do the last part of the prayer.

I once asked Denma Lochö Rinpoche why the biography of Lama Tsongkhapa talks about the Thirty-five Buddhas but never mentions that he did the Vajrasattva practice, reciting the Vajrasattva mantra. Denma Lochö Rinpoche mentioned that if you do the Thirty-five Buddha practice well once, it has power to purify the very heaviest negative karma—killing your father or mother or an arhat, harming the Buddha and causing disunity among the Sangha. This negative karma gets purified by doing the Thirty-five Buddhas practice once.

Reciting the names just once has the power to purify so many eons of different negative karmas. There’s a main one, and each Buddha is to purify a different negative karma. Of course, that doesn’t mean it doesn’t purify other negative karmas. Therefore, in the Lama Tsongkhapa tradition, this practice of the Thirty-five Buddhas is regarded as very important, as very, very powerful. So many lamas in this lineage do the practice every day with many prostrations.

Then, in daily life, before you go to your job, or eating, walking, sitting, sleeping, whatever activity you do, make sure that you do it with a bodhicitta motivation. That transforms the actions into the cause of enlightenment, to enlighten all sentient beings. That makes life most productive, most beneficial. In this way, all your actions such as working are done with a bodhicitta motivation, they all become the cause of all the sentient beings’ happiness. Before each action, think that the meaning of life is to free all sentient beings from suffering, to cause them happiness and to bring them to enlightenment. Think that that is the purpose of your life

and therefore you *must* achieve enlightenment. Therefore, you are going to do this service for others.

When you go to sleep, when you eat, think you are going to do the yoga of sleeping or the yoga of eating. You can think like that. When you practice tantra, there's a special practice of sleeping, as well as eating, washing and all these activities.

Before going to bed, if you can, recite the long Vajrasattva mantra twenty-one times or the short OM VAJRASATTVA HUM twenty-one times. It is so important to do a Vajrasattva practice. If one tiny insect is killed today, if it's not purified before going to bed, the next day the negative karma becomes double. After fifteen days, it becomes the same heavy karma as having killed a human being. After eighteen days, it becomes one hundred and thirty-one thousand and seventy-two times heavier. It increases day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year. Then afterwards, this one negative karma, by multiplying, becomes like the size of a mountain, like the size of the earth. Even this one negative karma makes life so heavy at the time of death. Even just with this one negative karma, you have to experience the sufferings of the lower realms for an unconceivable time.

Now, in one day there are so many negative karmas, not just having killed one tiny insect. So many negative karmas. And each one multiplies so much. That's unbelievable! After some time, each one becomes like a mountain, like the earth. It makes it so difficult to have realizations of the path to enlightenment; it makes it so difficult to be able to benefit other sentient beings.

If you do a three-month hundred thousand Vajrasattva retreat, it purifies many lifetimes, many eons of negative karma. Even reciting the mantra twenty-one times stops multiplying today's negative karmas from accumulating tomorrow. And it not only purifies today's negative karmas, it also purifies this life's negative karmas as well as the negative karmas from previous lives. That is just by reciting it twenty-one times. Of course, it depends so much on how you recite, how strong your bodhicitta and understanding of emptiness is when you recite, and how strongly you generate regret having done those negative karmas. It depends on many things.

Then, after each practice and especially at the end of the day, you should do a perfect dedication, dedicating all the merits you have created. As you remember, at the end of each teaching, I do some dedications. They are different ones each day, although some are similar. So you can do it

like that. There are even dedication prayers, such as the *King of Prayers* and other prayers you can recite, but even if you cannot do those, doing a few stanzas of dedication is very good. Mainly what you are praying for is that your life, from now on and in all the future lives, becomes most productive, most beneficial, most useful, for other sentient beings. That's what is contained there.

Because many of you took precepts yesterday, besides the meditation, they are another very important thing. It's extremely good, those who took precepts yesterday. Whatever number you took, you always collect merit, and living in the vows is the foundation for gaining the realizations of the path and or liberation from samsara.

Another thing is that every year, if possible, you should do some retreat, for either a week, or fifteen days or a month. Longer, of course, is better but even fifteen days or a week is very good. You should plan to do some retreat each year.

The meditation courses where there are teachings and a meditation program become a kind of retreat as long as there is time to meditate on the subject you have heard. On this course, there are times for meditation except when I start to give a talk. When I come back to Kopan, your meditation time disappears! Anyway, a course like this, where there is teaching and meditation combined becomes a kind of retreat. It gets two things done, studying and meditation.

So, each year you should do some retreat, either a deity retreat or some preliminaries, whether it's a group retreat or a solitary one, because at other times your life is so distracted with your job and this and that, with so many things, but doing the retreat makes you study and see yourself. You learn how you have been in the past and how you are at present. Seeing both the good things and the mistakes give you the opportunity to change, to create a better life. Seeing yourself makes you have a better life. It gives you energy, inspiration, to continue to practice and become even stronger.

I think that's it. The Chenrezig initiation is finished. It's gone!

I'll do the oral transmissions of the mantras of Dorje Khadro, the Thirty-five Buddhas, Vajrasattva, and Compassion Buddha. Think, "The purpose of my life to free all sentient beings from all the sufferings and bring them to full enlightenment. Therefore, I must achieve

enlightenment. Therefore, I'm going to take the oral transmission of these teachings. May each word cause me to have all the realizations within my mind and may each word that I hear cause all sentient beings to immediately have the realizations of the path contained in these words."

[Lama Zopa Rinpoche chants in Tibetan]

So this is Dorje Khadro, an extremely powerful one. It is one of the golden Dharmas that Manjushri gave to Lama Tsongkhapa. It very powerfully purifies negative karmas, defilements, and revives the degenerated samaya as well as eliminating obstacles. This practice is an extremely blessed one, highly admired for eliminating obstacles. This golden Dharma is Lama Tsongkhapa's secret heart practice.

Then the oral transmission of the *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga*.

[Lama Zopa Rinpoche chants in Tibetan]

Now, the *Heart Sutra*. I'll do *Heart Sutra* also, because it's a very, very important practice. Then the oral transmissions of the Thirty-five Buddhas and Vajrasattva practices. Now, the *Heart Sutra*.

[Lama Zopa Rinpoche chants in Tibetan]

Now, the Medicine Buddha mantra. There's a long one but I'm not sure whether I have received the lineage of oral transmission, I don't remember. If you recite Medicine Buddha's name and mantra every day, even animals, if they hear Medicine Buddha's name and mantra, won't be born in the lower realms. With the name and the mantra of Medicine Buddha, if even animals won't be born in the lower realms, there is no question for human beings. If you recite the name and mantra of Medicine Buddha, it is guaranteed you will not to be reborn in the lower realms. Because of that, it's extremely important to recite the Medicine Buddha name mantra. It is not only for healing sicknesses. Sickness is just one problem from the oceans of samsaric problems. Sickness is just one problem; it's not all the problems of samsara. Medicine Buddha is not only for healing, it is also very powerful for success. Medicine Buddha made so many prayers in the past, during the bodhisattva's time, to benefit us sentient beings.

[The recording stops suddenly]

Lecture 8

December 9, 1998

IS THERE ANY POINT TO IGNORANCE?

It makes no sense at all to continuously allow ignorance to arise; it's totally nonsense. It's totally crazy that we allow these afflicted emotions to arise, these delusions to these causative phenomena which are in this nature. It's childish; it doesn't make sense. It has no meaning, no purpose.

If we analyze this concept of inherent existence, this ignorance, we see that, while the subject—the doer, the I, and the aggregates—as well as the action and the object of that action—in fact all phenomena that exist—while they are in reality totally empty from their own side, not existing at all from their own side, they do exist, but they exist in mere name. The way they exist is nothing extra than that. But we let our mind believe that they exist inherently, we let our mind hold on to them as inherently existent, seeing the inherently existent I as true, as the real I that appears from there is true, true in the sense that it can be found as it appears. And it is the same with the rest of phenomena. We think in that way. We let our mind believe and hold onto the hallucinations as if they are true. This has no meaning. This is totally nonsense. There is no purpose for this. Is there purpose for this? Has somebody found a purpose?

Student: Sure! Maybe ignorant minds are able to handle it.

Rinpoche: Able to handle it?

Student: I mean because we're ignorant we need a label to be able to handle it. If you don't have a label, you can't.

Rinpoche: Can you repeat one more time?

Student: If you're very ignorant, you need some security in your life. That's why you put labels on [things]. That's why you need them. So the purpose if you're ignorant is to grasp onto things.

Rinpoche: “Grasp?” What do you mean, “grasp?” Do you mean “cling?” You need something to grasp onto, something to cling to?

Student: Something to hold in your life. Something to fix in your life. Like a baby needs a mother to hold. Ignorance needs the labels to grasp onto.

Rinpoche: Ignorance needs a label? Did you say ignorance needs a label? Mmm. Wisdom doesn’t need a label, only ignorance? Huh?

Student: Maybe. I don’t know!

Rinpoche: I think ignorance is very kind because it not only labels all the suffering but also labels “enlightenment” and “path.” All the paths. So it is very kind! I’m only joking.! But what happens if you don’t give ignorance a chance to arise?

Student: That’s a concept beyond my ignorance!

Rinpoche: What happens if you don’t allow ignorance to arise? Is it better or not? What is better? Which way is better for life?

Student: If you don’t have it, sure.

Rinpoche: If you don’t have it?

Student: Not having ignorance must be better. But you are born with a whole history, so you are probably born ignorant.

Rinpoche: Maybe it’s the fault of the monkeys! Because human beings came from monkeys! Ignorance came from monkeys, maybe gorillas! I’m joking. Or from the water, from the ocean, which is where everything evolved from in biology, in science. It goes back to the oceans, to bubbles or something. Monkeys are the nearest in evolution to human beings but then it got down to water, to some bubbles or something like that, if you go back in biology to the evolution of life. The very original life came from water; it started from bubbles or something like that, maybe from the bubbles children play with! I’m joking.

Anyway, what I was trying to say is that, when we allow the mind to become ignorant, we let our mind believe in this way, holding onto the inherently existent I as true, as well as all the rest of phenomena. There's no purpose of that. It has no meaning. It doesn't make any sense to create this thought. It is total nonsense because, by creating this thought, which is a wrong concept, this produces all the other delusions, which motivate karma, which then creates the whole of samsara from that. Death—something we don't want to think about, we are scared to even think about—comes from there, from this ignorance, from this thought; it is created by this. Every sickness [comes from there]. When we have a migraine headache, something which is utterly unbearable, it was created by this wrong concept, ignorance; it has come from this. This is only one example. This sickness is just one of the uncountable sufferings of samsara, one of the 424 sicknesses. If we think of all those sicknesses that are unbearable, they are all created by this ignorance, by this wrong concept.

When we have unbelievable relationship problems, so heavy we can't breathe, we feel we can never move, we feel we are suffocated, like being ground to dust under a huge mountain, like our life has been put in a sack, in a container—when we have relationship problems like this, they were all created by this ignorance, this wrong concept. Even though day and night we eat the most expensive food, costing thousands of dollars, it has no taste; we can't enjoy it. We might live in an expensive apartment or a five-star, six-star, seven-star or even ten-star hotel, something that is so expensive and has every comfort, but we can't enjoy life at all. Even though physically our body is there, our mind cannot enjoy it. We can't sleep at night. This whole suffering life, this painful mind that can't see any light in life, that is totally dark, totally depressed, totally unhappy, seeing the outside world as unhappy, thinking we are unhappy inside, this was created by this ignorance, by this wrong concept. While there is no such I, we let ourselves believe that there is such an I there. Simply by this thought, we are forced to experience every problem, every suffering. We have to experience sufferings that are like the ocean, and this is just the sufferings and problems of human beings, without talking about those very heavy sufferings of the hell beings, as well as those of the hungry ghosts and animals.

If we watch the people who come into a hospital, we only see one particular sickness. That problem is only one sickness, not the whole problem, not all the sufferings from the oceans of samsaric suffering. If we just look at all the people in hospital, there are so many different

sicknesses, it's so unbearable, so unbearable. Even if we don't have that sickness, just looking [at those people] is so unbearable.

There are sicknesses that cannot be cured and, of course, some that through a doctor's knowledge, through right medicine and right treatment and with the patient's merit, good karma, can be cured, but that doesn't mean that the person will never have to experience those sicknesses again. Because the cause of sickness, the karma, is not purified, the seed of delusions is still there. As long as the delusion is there, it creates the karma again and again. Even if we finish one karma, delusion creates another karma. As long as we have delusion, as long as we have ignorance, anger, attachment, those delusions, even if we finish one karma, by going through all the problems, delusion will then create another karma, another cause of sickness, either that same sickness or another. Delusion creates the cause of the problem again and again. And it goes like that, from life to life.

As long as we don't purify, as long as we don't destroy the delusion, delusion arises again and again. Until we remove the seed of delusion that is on the mental continuum, delusion arises again and again, again and again. If we don't actualize the remedy, the path, that which ceases the seed of delusion, as long as that part doesn't happen, as long as we don't realize the four noble truths—by realizing true suffering and the true cause of suffering, then by actualizing the true path and achieving the true cessation of suffering—as long as that doesn't happen, delusion, the seed, is there, and delusion arises again and again, which creates karma again and again. This continues endlessly. The suffering of samsara is like that.

Therefore, all these various sicknesses that we see in a hospital, and all these people that are experiencing things that are utterly terrifying, living a life that is so heavy, all this is created by this ignorance; it has come from this ignorance. It is something that is unnecessary. We have let our mind become ignorant. We have let our mind believe and hold onto this I that appears to be true but which is not true at all, which is totally false, totally non-existent, this real I appearing from there. This is the cause of all the suffering, and it is something that doesn't make sense. Why we create the very root of all the oceans of suffering doesn't make sense. Why we let our mind believe and hold onto this false notion doesn't make sense. It is total nonsense, totally crazy. But this is the thing that produces or creates all these oceans of suffering of samsara.

Anyway, I'll stop here.

[Chanting]

BREAKTIME SHOULD BE BREAKTIME FROM SAMSARA

Make a request to the lineage lamas to grant blessings to gain realizations of the whole path to enlightenment.

Although we don't normally see the virtuous friend as a buddha or bodhisattva, by using quotations and logic, by doing analytical meditation and then fixed meditation, we can prove that this virtuous friend, who appears from their own side as an ordinary being, is a buddha. With all these quotations, logic, personal experience, we are able to look at them as a buddha. That is analytical meditation. That is the result that will happen, looking at them as a buddha and seeing them as a buddha.

In that way, the mind gets transformed into this pure devotional thought, seeing the virtuous friend as a buddha. After our mind is transformed by guru yoga into the mind of guru devotion, we keep our mind in that state as long as possible. That is fixed meditation. The beginning is analysis, then our mind is transformed into this pure, devotional thought, seeing them as a buddha, and we keep the mind in that state as long as possible. That is fixed meditation.

It is also the same with renunciation and bodhicitta. When we see with all the analysis how samsara is the nature of suffering, our mind totally sees the whole samsara like a nest of the poisonous snakes, like the center of the fire or like the inside of a toilet, a septic tank, as something totally disgusting. We have not the slightest attraction, seeing it is only in the nature of suffering. Before we found samsara attractive, thinking it was beautiful, as a pleasure, as happiness. Now, after the mind is transformed, we see it as it really is, as only suffering. We then keep the mind in that state, in the renunciation of samsara, for as long as possible. That is fixed meditation.

And the same thing with bodhicitta. In order to have the realization, we do it like that. And then for the rest of day we live our life with that experience. In the morning we meditate on the lamrim, transforming our mind into that experience, and then we try to live the rest of the day with that thought. That is a very powerful way to have quick realizations of the lamrim, because

not only do we transform our mind into the lamrim during the meditation session, but even during the breaktime, when we break from the sitting meditation. Our breaktime should not be breaktime from the Dharma, just breaktime from sitting meditation.

We should actually understand breaktime in this way. If it is break time from the Dharma, we are creating the cause of samsara, we are creating the cause of the lower realms. Breaktime from the Dharma means we are having a break from the Dharma, and that is what keeps us away from enlightenment and liberation, and that is what creates the cause of samsara, the cause of the lower realms. But now, when we practice the Dharma in the breaktime, and especially the lamrim, renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness, at that time, that is breaktime from samsara.

I don't mean we are liberated from samsara, but we are not creating the cause of samsara at that time when our attitude is the renunciation of samsara in breaktime. If our attitude is right view, we are not creating the cause of samsara. Especially, if our attitude is the mind of enlightenment, we are always creating the cause of enlightenment.

Therefore, when we practice the Dharma, it should especially be the lamrim, not just breathing meditation or watching the sensations in order to have some peace of mind, some quiet within us, not that kind of thing, but the lamrim, the three principal aspects of the path: renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness. When we do that, we are having a break from samsara, a break from the lower realms, because we don't create the cause during that time. So we should understand it on this way.

THE TWELVE LINKS

Maybe the mandala offering can be done this time before I do the oral transmission of the lamrim.

[Mandala offering]

The refuge, bodhicitta prayer, "I go for refuge to Buddha, Dharma, Sangha until I achieve enlightenment..." contains two types or practices of refuge: causal refuge and resultant refuge.

“Until I achieve enlightenment” contains the *resultant* refuge. The purpose of our life is not just to achieve happiness for ourselves, not just to solve our own problems, it is to lead other beings from suffering and bring them to happiness. That is the purpose of our life. In other words, this life, having this precious human body, is not for ourselves but for others. “Others” doesn’t mean only the people that we like, only the people who are friends, it also includes enemies and strangers, all beings without any kind of discrimination, *every* living being. This also refers to buddhas, bodhisattvas, all sentient beings—this life is for everybody. Our life having this precious human body is for all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and for all sentient beings.

Of course, we can also think that those who practice guru devotion can include the guru along with the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha [when taking refuge]. To cause all the happiness to all sentient beings, including enlightenment, we need to have the Dharma refuge within our mental continuum. Then we ourselves become a Sangha, and through this we become a Buddha. So, “Until I achieve enlightenment...” is our resultant time Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Taking refuge in that, we are relying on that, the resultant refuge.

For that success, we need to rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha who exist separately from our mental continuum. In order to become a qualified doctor, we need to study by relying upon another qualified doctor. Without that, we alone cannot become a qualified doctor. We need to rely upon another qualified doctor, somebody who is separate from us, whose mind is separate from our mind. Similarly here, for us to be able to become a perfect guide to all other sentient beings, with all the qualities, we need to rely on a Buddha, Dharma and Sangha that exists, possessed by others’ minds. So “Until I achieve enlightenment...” is practicing the resultant refuge, whereas “I go for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha...” contains the practice of the causal refuge, refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha possessed by others’ minds.

“Due to the merits of having collected charity and so forth, may I achieve enlightenment in order to benefit *all* the transmigratory beings.” Practicing morality, patience, perseverance, concentration, as well as wisdom, whatever merit we have collected by benefiting other sentient beings or by making offering to the holy objects, through various practices, may we achieve enlightenment for *all* the transmigratory beings.

Geshe Lama Konchog has introduced you to the evolution of samsara, the twelve links. You should bring that understanding here; you should bring in the meaning of the twelve dependent

related limbs, that explanation of samsara that contains the result and the cause. The evolution of suffering—the whole package of samsaric suffering—true suffering and the true cause of suffering, the whole thing is explained in the Wheel of Life. It explains the three lower realms in order to show the suffering of pain and the samsaric pleasures of the gods, demigods and humans in order to show the suffering of change. There are seventeen categories [of the god realms] drawn on the Wheel of Life. Some artists draw all seventeen, some don't. The formless realm has four categories which aren't included as a part of samsara that is shown, only the seventeen categories of the form realm. It shows the realm where there is no suffering of pain or suffering of change but pervasive compounding suffering, which is the fundamental suffering of those two.

The Wheel shows three animals in the hub [representing] the three poisonous minds and, around that, a black semicircle and a white semicircle [representing] negative karma that is the cause to reincarnate in the lower realms and positive karma that is the cause to reincarnate in the realm of the happy migratory beings.

So, when you say, “Due to the merit of having collected charity and so forth, may I achieve enlightenment in order to benefit all transmigratory beings,” the term “transmigratory beings” contains the whole explanation of true suffering and the true cause of suffering, of delusion and karma. It explains the evolution of samsara, how we transmigrate in the six realms. The whole thing comes in the meaning of “in order to benefit transmigratory beings.”

There are numberless sentient beings and each sentient being in samsara is a transmigratory being. Why? In the twelve links there are three delusions and two actions. *Ignorance* and *craving and grasping* are the two delusions that cause us to be reborn in samsara again. Then the two actions are *karmic formation* or compounding action motivated by ignorance, and *becoming*. After craving and grasping there is becoming. Like that, there are the three delusions and two actions. In the *Heart of Dependent Arising*, Nagarjuna says,

The first, eighth and ninth are delusions,

The second and tenth are karma.

The remaining seven are sufferings.

Nagarjuna explained that from the three delusions arise the two actions, and then, from them, the other seven links, which are suffering, arise. The seven results start from *name and form*. Then

there is *consciousness* on which the *karmic imprint* is left. There are two traditions. One counts the part of the consciousness as a cause, where the compounding action motivated by ignorance leaves a karmic imprint there; in the other system consciousness is counted as a result, not a cause. Whichever way is followed, they are just different systems. Then, from the seven sufferings again arise the three delusions and the two actions, and then the seven again. So it circles like this. It becomes a wheel as Nagarjuna said, the Wheel of Life. If you think of the twelve links, with the three delusions and the two actions, the beings within samsara have no freedom; they are *totally* overwhelmed by the karma and delusion. They are forced to transmigrate in that realm and then experience *all* those problems and sufferings of that realm.

MONKEYS DON'T CHOOSE TO BE MONKEYS

One time, when I was going from Dharamsala up to Tushita, the retreat center there, there were monkeys on the road. In Dharamsala there are many monkeys, there are also many monks! On the road that goes up, below Tibetan family houses, there were monkeys. It just made me think that those monkeys didn't purposely reincarnate as monkeys, they didn't choose willingly, with free will. They didn't become monkeys with their own freedom. They had *no* freedom *at all*; they were *completely* overwhelmed by delusion and the negative karma that forced their consciousness, no matter who they were in the past, to take a monkey's body; they were forced to transmigrate into a monkey's body. They themselves had not one single freedom, they transmigrated into a monkey's body totally due to negative karma and delusion. It's exactly the same with the spider with the long legs, or the mosquito, and there is another one, I don't know what it's called. Its body is like a blade of grass, not that much long but the legs very long. What's the name? [Student: Praying mantis.] Praying mantis? Do you live in the Australian bush or where? [Student: New Zealand.]

Oh, New Zealand. Anyway, I am joking. They look like a blade of grass, with *long* legs. [Student: grasshopper.] No, not a grasshopper. [Student: Stick insects. They look like a stick. They have legs but they look like a stick, a twig. They actually look like food but they're an insect.] Anyway, whatever it is, it's the same. So let's say a mosquito or a spider. They never took this body *willingly*, not with free will, not out of choice. Whatever their past life was, it was totally under the control of negative karma and delusion, meaning they migrated into this body, as a spider or mosquito or a worm that has many, many hairs or the one that has *so* many legs, *millions* of legs. Anyway, these and snakes, have no freedom; they are totally under the control of karma and

delusion, of negative karma, that forces them to migrate into that body and they can do nothing about it. Once their consciousness migrates into that body, what can they do? Nothing. They have to suffer until the karma finishes. How many times will we have to be reborn like that? Until the karma finishes.

Liberation does not just depend on the hand of the Buddha, it also depends on sentient beings' effort, on sentient beings from their side creating good karma by practicing morality, living an ethical life, living in the vows.

That is the very basis. Then, with concentration and wisdom, sentient beings can cease the delusions, actualize the path and achieve liberation. So from sentient beings' side, they have to put effort into the practice to create good karma to have the realizations of the path to liberation. Liberation is not only in the Buddha's hand. Otherwise by now there wouldn't be a single hell being suffering, there wouldn't be a single hungry ghost suffering, there wouldn't be a single animal suffering, there wouldn't be one single human being suffering. There wouldn't be a single sentient being suffering if it were only in the hands of bodhisattvas, if it were only in the hands of holy beings, if it were only in the hands of buddhas, especially the Buddha who completed all the qualities. The bodhisattvas haven't yet completed the path, but the Buddha has completed all the realizations and cessations. So if it were only in the hands of the Buddha, if it were only up to Buddha, there wouldn't be any sentient beings. The Buddha wouldn't let even one sentient being suffer for one second, no question the numberless sentient beings. The Buddha's compassion embraces every sentient being. The Buddha cherishes us many, many thousands of times more than we cherish ourselves. No matter how selfish we are, no matter how much we cherish ourselves, the Buddha cherishes us thousands of times more than we cherish ourselves. That's how the Buddha's holy mind is.

Therefore, it is said in the teachings that the Buddha doesn't have a discriminating thought, where there is a partial mind and partial actions. The example that's given in the text is of one sentient being putting perfume on one side of the Buddha's holy body, and on the other side one sentient being is cutting the flesh of the Buddha piece by piece with an axe. Even though the sentient beings' actions are different—one is making offering, one is harming—from the Buddha's side there is equal love and compassion for both sentient beings; there is no discrimination.

With an attitude of love and compassion without the slightest discrimination, the actions are only to benefit in the same way. That is the quality of the Buddha, and it is the same thing with the bodhisattvas. It is not only the particular Buddha, but due to having compassion for all sentient beings, that is also the bodhisattvas' quality. The Buddha wouldn't let us sentient beings suffer for even a second if it were completely in his hands. But because liberation depends on both the Buddha and us sentient beings ourselves, from our side we must put the effort in, practicing morality, practicing concentration and wisdom, actualizing the entire path, the five paths to liberation. Without that, we cannot attain liberation. It's half and half; half depends on sentient beings' karma and half depends on the Buddha.

The Buddha has revealed the path; he has done his job already. If our karma had been purified before, if we had practiced Dharma in previous lives and already purified our karma, this [suffering] wouldn't happen. But that didn't happen, we didn't practice the Dharma, so there's still delusion and negative karma. Then, without choice, this is what has happened; we have transmigrated into this body. The karma has already ripened, so there is nothing that the numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas can do about it; they cannot liberate us immediately. If that were the case, as I just mentioned before, if it were that easy, there wouldn't be any hell realm. Achieving liberation and enlightenment depends half on sentient beings and half on the Buddha.

These pitiful creatures, the spider, the snake, the mosquito, have to suffer with this body no matter how long it takes, no matter how many lifetimes, until the karma finishes. It never happens with their choice. They have no such freedom. This spider, this snake, this insect with the long legs, this mosquito, this scorpion, this worm, they themselves have not the slightest freedom. It doesn't happen through their choice, their free will. In the past they didn't practice the Dharma, therefore they are totally under the control of delusion and negative karma, causing them to transmigrate into this body.

Therefore, when we think of beings, including the mosquitoes and fish, all these, when we think about the meaning of "transmigrator," the evolution of the twelve links—how those beings are completely under the control of karma and delusion and must experience all those sufferings, how if we are an animal with an animal realm's suffering, there is no choice—when we think of that, compassion has to rise. Compassion has to arise when we think of the meaning of transmigratory being for all those fish in the water that people catch, and for each of those

sentient beings, the mosquito, who make a lot of noise, *w000000*, who irritate us, make us angry, when they fly around us. When we think of these sentient beings, how they themselves have no freedom, how they are transmigrating under the force of karma and delusion and have to experience very heavy suffering until the karma finishes, there is nothing that we can do.

ANIMAL LIBERATION

I'll just give an example and then I'll finish. We used to liberate many, many animals, especially in Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong. This practice of saving life is slowly starting a little bit in the West but hasn't become popular yet. Of course, you save animals like the dogs, but what I mean is buying animals from the place where they are to be killed and freeing them, that one. In the West, people buy dogs from where they keep the dogs picked up from the street, or maybe somebody who can no longer keep their dog. What is the place? [*Student*: Pound.] A dog pound. Then, if nobody comes to pick them up, they get "put to sleep." It's called "sleep" but anyway, they are killed. After the injection they are going to sleep forever! They never wake up from the sleep. Anyway, I'm joking. So, because of that, many people like to save them and take care of them by themselves, choosing the dog sincerely, not just for their own comfort and happiness or for companionship. Many people do it sincerely for the happiness of the dog.

Anyway, liberating animals happens in Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan. I haven't yet been to mainland China, so I am not sure if it's there. Anyway, all three centers in Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan do a lot of practice. There is always somebody who takes responsibility for this job, a member or student, when people want to save the lives of animals, of birds, frogs and fish.

In Taiwan or Hong Kong—I'm not sure, my mind gets mixed up which place, but maybe in Hong Kong—they hire a whole truck and place very big fish in the water tank with oxygen, then they drive the truck to the water where the fish can be liberated. People come with all their family: children, father, mother, the whole family. All the children and all their friends also engage in the practice of liberating the animals. It's a very nice practice. On that day, you feel you have offered something, you have done something for the others, something good, something positive. I think that's to do with the attitude that that day is spent mainly for others. I'm not sure but I think that at other times doing jobs and all this could be mostly for yourself, but on that day, you are doing something for others.

Anyway, I wasn't going to say this, I wasn't going to tell some stories, to expand. Once, in the early times in Singapore, we bought a lot of snakes, many frogs and many different types of turtles, and frogs and pigeons and also fish, and a long eel in a box that they had to cut holes in so the eel could breathe. There were many, many frogs and maybe also some insects. Anyway, one time there were a few huge snakes bought from the shop where they are sold for food. It is quite difficult to recite mantras to them. With frogs and those other things, you can blow on them, but the snakes are kind of terrifying because they are in a sack, so it's kind of difficult. You can visualize the Buddha and purify them, but it is difficult to get close. I was thinking what to do. If you liberate them, they eat mice in the forest; but if you don't liberate them, they get killed. They are not vegetarian; they don't go to vegetarian restaurants! If you liberate them in the mountains, they eat mice and other things, especially frogs, but if you don't liberate them, they get killed. The whole body gets sliced while they're alive. This is what happens with them and they have an especially long body, so they suffer very much. So, what to do? Both ways cause suffering, both are problems. It's very difficult to decide what to do. Either they suffer or they create negative karma by killing others, then others have to suffer and they suffer by creating negative karma. I think they didn't get many mantras blown on them or blessed water sprinkled on them.

Normally, we bless many buckets of water, and many people and all the gurus chant Medicine Buddha mantras and OM MANI PADME HUM, then sprinkle the water over the birds, frogs and others. In this way, their negative karma gets purified and they have a chance to achieve a good rebirth by purifying negative karma. Most people know OM MANI PADME HUM and maybe the Medicine Buddha mantra, but there are many other powerful mantras. There are five very powerful mantras to recite. These are the same ones that you use for people when they are dying or have died, to liberate them. And among these mantras there is one mantra, Stainless Pinnacle, if you recite it seventy-three times if somebody has died, even if that being has been born in the hell realm, they will *definitely* get liberated from the lower realms. This mantra is very, very powerful. Even if people don't know this one, everybody usually recites many malas of the Compassionate Buddha mantra and the Medicine Buddha mantra in public, then they blow on the animals, purifying them.

CHENREZIG INITIATION MOTIVATION

Today is the particular initiation of Compassion Buddha. There are many different aspects of Compassion Buddha. This is from Rinjung Gyatsa, where there are hundreds of initiations of different deities. So it's called the Eleven-face Compassion Buddha, Five Deities. This somehow came out in the divination, according to my divination. So, tonight the Compassion Buddha initiation is this one.

To grant permission to do this practice, there are graduated actions to be done on the side of the lama: the sadhana, the self-generation, the front-generation, blessing the vase and so forth, as well as taking the initiation. Here, it also involves a self-initiation of this deity. The lama has to take this before granting the permission to the disciples to practice. Then there are the graduated actions to be done by the disciples, such as cleaning the mouth by washing with the blessed water, prostrations, distributing flowers and a mandala offering. Just before the mandala offering, there is a tormo offering, giving tormo to the interferers, the interferers who came not just from Nepal but from the United States and various countries. I'm joking! Anyway, giving tormo to the interferers who interfere with us granting and receiving the initiation, which is part of the graduated action of the guru, the lama who grants the permission to practice of the deity. During this time you can meditate on emptiness. Meditating on emptiness is the most powerful one for protection, to eliminate obstacles. Or you can meditate on compassion, generating compassion for sentient beings.

[Rinpoche chants, possibly giving the initiation]

Make a mandala offering, then think the place where you take the initiation is not an ordinary place. You can think of the Potala, the pure land of Compassion Buddha. It is the celestial mansion that is the appearance of Compassion Buddha's transcendental wisdom, and, by stopping impure appearances, you have to meditate on looking at the lama you take the initiation from, the permission to practice the deity, as the essence of Compassion Buddha. Not only that, also in the aspect of Compassion Buddha.

PROTECTING THE MIND

There are different practices regarding devoting to the virtuous friend. The lesser vehicle path, the Hinayana, doesn't mention visualizing the spiritual master we have established a Dharma

connection with as the virtuous friend. What is mentioned is to respect and obey them like the Buddha. In the Mahayana, in the Paramitayana, the way of devoting to the virtuous friend is by looking at them as the Buddha. In the Secret Mantra, the Vajrayana, in tantra, the way of devoting to the virtuous friend is not only looking at them as the Buddha but also visualizing them in the pure form, in the aspect of the deity. That method becomes more skillful, more profound than in the Paramitayana and in the lesser vehicle path. By visualizing as the pure appearance, we stop all impure appearances. Why? In tantra or Secret Mantra, the meaning of “mantra” doesn’t just mean reciting sounds. Usually when we do not know the meaning of mantra, we might think it just means something to pray, but it’s not just that. The chanting is not the meaning of “mantra.” The main meaning of “mantra” is the tantric path that is the quickest method or the quickest path that ceases the defilements, the gross and subtle mistakes of mind. It ceases the defilements quicker than what is explained in the Mahayana Sutrayana. Mantra is the whole tantric path to achieve enlightenment; it’s not just the words we chant, the words we recite. That is a very limited understanding of what “mantra” means. [Microphone makes a sound] I think this one is just so that you can hear my cough clearer than the teachings!

Protecting the mind, that is the actual meaning of “mantra.” Actually, the whole path to enlightenment protects the mind, if we relate it to the lamrim, from guru devotion, perfect human rebirth up to karma and the subjects of the four noble truths. And then there is the path of the higher capable being, bodhicitta, the six perfections and all the foundations of tantra—they are all means of protecting the mind. Protecting the mind is another meaning of “Dharma.” The nature of Dharma, the function of Dharma is that which protects us, which holds us up and protects us from falling down into the lower realms. So of course, that is the very foundation. That is the lowest level of Dharma. When we practice, when our mind and our actions become Dharma, it protects us from falling down into the lower realms. This is the definition of the Dharma that we practice. In Tibetan it is *chö*, which has two ways to be understood. One *chö* means “all existence.” Things that hold their own nature, that’s one definition of *chö*, holding its own nature. But here, when we say “practicing Dharma,” this means to hold us. This Dharma protects us from the suffering, it holds us from, for example, falling down into the lower suffering realms. Of course, it is not only that; it holds us from or protects us from samsara. There can be different levels of meaning of what our Dharma protects us from. However, that and the meaning of “mantra”—protecting the mind—are similar.

With guru devotion, when our mind is transformed into the pure mind of guru devotion, the lamrim protects us from the opposite, the non-devotional thought, the ordinary thought of seeing the virtuous friend as having mistakes, including having heresy and anger toward them. Guru devotion protects us from all these negative thoughts toward the virtuous friend, which are the heaviest negative karma, the heaviest obstacles to having realizations on the path to enlightenment. From this, by then meditating on the perfect human rebirth—its usefulness and how it is difficult to find again—and impermanence and death, the lower realms’ suffering and so forth, the conclusion is that, when our mind is transformed into the lamrim, whether it is the effortful experience or the effortless experience, the actual realization, this protects our mind from suffering.

During that time, it protects us from the attachment clinging to this life, the eight worldly concerns that make us to suffer, that always bring confusion into our life and obstacles to our mind, to our actions becoming pure Dharma. Even if we are not a practitioner, they bring so many problems in our life. The attachment clinging to this life is the main one that doesn’t allow us any satisfaction in life. Whatever different lifestyle we try to live, nothing gives satisfaction because of the eight worldly dharmas, the eight worldly concerns, this attachment clinging to this life. Nothing fundamentally changes when this abides all the time in our heart. No matter how much we change externally, whatever lifestyle we try, nothing gives us happiness, nothing gives satisfaction and peace in the heart.

When our mind and actions become Dharma, because we have transformed our mind into this lamrim meditation, we protect the mind from the attachment clinging to this life, this evil thought of the eight worldly dharmas: craving comfort and happiness, craving receiving material possessions, praise, and a good reputation, and disliking the opposite of these four. When these four don’t happen, we dislike it. These eight concerns are what stop us having peace in our heart, they always torture us. Attachment to these eight worldly concerns makes us suffer so much. Whatever different lifestyle we try to have, as long as no change is done to these, there are always the same problems; we are always tortured. When this has been our attitude in life, all the actions we do become nonvirtuous, because the thought is nonvirtuous, the attachment clinging to this life is nonvirtuous. That means the result is only rebirth in the lower realms; the result is only suffering.

When our mind becomes Dharma, all our actions become Dharma, and this protects us from these eight worldly concerns, the attachment clinging to this life, and from all the negative actions, the negative karma, and all the suffering results of the lower realms. Then, by meditating on bodhicitta, when our mind is transformed into bodhicitta, that protects us from the ego, the self-cherishing thought, which is the main obstacle to achieving enlightenment. The self-cherishing thought doesn't allow our actions to become the cause of enlightenment, so it is very harmful for all sentient beings because we are unable to develop our mind in the path to enlightenment to be able to benefit all sentient beings. This is also very harmful for us because the best thing in our life is to benefit others, to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings and the ego harms that. That means the ego is so very harmful to us. When we practice bodhicitta, it protects us from the ego, the self-cherishing thought where all the obstacles come from, where all the unfavorable conditions, all the problems come from.

When we meditate on the renunciation of samsara, that protects our mind. When the mind is transformed into renunciation, the detached mind that has aversion to samsara by seeing samsara as only in the nature of suffering, as unbearable, that protects us from the cause of samsara, attachment. When our attitude, our mind is transformed into the renunciation of samsara, our actions become the cause of liberation. That directs our life toward liberation, and the actions done out of that motivation also become the cause of liberation.

Similarly, with emptiness, when we meditate on the very nature of the phenomena, when we are looking at things that are empty as being empty, at that time, it protects us from the root of samsara, it protects us from whole of samsara, from all the oceans of suffering of samsara.

When we practice all this basic Dharma, it all has the meaning of protecting our mind. And the very beginning of protecting the mind is guru devotion. When we say that mantra protects the mind, we are specifically talking about how the tantric path protects the mind. After receiving a great initiation, we enter the door of tantra. The door of the tantric path is the great initiation.

THE POWER OF TANTRA

Practicing tantra means practicing pure thought and pure appearances. That means [visualizing our result time now], what we are going to achieve in the future when we become a buddha, the complete pure holy body of the buddha and the completely pure place, the deity's mandala,

which is the appearance of the deity's completely pure holy mind, the wisdom. We will achieve this in the future; this will happen in the future. Then, when we become enlightened, we do the completely purified actions of a buddha for sentient beings. When we become a buddha, beams of light are emitted from each pore that, even in a minute, a second, liberate and enlighten numberless sentient beings. Each beam emitting from each pore when we become a buddha, even in a minute or a second liberates inconceivable sentient beings from samsara. These are the completely purified actions, in the result time when we become a buddha.

Then there is the completely pure enjoyment, where everything appears the purest form, in the nature of the greatest bliss, because when we become a buddha we have completed both accumulations of merit, the merit of wisdom and the merit of method. As a result, all the mistakes of mind have ceased. As a result, whatever enjoyment appears to a buddha's senses is completely pure and in the nature of the greatest bliss. This is what we experience when we become a buddha.

These are the four completely purified results in tantra, and when we practice tantra, we visualize it is happening now. We visualize ourselves as a buddha—that buddha we want to achieve in the future we visualize as happening now, and we hold divine pride on that. It's the same with all the other three—what we are going to achieve in the future we visualize as happening now. We practice pure appearances like this. Looking at everything as pure, we only have pure thoughts; we don't have impure thoughts. No afflicted minds arise, no delusions arise because, depending on pure appearance, only pure thoughts arise. When we project impure appearance, then only impure thoughts arise. For example, on the basis of the inherently existent appearance, the projection of our ignorance, on top of that, we make up the label, "That person's way of thinking and talking is bad; that person's way of behaving is bad." Then we believe it and become angry. So, with all these impure thoughts, we create impure appearance, then on the basis of inherent existence, which is not there, after that we see all this as bad, as harmful—what the person thinks, what they say, how they behave—and then, after *that*, we become angry. We create this appearance of "bad," which makes anger arise. Because the seed of the anger is there, when we create the conditions with our superstitious mind, anger arises. We can see all these thoughts arising because we have impure appearances. Similarly here, with pure appearances, only pure thoughts arise.

Tantra is also based on emptiness. Without meditating on emptiness, there is no way to practice tantra. When the wisdom part is missing, it does not become Vajrayana. Whether we visualize ourselves as the deity or visualize the deity outside, or we visualize the mandala or offerings, if the awareness of emptiness is not there, it does not become Vajrayana. We are just practicing the method, we are not practicing wisdom. Just as a bird with one wing cannot fly, without wisdom, the tantra we are practicing—seeing ourselves as a deity, the mandala, all these things—even if we visualize them all as pure, if the awareness of emptiness is missing, we are visualizing all these things as inherently existent: the inherently existent deity, the inherently existent mandala, the inherently existent enjoyment, offerings—everything is inherently existent. That then becomes wrong practice. It does not even become the remedy to the root of samsara. Without the practice of emptiness, without wisdom, the danger is that our tantra meditation becomes the cause of samsara. If the awareness of emptiness is not there when we practice tantra, it does not become Vajrayana. The “vajra” in Vajrayana refers to the inseparability of these two things, method and wisdom.

In the Paramitayana or Bodhisattva Path, we practice method and wisdom separately. The mind that practices wisdom and the mind that practices method are two separate minds. That is the reason it takes a long time to achieve enlightenment within Sutrayana, three countless great eons. There is no method mentioned where one mind practices both method and wisdom. But tantra uses greater skill, where one mind practices both method and wisdom together. This more skilled method allows us to achieve enlightenment within one life.

We visualize the completely purified holy body of the deity. That is the mind practicing method. Then, with the same mind, at the same time, we simultaneously have the understanding that this deity’s holy body doesn’t have inherent existence. There may be the appearance of inherent existence but we understand at the same time that there’s no inherent existence. Because we are not yet enlightened, there’s the appearance of inherent existence as we visualize the deity’s holy body, but we are aware that this is not true. There is the understanding that the aspect of the deity’s holy body totally lacks inherent existence. This is one mind practicing method and wisdom together. Then it becomes Vajrayana, the “vajra,” the inseparability of the two, method and wisdom. Here, this yoga, this mind concentrating on the deity’s holy body while at the same time understanding that the aspect of this deity’s holy body lacks inherent existence, this becomes Vajrayana.

When we do this meditation that focuses on the deity's holy body in this way, we are continuously creating the cause of that buddha's holy body, the rupakaya. And the mind that is simultaneously practicing wisdom, understanding the deity's holy body is not inherently existent, we are continuously creating the cause of the buddha's holy mind, the dharmakaya. So, at the same time, we are creating the cause of the dharmakaya and the rupakaya, which is the ultimate goal to be achieved. When our mind becomes Vajrayana, we are continuously creating the cause of those two. The last realization is the ultimate goal to be achieved.

Then, in the highest tantra, it continuously becomes the preparation to actualize the completion path, the method and wisdom, the clear light and illusory body, then, the unification of no more learning, which is the ultimate goal. When we visualize the mandala, even when we are making offerings, the perfect way to do the meditation is supposed to be the same, with the mind focused on the offerings and that same mind understanding that the offerings are not inherently existent. This is to introduce the details, but then, of course, you need to receive the great initiation, otherwise it cannot really be explained because there is the danger of revealing the secrecy, which breaks the tantric vow, the samaya.

Before a great initiation is done, there can be some introduction to tantra, because the people are definitely going to practice tantra. So, I think, even though they haven't actually taken a great initiation, they have decided to do the practice and they are ready. The reason some of the introductions are given might be that. Otherwise, generally, some introduction is given just before the great initiation is granted.

So, the meaning of "mantra," just once more before we talk on that. When we practice like this, if we are looking at everything as pure and if our mind is perfectly qualified with method and wisdom, this is a much more skillful meditation on the path than a Sutrayana meditation. It has great power. Within a moment, within a second, we purify eons of negative karma. For example, just visualizing the mandala of the deity purifies ten million eons of negative karma. When we visualize the deity, it is an unbelievably powerful way to purify, the quickest way to purify the defilements, the negative karmas, and not only that, to collect inconceivable merit. When we become a buddha and send beams to sentient beings, purifying them, this collects more merit than the *tonglen* practice in the Sutrayana, where we take others' suffering and give them all our happiness and merit. We collect much more extensive merit by practicing tantra. This is how tantra becomes the quick path to enlightenment, how we can achieve enlightenment within one

life, or even more quickly, like in highest tantra, where we can become enlightened within a few years in a brief lifetime of degenerate times.

Because there is even greater skill in highest tantra, this is what I have just introduced, but it is the same with the lower tantras. As I have mentioned, the greatest skill is in highest tantra. To cease all the gross and subtle delusions and to actualize the extremely subtle mind, we need to achieve enlightenment. We are able to do that within a few years in this brief lifetime of degenerate times, without the need to have a long life of a hundred thousand years [such as in the lower tantras]. This very subtle inseparability of method and wisdom is not revealed in the lower tantras, in Kriya Tantra, Charya Tantra and Yoga Tantra, only in highest tantra. Therefore, the quickest way to achieve enlightenment is by practicing highest tantra because only this has this method. Without ceasing the gross and subtle delusions, we cannot achieve full enlightenment, we cannot achieve the dharmakaya. This extremely subtle mind, called the clear light, is the only direct cause to achieve enlightenment, the dharmakaya.

Even the tenth bhumi bodhisattvas who have never practiced tantra before and who are about to achieve enlightenment, before achieving enlightenment, they have to receive an initiation. The buddhas initiate them and, by practicing tantra with the support of the wisdom mother, they are only then able to cease the gross minds, ceasing the subtle dualistic view, actualizing the extremely subtle mind of the clear light and achieving enlightenment. That is the only way they are able to achieve enlightenment.

So, the meaning of mantra here refers to protecting the mind from ordinary appearance, ordinary thoughts. That is the explanation of the meaning of mantra relating to the generation stage, the first stage. Then, with the completion stage, we cease the ordinary mind and the ordinary wind by actualizing the completion path and we achieve the clear light and illusory body and the union of these.

Therefore, the meaning of “mantra,” on the basis of the lamrim, means the root, guru devotion, and then the three principal aspects of the path. And then there is the meaning of mantra as it is contained in the specific tantric path. Even though the whole basic lamrim is to protect the mind, here “mantra” specifically refers to this one, the tantric path.

Anyway, this side-talk happened again.

THE DISADVANTAGES OF THE SELF-CHERISHING MIND

One reason to visualize the place [transformed] into the mandala and the lama who gives the initiation in the aspect of deity is according to the guru yoga practice of tantra. So now, visualize the essence, the Thousand-arm, Thousand-eye Compassionate Buddha, also in that aspect and offer the mandala.

[Students chant the mandala offering]

Death is definite to happen and when it will happen is uncertain. Therefore, before the death happens, it is not sufficient to be able to achieve a god or human rebirth in the next life, without being reborn in the lower realms after this life. It is not even sufficient to achieve liberation from samsara for ourselves. That is still not the real meaning of life. Whatever suffering we experience in samsara is nothing new; it's not the first time. Whatever problems we have experienced are not for the first time. Even though we think it is the first time, we have experienced them all numberless times before. Whatever pleasure we have experienced is nothing new; we have experienced each pleasure numberless times before. However, all the pleasures of samsara are like last night's dream.

As I mentioned in the past, this samsaric pleasure, that feeling that is only suffering, is merely labelled by our mind "pleasure." Then also, seeking happiness for ourselves is nothing special because even the tiniest insect, that we can only see through a microscope, seeks the happiness of this life and works for their own happiness. So, that is nothing special. That attitude does not become the special quality of a human being.

On top of that, cherishing the I is the source of all suffering. Whenever we cherish the I, we open the door for all the suffering in our daily life. In our daily life, whenever we cherish others, it opens the door for all the happiness, including enlightenment, and, not only that, for us to enlighten all sentient beings. From cherishing others and our bodhicitta comes enlightenment, and then we can enlighten all sentient beings. By cherishing the I, there is no space in our mind for bodhicitta. All our actions become the cause of samsara. Due to the self-cherishing thought, attachment clinging to this life arises. Our actions do not become Dharma. Even if we try to practice Dharma, by meditating or reciting something, it doesn't become Dharma because of this

attachment clinging to this life. Therefore, this ego makes our life empty, wasted. And not only wasted, but all our actions become nonvirtuous, the cause of the lower realms.

Not only does the self-cherishing thought use this precious human life to create the cause of those heaviest sufferings, the heat and cold of the hell realms, but also, because self-cherishing abides in our heart, there is attachment to samsara, to samsaric perfections. Therefore, even if we try to practice Dharma, our actions do not become the cause of liberation. So again the self-cherishing thought makes our life empty, wasted. And because of self-cherishing there is no space in our mind for bodhicitta. So, the self-cherishing doesn't allow our actions to become the cause of enlightenment. Enlightenment is the highest quality, the cessation of all the mistakes of the mind and the completion of all the realizations. If our actions are unable to become the cause to achieve this, there is no greater loss. It is the ego, the self-cherishing thought, that causes this greatest loss in life.

This ego, this self-cherishing thought, makes our life empty. It makes us suffer, causing confusion all the time. When we see people who have a greater understanding of Dharma or who are better, with a more beautiful body or more wealth, whatever it is, we suffer from jealousy. Or when we meet somebody is comparatively lower than us, we feel pride. Not only that, even when we try to meditate, due to ego attachment, delusions arise constantly and, even for a minute, even for the duration of one mala of OM MANI PADME HUM, we cannot concentrate. Because of ego, all the other delusions arise, stopping us from meditating, from concentrating.

When we try to take vows, our ego stops us. It makes us afraid of taking them. And even if we do take them, because of ego and those other delusions such as attachment, we break the vows; we are unable to continue with morality. And ego blocks us from developing compassion for others, loving kindness for others; it doesn't allow us to generate loving kindness and compassion.

Because of ego, even if we have found a guru, even one like the Compassionate Buddha, Manjushri or Shakyamuni Buddha, even if we have found a perfectly qualified Mahayana guru, we are unable to devote correctly. Then, we receive all the eight shortcomings of not devoting correctly to the guru, thus creating so many of the heaviest obstacles to having realizations of the path. We experience many problems; nothing happens, no realizations, and life gets worse and worse, more and more messy. Then, what happens in our daily life reflects on our future lives.

All these things are due to ego. Because of ego, we are unable to give up our life to follow the advice of the virtuous friend or to correctly devote to them. Instead of being under the guidance of the guru, we let ourselves be under the control of ego. All these problems, all these eight shortcomings are also caused by the ego. Whatever we do, even when we try to do those different practices, our ego disturbs us; it interferes. It is what makes it difficult to practice Dharma, what makes it difficult to continue to practice, what makes it unsuccessful. Ego is what makes us unable to complete the practice. All these problems come from ego, from cherishing the I, so what is called the “I” is to be renounced forever.

As His Holiness the Dalai Lama often says, the best way to cherish ourselves is to cherish others. We should cherish others if we want to be intelligently selfish. I don’t remember exactly the Tibetan words His Holiness used, but it sort of means “intelligent.” The best way of cherishing the I is cherishing others, because this is the reality and this is the evolution of happiness.

We don’t know this. For example, when people in the West hear of “renouncing the self,” when they are not familiar with the lamrim and bodhicitta practice, they interpret it as abandoning yourself, as not protecting yourself, not looking after yourself. They misinterpret Tibetan Buddhism, thinking it says that anything good that happens to us is somehow bad. They interpret it that way, as completely ignoring the I. This comes from a lack of understanding, a lack of experience. They have not practiced bodhicitta, they have not practiced a good heart. They have not seen how, by cherishing others instead of ourselves, by renouncing ourselves instead of others, so many emotional problems are solved, so much happiness and peace is actualized. They do not see the fulfilment we can achieve in life by doing this. Either they have not practiced or they have but they have not analyzed, so they don’t know all the benefits. Because of that, they have a totally wrong interpretation. Actually, cherishing others, living our life for others is the best way to fulfil all our wishes, all the happiness, up to the highest happiness, including enlightenment. Anyway, due to lack of experience, lack of knowledge, they think like that.

Just to use the simple example, a simple experience of daily life, instead of going very deeply into the subject, when we have a relationship problem, something very painful or we are dissatisfied and unhappy with our relationship, because we cherish the I so much, we only think of *my* happiness. As I mentioned before, we can’t achieve satisfaction with samsaric perfections,

samsaric happiness. Satisfaction can only come through practicing Dharma, which means changing our mind, practicing renunciation, renouncing attachment. Only renouncing attachment, even renouncing attachment to this life, only when we practice this *real* Dharma will we have satisfaction, not from external things.

THE ADVANTAGES OF BODHICITTA

As I was saying, when we have these kinds of problems, when we feel we don't have enough, no matter how much wealth we have, when there is so much fear and worry, when the ego is unable to achieve what it wants and we are so unhappy and dissatisfied, suddenly, while we are experiencing these problems, we change our attitude and think, "My life is for others. I am here for others to obtain happiness, to cause happiness for others." The minute we think of others, the minute others come in our heart instead of only the I, suddenly there is peace and happiness in our heart. Suddenly our heart is restful. There is relaxation, inner rest, peace, enjoyment. When we change our attitude, suddenly we find enjoyment and fulfilment in our life.

With this change of attitude, we find fulfilment in the heart, which was empty until now. Previously, when we only cherished the I, there was no enjoyment in life, only pain, only depression, only worry, only fear, only all that anxiety. Suddenly there is relaxation when we think, "I am here for others. The purpose of my life is for others." Suddenly the tension at the heart is released; the uptight feeling is gone. Then, we feel close even to unknown people in the street, in the shops and restaurants, people who are in the cars, everybody. With this attitude, we feel close to them and we feel that they are close to us. We don't feel there is a gap, we don't feel a distance between us and others. When we generate a good heart, loving kindness like this, we feel them in our heart.

If we can use this daily, when we practice like this, great joy or happiness comes in our heart, in our life. Using this example, we can understand that cherishing I is mistaken, it is wrong. Cherishing others is the proper way; it is the real solution to achieve happiness in life. It might be difficult to understand the deep reasons explained in the teachings, but just the day to day, simple examples of the benefits we can experience, this can wake up the mind from this sleep, from the ignorance that completely wrongly interprets the cause of happiness, cherishing the I instead of cherishing others.

If we cherish the I we can't achieve all the realizations of the Mahayana path, we can't cease all the mistakes of mind and complete all the qualities, we can't achieve enlightenment. And we can't enlighten all sentient beings. If we cherish others, all these things happen. We complete the works for the self, we complete the works for all other sentient beings. Cherishing others is the source of all the three times' happiness; it opens the door for all the happiness. All our happiness of the past, present and future comes from bodhicitta. And bodhicitta comes from great compassion. Great compassion is generated by depending on the existence of suffering sentient beings. So, all our three times' happiness, all our past, present and future happiness, is received by depending on the kindness of each sentient being. Even the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha that we pray to in order to purify negative karma and collect merit, even they came from sentient beings, even they happened due to the existence of suffering sentient beings, due to kindness of sentient beings. Therefore, sentient beings are the most precious field; sentient beings are more precious than the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in our life.

When we generate bodhicitta, all sentient beings receive happiness from our bodhicitta. If we, this one person, have bodhicitta, all sentient beings receive happiness from our bodhicitta. The numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, gods, demigods and human beings all become enlightened, if we have bodhicitta. We can enlighten all those numberless sentient beings. Like that, we can give all the happiness to all sentient beings. For this reason, having bodhicitta in our heart becomes the most urgent, the most important thing. Without the delay of even a second, we have to have bodhicitta. It becomes the most urgent, unbelievable need for the numberless other sentient beings, for the happiness of numberless other sentient beings. Without that, we cannot offer numberless other sentient beings all the temporal and ultimate happiness.

Then the other thing is, as I was just saying, bodhicitta is the source of the numberless sentient beings' happiness and the source of all of our own past, present and future happiness. Therefore in our life there is nobody to cherish other than sentient beings. Think, "In my life, there is nobody to cherish other than sentient beings. In my life, there is nobody to work for other than sentient beings. What the sentient beings want is happiness and what they do not want is suffering, therefore I must free them from all suffering and the cause of sufferings and lead them to the happiness, especially the happiness of full enlightenment. I must do this by myself *alone*. This work for others should be done by myself *alone*." It is very important when we meditate on bodhicitta that we make this strong determination, to think precisely like this, to do this *alone*, to take this responsibility. Think, "To achieve this, first I must achieve enlightenment. For that

reason, I need to actualize bodhicitta and the Mahayana path. Bodhicitta is the door of the Mahayana path and the root of bodhicitta is great compassion, therefore I need to receive the blessing of a special deity in order to have this realization. Therefore, because Compassion Buddha is the special deity for that, to have this realization of great compassion, loving kindness and bodhicitta, I am going to take the permission to practice Compassion Buddha.”

Then, we will also do Vajrasattva to purify all the obstacles.

Do you want to go for *pipi*?

WE MUST CREATE EVEN THE SMALLEST POSITIVE KARMA

Killing doesn't happen every day. Even the intention to kill doesn't happen every day, and telling lies, sexual misconduct or stealing doesn't happen every day, But gossiping! Gossiping can possibly happen every day! Nonvirtuous gossiping, as well as the three negative karmas of the mind. For instance, when we go shopping and see so many objects to buy, covetousness arises; we become attached and want to have them. When we go shopping, we collect so much covetousness, which is a nonvirtuous mental action.

Therefore, we need the practice of the three principal aspects of the path—renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness—and not only in the meditation room. It's like a dress we wear all the time. I mean, generally speaking! I mean, there are many times we don't wear a particular dress, but the lamrim, the three principal aspects of the path, is something that we need all the time. When we go for shopping or do business, if there is no bodhicitta, if there is no right view, emptiness, if there is also no renunciation, then there is only the opposite. Attachment is the opposite of renunciation, so there is a possibility of collecting many of the ten nonvirtues. But, if there is renunciation while we are shopping, and if we have bodhicitta, thinking that we are shopping to benefit others, that we are taking care of our body so we can serve others, if we are shopping with this thought of benefiting others, then there's no danger.

If we are also shopping or doing business with the meditation of the right view, there is also no danger of creating negative karma. We only purify negative karma while we are shopping by looking at everything as like an illusion. We are like an illusion and everything is like an illusion. Instead of saying, “like an illusion,” we can simply say “an illusion,” which means we relate our

hallucinated view of things being inherently existent—the inherently existent I, the inherently existent material, the inherently existent shop, the inherently existent money. Then there is no need to say “like,” we can just say “an illusion”—an illusory me with illusory money buying illusory food from illusory people. So, if we are just referring to the conventional truth that exists, we have to say, “like an illusion,” or like a dream. It is more precise, more correct like that. This is another way of meditating. The conclusion is that everything is empty. In this way, attachment does not arise, so we have no danger of collecting the negative karma of covetousness.

The other one is renunciation. If we buy things with the thought of impermanence and death—maybe the only thing we think of is impermanence and death—we will save so much money! Thinking of impermanence and death is the best way of saving money, the best way of investing money. Thinking of impermanence and death, that death can happen at any time while we are shopping, also helps us to not have attachment, and so that doesn’t become the cause of creating the negative karma of covetousness.

Which negative karma we collect most from the ten nonvirtues basically depends on the individual person. Generally, from the ten nonvirtuous actions, we might think that we don’t create *any* of those negative karmas, but if we analyze we can find some happen many times a day. Not only that, if we check our motivation from morning to night, for twenty-four hours—if we check what motivation we get up with, we dress with, we eat breakfast with, and all the way through the day, what motivation we do our job with, we talk to people with, we eat dinner with, we go to sleep with—if we analyze like this, I’m sure we would find that almost everything is done with attachment. The motivation is attachment clinging to this life. Then, almost everything becomes negative karma. Whatever we do in each twenty-four hours becomes negative karma. Negative karma doesn’t have to be killing somebody. Then, the result is only a suffering rebirth in the lower realms. So now here you can understand.

On the basis of this, we can also see that karma is definite to bring its own result. No matter how many eons, it will definitely bring its own result. And it is expandable. From one negative karma, we experience the suffering result so many times; we experience it for so many years in one life or for so many lifetimes—hundreds of thousands of lifetimes—because karma is expandable.

Therefore, it is said in the teachings, even with a small negative karma we should not think, “This is so small.” We should never be careless; we must abandon even a very small negative karma. And we must practice even a small good karma; we must collect even a small merit. In every twenty-four hours of our life, we must take any opportunity to collect merit, by knowing the lamrim teachings, by doing all the preliminary practices, like rejoicing, making charity to other sentient beings and to the buddhas, the guru, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. We must use *every* single opportunity in our daily life to collect merit, even a very small merit. We must use any opportunity to collect merit, by knowing all the practices, such as the lamrim practice.

With karma, without creating the cause the result cannot be experienced. That means we have so much freedom. Because we won’t experience a suffering result if we haven’t created the cause, we have so much freedom. If it were not like that, if it were not dependent on us creating the cause, we would have no choice, we would have no freedom. We would just have to experience the suffering at any time without any freedom at all. But because it is dependent on causes, if we don’t create the cause, we don’t experience the result. Therefore, by knowing karma, we have so much freedom to not experience suffering. It’s wrong understanding to think that the Buddha’s teachings on karma mean we have no freedom. It is completely the other way around. By knowing karma we know what to do. We know how to finish suffering, how to not experience suffering. And that is by not creating the cause of suffering. Then, because of karma, the cause that has been created can never be lost. That is very good. Because of all the merit that we have collected, the result of happiness will never be lost; we will *definitely* achieve it. For all these reasons, the Vajrasattva practice becomes extremely important in our daily life. Besides the retreat, this daily practice of Vajrasattva becomes so important.

Now, please make a mandala offering to thank. A short mandala.

[End of teachings]