

# KOPAN COURSE NO. 50

## LAMRIM TEACHINGS FROM KOPAN 2017

BY

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LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE

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# Lecture 1: The Essence of Dharma

December 5, 2017

## **YOU ARE HERE TO BRING HAPPINESS TO EVERY BEING**

First, I will mention this. Our kind, compassionate Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, who has achieved omniscience, who completed the potential of the mind, was the same as us before. He had all the attachment, all the ignorance, all the anger, all the pride and all the delusions, and the self-cherishing thought, and he suffered in samsara, which is without beginning. He was the same as us but he changed his mind, his attitude, from cherishing the I into cherishing others.

“Others” doesn’t mean only mother, father, sister, brother, boyfriend, girlfriend; it means all the numberless sentient beings: the numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts—who, due to past karma in another life, miserliness, can’t find a mark of water on the ground or a spoonful of food for ten thousand years—it means all the animals and humans. Every single hell being, every single hungry ghost, every single animal living in oceans, the large ones like mountains and the small ones—I was told their name but I don’t remember. Every animal under the earth, in the grass—when we walk in dry grass, there are tiny flies that jump away at each step—in the forests, in the bushes. And not only in this world, but in the numberless universes that have been mentioned, not only by the Buddha but also by Western scientists. There are numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals in numberless universes, and numberless human beings. There are numberless universes, so numberless human beings, gods and demigods.

Like the Buddha did, we have to let go of the I and cherish the numberless sentient beings, not only somebody who loves us, who worships us, who likes us, even those who don’t worship us, who don’t like us. We cannot renounce them, not like that, not like most people running a country. We have to bring happiness to every being, we have to have compassion for everybody, for those who like us and those who don’t like us. The Buddha has compassion for everybody. Even if somebody cuts one side of his body to pieces slowly, slowly, and somebody else puts perfume on the other side, he has similar compassion for both of them. At least we have to have the wish like that to benefit the numberless others.

Then, of course, we need to have perfect power, so in every second we can read the minds of the numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, gods, and demigods. Seeing their minds directly, we can see everyone’s suffering level of mind, their intelligence and needs, and we

can know the different methods to free them from suffering and problems. Then we can gradually bring them to higher and higher happiness, temporary happiness and liberation from the oceans of samsaric sufferings forever, not only for a few days, a few years, a few lifetimes, but forever. Then we are able to bring them to peerless happiness, the total cessation of obscurations and the completion of realizations—enlightenment, buddhahood.

### ***All problems come from self-cherishing***

The word “buddhahood” comes from Sanskrit. In Tibetan it is *sang gye*. The translation is “the total cessation of obscurations—gross and subtle—and the completion of realizations.” We change the mind, the attitude; we let go of the I where all the problems and suffering come from. By renouncing the I, we cherish others; we live for others. Even in a couple, if one partner renounces the other, it brings so many problems in life. Even if they remain together physically, they always fight; there are many problems, and then they divorce. And divorce may not just happen once. Afterwards they might meet somebody else and think that this new person will help their happiness, and then another relationship and another divorce, on and on, like reciting OM MANI PADME HUM over and over again. Married in the morning, separated in the evening.

The family can be like this; a government running a country can be like this, with attachment, anger, ignorance, the self-cherishing thought. Even without relating to tantra, just with the basics, when you have these delusions, how can you run a country? With the self-cherishing thought, it is always “I,” “my power,” “my happiness,” “my this,” “my this,” all the time, day and night. Everything you do is for your power, for your happiness. The population’s happiness doesn’t come first.

There are good-hearted leaders, and, when that happens, there is great peace in the country, but mostly they are like that, because the education is missing. During their life, from childhood, primary school, high school, university, college, that vital education was missing. Instead, they were especially taught to develop the self-cherishing thought in the world and, like that, ignorance, anger and attachment developed. There was no education to bring peace in their heart, to pacify the self-cherishing thought, where all the problems come from.

When people run a country with that thought, what they think about first is *their* power, *their* happiness. Everything they do is for that. That is their main aim, not the happiness of the people. That is why there are so many problems in the world, in places such as Syria. The population doesn’t

like the leader and they fight against him and many innocent, non-political people die. Hundreds and thousands die trying to escape. They try to cross the ocean to another country but their boat sinks. Even if they travel for months and get to another country, they are not accepted so they have to travel to another country. There are so many problems, so much suffering.

***Unless you exchange self for others you cannot attain enlightenment***

I was talking about the Buddha's qualities. The Buddha changed his mind from self-cherishing into cherishing others, who are numberless in each realm. Can you imagine? He didn't leave out one ant, one fishing worm. Cherishing others is where all happiness arises from, all temporary and ultimate happiness, all the realizations of the path. Cherishing the I is where all the problems arise from.

For example, in the market, in the city, in the road, we see people whose attitude is so selfish. They only think to achieve the happiness of the I. "When can I be happy?" is their mantra, like the way Himalayan people or Tibetans constantly recite OM MANI PADME HUM, not only in the morning but even while they are walking, in the shop, and so forth. Because of cherishing the I so much, they constantly think, "When can I be happy?" The Buddha cherished all the numberless living beings, but they just cherish themselves. Then, so many problems come in their life. So many things don't succeed; so many things don't happen because of the self-cherishing thought.

Venerable Ailsa has already gone through a lot of the lamrim subjects. In *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* the great bodhisattva Shantideva said,

If I do not actually exchange my happiness  
For the suffering of others,  
I shall not attain the state of buddhahood  
And even in cyclic existence shall have no joy.<sup>1</sup>

As I have said, the Buddha let go of the I, the source of all the sufferings and problems, and cherished all others, the source of all happiness up to enlightenment. It doesn't just bring your own happiness but, with that purest attitude of cherishing others, you can bring happiness to numberless sentient beings, from temporary happiness up to enlightenment.

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<sup>1</sup> Shantideva, ch. 8, v. 131. Translated by Stephen Batchelor. 2011. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.

Now and in the future, while you are in samsara, there is no happiness. Leave aside the happiness of future lives, even the works of this life cannot succeed. The self-cherishing thought is the main problem. It brings so many problems in life. Even your wishes to achieve happiness for this life can't happen. Shantideva said,

Thus whoever wants to quickly afford protection  
To both the self and other beings  
Should practice that holy secret:  
The exchanging of self for others.<sup>2</sup>

If you want to help yourself first and then help others, what can you do? Here Shantideva gave the answer. Many people have the thought, "I want to help others," such as working in a school, or with deformed people, or looking after old people. Many people have the thought to look after others, to do things like that to guide or help them. Whoever wants to quickly guide themselves and others should do the practice of exchanging the self for others. That is the answer! That is what is usually missing. You don't get that education in primary school, or university. Of course, even if it is not as profound as the Dharma, the advice is generally to be a good human being, to care for others, to think of others' happiness instead of your own. In your daily life you should keep others' happiness in your mind. It all depends on what realization, how much power you have, but you should do whatever you can.

Here, I'm not talking about learning the Buddhadharma, the lamrim, nothing deep like that. But even just to be a good human being, that thought is not emphasized. That isn't the main education. That is why the world has become like boiling water, with so much hate and fighting. It has physically become like that, with so much suffering, because mentally it is like that.

Shantideva has given the method. This is what you do if you want to look after yourself; this is what you do if you want to help others. Whatever it is, looking after children or old people, the most important practice is to change your mind from cherishing the I into cherishing others. From there, loving kindness comes, compassion comes, all the positive minds come. Then, you bring happiness to others. It becomes giving only happiness to the numberless others in this world. You do that according to your capacity. Shantideva's answer is exchanging oneself for others. That is the answer if you want to help this world.

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<sup>2</sup> Ch. 8, v. 120.

This world is small. “Others” means the numberless sentient beings in the six realms, who are unenlightened, suffering, obscured. That is the one answer. If the leader of the country has that attitude, even a simple good heart, if they are a good human being, and especially if they can exchange themselves for others—the ultimate good heart—what they mainly think of is the happiness of the population. In that way, the problems of the people of the country become less and less and the people achieve so much happiness. They get so much happiness from this one person who has the ultimate good heart.

I have a guru, Kyabje Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche, who in Tibet was His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s helper in the very extensive debating subjects of Buddhist philosophy. Actually, they are condensed into the lamrim but, as they are studied and debated in the great universities of Sera Je, Sera Mey, Ganden Shartse and Jangtse, Drepung Loseling and Gomang, they are very expansive. Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche debated philosophy with His Holiness to help him. Those who were not his gurus but who helped His Holiness in that way are called “tsenshab.” In India Kyabje Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche became His Holiness’ guru when His Holiness took a commentary on Lama Atisha’s *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* and other teachings.

Rinpoche said there was a queen in England who was a holy being. I don’t know the name of the queen.<sup>3</sup> During her time, not only England but the countries around had great peace. Rinpoche went to see her diamond walking stick in a museum in France. Rinpoche said that she was a manifestation of Palden Lhamo, and, a long time ago, a manifestation of Tara or Sarasvati, in Buddhism the goddess of wisdom, the protector of the Tibetan government and His Holiness and many high lamas, the embodiment of that. Rinpoche said there was great peace in England and in many other countries at that time. Generally, wherever there is a bodhisattva who has the ultimate good heart, the realization of bodhicitta, there is so much peace due to the blessing of the holy mind, due to bodhicitta. Wherever there is a bodhisattva, the rains come at the right time, things grow well, and there is a lot of peace in that country. That is very common.

In Taiwan there was a Chinese master, a monk, who came from China, I don’t know his name. There were some bone relics of his that his disciple, an abbess, gave to me. He was a great bodhisattva; he had let go of the I and cherished numberless sentient beings. Because Kaohsiung had not had rain for so many years, nothing grew there, but wherever he walked, because of his bodhicitta, rain came and the grass grew. For not only the people and animals but even for the environment there is amazing benefit from that one being who has the holy mind of bodhicitta.

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<sup>3</sup> In other teachings Rinpoche has said that it was Queen Victoria.

In his monastery I saw his statue and his guru's statue. The second abbess, who has a monastery and nunnery there, is highly respected in Taiwan. Every day people come in buses to get blessings. She is very much into keeping pure morality; that is her practice. She is the one who helped our college, Sera Je. There were four thousand monks at one time. I tried to offer food to them, dinner at first then gradually adding lunch and breakfast. She helped, giving a few hundred thousand, a few lakhs, of dollars, perhaps more than for the Maitreya Project.

When I went there once, the nuns were doing prostrations, prostrating to each word of the *Golden Light Sutra*. In the Kangyur, the Buddha's teachings, there are elaborate, middle and short versions of the *Golden Light Sutra*, and the nuns were doing prostration to each word. They all had the book and were doing prostrations. When I went there the second time, they had already finished doing prostrations to each word twice and were doing it for a third time. She very much led her disciples to do that.

There was another nun who was perhaps a little bit more famous but she was more into schools and hospitals. When I was there I didn't see much in terms of practice, like the other nun, but more in terms of social service. She served the great bodhisattva monk, her teacher who came from China. What I heard was that she was actually the mother of that great bodhisattva monk in a past life. That is very possible.

In Shantideva's verse he said we should "practice that holy secret." One explanation is that exchanging oneself for others is a very brave bodhisattva's practice, so we practice it secretly. Bodhisattvas of lower intelligence are not brave enough to practice this, so we should keep it secret from them. That is one explanation, but I think it also means we don't expose the practice. We don't publicize it, like in the West, "I'm a great practitioner! I have this realization!" to make a billion dollars, or a reputation, or to have many millions of disciples. We keep the practice of exchanging oneself for others quiet, otherwise there could be pride. Without naming it, without exposing it much outside, we practice it quietly. I think that is one way to understand the way to practice.

### ***Happiness and suffering come from the mind***

This shows the difference from the attitude of the rest of the world, the attitude of those who run the government and the population. But now you are here, what you are doing is totally different; it is totally opposite to what the people in the rest of the world do. There are two things to understand.

In *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* Shantideva said,

Whatever joy there is in this world  
All comes from desiring others to be happy,  
And whatever suffering there is in this world  
All comes from desiring myself to be happy.

What need is there to say more?  
The childish work only for their own benefit,  
The buddhas work for the benefit of others.  
Just look at the difference between them!<sup>4</sup>

That is very good to think about. However much happiness there is in the world—the happiness of this life, of the lives after this, ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara, enlightenment, all happiness—all came from... Actually, I think I'll first start with this. However much suffering there is in the world, however many problems—yours and others, the government, the population, global, whatever—all comes from the mind. It all comes from wishing happiness for ourselves. It is that mind, the self-cherishing thought, wishing happiness just for ourselves. All problems come from that. That includes global problems; they all come from the mind, from the collective negative karma people have collected together.

Karma is mind. It is not body; it is mind. So, even global problems come from the mind. That is something that is not taught and learned in the world. That is not what most people think. They think problems come from outside. And, similarly, whatever joy and happiness there is in this world come from wishing others to be happy.

Shantideva then asks us to compare the two, the childish and the buddhas. A child here doesn't mean a small baby but we who are mentally childish. We can be a thousand years old or two but the mind is the same. It is not different from an animal's. The mind is not different from an ant's, not different from a worm's or a bird's, in that we are only thinking of our own happiness. In that, our mind is not different from a banana slug's. I don't know if everybody knows the banana slug. In Dharamsala when there is a lot of rain and fog, there are always many banana slugs outside. If you are not careful you step on them and kill them. Our mind is no different from that. "The childish work only for their own benefit." We are only thinking of our happiness. That is why such an

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<sup>4</sup> Ch. 8, vv. 129–30.

undeveloped mind is called childish. Somebody who cherishes the I—it could be an animal, it could be an insect, it could be human being, a millionaire, a billionaire, a zillionaire, a beggar—whatever the outside difference doesn't matter, inside the mind is not different.

On the other hand, buddhas work only for the welfare of others. “Others” are numberless; nobody is left out, not only people, even animals. No matter how tiny, nobody is left out. It doesn't mean they only work for their relatives and friends. As Shantideva said, just look at the difference between the buddhas and us.

The Buddha was the same as us but then he changed his attitude. He not only became enlightened, ceasing all obscurations and achieving all realizations, but he has been able to already enlighten numberless sentient beings. He is enlightening numberless sentient beings now and he will enlighten numberless sentient beings in the future. So, look at the difference between the childish who work for the self and the buddhas who work for others.

How the majority of the people in the world live is exactly the same as a child. There is no real education at school, from primary school up to college, about what is needed, so everybody lives with the self-cherishing thought. Because they develop the self-cherishing thought as much as possible, there are so many problems. Between the leaders and the population there is so much suffering. In many countries there is no peace, no happiness, just suffering.

For the rest of the world, developing the self-cherishing thought, ignorance, anger and attachment is so important. The immediate thing is attachment. But now, you are coming here to subdue the mind. Here, you meditate on the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought and the benefits of cherishing others, the ultimate good heart. That is the most important meditation, the most important Dharma practice. It is unbelievable, unbelievable. From your ultimate good heart cherishing others, you not only achieve temporary happiness—this life's happiness and future lives' happiness—while you are in samsara, but also ultimate happiness, not just liberation from samsara forever but also peerless happiness, buddhahood, the total cessation of obscurations and completion of realizations. I'm forgetting what I'm talking about. What did I say?

*Student:* You said we are coming here to subdue the mind.

*Rinpoche:* Did I say to subdue the mind? That is the ultimate; that is what you need to learn, to meditate on, to practice. When your mind becomes that, you achieve all the happiness up to enlightenment. That is by the way. Then, as I mentioned before, you can bring the numberless

others in the six realms temporary and ultimate happiness, up to enlightenment. You can cause *all* the happiness. You can cause all the happiness to every sentient being, to every hell being, hungry ghost, animal, god and demigod. That is so amazing!

## **CHERISHING OTHERS IS THE ESSENCE OF THE DHARMA, THE REASON YOU ARE HERE**

Learning Dharma means that. I'm talking about the real essence. To help others achieve all this happiness up to enlightenment, you are here learning through meditation, listening to teachings, reflecting, meditating, and then actualizing. That is something you don't hear in the rest of the world, at university, college, primary school, kindergarten. I haven't gone through kindergarten and all those things but that is my guess.

The rest of the world has these problems. Even one person has all these problems, spending their whole life going to see psychiatrists and psychologists, paying a lot of money and building debts. Society has problems, countries have problems, all coming from ignorance, anger and attachment. You are here to pacify that. You have come to Kopan Monastery to attend this meditation course to pacify the negative mind that brings all the problems—all your own problems and all the global problems.

Do you understand the point? It is most important. Coming here to learn and meditate, what you are doing is the most important thing in your life, the most important thing in the world. It helps not only your current life, not only your next life, it helps hundreds and thousands, millions of lives. The benefit goes on and on; it goes on ultimately to enlightenment.

The benefit of your coming here for one month to listen and meditate goes on up to enlightenment for numberless sentient beings. You achieve enlightenment for numberless sentient beings—for every ant you see on the road, in the gompa, every bird, every animal, every dog and cat, all the people, every sentient being. You benefit everyone to free them from the oceans of suffering of samsara and bring them to peerless happiness, buddhahood.

You have come here to learn lamrim meditation, to learn to transform the child's mind into the mind cherishing others, like the Buddha did. From ignorance, anger, attachment, you are transforming your mind into the renunciation of attachment and anger as well as by realizing the ultimate nature, emptiness only, *tong pa nyi*, you are transforming your mind from ignorance into wisdom.

This is the most important education, first, of course, to benefit you, but also to benefit everyone whose mind is obscured and suffering, unenlightened. Your life here is for that. You understand? That is the ultimate goal.

Therefore, I want to say to you a billion, zillion, trillion thanks for coming here to do the course. Thank you for coming here to discover this Dharma, to discover what was unknown before, what you didn't know about how to live life. You were born a human being but didn't know how to live your life. Your way of thinking was no difference from that of a tiger, a bear, an insect, even though you might have looked different. Here you discover the Dharma, you discover the existence which you were not aware of before.

Please don't think, "This is too much for my mind; there are too many subjects. I want it to be simple. I'm going to run away!" That is nonsense. That is cheating yourself. Now, while you have the opportunity, you can actually learn about your life, discovering your life, your mind, learning the lamrim in particular. You can discover your life, what you were not aware of before. Then, through that, you can understand others and you can generate compassion for others. You can have wisdom, loving kindness and compassion toward others. Therefore, while you have the opportunity, you must learn as much as possible. Take the opportunity as much as possible. This is just a very short time. Don't stay in ignorance, "Oh, I want it very simple. This is too much for me." Thinking it is too much to learn, you run away to the Himalayan mountains, to Mount Everest. "It is better to climb Mount Everest. Even if an avalanche comes, it doesn't matter. Even if death comes, it doesn't matter." You don't think about the next life. This life is not sure. Maybe yes, maybe not. Anyway, I'm just joking.

It is a great opportunity to learn as much as possible. In the beginning you might feel like that but then, as you read and meditate on the lamrim more and more, it gets simpler and simpler. It is like that.

Shall we go up to five o'clock? And have tea and snake, snack. You're taking precepts? Maybe there are two different Is, one I takes precepts and fasts, and one I eats as much as possible! We have five aggregates, so maybe we have five Is.

It is really of utmost important your coming here not just to learn how to meditate but to study the teachings, the lamrim meditations, even just to discover what is most important in life. Only then can you understand how to live your life, how your life was in the past, and now how you should live positively to benefit not only yourself but all the numberless beings, as I mentioned before.

So, I want to say, coming to Kopan to do this meditation course, this is the best. If you want to help the world, to bring peace, coming here to do the meditation course, to learn Dharma, is the best. You yourself have to have a good heart to bring perfect peace and happiness to the world; that is the best.

What you are doing here is the opposite of what the rest of the world does. What the people of the rest of the world do only results in harm to themselves and others, to so much suffering. But here, not only do you bring temporary happiness to your family, to your country, to the world, but also ultimate happiness, the total cessation of oceans of suffering, to the world, to the sentient beings.

Then, you are here especially to discover how to achieve bodhicitta, the Mahayana path to enlightenment, like on TV there is the Discovery Channel. You have come to discover you are able to bring enlightenment to the world, to sentient beings. In a large way, there are the six-realms' sentient beings, and in a small way, there are the sentient beings of this world.

So, you are most unbelievably, unbelievably fortunate. You are the most unbelievably fortunate, coming here this time to Kopan, all the way from the West, coming inside the machine, the airplane with the gas and all that, allowing it to somehow fly from the West to the East by crossing the Atlantic Ocean, this very deep ocean, to come to Nepal, this third world country.

Actually, I just read a story about Swayambhunath, where there is a high mountain. A long time ago, even before the Buddha, when the second buddha of the one thousand buddhas of the fortunate eons happened, Sertup [Kanakumuni]. Shakyamuni Buddha is the fourth one. What happened in this buddha's time, basically a *rangjung*, a self-arisen stupa happened in Swayambhunath mountain; all the buddhas' holy mind was embodied in a crystal stupa. The Buddha predicted this high mountain. This stayed there for a long time so gradually more and more dirt accumulated, which became Swayambhunath mountain. This is the reason people don't go on the top of that stupa. But I heard Padmasambhava built a stupa when he came from Tibet to purify the land. Tibet is an unbelievable place for spirits, so he subdued them, gave them *samaya* to be protectors. That is one story.

I don't know if everybody thinks that way, I'm not sure. That is the main reason why the great holy beings circumambulate the bottom of the mountain. In Tibet Kachen Yeshe Gyaltzen, a great lama, like the sun and moon in this world that people and animals can enjoy by shining, did work for numberless sentient beings. He gave so many unbelievable teachings. He did one hundred thousand

full-length prostrations, going around the mountain. A monk showed me where he rested. I'm not going to tell the story here. This lama and the Kopan course have a big connection.

***Kopan's fifty courses happened because Rinpoche read Yeshe Gyaltsen's book***

How many Kopan course have there been? [*Ven. Roger: Fifty.*] Fifty. So many because of this connection, by my reading a little bit Kachen Yeshe Gyaltsen's *lojong chenmo*, great thought transformation teaching, these courses happened.

In Lama Yeshe's time, Lama used to come when the people's mind went down. Because I taught so much on hell realm suffering, the shortcomings of samsara and attachment, people's mind went down. They come here to Kopan because they were suffering, and here there were deeper sufferings! Then, after some time, Lama would come and bring smiles and light. He would lift up their minds. I was the one who brought them down and Lama was the one who lifted them up.

Up to the seventh course, people told me I did such a wonderful course, but in my heart I was thinking it was Lama Yeshe. Up to the seventh course I always thought it was Lama Yeshe, not me. Then, after the seventh course, I don't know, I think something went wrong, like a machine that broke, then I lost that feeling. Yes, of course, it had to be like that because I don't know the Dharma.

I was in Buxa. When India was under British control this was where Mahatma Gandhi-ji and Jawaharlal Nehru, the ex-prime minister, were imprisoned. I was there eight years, but I was a child, like children playing.

Then, another high lama, Je Drubkhangpa, also did a hundred thousand full-length prostrations around Swayambhunath. The main reason is that there is a stupa in the mountain.

Nepal does not look like the West, very clean and tidy, developed. It is not like that. It is very old and kind of a third world country, but I see from the scriptures this place is a holy place, an unbelievably blessed holy place. There are so many unbelievable holy places, with stories of practitioners who achieved enlightenment, like the eighty mahasiddhas. It is an amazing, great holy place. That is why it is easy to transform your mind, easy to develop it, if you learn Dharma here in Nepal, if you practice and meditate here. There have always been buddhas and bodhisattvas. It is an incredible place from very old ancient times. Physically it's kind of dirty, but in reality it is a very great holy place, so it is very lucky to be able to come to Nepal.

Then, we pay homage to the Buddha.

[Students recite *Prayers Before Teachings* up to *karma rabrib*]

You did these verses before? *Ven. Ailsa*: [inaudible] Dedicate. Read it in English.

[Dedications, then tea offering. Then, the students do a mandala offering and Rinpoche recites Tibetan verses.]

## **HAPPINESS FOLLOWS US LIKE A SHADOW**

One most important thing is that you need not only an intellectual understanding of Buddhism but a daily practice. A daily practice, mindfulness, is most important. It is not just like in university where what you learn has nothing to do with your life, not just intellectual development, like investing in a computer. It is not like that.

[Someone sneezes very loudly] That is a reaction to “invest in a computer.” I said “invest in a computer,” so that was somebody saying that is ridiculous!

It’s not just that, you need mindfulness in everyday life. Even if you know a little bit of Dharma, even if you are an expert and you can recite more than one hundred volumes of the Buddha’s teachings, the Tengyur, and more than two hundred volumes of the pandits’ commentaries, even if you know a little bit of Dharma, if you don’t do this mindfulness practice, the basis of practice is not there. You might be reciting a lot of prayers and mantras, but the real transformation of the mind, the root of peace and happiness, up to enlightenment, is not there. Even if you do a lot of prayers and mantras and you look like a Buddhist, actually the heart doesn’t become Buddhist. The way you live your life outside looks Buddhist, but the heart doesn’t become Buddhist.

As I often say, the heaviest suffering in samsara, the hell suffering, comes from the mind. It comes from your own negative, impure mind, your unhealthy mind. And also the fully developed mind, in Sanskrit “buddhahood,” the total cessation of obscurations and completion of realizations, that also comes from your mind. Your hell comes from your negative mind; your enlightenment comes from your positive mind, your most positive mind.

Samsara comes from your negative mind, your wrong way of thinking, not your right way of thinking. And nirvana, the blissful state of peace for yourself, comes from your mind. Your nirvana comes from your mind. Your everyday life problems come from your own mind, your negative

mind, your wrong way of thinking. And your everyday happiness and peace come from your mind, your positive mind, your correct way of thinking. It is like that.

So, everything comes from the mind. It is said in the *Abhidharmakosha* [*Treasury of Knowledge*],

Myriad worlds arise from karma.

The various worlds are born from karma; they arise from the mind. There are six principal consciousnesses and fifty-one mental factors and among them are the five mental factors that always accompany the principal consciousness, *kundro nga*. Among them, one is intention, *sempa*, which is karma. Of the five mental factors, karma refers to that mental factor, intention. Everything comes from the mind. The sun and moon, any form, the sense objects, all come from your mind. Your senses come from your mind. The imprint is left on the principal consciousness, and then it is experienced out. So, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects all come from the mind. Any bad or ugly things come from a negative imprint of a negative karmic action left on the consciousness that continues from life to life. And beautiful forms, sounds—music you like—smells, tastes, tangible objects, all the things you enjoy come from a positive mind, an imprint left by a past positive karma. Every day everything you experience—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects—everything you have experienced from beginningless rebirths, what you are experiencing now, and what you will experience in the future, it all comes from your mind. This subject is one of the biggest foundations of Buddhism. It is not just blind faith; it is logical.

For example, the Buddha mentioned in *Dhammapada*,

Mind precedes all mental states.

Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought.

If with an impure mind a person speaks or acts

Suffering follows him like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox.

Mind precedes all mental states.

Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought.

If with a pure mind a person speaks or acts

Happiness follows him like his never-departing shadow.<sup>5</sup>

Phenomena are created by the mind; it is the principal and preliminary. It means mind itself comes before actions of body and speech, also action of mind. If you talk with a bad heart, suffering arises like the wheel and the ox. In Nepal and India, after the ox there are the wheels of the, what do you say? [*Student: Carriage.*] Carriage, yeah. Like after the ox there is the wheel of the carriage. There are so many heavy things on top, iron bars and so forth, and the ox has to pull them. If it doesn't, it gets hit. You can't explain anything to it. The ox can't move. If, no matter how much it is beaten it can't move, then it is finished. Like that, it suffers, especially in the hot weather, when it is so unbelievably hot. We need an umbrella, we need many things under the hot sun, but the ox doesn't have them. So like that, all that suffering comes from the mind, the negative mind, the negative karma.

When you talk, if you are generating a good heart to benefit that person, then happiness comes from that like the shadow follows the body. Wherever the body goes, the shadow follows. In the same way, there is always happiness when actions are done with a good heart, for example, speaking to somebody. When the actions of speech, of body and of mind are done with a good heart, happiness comes to you and happiness comes to others. You can think "like the shadow follows the body." So here you see happiness comes from mind; it is clear. It comes from your good karma, your positive action. It is always like that.

Even today, anything undesirable—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects—anything undesirable comes from a bad heart, because you have created negative karma with your body, speech and mind. Today anything pleasant—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects—comes from your good heart. With that motivation, a virtuous motivation, you did actions of body, speech and mind, positive actions, it comes from that, from what was done in the past. So, everything today comes from your karma, your mind, as I mentioned, intention, *sempa*. It all comes from that.

Maybe we stop at four, if you go back in time.

### ***Learn to recognize negative karma and avoid it***

From birth until death, everything has come from the mind. Undesirable things from your negative karma, your negative intention, and pleasant things from your positive mind, your positive karma,

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<sup>5</sup> *Dhammapada*, ch. 1 (*Pairs*), vv. 1–2. From [accesstoinight.com](http://accesstoinight.com), accessed 03/19/19.

your positive intention, your good heart. From beginningless rebirths, all the undesirable things and all pleasant things have come from your mind. In the future it will also be the same.

Therefore, what you need to practice every day is to recognize what is negative karma—what is to be cast away, to be abandoned—and what is positive karma—the thing to be practiced, good karma, the good heart. If you do actions of body, speech and mind with that, the result will only be happiness, not only temporary happiness in this life and the next life, but also ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara, and not only that, buddhahood, peerless happiness. Therefore, by understanding how everything comes from the mind, the bad and good heart, you need to practice like that.

This comes to the point, showing how Dharma practice is most important. If you want happiness, Dharma practice is most important. That is the answer. In the world, people learn how to do business, economics? No? Economics. People learn in universities how to be successful in business, but when you actually start to do business, what you have learned and become expert in at university doesn't work, it has obstacles. This person who learned at university, who learned so much information, like inputting into a computer, like feeding a computer, but when they do business, there are so many obstacles.

You have to understand why. Why? Because happiness comes from Dharma practice, from positive actions of body, speech and mind, from a good heart. And failure, problems, come from the negative mind, from negative actions of body, speech and mind and a bad heart. They don't know that, they really don't know where suffering comes from, where happiness comes from. They have no idea. The understanding that you have to abandon negative karma and practice virtue is not there. The big thing is missing.

The cause of problems, of failure at business, has not been purified. It was created in the past but you can purify it, but that person doesn't know Dharma so it has not been purified. Therefore, instead of success they experience many problems, failure in their business.

For those who created positive actions, who have a good heart, they have power now to experience success, and so success happens. Even if you have created negative karma, you can purify it, but because they don't know Dharma that doesn't happen. Then, all the problems, the obstacles, arise.

I'll just give you an example, relating to myself. In the past years I did some benefit to sentient beings, certain people or animals, and I made offerings to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Because of that, I can benefit to the world better, not only the Dharma, but whatever people need. I can say

that from my experience. I can tell that from my experience, just the first thing. Like that, it is a dependent arising, a gross dependent arising. Subtle dependent arising is emptiness only, but this is gross dependent arising. Happiness and success happen as a result of, *depending on*, a good cause. Then from a negative cause, the result is problems. So just using myself as an example, it is like that.

### ***Perception, inference and very hidden phenomena***

His Holiness used to give this example. Because you see smoke coming from a house you know there is fire there. The smoke is direct perception [and the fire is valid inference]. More difficult than that is knowing the age of the person living in the house. Then, more difficult than that is what the person is thinking. Similar to that, among existents, there are easy ones, more difficult ones and then the most difficult ones.

There is direct perception—like seeing smoke—and inferential reason—like inferring fire from seeing the smoke. For example, sound is impermanent because it is *cheṇa* [a product], which means it is born through causes and conditions. The characteristic of a product is that which arises from the control of causes and conditions. So, the proof that sound is impermanent is this: because it is *cheṇa* [a product], it has to be impermanent. Or you can say sound is impermanent because it is changing within a second, even within a second, by causes and conditions. So that is the meaning, the very subtle meaning of impermanence. That understanding that sound is impermanent comes by depending on logic.

For example, the self, the I, has no true existence. The I doesn't exist from its own side, or it doesn't exist by itself. To put it in a simple way, the I is not a real I. That which appears to you and which you always believe or apprehend, it is not that. The I that exists is what exists in mere name; it is not the real I that always appears to your hallucinated mind and which you always believe. That is because it is a dependent arising—not a gross dependent arising but a subtle dependent arising. The I is not real in the way it appears to you and the way you believe it to be.

I will just mention that the I exists in mere name. Why? Because it is a subtle dependent arising. Because there is the basis. The valid base to be labeled I, the aggregates, exists, therefore, the I exists. The I exists in mere name, merely labeled by the mind. Due to inferential reasoning you discover that, you realize that.

There is the most difficult level of understanding, which is karma. The result of having made charity to other sentient beings in the past is having wealth in this life. You did charity, so later you

experience the result, wealth. The past life could be a billion, zillion, trillion eons ago, just the life before this, in this same life, or even yesterday. If the charity you made yesterday was very powerful, the result you get today is wealth. Or if you made charity in this life, the result will be wealth in the next life.

Practicing pure morality in a past life results in receiving a human body this life. We all have a human body. That's because in a past life we practiced morality and made prayers to receive a human body. It could have been a billion, zillion, trillion eons ago, or it could have been the life before this. From pure morality, the result is a deva or human body, the body of a happy migrating being.

The Omniscient One, the Buddha, explained the subject of karma, of action and result. The Omniscient One, who had no obscurations and completed all the realizations, who achieved buddhahood, explained it like this. That is how you come to know what to practice to achieve wealth and receive a higher rebirth in the next life. It is the same for liberation from samsara and buddhahood; you have to create the cause. The Omniscient One explained karma like this and no other omniscient being contradicts this. All the numberless buddhas see the same thing that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha explained. There is no contradiction by another omniscient mind; they all see that karma. That very hidden phenomenon is the most difficult thing to understand among phenomena.

### ***With problems don't blame external phenomena***

Here is a very, very important point. When you experience problems, you always blame the outside, either the elements or sentient beings. You point the finger, you put the blame outside. Now you can see, there is no one to point to outside to blame; that is totally wrong. All the problems come from inside; they come from the mind, a negative mind, a self-cherishing thought, a bad heart. From that you create negative actions and problems come. Whenever you have problems, immediately remember they come from the mind.

The problem is telling you that you have to purify the negative karma and pay attention to practicing a good heart. It emphasizes that to you. And by experiencing the problem now, the benefit is that it purifies past negative karma and in the future there will be happiness like the sun shining.

The Kadampa Geshe Kharag Gomchung said that you should therefore rejoice in the suffering, thinking, “It is so good that I have this problem,” instead of, “I have this and that, like cancer, and that is bad.” Rather than putting yourself down, thinking you are hopeless, you rejoice. By experiencing the negative result, it finishes the past negative karma and in the future the result will be happiness. So, you rejoice in suffering, thinking how good it is to experience suffering.

And your problem is also educating you to generate compassion for other sentient beings. Recognizing how they are suffering helps you generate compassion for them and, if you are able to generate compassion for even one person or animal, there is enlightenment for you.

Like Asanga who did a retreat for twelve years but didn’t see Maitreya Buddha. Then, when he saw a wounded dog on the road, full of maggots, he generated compassion, and took the maggots from the dog with his tongue. Then his karma to see the dog, his impure vision, was finished, and he saw Maitreya Buddha. He no longer saw the dog but saw Maitreya Buddha instead. He then received teachings in Tushita pure land for one morning, which is fifty human years, and when he returned he wrote five commentaries which have been the cause of numberless sentient beings becoming enlightened. That is what happened by one person generating compassion for one sentient being. If you generate compassion there is enlightenment; if you don’t generate compassion there is no enlightenment for you.

I will stop here.

## **DEDICATIONS**

“Due to all the past, present, and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, in the three times, may bodhicitta be generated in the hearts of all sentient beings, in the hearts of all the sentient beings in this world, in the hearts of all sentient beings in Nepal, in the hearts of all sentient beings, the students of FPMT, all the students and all those who rely on me, who I promised to pray for, whose name was given to me, in the hearts of all of us here including our family members, those who are dead and those who are living, in everybody’s heart to generate bodhicitta and in whose heart bodhicitta has been generated may it increase.

“Due to all the past, present, and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, all these merits which exist in mere name, may the I, who exists in mere name, achieve buddhahood, which exists in mere name,

and lead all the sentient beings, who exist in mere name, to that buddhahood, which exists in mere name, by myself alone, who exists in mere name.”

## Lecture 2: Subdue the Mind

December 6, 2017

[Students recite *Prayers Before Teachings*]

### **MEDITATION IS MORE THAN CLOSING THE EYES**

For Western people, learning how to meditate doesn't mean learning how to practice of Dharma. Whereas it is very common for Western people to learn how to meditate, learning how to practice the Dharma is very rarely known. If you know how to meditate on the Dharma, that is pure Dharma practice.

How to meditate is a very big question. It is not only what you look like from outside, sitting with your eyes closed, sitting on a round meditation cushion. For me, when I sit on one it is a little bit uncomfortable, a bit too high, but of course I don't meditate so that's maybe why I'm uncomfortable sitting on one.

How to meditate, how to practice the Dharma, is mainly the mind. There can be a big division in life between the way you think and your Dharma practice. Something that you strongly cling to brings so many problems in your life. Hundreds of problems arrive, either at the same time or one after the other, like from the root of a tree more and more branches spread. Problems come from the strong thought that grasps on to the happiness of this life, the comfort of this life. Thinking "I want happiness," you grasp on to that, and from that mind all the problems start. That can be the same when you try to practice the Dharma.

### ***You need to be free from the eight worldly dharmas***

That means you have to practice Dharma, you have to meditate, by freeing your mind from that grasping mind, the wrong concept that brings all the hundreds of thousands, the millions of problems, all the problems in life, including all the relationship problems. I think you have already heard about the eight worldly dharmas. Strongly grasping on to the comfort of this life so much and not achieving that causes failure to achieve the happiness of this life.

The first worldly dharma is craving to receive material possessions. There is so much grasping, and then because of that, when you don't receive what you want, when what you expect doesn't happen, there are so many problems. The stronger the grasping, the more painful it is not to receive what you want.

On the other hand, when your grasping mind is less, if you don't receive material things the problems are less. You can see the connection, how unhappiness is totally related to grasping. When the grasping is less, the pain and discomfort are much less. If you didn't have strong grasping to receive material things like birthday gifts or whatever, there would be no problem in not receiving them. Even if you didn't receive anything for your birthday, the mind would still be extremely peaceful. Receiving or not receiving, the mind has great inner peace. When this strong grasping is not there, what you renounce is only suffering, so when it doesn't happen the mind is extremely peaceful. That is the happiness of Dharma, the peace of Dharma; that is renunciation.

Similarly, when you are looking for reputation, there is so much strong grasping. What failure to have a good reputation brings is so much pain, worry and fear. When you have less grasping to reputation, there are also less problems and more peace in not receiving it. When somebody doesn't have any more clinging, there is no disturbance at all. I should have said that before but I forgot—there is no disturbance. The mind is totally calm, like water that is so calm you can see right through to the bottom because there is no dirt inside. Like that, your mind is in the great peace of Dharma.

That is the advantage of practicing Dharma, of practicing meditation. Whatever happens in your life doesn't bother you. That is what we all need. By practicing Dharma, by practicing meditation, whatever happens in your life doesn't bother you. The mind should be like that. If somebody meditates their whole life, for thirty years, sixty years, a thousand years, the mind should be like that. If you meditate correctly it should be like that—whatever happens doesn't disturb your mind.

This is what you need to achieve. The world is like boiling water, with no peace at all. Look at the news every day. They don't talk about who has achieved bodhicitta or renunciation. Of course the news people have a responsibility to announce whatever disasters happen in the world, what dangers there are due to water, fire and wind, how many people have been killed. Because people are very attracted to that, that is why we only hear about problems. People don't notice somebody who has achieved inner peace on a Himalayan mountain or even in the West, through real meditation practicing Dharma. Peace through the absence of attachment, peace through the absence of anger, peace through the absence of ignorance, peace through the absence of self-cherishing thought, peace through achieving bodhicitta—there are people achieving peace like this but it is not known. Maybe there is not much interest in this; maybe people are more attracted to problems.

Then, there are no methods to solve the problems and no teachings on how to solve the problems. Because people don't have that education, it is difficult. Because the world is like noisy boiling water, this peace and happiness of practicing Dharma is needed. Then, no matter what

happens in life, it doesn't bother your mind; there is always peace. And the more you practice the more you develop peace, higher and higher and higher. For those who meditate, who practice Dharma, it is like that. That is what happens.

***You need to be free from grasping and self-cherishing***

Many people try to meditate but get easily disturbed. While meditating, even if a dog barks or a bird makes a noise outside, they get angry. They want to kill the dog or the bird, or the children who cry, or the people who scream. They are fed up, so bothered and angry that they want to destroy the animal or the people making a noise, killing them with a stone. "They won't let me to meditate!"

What are you meditating for if you are angry? If you want to kill others why are you meditating? The big reason—to benefit sentient beings—is not there. You must practice patience and renounce anger. That is the basic thing you must do even for your own happiness. So how can you get angry at others?

Even though you might meditate every day for many hours, you can still fail to look after yourself by not looking after your mind. You might sit perfectly with your eyes closed but never take care of yourself because you don't look after your mind. Taking care of yourself means taking care of your mind, and that means practicing the Dharma, meditating; it is the same thing.

I mentioned this in the past but I'll mention it again here. If somebody asks you how you are, you would normally tell them you are happy or not happy—happy because you received this present or were praised, unhappy because you got some bad news or you are feeling ill. That is how people normally judge a happy life. But the meaning of a happy life is if you are practicing the Dharma. Then, it is a happy life. If you are practicing the Dharma you are protecting yourself from the negative mind which brings so many problems, as I mentioned before. You are protected from the painful grasping mind of attachment.

That is where negative emotions come from. You have to recognize that. I don't know what psychologists say, but you have to protect your mind from anger and ignorance, and especially from the self-cherishing thought. That is just talking about sutra, not talking about tantra.

In tantra you have to protect the mind from ordinary appearances and concepts, protect the mind from ordinary death, ordinary intermediate state and ordinary rebirth. The mind has gross mind, subtle mind and extremely subtle mind, and the body has gross body, subtle body and

extremely subtle body. According to the highest of the four levels of tantra, the ordinary extremely subtle wind and mind is the root of samsara.

Without talking about tantra, just sutra, when you practice Dharma, when your mind is living in the practice of Dharma, you experience real happiness. It is common for people to say they are happy when they see they have managed to get the object of their attachment. That happiness is according to attachment, the happiness of attachment. Maybe if they killed their hated enemy they would also feel happy, the happiness of anger. I'm not sure.

We all need the happiness of renunciation, instead of the attachment that brings all the problems to us and our many friends, and to the many people in the world. One person with a strong grasping mind who wants power and pleasure can create unbelievable problems to so many people in the country and in the world. It just happens like that. On top of the attachment, the self-cherishing thought causes so many problems to others, if the aim is to only selfishly have power and happiness.

When you are able to let go of attachment, your mind has unbelievable peace because you renounce the cause of all the unbelievable problems for you and others, for so many sentient beings. That is real happiness. In other words, renunciation is to give yourself real freedom, to free yourself from the prison of attachment, from the pain of attachment. Having become free from the prison of attachment, where you are always torturing yourself, you have incredible peace.

Most people are busy fighting, full of anger and attachment, thinking this is better, that is better, pushing and pulling each other to get what they want, but when you are free from attachment, you have no problems; the mind has great peace.

The more you cling to receiving praise from other people, the more pain, worry and fear there is when you don't receive it. So, you can see they are totally connected.

## **FREEDOM FROM THE EIGHT WORLDLY DHARMAS IS PURE DHARMA PRACTICE**

I want to say that both sets of the eight worldly dharmas are problems of life, not only one side—grasping on to material possessions, happiness, praise, and reputation—but also the other side—craving to be free from not getting them. We need to be free from all the worldly dharmas, neither grasping for praise and so forth nor being bothered when we don't receive them.

Nagarjuna propagated the Mahayana teachings in the world four hundred years after the Buddha. This is his definition of pure Dharma practice, pure meditation, when there is no grasping if you

receive these four things and no suffering or worry if you don't receive them. Nothing bothers you, so your mind is always in great peace.

As Western people coming to India and Nepal, to the Himalayan mountains, what you need to learn is this basic thing; that is the real one. You don't need to talk about higher realizations. Unless somebody has higher realizations of sutra and tantra, even for somebody with a realization of impermanence and death, and certainly the rest of the people in the world, they need this basic practice, to just let go of attachment, and then there will be unbelievable peace.

We are all caught in the prison of attachment, which always brings problems and unhappiness. You can have a billion dollars, a zillion dollars, a trillion dollars, you can have houses everywhere, in different countries, on different beaches, in the mountains (maybe not on Mount Everest) but your mind is always unhappy, even though all this is for the happiness of the mind. However many boyfriends, girlfriends, material things, everything is obtained for happiness of the mind but you can't find happiness. After all this, after you have gathered as much as you can, your mind is so unhappy; there is so much more dissatisfaction than before. This is only outer wealth. Inner wealth is the realizations. When there is only outside wealth, the richer you are the more dissatisfaction there is.

Whatever you try, wherever you go, nothing works. You go to Tahiti, Goa, Thailand, to so many beaches, but you can't find happiness, just more and more dissatisfaction. Whether you go to the mountains or the city, whether you stay alone or with people, you are so unhappy that you want to commit suicide. The thought comes very easily. What kills you is your attachment.

Of course, there is also the relation to outside spirit harm, but the main thing is attachment. If you follow attachment as your guru or as your best friend, if you do everything it says, then attachment will kill you. Most people can't find happiness because they don't know there is another life, a continuation of mind even after the body ceases. They think that after this life finishes everything is totally blank, dark, like there is no sun or moon, no stars, everything is totally foggy.

Maybe some people talk intellectually of another life because they have met Buddhism, but when they face problems, because they have not been properly practicing Dharma, meditation, their Buddhism doesn't come into their life; it doesn't happen.

Sorry to give this example which I have mentioned many times, but in Switzerland we had a student who knew Tibetan and translated for the courses of my guru, Geshe Rabten Rinpoche. One day his wife left him all of a sudden. This became a *huge* problem. He couldn't manage the suffering. He translated Dharma, he spoke Tibetan, intellectually he knew a lot, but when he encountered this

problem, he hanged himself in the house. It was maybe a sign that normally he didn't practice Dharma, because practicing Dharma is food for the mind. Of course there is a relation to spirits, yes, but mainly it is attachment. So, like that he died. That is just one example; I'm sure there are many.

Just intellectually understanding but not practicing with the heart, there are problems like that. The problem becomes huge and you can't utilize it to purify the suffering of numberless sentient beings—relationship problems and so forth—and utilize that experience on the path for yourself to achieve enlightenment and to enlighten all sentient beings. You are unable to do bodhicitta thought transformation. Life becomes very sad.

The nature of samsara is that things can happen; your life can change. We all know that. When things change, it is not the first time. You have experienced these things numberless times from beginningless rebirths up to now. That's the reality but you don't think like that. You think it's the first time, and then it becomes a big shock.

### ***The happiest life is when you practice bodhicitta***

The happiest life is when your mind is living in the practice of bodhicitta, when your life is dedicated for sentient beings. When you have a realization of bodhicitta, not even an actual realization but just effortful bodhicitta, then not only meditation, practicing Dharma, but each step you take—during a pilgrimage or on a tour, for shopping, and so forth—each step you take toward the shop, each step you take back home, each step you take is for numberless sentient beings, not only for the people you love, not only for your boyfriend or girlfriend, but for numberless sentient beings: numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, suras and asuras, everyone. Not only those who are attached to you but also those who hate you or those who are strangers to you, each step you take is dedicated to every sentient being. Everything you buy you dedicate for all sentient beings. If you are buying vegetables, it is dedicated for every sentient being to achieve happiness and to achieve enlightenment.

When you talk to people, each word you say has the motivation of bodhicitta, so it benefits not only the person you are talking to but numberless sentient beings, helping them to achieve not just happiness but peerless happiness, enlightenment. Then, each time you eat food or drink something, every spoonful of food that is eaten with bodhicitta, every single bite of food or sip of drink is done to obtain happiness for numberless sentient beings, for others to be enlightened. Then, when you finish the tea in the mug, however many sips of tea you have drunk, you have collected unbelievable

merit, more than skies of merit. After you finish even one plate of rice or one bowl of soup, each time you eat with bodhicitta, you collect numberless merits, more than skies of merit, good karma, the cause of happiness, the cause of enlightenment. It is unbelievable, unbelievable. Each time you eat is for the benefit of sentient beings.

Similarly, how many hours you sleep, if your sleep is done with bodhicitta, however many seconds, minutes or hours you sleep you collect more than skies of merit all the time, continuously, dedicated for the numberless sentient beings to achieve enlightenment, not just temporary happiness, not just that, but the highest peerless happiness, the total cessation of all obscurations and the completion of all realizations. It's incredible. And when you breathe, with bodhicitta each inbreath and outbreath is totally dedicated for sentient beings, for the numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, suras and asuras, for their happiness and enlightenment.

What you should aim to achieve in this life is to have a bodhicitta realization, the ultimate good heart. If you are smart then the goal you try to achieve in this life is enlightenment. Otherwise, even if you are able to actualize ultimate reality, emptiness only, you can only achieve liberation from samsara, nothing more than that, nothing higher than arhatship. You can't achieve enlightenment. Without bodhicitta, no matter how many other realizations you have, enlightenment is impossible. Therefore, bodhicitta is so important.

There is a new book talking about the bodhicitta motivation [*Bodhisattva Attitude*]. Each time you enter the gompa or in relation to your daily activities, you should dedicate every action for sentient beings. That advice is not for those who have a realization of bodhicitta but for us without bodhicitta, to train the mind in bodhicitta. Maybe it is useful to read the book so everybody can try to practice during the course. Of course, you can practice when you are back in your country in your normal daily life, but also during retreats. Whenever you do a retreat in a group or alone it is good to do that; it brings you much happiness. You can see your life is dedicated for everybody, dedicated for the happiness of all sentient beings. The book is in English; maybe it is good to read it. That is good to use to practice with, to train the mind. Even with the breath you benefit numberless sentient beings, helping everyone achieve enlightenment. It's incredible.

## **SUBDUE THE MIND**

You should tell other people you are trying to attain bodhicitta. This should be your plan in this life. Then you are smart. Otherwise, you can walk on the water or you walk through fire without getting

burned, like a miracle, but even animals and birds can go in water and not sink. And there is a fish with a light. The fish is blue and there is light inside, what is it called? [*Student*: Bioluminescence.] We don't have a body that lights up but there are flies that do when they come out at night. What are they called? [*Student*: Fireflies.] Fireflies. It's due to karma. There are many animals who have lights in their body at night, like that fish. What am I saying?

I will just finish the words of the Buddha's advice:

Do not commit any unwholesome action.

Engage in perfect wholesome action,

Subdue one's own mind.

This is the teaching of the Buddha.

That means we should never act in a nonvirtuous way, whatever the outside action is, even if we live our whole life in a cave in the Himalayan mountains, not seeing people, not even birds, not sleeping or eating. There is a Nepalese boy the villagers call Little Buddha. I don't know whether he is eating or not now but before, for so many years, he didn't have to eat. I think in his past life, due to some meditation, he gained some realizations where he didn't need food, so he lived in the jungle doing meditation. In reality, I don't know if he is a buddha or not, but outside he looked like he was always in meditation. He didn't get to study much Dharma in a monastery—I think he spent a short time in a Sakya monastery—and didn't have much to tell the people, but it now seems he is out, going around to many villagers.

Western doctors and psychologists went to check him because they had never heard of people who could survive without eating food; it is not common in the Western world. They recommended that the boy should not be kept like that, he must eat food. I don't know whether he is eating now but the villagers call him Little Buddha.

You must have Dharma on the inside, not just the outside, even if you are an expert in the Dharma, in Buddhist philosophy, knowing all five of the great Sutra philosophical texts by heart. There is the *Pramanavarttika*—how the Buddha's teachings are reliable because the Buddha is reliable, all the logical arguments about how you can rely on that, how past and future lives exist, and all that. Then there is the *Prajnaparamita* text describing the whole path to enlightenment in detail. It is like a textbook on an airplane having a detailed explanation of how an airplane works so one person can understand it completely, even though an airplane is not made by one person. It is made by different

groups, but starts with one person. The text describes the whole path to enlightenment, the basis, the four noble truths—true suffering, true cause of suffering, true cessation and true path—and then ultimate reality, the two truths—truth for an all-obscuring mind and truth for absolute wisdom. Not just that, it describes the path as well. Then, there is *Abhidharmakosha* and *Vinaya*, the monks and nuns’ rules and what to do to achieve liberation from samsara, and of course, if done with bodhicitta, you achieve enlightenment.

Even if you are expert, even if you can explain by heart the more than one hundred volumes of the Buddha’s teachings and the more than two hundred volumes of the pandits’ commentaries, if your mind is not subdued, all this—listening, reflecting, studying—becomes the cause of developing pride, attachment, ignorance, anger and the self-cherishing thought; it doesn’t become Dharma. Outside it looks like Dharma, like extensive Dharma practice, but the heart doesn’t become Dharma.

Despite knowing an unbelievable amount, you can’t subdue your mind and that causes pride, attachment, anger, ignorance, and the self-cherishing thought develops. Delusions become stronger. Your Dharma knowledge, your Dharma understanding is used for that. It is not used to subdue the mind, it doesn’t become real Dharma practice, but instead becomes the practice of the eight worldly dharmas.

When the Buddha says to not commit any unwholesome action and engage in perfect wholesome actions, the essence comes down to the point, “Subdue your own mind. That is the real teaching of the Buddha.”

In other religions you can shave your hair and put some white marks on your forehead, or you can wear a sari, but Buddhism is not like that. Even if you shave your head and wear robes, that alone is not Buddhism; it is not subduing the mind. It can be the opposite of subduing the mind. Here, in Buddhism, the whole thing is to subdue the mind. That is the teaching of the Buddha.

### ***Like a star***

I think you did it in the morning, but we will do one meditation. You all have the text,

KAR MA RAB RIB MAR ME DANG

A star, a defective view, a butter lamp flame,

GYU MA ZIL PA CHHU BUR DANG

An illusion, a dew drop, a water bubble,

MI LAM LOG DANG TRIN TA BUR

A dream, lightning, a cloud:

DÜ JÄ CHHÖ NAM DI TAR TA

See all causative phenomena like this.<sup>6</sup>

The word *karma* means “star” because in the daytime the sunlight is so powerful you don’t see the stars. Only after the sun sets can you see more and more stars. Like that, the meaning is emptiness. Emptiness only, *tong pa nyi*, *shunyata* is so subtle. Whatever exists, exists from emptiness, from emptiness only. This is not the emptiness of what is merely labeled; this is the emptiness of what appears to the hallucinated mind, what you apprehend and what you believe to be real—the real I, real action, real object, real hell, real enlightenment, real samsara, real nirvana, real happiness, real problems, all that. It is the emptiness of this. This has never come into existence from the beginning, this has never existed. If you analyze, you discover it doesn’t exist. So, it is the emptiness of this—what never existed. It is not emptiness of what exists, what exists in mere name. What exists is what exists in mere name, in reality; it is not that. It is the emptiness of what doesn’t exist.

Nagarjuna said in the *Root Wisdom of the Middle Way*, [Skt: *Mulamadhyamakakarika*, Tib: *Tsawa Sherab*,

Because things are empty

Everything can happen.

If things were not empty,

Nothing could happen.

Everything that exists comes from emptiness, from emptiness only. So, everything is born in emptiness, everything exists in emptiness, everything ceases in emptiness. Everything functions in emptiness, in mere name; nothing exists from its own side. In *Dhammapada* the Buddha said,

He who knows that even in death and rebirth there is no death and rebirth,  
that knowledge is not difficult to find with concentration and a realization  
of the ultimate nature.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See *FPMT Essential Prayer Book*, p. 71.

We say that there is birth and there is death and we believe it, but in reality there is no birth and death. What this verse saying is that what we believe in is a truly existent birth and death, a birth and a death existing from their own side, existing by themselves. That is how it appears to our hallucinated mind but in reality there is no real birth and no real death. With concentration and an understanding of emptiness, it is not difficult to find this.

[Tea offering verse and break to drink tea]

During my birthday two days ago, I was going to mention the Buddha's quotation from the *Guhyasamaja Root Text*, but I forgot. There it says,

From no birth all are born.

There is no birth except mere birth.

I think the second line, there is no birth *except mere birth* becomes a commentary to the first line. "From no birth" means from no truly existent birth, the real birth that appears to you, that you a hundred percent apprehend and strongly hold as true, that is not there. The Tibetan, *kyewa me* "no birth" means no real birth. *Tamche kyepa* means from that everything is born. Since there is no real birth, how is everything born? Everything is born in mere name. That is what the second line explains, there is no birth except mere birth.

So, there is a star, but in daytime it is obscured by the brightness of the sun. Only when the sun goes down, then the stars become clearer and clearer. Similarly, emptiness only is there, but for your hallucinated mind it is like it doesn't exist. Even though the ultimate reality of the I, action, object—all phenomena—the emptiness is there, but for your hallucinated mind it is like it doesn't exist.

For your hallucinated mind what doesn't exist in reality seems to exist a hundred percent. This is what appears and what you believe in. For example, the merely labeled I exists on the valid base, the aggregates. It exists in mere name, merely labeled by the mind, and it has existed that way from beginningless rebirths. That is what the I is, that which exists. But now what appears to you is just

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<sup>7</sup>This verse could not be located, but it resembles verse 419: He who in every way knows death and rebirth of all beings and is totally detached, blessed and enlightened—him do I call a holy man.

little more than that. That means it is not just merely labeled by the mind, but slightly more than that, being truly existent.

In the four schools, of the Madhyamaka school there are two sub-schools, Svatantrika and Prasangika. What the Prasangika and Svatantrika assert as truly existent is different. The Prasangika view of what is truly existent is much finer, much more subtle; the Svatantrika view is grosser, even though they both use the same word.

You apprehend an I that exists more than what is merely labeled by the mind. From beginningless rebirths it has appeared to you like that and you a hundred percent believe in this I; you believe it is a real I. What exists is the emptiness of the I. That has the same meaning as existing in mere name. That's what exists but you don't believe in that. What you believe is what the I is empty of, being truly existent, or existing more than what is merely labeled by the mind. That is what appears and what you believe. However, that is what has *never* existed at all from beginningless time.

So, what exists is emptiness, what doesn't exist is the truly existent I, the real I. That's what doesn't exist but you believe what doesn't exist a hundred percent. On the other hand, you don't believe what exists. You believe the false and you don't believe the truth. Many people think the truth is false, totally the opposite, like that. So, with "like a star," the star means emptiness only.

Is there an explanation on that or not? [*Ven. Ailsa*: No, Rinpoche.] I think slowly, slowly, slowly you can understand. Then next time you come back to the course you will understand better. Or next life!

So, we'll do the meditation. You can follow the English.

[Rinpoche slowly chants the verse from the *Vajra Cutter Sutra* in Tibetan while the students meditate]

KAR MA RAB RIB MAR ME DANG

A star, a defective view, a butter lamp flame,

GYU MA ZIL PA CHHU BUR DANG

An illusion, a dew drop, a water bubble,

MI LAM LOG DANG TRIN TA BUR

A dream, lightning, a cloud:

DÜ JÄ CHHÖ NAM DI TAR TA

See all causative phenomena like this.

Do the dedication.

## DEDICATION

[Rinpoche and the students recite a dedication verse in Tibetan]

I think I'll go straight. First we have to stop. Sorry it took time.

Then, the motivation is to listen to the Dharma to achieve enlightenment and to liberate all sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment.

## THE BEAUTY OF AN OBJECT COMES FROM THE MIND

At the end of yesterday I was talking about how everything comes from the mind, from the heaviest suffering of the lower realms, the hells, up to enlightenment, then samsara and nirvana, the happiness and problems in daily life, everything. Everything comes from *your* mind—*your* enlightenment, *your* hell, *your* samsara, *your* nirvana, *your* happiness, *your* problems, everything. That is kind of the way to start to discover, to see life, the world, seeing how everything comes from the mind.

Now, I can mention a few words. In your life, even if somebody's body wasn't particularly an object of attachment at the beginning, you can easily change your mind due to the way they talk, how they give you presents, and so forth. Because of things like that you change your mind about them and develop attachment for them. Then, you see the object of your attachment with a kind of beauty inseparable from that object. It is very hard to separate your mind from that. That happens and attachment arises. It projects on that person's body a beauty that becomes inseparable from the body. It is painful to separate from that object, even if at the beginning there was nothing; it wasn't an object of attachment. That is an example of how things come from the mind.

At first it was an indifferent object, but then, due to the way the person talks to you or gives you a lot of presents, and things like that, your mind changes and you get attached, and project beauty onto that object. Then, it is painful for your heart, your mind, to separate from it.

Of course, that can change when the person does something negative. They say something negative or their way of looking at you is negative, kind of peering from the side of their eye.

Peering? [*Ven. Ailsa: Glaring.*] Glaring. Or they say some bad words, telling you that you are so selfish or something like that. *Then* your attachment stops and you get angry. Then your mind projects ugliness onto the object. That is the view of anger. It projects something unpleasant, undesirable, onto the object.

Put it this way. When the person did something, your mind interpreted it as bad. You feel you have been harmed. To your mind, this person harmed your I, this real I that is not there. They harmed the real I that you can't find anywhere from head to toe if you look. Then, after you believe in what you label; you project that and what appears is what your mind has labeled. It appears to you in that way, as unpleasant, and then anger arises.

So, you can see, you are the one who created the anger, not that person. It is very clear if you analyze it. You interpreted that this is bad, that it harmed you, it harmed this real I that is not there, and then the anger arose.

It all comes from the mind. Also, you might see somebody you think is very ugly, but then you see somebody who is even uglier and suddenly that first person seems beautiful! Or you see somebody you think is beautiful but then see somebody even more beautiful and that first person seems ugly. It is all dependent arising, all relative. It comes from the mind; it has been created by the mind.

If it were beautiful from its own side, then it wouldn't change. There is no way you could see something beautiful become ugly, or ugly become beautiful. It shouldn't change; you should see that thing as beautiful forever. It wouldn't change by comparison. Ugly would always stay ugly, beautiful would always stay beautiful. But it *does* change by comparison because it has come from the mind. Do you understand?

Say a hundred people look at him. [*Rinpoche points out a student*] Sorry, today, when I need to mention your name, I've forgotten it. [*Student: Bill.*] Bill. When a hundred people look at Bill, some people see him as beautiful, some people see him as middle, some people see him as ugly; he appears as all kinds to different people. It's the same thing with food you like so much. Another person hates that food, not only to eat it but even just to see it.

It's even like that for places. One person looks at some place and it appears as a hundred percent very nice, but somebody else will see it as very ugly. It comes from the mind. For the person who sees it as ugly, as all bad, that is the result of past negative karma, unwholesome actions. For the person who sees good things, it comes from past good karma, virtuous, positive actions. That is one

way to see how causative phenomena are created by the mind—one thing is karma, a person's karma. That is why it appears differently to different people and different people see it differently.

For example, (I mentioned this last time as well), you see the gompa here full of holy objects, so many unbelievably precious holy objects that allow you to collect unbelievable, unbelievable merits each time you see them. I won't explain that now. You collect unbelievable merit by seeing holy objects. But hungry ghosts don't have the karma to see these beautiful things, these amazing holy objects. It is said in the texts that dogs don't have the karma to see holy objects. So, how do hungry ghosts see this place? They don't have the same view as you have. They see the place, the environment, as very sad, as copper ground, very hot, in the daytime burned by the sun. Even the moon becomes hot due to their karma. The trees they see are logs, standing up, burned by fire. There is no beauty; it is a very depressing place. The same place you see as a gompa, so beautiful, appearing due to your past good karma, for hungry ghosts who don't have the same view, it appears as a depressing place. They don't have the karma that you have, so this is the view that appears.

Now devas, gods, have a different view again. This is not talking about buddhas, but suras and asuras, devas. They see a jeweled palace, unbelievably beautiful. I don't know about the holy objects, but they enjoy incredible sense pleasures. They have much more sense pleasure than we do. They see things as unbelievably beautiful.

For example, it is explained in the Madhyamaka, one bowl of liquid appears as water for you but for hungry ghosts they see pus and blood. They don't have the karma to see water, so they see pus and blood. And devas, suras, asuras—this is not talking about buddhas—see nectar, because of their better karma.

This is very, very useful to keep in mind. What you see is just during this time, while you are a human being. And again, not every human being has the karma to see things like you do. Hungry ghosts see things totally differently from devas. Of course, because the buddhas have ceased all the gross and subtle mistakes of mind and completed all the realizations, they have a view that is totally pure. Their view is the result of that. Whatever appears to a buddha is a most pure view. With infinite bliss nondual with emptiness, they see things as amazing, amazing, as numberless offerings.

So, how you see things is according to the mind. Do you understand the point? It is according to how developed your mind is, how pure your mind is. The purer your mind, the more you purely see things. It totally depends on the mind; the perceiver is the person's mind.

This point is most important, how everything comes from the mind, how all causative phenomena come from the mind. As I mentioned yesterday this is very important, basic Buddhist

philosophy. Then, it helps when you have relationship problems, when somebody abuses you, when somebody is angry at you, when somebody looks down on you, with the eyes down and the nose up in the sky, saying impolite things, or when you have helped somebody and they don't thank you. You expect them to thank you but they don't. When you give somebody a glass of water or something, but don't even get a thank you, it bothers you so much; you get angry at that person.

I remember one time in Dharamsala when I was coming down the long road from McLeod Ganj to the Dialectic School, there was a monk coming the other way, not a Tibetan monk, I think he was Korean or something like that. I'm sorry, I didn't acknowledge him. My mind should have respected him but I didn't remember to even do that. I did like that, like the police do. I went to the Dialectic School and the monk followed me all the way to ask me how I could have done what I did. So, I apologized for not showing respect and then he went all the way back.

If you are practicing Buddhism you always have to remember the basic Buddhist philosophy, that everything comes from the mind. Whatever problems you experience all come from the mind, they don't come from another person. You should always immediately remember what Kadampa Geshe Chekawa<sup>8</sup> said in *Seven-Point Thought Transformation*,

Blame all the shortcomings on one.<sup>9</sup>

The one is what? The self-cherishing thought. Whatever unpleasant things you ever experience, they all come from your self-cherishing thought. So, you need to put all the blame on one, the self-cherishing thought. Besides that, what do you need to do? In the next line Geshe Chekawa said,

Toward all beings contemplate their great kindness.

I can mention this now. This is very important, so write it down to meditate on it every day. You have to remember it otherwise you might forget. If it was me, I would forget! The very next minute!

You have to contemplate the kindness of others. I'm able to teach you what little Dharma I know—just some familiarity with a few words—because of your kindness. And generally when students are able to learn something, whether it is Dharma or whatever, that is due to the kindness

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<sup>8</sup> Chekawa Yeshe Dorje (1101–75).

<sup>9</sup> Thupten Jinpa's translation is "banish all blames to the single source" but this is how Rinpoche generally translates it. See *Mind Training: The Great Collection* p. 83, 2006, Boston: Wisdom Publications.

of the teacher. For example, the teacher can make a salary in a university or school, they can make money through education, due to kindness of the students. So, the kindness depends on each other.

That the population gets many freedoms and forms of happiness is due to the kindness of the government. And what the government is able to do for happiness is due to the kindness of the population. For example, taxes! If you think like that, there are so many examples of kindness and they depend on each other.

But now I'll mention this, then I'll stop here. All your happiness—from beginningless rebirths, at present and all the future happiness—depends on karma. All temporary and ultimate happiness, freedom from samsara, the blissful state of peace for yourself, including peerless happiness, enlightenment, buddhahood, the total cessation of obscurations and the completion of all realizations, everything, even the small comfort when you are hot and tired and a cool breeze blows on you, cooling you, making you feel comfortable, even small pleasures like that—these all come from your good karma.

Your good karma, your virtuous mind, that is the action of the buddhas. The buddhas have two actions, one is possessed by the buddhas' own mind, but one is possessed by us sentient beings, so your good karma is the buddhas' actions. So, your good karma comes from the buddhas, and the buddhas come from bodhisattvas; bodhisattvas come from bodhicitta, bodhicitta comes from great compassion, and great compassion comes from sentient beings whose minds are obscured and who are suffering. Compassion is generated by depending on them. Compassion depends on them, on their kindness.

Therefore, you receive all your happiness from beginningless time, now, and up to enlightenment, from sentient beings, from *every* sentient being, from every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal. There are numberless fish in the ocean, numberless worms under the earth, numberless insects in the grass, in the bush, including those tiny flies that jump when you walk on the grass, there are numberless birds in the trees and in the sky. You receive all your happiness from every animal, from every human being—and there are numberless universes with numberless human beings—from every sura, every asura and every intermediate state being. Every happiness, every wish for happiness that succeeds is received from every single sentient being. Your enlightenment comes from every single ant here and outside; you receive your enlightenment, the cessation of obscurations and the completion of realizations, from every sentient being. Now every ant you see outside, every dog, cat, bird, every human being, as you go to the market, you see people in the shop,

the restaurant, traveling by car, walking—from every single one you have received every single thing from them.

This is a very good meditation. When you go to the market, this is your mindfulness practice. When you walk around or go on a tour or pilgrimage, or when you just go around the city, in the market, shopping, this is an excellent meditation, meditating on the kindness of sentient beings. It is so good.

Even the Buddha comes from sentient beings, so there is no question about the Dharma and Sangha. The Buddha, Dharma and Sangha come from every sentient being, every mosquito, every banana slug, or whatever. Your refuge objects, those you take refuge in to be free from the lower realms, to be free from samsara, to be free from lower nirvana and to achieve enlightenment, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, who guide you, they come from sentient beings. Therefore, sentient beings are most precious, most dear, your most kind. Sentient beings are your wish-fulfilling gem, fulfilling all your wishes for happiness. I'll stop here.

## **DEDICATIONS**

[Mandala offering]

“Due to all the past, present, and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may bodhicitta be generated in the hearts of all sentient beings who have been your mother from beginningless rebirths and been kind from beginningless rebirths, showing unbelievable kindness, having taken care of you. Because they don't know the Dharma, they haven't met the Dharma, and those sentient beings who have met the Dharma hardly know anything, so the way they took care of you was with attachment, anger, ignorance, the self-cherishing thought. Because of that, they created so much negative karma, and they have had to suffer from beginningless rebirths up to now.”

So think, “If I don't practice Dharma and have a direct perception of emptiness, I will have to reincarnate to the sentient beings, then they will have to suffer unbelievably again with no end, like in the past. There will be no end; they will have to suffer because I have to be born to them. Therefore, I need to generate bodhicitta in all their hearts, especially the sentient beings living in this world, especially the sentient beings living in Nepal, especially the sentient beings, the students, all those who rely on me, who I promised to pray for, whose names were given to me, in all their hearts

may bodhicitta be generated, and may bodhicitta be generated in all of us here doing the course, including any family members who have died, who have already left this world, and those who are living now. May bodhicitta be generated in all their hearts.”

When we dedicate include all those who are dead, not just the living, that is very important. One way is to think that if we don't dedicate for them, who will save them from the oceans of suffering of samsara? That is one way to think.

You can also think in this way, “May any sentient being who sees me, hears me, remembers me, touches me, even the flies who land on my body and the ants, including all of them, not only people, those who see my photo or dream of me, may bodhicitta be generated in all their hearts, also in my heart, and for those who have already generated bodhicitta, may it be developed.”

[Prayers in Tibetan]

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, who exist in mere name and who do not exist from their own side, may the I, who exists in mere name and who does not exist from its own side, achieve buddhahood, which exists in mere name and which does not exist from its own side, and lead all the sentient beings, who exist in mere name and who do not exist from their own side, to that buddhahood, which exists in mere name and which does not exist from its own side, by myself alone, who exists in mere name and who does not exist from its own side.”

Thank you very much. Good night.

## Lecture 3: Understanding Karma

December 7, 2017

### THIS PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH

[Rinpoche slowly chants the verse from the *Vajra Cutter Sutra*]

KAR MA RAB RIB MAR ME DANG

A star, a defective view, a butter lamp flame,

GYU MA ZIL PA CHHU BUR DANG

An illusion, a dew drop, a water bubble,

MI LAM LOG DANG TRIN TA BUR

A dream, lightning, a cloud:

DÜ JÄ CHHÖ NAM DI TAR TA

See all causative phenomena like this.

“The reason I have been born as a human being at this time is not just to not be reborn in the evil-gone realms, the lower realms, not just to receive a higher rebirth as a deva or human being. Even, at this time, just by having been born as a human being doesn’t mean I won’t get reborn in the lower realms.”

During the second pilgrimage to Tibet, the second or third pilgrimage, I don’t remember, there was a young Chinese boy driving our car. We had some Western Sangha in the car. At that time my attendant was John, I don’t remember his last name. [A student prompts] John Feuille. I asked him to ask the driver a question. One thing was, although the driver accepted rebirth, he accepted past and future lives, his ideas were strange, they were not correct. So I asked John to ask him what he thought about his next life, and he explained because he was a human being he was always going to be a human, forever. That is what he believed, so although he accepted reincarnation, he thought there would be no change. If somebody was a dog now they would be a dog all the time. That is what he accepted without any logical reason to prove that. If that being had been a dog from beginningless rebirths, then why? What is the cause for the dog to be born a dog? There is no explanation, simply because in the past lives they were a dog. So anyway, that was very interesting.

We then talked about the mind. I don't remember what happened. I just remembered about Tibet as I was talking.

That kind of answer is quite unusual. He accepted reincarnation but his ideas were totally wrong; there was no logic. He just used his own logic—because you are now human being, you are going to be a human being forever. Why a dog? Why a human being? He didn't have a logical explanation.

You are human now but it's like somebody about to be executed is let out of prison for a short while. They are given a little freedom to be outside in the city. For just a very short time they are given permission to go to their house to meet their family, to go around the city, but then they have to go back to the prison. It's like that. You are a human being just for a short time.

It's kind of like you are on a plateau on top of a mountain for a short time, but then you are going to fall down again. You are just there where there is some flat place for a very short while, then you are going to fall down, which means down to the lower realms—as a hell being, a hungry ghost or an animal. But of course it is all up to your mind.

You can either transform your mind into virtue, into a positive mind, with non-ignorance, non-anger and non-attachment, or you can make your mind one of ignorance, anger and attachment. Making the mind one of non-ignorance, non-anger and non-attachment you go up, you go to higher rebirths all the way up to enlightenment. The temporary result is the temporary happiness of higher rebirths and the ultimate result is ultimate happiness, the total freedom from the oceans of samsaric sufferings, not just for a few lifetimes or a few years, not like that, but forever, and then full enlightenment.

The reason is that you cease the cause of suffering, which is not outside, which is your negative mind, this unhealthy mind, this unclean, impure mind. Probably more people understand “unhealthy mind” so you can also say that. You then go to enlightenment, to peerless happiness, the total cessation of obscurations and completion of realizations.

But then if you make your mind ignorant, being attached, angry and all those things, then your mind is unhealthy, negative, and then whatever action that is done with that mind is all negative; it is an unhealthy action, bringing a negative result, a rebirth in the lower realms as a hell being, a hungry ghost or an animal.

So, at this time you have not only been born as a human being but by coming to Kopan, you have met the Buddha's teachings. Therefore, you have incredible freedom in your hands. You have great freedom to choose where you want to go, lower or higher, even to total liberation from the

oceans of samsaric sufferings and *sang gye*, the total cessation of obscurations and completion of realizations. You have total freedom. It depends on how you use your mind.

Nobody likes suffering; everybody like happiness, but whether you become free from suffering and get happiness depends on how you use your mind, how you use your life, every year, every month, every week, every day, every hour, every minute, every second. It is like that. You have total freedom in your hands to achieve all those happinesses up to enlightenment, or to be in the oceans of samsaric suffering forever, and especially to be in the lower realms.

Therefore, you have to realize that this life you have now, after discovering the Buddha's teachings, is *so* important. Sorry, I should make twice as much noise, but some people might get angry so I didn't! Some people get easily frustrated and angry if I make too much noise. But I make a lot of noise just so you may not forget, so it gets imprinted more on the brain or in the mind, for it to stay a little bit longer.

I was trying to remember a quotation from a great enlightened being who happened in Tibet, Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo. There is a verse in his *Calling the Guru from Afar*, but I don't remember the exact words. I remember the essence. Did you find it? [*Student*: In the short one?] Not the short one.

Thinking of this excellent body, highly meaningful and difficult to obtain,  
And wishing to take its essence with unerring choice between gain and loss,  
happiness and suffering—reminds me of you, guru.<sup>10</sup>

Those are very powerful words. The essence is that this perfect human rebirth is so difficult to find again; it is only really found this once. In every second you have great freedom to choose. That is due to the kindness of the guru. Then the verse requests the guru to guide you.

Unless you know that, it's like the expression about the donkey, how whether you put precious gold dust or dirt in a donkey's ear it shakes both out equally, not knowing the value of the gold. That is the expression for somebody who has no idea of the preciousness of the teachings, so it is similar to this human rebirth; it is all kind of misused. When you have no idea how precious it is, then the way you use this life is no difference from the insects or the worms used in fishing.

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<sup>10</sup> See *FPMT Essential Prayer Book*, pp. 91–98.

Then totally—every second, every minute, every day, every week, every month, every year—purely by attachment and ignorance, you go to the lower realms. Ignorance is the root of samsara, the ignorance of not knowing the Dharma, what is right and wrong. Because of that, your life is totally used for ignorance and then anger and so forth, with no idea what you have been experiencing in the six realms, samsara, one after the other from beginningless rebirths. You have totally no idea at all.

The other thing is, how you live this life will continue in the future. It will be endless, again endlessly being reborn in samsara, endlessly suffering in samsara, again and again in the six realms one after the other. You have no idea of these things; you are not aware. It's like you have your eyes closed completely. Then, because you cannot see anything, you never do anything to free yourself, to be *free* from that. You never do anything; you never search for how you yourself can fulfill the wish to be free. You never look for a method to be free. Leaving aside others, you never think how just you can be free from samsara. I'm just mentioning this as the motivation.

## **THE SUFFERING RESULTS OF KILLING**

There are very few sentient beings who have met and who understand the Dharma, who can discriminate correctly what is right and what is wrong in life. There are hardly any human beings who have Dharma wisdom, who have met and understood the Dharma. For example, what do you call those people in Africa who don't wear clothes much, only around here? [*Student: Naked.*] In Africa and in other places, maybe also America, especially in old places? [*Student: Tribes.*]

Their food is by hunting animals. Those people make sharp arrows and go hunting for gorillas or monkeys, carrying them to the house and burning them in the fire. That is their food. That's very similar to those who live by fishing, every day catching maybe more than thousands, thousands, thousands, thousands of fish in a huge net. They do that every day, not only fishing with a net, what do you call this one? [*Student: Fishing rod.*] Fishing rod, they go to the beach or on a bridge. It's not that they don't have food to eat, but they take it as entertainment, as a pleasure in life. They think only of themselves, not thinking of others in the slightest.

What is her name? [*Student: Kirsten.*] Because Kirsten used to cook on a ship in England, I asked her how many times she had been fishing. She said she went twice or something like that. The second time she put the line in but it was caught in a tree, it didn't go in the water, so she gave up

fishing from that time. She is very mindful, very clever; she understood what it means to not fish. That is very thoughtful; that is very good. But most people wouldn't think like that.

I'm just giving an example to you, those who hunt animals every day as food or go fishing. I haven't physically seen it but I saw a video, at the beach in Thailand there are people who have small shops on the beach who are always busy cutting up shellfish. This is what they do all day long and they sell them. The shellfish can't speak, they can't express themselves, they can't have demonstrations. It's so pitiful, every day, every day like this.

If you kill one insect, no matter what size—the size of a mountain or a small size—of course the motivation is a delusion: attachment, anger or ignorance, or all three. If you kill one insect, one sentient being, usually four things gather: the object, the intention, the action and the resolution. The object you kill is a sentient being, then there is the thought to kill, the action of killing and the resolution, that the being dies before you. So those four things are gathered. Because that action was done with the self-cherishing thought, then of course there is attachment and all that; because it was done with delusion, your wrong way of thinking makes that action of killing negative karma.

Those four things gathered have four suffering results. There is the *ripened aspect result*, which is suffering in lower realms. You get born and suffer in lower realms, and it could be for eons, depending on the strength of the negative karma. Then, you experience the other three suffering results in the human realm. Due to another karma—not the same karma but a good karma—you are born as human being but you experience the *possessed result*. The place you are born is not green and beautiful but very dusty and windy. Because the action is killing and therefore negative karma, the place has a lot of danger for your life, a lot of killing and many diseases; it is not a healthy environment.

You have to understand where that unhealthy, dangerous environment comes from. It comes from the mind. That is very important. So now, you have to change the mind. The point is to change the mind. The way to change that negative environment into a positive, healthy one is through the mind. That is the real way to do it. So, it is a very dusty, very uninteresting, boring place.

### ***Rinpoche's early life***

For example, I have diabetes so I can't eat sugar or potatoes, (although I do eat potatoes.) I was born in Solu Khumbu, in the Himalayan mountains, where potatoes are the main food. We make

eleven or twelve types of potato food, as well as potato alcohol, which looks like very clean water, but it is unbelievably strong.

I know what it means to be drunk. Although I was born in Solu Khumbu, there was another place, Namche Bazaar, where the people were cleverer. I came from there because I escaped from the monastery when I was learning the alphabet—*ka kha ga na*—from my uncle who was a monk and who carved many, many rocks with mantras. Benefactors asked him and then he carved mantras in the rock on the road, which people went around. I escaped the monastery on the hillside back to my birthplace a few times. As a child you don't look for reasons, you don't analyze reasons; the only thing a child is interested in is going home and playing with friends, nothing else. You don't analyze reasons much in childhood. I just thought of home and ran away from the monastery.

One or two days after [each escape] my mother would put me on somebody's shoulder and they would take me back to the monastery where I would stay for a few days and then I would escape again. When I escaped I ran home so fast because I saw dark caves and got scared. So my mother sent me to Rolwaling. You have to cross dangerous snow mountains and sleep in dangerous places. There is no real road but the people who travel there know how to go across. Everybody is tied with ropes because sometimes you sink in the snow. There are a few places where there is a narrow ridge and deep blue water way down below, if you look. If a person drops, the ropes pull him up, except the first person. Two people are always tied together, walking along like that.

I lived there for some years and then came back to take an initiation at Thangme monastery. The lama of Thangme monastery was a married lama, not a monk. He was always in retreat but he gave initiations from time to time. He was very good-hearted, with a white beard. I remember when I was a child he gave a Ludoma initiation and there were many people. As part of the initiation, we all had to sit on the throne and blow a conch shell but when I blew the conch shell it didn't make a sound!

For just a short time my mother invited my teacher, who was also my uncle, a monk. We went in my mother's house, which was very dark and dirty. We were a poor family. My father had died and then so many people came to ask for the money we owed, but we didn't have money to pay. She put a dirty table there for my uncle and me. I never had potato alcohol before when I lived in the house but I think five years after I had left and returned with my uncle, she served it. In Solu Khumbu there are monks who never drink in their life—it's part of the monks' vow—but I think in Himalayan mountains it is very common to drink *chang* [alcohol]. It seems it is very important to drink, just as in Tibet it is tea with butter. Tibetan tea is a liquid of tea with butter and salt shaken into it. Generally monks in Tibet don't have anything so the butter in tea is very important for them.

But in Solu Khumbu many monks drink chang; it is very common. My mother gave a glass of potato wine to my teacher and then the same to me.

I had two or three sips and I became drunk. I could not walk. It's like when a mosquito is dead and all the long legs are stretched out. I was like that, with no control at all in my body, and kind of a little bit uncomfortably tight in my chest. My teacher held my belt at the back and just dragged me back along the road to the monastery. I went just like this, with mosquito legs out, with no ability to walk. So, I know what it means to be drunk.

For potato wine we use small potatoes that people don't eat. My mother made it from time to time when I was small child. You fill a whole big pot with small potatoes, then another smaller pot, another smaller pot, and another smaller pot, like building a stupa, so the vapor cannot go outside; it is all sealed around. What happens is the vapor from the potatoes goes high up and the drops are collected in the containers, one, two, three, four. You have to burn the fire for several hours, then you get a small container of chang, called arak, which is unbelievably strong. It was maybe four hours' work. My mother did this from time to time when I was at home.

Even though I don't know any Dharma, just a few words, but I teach in the world, I try to help people with those few words, to inspire them to be a meaningful human being, not harming others and bringing peace up to enlightenment, not only themselves but also for others who are numberless. That is due to my mother's kindness. Because of that, even now I am able to teach these few words to you to be able to understand the reality of life. That I can be just a tiny bit helpful to you, who need it, that came from my mother's kindness, by sending me to the monastery to learn when I was a small child.

[Tea offering and break to drink tea]

I remember one story. After my father died, when I was a small child, many people came to ask for money that we owed them. The leader of the country came to the house to ask for money. My mother offered chang and then he spoke and left. The house had two stories, and before he even got out of the door downstairs, my mother was picking up the dirt from between the planks on the second floor and throwing it after him. Then, she was complaining—not complaining but what do you call it? [*Ven. Ailsa: Cursing.*] She was cursing, picking up the dirt and throwing it and cursing, maybe saying, “May he die soon,” things like that. I remember when I was a small child my mother did that when he came to collect money and we didn't have it to pay him.

When I was born many animals died, many obstacles happened to the family. I was telling you that the majority of people in the world haven't met the Dharma, don't know the Dharma. Like that example of the people with the shellfish in Thailand near the beach. I'm just giving you an example but you know many more.

### ***The four results of killing (continued)***

Killing one sentient being, one insect, with the self-cherishing thought, with attachment, becomes negative karma. It becomes negative karma because of the motivation. So, killing even a tiny insect has a result. The four suffering results I was talking about before, this is very important subject. I'm sure you went through that.

The possessed result is to do with the place. I have diabetes, so the food you normally eat has side effects for me. This is the result of the negative karma of killing in a past life. Medicine has side effects. Even if it works for others, even if it is the correct medicine, for you there are side effects. It's not poison but you can't eat it; it harms you, like with diabetes.

I was talking about potatoes, then I went on to the mountain story. Potatoes and white rice. There is a general one but according to my experience, with diabetes, the experience of food changes as time goes. One time it harms. Like before, two pieces of orange increased the diabetes, or what do you call the small fruit? [*Student: Grapes.*] Two grapes and water, many years ago brought on the diabetes but now not.

It is a general explanation but it depends on your experience. Certain food harms you sometimes, but certain food cures you. Khadro-la's attendant, Sangpo, recovered from his diabetes by eating *tsampa*, barley flour. There have been people like that. You have to understand karma; so much depends on karma. There was a Tibetan or Nepali whose face looked like the young Nepalese king who was killed. I went to see him once to ask his help to build a university in Kathmandu and in Lumbini but it didn't happen. Tibetan monks came to get Nepalese citizenship but it didn't happen. It was very easy to talk to the young king. So I offered him a big carpet, a peacock feather and a prayer wheel. This was the first prayer wheel made by a student from Guhyasamaja Center, Washington. Lorne and his wife at that time bought a small prayer wheel in Boudha, and when I saw him and mentioned the benefits of prayer wheels, they started to make prayer wheels. They were very primitive, made with wood. I gave one to the king, and he asked what to do with it. So I told him there were skies of benefit. When I was leaving I mentioned that if you have a prayer wheel

when you die and you put it on your head, it was the same as doing *powa*, the transference of consciousness to a pure land. When I talked about death, he was physically there but mentally he went far away. He asked, “Guru, should I keep this?” so I said he should. He was trying to follow the truth but his wife was Hindu and she took it away. I heard the story. OK. I don’t know why that story came.

The possessed result is like this, you understand? Where does the side effect of medicine and food come from? It comes from you, from your negative mind. That is very important to understand. To change that you have to change your mind, you have to purify your mind into a positive one, creating only good karma with morality. Now you understand.

Practicing morality—as a lay person, a monk or a nun—there is a relationship with the environment, a relationship with the world you live in. Your positive mind affects the world giving you a happy life; your negative mind affects the world giving you a suffering life. That is how you should understand it.

Living in morality as a lay person, there are five, four, three, two or one precepts besides refuge, but the basic thing is to not harm others. That is most unbelievably important in life—to not harm others and, on the basis of that, to benefit others. If you harm then of course you can’t benefit them.

That is the possessed result of killing an insect, one sentient being. Now *experiencing a result similar to the cause*, whatever the past negative karma you have created, however you harmed the other sentient beings, you now receive that harm from others as a result. For how long? Not just once, not just for one life, but you receive harm from others for five hundred lifetimes.

I think that might be in general. It depends on how much harm you gave, how harmful it was, but generally for the result of one negative action of killing, you will be killed for five hundred lifetimes. Keep that in mind. For one action of killing one sentient being, the result is you get killed by others for five hundred lifetimes. I want to emphasize this. You have to understand it. You experience the result similar to the cause.

The fourth one is *creating a result similar to the cause*. You repeat the same action again because of the habit, the imprint left from the past action. Again you harm sentient beings, killing them again in next life. You do this again and again, not just once but again and again, because of the habit. Having done it often before, the negative imprint is left to do it again. For example, in one family with five children, one child doesn’t like to kill insects and animals at all. When the child sees other people killing they cry, whereas somebody else in the family will see an insect and immediately want to kill it. Like that, two children are born in same family, but their life is totally different.

So, you can see that their minds didn't come from the parents. Because their minds came from their own past lives, the continuity of their own past lives' minds, they are different. One likes so much to kill, the other one cries even seeing somebody else killing.

I saw in a video showing how every year in the past there were two days when the Nepalese government killed ten thousand buffaloes. I don't know if they do it now<sup>11</sup> but, before, the officials cut their necks with a long knife. They competed, watching who was better at cutting the necks of the buffaloes. I heard there was a competition, and the government officials killed ten thousand buffaloes in two days. But in some places, such as Pharping, most of the animals sacrificed are chickens. They believe the god drinks the blood or something like that. I don't know if India has this. I don't think India has that many sacrificial animals. There are maybe other countries but Nepal is the worst.

I saw a picture of a small child who didn't know his father had brought a goat to their place to sacrifice it. The video didn't show it but after another goat was sacrificed, their own goat was about to be killed. Seeing that, the boy got a shock and he had his arm around the goat calling out to his father not to kill it. He pointed his finger at the father, telling him to stop but the father didn't want to, so the child cried. Then the father made a promise that he would never kill another goat in his life.

He saved his father from negative karma and the four suffering results. By killing one time you get killed five hundred lifetimes. The father had sacrificed on those special days and even on other days, so, by crying, the boy saved his father from the most unbelievably heavy negative karma. And he saved so many goats from being sacrificed. I don't know where the child lives, but I thought to go to him to offer him a *kehatag*, a scarf, to thank him, but it didn't happen.

I heard that nowadays in Nepal the sadhus, the priests and students talk about not sacrificing. They say if you want to sacrifice, sacrifice your own blood, sacrifice yourself. They say that it is not the way to worship, that it does not please the gods, that it is the wrong way. That is a very effective way to talk. I heard many sadhus, many lamas are talking like that now in Nepal. When I heard the first one, I thought to offer a scarf to thank him very much. Buddhists don't sacrifice like that. Killing even one being, as a result you get killed for five hundred lifetimes by others, by the sentient beings you killed.

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<sup>11</sup> Rinpoche is probably referring to the Gadhimai Festival which, after huge petitions and protests, was stopped after the 2018 festival by the Gadhimai Temple Trust.

This is just one being but there are people killing every day. Even in one hour they kill so many conch shell animals to sell. There are also so many people in the world hunting animals to kill. They have never heard the Dharma; they have never got the wisdom of the Dharma to understand what is right and what is wrong in the life. No way. For their whole life they haven't heard, and even if somebody told them they would think that person was crazy.

My talk went on and on, sorry.

Down below the mountain there is a Nepalese man who used to buy goats that came from India. When I saw them I bought them, even though they were twelve or thirteen thousand rupees, something like that. I left them at the nunnery because one or two might have some disease, and then they would come here. I did that a few times. Then, his wife died. She suffered so much for a year, then I think what happened she said the heavy karma she experienced was due to this. I'm not talking about past lives, just this life. We didn't get to talk but after he saw his wife die, he stopped killing. He sold the goats to a restaurant down there, so they depended on him to make money. They received meat from him.

Before his wife died, the driver for the nunnery, a Nepalese man, told me that because he was dealing with the goats, he told him to not kill, but he said, "By killing goats I am able to build a new house." Because the nunnery driver hadn't learned Dharma, when the man told him the benefits the driver couldn't say anything.

The last time, I sat down with the man and gave him a crystal mala and recited mantras. I told him to go around the Boudha stupa and recite them, and I talked a little bit about the negative karma of killing. This time when I went to the celebration of a lama who built a monastery, on the car road, not this side, he was there at his house. He stood up when I was coming up. I think he saw me, but I didn't get to acknowledge him.

When people have no karma to hear the Dharma their whole life, even if you tell them, they will think you are crazy. It doesn't fit their mind. So you can see, so much unbelievable suffering is due to ignorance, not knowing the Dharma. All these are objects of compassion for you. Due to ignorance, life after life they have to suffer, for hundreds of thousands, millions of lives, on and on, they have to suffer. This is without talking about the lower realms.

You are just here as a human being temporarily, for a very short time. It's like lightning at night; it's like a water bubble that can be popped anytime; it's like water dew on the plants, it can drop off anytime.

Even to be free from samsara forever, to achieve liberation, is not enough. The main purpose is to benefit others, to free sentient beings from oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to buddhahood, total cessation of obscurations and completion of realizations. To do that perfectly without mistake, you must achieve the state of omniscience, and to do *that* you must know the Dharma. You need to know the Dharma. I emphasize that as the motivation.

***Recognize you are harmed because you harmed others in the past***

Last night, I said that it is so important to meditate on Kadampa Geshe Chekawa's *Seven-Point Mind Transformation* teaching on the basis of the Buddha's teachings,

Blame all the shortcomings on one.

Toward others meditate on kindness.

Dharmarakshita was Lama Atisha's guru. Lama Atisha made Buddhism in Tibet—both sutra and tantra—correct, pure. At one time it had degenerated but because of the purity of his teachings, it has continued up to now, and so many beings have become enlightened, or have become free from samsara as bodhisattvas. Lama Atisha's guru, Dharmarakshita, said in *Wheel of Sharp Weapons*,

When our bodies are aching and racked with great torment  
Of dreadful diseases we cannot endure,  
This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning  
Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.  
Till now we have injured the bodies of others;  
Hereafter let's take on what sickness is theirs.<sup>12</sup>

When your body has the most unbearable pain, with many sicknesses, you should recognize that in the past you have harmed another transmigratory being's body, so that wheel of sharp weapons, your own negative karma, has turned back on you. Because of the karma of harming another being's body in the past, the wheel of sharp weapons of the negative karma, has turned on you this time. So

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<sup>12</sup> V. 10.

now, what you should do is to take all the sentient beings' disease on yourself. It mentions the evolution of where your disease comes from. It comes from the mind.

[The electricity cuts out] This darkness also comes from the mind!

Not only one sentient being's sickness, you should take all the numberless sentient beings' sickness on yourself, so it makes whatever sickness you have most worthwhile. Not only one sentient being, but your experience of pain should be for numberless sentient beings, for every single sentient being. It talks of the evolution, where your heavy pain comes from, not from others but from your mind.

That is related to sickness. It is similar with any relationship problem you are going through. I mean not just one but one after the other, even two or three together, you have relationship problems with different people. That is because you have caused something like that before. Slandering, sexual misconduct, you did these in the past to others, so now you are experiencing that back. The wheel of that karma of harming others is now turning back on you; you are experiencing the result of the harm you did to others

So now what you should do to make the experience of relationship problems most beneficial, is to take *all* the sentient beings' relationship problems on yourself, to experience it for them. By taking all the relationship problems, all the suffering upon yourself, you experience it for them so they can achieve the dharmakaya. This is the bodhicitta practice that Lama Atisha's guru, Dharmarakshita, advised.

For example, I'll mention a story. We bought land in Tibet for a million dollars to build a Padmasambhava statue for the success of His Holiness' wishes for Tibet. Some students gave and some students loaned some money, so we raised a million dollars. We got the land but then we had to build a hospital or school or something but because we were building the statue it didn't happen. The Tibetan man who was helping us didn't go to the Chinese office, so we lost it to the Chinese government. Later I realized it is a holy place where Padmasambhava met King Trisong Detsen, the Dharma king of Tibet. It is a very holy place, with Padmasambhava's footprint. I went to see it after we bought it. It is very beautiful place.

What happened was, it didn't cost that much, only half a million dollars, but the man who helped took over five hundred thousand more. He also bought land for himself with that same money. This is what happened. I asked the person who produced the most famous feng shui book in the world, Lillian Too, who knows a Buddhist businessman in Malaysia. I asked him to build a Padmasambhava statue for the second time. He accepted and he sent his manager to Tibet. He went in to the office

and saw many false letters. The big businessman from Malaysia got very angry and wanted to put the Tibetan man and his wife in prison. I said we can't do that; we can't put them in prison. It's not simply a family matter so it's a disgrace. If you are practicing Buddhism you can't put them in prison. He got very angry, he thought they cheated me, a Buddhist, and he was very angry.

In reality, they are most precious, most kind. They have allowed us to finish the karma we created in a past life that we did to other people. In the past we did like that to other people, we cheated them. Because they have helped us finish the past heavy negative karma, they are extremely kind. Instead of being born in the lower realms, in hell, we experience the karma of what we did to other sentient beings, cheating them, in this life. Then we finish that negative karma. So those who did that are extremely kind, they are most extremely kind. I didn't tell the man that, but that is the reality.

Did Marcel serve on the Maitreya Project for one year or two years? Three years? There is another story I want to tell you. I know some of you have these problems, which is why I want to tell you the story. We are trying to build a five-hundred-foot Maitreya Buddha statue in India. This is the first time I have told you this story. Again, it is the same kindness. I met a couple in Singapore. I don't think the wife knew very well what the husband wanted to do. She was taking care of their two small children. The husband explained to us that they could build the five-hundred-foot Maitreya Buddha statue four or five times; they had the money. I don't think the wife knew anything about this. We believed him.

Then, there was a story. Her brother got angry or negative, and he took away her money. She had to escape to Malaysia and then to France and Nepal, to several countries. We tried to help. Kunsang spent money for the traveling and food, and then Marcel helped. We helped doing pujas. They didn't stay anywhere, just going here and there for two years. We requested other lamas to do *mo*. Drubtob Rinpoche, who lives near Swayambhunath, did a *mo*, and many pujas came out, which Sera Mey and Lama Ösel Rinpoche did for two years. He said it would be very difficult to get money from her for the project.

When we are experiencing in this life the karma of having cheated others in the past, when we get cheated, most observations, maybe not all, indicate it is according to our karma. I think so. We did that for two years, doing many pujas, then in the end we sent her a message in China, "You did that to us, but don't do that to others."

All that is actually totally the same. It was so kind that she did that to us, so kind. Instead of being born in the lower realms and experiencing heavy negative karma for eons, she made us finish

that karma in this life. We experience the result of having cheated in the past, and, by experiencing that, the past karma is finished. So, she is extremely kind, helping us to finish past negative karma.

Thinking like that helps you generate compassion and frees you from samsara more quickly. You achieve enlightenment more quickly if you generate compassion for a person like that. Some of you have to experience problems, so I'm telling you the story of how we dealt with it. It is not only you who experiences problems, we do too.

When people think you are telling a lie when you speak to them, even if it is true, when they don't believe what you say, all that is the result of the past negative karma of telling lies to others. Things like that are difficult. If many people tell you lies, that is the result of the past negative karma of telling lies to others; the wheel of sharp weapons has turned on you and now you have to suffer. Then you tell lies again to others because of your past habit, the imprint.

Then, with sexual misconduct, the possessed result is you are born or you live in a place that is very dirty, smelly, unhealthy. For example, even if you normally live in a clean place but sometimes, even for five or ten minutes, you have to cross such a place, filthy, dirty, with lots of *kaka*, it is the possessed result of past sexual misconduct. You have to remember that.

Experiencing the result, if you are married, your husband or wife is always competitive with you; they are never harmonious. That becomes a cause of divorce or separation. All that is the result of your negative karma of sexual misconduct with others who are not your husband or wife. Even with your husband or wife, there are certain things that are sexual misconduct, such as having sex after having taken the eight Mahayana precepts or at holy places, such as the guru's place or stupas or monasteries. There are certain places where it becomes sexual misconduct. By committing sexual misconduct the wheel of karma turns on you and you never get along, you always fight. These things happen.

Creating a result similar to the cause, you do again in this life what you did in the past to others, again and again. Even if you want to control it, it happens; you have no choice, you kind of fall into that. That is because the imprint of so much past negative karma is very strong, so it happens again and again. That is creating a result similar to the cause.

Related to stealing, which has gathered four actions, due to another good karma ripening, after acquiring another human life, you suffer so much. Where you are born, where you live, there is no rain. There is a drought and nothing grows. Or even if it grows, because of the wind—I don't know what it is called—the crops grow a little bit but then are completely destroyed. Or there is too much rain and there are floods, destroying the crops.

In Africa there was a place without water where millions of people died, including children. Then, somebody brought water in from another country by airplane, but the minute the airplane arrived in this place, all of a sudden the water in the airplane became very dirty. It became filthy in the airplane, completely undrinkable. You have to know why the water became filthy. It is all from the mind, from the past negative karma of stealing. The possessed result is so harmful to life.

Experiencing the result similar to the cause means that things get stolen. Some people seem to always have their things stolen, money and other possessions. That is experiencing the result similar to the cause. Then, creating the result similar to the cause, you do the stealing again, even though you know it's not good. That problem can arise—you can't abstain from it, you can't control it, even though you know it is not good. That is the past negative karma creating the habitual attitude.

The shortcomings of slandering, gossiping, covetousness, ill will and heresy are explained. You should relate this to what Lama Atisha's guru explained in the *Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, how doing negative things returns to you now. That explains what to do in the taking and giving bodhicitta practice, taking all the suffering of others on yourself and wishing that they achieve the dharmakaya. It is a great practice.

I'll stop here.

Whatever problem you are experiencing now, relate it to past negative karma, to the ten nonvirtues you have done. That is a simple example. All that is done with the self-cherishing thought, and then you experience the different results. Then, you do the practice, as Dharmarakshita mentioned, taking the suffering of sentient beings on yourself. If you do that sincerely it makes you to achieve enlightenment quickly.

## DEDICATIONS

[Mandala offering]

“Due to all the past, present, and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may bodhicitta, the source of all happiness up to enlightenment for yourself and every sentient being, may it be generated in the hearts of every single sentient being, in particular the sentient beings in this world, in particular in the hearts of sentient beings in Nepal, all the students in FPMT and so forth, all those who rely on me, who I promised to pray for, whose name was given to me. May bodhicitta to be generated in all our hearts,

including our family members who have died and those who are still living, and in any sentient being who sees me, hears me, remembers me, who touches me, sees photos of me, dreams of me—in all those sentient beings, not only people, even insects, may bodhicitta be generated in my own heart and in the hearts of all others. In whose heart bodhicitta has been generated may it increase.

“Due to all the past, present, and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, which exist in mere name, may the I, who exists in mere name, achieve buddhahood, which exists in mere name, and lead all the sentient beings, who exist in mere name, to that buddhahood, which exists in mere name, by myself alone, who exists in mere name.”

Thank you very much.

## Lecture 4: The Four Clingings

December 8, 2017

[Students recite *Prayers Before Teachings*]

### ATTACHMENT OBSCURES CONVENTIONAL AND ULTIMATE TRUTH

The purpose of your life is not just living for this life. If that were so, there would be no difference between your way of thinking and that of insects, the fish you eat, the chickens you eat. There would be no difference from them in your way of thinking, being attached to this life. It would be exactly the same. Only the body is different but other than that there is no difference from the insects, from the maggots, from those ants keeping their lives so busy. Even if externally you look different, even if you have a million, a billion, a zillion dollars, and you own gold and skies of wish-granting jewels, if your attitude is only attachment to this life, only working for this life's happiness, you are no different from the maggots, the ants and the mosquitoes.

You are supposed to be very special, you are supposed to have a very special way of thinking, especially if you have a human body. But just having a human body does not define you as having a special way of thinking, even if you can fly. As I mentioned yesterday, there are numberless beings that can fly, even insects and birds going for water. That is just an ordinary capable being; it's the same as a tiger or the tiniest insects, such as the tiniest flies in the grass that jump and run away when you walk. Ordinary capable beings are capable of just obtaining food for this life, just the happiness and comfort of this life; there is no difference from the animals.

Besides the three special capable beings, the ordinary capable being is the one who is attached to this life, just working for this life, only thinking of the happiness of today, not the happiness of tomorrow, next week, next month, next year. You can see how the people in this world who only think about working for the happiness of today are so silly. Not working for tomorrow's happiness, or next week's, next month's, next year's, only today's. That is so silly. If you don't make preparations for the happiness of the next day, when today finishes and tomorrow comes you have a problem. Such a mind is like a child's mind, so silly.

Similarly, only being concerned with the happiness of this life, only working for the happiness of this life, is so silly, so meaningless. The root of life's problems is attachment to this life. That is nonvirtue, and the attachment itself obscures the mind. It doesn't enlighten the mind, it obscures the mind. You have to know the difference between what attachment does and what wisdom does.

Wisdom is the opposite of attachment. You have to know the difference. This is just my simple example. Attachment obscures the mind from realizing the ultimate nature of the I, the self, the person.

Not only that, it obscures even the understanding of the conventional nature of the I. It is the same with phenomena. This is a very important point. Attachment obscures your mind from seeing the ultimate nature of the flower, *shunyata*, the emptiness of the flower. Not only does it obscure you from seeing that, it also obscures you from seeing the conventional nature.

Looking at a flower, what is the truth for the all-obscuring mind? It is the nature of impermanence. It changes from morning to night. At night it is different, tomorrow it is very different. The color alters; the shape changes. [The perceptible changes] happen gradually, not all of a sudden, but the flower changes within hours, it changes within minutes, it changes within seconds, even within the shortest period of a second. Right now, you don't notice it but in reality it is changing. It is changing within every minute, within every second, but you don't notice it.

It appears as permanent and you believe it to be permanent. That is *totally* wrong, a total hallucination, even without talking about the ultimate nature. You understand? It is like that, changing within a second, second by second, minute by minute, day by day, all that happens.

While you are analyzing the conventional nature of a beautiful object, attachment doesn't arise; when you don't analyze it, attachment arises. You believe it is permanent and attachment arises. But when you check the nature of the object—not the ultimate nature, but the conventional nature—there is no object for attachment. It's lost; it's a hallucination. The object of the attachment, the hallucination, is not there, because you are checking the nature that is the opposite of the attachment, the beauty existing from its own side. There is the hallucination of existing from its own side, then on top of that there is the beauty and you get so attached. Then it is difficult for the mind to separate from the object, like oil stuck on paper.

While you are doing the analysis, the attachment doesn't manifest, at least not as much as before, when you didn't analyze. That is not the function of attachment. Therefore, attachment even obscures you from realizing the conventional nature, besides the ultimate nature.

The ultimate nature is that it does not exist from its own side. It exists but does not exist from its own side. It is totally empty of existing from its own side. It is not that there is no flower. It's not that there is no flower even in name. There is a flower but it doesn't exist from its own side; that is its ultimate nature. The flower that appears as something a little more than what is merely labeled by the mind, that is what is not there. That is the subtle object to be refuted.

There are the four schools, Vaibhashika, Sautrantika, Mind Only or Cittamatra, and Madhyamaka, which has two sub-schools, Svatantrika and Prasangika. The Prasangika's object to be refuted is very subtle. Only by recognizing *that*, then it just takes a minute to see emptiness only, *tong pa nyi*—not only *tong pa*, but *tong pa nyi*—the emptiness only of the flower, *shunyata*. It becomes easy to realize that.

Attachment not only obscures the mind, it becomes the basis for many problems, for many sufferings to arise. That is the definition of attachment. When the mind is unstained by attachment to this life, it is free. Unstained by attachment of this life means it is pure. That means you are free from *all* the problems, the hundreds of thousands or more that come from attachment. You are free from all the rest of the problems. You have to understand the evolution, how all of life's problems are connected to that. Now you understand what practicing Dharma means, and how you can achieve inner peace and happiness.

## THE FOUR CLINGINGS

Dharma doesn't mean just reciting prayers or changing the body, it doesn't mean just that; it means to subdue the mind. "Subdue the mind. This is the teaching of the Buddha." I mentioned before that even if you are able to recite by heart the more than one hundred volumes of the Kangyur, the Buddha's teachings, and the more than two hundred volumes of the pandits' and yogis' commentaries, even if you are able to do that, your mind could still not be subdued. Fundamentally, not subdued means being attached to this life. That mind is not Dharma.

Even though you can explain so well by heart, if your mind is not free from attachment to this life, your mind is not Dharma. Then, your action of explaining the Dharma is not Dharma. You are explaining the Dharma, the path, but your action is not Dharma because it is done with the mind attached to this life.

Similarly even if you do a lifetime retreat in an isolated place, never sleeping, your mind is not clear, not pure, because the motivation is attachment to this life. Even if your whole lifetime is retreating in the Himalayan mountains, the mind is not Dharma. You might be totally silent, never seeing birds, dogs and cats, let alone humans, but it is still not Dharma.

The motivation could just be to get so much power and reputation in this world. That's why you are on the mountain doing retreat. Your whole life is retreating on the Himalayan mountains, not

even seeing yetis, the snowball men, (I'm joking) but it is not a retreat; it is not a Dharma practice. Do you understand?

Of the four Tibetan Mahayana traditions—Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, Gelug—the Sakya have *Parting from the Four Clings*.<sup>13</sup>

If you cling to this life, you are not a Dharma practitioner.

If you cling to this life, you are not a Dharma practitioner. By examining your mind, you can tell whether you are practicing Dharma or not. It is not just external appearances, like reciting mantras and doing a lot of prayers, not just some external change, not that, as I mentioned before.

You have to examine your mind as to whether you are practicing Dharma or not, whether it becomes Dharma or not. Who is practicing Dharma? Whether it's the person who doing business or working in a hospital or an old folks' home, or whether it's somebody who lives in the high Himalayan mountains in a cave—you cannot judge who is practicing Dharma and who is not practicing Dharma from the outside. You can only understand if you understand the motivation of the person. The person doing business, working in the city or for the government, living a family life, or someone seeing nobody, living in cave, only if you can read their minds can you see who is practicing Dharma and who is not practicing Dharma.

If you cling to the future lives' samsaric perfections, your mind is not in renunciation.

You have not renounced the whole of samsara while your mind remains attached to samsaric pleasure, to samsaric perfections. You must free yourself from the attachment clinging to samsaric happiness.

If you cling to working for the self, that is not bodhicitta.

If you are clinging to working for the self, if you have the self-cherishing thought, it is not bodhicitta, cherishing others; it is not seeking to achieve enlightenment for others.

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<sup>13</sup> See *The Way of Awakening* by Yeshe Tobden, Wisdom 2005, p. 359. See also *Mind Training: The Great Collection*, p. 517 for the root text and pp. 521–566 for commentaries.

If you are clinging believing the I is truly existent, that is not the right view.

When you believe that the I exists from its own side, that it exists by nature, it is real, that is not the right view. A simple way to think about this is to see how when we normally say “I” we automatically think this is a real I. Here it says clinging to the real I is not right view. It is not emptiness, it is not right view.

That is from the Sakya tradition. Manjushri taught it to Sachen Dragpa Gyaltsen. Then there is a similar teaching in the Nyingma tradition where it says,

Change from clinging to this life.

Change the clinging to samsara.

Change from cherishing the I.

Change from holding the real I.

In *Uttanamche*, Kagyu-Nyingma, it is exactly the same. Lama Tsongkhapa’s way is the three principal aspects of the path, where instead of the two renunciations—of this life and of future lives—he just calls it renunciation. Then bodhicitta and right view make the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment.

### ***Whether an action is Dharma or not depends on the motivation***

Whether it’s a person who begs for food every day of their life or a rich person doing business—working for the government, for the population—if their motivation is renunciation of this life by seeing that working for this life has no essence and attachment is the root of suffering, then the motivation of both the beggar and the businessperson is Dharma. Their actions don’t look like Dharma but they are holy Dharma.

Then, there is a person living in a cave, meditating, not sleeping, not seeing anybody, trying to not even meet a mouse in the cave (I’m joking), but the motivation is clinging to this life, to their reputation. “Everybody will praise me. I’ll have power. I’ll have a reputation.” Then their whole life doing retreat and reciting prayers is not Dharma. It is not holy Dharma; it is worldly dharma, nonvirtue. You have to understand that.

Because the motivation of the beggar and the businessperson is not clinging to this life, it is holy Dharma. Every action becomes a cause of the happiness of future lives, to have a good rebirth as a human being or even in a pure land of the buddhas. It doesn't become a cause to be born in the lower realms; it becomes a cause to be reborn as a deva or human.

If the motivation is not even attachment to their future lives' pleasure but renunciation of samsara, freedom from attachment to samsara, whatever they do—eating, walking, sitting, sleeping, doing a job, listening to teachings, reflecting and meditating—everything becomes a cause of achieving nirvana, total liberation from the oceans of samsaric sufferings including the cause, delusion and karma. It becomes a cause of achieving the blissful state of peace for themselves forever. Any action of the beggar or the businessperson running the government becomes a cause to achieve liberation from samsara, ultimate happiness.

But a person who lives in the mountains doing retreat for their whole life, trying to bear hardships, if the motivation is attachment to the future samsaric life, to samsaric happiness, that becomes a cause of samsara. Whatever mantra they recite, whatever prayers or meditation they do, it all becomes a cause of samsara. You have to know these things.

If the motivation of the beggar and the businessperson running the government is bodhicitta—not cherishing the I but cherishing others instead, wishing to achieve enlightenment to free the numberless others from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to buddhahood—then everything becomes a cause of enlightenment, of buddhahood, the total cessation of obscurations and completion of realizations.

Now for the meditator living on the mountain alone, whose motivation for their whole life has been the self-cherishing thought, not bodhicitta, then nothing they do—eating, walking, sitting, sleeping, meditating, saying prayers—nothing becomes a cause of enlightenment. It doesn't become a cause of buddhahood. They might believe that is so because they have been practicing Dharma for so many years, their whole life, thirty, forty, even seventy years. Perhaps they think like that, but it is not so.

There are many people who do like that but don't really know what Dharma practice is. If you are like that, then you do outside things and your whole life you are cheated. Because your whole life you didn't know what Dharma is, you think these outside things are Dharma. You think, "I am practicing Dharma." Then, you have so much pride to show other people, to advertise that you have been doing Dharma. I'm so sorry. What to do? There are many people like this, unfortunately.

You are in a retreat place and people think you are practicing Dharma, leading a renounced life, but you are not. You don't know the definition of practicing Dharma, thinking only these outside things are Dharma. Your definition is that, not freeing your mind from these negative thoughts.

So, it is possible that for your whole life you don't understand what it means to practice Dharma. Your life is cheated. It is totally cheated by your mind, by attachment, by not learning. Therefore, what it comes down to is that it's so important to learn Dharma, to learn the unmistakable teachings, to receive them from a qualified guru. Otherwise, if you don't do that, you can cheat your whole life by your wrong concept, by attachment. You believe you are practicing Dharma but you are not. You have to understand that so you don't cheat yourself.

### ***Holding on to the I as truly existing***

There are all these people, beggars, businesspeople, mixing with people and helping others, or working for the population or the government, but the mind does not hold on to the I as real, as truly existent from its own side. That real I is not there. They are like the Buddha, who totally ceased the gross defilements, the negative imprints, and the subtle defilements left by the ignorance believing in a truly existent I, the subtle negative imprints that decorate, that project the dualistic view—the real I, real action, real object, real hell, real enlightenment, real samsara, real nirvana, real problems, real relationship problems, real happiness, and so forth. These subtle negative imprints that project, that decorate, are totally ceased. A Buddha doesn't have the dualistic view of truly existent appearance.

As long as you are a sentient being, there is delusion, there is the negative imprint that projects, decorates, the hallucination of a truly existent I, a real I. It can be there, but by either having realized emptiness, shunyata, or even indirectly perceiving emptiness, because you are still not enlightened, you might still have the appearance, the hallucination, of a real I and so forth. You might still see everything as real, but you don't believe it. There is no belief.

It is like in a dream where you found a million or a billion dollars, or you had a wedding. Some men and women don't like having weddings, so let's say while you are dreaming, in your dream you have a wedding and you don't like it, but you recognize it is a dream. Because you recognize it as a dream, even though you have the appearance, you don't believe in it.

It's like when you walk through the desert and look back at the sand. Where the sunlight hits it, it looks like there is water running. You have a vision of water, but you know there is no water

because you just came from there. Like that, you have the vision but you don't believe it. You don't have the wrong belief that it is true even if you have the appearance of a real I.

I mentioned about a wedding but there are many examples like that. Say, you had a dream that you won the vote and became president of a country, like America, but you recognize this is a dream, as I gave those other examples. Therefore, even though you have the appearance, you don't believe in that.

Sorry, what I'm saying is that for somebody who has a realization of emptiness, even if there is the appearance they don't believe it. They know this is a hallucination. So, with that mind listening, reflecting, meditating, eating, walking, sitting, sleeping, working for the government or the population, doing business, begging food—all this becomes an antidote to samsara. You have to know that all this becomes not a cause of samsara; it becomes an antidote to samsara. All this becomes a remedy to cut the root of samsara, the ignorance holding a truly existent I, the root of samsara, the root of *all* the problems, such as cancer. You think, "Oh, I have cancer," and there is so much suffering, but this is nothing. The oceans of hell beings' suffering, of hungry ghosts' suffering, of animals' suffering, of human beings' suffering, it is the root of that.

If you do all these actions with this mind understanding emptiness, seeing this is a hallucination, then it is an antidote to eliminate the root of samsara, that ignorance holding the I as real while it is not. The direct perception of emptiness is one of the best medicines. All these activities you do with that mind become an antidote to the root of samsara, to ignorance. This is one of the best medicines, the other one is bodhicitta.

Everything becomes a remedy to samsara, not a cause of samsara, a remedy to samsara and a remedy to cut the root of samsara's ignorance. On the other hand, a person who lives on a mountain in a cave for their whole life, doing prayers or meditation, if their motivation is clinging to the I as a real I, then everything—their meditation, eating, walking, sitting, sleeping—becomes a cause of samsara. It becomes a cause of developing ignorance, the root of samsara.

Sorry, it was meant to be the motivation, but anyway I should mention one thing.

### ***Geshe Ben Gungyal breaks his attachment to this life***

Geshe Ben Gungyal was a Kadampa geshe and a great meditator. When he began to practice Dharma, on the day his benefactor was coming to see him in his hermitage, he cleaned the room and made beautiful offerings. Then he sat down to analyze, checking his motivation, which is usually

how the meditation on the graduated practice is done. Suddenly he found that cleaning the room and making beautiful offerings and water bowls was not holy Dharma, it was worldly dharma. Because his benefactor was coming, he did these things so nicely to impress him, which was attachment to this life. So, he suddenly got up and took a handful of ashes. Not hashish, ashes! I'm sure some people think he does hashish. This is old, so many years ago, when meditators took hashish, so maybe some want to hear that. But not that, ashes. He grabbed the ashes and sprinkled them over the nice, beautiful water offerings and made a mess.

At that time there was a great yogi in Tibet, in Tingri, which is not very far from here. You have to go through the border and maybe on the same day or the day after you arrive by car. So in Tingri there was a great yogi, Padampa Sangye, who went from India to Tibet during Milarepa's time, Milarepa, who achieved enlightenment in a brief lifetime of degenerate times. He was a layperson, not ordained. As Padampa Sangye was going into Tibet through the mountains, Milarepa was coming down. Milarepa manifested as a flower. Maybe it was a yellow flower; I have some kind of yellow or orange flower visualized. He manifested as a yellow flower in the road to check whether Padampa Sangye would recognize him or not, but of course he recognized Milarepa.

So, at that time Padampa Sangye lived in Tingri. He put his arms like this [Rinpoche shows prostration mudra with hands], "Today in Tibet, Kadampa Geshe Ben Gungyal did the best offering." It was "the best Dharma" or "the best offering." He made the room beautiful with the motivation so that his benefactor would praise him—attachment to this life—and after he recognized this, he grabbed ashes and sprinkled them, making a mess. He put ashes on his attachment to this life. He sprinkled ashes on the eight worldly dharmas of this life; he made a mess. Padampa Sangye could see this with his clairvoyance, so he said, "Today Kadampa Geshe Ben Gungyal did the best offering, the purest offering." Ben Gungyal's action became pure Dharma whereas before it was worldly dharma. You have to know that. Write it down. It is very important to know that, then you will be able to tell yourself whether what you are doing is holy Dharma or worldly dharma.

[Tea offering and break to drink tea]

### ***Rinpoche first reads Opening the Door of Dharma***

I just want to tell a story. I was born in Solu Khumbu, in the Himalayan mountains close to Mount Everest. The place is called Thangme. As I mentioned yesterday, I went to Rolwaling. The people are not so clever there as on this side in Solu Khumbu; they are more primitive. I lived there for seven years with my teacher, my uncle, who at that time had the aspect of a monk. That time in Tibet, we read texts all day long; in the morning we memorized and in the evening we recited, all day long reciting the Buddha's teachings, such as the *Diamond Cutter Sutra*, which we did many times, then *Do Dīpa*. Unbelievable, unbelievable, such precious teachings, because of the great kindness of my teacher. I didn't do extensive studies but if I just have a little idea of the word emptiness, that all came from my teachers when I was small, reading *Diamond Cutter Sutra*, *Do Dīpa*, *Condensed [Good Qualities] Sutra*, over and over, for months and months. Then, when I lived in Tibet for three years, I did puja in different people's houses.

The temple where I stayed belonged to Domo Geshe Rinpoche's main monastery. The elder monk who came from there ran the small temple in Pagri for three years. Pagri is very close to Bhutan, then Domo, then Sikkim. So in Pagri, where I lived for three years, I did puja every day with my teacher and other monks, except maybe two or three days at new year, I'm not sure. Otherwise, every day I had to go in the morning and memorize texts to offer examination in Domo Geshe's monastery in front of all the monks. I had to recite from here to there while the *umdze* sat on a throne. I got the first examination done but not the second because I escaped to India.

The pujas were fixed because of different benefactors. Sometimes we recited *Twenty-one Tara Praises* all night. My teacher had a long stick with a needle on top. I didn't get the needle, but there was a monk behind me from Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, I forget his name, but he got it twice when he fell asleep at night. I didn't get it, unfortunately. Then, I escaped through Bhutan to Buxa, where I stayed for eight years. I was a small boy; I just thought about playing, but I had to memorize texts and debate. Then I came to Nepal and started Kopan.

At Lawudo, of the Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelug, and Nyingma texts, there were mostly Nyingma texts and deities. There were many, but there was one text that all the four sects could use, a collection of Kadampa geshe's very first thought transformation teachings, called *Opening the Door of Dharma*.<sup>14</sup> I was reading that. I was supposed to look after the workers outside building the

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<sup>14</sup> A fifteenth century text by the Tibetan yogi Lōdro Gyaltsen.

monastery, but I spent most of my time in the cave. I only saw them when I went outside to do *pipi*. They were only talking, not working, but I didn't have courage to tell them off.

While I was reading this text, I found out what holy Dharma is. Then I checked whether what I had been doing was holy Dharma or not. I checked back to the old times, at Pagri, then at Buxa for eight years, I checked back if anything had become holy Dharma, but nothing had become holy Dharma. I was so shocked, so surprised! By reading that text, I found out that nothing had become holy Dharma.

The offerings the people of Solu Khumbu brought were very simple. They brought big radishes in baskets. The smell was so strong. If you ate them you had very terrible smelly gas, then your body becomes sort of ordinary. Of course, they could be very tasty. The people filled up a container they ate from with potatoes and another with rice, and then some rupees. Those were the offerings. By reading this book, when I got these offerings, even though they were nothing, I get scared, my mind got scared. Of course, now I'm totally degenerated. Totally degenerated. The offerings were nothing, but even getting the offerings scared me. I think maybe I was scared of attachment arising for the offerings.

After that, I did another retreat, but I had to come down. Because reading that text cleaned away the garbage in my mind, the attachment and those things—of course I'm not talking forever, just that time—I did the retreat with a clean mind, which became holy Dharma. Then you can really do a deity retreat. On the first day I thought, could you imagine if your life became like that, what happiness! If my whole life could have been like that, I can't imagine what happiness. Because I read the text at the beginning of the retreat, it cleaned my mind a little bit. I began the retreat with a clean mind, a mind that had become Dharma.

I did a book called *The Door to Satisfaction*, where I put the collection of advice from the Kadampa geshe into English. I'm not sure every single thing is there but much of it is. Also there is another book from London, *How to Practice Dharma*. If you read those books before you begin a retreat, Vajrasattva or anything, it would be so good. Then you can enjoy the retreat so much. Any deity retreat can become pure because you begin with a pure mind, a clean mind. That is just my suggestion, to do that much.

Life is to benefit others, not just to achieve a blissful state of peace for ourselves, not only that. It is to benefit others, to free numberless sentient beings of each realm from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and the cause, delusion and karma, and then bring them to peerless happiness, the total cessation of obscurations and completion of realizations, buddhahood. It is to bring everyone there.

To do that, you must first achieve the state of omniscience. Then you can perfectly guide sentient beings, you can do work for sentient beings. Therefore, please listen to the teachings.

That is the motivation to listen to the teachings. You can also think the teachings you listen to become actualized in your heart, now, so that you can be most beneficial for all the sentient beings. You can make that motivation, that every word of the teachings that you listen to becomes most beneficial for every sentient being. If you think like that, it will become like that, due to the power of the mind.

### ***“My karma persuaded me”***

In *A Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life* Shantideva mentioned,

Previously I must have caused similar harm  
To other sentient beings.  
Therefore it is right for this harm to be returned  
To me who is the cause of injury to others.<sup>15</sup>

There is always a reason why others harm you, even if it’s fleas or mosquitoes biting you, ants biting you, bees stinging you, others getting angry at you, abusing you. Whatever happens, there is always a reason. The reason is you harmed others first! You harmed others first! In the past you gave a similar harm to other sentient beings, therefore, you deserve the harm others give you in return. By remembering the reason it happened, you can see you deserve receiving it.

Usually what we all do is think, “I’m totally perfect, I’m never wrong; others are wrong.” You blame others, then somebody harms and abuses you, somebody looks at you badly, somebody says something bad, and you harm them back. You crush the person, you disintegrate them or whatever. Whatever you can do, immediately, thinking, “There is nothing wrong with me. I’m perfect. All others are wrong.” You put the blame on others thinking you are perfect. They can’t tell you that you have made mistakes. You think it’s outrageous that that person got angry and abused you.

I went through a long story explaining how those people are most precious, most kind, remember? By finishing past heavy negative karma, you ensure future happiness up to enlightenment, so you should remember the kindness of that person. What am I saying? Normally,

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<sup>15</sup> Ch. 6, v. 42.

we say, “I’m perfect. They are wrong.” Whatever harm they did, whatever you didn’t like, then you harm them back as quickly as possible.

This is not an educated person’s action. This is not an educated person’s personality. No, it’s the action of an uneducated person, someone the same as an animal, a tiger, a dog. If somebody harms them, they bite back; it’s the same. That’s an animal’s character. Do you understand? That is not wise. But this is what we normally do.

Whatever happens, there is always an evolution for that, there is always a reason for that. The reason is that in the past you cheated or you abused others in that way. You abused others in that way, so this time it has happened to you. Why did this person abuse you? Because in the past you abused them in that way. That is why it happened. Even if a flea bites you, it is the same. Everything is the same.

The great bodhisattva Shantideva said, “It is right for this harm to be returned to me.” It is justified. What you do, though, is you think you can do anything, you can harm others, but you can’t receive any harm from others. That is an uneducated person’s personality. That is an animal’s character. That is totally illogical, totally—you can harm others in any way but others can’t harm you. It looks like that’s how most of us think, that’s how we lead our life. Do you understand? It doesn’t make sense.

There is something good to know. Please write it down in your notebook; it is worthwhile to remember. [Rinpoche recites in Tibetan] That is so important to write down! [Everyone laughs because Rinpoche said it in Tibetan] You can write down the Tibetan!

Having been instigated by my own actions,  
Those who cause me harm come into being.  
If by these (actions) they should fall into [the hole of] hell  
Surely isn’t it I who am destroying them?<sup>16</sup>

My karma persuaded me, then I received the harm. Then I received this harm. By that, didn’t I push that sentient being in the hole of the hell? It means in the past you harmed them, so your karma persuaded the person to harm you in return. The result is that person harmed you. That happens from that cause—you harmed the person in the past so in this life you are harmed by this person.

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<sup>16</sup> Shantideva, ch. 6, v. 47.

Because of that harm, it stops them remaining in the human world, where they are now, and causes them to reincarnate in the lower realms, falling down into the hole of the hell realm. The hole is an example of hell.

That is a way of generating compassion. Instead of getting angry and harming back, you generate compassion, the root of happiness for yourself and all sentient beings. To generate compassion back is very important. When other sentient beings abuse you, whatever harm they do, use that to develop compassion. Instead of violence, develop compassion and peace. If you can't help others in other ways, at least you can pray, dedicating your merits and reciting mantras for that person to not be born in the lower realms due to their negative karma. As you recite mantras like OM MANI PADME HUM, nectar comes from the hand of Chenrezig, the Guru Compassionate Buddha.

That is just one way, but there are many. At least pray to the root guru, Chenrezig, the deity, for that person to not be born in the lower realms. Dedicate all your past, present and future merits, all your past merits from beginningless rebirths, all the merits now and in the future, all good things to happen—dedicate that they will not be born in the lower realms at all, and that they will generate bodhicitta and stop harming sentient beings, bringing peace and happiness to numberless sentient beings. At least pray. That prayer has power.

In [the oral transmission teachings on the Vinaya,] *Duhvai Lung*, it says,

All dharmas, all existent [phenomena], are like the conditions; everything is up to the point of the wish. Whatever prayer you do, the result will happen like that.

That is explained in the sutra teachings—we pray by generating compassion like that. If we rely on Medicine Buddha, we should completely rely on him to help, or we should rely totally on Tara to help. Those things can help. This practice is so important to keep in the mind. Don't forget it. Otherwise, even if you learn Dharma philosophy, learning many texts of sutra and tantra, when somebody complains about you, when somebody is angry with you, you get angry back. If you offer somebody something and they don't thank you, they don't show you appreciation, you suddenly get angry.

Even though you know a lot of Dharma intellectually, the practice is not there. Then, in everyday life if somebody does something like that, anger arises, and it destroys all your merits, all the merits from where happiness comes; it destroys the realizations and enlightenment. Therefore, it

is very important to persuade yourself to practice this. Otherwise, even if you know so much and can explain so much, there is no practice in your daily life, then when something happens, even a very little thing, you get so upset and destroy your merits, the causes of all happiness. Although you learned the Dharma words, you don't practice; you don't subdue your mind. This is the problem. You either still have problems or you have even more problems than before you met the Dharma. You have more ego, more pride, than before you met the Dharma.

### ***The lamrim is the remedy to self-cherishing (Gen Jampa Wangdu)***

Sorry, I want to say one more thing. I didn't get to mention it yesterday. I had a teacher, Gen Jampa Wangdu, who achieved *shamatha*, free from the gross and subtle sinking thought and the attachment-scattering thought, the gross and subtle obstacles to meditation. Shamatha, mental quiescence or abiding in peace is *zhi nä* in Tibetan. He achieved *zhi nä* in Dalhousie, and *bodhicitta* near Dharamsala at the back of Tushita, in a retreat house on the mountain.

Then he realized emptiness near the house of Kyabje Ling Rinpoche, His Holiness' tutor in past life. Down below there is cave in a rock where he lived for seven years and where he realized emptiness. Then, he also achieved the tantra path, the generation and completion stages, the *six yogas of Naropa*, all these things; it was very fortunate. His teacher was Geshe Rabten, after His Holiness, who always admired Gen Jampa Wangdu.

Before Gen Jampa Wangdu passed away, the year before I think, he told us he had knee pain, I think for a month or two. This is what he said. But, of course, relating to me he is my teacher, my guru.

I took the lineage of the *chulen*, "taking the essence," from him. If you are living in an isolated place, too far from a market or a place to get food, you have to abide without having need for food, therefore you live on the pills with meditation. Every day you do like that. When I took the lineage of *chulen* of flowers, I asked him how to actualize lamrim realizations quickly. His answer was to practice the remedy to self-cherishing thought every day. That is the way to actualize not only *bodhicitta* but also all the lamrim realizations. This came from his own experience.

He said that he had knee pain for one or two months. During that time he was reminded of an old monk when he was in Tibet in early times, in the debating place outside who lived his life as a *dobdob*. The early books by Westerners mistranslated that as "monk police," just as they called Tibetan Buddhism "Lamaism." He said the old monk did not learn Dharma but kind of lived life

like a dobdob. They do service to the monks, things like tea and food offerings, and they do their own competitions, running, carrying stones and things like that. There was no particular reason why but Gen Jampa Wangdu harmed the old monk. He took a stick and hit the old monk on the knee. He thought that is why he had pain in his knee for one or two months.

## TAKING THE PAIN OF OTHERS

As I mentioned yesterday, in *Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, Lama Atisha's guru, Dharmarakshita, said,

When our bodies are aching and racked with great torment  
Of dreadful diseases we cannot endure,  
This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning  
Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.  
Till now we have injured the bodies of others;  
Hereafter let's take on what sickness is theirs.<sup>17</sup>

That is the wheel of the negative karma turned on us. You think, "It turned on me this time." That is the evolution. Then it talks about practice where you learn to take all the sentient beings' suffering on yourself. It means you take others' suffering on your ego, the self-cherishing thought, and, by doing that, you destroy it. All the harm from sentient beings comes from the self-cherishing thought, so you take all the suffering on your self-cherishing thought and destroy the enemy, the demon of your self-cherishing thought. Gen Jampa Wangdu said that. Probably, for many of us who have physical pain, it might be that we badly treated animals or beat people. It could be the result of that in this life.

This is just a side talk. I will just say this. There was a Kagyu lama, I forget his name. I think it was Gyalwa Gotsangpa. He was unbelievable. I read his life story. Although so many lice attacked him, he purposefully made charity of his body to the lice. Two times or three times he almost passed away. He bore the most unbelievable, unbelievable, unbelievable hardships to practice Dharma. He didn't just bear hardships because he was very poor (although he was), he purposefully chose to bear hardships. He practiced without monasteries or organizations. We can't start to compare our

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<sup>17</sup> V. 10.

Dharma practice to his. Our Dharma practice is just between our lips, but his was unbelievable. He bore unbelievable hardships.

Dharmarakshita's advice is very nice. Whenever you experience sickness, such as cancer, or you have relationship problems or anything, you pray like this. "By my experiencing this, may all the sentient beings be free from all the sicknesses, spirit harm, negative karma and defilements—the negative karma and defilements they have collected from beginningless rebirths." You should pray like that with every sickness, every relationship problem or whatever it is. You can add, "May they quickly be free and achieve enlightenment."

You can recite that prayer like reciting a mala of OM MANI PADME HUM. Meditating like that and reciting like that is unbelievably good. Even while you are walking, sitting, whatever, you can recite like that. Then you collect merits more than the sky. When you do this, it becomes the greatest purification, purifying the defilements and negative karma that you have collected from beginningless rebirths. Then, it becomes a quick path to enlightenment for you.

In other words, you use everything, including your problem, for the numberless other sentient beings, to free them from all the suffering and to achieve enlightenment. It is amazing. If you do it like that, like reciting a mantra, the cancer or any other disease can be cured even if it is a disease that there is no medicine for.

Sorry to say this, in my experience, for some dangerous diseases there is no medicine. I gave some Tibetan medicine and some practices to somebody once and they recovered in about two weeks. Things like that have happened, just with some simple practice and sometimes Tibetan medicine, even if there is no medicine for the disease in the West. That has happened at different times.

First, there was a lady from Canada who did fashion shows; she makes a thousand dollars an hour. I hadn't had contact with her for a long time. She wasn't really interested in Dharma, although she was sometimes around the center. I got a message from her that she had cancer and I sent an answer to liberate a lot of animals. She liberated a lot of chickens, but because they are not easy to look after she hired a lot of people to look after them. Then she took the eight Mahayana precepts and recovered from her cancer. After that her life got kind of messy [and the illness returned]. Then she took the eight Mahayana precepts and liberated animals again and she recovered. She is one I remember but there are several stories of people who have recovered with different practices.

I think maybe I'll stop here.

## DEDICATIONS

[Mandala offering]

“Due to all the past, present, and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may bodhicitta, the source of all happiness, including enlightenment for myself and for every sentient being, be generated in the hearts of all sentient beings who have been my own mother and have been unbelievably, unbelievably kind from beginningless rebirths. But they took care of me with ignorance, anger, attachment, and the self-cherishing thought, so they have created negative karma from beginningless rebirths, and have experienced unbelievable suffering for me. So now, if I don’t practice Dharma, if I don’t actualize a good heart and emptiness, I will reincarnate again in samsara, I will have to be reborn to sentient beings and they will have to suffer again without end and endure the endless unbelievable suffering of samsara.

“May bodhicitta be generated in the hearts of all sentient beings in this world, and especially in Nepal. May bodhicitta be actualized in all the students, in all those who rely on me, who I promised to pray for, whose name was given to me, the dead and living, everyone who is here, in all my family members, the living and dead. May bodhicitta to be generated in everyone’s heart, those who see me, hear me, remember me, touch me, talk to me, dream of me.”

I’m talking about myself but you should relate it to yourself. “Whoever dreams of me or sees photos of me, may bodhicitta be generated in all their hearts and in those who have generated bodhicitta may it increase.”

We must dedicate for the world, for perfect peace and happiness to happen in the world, to be guided by Lama Tsongkhapa, being our Mahayana virtuous friend in all lifetimes, and actualize Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings in this life.

“Due to all the past, present, and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may all the wars happening now and in the future be stopped immediately; may all disease and famines, all problems be stopped immediately in this world, any problems coming from anger and attachment, the dangers of fire, water, air, earthquakes, tsunamis—all the global problems, like the ice melting, the ocean levels rising and washing away the cities—may all those dangers to be pacified immediately. May perfect peace

and happiness prevail in everyone's heart in this world, by generating loving kindness and compassion in everyone's heart.

“May the Buddhadharma from where sentient beings receive peace and happiness last a long time; may sentient beings meet Buddhadharma and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, which exist in mere name, may the I, who exists in mere name, achieve buddhahood, which exists in mere name, and lead all the sentient beings, who exist in mere name, to that buddhahood, which exists in mere name, by myself alone, who exists in mere name.”

Thank you very much.

## Lecture 5: Guru Devotion

December 9, 2017

### THE IGNORANCE OF BELIEVING IN A TRULY EXISTING I

Don't look at the hallucination as the truth. Don't look at what is false as the truth. That is a huge challenge in life, to realize what is false and what is truth. All the suffering in the whole world—global problems, individual problems, even the sufferings of the tiniest insect, even a tiny fly, then the problems of human beings, families, society, the country, the world—all problems come from ignorance, not knowing what is false and what is truth in life.

This is important for those who believe in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, or in any religion. Everybody with any education has to realize the whole world's problems come from ignorance. It all comes from initiation, sorry! I said "initiation," but I meant ignorance. Ignorance. Any educated person *should* know that, although they wouldn't know what ignorance is without a Dharma education; they wouldn't know it's the root of suffering. But intelligent educated people *should* know that suffering comes from ignorance.

*That* is big question in the life you need to discover—what is false and what is truth. This isn't a small thing; it is a big thing. Kindergarten, primary school, college, university—you have to know that all this suffering comes from ignorance. Even the suffering of the tiniest being in the water—I forget its name—comes from ignorance.

As I mentioned in the past, this ignorance projects something false that is totally the opposite to the truth, something you have believed in not only from this morning, not only from birth but from beginningless rebirths. That which is false in life, that projection from ignorance, you have *totally* believed. It comes from *your* ignorance, not the ignorance of God or something, from your ignorance projecting everything as real, making everything appear real, existing from its own side. Then you believe a hundred percent in that! In that way you are living in that hallucination.

I will talk a little bit more on that.

Besides not understanding the Dharma, with this ignorance, what is false is projected as the truth, and then, after that, you believe the ignorance that things are real. That happens in the second instance; in the first there is the false appearance. And you never think of reality, of the truth. Of course, most sentient beings never get an education, so they have no understanding.

You don't see the real truth that the I does not exist from its own side; you don't realize it. It is like it doesn't exist. Form, sound, smell, taste, tangible objects, and not only objects but the perceiver, the mind, also do not exist from their own side. They exist in mere name. But you don't see that. For us normal sentient beings, it doesn't appear in that way and we don't see it. The only ones who can see that are those who have received teachings on what is false and truth in life, teachings on emptiness and the two truths, otherwise it can never happen. It's like the truth does not exist for your mind. Even if you hear about it, if you receive teachings about what the Buddha explained, you are still unable to think correctly about it.

Still, it is very fortunate you are able to learn. It depends first on learning the correct words, receiving the correct teachings. Without that how can you learn? Whether it becomes part of your experience depends on receiving the correct teachings and that depends on words.

### ***The four schools' view of how the I exists***

During the Buddha's time, four schools of Buddhist philosophy happened. The first is Vaibhashika, then Sautrantika, then Mind Only school, and then the Madhyamaka school, which has two sub-schools, Svatantrika and Prasangika. All the Buddhist philosophies are in these four. Only in the Vaibhashika school, which has eighteen sub-schools, is there one that does not totally refute the real I. That sub-school asserts that the I is not permanent, not impermanent [and not not impermanent]; existing alone, not existing alone and not non-existing alone; existing with its own freedom, not existing with its own freedom, not non-existing with its own freedom.

It is not exactly the same as Hinduism that believes that the I, the *atman*, is permanent. In reality the I is not permanent; it is impermanent. The I is changeable due to causes and conditions. As I mentioned before, it changes day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, second by second; even within one second it changes. Only that sub-school believes it can have some permanence but it is still not totally similar to the Hindu idea.

What is believed, what is accepted by the others is that the I is impermanent, that the I does not exist alone, without depending on parts. The I does not exist with its own freedom. That is the basic Buddhist philosophy.

There was an Indian businessman from somewhere near Lucknow who became a monk. He was ordained by His Holiness, I think. He was very simple. His Holiness gave him alone a commentary to Shantideva's *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Life* in His Holiness' room or office. After His Holiness

finished the whole commentary, I don't know how long it took, he just had one question for His Holiness, "Is there atman or not?" That was his only question. Then His Holiness said, "No." For him that was it; everything was solved. He was very sincere. He died a long time ago. He was a business person for a long time. I just remembered him.

Impermanence is the basic view of Buddhist philosophy, the foundation. In your view, when you think of the I, you have this hallucinated appearance that the I is permanent, that the I exists alone, that the I exists with its own freedom, without depending on causes and conditions. We all have this very basic hallucination. When the I appears, this is how we think of it. Then, on top of that, you believe that the I is self-sufficient, *ran gya thub pai dze yo*. Like a king existing without depending on the population, I exists without depending on the aggregates. The I is *not* self-sufficient; the I is empty of that self-sufficiency. Even for those lower schools, that is their view—that the I is empty of self-sufficiency. The Buddhist philosophical view is that it is empty of self-sufficiency, but you have this hallucination when you think of the I. That is how the I appears to you.

The Mind Only school believes in a seventh consciousness and an eighth consciousness [on top of the six consciousnesses that the other schools assert]. The seventh is the basis-of-all samsara and nirvana. According to their philosophy, that is how things exist. The color blue is a common example. The imprint, a substance, is left on the seventh consciousness, and it is experienced out in two ways, one as the object blue and one as the consciousness. Both the object blue and the perceiving mind seeing the blue come from that imprint, the substance, left on the seventh consciousness. When it is experienced out, it manifests as the two.

That school believes phenomena are like that. When the I appears to you, you also have this wrong view, opposite to that, that there is an I existing totally without depending on this imprint, the substance, left on the seventh consciousness being experienced out, the I as the object and the perceiving mind as the subject. The I totally exists from its own side, without depending on the imprint, the substance, experienced out. When the I appears to you that hallucination is there. Then, not only that, you believe in it, of course.

Then, with the Madhyamaka Svatantrika view, when the I appears to you, that school accepts that there is no I existing completely from its own side. There is no such thing. That is the refuting object of that school. Their view is that there is something from its own side but it does not completely exist. Why? Because it is labeled by the mind. They accept it is labeled by the mind but not *merely labeled* by the mind. There is a little something that remains. That is much better than the previous wrong views.

In order to be able to realize the view of the Madhyamaka Prasangika school well, you have to generally know the views of all the other schools but especially that one. If you know that, it is very easy to recognize the Madhyamaka Prasangika school's view of the very subtle object to be refuted.

Labeled by mind is easy to accept because what is called "I" is a sound, so it has to be labeled by the mind. Of course, that is easy. However, accepting it is *merely labeled* by the mind is very difficult. Being merely labeled by the mind means it almost doesn't exist. It becomes nihilism—not in reality but maybe because you don't have enough merit at the moment to realize that it is merely labeled by the mind, that it exists in mere name. You don't have the merit, you don't have the intelligence, so you are kind of falling in nihilism, but it is not nihilism.

Merely labeled by the mind is the correct view according to the Madhyamaka Prasangika school. So, according to Prasangika, the *gag cha*, the object to be refuted, is the object that does not depend on the mind labeling it, that is truly existent. The I appears to you like that; that hallucination.

Of course, for you it has to be there! The Prasangika school's subtle object of negation has to be there. When the I appears, even if you agree it is labeled by mind, there has to be something there. How can it exist only in mere name? No way. For you that is kind of nihilism. You think there must be something, a little bit that exists from its own side. So, you see, you have the appearance of the I existing not just being merely labeled by the mind. There seems to be something slightly more than merely labeled by the mind. So, the I appearing not just merely labeled by the mind is the subtle object of refutation of the Prasangika school.

That very subtle false I is what you have to recognize. If you realize that that is the false I, that is what doesn't exist, that is what is totally empty, after recognizing that false I, it is just a minute to realize emptiness only, *tong pa nyi*—*tong pa* is emptiness, *nyi* is only.

In English it is not translated completely. The translation comes from a long time ago, I think, a very long time ago. The translators were not geshe. At the beginning, many hadn't studied philosophy completely; they had some understanding of Dharma, but not a complete understanding. I'm not saying everyone, but at the very beginning some translators were like that. If you really study the philosophy well on the basis of the four Buddhist philosophical schools, you can understand the Tibetan words well. When you can understand completely, you can get the complete translation in English. But at the very beginning some were just half translated, even the title was not complete. Then the Tibetan didn't come across completely in English. It didn't give a clear idea for general people who haven't done much study.

## GURU DEVOTION

### *Understanding emptiness needs great merit and strong guru devotion*

Even if the words are explained correctly, even if the teachings on emptiness are received correctly, it doesn't mean you can see clearly understand assertions like the Prasangika school's philosophy. It doesn't mean it is proved to you. Even if you are given correct teachings, it depends on a lot of luck. In worldly activities, like a football game or a lottery or something, you need good luck. If you have good luck you win. Therefore, you need so much merit to not only receive the correct teachings on the Prasangika school's teachings on emptiness that introduce the subtle object of refutation, but also to realize them. You need a lot of merit and a high intelligence.

You also need very strong guru devotion, from your side seeing the guru who reveals the teaching to you as a buddha. Without that it doesn't happen; it just becomes words for you. It remains something too difficult for you to believe in and you feel like you are falling into nihilism. Even though it is correct that things exist in mere name, because it is too subtle for you, you think it is nihilism. You think it is wrong, even though it is completely right.

When there is strong devotion to the one who reveals the path to you, when from your side you look at the guru as a buddha, you see no mistakes, only qualities. Looking at them in that way, as a buddha, you generate strong devotion and, through that, you receive the blessings of the guru in your heart, like a plant growing after having planted the seed in the ground and watering it and so forth.

Even though you might not have many merits, this is such an easy way to collect extensive merits. With devotion it happens naturally. In everyday life, with that mind of devotion, you live your life, following the guru with body, speech and mind. Your life is no longer under the control of the self-cherishing thought; it is under the control of the guru. As much as you are able to follow the guru, then unbelievable, unbelievable, unbelievable merits are collected in such a short time.

In the first meditation in the lamrim, the graduated path to enlightenment, there are eight benefits mentioned by correctly following the guru, fulfilling the guru's wishes or following their advice.

If you are ordained by the guru and you follow the vows, or the guru advises you to do a retreat or recite a mantra every day or something, each day, each hour, each minute, each second you do that, you become closer to enlightenment. It purifies all the defilements and collects extensive merits,

hour by hour, minute by minute, second by second. Second by second you become closer to enlightenment.

I'm giving just a few examples. You have to relate it to your own activities, for instance, doing what your guru advises, such as making a meditation room in your home or being a secretary in a center and helping to spread the Dharma. There are many different activities to purify a disciple's negative karma collected from beginningless rebirths and to benefit others. Each time you do whatever work the guru advises, you become closer to enlightenment.

If it involves traveling or whatever it is, even going back and forth for the work, each step is fulfilling the guru's wishes and advice, so each step purifies unbelievable obscurations collected from beginningless rebirths and develops extensive merit and you become closer to enlightenment. Each word of each conversation you have with somebody to actualize a project—or whatever was advised by the guru—purifies unimaginable obscurations and collects extensive merits and you become closer to enlightenment. This is because the guru is the most powerful object of merit, the one that allows you to purify the most unbelievable obscurations and negative karma and collect the most extensive merits.

A much more powerful object to collect merit and purify than ordinary people are your parents, the parents of this life. If you harm them even a little, like physically harming them or scolding them or retaliating, something quite small, it becomes powerfully negative because the object is so powerful and you can start to experience problems and suffering in this life. It doesn't finish; of course, there is rebirth in the lower realms, then you suffer for an unbelievable length of time.

Even when you are born a human being again due to another good karma, you experience the result of that negative karma not just in one lifetime, but for many lifetimes, for five hundred lifetimes. You have to know that, that there is unbelievable suffering from that small act which you can start to experience in this life. But if you do a small service for your parents, if you help them a little, the good karma is so powerful that you start to experience the result of happiness and success in this life. Then, that one small service you offered your parents, the small good karma you created with your parents, goes on and on life to life, for five hundred lifetimes. That is very, very important to know.

So if you do anything harmful to them, you should confess and do practices to purify the negative karma. It is very important that every day you do something like the Thirty-five Buddhas practice or Vajrasattva. Of course this is not only to purify negative karma collected with the parents, but to purify all the negative karma collected from beginningless rebirth.

As I mentioned yesterday, I asked my teacher, Gen Jampa Wangdu, what is more important, to purify or to collect merits. He said from his experience it's better to concentrate more on purification. If you do that you are a very wise person. Every day, wherever you are, on top of Mount Everest or in Africa, whether you are alone or with people, whatever, you must practice purification, either the Thirty-five Buddhas or Vajrasattva.

There are many other ways, such as working for sentient beings, bearing hardships with compassion. Working for others is unbelievable purification. If you do it with compassion, it's strong purification. Then, there is offering service, doing hard work for the Sangha. Then, of course, no question about the guru—offering service, doing the guru's wishes, following their advice. That is the most powerful way to purify and collection of merits. You don't have to necessarily physically be with the guru, you can be very far away, but wherever you are in the world, you should always fulfill the guru's wishes and advice.

Then, constantly, day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, second by second, you are getting closer to enlightenment. When whatever you do is the advice of the guru, that is the most powerful way to purify as well as to collect the most extensive merits. The main thing is following the guru's wishes and advice.

There is remembering the guru's kindness, and the next one is fulfilling the guru's wishes and advice. Then, the next one, if you have material things, if you offer them to the guru you collect merit and purify. From the guru's side also, they accept the offering in order for the disciple to collect merit.

For example, even just offering a glass of water or tea or a candy or a biscuit to the guru, you collect the merit of having made offerings to numberless buddhas, numberless Dharma, numberless Sangha, of having made offerings to numberless statues, numberless scriptures and numberless stupas.

Sorry, I talked before about the parents but suddenly I went there. I didn't get to mention the other ones in between. The next level after the parents is offering to ordained people, to a monk or nun. Harming an ordained person is more powerful than harming your parents, and offering even a little service to them, you collect more unbelievably more merit than offering to this life's parents.

Then, one arhat who is free from samsara is such a powerful object to collect merit from. Of course, if you harm them, it is unbelievably powerful negative karma.

After that, one bodhisattva. It is mentioned in the sutra teachings by the Buddha, if you look at a bodhisattva with an angry mind, with the white side of the eye, what do you call it? [*Ven. Ailsa:*

Glaring.] Glaring. If we glare at a bodhisattva, one bodhisattva, who has renounced the self-cherishing thought and actualized bodhicitta, cherishing others, the negative karma and obscurations you collect are so unbelievably heavy, it is like taking out the eyeballs of all the sentient beings of the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realms. The negative karma is like that or more than that if you look at one bodhisattva with glaring eyes.

Now, if you look at a bodhisattva with a peaceful mind and virtuous mind, if you calmly look with respect, you collect the merit of having given eyeballs to all the sentient beings in the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm. By making charity of your eyeballs, you collect unbelievable merits by the power of the pure mind of bodhicitta that cherishes numberless sentient beings. Not one sentient being is left out, not one insect, not one black or white ant is left out. To get the idea, there is not one tiniest insect left out from the bodhisattva's compassion realization. Because of that, you collect that unbelievable merit.

It is mentioned in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*,

Whatever wholesome deeds,  
Such as venerating the buddhas and generosity,  
That have been amassed over a thousand eons  
Will all be destroyed in one moment of anger.<sup>18</sup>

If a non-bodhisattva, somebody without bodhicitta, gets angry for one second at a bodhisattva, you destroy a thousand eons of good karma that you have collected by having made charity to sentient beings and having made offerings to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. According to Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltsen, if you get angry at a bodhisattva for one second, a thousand eons of merits collected by having made charity to sentient beings and having made offerings to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, get destroyed instantly.

Now, of one buddha and numberless bodhisattvas, one buddha is more powerful than numberless bodhisattvas, so what happens if you get angry at a buddha for one second? Can you imagine? If a thousand eons of good karma are destroyed with a bodhisattva, with a buddha it could be ten thousand eons. I'm not sure. So many merits collected in the past from sentient beings and Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are destroyed if you get angry for one second at a buddha.

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<sup>18</sup> Ch. 6, v. 1.

Now, of the numberless buddhas and one guru, one guru is more powerful than the numberless buddhas. Therefore, how much merit do you destroy if you get angry for one second at the guru you have a Dharma connection with? You are the disciple and they are the guru. The texts say the one who is followed, who is relied upon, is the guru and the one who is following, who is reliant on the guru, has the characteristic of the disciple. So, if you receive a Dharma connection from a teacher, they are the guru and you are the disciple. Even if all they have given you is two or three words, a mantra or even a *lung*, an oral transmission, that is a Dharma relationship, a Dharma connection.

There is a story about Serkong Dorje Chang, who passed away. I heard many stories in Buxa, where Mahatma Gandhi-ji and ex-prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru were imprisoned, where so many people were killed there during the British time. I heard so many stories of Serkong Dorje Chang who lived in Swayambhunath. He was a great yogi. I had some karma to meet him after coming to Nepal.

[Tea offering and break to drink tea]

Compared with one second of anger to numberless buddhas, getting angry for one second to the guru is much heavier negative karma. I haven't seen quotes about that yet but on the basis of what Shantideva advised in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*—that a non-bodhisattva getting angry at a bodhisattva for one second destroys the merits collected during a thousand eons of having made charity to sentient beings and having made offerings to Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha—on the basis of that, it could be millions of eons. Certainly unbelievable, unbelievable merits are destroyed by getting angry at the guru for one second. It might not only be that—being reborn in the lower realms, in the hell realm, and suffering for that many eons—it could be many hundreds of thousands of eons, or millions of eons. It could be like that on the basis of what the bodhisattva Shantideva said. Then, your realizations are put off for many hundreds of thousands of eons, for millions of eons, if you get angry at the guru for one second. It could be like that.

There are these three things—not only must you suffer for that unimaginable length of time but also your realizations are put off for that many eons and your merits are destroyed. The guru is the most powerful object, not the world guru, your guru, the one you have a Dharma connection with.

*Serkong Dorje Chang: If the guru is sitting, think the Buddha is sitting*

I was going to tell a story about Serkong Dorje Chang. After we came here, we went to Swayambhunath. The first disciple, Zina Rachevsky, was called a princess because her parents were royalty a long time ago in Russia. Then there was a revolt and they escaped to live in France. She lived in America and in many places. We had some karma [with Serkong Dorje Chang]. When we reached the top of the hill at Swayambhunath, (what tourists call the Monkey Temple because it looks like monkeys gather to do pujas inside the temple, or they built the temple for monkeys) we were outside the house when a very simple monk came outside down the steps. We said we wanted to see Serkong Dorje Chang and he told us to wait a minute. Then he went to do pipi or something, I'm not sure. Anyway, he didn't come back. Then we went upstairs and met his manager.

When we were shown to his room, the person we saw on the bed, Serkong Dorje Chang, was the one we saw outside, the monk who came down the steps and who we told we wanted to see Serkong Dorje Chang. We didn't know it was him.

Zina was very good. Because she always wanted to ask questions, we met so many other Kagyu and Nyingma high lamas. Rinpoche had quite a number of texts near the pillow, so Zina asked him to read them, not all, just some. Normally we wouldn't ask that, but she was a Westerner and so she just asked anything she wanted.

Rinpoche replied, "No, no. I don't know anything. I'm so foolish, I don't know anything." Then he gave a teaching to her in answer to her question. I don't know if it was her question or not, but it was a very powerful teaching on guru devotion. He said, "If the guru is sitting on the floor, think Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is sitting on the floor." There were many other things, but I didn't have the merit to understand the rest.

That was the first time. After that, from time to time I went to see Rinpoche. Every time I went to see him, there was never any doubt—this was Yamantaka, the extremely wrathful aspect of Manjushri, the essence, the manifestation of all the buddhas' wisdom. There was no doubt. He was always like that. I used to think he was a buddha, a mind-sealed deity, a yidam. I think Rinpoche knew everything, he could see all the lives—past, present and future—of anybody who came into his room. Sometimes I mentioned dreams that I had, and Rinpoche said it was Palden Lhamo, a wrathful aspect of Sarasvati or Tara, a little upset, angry. Before Rinpoche did the divination he knew, but he did the divination according to the level of our mind. He didn't make it a big thing. He knew past, present and future. He appeared as a very simple monk who didn't know anything, but even before he did a divination he knew. He started to tell you even before he threw the dice.

One time we were staying in Boudha, in the Gelugpa monastery built by a Mongolian lama who passed away in Mongolia. The monks came from Kyirong, near Nepal. Kachen Yeshe Gyaltsen's monastery was there. Remember I mentioned to you that this course, that we have now done fifty times, came from my reading his teachings; it was his inspiration. The monks came from his monastery. I think it was Saka Dawa, the Buddha's day of enlightenment. In the past, in Bodhgaya, the Buddha showed enlightenment and showed the holy deeds. Not only that, Saka Dawa also marks the Buddha's passing away into the sorrowless state and his birth. These three things are combined on that day.

In that monastery they were doing a *nyung nä*. One of the benefactors from the upper part in Tibet, followed the lama Drubtob Rinpoche from Swayambhunath, who did the practice of Most Secret Hayagriva. The other monks thought Most Secret Hayagriva was a Nyingma deity, so they didn't agree. As their guru, the monks had invited Serkong Dorje Chang and the next morning they wanted him to give the eight Mahayana precepts. The monks wanted to take them from Serkong Dorje Chang, not from Drubtob Rinpoche. In the morning, Rinpoche came. When we sat on our seats, he also sat on a normal seat, not on the throne. Rinpoche opened the text and said, "If you want to practice Dharma, if the guru says, 'This is hot kaka, lick that kaka,' if you are able to go there immediately without doubt, without any question, and lick it with the tongue," (and Rinpoche mimed licking) "if you are able to lick it, that is how to practice Dharma." Then he put the text down and left. That was the motivation for the ordination, nothing else. He didn't give the vow; he just left.

Rinpoche's teachings were normally just like that, but that teaching was very important; it is we call a "red teaching." That is the most important advice for life on how to practice guru devotion, how to follow the guru, who is the root of the path to enlightenment, the most important one to achieve all the realizations of the path to enlightenment. So he said that and left. What he gave was a most important teaching. Just from that I took Serkong Dorje Chang as a guru.

I have many gurus, almost forty. My root guru is His Holiness the Dalai Lama and my first guru is His Holiness the Dalai Lama's younger guru, Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, who was the first to give me the lamrim teaching, *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, in Varanasi, in Sarnath. He is both my root guru and Lama Yeshe's root guru. Then, the second is His Holiness the Dalai Lama. So I have two root gurus. I just wanted to tell you the words that Serkong Dorje Chang taught. A great enlightened being, Serkong Dorje Chang, in his past life, was highly respected by the Thirteenth

Dalai Lama. He completed the path to enlightenment, the tantric path. So as I said, he just said a few words and left.

***Following the guru's advice is the quickest way to attain enlightenment***

To collect merit and purify, if you have things to offer the guru, you should. Even offering just a glass of water, a biscuit or a candy, you collect the highest merit and do the greatest purification. And you get closer to enlightenment, even by making just that tiny offering, because the guru is the most powerful holy object.

For example, if you offer just a tiny drop of perfume, what comes on the tip of a needle, if you offer that scented smell to the guru's pores, the physical pores, where the hair grows, you collect much more merit than having made offerings to numberless buddhas, numberless Dharma, numberless Sangha, numberless statues, numberless stupas, numberless scriptures. The merit you collect is unbelievable because he is the most powerful holy object.

It is mentioned that if you practice the six paramitas for a thousand eons, if you make charity of your head and your hands to sentient beings for a thousand eons, you collect the most unbelievable, unbelievable, unbelievable merits. But when you follow the wishes and advice of the guru, in that second you collect more merit than *all* those merits collected for a thousand eons by making that charity.

Sakya Pandita was a great holy being who one of the founders of the Sakya lineage of teachings. He said,

For one thousand eons, if you made charity of your hands, head and the limbs of your body to sentient beings, the merits you have collected by making charity to sentient beings like that is [much less] than when you follow the guru's advice for even a second.

That is so powerful. That is the quickest way to be free from the oceans of samsaric sufferings, the quickest way to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, and the quickest way to free sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and quickly bring them to enlightenment. All that depends on following the virtuous friend.

“Devoting” is only with the mind whereas “correctly following” is two ways, with devotion and with action. So I say “correctly following the virtuous friend.” It is so powerful, unbelievable, unbelievable. You have to know those things. You have to write them down in your diary or in your heart. It should be kept as the most important advice. The quick way to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings depends on following the guru correctly.

If you follow the guru’s advice, the guru’s wishes, for days, weeks, months or years, can you imagine how unbelievable your life becomes. You are the most fortunate person. By following the guru’s advice, his words, for years and years, you collect the greatest purification in every second and you collect unbelievable merits, the cause of success, the cause of happiness, the cause of enlightenment. It is the quick way to achieve enlightenment. Now you can understand how that disciple is most fortunate.

I’ve mentioned this many times. I haven’t physically seen soccer but I’ve seen it on TV, in the early times. The soccer player doesn’t smile; the nose is out, the hands are like this. [Rinpoche raises his arms up in the gesture of winning] He runs out, like this, the nerves are out. I thought maybe he had lost the game, running like that, not smiling. But later on I realized it means he had won. That is nothing; that is just an object of attachment. Following the guru’s advice well, on the other hand, in every second you become closer to being free from samsara and to buddhahood. It is the quickest. You are supposed to do like this, in every second, like this, [Rinpoche shows running with the arms stretched up above the head] all the nerves out, day and night. Day and night you have to run like this!

Winning at soccer is nothing; it is winning the lower realms. In reality it is winning the suffering of samsara, in particular in the lower realms. It is totally done with attachment to get power, to get money. I can’t say everyone, but most people who play soccer don’t have a bodhicitta motivation. Of course, if you play the soccer with an emptiness meditation, a mindful awareness of emptiness, or even just an effortful meditation, playing soccer becomes a remedy to samsara. Like the example I gave yesterday, it becomes a remedy to samsara, not a cause of samsara. It becomes a remedy to eliminate the root of samsara if you do it with a realization of emptiness or even with an effortful meditation on emptiness. And if you play soccer with bodhicitta, it becomes a cause of enlightenment. Yesterday I didn’t mention soccer; I gave another example.

### ***The guru is the magnifying glass allowing us to receive blessings***

I'll give just one quotation, then we'll go back to emptiness. Sakya Pandita mentioned,

Even though sunbeams are very hot,  
Without a magnifying glass, they cannot ignite a fire.  
It is the same with the blessings of the buddhas:  
Without the guru, they cannot enter the disciple.<sup>19</sup>

There is a plant called *dra* that is dry, I don't know the English word. You wrap it up and put it on wood to make a fire. Then you put a magnifying glass on it, and the light shines through the glass onto the *dra* and it produces a fire. Without a guru, no matter how many buddhas have compassion, no matter how many blessings of the buddhas there are, without a guru, we sentient beings cannot receive realizations, they cannot be received in our hearts.

The need for a guru is extremely important to understand. You need to check why there is the need for a guru. Then the quote says,

Like that, by pleasing the guru, all the ten directions' buddhas are pleased.

The numberless buddhas are pleased by pleasing the guru. You have to understand that. That is a very important point.

For example, when you do something good that follows the guru's wishes, his advice, something very positive, even if you don't inform the guru, you might have a dream of the guru being so pleased with you, even giving you presents. The guru appears very radiant, very happy with you. Even if you don't inform the guru, that can still happen. That is a sign that numberless buddhas are happy with you. There are numberless buddhas who guide you, but they do it through this guru you have a karmic connection with in particular.

If you did something wrong, then even if you didn't inform the guru, becoming sick or something can be a sign the guru is displeased with you. That again means numberless buddhas are displeased with you, but the communication is through the guru to you. You have to understand that. By pleasing the guru you have a karmic connection with, you please the numberless buddhas.

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<sup>19</sup> Quoted in *Heart of the Path*, p. 239.

Then it says something very important,

In reality numberless Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are embodied in one, the guru.  
To you, the guru, I take refuge.

The guru is the embodiment of the numberless Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha and in reality the numberless Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are embodied in one—the guru. Sakya Pandita mentioned this. It contains important advice that you have to think about in your daily life.

***The ox with the blue horns (pleasing the guru)***

I will just mention one more thing so you can understand. This is very important advice. Don't forget.

There is a story about the Seventh Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Kelsang Gyatso. There was a geshe from Drepung Monastery, Geshe Chenpo Sumra Mitupa, who was not only a disciple but also kind of a friend to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He always said everything very straight to His Holiness. One day, the geshe asked His Holiness to predict what he would be in his next life.

His Holiness said, "Oh, right away you will be born as a buffalo with blue horns." The geshe laughed and laughed. "How is it possible?" he said, "How is it possible right away? First of all you have to die. Then, your future father and mother have to have sex, with the sperm from the father and the egg from the mother. Then you, as a bardo being, have to see them as parents, with attachment. Then, you enter in conception in the mother's womb. It takes nine months. Then you gradually get born outside. *Then*, you have blue horns. It takes a long time to have blue horns." The geshe then asked His Holiness, "How is it possible, therefore, to be born right away as a buffalo with blue horns?"

His Holiness laughed and laughed and then said, "Now you will be born as monk. Not only that but as a monk who is around me to serve me." The monk was so surprised and asked His Holiness, "How is it possible? I was going to be born as an ox, and I haven't done any purification or collected any merit. How can I now be born as a monk immediately?" His Holiness answered, "That is because I am the one blessed by Chenrezig." He didn't say he was Chenrezig, he said he was blessed by Chenrezig. Maybe, because the geshe was a disciple and he talked so straight to His Holiness, because that made His Holiness laugh so much by challenging his assertion he would be

reborn immediately as an ox with blue horns, he purified his negative karma to be born an animal and created the karma to be born as monk right away. This was by pleasing His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Don't think of it just as a story; bring it into your life practice. Whether you are with the guru or far away does not matter. That is not the question. By pleasing the guru, whatever negative karma you have, even to have a bad rebirth in the lower realms, gets immediately purified in that minute. Whenever you are able to please the guru, all those heavy negative karmas to be born in the lower realms at that time are purified, and right at that time you get a higher rebirth, like that monk born around His Holiness serving him. You should take that as very important advice in your daily life, that this is the source of happiness up to enlightenment.

You have great freedom in your hands at this one time that you have received a human body, and not just a human body but a perfect human body. You have met the holy Dharma, Buddhadharma, that reveals the unmistakable path to enlightenment. You have incredible freedom in your hands. In each second you have great freedom whether you choose to win or lose, whether you have profit or loss. In each second you can choose between hell or enlightenment, between samsara or nirvana, between the lower realms and a higher rebirth. In each second you have great freedom in your hands, the opportunity to protect yourself. In *Calling the Guru from Afar* it says,

NYE KA DÖN CHHEI TEN ZANG KHE NYEN KYI DUG DAM GA

Thinking of this excellent body, highly meaningful and difficult to obtain,

MA NOR NYING PO LEN DÖ SAM KYIN LA MA DRÄN NO

And wishing to take its essence with unerring choice between gain and loss, happiness and suffering—reminds me of you, guru.

By thinking of the guru's wishes, even in every second, you take the essence of this perfect human body, *Nye ka dön chhei zang khe nyen kyi dug dam ga* means not to take loss and to take the profit. *Ma nor nying po len dö sam kyin la ma drän no*, the whole thing depends on remembering the kindness of the guru showing the unmistakable path. "Please guide me in this life, the intermediate state, and the next life," all the time. That means all the time up to enlightenment, in every second, you request the guru to guide you, to bring you to enlightenment.

## THE EMPTINESS OF THE Z

Maybe I'll mention this so you can meditate on it.

One thing you need to do is to realize how everything comes from the mind—hell and enlightenment, samsara and nirvana, happiness and problems, everything, like any relationship problems you are going through. That is the beginning, understanding how everything comes from the mind, how everything is created by the mind.

Here is a simple example. At the very beginning, when you were a small child, your teacher was the one who introduced you to the alphabet by writing the letters on the blackboard, like the letter Z [Rinpoche draws a letter “z” in the air]. The teacher drew three lines on the blackboard but, because she had not taught you yet that this was Z, you had no idea what it was. You had no idea this was a Z. It is Z but you didn't see it. It was just [a horizontal line, a diagonal line and another horizontal line,] this, this, this [Rinpoche draws three lines in the air].

You just saw the lines. You didn't see them as a Z because you didn't have the appearance of this as a Z. Why? Because your mind hadn't labeled “Z” on this. Then, your teacher taught you the label. So, there are these three lines that are the *basis* to be labeled “Z” and there is the *label* “Z.” They are not two separate things but they are two different things, like I and the aggregates.

In earlier times, when the teacher was young, she also learned that from somebody who believed that is Z, so now the teacher taught you what she believed. She taught you, “That is Z.” She put the label, and then you believed in what she explained because it was there on the blackboard. You believed it; your mind labeled “Z” relating to this base. You believed in that, and from that time on whenever there is that appearance to you, you think, “That is Z.” There is the whole evolution until you see the lines as a Z.

It is the same with the I, with the aggregates, with all phenomena—form, sound, smell, taste, tangible object, the mind, everything—it is the same as this example. That is how your mind creates things. Do you understand? Subject, object, everything, you create your I!

It is exactly the same. This is the meditation. It relates not only to Z but to everything, the whole of life—form, sound, smell, taste, tangible object, mind, subject, object, including the I, action, object, everything. So, meditate to enlighten your mind, not to make it more ignorant. Now you can see, the Z comes from your mind. It is very clear that it comes from your mind. It is not just blind faith. It is very clear.

Whatever you are trying to abandon, samsara, lower nirvana, and whatever you are trying to achieve, everything comes from the mind. The conclusion is that it comes from the mind; it is created by the mind. Like that, here, in the Kopan gompa, you see me, I see you, outside, inside, the sky, the trees—everything here that you see comes from our mind. Do you understand? Everything is like the Z, including you here taking precepts and the food you cannot eat.

So, meditate using this mindfulness, like how the Z comes from the mind. Actually this is a very important meditation. You need one month, one week. You can even do it on weekends. It can be weeks, months, years; it can be a lifetime practice.

This is the most important mindfulness practice, rather than “Oh, I’m walking,” “Oh, I’m doing this.” You can do the same thing with negative actions. “Oh, I’m stealing.” Whatever you are doing you can call that “I’m doing this.” The purpose of mindfulness should be to abandon negative karma, to transform the mind into virtue, to abstain from delusion and practice virtue to actualize the path. The purpose of mindfulness is that.

Even just that meditation is so important. In everyday life, wherever you are, West, East, not only in Nepal, to have this mindfulness is so important. Then if a problem comes to you, [Rinpoche snaps fingers] it doesn’t disturb you. It becomes insignificant. By thinking in that way, it gets pacified; it doesn’t become a big disturbance. It comes from your mind, so you can relax. Anyway, that is just the essence. So, I’ll stop here.

## **DEDICATIONS**

[Mandala offering]

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may bodhicitta, the source of all happiness and suffering including enlightenment for me and for every sentient being, be generated in the hearts of all sentient beings who have been my own mother and have been unbelievably kind from beginningless rebirths.”

Of course, sentient beings who have met and who practice the Dharma are few, and those who do not know or practice the Dharma are numberless. The way they take care of you is with ignorance, anger, attachment, with the self-cherishing thought. They create unbelievable negative karma taking care of you and they have had unbelievable suffering from beginningless rebirths. In

this lifetime, if you don't practice the Dharma, if you don't realize emptiness, you will get born in samsara and to them again, and then they will have to experience yet more of the most unbelievable suffering, without end.

Therefore, generate bodhicitta for all sentient beings, in particular the sentient beings of this world, in particular the sentient beings in Nepal, in particular in the hearts of all the students. "May all those who rely on me, who I promised to pray for, whose name was given to me, in the hearts of all of us here, including our family, those who are already dead, even including them. May bodhicitta be generated in their hearts and may bodhicitta be generated in any sentient being who sees me, who hears from me or about me, who remembers me, touches me, who hears my name, who mentions my name, who sees my photo or dreams of me; may bodhicitta to be generated in all their hearts, and in whose heart bodhicitta has been generated may it increase.

"Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may we be guided by Lama Tsongkhapa; may he be our Mahayana virtuous friend in all lifetimes."

This is to actualize Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings, [seeing them as] not separate from the Buddha's teachings, as the most correct explanation of the Buddha's teachings.

We pray for the world. "Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may the wars that are happening now and will happen in the future be stopped immediately. May all disease and famine, including all problems coming from anger and attachment, be stopped immediately."

For example, in California there is always the danger of fire, with even two or three fires happening at the same time. This has happened so many times. Can you imagine how many ants, how many insects, are killed? Even though their body is so small, their mind is just like ours; they want happiness and do not want suffering at all. Besides the big animals numberless tiny insects get burned. One young man caught a rabbit running into the fire. Normally when there are disasters like tsunamis, people don't think of the animals, they only think of other people.

Yesterday there was a small earthquake here in Nepal. I thought sometimes with those small earthquakes it is because somebody has had a realization of bodhicitta, then the earthquake happens. Maybe it's not an earthquake that destroys everything; it's not necessarily bad all the time. All the global problems, ice melting, oceans washing away cities—there is so much danger, like what happened in Texas. Therefore, "May all those be stopped immediately. May perfect peace and happiness prevail in everyone's heart by generating loving kindness and compassion.

“May the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, from where sentient beings receive all peace and happiness, last a long time and may sentient beings meet the Buddhadharma, the Buddha’s teachings, and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.” Pray like that. We are responsible for the world. We have responsibility to pray for the world. We have to pray not only for our own happiness but the happiness of numberless sentient beings living in this world. It is very important.

“Due to all these merits, may we be able to cherish every single sentient being more than the sky filled with wish-granting jewels.”

There are numberless, numberless sentient beings, so, “May any sentient being who sees me, touches me, hears me, remembers me, see photos of me, dreams of me, just by that may they be free from all the sufferings and may they achieve all the happiness including enlightenment.

“Due to all the past, present, and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, that which exist but do not exist from their own side, which are totally empty from their own side, may the I, who exists but does not exist from its own side, who is totally empty from its own side, achieve buddhahood, which exists but does not exist from its own side, which is totally empty from its own side, and lead all the sentient beings, who exist but do not exist from their own side, who are totally empty from their own side, to that buddhahood, which exists but does not exist from its own side, which is totally empty from its own side, by myself alone, who exists but does not exist from its own side, who is totally empty from its own side.”

Thank you very much.

## Lecture 6: The Faults of Self-cherishing

December 10, 2017

### THE GRADUATED PATHS OF THE MIDDLE AND HIGHER CAPABLE BEINGS: MOTIVATION FOR THE EIGHT MAHAYANA PRECEPTS

[Students recite *Prayers Before Teachings*]

As Lama Tsongkhapa mentioned in the heart of the Buddhadharmā, the *Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, generally there are 84,000 teachings taught by the Buddha, that are included in the three levels of teachings, the Lesser Vehicle teaching, the Mahayana sutra teachings and the Mahayana tantra teachings. There are different levels of teachings because sentient beings have different levels of intelligence, different levels of merit. Those three levels of teachings taught by the Buddha are all included in the graduated path to enlightenment, lamrim. There are the graduated path of a lower capable being in general, the graduated path of a middle capable being in general and the graduated path of a higher capable being.

Yesterday I was introducing the capable beings, then I got stuck explaining the ordinary capable being, [which is below the lower capable being] so probably I didn't go beyond that.

To not be reborn in the lower realms and to seek a higher rebirth, you need to take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, to rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and you need to protect your karma, to abandon negative karma and engage in virtue, such as living in the precepts. Even for lay people, besides taking refuge you can take five precepts or four precepts or three precepts or two precepts or one precept, in order to protect your karma. These are the general precepts and then of course there are the eight Mahayana precepts you take for one day. You have been taking the eight Mahayana precepts but there are also the eight precepts of *pratimokṣha*, which are also taken for one day, but for individual liberation and without visualizing the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

What you are taking here is the eight Mahayana precepts with bodhicitta—to free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and to bring them to peerless happiness, buddhahood.

It is mentioned in the prayers that you do this to not have disease, to not have famine—I think I have added to stop war—and to stop the dangers of fire, water and earth, all these things. That includes global problems. Now you can see there is a solution to stop the global problems, the ice

melting, the oceans increasing and washing away the cities, the problems in the West. To stop those things, you take the eight Mahayana precepts. It includes all those.

Then, abandoning the ten nonvirtues and practicing the ten virtues, according to what you can do, is [also part of] the graduated path of the lower capable being in general. It is “general” because it is the foundation to actualize the graduated path of the middle capable being and higher capable being. To actualize bodhicitta, the higher capable being, and to actualize right view, the realization of emptiness, needs that foundation.

The goal of the graduated path of the middle capable being is to be free from samsara. It is a better aim than before. To be free from samsara, to achieve liberation from samsara forever, to achieve that, you practice the three higher trainings—the higher training of morality, the higher training of concentration—the nine levels of shamatha you have to go through—and the higher training of wisdom. On the basis of the realization of shamatha, calm abiding, you do the analysis of emptiness, then you derive the rapturous ecstasy of body and mind. That is the higher training in wisdom.

The graduated path of the middle capable being is “general” because you need that foundation for bodhicitta. For the graduated path of the higher capable being you need that foundation. So here, achieving nirvana, achieving the blissful state of peace for yourself, is what is to be abandoned. Before it was what was to be achieved, but now, in relation to bodhicitta on the Mahayana path, thinking of your own happiness, even ultimate happiness, is to be abandoned.

Abandoning achieving liberation from samsara, being free from that, not falling into that, means achieving buddhahood, the total cessation of obscurations and completion of all the realizations, *sang gye*, achieving that for all sentient beings.

It is not just something nice up in the sky. Starting from you, whoever is around you, the people, all your family members, chickens, dogs, ants, the tiniest insects—whoever is around you—from there up to those equaling the limitless sky, the numberless sentient beings, your goal is to achieve buddhahood for the benefit of each and every single sentient being. No one is left out. No matter how tiny an insect or no matter how big it is, nobody is left out. For that reason, you generate compassion for the numberless sentient beings.

Before, [you developed] renunciation of your samsara. Realizing your samsara is totally in the nature of suffering, you had aversion to your own samsara, bringing total renunciation. That led you to achieve nirvana, the blissful state of peace for yourself. But now this is much more advanced. You think of others’ samsara, how the others are suffering in samsara, by using yourself as example. You

are suffering in samsara and you know others' suffering to that depth, so you naturally generate compassion when you look at others. For the numberless others suffering in samsara you generate unbearable compassion.

As I mentioned, you have received your past, present and future happiness including enlightenment, every single comfort and happiness, from every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal, every human being, every sura and asura being, from every intermediate state being, from everyone. Even though there are numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas working for sentient beings, it is your responsibility to work for those numberless sentient beings, to repay their kindness.

## **EXCHANGING OURSELVES WITH OTHERS**

Repaying the kindness is one thing. From cherishing the I all the suffering and problems come. It is the main blockage to achieving enlightenment for sentient beings. It is the greatest obstacle to being able to fully enlighten your mind in order to perfectly benefit every single sentient being. The self-cherishing thought is the source of all the obstacles, all the misconceptions, all the sicknesses—even black magic—all the failures, not only in Dharma but also in business and worldly activities. Everything, all the failures, all the problems, all the sickness, whatever, it all comes from cherishing the I.

A few days ago I mentioned a quote from *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* but I think a word was missing in Tibetan at the beginning, “who wishes to guide,” to guide or save.

Thus whoever wishes to quickly afford protection  
To both the self and other beings  
Should practice that holy secret:  
The exchanging of self for others.<sup>20</sup>

If you wish to save yourself and others quickly, secretly practice exchanging yourself and others. That contains a lot of answers, if you want to know them. Many young people want to help others but do not really know the way; they don't know how to make their life beneficial for others. The real secret is to change your mind, to exchange yourself and others.

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<sup>20</sup> Shantideva, ch. 8, v.120.

Usually we all live life letting go of others and cherishing ourselves. That has been our practice from beginningless rebirths up to now. That is how we have been living our life. But there has still been no end to experiencing problems and suffering. Can you imagine—[you have had problems] from beginningless rebirths and you still haven't finished your problems because of the self-cherishing thought. You have never given up the self-cherishing thought and have always cherished this I, whereas with the numberless sentient beings, you have been careless with their happiness, careless with their lives. The proof is that.

The first thing is to change your mind, your attitude. You change from the root of the problem, the self-cherishing thought, into cherishing others, the root of happiness for yourself up to enlightenment and for numberless sentient beings. By cherishing the numberless sentient beings you open the door to all the happiness up to enlightenment for yourself and all the happiness for *all* the sentient beings up to enlightenment. Sorry, I should have done the “all” longer!

Kyabje Khunu Lama Rinpoche was a great bodhisattva from India, from Khunu in Ladakh. When he was young he went to Tibet and from very learned ones he received not just teachings on philosophical subjects but other teachings such as poetry and grammar. In Bodhgaya, His Holiness received extensive teachings from Kyabje Khunu Lama Rinpoche on *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. I received the *lung*, the oral transmission, of *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* and a commentary on the wisdom chapter. I also received it publicly with many other lamas and monks. Rinpoche himself is known outside as a Nyingma, but he knows all the four sects' teachings. When he explains, he explains it like, “For Gelug, Lama Tsongkhapa's tradition, it is like this, for Sakya it is like this, for Nyingma it is like this.” Of course His Holiness the Dalai Lama also teaches like this—“The Nyingma tradition is like that, Lama Tsongkhapa's tradition is like that.” Rinpoche wrote *A Praise of Bodhicitta*<sup>21</sup> and I received the *lung*, the oral transmission of that, and several teachings, from Rinpoche. There it says,

The precious supreme thought [bodhicitta] alone has the power  
To be the ground for the continual production of benefits and happiness  
For wandering beings, pervading space, who have been one's mother,  
And for relieving the suffering of each of them.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *The Jewel Lamp: A Praise of Bodhicitta*, published as *Vast as the Heavens, Deep as the Sea*, Wisdom Publications, 1999.

<sup>22</sup> V. 186.

The basis of happiness of every sentient being up to enlightenment is bodhicitta. That means if you have bodhicitta, you are able to bring all the happiness for yourself up to enlightenment, and then you are able to bring happiness to every single hell being, hungry ghost, animal, human being, sura being, and asura being and intermediate state being, to everyone. There are numberless beings in every realm and you are able to bring happiness up to enlightenment to all of them if you have bodhicitta. It totally depends on your bodhicitta.

You have to write that down. Really. Therefore, you must generate bodhicitta in your mind in this life. That should be the main aim of living your life. What are you living your life for? Why are you surviving? The aim should be to generate bodhicitta in this life; everything should be for that. Whenever you collect merit, you must dedicate for that.

I don't remember the words after that. There is a verse in *Bodhicaryavatara*, I don't know it by heart, what? [*Ven. Ailsa*: The first chapter.] Yes, yes, the first chapter.

All the buddhas who have contemplated for many eons  
Have seen it to be beneficial;  
For by it the limitless masses of beings  
Will quickly attain the supreme state of bliss.<sup>23</sup>

For many eons the buddhas have been checking what is the most benefit for the sentient beings and found it is *nothing else* except bodhicitta.

If you want to know who the wise person is, it is this.<sup>24</sup>

Otherwise, even if somebody plays soccer and wins a million times, that is not a wise person. Even if we can fly without wings, or with our hands tied to wings [we are not a wise person]. Many insects can fly. So, if you are doing a retreat, meditate on bodhicitta. If you are eating food, eat with bodhicitta, to help sentient beings. If you are sleeping, sleep with bodhicitta, to help the sentient beings.

[Tea offering and break to drink tea]

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<sup>23</sup> Ch. 1, v. 7.

<sup>24</sup> This source could not be located in either *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* or *The Jewel Lamp: A Praise of Bodhicitta*.

## CONTEMPLATE THE FAULTS OF SELF-CHERISHING

In the *Guru Puja*, composed by Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen, it says all the great yogis of the past gained enlightenment by pleasing the guru. That is what all the past pandits and yogis practiced, including Saraha, Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa, Milarepa, and many in Tibet from the four traditions. This is what caused all of them to become enlightened, including Gyalwa Ensapa, Lama Tsongkhapa's disciple who achieved enlightenment very easily, very comfortably. As my guru Kyabje Zong Rinpoche in his past life said, Milarepa achieved buddhahood in a brief lifetime of degenerate times by enduring so many hardships but Gyalwa Ensapa achieved full enlightenment very comfortably. Rinpoche often said that. That is Kyabje Zong Rinpoche praising the purity of Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings.

Many from the Gelug tradition also achieved buddhahood not just in one lifetime but in one brief lifetime of degenerate times. The main thing that made them achieve enlightenment quickly is the special guru practice. Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen checked what the Buddha taught and how the Tibetan pandits and yogis who achieved enlightenment practiced. Then he collected all the advice on what they practiced and put it together in the *Guru Puja* practice. Pleasing the guru allows you to become enlightened in one brief lifetime of degenerate times. It is an unbelievable highest tantra practice, which puts together the lamrim, and in particular *lojong*, utilizing everything in life—whether you have problems or not; whether you have an unhappy or a happy life—utilizing everything on the path to enlightenment for sentient beings.

It is mentioned in the *Guru Puja* [LC 91],

RANG NYI CHE PAR DZIN PÄI CHONG NÄ DI  
This chronic disease of cherishing myself  
MI DÖ DUG NGÄL KYE PÄI GYUR THONG NÄ  
Is the cause giving rise to my unsought suffering.  
LE LÄN DÄ LA KHÖN DU ZUNG JÄ TE  
Perceiving this, I seek your blessings to blame, begrudge,  
DAG DZIN DÖN CHHEN JOM PAR JIN GYI LOB  
And destroy the monstrous demon of selfishness.

This is talking about the bodhicitta practice. *Rang nyi che par dzin päi chong nä di* means seeing that cherishing the I, this chronic disease, has been with you not only in this life, but from beginningless

rebirths, and because it is the cause of all the sufferings, you put the blame on the one, the self-cherishing thought. Because all the problems come from that, you give them back to the I, *le län dä la* is “Put all the blame on your self-cherishing thought.” All problems come from the self-cherishing thought, so that is where you put all the blame. Although you have [continually] asked the self-cherishing thought for help, it never has. There are many stories like that. You always harbor in your mind any harm a person has given you with body, speech and mind. You always keep it in your mind, getting angry back. Then, if you can, you harm them back.

That is what people normally do. But now you use that example [and you do the same to] the self-cherishing thought, your real enemy, Mara, the demon. Whatever harm it has given you, you harbor it. That is your real enemy, the self-cherishing thought. In reality there is no external enemy, only in your mind, the self-cherishing thought. For example, in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, it says,

Unruly beings are as unlimited as space;  
They cannot possibly all be overcome.  
But if I overcome thoughts of anger alone  
This will be equivalent to vanquishing all foes.<sup>25</sup>

The enemy comes from your mind. Your mind has made the outside enemy. So you see, if there is no anger there is no enemy outside. Wherever you go, east or west, mountains or cities, in the oceans, there is no anger in your mind. What you call “enemy” comes from your mind, from your anger, from your self-cherishing thought.

There is also a quote from Nagarjuna, I don't remember exactly. It says,

Killing your anger is like killing all your external enemies.

It is also mentioned in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*,

Where would I possibly find enough leather  
With which to cover the surface of the earth?  
But wearing leather just on the soles of my shoes

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<sup>25</sup> Ch. 5, v. 12.

Is equivalent to covering the earth with it.<sup>26</sup>

To try to cover the whole earth with leather to protect your feet is impossible, but if you have shoes wherever you walk no thorns can go inside, so that is the same as the whole earth covered with leather. That means with no anger, with patience, there is no enemy outside. You have to know this.

### ***The messages on Rinpoche's car***

We have two cars at the Aptos house in America that have messages on the back. I wrote that message: “No anger, no enemy.” At airports or restaurants some people copy it. They learn from the car. It is a very important message, so important now, especially now you look at the world, it looks like boiling hot water. Because so many hundreds of thousands of people get killed, die or suffer, that message is very important. You don't need to fight [any external enemy]; you fight your enemy inside, the one enemy, anger. Kill that and there is no outside enemy. By having patience you can't find an outside enemy.

The message I have at the front of the car might be harder for some people to understand; anger might be easier. It says: “Less desire means more happiness.” That is at the front car at the bottom. At the top there are many mantras, which are supposed to purify or bless any insects that hit the car.

Of course, it has Namgyälma protection for the many insects and ants that get killed by being hit or run over by the car. The car has become holy by having the protection of the Namgyälma mantras, which are extremely powerful purification. Stuck on the car, however many insects get killed are all purified and don't get reborn in the lower realms. Due to negative karma they would certainly get reborn in the lower realms, but because the Namgyälma mantra is stuck on the car they don't get a lower rebirth and they get a higher rebirth. There are many mantras on the car for people to see, like OM MANI PADME HUM and other mantras. By seeing them people purify the negative karma of killing their father and mother or an arhat, causing blood to flow from a buddha, or causing disunity among the Sangha. All those are purified by seeing the mantras and it plants the seed of enlightenment.

On the back of the car, on the wheel, I have the message, “Anybody who sees the car, touches, remembers...,” anyway, like that, “...not to be reborn in the lower realms,” I think, “...and to achieve enlightenment.” That dedication has been put on the back of the car, on the wheel. Many

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<sup>26</sup> Ch. 5, v. 13.

people copy those sayings when the car is parked, or sometimes when we go to the airport or drive around. Other people do like this [Rinpoche shows thumbs up gesture]. On one side of the car it says, “Kindness is my religion” by His Holiness and on the other side of the car it says, “Cherishing others is the source of happiness.” Probably not everybody can know about that. You have to collect a lot of merit and be intelligent to know how that is important.

Wherever the car goes, driving back and forth, it is giving education to people, as the world has so much suffering. But that message, “less desire means more happiness” is so important to know in life. When you have less desire your peace and happiness naturally increases. Millionaires, billionaires, zillionaires have unbelievable, unbelievable dissatisfaction, unbelievable suffering. That is because their desire doesn’t become less, it increases more and more. That is how they have incredible, unbelievable dissatisfaction and so much suffering.

It is said in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* that [when they are faced with their own death] the suras have mental suffering thirteen times greater than hell beings. Hell beings have unbelievable physical suffering but suras have thirteen or fourteen times more mental suffering than them. The suras have unbelievable sense pleasures. The most developed country in our world is very primitive compared to theirs. Even what we think of as so rich is very primitive in comparison.

I heard that in President Trump’s house in America everything is gold. The water taps and everything are gold. It is a huge house he gave to his son or something, huge, beautiful, but that is nothing, that is like a beggar’s hovel compared to the sura’s world. But mentally they have more suffering, just as in the human realm millionaires, billionaires, zillionaires have great dissatisfaction, great suffering. They have much more mental worry than a beggar outside begging for food every day. This psychology was not made up by somebody, not figured out by somebody; it is experience. “Less desire means more happiness” is according to practitioners’ experience, not made up by some psychologist. Sorry. Not like that. It is the experience of Dharma practitioners who renounced attachment to this life. That is the first thing they experience.

That is the solution in the West, especially in the West. Less desire means more happiness, more peace. That is the main solution; that is the main psychology. That is the main thing if you don’t want problems. That is the thing just there! You don’t have to go anywhere. It’s just there. Inside here, you have to get peace just there. There or here? There or here, what do you think? There? In the brain, not the heart? Anger doesn’t come from here. [Rinpoche points to his head] Why do you think it comes from here? In the West the brain is everything. But anger doesn’t come from the

brain, compassion doesn't come from the brain, it comes from here, loving kindness and compassion come from here, [Rinpoche indicates his heart] not there. You understand? You analyze.

So, I didn't finish.

When we drive around in the car with messages like His Holiness' "Kindness to others is my religion," I don't know, maybe some people, maybe some missionaries, don't like it because it mentions His Holiness' name. Sometimes they do like this. [Rinpoche gives a thumbs down gesture] Is it bad upside down like that? And then some cars circumambulate our car like this. [Rinpoche indicates with his hand circumambulating] They might be students; they go like this, circumambulating us while we are driving.

***The faults of self-cherishing (continued): Give your problems back to your self-cherishing***

Last one, *le län dä la khön du zung jä te*, "Please bless me to destroy the great demon of cherishing the I." That is the last word. Whatever problems you have with anybody, even just with yourself, because they all come from the self-cherishing thought, you blame that, not just the problem. The great demon of the self-cherishing thought gave this problem to you, whatever it is—somebody abusing you, criticizing you, being angry with you, not helping you, whatever—your self-cherishing thought gave you all those problems, so now you give them back! You give back all the problems to your great demon self-cherishing thought.

You not only put the blame on the self-cherishing thought and harbor a grudge against it, because all these problems were given to you by the self-cherishing thought, you give them back! This last thought has been added by the pandits, not by the Buddha. You give the problem back to the great demon self-cherishing thought, instead of taking it on, and, by doing that, you destroy it.

It is like what I saw on the iPad or TV or something, when America was fighting Israel or Saudi Arabia. [*Ven. Roger. Iraq.*] Iraq. There was an army place and they shot this missile from a long way away right on that army place. From very far away they shot it exactly, and then everything became pieces. Your problem is exactly like that. When you are abused by somebody or even so many people complain about you or criticize you, you not only harbor a grudge against your demon, the self-cherishing thought, you give the problem back to it and destroy it. Like that, the great demon self-cherishing thought is eliminated, destroyed. It doesn't exist, even in name.

Then, the real I that appeared and that you believe in all the time, day and night, from beginningless rebirths, is eliminated because ignorance is eliminated. There is no real I, and now

even the object of ignorance, the real I, that is totally nonexistent, you see as nonexistent. So now, meditate on emptiness for a little while, whatever you can. Like that it is very effective.

***What greater happiness do you need than helping sentient beings?***

In *Lama Chöpa* [LC 92] it says,

MA NAM CHE ZUNG DE LA GÖ PÄI LO

The mind that cherishes mothers and places them in bliss

THA YÄ YÖN TÄN JUNG WÄI GOR THONG NÄ

Is the gateway leading to infinite qualities.

DRO WA DI DAG DAG GI DRAR LANG KYANG

Seeing this, I seek your blessings to cherish these transmigratory beings

SOG LÄ CHE PAR DZIN PAR JIN GYI LOB

More than my life, even should they rise up as my enemies.

*Ma nam che zung*, “cherishing the mothers,” *ma nam* is plural for mothers. Then *che zung de la gö* is “the thought leading them to happiness.” So, you see that cherishing our mothers and leading them into happiness is the door to receiving *all* the happiness, *tha yä yön tän*, all the good things, all the qualities up to enlightenment, all the realizations of the path. Just to make it simple, that means from correctly following the virtuous friend you receive every single realization all the way up to omniscience. You can also think of all the success, all the happiness up to enlightenment. You can elaborate it like that. Then, *tha yä yön tän jung wäi gor thong nä*, “seeing it is the door for receiving limitless qualities,” *dro wa, gor thong nä*, “even if all transmigratory beings, all the six realms’ sentient beings, rise up as my enemy,” *sog lä che par dzin par jin gyi lob*, “please bless me to cherish them more than my life.”

That is the practice. Even if the numberless sentient beings of the six realms rise up against you as your enemy, you cherish them more than your life. This is what the verse is saying.

Here it uses the plural *nam*, but I say even one. Of course, often His Holiness says when you cherish the I you are just one, but by cherishing others, they are numberless. Generally in the world the president who acts for the benefit of the majority will win. Others are numberless, so of course they are more important. They are most important. You cherish the I, but that is only one, whereas others are numberless.

Even cherishing two is more important than cherishing one. Two people’s happiness is more important than one person’s—yours. Then, cherishing three people is even more important. You

have to think, three people's happiness is more important. Now, one hundred people's happiness is very important. Their happiness is more important than yours. And like that, a thousand people, a billion people. So you can see how important it is to cherish others. Their happiness is *so* important. Sorry! I should make more noise.

If the bigger the number, the more important, can you imagine just how important it is to cherish numberless sentient beings—to serve and cherish them. Now you can understand how that is of utmost importance.

I want to bring this up again now; I mentioned it yesterday or the day before yesterday. All the three-times happiness—your happiness from beginningless rebirths, your present happiness and your future happiness—every single happiness up to enlightenment, every single comfort and pleasure you have experienced from beginningless rebirths and you will experience in the future up to enlightenment, has been totally received by the kindness of numberless sentient beings: numberless hell beings, numberless hungry ghosts, numberless animals, numberless human beings, numberless sura and asuras, and numberless intermediate state beings. I mentioned every single sentient being living in the ocean, under the ground such as worms and insects, living in the bush, in the trees and in the grass, like the tiniest flies. I've already explained how all our happiness comes from sentient beings, but I can repeat it once more in case there are people who were not there on that day and they may not understand.

All your past, present and future happiness comes from your good karma, your virtuous thoughts, and that is the buddhas' actions. The buddhas' actions are two types—one is possessed by their own holy mind, and one is by you. Buddhas come from bodhisattvas; bodhisattvas come from bodhicitta; bodhicitta comes from great compassion; and great compassion is generated by depending on obscured suffering sentient beings, everyone. Therefore, every single comfort you ever experience in everyday life from beginningless rebirths up to enlightenment is all received by the kindness of every single sentient being, even every single insect.

I explained that that is what His Holiness normally says. Therefore, as I told you, every sentient being is your most precious, your most dear, your most kind, your most wish-fulfilling one. Now you can understand why you begin every meditation with bodhicitta. Before you begin every practice, there is refuge and bodhicitta motivation. Whatever the practice is—even offering food, walking, sitting, sleeping, any meditation, any practice you do—you do it with a bodhicitta motivation, to benefit every single sentient being. Now you understand! Now you see the point!

Now you can see why you do everything for sentient beings, why you live your life for sentient beings. To free them from suffering and bring them to buddhahood, what greater happiness do you need? Now you can see how to make your life most beneficial for every sentient being, for every creature, even the tiniest one, it doesn't matter what body they have. You need to benefit every sentient being. You collect more than skies of merit each time you generate a bodhicitta motivation; you collect the cause of happiness, merits, more than the sky. Now is the time to finish. There are quotations from Nagarjuna and Shantideva that explain why we must live our life for others.

### ***Cherishing the enemy***

Looking at even one sentient being, when the choice is between you and one sentient being, who is more precious? You or this one person, this one insect? Who is more precious? You have to think about that; you have to analyze that. If you have an enemy, somebody you hate, somebody you don't want to see or hear, ask the question. "Am I more precious than this person? Or is this person more precious than me?" Analyze.

The number is the same, one to one. Before the choice was simply numbers; you are one and there are numberless sentient beings, but now it is just one. If you cherish this one sentient being, especially somebody you call "enemy," there is enlightenment. Because of them, you become free from samsara and achieve enlightenment. On the other hand, if you renounce this one sentient being, there is no enlightenment for you. You have to know that. If you cherish that one being, especially the enemy, the one who harms us, there is enlightenment. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] If you don't cherish them, there is no enlightenment. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] There is just endless samsara. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] Think that.

I will tell you a story. This is very important, so don't forget. There are many stories that I don't know, I haven't read. But, anyway, this is a story I know that is very helpful for you to remember and meditate on, for you to help all sentient beings. In the commentary on Vajrayogini, a female enlightened being, there is the story of a great yogi called Ngagpo Chöpawa. He normally traveled in the sky with five hundred dakinis with damaru and bell. He went to do his last tantra practice before enlightenment, *chöpa*, tantra conduct, in a place in Oddi, near West Bengal, near Buxa where I lived for eight years, where the one thousand five hundred monks continued to study philosophy after they escaped from Tibet. This place, Oddi, is near Buxa. Each year there is a kind of celebration of the holy place and many people go there from Bombay. I heard there is a cave you climb up to by

holding on to an iron bar. In the cave the earth is like ice melted down, and when some people go there, they hear music—cymbals and damaru—or chanting. I think an incarnate lama, the old leader of puja in Namgyal monastery, heard chanting when he went there. He taught in His Holiness' Namgyal Monastery and he passed away a long time.

In the story of Ngagpo Chöpawa, there was a lady with leprosy, totally full of pus and blood coming out, waiting to cross a river. When she asked the yogi to carry her to other side, he didn't pay attention; he just went straight across. The yogi was not a monk but his disciple was. Later the disciple monk, Getsul Tsimbulwa, came, and when she asked him to help her across, instead of ignoring her, he had unbelievable compassion seeing her suffering. He was a monk and she was lady but he had no thought that he could not touch the lady. He immediately grabbed her and took her on his back without thinking of catching her leprosy, that the disease would spread from her, just unbelievable compassion.

What happened was in the middle of the river—they didn't even get across—in the middle of the river, carrying her, he was purified. Seeing the unbelievable suffering of the lady, the negativities obscuring his mind were purified. In the middle of the river this lady transformed into Dorje Phagmo, the female enlightened deity, the same as Vajrayogini but with a pig's head, which signifies the antidote to sentient beings' ignorance. Actually, from the beginning she always was Dorje Phagmo, not that lady, but Getsul Tsimbulwa's mind was so obscured he saw a suffering lady with pus and blood. But carrying her across with unbelievable compassion he purified his negativities, allowing him to see her as the deity. She was the deity but before he couldn't see the deity, he saw the suffering lady. Then, without need for him to die, she took him to the pure land, Dagpa Kachö.

If you go there, you will definitely get enlightened there, whereas in Amitabha's pure land you don't get enlightened. Bodhisattvas pray to be born here in our world, the southern world, where there are tantric teachings happening, so they can practice tantra and get enlightened. That is one reason for being born here. Our human body is very precious, so we must not waste time; we must make the most of it by utilizing it in the practice, for the Dharma and especially for tantra, to achieve enlightenment quickly, if possible in one brief lifetime of degenerate times, or however quickly.

She took Getsul Tsimbulwa, without him needing to die, to the pure land of Dagpa Kachö, and he became enlightened there. I'm not sure but maybe the disciple became enlightened before his guru, Ngagpo Chöpawa. Getsul Tsimbulwa generated compassion for just this one being and look at the benefits he got! He purified his negativities and was able to go to a pure land and get enlightened there. That is from generating compassion for one being.

Therefore, for one insect, for one human being, for anybody, it is so important to generate compassion even for one being in your daily life. For me, I'm very lazy. Don't copy me, I'm terribly lazy. But on the road in India you see buffaloes carrying such heavy loads, piles of heavy iron bars. They have to pull such heavy things, and then they get beaten. You can't do very much for them, so at least you should do *tonglen* meditation and do prayers for them. There are many prayers, such as Nagarjuna's prayer:

Whatever suffering sentient beings have, may it ripen on me.

Whatever happiness I have, may it ripen on others.

You recite this prayer and dedicate your happiness, your merits, mentally giving them to these animals or people. You take the suffering in your heart and destroy the self-cherishing thought as I mentioned before. At least pray for them but, if possible, take their suffering. Visualize and give your happiness and merit to them.

In the road or wherever, there are so many suffering beings around that you can see. So, you can do like that while you are walking. At least you do like that, practice bodhicitta. Then, like Getsul Tsimbulwa, it is the most powerful purification, the quickest way to collect extensive merits. If you train your mind like that, it is the quickest way to achieve enlightenment.

So, I've finished. I didn't reach emptiness. I was supposed to do the motivation, then reach emptiness. It didn't happen. Do the emptiness meditation in your sleep, in your dreams. OK.

In the road there are people who don't have legs or hands; there are so many different suffering beings. So, as you walk around, do *tonglen*, taking sentient beings' suffering and the cause, and giving them your happiness and merits. If you can help somebody of course you should, but at least pray, at least do meditation. I will stop here. Even one sentient being is most precious. Cherishing yourself is the source of all suffering. Cherishing others is the source of all happiness, your happiness and other numberless sentient beings' happiness. It opens the door for that, up to enlightenment. Understand that.

## **DEDICATIONS**

[Mandala offering]

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may bodhicitta, the source of all happiness and success up to enlightenment for ourselves and all sentient beings, be generated in the hearts of all sentient beings who have been our own mother from beginningless rebirths and have been most unbelievably kind from beginningless rebirths, numberless times.”

After she lays her eggs outside the water, because she has to live in the water, the crocodile keeps her babies in her mouth before she puts them in the lake. Her mouth is very long and she puts water in her mouth to keep the many babies in. Sometimes the babies’ legs come outside, but she tries to keep them inside, in the water in her mouth, to train them before getting into the lake. I don’t know how long she keeps them like that. It’s amazing. If she put the babies immediately into the lake they would get lost and die. After keeping them in her mouth for I don’t know how long, she slowly puts them in the lake when they get big enough. I’m sure you must know more about that. I’m talking about the kindness of the mother.

It is amazing how, when the different beings are born, their mothers take care of them with ignorance, anger, attachment and the self-cherishing thought, creating so much negative karma from beginningless rebirths up to now. Then they suffer. The result is they experience unbelievable, unbelievable, unbelievable suffering from beginningless rebirths up to now. Unless you practice Dharma and realize emptiness, you will have to be born in samsara to sentient beings again. Like before, you will have to be born again and your mothers will have to endure samsaric suffering again and again, endlessly.

“May bodhicitta be generated in all the sentient beings who have been our mothers and have been so kind and suffered so much, especially in sentient beings in this world. May bodhicitta be generated in their hearts, especially in the hearts of all sentient beings in Nepal, in the hearts of all the students of the FPMT, in the hearts of all of us here, including our family members, those who have already died.”

Maybe some are in the higher realms but most are probably in hell, or are a hungry ghost or an animal. You just can’t imagine. You meet many of them as horses, or dogs or cats, or as worms or something but you don’t recognize them. You not only don’t have an omniscient mind, you don’t even have ordinary clairvoyance. You can’t recognize your kind mother, your kind father, you can’t recognize them now. So many times it is like that.

“May bodhicitta be generated in the heart of any sentient being who sees me, who hears from me, who remembers me, who touches me, who hears my name, who mentions my name, who sees

my photos, who dreams of me. May bodhicitta be generated in all their hearts, and in those whose heart bodhicitta has been generated, may it increase.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may I be able to cherish every sentient being more than the sky filled with wish-granting jewels.”

Then we should pray for the world. There is a prayer for the world written by His Holiness but I don't know it by heart.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may all the wars happening in the world now and in the future be stopped, and may all the famines, disease, dangers due to attachment and anger, dangers of earth, fire, tsunamis and so forth be stopped immediately. The ice melting, the water levels rising and washing away cities, may all those problems be stopped immediately.

“May perfect peace and happiness prevail in everyone's heart and, by generating loving kindness and compassion in everyone's heart, may the Buddhadharma last a long time. By meeting the Buddhadharma, may sentient beings receive peace and happiness and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may any sentient being who sees me, touches me, hears me, remembers me, sees photos of me, dreams of me, just by that may all their suffering be pacified and may they achieve all the happiness including enlightenment.”

I must tell you this story. Not necessarily every day but I normally do those prayers. This happened last time I went to Australia, to Kangaroo Island, where the center there has built a stupa and a Padmasambhava statue, a standing one with water around. After I had been to bless it and we came back by boat to Adelaide, where the boat stopped there was a mother waiting. She had come to thank me. She had a dog and the vet told her the dog had no hope, it would die, so she should take it back home. They didn't take care of it, they didn't give it medicine because they thought the dog would die. When she took the dog home she put my picture on its pillow and she said the dog took refuge. She said that. It seems the dog saw the picture there on the pillow. Then, the dog didn't die, it survived. So she came to where the boat was moored to thank me.

Then another time, also in Adelaide I think, a mother wrote saying she had a girl with heart pain. She gave her my picture and the girl rubbed it on her heart. It is karma but it seems her heart pain got better. That is what I can remember. I'm sure there are many other things I don't remember or I

haven't heard. When you frequently do prayers like this, when you dedicate like this, it naturally helps. Your wish has power to help the world, to help anyone who has problems. I want to let you know that. Of course it is the expression of your good heart, but I want to show you some proof that it does have an effect.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, that which exists in mere name, may the I, who exists in mere name, achieve buddhahood, which exists in mere name, and lead all the sentient beings, who exist in mere name, to that enlightenment, buddhahood, which exists in mere name, by myself alone, who exists in mere name.”

OK, thank you. Thank you very much.

## Lecture 7: Emptiness, Dependent Arising and Tonglen

December 11, 2017

### THINGS EXIST IN MERE NAME

KAR MA RAB RIB MAR ME DANG

A star, a defective view, a butter lamp flame,

GYU MA ZIL PA CHHU BUR DANG

An illusion, a dew drop, a water bubble,

MI LAM LOG DANG TRIN TA BUR

A dream, lightning, a cloud:

DÜ JÄ CHHÖ NAM DI TAR TA

See all causative phenomena like this.

In this verse of the *Vajra Cutter Sutra* that the Buddha taught, the first word is *kar ma* (the Tibetan word for “star”). Then *rab rib*, which I translate as “defective view.” The text explains it is like while you are eating food you have a vision of your hair dropping into the food, that your hair is falling. That is the example of illusory vision given in the text.

As I introduced before when I talked about a star, in reality I, action, object, hell and enlightenment, samsara and nirvana, happiness and problems in everyday life, the whole thing—it does not say everything is nonexistent, that nothing exists. If it said that, you would be falling into nihilism. You would be falling into one of the two extremes. The other is eternalism, where you believe things exist by themselves, from their own side, real. This is what you talk about every day, how everything is real: a real I, real action, a real object. It is all the same.

All these examples do not say things do not exist. It is not saying that. If you believe that, you are falling in nihilism, not the middle way, the way that is neither nihilism nor eternalism. So, the meaning of “real” is the same as how you think in your everyday life, what you talk of as “real.” Then you believe this. The way these things appear to you, you believe in this way. Then you fall into eternalism. So, it should be the middle way. How it appears and how you believe—the middle way.

Yes, all these things exist. Things exist; they exist in mere name. It is most subtle. It is the subtlest way of existing. The way the I exists, the way everything exists is the subtlest way—in mere

name. They exist because they exist in mere name, merely labeled by the mind, by the valid mind relating to the valid base, not just anything but a valid base. Therefore, they do not exist from their own side. I, action, object, all phenomena exist in mere name, merely labeled by the valid mind relating to a valid base.

### ***The emptiness of money***

Say, you cut up a newspaper into a lot into small pieces and then you call them dollars or what is the European money called? [*Student: Euro.*] You call them euros or US dollars. If it were only up to the label, even without relating to the valid mind, if it were up to whatever the mind labels, you should be able to go shopping with all those bits of newspapers cut into pieces. But if you tried to go shopping or if you went to a bank, they would think you were crazy. Cutting up some paper and going to a department store or wherever and saying it was a thousand dollars—they would think you have to go to a mental institute.

It must be merely labeled by the valid mind, not just on anything, but on a valid base. That is why you need a valid base, that money made by the government that is used publicly, that is accepted by the government, that has those characteristics. It should be like that, a valid base. Then, on that valid base, your mind merely imputes “dollar.” It exists in mere name, merely labeled by the valid mind relating to the valid base with all the characteristics—officially accepted by the government and so forth. That dollar exists in mere name. If you think about it well, it exists. It exists in mere name.

To understand clearly you have to meditate precisely. What money is, what that dollar is, is unbelievably subtle, most unbelievably subtle. It exists, yes, but it exists in mere name. This is the same as how the I exists. Therefore, that dollar does not exist from its own side. You have to clearly know that. It does not exist from its own side at all! The dollar exists from the emptiness, do you understand?

This emptiness doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist even the name. We are not talking about that. I already told you that at the beginning. That dollar that exists is not a real dollar existing from its own side. That’s the way it appears and the way you believe, but it’s not that. It’s not real because it doesn’t exist from its own side, by nature, it is not truly existent. The dollar exists but at the same time it is totally empty from its own side. You have to clearly know that.

The dollar is not empty of dollar, the dollar is empty of *real dollar*, you understand? Sorry, I'm tearing your ears down. Inside the ear there is, what is it called? [*Student: Wax.*] Not wax. [*Student: Eardrum.*] It is tearing the ear, tearing the drum, buzzing.

[Tea offering and break to drink tea]

### ***Emptiness and dependent arising***

Dollar, I, action, object—every phenomenon exists because it is empty of itself. It is empty of the real I, it is empty of the real action, it is empty of the real object. From that it comes into existence. It exists while it is empty of existing from its own side, by itself, empty of the real one. So, while it exists it is empty; while it is empty it exists.

Emptiness and existing, that which is subtle dependent arising, existing in mere name, merely labeled by the mind, those two are unified. That is the correct view, the right view, the Prasangika view. Only the wisdom that understands that—the unification of emptiness and dependent arising, how they don't exist separately, how they are unified—*only* that wisdom can eliminate the root of *all* the oceans of your samsara, that wisdom realizing the Madhyamaka Prasangika view of emptiness.

Many talk about *my* emptiness. Like *my* religion, *my* emptiness is the best! Actually, the best view of emptiness is the Prasangika view. The wisdom seeing emptiness is the meaning of subtle dependent arising. Dependent arising and subtle dependent arising are unified with emptiness. Existence and emptiness unified. It has to be that. Only that can eliminate ignorance, the root of samsara, holding the I as truly existent, as real.

As I mentioned yesterday, it is not just truly existent from the object's side, you have to go finer, to recognize the Prasangika subtle object of refutation, which is that even though it is labeled, it is not *merely* labeled because there is something existing from its own side. *That* is the subtle hallucination. That has to be realized. You have to first of all recognize that is the *gag cha*, the object to be refuted. Then, once it is recognized, it takes a minute to see it is empty. You see it as empty, as it is empty.

In Buddhism, *shunyata* is not something that is there that you make to be empty, not like that! While your I exists, you believe it is not there. As I mentioned before, that is a kind of nihilism. It is not that. It is something you haven't discovered from beginningless rebirths, due to that ignorance of the hallucination, the decoration, appearing to you, the real I, and then believing in that.

That belief, *timug dendzin marigpa*, the ignorance that holds the I as truly existent, is the root of samsara. According to Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltsen, also holding the aggregates as real as they appear and believing them to be real is also the root of samsara. There are two. The I appears as real and you believe in that, not just merely labeled by the mind but, by going finer, something slightly more than that exists, more than merely labeled by the mind.

From beginningless rebirths up to now you haven't discovered that it is *totally* nonexistent in reality, so then you suffer. That is why you suffer. The suffering of pain and the suffering of change—all the samsaric pleasures—those two sufferings come from pervasive compounding suffering, the aggregates pervaded by delusion and karma. They are pervaded by and under the control of delusion and karma. Therefore, all the aggregates are totally pervaded by suffering. That is the nature of suffering.

Because of this contaminated seed of delusion and karma, by meeting the conditions, suffering and delusion arise again from that seed. This is the foundation of the two other sufferings, the suffering of pain and the suffering of change, all the samsaric pleasures. Therefore, for Buddhists, the main suffering to have aversion to, to renounce, to be free from, is pervasive compounding suffering. By generating renunciation to that, by realizing how that is the nature of suffering, you actualize the path, you are able to be free from that suffering. When you are totally free from that suffering, you are totally free forever from the suffering of pain and the suffering of change. Then you have the blissful state of peace for yourself, forever! For Buddhists, recognizing and realizing that this is the nature of suffering is the main thing and then you generate renunciation from this. Then, freedom from the other sufferings comes by the way. That is the main meditation for renunciation.

There is a quotation by Panchen Losang Chokyi Gyaltsen, but I don't remember it by heart today. Maybe I'll mention it another time.

### ***The hallucination we believe in***

Things exist—I, action, object, samsara, nirvana, hell and enlightenment, samsara and nirvana, happiness and problems, all that exists. They exist in mere name, merely imputed by the mind. Therefore, everything is empty; nothing exists from its own side. Because things are empty they exist, but for the hallucinated mind, like mine, for ordinary people's minds, emptiness is kind of like it doesn't exist, for our hallucinated minds it doesn't exist.

That is the reality, but what is not there appears real from there. The decoration or appearance, the truly existent thing, existing from its own side—the real I, action, object, real hell and enlightenment, real samsara and nirvana, real happiness and problems, real relationships, real husband, real wife, real children, real wealth, real this, all that—everything that is not there in reality appears real from that. And then you believe a hundred percent without doubt that it is real. Things that are not there appear as being there and you believe they are there, *totally* the opposite of reality. You have to know that. Your life is like this. That is discovering the truth, the most important truth in your life.

Coming here to Kopan, crossing the ocean with so much expense, you have to know that, otherwise you cheat yourself. You have been cheating yourself from beginningless rebirths. You still don't realize emptiness, so you will cheat yourself forever, and then suffer in samsara without end. Not only without beginning but without end. Then what? To your hallucinated mind, the way things appear and the way you believe is all a hallucination.

That is what is called “defective view.” The text describes it like a vision of hair dropping in the food. Like a vision. Here, the whole thing is like defective view: how paintings appear to you, how the tea you drink appears to you, how the I appears to you. All these things will be a little bit clearer later. Defective view is *rab rib* in Tibetan.

*Kar ma*, which means “star,” refers to emptiness. The star is there in the daytime but the sun is so bright that it is obscured. Everything exists because it is empty but then it doesn't appear. You don't see it, like you don't see a star in daytime. What appears to you is all *rab rib*, defective view.

When you squeeze your eyes closed a bit, you see a lot of hairs kind of round, going like this, but they are not there. So, it is the same, day and night, your whole life. Maybe now, or a little bit later I'll mention it. It is all a hallucination. It's not true, the whole life, from birth to death. How things appear and how you believe is a hallucination, defective view. This verse is *so* important! The teaching, the meditation is unbelievably, unbelievably important. It shows the truth of your life and the falsity of your life.

[Rinpoche chants the verse very slowly in Tibetan]

KAR MA RAB RIB MAR MEDANG

A star, a defective view, a butter lamp flame,

GYU MA ZIL PA CHHU BUR DANG

An illusion, a dewdrop, a water bubble,

MI LAM LOG DANG TRIN TA BUR

A dream, lightning, a cloud:

DÜ JÄ CHHÖ NAM DI TARTA

See all causative phenomena like this.

## TONGLÉN

“The purpose of my life is not just working for this life.” When you think only of this life you are no different from insects, the fleas, the mosquitoes, banana slugs and, what is it called? Two bodies, two things, then you break it? [*Student*: Shell.] Shell, shell animals. There is no difference between their life and yours.

With that motivation even listening to the Dharma—listening, reflecting, meditating—is no different from animals, from insects. There is nothing special in such a life. In the world you might learn this science or that science, you might have so many piles of degrees in your room or office, East and West, this and that, but your attitude is no difference from the insects; your life is no different from the insects.

The purpose of life is not to be reborn back in the lower realms. You came from there, so the purpose of life is to not be born back where you came from, but it is not just to receive a higher rebirth either. It is not that. It is not even to achieve freedom from samsara forever, to achieve nirvana, it is not just for that.

The purpose of your life is to not only to not fall into lower nirvana but also to achieve great nirvana, buddhahood, to achieve that for every single sentient being. There are numberless sentient beings, so this is for every single sentient being, besides human beings, not leaving out even one tiny insect. The purpose of life is to achieve enlightenment, buddhahood, the total cessation of obscurations and completion of realizations, *sang gye* in Tibetan.

When you translate it from Sanskrit it is very scientific. It is not something inexplicable, not something you have to believe in which has no basis in science; it's not like that. Everything the Buddha taught—the Lesser Vehicle teachings, the Mahayana sutra teachings and Mahayana tantra teachings—the whole thing is logical.

“At this time I have received not just a human rebirth, but this perfect human rebirth. This is the one time I received this when I can achieve buddhahood, the total cessation of obscurations and completion of realizations, for the benefit of every sentient being, to free them from oceans of

samsaric sufferings and bring them to buddhahood. Therefore, I need to achieve omniscience; therefore I need to actualize the path, to purify the defilements and create the necessary conditions. Therefore, I will listen to the teachings.”

### ***The wish to take others’ suffering***

Today, I should explain this before talking about emptiness. Yesterday, the last advice I mentioned was about tonglen practice. I mentioned Nagarjuna’s words,

Whatever suffering sentient beings have may it ripen on me.

Whatever happiness I have may it ripen on sentient beings.

You should recite that not only in your room, but also especially when you go out, when you are traveling in India and Nepal. For example, you always see people and animals suffering in general. When you look you can see so many experiencing the suffering of pain—unbelievable, unbelievable—and the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering, as I mentioned yesterday. You see all kinds. In tonglen practice there are different words you recite while walking or going by car, whatever, when you are carrying your bag or rucksack? [*Student*: Rucksack.] Rucksack, carrying the bag. Wherever you are walking, you should think of the suffering of sentient beings all the time. Then you do this practice with different prayers. In the *Guru Puja* [LC 95] it says,

DE NA JE TSÜN LA MA THUG JE CHÄN

And thus, perfect, pure, compassionate Guru,

MA GYUR DRO WÄI DIG DRIB DUG NGÄL KÜN

I seek your blessings that all negative karmas, obscurations, and sufferings  
of mother transmigratory beings

MA LÜ DA TA DAG LA MIN PA DANG

May without exception ripen upon me right now,

DAG GI DE GE ZHÄN LA TANG WA YI

And that by giving my happiness and virtue to others

DRO KÜN DE DANG DÄN PAR JIN GYI LOB

All transmigratory beings may experience happiness.

*Je tsün la ma*—I translate *je tsün* as “perfect.” *Je tsün* means perfect; that is dharmakaya. Geshe Rabten Rinpoche was one of my teachers who gave teachings in Dharamsala on the explanation of the mahamudra composed by Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen. Geshe-la explained that when *je tsün* means dharmakaya, it is talking about the qualities of the guru. Then the next word is guru, *je tsün la ma thug je chän*. This is how we realize, from our side, *je tsün la ma thug je chän*, “the kind one,” the kind one or having compassion. *Ma gyur dro wäi dig drib dug ngäl kün / ma lü da ta dag la min pa dang*, “All the negative karma and obscurations of the mother transmigrating beings,” all their sufferings and obscurations. *Ma lü* means every single obscured and suffering sentient being, with not even one left out, all their negative karma and obscurations. *Da ta* means “right now.” *Dag la min pa*, “ripen on me right now.” That is one practice of taking others’ suffering. *Dag gi de ge zhan la tang wa yi*, “my happiness,” *dag gi de*. *De* is happiness, *ge* is virtue. Every single virtue of the past, present and future, *de* is the result of the virtue of the present and future up to enlightenment. Everything—ultimate happiness, nirvana, and great nirvana, enlightenment—everything is the result of virtue, so you give all that. *Dag gi de ge zhan la tang wa yi*, “by giving my happiness and virtue to others,” to the numberless sentient beings. Others are not just somebody you like or who loves you, but every single one of the numberless sentient beings, everyone. *Dro kün de dang dön par jin gyi lob*, “May all,” *dro kün*. “Please bless all the transmigratory beings to have happiness.”

It means up to enlightenment, not only just temporary happiness, just a few minutes, a few seconds or a few minutes of happiness, it is not talking about that—but up to enlightenment. There are two types of ultimate happiness; one is nirvana, the blissful state of peace, forever, then there is great nirvana, enlightenment, the total cessation of obscurations and completion of realizations. It means you give all the happiness, you make charity to every single sentient being, for them to have all the happiness.

All this is very good to go over. Like reciting OM MANI PADME HUM, while you are walking then recite it. It is very good. When you go around, you see all kinds of suffering, like defective bodies. Because you think, “I am so well,” you put down those who are suffering like that. You don’t think about them; you try to forget.

I told you the story of the yogi who didn’t pay attention to the lady who asked him to carry her to the other side of the river. He didn’t help at all, but his disciple, a monk, came and got incredible compassion when she asked him, so he took her on his back side and went in the water. He only got

halfway across, then his karmic obscurations were purified by carrying her. Sorry, some of you were not here yesterday so I must explain again.

What His Holiness often says, if there are two people and we are one, because they are two, their happiness, their wishes are more important than ours. We are just one, so they are more important. Then a hundred people, a thousand people, a million people, [they are all much more important]. In a country when they vote for a president, the one most people vote for wins. Now here, other sentient beings are numberless. There are numberless hell beings, numberless hungry ghosts, numberless animals, numberless human beings, numberless suras, numberless asura beings and numberless intermediate state beings. Just like you, they all want happiness and do not want suffering. That is why it is so important to work for them to eliminate their suffering, to free them from suffering and to cause them to achieve all happiness up to enlightenment. That is *so* important! I got exhausted from that!

That is why it is important to live your life not just for yourself but for the numberless sentient beings, to free them from the oceans of suffering and bring them to enlightenment, buddhahood.

### ***Cherishing all beings more than ourselves***

I was repeating last night's story for those who were not here.

So now, one person and you, one insect and you, who is more precious? I mentioned to you, that is a very, very important meditation. If you generate compassion for and cherish one sentient being, one insect, one person, there is enlightenment, buddhahood, for you. If you don't cherish that one sentient being, let's say your enemy, if you don't cherish them, there is no enlightenment for you, there is no buddhahood for you. I told you that yesterday. It's a hundred percent clear. To understand that, I told you that story.

There are many stories. Getsul Tsimbulwa, the disciple of the great yogi Ngagpo Chöpawa, came to the same place his guru had been, where there was big water. When this lady full of leprosy, with pus and blood coming out, unbelievably pitiful, asked him to take her to the other side of the river, unbelievable, unbelievable compassion arose in the monk. Then, without thinking that he was a monk and this was a lady, without thinking he might catch the contagious disease if he touched her, he immediately picked her up and carried her on his back. She was actually an enlightened being, a deity, Dorje Phagmo, the same as Vajrayogini, but he could not see it. He only saw a very ordinary, filthy dirty woman. But right there in the middle of the river, his karmic obscurations finished,

purified by generating unbelievable compassion, even to that one being. Then, he could see she was an enlightened being. Without his impure appearance, no longer hallucinated, he could see Dorje Phagmo. Then she, the female enlightened deity, Dorje Phagmo, led the monk, without needing to die, to the Vajrayogini pure land, Dagpa Kachö. There, you definitely become enlightened, not like Amitabha's pure land. If you are born in Amitabha's pure land you definitely won't get reborn in the lower realms, but there is no opportunity to practice tantra there, so bodhisattvas pray to be born here in the southern continent where tantric teachings exist, are experienced and taught. That is one reason why it is so fortunate to be born here, where the tantric teachings exist. And, in Dagpa Kachö, Getsul Tsimbulwa could get enlightenment. He probably achieved it before his guru did, due to compassion.

So, I'm saying that if you don't generate compassion for even one being, even if, *especially* if it is your enemy, there is no buddhahood for you! I want to mention this. I don't remember the name of the text, but the Compassion Buddha emphasizing the bodhisattva way of life, said,

Don't follow many dharmas, follow one Dharma—that is compassion. If you follow compassion, then everything will come, all the dharmas, all the realizations, everything will come.

If you follow compassion, then all the dharmas will come because if you follow compassion, by reason of that compassion, you then need to develop your wisdom, and then all other realizations come. They come mainly persuaded by compassion for the numberless sentient beings. All the realizations come like rainfall.

Also, in *Gom Rim, Graduated Meditation*, Kamalashila mentioned this great compassion. This is one of the normal texts His Holiness often teaches, about how to meditate, how to practice. He said,

In all conduct, no matter what you do, at all times train the mind in compassion.

That means even if you are walking, standing, going, eating sleeping, whatever you are doing, all the time you must train your mind in great compassion for all sentient beings. That means all sentient beings, not only your boyfriend or girlfriend, your father or mother, not only somebody who loves you. It means every sentient being, even mosquitoes, insects, snakes, whatever.

As I said, even when you are talking to somebody, it is good to bring up compassion. You have to talk about compassion, even in a normal conversation. It makes it so worthwhile for you and for others.

That is what brings you to enlightenment quickly. What makes you achieve enlightenment is generating compassion to sentient beings, even one sentient being, even one insect. There are many stories I know about that, but many I don't know. You have to keep it in your mind, keep it in the brain, keep it in the heart! It is so important to benefit numberless sentient beings.

OK, I'll stop here. Some have to have dinner. Some have to get enlightened.

Just one more thing. I'll mention this, then I'm done. Panchen Shakya Shri mentioned,

KYI NA DE WA TSHOG SU NGO

When I am happy, I dedicate my happiness to collect merits:

PHÄN DE NAM KHA GANG WA SHOG

“May space be filled with benefit and happiness.”

DUG NA KÜN GYI DUG NGÄL LANG

When I am suffering, I take the suffering of all upon myself:

DUG NGÄL GYA TSHO KEMPAR SHOG

“May the oceans of suffering dry up.”

That is an important practice, as I mentioned yesterday. Also, while you are walking about you see so much suffering, so it is very, very good to keep on reciting this. It says *de wa tshog su*, when you are happy you dedicate your happiness to others to collect merit. For example, when you are eating. This is not only me telling you, I'm also telling myself to practice.

When you are in a five-star hotel or a ten-star hotel, a fifteen-star hotel, because there is so much comfort around, you dedicate all the comfort to all sentient beings: to all the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, suras and asuras. You might be eating delicious food that costs a thousand dollars. (Sometimes, one dollar food is more delicious than a thousand dollar food! I'm joking.) Dedicate the delicious food for the pleasure of the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals and so forth. Dedicate it to all sentient beings like that. *Kyi na de wa tshog su*, “when you are happy, dedicate your happiness to sentient beings to collect merit.” *Phän de nam kha gang wa shog*, “May the

whole sky be filled with happiness and benefits.” It means you can pray for every sentient being, that every suffering sentient being has happiness and benefits filling the whole sky.

Then, when you are suffering, when you are worried, when there are many problems, you take *all* the sentient beings’ suffering, *dug na kün gyi dug ngäl lang / dug ngäl gya tsho kem par shog*, saying, “May the oceans of suffering be dried up.” That means every sentient being’s suffering. When you suffer, you take every sentient being’s suffering on yourself. As I mentioned before, doing that destroys your ego, from where all the suffering comes. May every sentient being’s oceans of suffering be dried up! That verse is so good to recite when you are walking, not only in your room.

I will stop there. I should mention tonglen practice, just some idea. It is the most important practice for bodhicitta.

So, those who have to have dinner, I don’t know. Maybe I’ll speak a little bit before you fall asleep, before you go to bed. What?

*Ven. Ailsa:* What time, Rinpoche?

*Rinpoche:* No time. Maybe. OK.

[Dedications]

Thank you very much.

## Lecture 8: Tonglen Meditation

December 11, Late Evening

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

[Mandala offering]

Maybe there is a question? Half a question? Something that enlightens you?

*Student:* If everything depends on karma, then what is the role of free will?

*Rinpoche:* I know that is a big thing in the West! Yes, generally it is up to karma. It is up to karma, but you can change the karma. If you want to have free will, real free will, unmistakable free will, you can change the karma. I gave you the example of the geshe who asked the Seventh Dalai Lama where he was going to be born and he was told he would be born as a buffalo with blue horns. Then he asked how it was possible, because first the father and mother had to copulate, then the consciousness had to get attached to the sperm and egg, then you stayed nine months in the womb, then you came out. It took so much time to get born as an ox with blue horns. So His Holiness laughed and laughed. He was so happy because the geshe talked straight.

After that, His Holiness said he would now be born as a monk and around His Holiness, but the monk said that he hadn't purified anything and hadn't collected any merit, so how was that possible? His Holiness didn't say, "I'm Chenrezig," but, "I'm a special being blessed by Chenrezig." Because he made His Holiness happy, *right away*, by pleasing His Holiness, he purified his negative karma to be born as an animal and created the karma to be born as a monk and around His Holiness. That is free will. With unmistakable free will you can change karma and become free from the lower realms, attain the path, become free from samsara and achieve nirvana and enlightenment. That is not wrong free will, but unmistakable free will.

If an obstacle year happens and you don't do anything and heavy negative karma ripens, meaning you are going to die, you can ask some high lama, somebody who can tell you what practice to do. By giving advice that makes you purify the negative karma that would cause you to die now, this week, that can change your life, you get better and have a long life. That is very common. That is unmistakable free will, not only free will but unmistakable free will. You can have unmistakable free will.

Whether you do that or not is totally up to you. If it were up to God, you wouldn't have any freedom at all. What could you do if it were all up to God? It's not sure what happens to your life. It's like, "Oh, it is up to karma, there is nothing I can do." It is like that. "Oh, I have no freedom, I can't do anything. I just lie down and sleep. I don't go to work, I don't study, I just go to sleep." It would be like that but it is not like that at all. That is why you came here. That is the main purpose.

*Student:* My question is how the merely labeled I relates to subtle consciousness, like the most subtle consciousness that travels from life to life, if my understanding is correct?

*Rinpoche:* How it is connected?

*Student:* Because the merely labeled I, as I understand, is a product of our obscurations, our ignorance, but subtle consciousness is what gets all the imprints of whatever karma we do and travels. What is the connection between the merely labeled I and the subtle consciousness that travels from life to life?

*Rinpoche:* As long as there is consciousness, merely labeled there, since consciousness exists, there is merely labeled there, that merely labeled is there, whether it is gross and subtle. It doesn't matter whether it is gross or subtle, that which is merely labeled is there. That is what I think. Go on.

*Student:* I have a question about compassion and omniscience.

*Rinpoche:* Compassion and omniscience?

*Student:* I read in a book that compassion is the root of omniscience. It is not clear to me the connection between those two. Can you explain to me, based on your own example? If today you are more compassionate than yesterday does that mean you are more omniscient than yesterday?

*Rinpoche:* The last part I didn't understand.

*Student:* If we assume you are more compassionate today than yesterday, does that also mean you are more omniscient today than yesterday?

*Rinpoche:* I thought in English “omniscient mind” means understanding every single phenomenon, not just understanding, directly seeing every single existent, directly seeing past, present and future existence at the same time. Every second of omniscience can see all the past, at the same time can see the future and at the same time can see the present.

Once you achieve omniscience it is forever. Once you achieve omniscience it can never happen that obscurations come again and the omniscience degenerates. No, there is no degeneration. Omniscience is the result of having totally ceased not only the gross obscurations but also the subtle obscurations. Then, you achieve omniscience. Therefore, nothing can degenerate omniscience. Once you achieve omniscience it is forever. Compassion is what causes you to achieve omniscience. Compassion and bodhicitta, yes. So if you are able to practice that, it will cause you to achieve omniscience, then you are able to do perfect work for sentient beings. OK, thank you. Is that clear?

*Student:* [inaudible]

*Rinpoche:* I think gradually you will understand by more studying. Read lamrim books, study and practice, and you will gradually understand. It is just a question of learning. You especially need to study all the philosophy contained in the lamrim. You can study that, then you can also study the other philosophical texts. There are short ones and elaborate ones, so as much as you study that, it will help you understand lamrim.

*Student:* I read in Pabongka Rinpoche’s *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* that there is acquired karma without having done any action. Can you explain what is meant by that?

*Rinpoche:* You create karma without having done action?

*Student:* There are other types of karma including karma that is accumulated without doing anything.

*Rinpoche:* You create karma without doing anything? That sounds like you create karma without creating karma. But I have to know what context, I have to know more. Maybe there are more things.

*Student:* Do you want me to read them?

*Rinpoche:* I think that is not enough. Read more.

*Student:* It says, “There are other types of karma: karma one is obliged to undergo, karma one is not obliged to undergo, karma one has accumulated through some action, actions done that accumulated no karma, karma that one accumulated without doing anything.”<sup>27</sup>

*Rinpoche:* Ah? [Someone explains in Tibetan] Maybe it is talking about indifferent karma, not done by the virtuous thought, not done by the nonvirtuous thought. Maybe like that. Maybe that is what he is talking about.

*Student:* ...Neutral karma, without action of negative, without positive or negative action.

*Student:* Rinpoche, I have a question about bodhicitta and drug addiction. I did a stupid thing. I took drugs with my girlfriend. Now I have real difficulty dealing with drug addiction. When I try to do single-pointed concentration, it stays in my mind, if I try to practice tonglen, bodhicitta, with the person who taught me about drugs. I have to separate. How do you practice bodhicitta when two people who do drugs maybe do it out of love and stupidity?

*Ven. Ailsa:* His girlfriend introduced him to taking drugs, so now in his mind, she is addicted to drugs. How to develop compassion and bodhicitta because when they are together they need to take drugs.

*Rinpoche:* When they are together they take drugs, so how does that relate to bodhicitta and compassion?

*Ven. Ailsa:* How does he generate bodhicitta or compassion.

*Rinpoche:* She takes or he takes drugs? Who takes drugs?

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<sup>27</sup> *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, p. 413.

*Ven. Ailsa:* They both take drugs.

*Rinpoche:* Your taking drugs, that may not be helping compassion or bodhicitta to develop, but you can generate compassion for her because she takes drugs, because, like I said before, it blocks free will. That's what I want to say. [To the first student] What's your name?

*Student:* Yuida.

*Rinpoche:* Yuida says that it breaks free will; it doesn't allow free will to function. It blocks the mind developing and it also blocks the physical channels' potential from functioning. So, you can generate compassion for her because that is what it does, it blocks her free will, it blocks her from developing correct free will, to be not reborn in the lower realms, to be free from samsara, and to achieve enlightenment. It blocks that.

*Student:* What is the strongest antidote to attachment that manifests as addiction? What is the strongest way to abandon addiction?

*Rinpoche:* First of all, you can generate compassion for her. It blocks her from developing free will in her mind to benefit not only herself but to benefit numberless sentient beings. It blocks her developing wisdom and compassion to benefit all sentient beings. So generate compassion for her. That is just kind of an easy way to explain it.

Then, it destroys your life. It makes you take more and more, and because it makes you get more and more involved, you can't even do normal work, even a normal job. You not only can't do Dharma but even normal things that other people do. Then, it makes life so expensive because drugs cost lots of money. So, you steal from your parents and other people. The thought to steal comes because you are attached to pleasure, so you steal from your parents, from friends, even from unknown people, and then you get involved in many heavy negative karmas.

That is because of not thinking much about the shortcomings of taking drugs, only thinking of the pleasure with a very limited mind. There are so many unbelievable, unbelievable shortcomings but you don't think of them. Then you get attached. That is the small mind attached to pleasure.

Then you get into problems. You have so many problems in life, where you could have had so much peace and happiness, especially living in satisfaction, living in less desire, as I talked the other

day. Less desire, small desire, *dochung chogshe*, satisfaction. Whether you meditate or not, if you live your life in that, then more and more peace and happiness comes. You become mentally and physically healthier and healthier.

Otherwise, if you only think of pleasure, if you don't think of all the vast shortcomings, then your life gets more and more sunk in the mud. The problems in your life go on and on. You can't even do what normal people can do. Your parents worry, your friends and other people who know you worry. Those who are close to you worry for you. You only think of the pleasure, you don't think of past and future, just now. It causes your parents and many people to worry about you.

So, it is very important to think of the shortcomings as much as possible. There are many people in prison for drugs and things like that. Even the government finds it difficult. There are so many prisons in countries like the United States. [Thinking about the shortcomings] is so important.

Whether it is drugs or whatever object of attachment, think of the shortcomings. The more you think of the shortcomings, the more you see the suffering. If you think about the shortcomings you see more and more that you are totally cheating yourself. You see no essence.

It's the same with alcohol, you think of the pleasure, you don't think of all the shortcomings of alcohol. It breaks relationships with your wife or husband and your children. It makes your life unnecessarily expensive. You become mad and you become intoxicated and break things in the house. When you fight, throwing things and beating your wife or husband—probably more likely your wife—they have to call the police. They have no choice because their life is in danger. Then you go to prison.

Similarly, with many things, think of the shortcomings as much as possible. That is the main meditation. Analyze, look at the world, and then also look at your experience. That is one thing.

But, even though you know the meditations well, you know what to do—of course it will help some people—if your mind is not controlled, you still go looking for drugs. So, if you can go to a place where there are no drugs for a while, I think that helps very much, not only for drugs but generally that controls attachment. Meditation is one thing, as I said. Look at the many shortcomings, how it destroys your life, how it not only harms you, it harms your family and others.

I have a brother, Pema, who now lives somewhere near here. He was married to a French lady. They were well; they had two or three girls. Their business was a bakery. All day long they made bread, but he is a Sherpa and Sherpas drink wine. That is kind of their main thing. So, he didn't control his mind. He drank a lot and then he threw things in the house, he broke things, and he was dangerous for the family. She had to call the police who put him in prison. Then they divorced and

he left the West to live back in the East. I didn't get to ask him about his life in the East. Like that, it is a very sad life. You destroy yourself; you are no benefit to yourself and no benefit to others. There is so much negative karma, such unbelievable fear.

For some people, meditation is OK, but for many people who have very strong habituation, it is not enough. It is better to get away from the object of desire. That is best. Without meditation, however, without understanding the methods, even if you are away from the object, what happens is that physically you are away but mentally you are not away, so the mind suffers. You are physically away but if you don't have meditation the mind suffers. So, you need both meditation and, if you have an uncontrolled mind, it is better to be away from the object of desire. Meditation and being away from the object of addiction can help each other. That is my advice, my suggestion. You have to try very hard, then gradually it will happen.

Some young Tibetan people get very involved in drugs. There was one Lama Gyupa who tried to help them. He made a movie of people who stopped taking drugs then did jobs to help others. I didn't see it but he made a video. What happens is that, while taking drugs is one thing, when they stop the drugs it is very difficult to find a job. First is the drugs, then second, it's very difficult to find a job or you can't do well, something like that. I forget exactly the second problem. He had to find a job for them to do, that was the second thing. To stop drugs is not enough, so he came to ask me to help him. I don't remember what we talked about. You need good organization for that but he didn't have good organization, so I think maybe I helped him with some money. It was some years ago. There is the same problem with the young people in Bhutan.

*Student:* Rinpoche, was there any moment in your life that somehow changed your mind, some experience or some realization that was very important for you? Like for many people the mind changes when parents die or they have a car accident, suddenly their whole life changes. Did you have some experience that changed your life?

*Rinpoche:* Yes, there have been different times. Yes, you are right. It does happen. More and more you discover. From time to time you discover.

*Student:* Can you share what it was? What kind of story was behind it?

*Rinpoche:* I'm totally blank. There have been different things. Like I told you, in Solu Khumbu when I was building the monastery, reading that text changed my attitude. It cleaned the garbage a little bit from my mind, so when I began the retreat it was very good. I mentioned that. When people came to see me in the cave and made offerings of potatoes and rice, these are the offerings in Solu Khumbu, then I got scared. So yeah, like that.

One time, I went to Dharamsala, where His Holiness is, and looked back at my life. I had some dogs in the old gumpa. The first one, a Lhasa Apso, was a present from my mother, called Drolma, an unbelievable wonderful dog. In seven years, I never saw her make kaka or pipi. Sometimes she was locked in a room for a long time, but she had incredible conduct. It was unbelievable. If you put food in front of her, while other dogs gulped it down, trying to get it down as quickly as possible, she looked like she was making offerings. She stopped, she didn't eat immediately but waited and then ate slowly. She was like that all the time.

[My mother gave me the dog when I returned to Nepal.] For many years we lived in the old gumpa, sorry, not gumpa, in the king's astrologer's house. It was built in the British time. You can't see it from the outside because it is surrounded by trees; you can only see it if you come down the mountain a little bit. We lived there for many years. We were doing a puja led by Lama. There was also another geshe who did a three-year Heruka retreat in Pharping. His attendant was there and some students who came from a monastery on the hill. Only after seven years I saw her make pipi. Then at the end, her karmic connection was with me; she was my mother's present after I lived three years in Tibet and eight years in Buxa, where Mahatma Gandhi-ji and Prime Minister Nehru were imprisoned in British times.

It was Lama Yeshe's decision [that we lived on Kopan hill]. We were supposed to go to Sri Lanka. The first student, Zina Rachevsky, from Russia—her father revolted in Russia then went to France—was living there and we were supposed to go there to start a Mahayana center. We went to see His Holiness to get advice from his religious office. At that time, India and Russia did not have good relations, so somehow it didn't happen to go to Sri Lanka at that time. It was Lama's idea to go to Nepal so we came here.

Then, for less than a year, we lived in the Gelug monastery in Lama Tsongkhapa's tradition in Boudha, built by a Mongolian lama. The monks living there were from Kyirong in Tibet. The caretaker of the stupa, Chimé Lama, had three sons, and we lived in two different sons' houses for a long time after that.

Anyway, that dog was my mother's present after coming back to Nepal. Of the twelve animals in the astrological calendar, it was the year of the monkey, the time each twelve years when people come from very far to make pilgrimage in Nepal. Because I had been away for a long time, my whole family came down, including my two alphabet teachers. One, who lived in the aspect of a monk, carved mantras on rocks in Solu Khumbu when people requested him, which people then circumambulated. The elder one passed away; he was a monk before but later changed aspect. This dog was mother's present but in the end it was bitten by a big dog.

She was in bathroom making a big noise. When I went to her, she stopped the noise but when I went away she made the big noise again, then she died. Then, there were two other dogs that Lama brought down from the mountains. Mommy Max went to the mountains, to Junbesi, and brought two dogs. One was Lama's. I think maybe that dog had more karma with me so it stayed with me, on the cushion where I was, sitting on top of the cushion. I think maybe it was the incarnation of my mother's dog, I'm not sure.

One time, when I did retreat in Tushita, I thought about the dogs I had a long time ago. It was up to the cook whether they got food or not. I didn't really take care of them well, so during the retreat I realized I felt sorry I didn't take care of the dogs well in early times. I needed to pay attention. I needed to take care of them well. In reality, they are the same as your family. We are all family. Many times they could be recent family, those who died. There have been different things like that.

Do you understand what I'm saying? I have no memory of past lives like many other reincarnate lamas have, but certain thoughts arise and I believe that I did meditate in my past life because of that. But I have no memory of past life stories. That is my reason. OK? That is all. Finished. Sorry.

## **TONGLEN**

I just want to talk about tonglen, in case you would like to do that meditation. It is the best. It makes life most beneficial for every single sentient being and allows you to achieve enlightenment quickly. It is the best practice, the strongest purification and the most extensive way to collect merit. I'll first explain the meditation.

When you do the tonglen practice, you first take other sentient beings' sufferings and the cause of sufferings. You do that by generating compassion for sentient beings.

What sentient beings like is happiness and what they don't like is suffering. However, no matter how much they don't want to suffer, due to ignorance, day and night, they keep totally busy creating suffering, as busy as ants, day and night keeping so busy creating the cause of suffering. Living life with ignorance, anger, attachment, like that, the karma they create is only nonvirtue.

They suffer now, in this life, and they suffer at death, without talking about future lives, about the suffering in the lower realms, as a hell being, a hungry ghost, an animal, without talking about the karma [of being trapped there] even for eons. Then, even when they are born again as a human being, due to another negative karma, there is still so much suffering.

As I explained before, due to the habit of negative karma of stealing in a past life, you do the action of stealing again. Then you get what you did in the past, how you treated others in a negative way in the past. In this life, when you are human being, you receive harm from others, which is experiencing the result similar to the cause, and so it goes on and on. So, people are busy all day. No matter how much they don't like suffering, their life is always kept busy creating negative karma, the cause of suffering. As I told you before, you have to experience the suffering result of one negative karma for five hundred lifetimes.

And with one good karma, benefiting somebody like an insect or a human being just once, the result is happiness and success for five hundred lifetimes. It can be even more if the action is stronger.

Not knowing karma, people totally live their whole life with ignorance. Even if they know Dharma intellectually, they don't practice it. Some people are experts intellectually, but they don't practice. They are so busy their whole life; so busy they look like ants. Then, no matter how much they like happiness, they always destroy the cause of happiness due to ignorance.

Even if you give them teachings, talking very sincerely, people don't have the karma to understand. They're afraid, they run away. Even if you explain with compassion, they run away because they don't have the karma. Like that, it's so difficult. However much they like and want happiness, they always destroy the cause of happiness, virtue, and due to anger or heresy they even destroy merits they collected in the past.

First of all, it is very difficult for the actions you do in life to become Dharma. And even if you practice Dharma, it doesn't become Dharma, like the example I gave you. It is so difficult to become pure Dharma. And in case some pure Dharma happens, then anger or heresy or ill will arise and destroy the merits. Even if there are some merits collected in the past, they are destroyed. And even if some merits are created, there is no dedication to achieve enlightenment.

With tonglen, by generating compassion, you take others' suffering and the cause of suffering, delusion and karma. You take the sufferings of the six realms, as we went through. Not only that, out of compassion you even take the conditions, the totally unfavorable negative place, in your heart.

You can do this with the in-breath, but take it inside your heart. Not this heart, this bumping heart, but the heart where emotions like anger, patience and loving kindness come. It's that one, here. You give it to the self-cherishing thought. As I mentioned to you already, the self-cherishing thought is the great demon, your enemy where all the obstacles to practicing Dharma come from.

All the suffering you have experienced in samsara from beginningless rebirths, you are experiencing now and will experience in the future—endlessly—all that comes from your self-cherishing thought. Take others' suffering in your heart and give it to the self-cherishing thought, your enemy, and it is totally destroyed, totally eliminated. When that is eliminated, the real I is also destroyed. It is the object of ignorance, *den dzin ma rig pa*, the ignorance holding the I as real while it is not. It has never existed from the beginning, but it appears and you totally hold this wrong I, this false I. So, not only is the self-cherishing thought destroyed but also ignorance, the real I that is not there. Then, you see it is empty. You see empty, as it is empty.

### ***You create infinite merit***

You can stay there as long you want. Then generate loving kindness. There are numberless sentient beings. If you take the suffering and its cause from just one person or from one insect, just by doing that sincerely you create unbelievable merit and purification. Now, there are numberless sentient beings in the hell realms, and the realms of the hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, suras and asuras. So taking the suffering from everyone is such an unbelievable practice. You collect more than skies of merits.

Can you imagine making extensive offerings to even ordinary bodhisattvas? Now, you make extensive offerings to the buddhas. I told you already, didn't I? I thought some time ago I taught how one tiny grain of rice or one tiny flower offered to one picture or statue of the Buddha, no matter how small or big it is, purifies past negative karma, the cause of lower realms, and creates the cause of a higher rebirth. That is the first thing.

Second, and this is very important to keep it in mind, it creates the cause to experience as much happiness in the future as you have experienced from beginningless rebirths. However much happiness you have already experienced from beginningless rebirths up to now, that much will be

experienced in the future. The second benefit is you create that much. Don't forget. It is in the *Sutra of Piled Flowers (Metog Tsefpai Do)* if you want to learn.

That is incredible. Now the next one is that it is the real cause of success in life. Normally people think success comes from a school education, from university, but even though many people have degrees they still can't find a job. For instance, even if they learned economics in university, they have so many problems in business; they don't succeed in business. There are people who have no education but also no worries; they are wealthy. I know there are many people where everything positive happens. What about that?

The next benefit is that it causes you to be free from samsara. Samsara has no beginning, but this causes it to end. That is so important, so important. Just by offering one grain of rice or one tiny flower, and we're not talking about offering to a living buddha but to a picture or statue of the Buddha, no matter how small it is.

After that, it causes you to achieve great nirvana, buddhahood, the total cessation of obscurations and completion of realizations, to achieve that for sentient beings. Still, after you have achieved enlightenment, buddhahood, the merits have not finished. After that, you not only free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings, but also bring them to buddhahood, to peerless happiness, everyone, the numberless hell beings, the numberless human beings and so forth. Only when everyone is brought to buddhahood by you, only at that time, are the merits completed of offering a tiny grain of rice or a tiny flower to a statue of the Buddha, no matter how small the offering. Only at that time are the merits completed. There is another benefit but there is no time.

Now, this one is so important. If you want realization, if you want enlightenment, you have to put effort into this one. You have to be alert, mindful. This is how to have success in the life, life to life up to enlightenment. Making offerings to the Buddha is like that. Now thinking to benefit somebody, an insect or person, is much greater merit than making extensive offerings to the buddhas. That is what I explained before. Then, if that is so, just merely thinking to benefit, then what about actually doing it? When you actually engage in benefiting others? Therefore, even benefiting one is unbelievable, but now there are numberless, and from each one you receive the greatest purification and collect the most extensive merits. Unbelievable.

Nagarjuna said in the *Jewel Garland* that by generating bodhicitta to benefit sentient beings, if the benefit is materialized the whole sky would be filled up, and even more than that, if it is materialized

it would be more than the sky. This is said by the Buddha.<sup>28</sup> Even logically, sentient beings are limitless, so your thought to benefit them is also limitless. Talking about how important bodhicitta is, Lama Atisha in the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* referred to a quotation that the Buddha explained to somebody called Paljin,<sup>29</sup>

If someone were to fill with jewels  
As many buddha fields as there are grains  
Of sand in the Ganges  
To offer to the Protector of the World,

This would be surpassed by  
The gift of folding one's hands  
And inclining one's mind to enlightenment,  
For such is limitless.<sup>30</sup>

He compares the benefits to the number of sand grains of the River Ganga, the Indian River Ganga. It is very long and very wide. I remember Kyabje Pabongka Rinpoche explained when it talks about the benefits of bodhicitta, it is not the River Ganga, it is the Pacific Ocean. He took this from his notes of the teachings when he received a commentary on *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* from his guru. It refers to the number of sand grains of the Pacific Ocean. That many worlds, that many buddha fields, all that is filled with seven types of jewels, totally filled up, like a container filled with rice, that many worlds, equaling number of sand grains of Pacific Ocean, you offer to the Buddha. The "Protector of the World" means the Buddha. Compared to somebody who puts their palms together and generates bodhicitta, saying "May I achieve enlightenment for sentient beings by practicing charity and so forth," the merits of this are so much greater than that. The merits are so much greater they have no end. They are limitless compared to the sand grains of the Pacific Ocean, that many buddha worlds totally filled with the seven different types of jewels and offered to the buddhas. Can you imagine?

Before I talked about one grain of rice or one tiny flower, but actually when somebody generates bodhicitta the benefits are so much greater than that, than the previous ones. Just by generating

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<sup>28</sup> See also *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, v. 15.

<sup>29</sup> This is the *Sutra Requested by Viradatta*, cited in v. 14 of *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*.

<sup>30</sup> Vv. 16 & 17.

bodhicitta the benefits have no limits, dedicating the merits to achieve enlightenment for the numberless sentient beings. I didn't finish but then there is giving away your body, enjoyments, merits and all the happiness with loving kindness. I will explain that tomorrow.

I want to suggest this to you. If your doctor tells you that you have cancer, then do this meditation, taking all sentient beings' suffering, and in particular the cancer, on yourself, destroying the ego, the source you received all the suffering from and not only that, the root of samsara, ignorance. If you can do that, it's the best. Then, the cancer is nothing. The cancer has made you practice pure Dharma, the Mahayana teachings, the bodhicitta practice, and that makes you achieve enlightenment quickly. Your cancer makes you quickly be free from samsara and achieve enlightenment. What more do you need than that? Can you have anything greater than that?

Sometimes it is nothing but there is pain with cancer or other diseases, but with tonglen—maybe when you are not even actually doing it but starting to think about it—the pain completely goes away. That is the power of bodhicitta. Even if you didn't actually start but you are just thinking of that, it can be like that.

When you have pain in the eye, even you don't actually start the practice but the mind intends to, it eliminates the pain. You can apply this to any problem in life. For relationship problems and many other things, it is the best one. Many times your friend or a parent or somebody you know is very sick, in great pain. When you go to your room and do tonglen practice on the bed, you take that person's unbelievable pain on you and it destroys your ego and self-cherishing thought, ignorance. Many times it can be a very helpful method to cure that person. That has happened. There are many stories about that. Then, it also helps your bodhicitta. It develops your bodhicitta and makes it quicker to achieve enlightenment. It is the best practice.

I'll stop here. I'll explain the rest tomorrow, hopefully. I think that is all.

Please understand that lojong, thought transformation, is not to stop the suffering that you have, the problems that you have. It is not for that. Whatever sickness or problem you have, while you are experiencing it, you utilize it on the path to enlightenment, to achieve enlightenment for all sentient beings; it is not to stop your problems. But I'm saying if you do that, these things happen, but the main reason is not to stop the problems. So I'll stop here.

*Jang chhub sem chhog...*

When you do this, sometimes the other person gets totally better and you get the sickness! But according to the practice, that is the greatest success. The ordinary mind, the self-cherishing thought,

thinks that is terrible, but in the practice, in the view of bodhicitta, that is the greatest success. That other person gets better and you get sick, because you have taken the suffering. There is nothing definite but it has happened many times.

There was a Kadampa geshe, I forget his name, possibly Langri Tangpa. When a dog was beaten by somebody with a stick, because of his bodhicitta, his compassion, he got the mark of the stick. The person didn't hit him at all, he hit the dog, but because of his bodhicitta, his compassion, he got the mark of the stick on his body.

*Ge wa di yi...*

Do this meditation when an earthquake happens or when you are in an airplane and bad weather happens and there is danger. My practice was political. During the very big earthquake here in Nepal<sup>31</sup>—there were more than six or something—in my big room all the buddha statues fell down. Sangpo came in with very intense face, saying “HRIH VAJRA KHRODHA HAYAGRIVA HULU HULU HUM PHAT,”<sup>32</sup> holding my table and saying, “Rinpoche, HRIH VAJRA KHRODHA HAYAGRIVA HULU HULU HUM PHAT.” I think it was not pure practice but because I knew some thought transformation words, I tried to remember them, I did like this, I tried to remember Nagarjuna's words that I mentioned:

DRO WÄI DUG NGÄL GANGCHI RUNG

Whatever suffering transmigratory beings experience,

DE KÜN DAG LA MIN GYUR CHIG

May it all ripen on me.

DAG GI DE GE CHI SAG PA

Whatever happiness and virtue I accumulate,

DE KÜN ZHÄN LA MIN GYUR CHIG

May it all ripen on others.

It was very strange; there was no fear at all. I think it was political; my practice was political. It was like that.

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<sup>31</sup> Rinpoche is referring to the devastating earthquake on April 25, 2015.

<sup>32</sup> This is the Most Secret Hayagriva mantra.

Then, when I came out, there were some boys. One had learned how to behave [in an earthquake.] You have to sit down. Then Jinpa, the disciplinary monk, and Sangpo carried me to the steps and then outside. We spent maybe two weeks outside? Something like that. Then, every day there were many small earthquakes. On the second day there were more than five, even the trees went like this. [Rinpoche indicates trees shaking] I was outside. The earthquakes lasted one month or two months? Anyway. That is all. Thank you very much.

## Lecture 9: How to Correctly Follow the Guru

December 12, 2017

### THE FIVE DEGENERATIONS

I'll just maybe say some words to introduce this. First we are paying homage to the Buddha. In India in past times, Bodhisattva Meaningful to Behold asked the Buddha, "Now you are guiding us, but what about in the future when you have passed away? Who will guide us, who will look after us?" The Buddha said, "Meaningful to Behold, when that time comes I will manifest in the form of an abbot, a master, a *lob pön*.<sup>33</sup> In order to ripen the minds of sentient beings, in order to benefit them, I will show the aspect of having birth, old age, sickness and death." That means the Buddha will still be there to guide us in the form of a sentient being during the time of the five degenerations. [They are the *degeneration of delusions*, the *degeneration of lifespan*, the *degeneration of time*, the *degeneration of view* and the *degeneration of sentient beings*.]

The first degeneration is the *degeneration of the delusions*. That means sentient beings' delusions become unbelievably stronger and, due to that, their minds become so difficult to subdue, so stubborn, like a person who is going to jump in the fire, and no matter how much you advise them they don't listen. Their mind is so stubborn it makes it very difficult to understand and accept your advice. That is just an example but it could be many things. It means a person does something very harmful, very wrong, but however much you give the best advice they cannot accept it; they don't have the karma, the merit, to accept it.

Because of that, life gets shorter and shorter. That is the *degeneration of lifespan*. At first, the lifespan of the people in the world was much longer than a hundred years. Before, it was even much longer, a thousand years, but a hundred years was very common. Now, to live a hundred years is very rare. [Recently, somebody] lived until one hundred and twelve, or one hundred and thirteen but now that is becoming much less than before.

The origin of human beings is explained differently in the West, but the Buddha explained the original human beings like this. According to that, after the earth evolved, the desire realm devas started from the form realm and formless realm, then the six realms happened, with the hell realm as the last to be completed. So, the consciousness of the original human beings on earth came from the deva realm, from the form and formless realms. Their body was made of light. It wasn't like ours is

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<sup>33</sup> (Tib) A spiritual master or teacher, the person who gives vows.

now. This happened after so much had degenerated. Originally it was in the nature of light. At the very beginning there was no owner of food. I'm not sure whether they had to eat or not at the very beginning, but later, even though crops happened, there were still no owners. They used the crops in the morning to eat and in the evening they grew again, so there was no owner.

Then later, somebody built a house and somebody kept the crops on their land. That was the start of some miserliness. Although there was no need, it came from some past habit of miserliness. So, they kept their crops. Then, things grew worse. There was humidity, a little bit wet, *shazzen?* [*Ven. Ailsa*: Moisture.] Moisture, humidity, to do with the earth, and the mind got attached to that.

They used to have light [bodies] but the light dissolved and their bodies became gross by eating gross food with attachment. Because of that, gross bodies happened. Then, because of past habit, past imprint, the male sex and female sex happened. Then, because of past habit, past imprint, they started having sex. Other people threw stones or dirt and things over them. That is one reason they built houses, for that, [to have sex]. Originally, there was no need for houses before.

That's how it started for human beings. Originally they could live unfathomable lives. That means you can't count the length of their lives at all. It was so long it is called unfathomable life, but then it got so degenerated. Everything degenerated.

For example, when you haven't eaten garlic for a long time and then you eat a little bit, you feel the body becomes very gross—not only in the mind but also in the body; it has that effect. Rather than a clean, pure body it becomes the opposite, kind of very gross. You feel like that. That's just an example. It depends on the food that you eat.

Then, there is the *degeneration of sentient beings*. The mind is so difficult to subdue, like the example I gave you before. Then, there is the *degeneration of view*. Many more people believe in wrong views, seeing wrong views as right. Many people believe things that are easy to believe, but [they don't believe] the right view, such as karma. Ideas like karma and reincarnation are beyond the view of worldly people's understanding. The number of people who believe that this is how it exists, how the mind functions, the number of people who can understand such things are much less than those who hold wrong views, who believe there is no such thing as reincarnation. They are kind of like numberless.

Somebody [who understands] *shunyata*, emptiness, their view is beyond the world. As I mentioned, there are four schools of Buddhist philosophy. Each one talks about their own truth, ultimate nature, but they are not the same. Those who have faith, who understand the view of the Madhyamaka school view are far fewer than for the other schools, and, among Madhyamaka, the

Svatantrika school view and Prasangika school view, compared to Prasangika school view the Svatantrika school view is not correct. It is the *exact* object to be refuted, to realize it is empty as it is empty. That is exactly what the Svatantrika school philosophy thinks is right, but, for Prasangika school, the only view that can eliminate the root of samsara is the wisdom [that eliminates] the ignorance holding the I as truly existent while it is not. Very few have the merits and intelligence to understand that, to realize that. Because it is hard, so few can understand; you need so much merit and intelligence.

Then there is the *degeneration of time*. In different parts of the world, there are so many wars, so many people killing each other, so much contagious disease. Even if there is no war, there is a scarcity of food. It is so difficult to get food; there is so much famine and drought, where there is no water. That is the biggest one that is happening in the world. Either there is no rain and there is a drought and nothing grows, or, if there is rain, then there is so much that there are floods that destroy the crops. So, people suffer unbelievably, with disease, destruction from the elements and so many things. That is degeneration of time.

All this comes from the mind, the degeneration of the mind. The delusions become stronger and stronger, and everything comes from that. Everything is affected by that, including global problems. Everything comes from the mind.

## **EVEN UNDERSTANDING THE DHARMA WITHOUT PRACTICING HELPS**

I don't know in the West what all the educated people like the scientists would do to protect [the planet], but because originally everything comes from the mind, you therefore need to take care of the mind. The whole conclusion comes down to individually you have to take care of the mind. To stop the global problems, you need to take care of your mind. The conclusion is that.

Therefore, you can see that your coming here to Kopan makes sense, it makes great sense; it gives great meaning to your life. It is really amazing to come to understand the lamrim, to understand your life, your mind. It is an amazing thing. Otherwise, yes, your life is totally an illusion, but there is kind of something else. Life is not just illusion. Everything appears real and you believe it, and on the basis of that hallucination, there is a second hallucination, a third hallucination, a fourth hallucination, a fifth hallucination, a sixth hallucination, a seventh hallucination, a whole bunch of hallucinations. And you never come to understand life. You never come to understand life, you never see your life, you never realize what is the life you should live, how your life should be.

There are so many hallucinations in your life, you never think of what can really benefit you in life, not your own connotation of what is of benefit, but real benefit. I don't mean what you call benefit, what many people think is of benefit, not your own connotation of benefit, which is wrong, but which they think is right.

I want to tell you this and please keep it in the mind. Even if you don't practice Buddhism, even if you just learn about it, [do it with] a straight mind, not a bent one. Use a straight mind to learn about Buddhism, to check out Buddhism. Then, the more you learn the more you know what is right and wrong in your life. And when you come to know what is right and what is wrong, then you are able to develop discriminating wisdom. You can judge what is real right and real wrong, not what is wrong but you believe to be right, or what is right but you believe to be wrong. You see right as right and wrong as wrong, not wrong as right and right as wrong.

By learning Buddhism, you develop the wisdom of Dharma. Even if you are not practicing it, just by learning it you can develop. Then you have the correct way to judge what is right and wrong. There are more than a thousand religions in the world, but, by learning more Buddhism, you can judge what is right and wrong. Then you can develop wisdom even if you are not practicing. You have to understand that. Otherwise, how are you going to develop wisdom in your life to be able to judge the correct way? There are thousands of religions and everyone says, "Mine is best," so how can you judge?

I want to say this. I'll give an example. Sorry, the talk went over time, but it doesn't matter. We had an intelligent boy at Kopan in earlier times called Thubten Sherab. He was a big boy and so intelligent. Many years ago, as a monk, he left to translate at Nalanda, the FPMT monastery in France. That is a real monastery. It follows the vinaya rules and they do *sojong* twice a month, purifying and restoring degenerated vows, abiding in summer retreat, and releasing from them—they do the three practices of vinaya. They very much follow vinaya. Nalanda is named after the Nalanda in India in ancient times, where there were hundreds of pandits, learned ones, holy beings. We have a monastery like that, and then a nunnery which has a greater number of nuns, in Australia at Chenrezig Institute. What is the name of the area called? [*Ven. Ailsa*: Eudlo.] Eudlo. Then of course there are Sangha, monks and nuns, in many places, some here, some there.

Thubten Sherab went to Nalanda to translate for Geshe Jampa Tegchok, who was an outstanding, well-known teacher. He taught there for eleven years or something like that before he became the abbot of Sera Je Thegchen College in south India. Thubten Sherab translated the very

important philosophical teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa but then he disrobed and went to Spain to live.

He told me that the people he worked with had so much suffering, so much worry and fear, so many problems. He said he didn't have problems because he understood the Dharma, even though he didn't practice. He said that very clearly—he didn't pretend. He said very clearly he didn't practice the Dharma, it's true, but he didn't have nearly as many problems as the people around him because he understood the Dharma.

So, just intellectually learning the Dharma, even not practicing, is a lot of help in your life. That is what Thubten Sherab said. I met him when I was in Italy. When I go there, he comes to see me and he reports what he thinks about the center.

Now, I don't know. Now, maybe some thought of practice is starting to come to him. When I met him recently, he said he had been translating Dharma philosophy for a long time, and he was surprised it hadn't affected his mind. He was wondering why it didn't make him change his mind. That was his surprise. Now he is starting to think, a little bit of thought is coming that he needs to change his mind and practice.

Thubten Sherab was an original Kopan boy, the main one translating philosophy. It's very difficult to translate that into English. He was the first one, and then there was Ani Janne. She and others polished the English and then used it for the Basic Program and the Masters Program—first the Masters Program and then the Basic Program.

I just wanted to let you know the benefits of just learning the Dharma without practicing it. Everyone says my [religion] is best, so how are you going to discriminate? How are you going to judge when you yourself have no wisdom? That is my question. You need to develop wisdom. By eating drugs you won't get wisdom. By eating LSD you won't get wisdom. After you eat hundred LSD, the next day you become enlightened! Sorry!

### ***The Buddha manifests in many forms***

In the sutra *Meeting of Father and Son, Yabse Jalwe Do*, the Buddha said,

In degenerate times, in order to ripen the sentient beings, I will show birth,  
old age, sickness and death.

That is what the Buddha advised Bodhisattva Meaningful to Behold. Then he said [he would manifest in many ways.] I'll try to remember the verse but my memory is very bad.

In the future, to benefit sentient beings, I will manifest by taking the costume of the Indra or Brahma [which means as a sura] or even sometimes as mara, with the costume of mara, in the aspect of mara, to ripen the minds of sentient beings. I will manifest in the aspect of women, in the conduct of women, to show the conduct of women. And also in the aspect of an animal, showing the aspect as an animal. I will manifest as crazy although I am not crazy; I will show the aspect of being blind or lame, although I am not blind or lame. Even though I have no attachment I will show the aspect of having attachment. I will show various aspects, and with those aspects I will then subdue the minds of sentient beings.

The Buddha manifests as a sura or asura being to work for sentient beings. He manifests as a human being, a king, a beggar, a rich person, a child, even as a butcher or a prostitute, manifesting in all aspects to benefit sentient beings. He manifests in whatever aspect best helps to subdue their minds.

When you go through the city in Kathmandu, you see all kinds of beings, ordinary sentient beings and buddhas and bodhisattvas, but you can't recognize them. When you go for pilgrimage in holy places, there are many but, because you don't know their hearts, you don't know their minds, you don't recognize them. That is the problem. There are all kinds, but even though you see them you can't recognize them.

In the past, you have met many but you haven't recognized them because your mind is not purified, not developed, because it is so heavily obscured. Like the [stars in] the night sky are obscured by [clouds] or in daytime there is no light because the sun is obscured by fog, your mind is like that and therefore you can't recognize buddhas, bodhisattvas, and dakinis when you see them. Even though you might talk to them, you can't recognize them. They guide you but you don't know who they are; it never comes in the mind.

The Buddha can even manifest as a butcher. I think I told you but maybe I didn't mention it. There was a butcher behind the Potala. Maybe I mentioned it in south India, but I thought I mentioned it here. Anyway, what happened, in Tibet, there was a monk who, whenever he got a money offering he went outside and buried it in the ground. When he died, his disciple, a getsul,

looked for money to make offering to the monastery for his teacher. He couldn't find any money at all in his teacher's room, so he went outside to the place where his teacher sometimes went. He saw that part of the earth was a little bit up, so he dug that up. There was a bundle of money wrapped in a cloth and an animal—a lobster or frog,<sup>34</sup> I'm not sure—was holding on to the money tightly.

When he asked his teacher's guru, a very high lama, about this, the lama told him to take the animal behind the Potala and give it to a butcher there. When he did this, the butcher put it where he cut the meat. Then he [cut it in two] and ate half of it and threw half in the air. When the monk informed his teacher's guru, the guru said what happened was extremely good for the teacher who had passed away. The half thrown in sky meant the butcher transferred his consciousness to a pure land of a buddha. This butcher was not a butcher. Although he appeared like that for ordinary sentient beings, he was not a butcher but a deity, the mind-seal deity, red Yamantaka. Yamantaka is Manjushri. Manjushri is the embodiment of all the buddhas' wisdom in peaceful aspect, whereas Yamantaka is a wrathful deity, in wrathful form to pacify the obstacles of practitioners and help them develop wisdom. Yamantaka is normally dark blue, but this is red Yamantaka, the wrathful aspect Yamantaka, a buddha.

I also recently mentioned there is a butcher at Swayambhunath, what tourists call the Monkey Temple, where there are so many prayer wheels, not only down but up. You'll see this tomorrow. A little bit down there, on the way to Swayambhunath, there is a small butcher shop. That butcher went to Tibet. I'm not talking about ancient times; it's not so long ago. There was a very high Nyingma lama who had clairvoyance. He has now passed away. When the butcher went to see him, this Nyingma lama put out a throne for the butcher to sit on. Normally, by judging outside ordinary appearances, you wouldn't do that, but this lama who had clairvoyance put a throne out for him to sit on. You understand? So, you never know. Sometimes in the form of a child, sometimes in the form of a lady, the Buddha takes all kinds of aspects. Even when you have problems, when you are lost, when somebody gives you advice, when they guide you, you don't know, you don't recognize who they are.

The Buddha even manifests as a hell being to subdue other hell beings, to benefit them. He shows the aspect of a hungry ghost to help other hungry ghosts, to pacify their minds. Then, he manifests as animal. I saw recently on the iPad, there were many deer and a tiger. A tiger usually eats deer, but this tiger was taking care of a small deer—not very small, but a bit smaller than normal. The tiger was taking care, [helping] the deer avoid places where there was danger, like in tall grass. It

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<sup>34</sup> In some teachings Rinpoche has said the animal was a crab and at other times a lobster.

stayed inside the bushes or grass, sometimes trying to cover the deer, trying to put it on a tree or something like that. It was trying to take care of the deer and the deer didn't go away. It stayed with the tiger, well, not completely with the tiger, but it didn't go away. It stayed around the tiger, and so the deer couldn't run away, the tiger held the deer's tail. It was really amazing. Normally, tigers eat deer but here the tiger was helping the deer. I found that really moving the mind. It's unbelievable.

That's just one example. If even animals can do this, why don't human beings? We human beings have to be double, triple, a hundred, a thousand times more beneficial for others. That is general talk. Generally speaking, as His Holiness says, we have a much better brain. In Western way, because we have a much better brain, we can do so much more benefit.

So, without knowing the mind, just from the outside aspect, you can't really decide whether any being is an ordinary sentient being or a buddha.

## **WE NEED A GURU FOR ENLIGHTENMENT**

I'll mention one quotation.

Even if you have the complete qualities, without a guru you cannot be liberated from samsara.

For example, you can recite by heart not only the more than one hundred volumes of the Buddha's teachings, called the Kangyur, but also the more than two hundred volumes of commentaries by all the great yogis and pandits from India, such as Nagarjuna and Asanga. Even if you know them all by heart and you can explain them, if you don't have a guru you cannot be free, you cannot be liberated from the oceans of suffering of samsara. Do you understand?

Khedrub Sangye Yeshe said,

Without a helmsman, a boat cannot take you across the ocean. Like that, without a guru, you cannot be liberated from samsara, even if you have the complete knowledge of Dharma.<sup>35</sup>

And also,

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<sup>35</sup> Khedrub Sangye Yeshe (1525–91) was Gyalwa Ensapa's closest disciple. Quoted in *The Heart of the Path*, p. 7.

Before the guru there is not even the name “buddha.”

And from *Yeshe Drubpa, Actualizing Transcendental Wisdom*,

All the numberless past, present and future buddhas come from the guru.

The numberless past buddhas, the numberless present buddhas and the numberless future buddhas all come from the guru. That is the understanding, the realization, we all need, including me. Sorry, that took time.

Mind has gross mind, subtle mind and extremely subtle mind; body has gross body, subtle body and extremely subtle body. The nature of the extremely subtle mind is that it has no mistakes. I mean any mind, any sentient beings’ mind. That is why all sentient beings can become enlightened—because their mind has no mistakes; it is only temporarily obscured, like the sky covered by clouds. The sky is not oneness with the clouds but it can be temporary obscured by the clouds. Likewise, the mind is temporarily veiled. The nature of the mind is not oneness with the mistake; its nature is pure. That is why sentient beings can become enlightened. What it says in Buddhist philosophy is that all sentient beings can become enlightened.

Here, I’m talking about the very subtle consciousness, which is not only pure in nature, not only that, but even the primordial mind. This is a tantric subject actually, a highest tantra subject. Normally you don’t hear this unless you are studying highest tantra, but I think for you to practice it is most important for you to really know what the guru is. You have to know that. Not only is the nature of the mind pure but it also must be free from temporary obscurations.

[The guru] is bound with infinite compassion embracing us sentient beings. This is what is mentioned in Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo’s *Calling the Guru from Afar*. This is the real thing that guru is. At the beginning it says *lama khyen* three times. *Lama khyen* means “may the guru understand.” It doesn’t mean the guru doesn’t understand, doesn’t see, that the guru is totally blocked, totally dark. It doesn’t mean that. But you need to have very seriously considered how you have been suffering from beginningless rebirths, and you want to express that. So even though the guru understands, this is your appeal, this is what you want to express.

For example, if you are in danger of being killed and even if the other person understands you, this is the way to make it clear, to express your wish. “May the guru understand,” kind of emphasizes that.

[Rinpoche recites the first verse of *Calling the Guru from Afar* in Tibetan:]

SANG GYÄ KÜN GYI YE SHE DE CHHEN CHHÖ KUR RO CHIG

The wisdom of all buddhas, one taste with the great bliss dharmakaya,  
DE NYI DRIN CHÄN LA MA KÜN GYI RANG ZHIN THAR THUG

Is itself the ultimate nature of all kind gurus.

LA MA CHHÖ KYI KU LA NYING NÄ SÖL WA DEB SO

I beseech you, guru, dharmakaya,

DI CHHI BAR DO KÜN TU DRÄL ME JE SU ZUNG SHIG

Please guide me always without separation, in this life, future lives, and  
the bardo.

That is an unbelievably important subject. That is so incredible, it takes time to understand and to feel. *Sang gyä kün gyi ye she*, all the buddhas’ *ye she*, transcendental wisdom, *de chhen chhö kur ro chig*, one taste in the great bliss, dharmakaya. [*De nyi drin chän la ma*] “That is the kind guru.” That is all the transcendental wisdom of all, numberless buddhas. The transcendental wisdom of all the buddhas is one taste in the great bliss dharmakaya. That one is the kind guru. [*Kün gyi rang zhin thar thug*] “That is the nature of all” means all the buddhas. *La ma chhö kyi ku la nying nä söl wa deb so*, “To you, the guru, dharmakaya, from my heart I make requests.” Then the request is: *di chhi bar do kün tu dräl me je su zung shig*, “In this life, the intermediate state—the bardo—and the next life, all the time.” “All the time” means every second; “without separation,” the guru and you without separation; “please guide,” means bring you to that same state, the dharmakaya. That is the meaning of “guide.”

We have the same prayer in *Lama Chöpa*.

You are the guru, you are the deity, you are the dakini and Dharma protector.

That request is the same. Even if you are going to die today, or even you have only one hour to live, or one minute or a few seconds, this is what you request to the guru. It is like that. That is the most important.

Tea.

[Tea offering and break to drink the tea]

***Check well before you take a guru***

I mentioned the quotation, from the tantra text, *Actualizing Transcendental Wisdom (Yeshe Drubpa)*, at the end,

All the numberless past, present and future buddhas come from the guru.

After you have found a guru, the most beneficial way to correctly devote to the virtuous friend is to thoroughly check them first. It is said you should check for twelve years to determine whether this teacher is a virtuous friend or a nonvirtuous friend. So, again, you need some discriminating wisdom to check the guru. I mentioned twelve years. You may die before finding a guru, spending a whole lifetime checking the whole world for the guru!

I'll tell you one thing. His Holiness advises first, for safety, study Buddhism like it's a subject in school, at university. You learn philosophy or whatever subject you are studying from the teacher, like learning in school. Do that for two or three years. You learn and then, if you really want to devote to the teacher as a guru, if there is no question, if you really feel you want to devote, then you can follow them as a guru. You should make that determination. That is what His Holiness generally advises. It is safer like that.

When you follow your guru, you fulfill the guru's wishes or guru's advices, serving the guru whether you are with the guru or far from the guru. Near or far, it doesn't matter, you serve the guru. The best way is like Milarepa, who served his guru even when there was no offering,

I have no material offerings. My offering to my father-guru is my practice.<sup>36</sup>

Even though he had nothing physical to offer, what Milarepa offered was his Dharma practice, his actualized realization. This was the best offering to the guru.

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<sup>36</sup> Quoted in *The Heart of the Path*, p. 284.

Then, you should always remember the kindness of the guru, you should always do that with mindfulness. Of course, if you have the realization [of guru devotion,] it is there all the time, the mindfulness that this is the guru where the numberless past, present and future buddhas come from. They are the numberless past, present and future buddhas. That is the mindfulness practice. With this mindfulness, you follow exactly whatever the guru advises.

You must follow exactly whatever advice the guru gives you—whatever practices, prayers or mantras. For example, by keeping the vows you have taken—lay vows or ordained vows—you are fulfilling the guru’s wishes and advice. Or whatever work you do as service to the guru, as a secretary or whatever, working for a center, no matter whether the guru is near or far physically, every single thing is done with that mindfulness [of serving the guru]. Even offering a glass of water with that mindfulness because each pore of the guru is all the buddhas. Think with that mindfulness each pore of the guru’s holy body is all the numberless buddhas, past, present and future. That is enough.

If you want to know the way to correctly devote to the guru, that is the wisest way, the most beneficial way, for you to achieve enlightenment quickly, to be free quickly from obscurations to the mind.

I’ll go back, now. I want to mention something. Sorry. Maybe I’m not supposed to mention the subtle points of what the guru is, but then I quoted the words of Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo, which is a highest tantra subtle point. Anyway, it is explained. I will just mention one more thing mentioned in the Kadampa teachings. Kadampa Geshe Chengawa said,

A disciple who practices correct devotion to the virtuous friend, even if he is as foolish as a dog or a pig, will have no difficulty in becoming like Manjushri.<sup>37</sup>

Manjushri is the deity of wisdom, the manifestation of all the buddhas’ wisdom. To develop wisdom, you practice Manjushri, reciting his mantra and doing meditation on him. You might not know anything about the Dharma but you have this most important thing, devotion to the guru. You might be so ignorant, with no understanding, no intellect, nothing, all your life you might be like a dog or a pig, but when you have this strong guru devotion, you have no difficulties becoming Manjushri quickly. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] There are no difficulties to become like Manjushri. You must know that is the most important point in your practice.

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<sup>37</sup> Quoted in *The Heart of the Path*, p. 114.

Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo was a great lama, like the sun shining in the world, the one sun that makes all the animals and human beings happy. He had a student, a monk attendant, who couldn't read Tibetan. While he was serving Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo in Tibet, Pabongka Rinpoche predicted to him that one day he would be able to read the whole *Lama Chöpa* (the practice we are going to do later) and yet he didn't know any [written] Tibetan at all. When he escaped from Tibet he went to India, to Buxa, in West Bengal, where he lived with the incarnation of Pabongka Rinpoche, the one who had lived in Tibet. Rinpoche's incarnation happened and he stayed in Buxa. He did his geshe examination, giving his answers to all the monks of Sera, Ganden and Drepung in Buxa. Right after that, he took cancer and passed away in Kasha near Darjeeling. Many people don't know that.

Then, there is the next incarnation who lives in Tibet and sometimes comes here. So, the next incarnation was in Buxa. I stayed in the place where they lived, not inside the lama camp but up from there, called the Lal Bungalow. Kyabje Pabongka's incarnation was there, and Lama Yeshe lived there when I went to receive teachings. There were a few other lamas there such as the geshe who became the first abbot of Lawudo and ordained monks like Geshe Tashi, Lama's best friend, who was very learned in philosophy, and Geshe Yeshe Tobden.

The monk who served Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo in Tibet was there serving the next incarnation. One day, he was able to read the *Lama Chöpa* completely, without anybody teaching him. I don't know what Western scientists would say about that but one day he was able to read the whole prayer book, as Kyabje Pabongka had predicted in Tibet. That was due to his service to Kyabje Pabongka, the great holy being, the virtuous friend, because he had done so much purification, purifying the mind. Purifying the mind—that education—is not known in the West, by the government or society. What Pabongka predicted one day in India exactly happened. He was able to read it without anybody teaching.

In Domo Geshe's monastery in Tibet, where I did my first scriptural examination by heart, the leader of the puja, the umdze, had died and, when he reincarnated, he could remember the words he had memorized [in his previous life]. He couldn't do that as soon as he came out of mother's womb, not like that, but later he could remember them. You have to know these things, whether you believe it or not. There is a book *Believe It or Not*, or a TV channel. Is there a book or a magazine? [*Ven. Ailsa: Ripley's Believe It or Not.*] There is a magazine that talks about what happens in the world? He could remember what he memorized in the past, meaning he had less obscurations so he could remember.

Purifying the mind and collecting merits is not known yet by the scientists in Western society or by the government. They don't know how to develop the mind. That is why you have come here to Kopan, to develop the mind.

### ***The eight benefits of guru devotion***

When you fulfill the guru's wishes—following his advice, doing service, make offerings, all those things—when you correctly follow the virtuous friend, at that time you get eight benefits.

The first one is that *you become closer to buddhahood*. Even if you only offer a glass of water or a candy to the guru, as I mentioned, even by that you become closer to enlightenment. Reciting mantras, keeping your vows or whatever, doing what the guru advised you, listening to the Dharma, teaching the Dharma, with each word you become closer to enlightenment.

The second benefit is *all the buddhas are pleased with you*.

The third one is that *you don't get harmed by the maras or evil friends* who mislead you. They try to guide you but not the way that the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha guide you. It's just the opposite; these evil friends mislead you, they cheat you. With this third benefit you don't get harmed by maras and evil friends.

*All the delusions and vices naturally become less and less*. Without effort, they naturally become less and less and then they are naturally stopped.

Then, *all the realizations of the path are developed*. All the realizations of the paths and the bhumis increase. Then, in all your lifetimes, *you don't experience poverty of being without a guru*. Experiencing the poverty of being without a guru means you can't find a guru at all. People come to India and Nepal but sometimes they can't find a guru. They come to the East to look for a guru and there are perfect pure gurus but the person doesn't meet them; they can't find a guru. So, this benefit is that in all your lifetimes, from life to life, you never lack a guru.

Then, [*you won't fall into the lower realms*.] To become like that in all future lifetimes, you should pray all the time to find a perfectly qualified guru who is not just able to teach meditation but is also able to reveal the unmistakable path to enlightenment, allowing you to achieve what you want to achieve. This depends on how you follow the guru as much as possible without mistake.

First of all, you need to study the guru, because if you make mistakes it affects thousands and millions of lives, on and on. For thousands and millions of lifetimes you don't meet a guru revealing

the unmistakable path to enlightenment. Then, for many eons you won't even hear human words, even human beings speaking.

It depends on how correctly you follow the guru in this life. It is the most important thing, the thing you must be most careful with. You must pay complete attention to that. Many people think it only affects this life, but it's not like that. It affects life to life, it affects eons and eons and eons, thousands and millions of eons. What kind of future lives you have for thousands and millions of eons, how they turn out, depends on how correctly you follow the guru. It is so important. It is the most important thing to not make a mistake in this.

Therefore, you have to study the first lamrim subject, correctly following the virtuous friend. It's the most important thing. If that is done well, all the realizations will happen very quickly, all spiritual success will happen very quickly. All your wishes succeed by correctly following the virtuous friend, by following the guru's wishes and advice—that is the main thing—and then offering service and making offerings. The effect is that all your wishes, not only in this life but in all future lives, life to life, for eons and eons, will so easily succeed.

That is the last one, *you will quickly accomplish all your temporary and ultimate wishes*. Ultimate wishes means you will quickly achieve enlightenment. That also means you will bring sentient beings to enlightenment.

LA MA TÖN PA CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG  
DAG PAR DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ PÄL GYÄL WA SHA KYA THUB PA LA  
CHHAG TSHÄL LO  
To Guru, Founder, Bhagavan, Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly Completed  
Buddha, Glorious Conqueror, Shakyamuni, I prostrate.

Normally, “lama” was not recited, just *tön pa chom dön dä*, but I think I was the one here a long time ago at a Kopan course who added “lama” at the beginning. I want to explain that. That is why I talked about all the other ones before. I already mentioned what the guru, the lama, is.

The guru guides and benefits you. People think this is only in this life, not the people who know, but maybe most Westerners. So, when you recite or hear the word “lama” in *la ma dön pa chom dön dä*, remember this is the dharmakaya. I mentioned that before. It refers to the Omniscient One who knows all the past, present and future phenomena at the same time and can read the minds of all the numberless sentient beings. He can fully understand what you need, how you are suffering, and he

can fully understand all your levels of intelligence and everything, your karma, and all the methods to lead you from happiness to happiness, to enlightenment. He is bound with infinite compassion, embracing us sentient beings. So, when you say or hear “lama,” your guru appears to those who have pure minds, pure karma.

With the bodhisattvas, there are five paths: the path of merit, the path of preparation, the right-seeing path, the path of meditation and the path of no more learning. The path of merit has three levels: the small, middle and great concentration of Dharma continuity. When you achieve that, your mind is so purified that at that time you see all the buddhas in the nirmanakaya aspect. When you achieve the right-seeing path, you reach the first bhumi, and from that you start to actualize the ten bhumis. There are ten bhumis, and you start to actualize the first bhumi, the second bhumi, and so forth. The path of meditation is like that.

When you actualize the arya exalted path, you see in the buddhas in their more pure sambhogakaya aspect. Before you saw them in the nirmanakaya aspect but now you see them in the sambhogakaya aspect. Then, when you complete the five paths, at that time, when your subtle obscurations have ceased completely, you become one with all the buddhas.

At that time, you achieve the guru. At that time, you become the guru. At that time, when you become the guru, you become all the buddhas. Even though you are practicing highest tantra, Guhyasamaja or Yamantaka or Chakrasamvara, the graduated path to achieve enlightenment of that particular deity, when you complete the path you become the guru, and when that happens you become all the buddhas.

That happens for those whose minds are well purified. For those whose minds are not purified, who have impure minds, the guru manifests in an impure aspect. That is what I wanted to say, those who have impure minds. Of course, that doesn't mean I'm advertising myself. Don't think that I'm advertising myself. This is what not only you but even I myself should realize. This is our practice. That is my heart advice.

By manifesting as impure to the numberless impure, obscured sentient beings, including yourself, the guru in impure form then guides you. In that way, the guru has guided you from beginningless rebirths. When you hear “lama,” think he has manifested in an impure form to guide obscured sentient beings like yourself—and like myself—and he has been guiding you from beginningless rebirths up to now. This is what you have to understand. He has manifested in so many different ways, in so many different aspects, using so many different methods, all kinds, all kinds, all kinds of manifestations.

Just as I told you about the Buddha, because the guru has guided you from beginningless rebirths up to now, all your happiness from beginningless rebirths up to now has come from your good karma. That is the action of the Buddha. That action of the Buddha, which has come from the Buddha, that is the action of the guru. It's the same; it's the action of the guru, it has come from the guru. Numberless happinesses from beginningless rebirths up to now have come from the guru. The cause of those happinesses, virtue, has come from the guru. Your virtuous actions have come from the guru.

All the positive imprints of the Dharma—the *base* of the two truths, absolute truth and conventional truth, the truth for the all-obscuring mind; the *path*, method and wisdom; and the *goal* to be achieved, the dharmakaya and rupakaya—all this comes from positive imprints that come from the guru. Every single understanding of every single word of Dharma comes from the guru. Every single cause of happiness, virtue, comes from the guru. From beginningless rebirths up to now every Dharma practice, every vow—the opposite of negative karma—completely comes from the guru.

Because everything, all the collection of goodness, comes from the guru, the guru's kindness is like the limitless sky. If the guru's kindness could materialize it would fill up the limitless sky. The kindness of the guru is most unbelievable, unbelievable, like limitless sky. Because of that, you can attain happiness in the future, all the way up to enlightenment, and then you are able to liberate numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment.

Then, [*tön pa*] this guru manifested as the Buddha, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism in this world, the southern continent. Then, *chom dän dä*; *chom* destroyed the four gross and subtle maras, destroyed the disturbing thought obscurations and the subtle obscurations, *she drib*. Then, *dän* is “possessed,” meaning possessed with the four kayas, the five wisdoms and the six qualities, but I don't remember them by heart. *Dä* is “gone beyond samsara and lower nirvana.”

*De zhin sheg pa* means “gone as it is, directly seeing emptiness of all phenomena.” Gone as it is, all the obscurations are ceased, and then you achieve enlightenment, you are “gone as it is,” *de zhin sheg pa*.

*Dra chom pa*, *dra* is “enemy” so *dra chom pa* means “having destroyed the enemy.” You can relate it to the three poisonous minds or the four gross and subtle maras. Then *yang dag par dzog päi sang gyä*: he removed all the 84,000 delusions, every gross and subtle single defilement relating to the path. Then *sang gyä* refers to having completed the whole path. *Päl* means glorified, dharmakaya. *Gyäl wa*, Victorious One, victorious over the two obscurations, the four maras. Then, of *sha kya thub pa*, *sha kya* is the caste and *thub pa* is “mind only.”

Then *chbag tshäl lo* means to prostrate with body, speech and mind. There is physical prostration and speech prostration; praising the qualities is speech prostration. Mind prostration is devotion to buddha. *Chbag* means having removed all wrong conceptions, from regarding the guru as ordinary up to the subtle wrong concept of dualistic view—the white appearance, red increasing and black near attainment. Having removed the very last subtle dualistic mind, you achieve enlightenment. *Chbag* means everything is purified. *Chbag* in Tibetan means to “throw away,” so you clean everything out, you clean away all the garbage mind. *Tshäl* means you are looking for [all these qualities] you wish for, from correctly following the virtuous friend up to enlightenment, *chbag tshäl lo*.

*Cho du kyab su chi wo: cho du*, making offerings. *Kyab su chi wo*, go for refuge.

I'll stop here. Sorry, I didn't get to continue the other subjects. That is OK.

[Dedication and mandala offering]

Tonight we will do an extensive *Lama Chöpa*, the *Heruka Lama Chöpa* offering, because today is Lama Tsongkhapa day. So, pray to be like that, to be able to benefit all sentient beings. Sorry, I forgot about giving refuge. Maybe tonight in your dreams!

We'll bless the stomach for the dinner!

[Dedications]

## Lecture 10: Refuge Ceremony

December 13, 2017

### REFUGE CEREMONY

[This session took place in the Kopan tantric gumpa as the main gumpa was being prepared for the long-life puja. Although it was not livestreamed, it was filmed.]

#### *Swayambhunath*

The purpose of the mandala is that it purifies the five heavy negative karmas without break. Just seeing the mandala purifies the five heavy negative karmas without break, so no need to mention the ten nonvirtues. Even just seeing a painting of a mandala does this. This is the power of the mandala.

The way to make a mandala is to crush jewels. It is not just art; it has incredible benefits. By crushing jewels and making a mandala you collect unbelievable merit. You can pray to actualize Guhyasamaja. There are commentaries to the mandala where it is explained that this is not just art, that it has the whole path to enlightenment of the deity. The monks, the Lama Gyupas who drew the mandala, took seventeen days. Seeing it purifies a lot, by the way. Now it generated in the mandala.

In America, Namgyal monks from His Holiness' monastery drew a mandala and when it came time to dismantle it, they did it physically like that, but they felt sorry, they felt uncomfortable when they dismantled the mandala. The Lama Gyupas have to learn this. Sangpo is not the first Lama Gyupa nor the second; he is the third. Sherab is also. I haven't touched on it, but there are many things besides debate.

Did you enjoy going around Swayambhunath mountain and then Boudha today? People must have been surprised that there were many Westerners going around the stupa. I'm not sure but maybe there are not usually so many tourists going around at the same time, so they must have been quite surprised. We never used to have this in the program. We didn't have it with any of the courses at the beginning; it was only a few years ago that we started it, only four or five years or so. I thought [it was worthwhile] because you don't have this is incredible, unbelievable holy place in the West.

Some people who have come here might never be able to come back again, even to Nepal. This might be the last time for some people to be able to be in this world. There are six realms, and you have to be reborn in one of them. So for some people it is like that. Some have never seen this

incredible holy place. There are many holy places from ancient times, places of the Buddha and other enlightened beings—yogis, deities and holy beings. At least you can see and go around these two, praying and doing prostrations, doing unbelievable purification and collecting merits. It makes it more certain that you will achieve enlightenment; with the prayers you make a connection. What you pray for there becomes very powerful because of the power of the holy objects. We are so fortunate, unbelievably, unbelievably fortunate.

We have been doing the course for so many years but [until recently] people haven't gone from here to Swayambhunath; they've never gone around there. They went straight from here to the airport and flew back to their country. That is kind of very sad, to come all the way but not see these incredible holy places. You go back and you can't be sure whether you can ever come back. Not everybody has the opportunity to do this, which is very, very sad. Many people come from very far to see these holy objects.

[Talking to some people standing at the back of the gumpa] There are many places here. There are many spaces here to sit. You don't have to be crowded at the door. There are many spaces. There is space. [Someone explains they need to sit on chairs, that they can't sit on cushions]

## **THE BENEFITS OF PROSTRATIONS**

As I was going around and prostrating, I just want to talk about that. Ailsa, did you ever explain about the prostrating? [*Ven. Ailsa*: No.] Full length. [*Ven. Ailsa*: No. Ani Karin explained it.] Full length? OK, all right. So, first I will explain this one.

In Tibet there was a geshe who thought that ten fingers means ten virtues, so you put them together. The thumb inside is offering a jewel, so you don't have empty hands. Kyabje Khunu Lama Rinpoche, a great bodhisattva who gave extensive commentary on *Bodhicaryavatara* to His Holiness, told us that with empty hands it is *namaste*. With prostrations it is like this, here, you are offering a jewel, just as Chenrezig offers a wish-granting jewel. What [the mudra of two hands together] signifies is the whole entire Buddhism: the two bases—the base is the two truths, conventional truth and absolute truth—and then the two paths—method and wisdom—and the two goals, what is to be achieved—[the dharmakaya and rupakaya].

The emptiness [within the folded hands] signifies the dharmakaya, the ultimate nature of a buddha's holy mind, the dharmakaya. And these two hands around it are the rupakaya, a buddha's holy body. So, the folded hands contain the whole entire Buddhism—the two bases of two truths,

the two paths of method and wisdom and the two goals, what are to be achieved, dharmakaya and rupakaya.

When you see any pictures, statues, stupas, mandalas, or anything, your refuge practice is to do like this. [Rinpoche shows putting the hands in prostration] You prostrate like this and there are eight benefits. Have you gone through those yet or not?

*Ven. Karin:* I haven't gone through in such detail.

*Rinpoche:* It has eight benefits. It has ten benefits also but I don't remember all the ten benefits. Sometimes I explain it as ten, but generally there are eight benefits.

The first one is that it creates the cause to *have a perfect body, zugsang*. You need that to practice Dharma, and in particular to practice Mahayana tantra. To benefit other sentient beings you need a perfect body. In the past Lama Atisha and many other great pandits, great holy beings, were born to a king and had a beautiful holy body. Even if you are born as a human being but very sick, unhealthy, it's not like that.

[The second is that *you have perfect surrounding people*.] In order to practice Dharma, you need perfect surrounding people, *kboryab*, to help you succeed in your wishes to practice Dharma.

The third one is *you are able to live in pure morality*. Without pure morality you won't achieve perfect meditation. You have to know that. People talk about meditation, meditation, meditation, but they don't talk about morality. That is missing. It is what makes meditation perfect.

Like *zhi nä*, calm abiding, which has nine stages, where you overcome the gross sinking thought, subtle sinking thought, and gross and subtle attachment-scattering thought, then you can do perfect meditation, otherwise you can't do perfect meditation. Even if you are able to concentrate on the object, still there is gross sinking thought or subtle sinking thought, or subtle attachment-scattering thought. Because there are these mistakes it is not perfect meditation. To achieve that is not easy. Everyone says, "Oh, I want to achieve *zhi nä*," but not everyone who wants to achieve *zhi nä* can—only those who have pure morality and very little desire, who have a contented mind. Then you can do meditation better. With less desire and a more content mind, there is less distraction.

***We practice the three higher trainings for every sentient being***

You need pure morality to achieve the perfect samadhi, calm abiding meditation. Pure morality creates the cause for that that. The first of the three higher trainings is concentration. [Then there are morality and right view.]

“Higher training” means that, on the basis of refuge—with reliance on the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha—you keep precepts, pure morality, then on the basis of pure morality there is the higher training in meditation, and then on the basis of that, the third one, the higher training in wisdom, higher seeing. As I mentioned, you experience the rapturous ecstasy of body and mind with the meditation on emptiness combined or on the basis of shamatha, calm abiding. Without morality, it doesn’t happen. Then, if those three don’t happen, you have no way to achieve the resultant path, *phaglam* [the arya path], directly perceiving emptiness. Then you can’t cease the seeds of delusion and karma. If you can’t cease that, there is no way to be free from delusion and karma so there is no way to be free from the suffering of samsara, the six-realm sufferings. You can never be free from samsara. And this is without talking about gaining enlightenment for all sentient beings.

Of course, people who don’t have the capability of mind for bodhicitta, for compassion for all sentient beings, like practitioners of the Lesser Vehicle path who don’t have the karma, the merit, can’t even achieve nirvana for themselves without pure morality.

When you read, study or listen to the lamrim, you need to understand the big reason, that you aren’t trying to attain the three higher trainings—the higher training in morality, the higher training in concentration and the higher training in wisdom—just for yourself. It is for the numberless hell beings with most unimaginable suffering, to free them from oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to the peerless happiness of buddhahood, the total cessation of obscurations and the completion of all realizations. You practice the three higher trainings for that. Now you understand the big reason. It is not just for yourself, but even for yourself, you need those three. The biggest reason is for the numberless hell beings who have unimaginable suffering. You can do that. Then for the numberless hungry ghosts, who suffer the most unbelievable hunger and thirst. For ten thousand years they cannot even find a spoon of food. To free them from oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment, to help them, you practice this. Then you practice to help the numberless animals—every ant, every mosquito, every chicken, every fish, every goat you eat, for every single sentient being—to free them from oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment, to buddhahood, you practice this, you dedicate your life to this.

By taking precepts, as lay people you can dedicate like this, and monks and nuns can also do this. This is how you dedicate your life to numberless sentient beings. You give your life, you practice this for them, for the numberless animals. There must be a billion, zillion, trillion animals eaten every day in the world. How many hotels and restaurants are there where, every day, so many people come to eat food. Millions, billions, zillions, trillions of chickens get killed. The chickens are the majority, but then there are many goats and other animals.

Do you understand? If that many human beings were killed every day it would kind of upsetting, but animals are never counted. However, it is exactly the same. They also want happiness and do not want suffering, just like us. They are exactly the same but they are powerless, not like human beings. There are even many human beings who don't have power and the animals are exactly the same, with no power at all. Human beings have power over them, they control them, they use them like toilet paper, which you can use for anything you want. Like that, they use them. In reality, people in the world do not know that animals suffer. Many people do not know they have no power. Even if they see the animals are scared, showing they don't want to suffer [in the same way] human beings do, people still don't understand. It's amazing.

There are numberless human beings, numberless sura beings, numberless asura beings, there are numberless universes, so you are practicing these three higher trainings for every human being, for every sura and asura. The attitude is supposed to be like you would do for the person next to you, for the person sitting in front of you, for the person sitting behind of you, [expanding it out] until there is no sentient being left out. You are doing this for every obscured suffering sentient being.

That is the big way of thinking. You don't just think you are doing it for one person. You think you are benefiting everyone. You develop your mind to achieve enlightenment for every sentient being. The monks and nuns are supposed to think like that, keeping precepts and all that, having courage, no matter how difficult the life you are going through is. That is the attitude, to benefit everybody. In this way you can overcome hardships and difficulties to practice Dharma.

Without morality there is no realization, there is no enlightenment, there is no cessation of suffering, nirvana. There is no great nirvana, full enlightenment, peerless happiness.

### ***The benefits of prostration (continued)***

The fourth benefit of doing prostrations is *you develop devotion*. Without devotion there is no success in meditation, no attainment, no realization of the path. Gyalwa Ensapa was a monk who achieved

buddhahood comfortably. As His Holiness Zong Rinpoche, one of my gurus, said, he achieved the unified state of Vajradhara in a brief lifetime of degenerate times comfortably. [Ensapa] mentioned this,

In short, whether we achieve great or small realizations depends on whether we have meditated with great or small devotion.<sup>38</sup>

It is due to that, to whether you have great devotion or small devotion. Then he explained the practice. This is a very important quotation to be able to remember.

Therefore, may I keep as my heart practice the instruction to reflect only upon the qualities of the kind guru, the source of all realizations, and not look at the faults. May I fulfill this commitment without any obstacle.<sup>39</sup>

It is not that sometimes you practice and sometimes you don't care. It's not like that. When you always do the same, you develop better, better, better. You only look at the qualities of the guru and don't think of any mistakes. You don't think of that, you don't project [mistakes onto the guru], only qualities. That is the main cause; it's from there you achieve enlightenment.

It is very important. Gyalwa Ensapa achieved buddhahood in one brief lifetime of degenerate times. If that is what you want, if you desire to achieve enlightenment to be able to help free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment, buddhahood, if you want to do that, then you have to practice guru yoga, correctly following the virtuous friend.

But if you want to stay in samsara, suffering in the six realms continuously, if you want to do that, then that is your choice. If you want to live in the suffering, that is your choice. It's like that. If somebody wants to live in fire, that is their choice. But if you want enlightenment, this is what you have to practice. You have to know that. You start from here. That is the main cause that makes you become enlightened.

Ensapa said that whether you have great realizations or small realizations depends on how much devotion you have, whether you have great devotion or small devotion. Therefore, this creates the

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<sup>38</sup> Quoted in *The Heart of the Path*, p. 171.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

cause for devotion. Not just doing like this to anyone, [Rinpoche shows the prostration mudra] but to holy objects. If you see the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha [in the aspect of] statues, stupas, scriptures, pictures, drawings, relating to the holy object, this becomes prostration. [Rinpoche shows the mudra again] Otherwise just doing like this, no. I'm not talking about the benefits of holding the hands like this, I'm talking about the benefits of doing like this to holy objects. You can do it to mosquitoes like this, you can do to ants, to chickens, to fish. Hindus worship cows and buffaloes. You can bow to tourists like this. I'm not talking about this; I'm talking about holy objects.

The fifth benefit is that *you develop a brave, courageous mind*. You are able to help many people, to lead them away from the wrong path to happiness, to nirvana, to enlightenment. You are able to lead with courage, *po bpa*, a courageous mind. It develops that.

Then, *you do not get reborn in lower realms*, you get reborn as a human being or deva.

The seventh benefit is that *you achieve the arya path*, the exalted path, the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, where you cease the seed of delusion and karma. You get that benefit by doing like this [Rinpoche demonstrates the prostration mudra] to holy objects.

Finally, the eighth benefit is that *you achieve enlightenment*, you achieve buddhahood. That's the last one, the eighth one.

Then there are ten benefits, which are more or less the same.

### ***The correct way to prostrate***

I usually explain to students, when you are on pilgrimage and go to a temple, there are thousands, millions, billions of holy objects—paintings, thangkas, statues, stupas. Of course, it might take many days if you prostrate to each one. So, when you are standing in the gompa, generate the motivation of bodhicitta, to not only free the numberless sentient beings from being born in lower realms, and to not only free them from the oceans of samsara but to bring them to buddhahood. Then think, “Therefore I must achieve buddhahood, therefore I'm going to prostrate to all the holy objects here.” That is the same whether you are doing a long prostration or just this. [Rinpoche indicates the prostration mudra]

Then, you think that all the many millions and billions of holy objects around you are your guru. For example, I myself think of my root guru Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche or His Holiness the Dalai Lama. So think, “All these holy objects are my root guru, which means he manifests as the statues or paintings, as all the holy objects, to free me from samsara and bring me to buddhahood.” With that

thought of His Holiness related to myself, His Holiness, my root guru, manifests in all these holy objects. With this mindfulness, you prostrate [with your hands at your heart]. Don't close your eyes, leave them open and turn around like this. Within that minute you have finished prostrating and have created a million or a billion causes for enlightenment. Depending on how many millions or billions of holy objects there are in the gompa—paintings or statues, stupas or scriptures—you have created a million causes of enlightenment, a billion causes of enlightenment. You have created that many causes of enlightenment, a million or a billion, in that very minute. For example, when you go on pilgrimage or when you go to temples, don't close your eyes, but move your feet, going around like that, looking at the holy objects.

Generally, if there are a billion holy objects in the gompa, you then create those eight benefits I explained before a billion times. By collecting such unbelievable merit, you are the luckiest person by coming into that gompa. For example, when you go from here to the Boudha stupa, every time you see it, do this [put your hands in prostration], then say, “By my seeing the stupa, may all sentient beings achieve the dharmakaya soon.” You should pray like that. That prayer is so good, not only for when you see a stupa.

When a *drangtsemo*—*drangtse* is “Brahmin” and so *drangtsemo* is a female Brahmin—named Paldema, “Glorified One,” saw the Buddha, she sprinkled offerings of sandalwood powder over the Buddha's feet. The Buddha predicted that the result of that was she wouldn't be reborn in the lower realms for eighty hundred million eons and forty million eons, forty or four million, I think something like that. He explained that to the Bodhisattva Undefeatable, that the Brahmin lady Paldema, by sprinkling sandalwood powder on the Buddha's feet, created the karma to not be born in the lower realms for that many eons, for eighty hundred million eons and forty million eons.

You need to understand what the Buddha explained about the karma. Offering a bowl of water to the Buddha, even if you don't visualize it as nectar, just water, you get the same benefit. That is so important to understand. Don't forget this. You can do this to make your life meaningful, to be able to benefit the numberless sentient beings, to free them from the oceans of suffering and to bring them to buddhahood. You have to know how to develop the potential of your mind all the way to buddhahood. Even though you haven't actualized the path you have to know how to do it.

That is how to collect merit, even offering a bowl of water or some incense, whatever offering it is. If you put some brocade around a thangka, that is the offering of a dress. It is like offering a dress. For any offering, the benefits are like that. To actually meet the Buddha and make any offering, you get that much merit, but now, making offerings to a holy object, it is exactly the same.

I don't know the quotation by heart but the Buddha said, "Now you are making offering to me but in the future when you make offerings to statues and stupas it is exactly the same." You have to keep that in mind. Therefore, you are *so* fortunate, so fortunate, understanding [the meaning of] the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and relying upon the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, knowing each time you make offerings, any offering, you create the most unbelievable merit. The purpose of offering divine dress, robes, is like that. My guru told me with thangkas, with a picture or drawing, the purpose of surrounding them with brocade is because it becomes an offering of divine dress. This is so important.

Now you can see in your life, having opened your mind to Buddhadharma, you are *so* lucky, so fortunate. Every day, every night, you have the most unbelievable, most unbelievable opportunity to collect merit, not just the cause of happiness but even the cause of enlightenment, all the time, day and night. You have this opportunity, *lama khyen, lama khyen*. When I say "*lama khyen*" that means something beyond your conception, something utterly unimaginable. *Lama khyen*, "May the guru understand." It is an expression for something so great you can't stand it, whether it is suffering or happiness.

Now you can see how fortunate you are. Otherwise, if you don't notice how important this practice is, it's like a trip. Buddhism is a trip at one time, Hinduism is a trip at another time. It is like tasting food in a restaurant. So, you must understand how you are so fortunate to have opened your mind to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. You have the most unbelievable *freedom*. Otherwise, "Because I have become a Buddhist, I have to learn this, I have to do this, I have to do that and so on." Then you feel tired; you have a kind of unhappy mind, like it's better to die or something. However, if you understand that the benefits of practicing Dharma are like this, you can realize that you are so lucky.

There is no time to think, "I'm useless," no time to be depressed. Millions of people in the West are depressed. Now, here, you have opened your mind to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, so there is no time for depression. You practice a good heart toward others and have devotion to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. When you practice a good heart toward others, even if you are alone on a mountain in the Himalayas, numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas are taking care of you. When you die they will guide you. You don't have to worry if you take care of sentient beings, if you practice a good heart toward sentient beings in your everyday life, toward insects, toward people, giving them whatever help they need.

I think even if you don't have devotion to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, but you have the other one, you have compassion for sentient beings—for insects and human beings—and you help them, that is what pleases the buddhas and bodhisattvas the most, so when you die the numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas will guide you. Then, whatever you pray for has much power due to your good heart. There is no place in your mind for depression.

## **HELPING ANIMALS**

I didn't finish even though I have brought it up twice. I explained to you, your happiness from beginningless rebirths up to now, and your future happiness up to enlightenment, everything, you receive by the kindness of every hell being, hungry ghost, animal, human being, every sura being, every asura being, every intermediate state being. By taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, you are free from lower realms, free from samsara, even free from lower nirvana and then you achieve great nirvana for sentient beings. Then, you are able to free sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to buddhahood by taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Where did the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha come from? They came from sentient beings. The Buddha no question, the Dharma no question, and the Sangha no question, they came from every sentient being, even one insect, one mosquito or ant. Because all numberless Buddha, Dharma and Sangha came from them—because those you take refuge in came from them—every sentient being is most precious for you, most kind, most dear. Every one is wish-fulfilling for you. Therefore, in your life, you should help them as much as you can, even some small help, giving them some small pleasure, even rescuing an insect attacked by ants or saving one from falling in the fire or in the water, having difficulty. However you can help sentient beings, you should, even insects and animals.

Sorry, I shouldn't say this, but in India, when you travel by car, you see many chickens piled up by the roadside, right in the place they are about to be killed. The difficulty with chickens is they are difficult to keep. Even if you buy them and liberate them in a field, they eat worms all day long. In the past on Maitreya land, we built houses with cement floors and roofs to house some chickens we bought, and we fed them grain. We bought some chickens, not many, like that.

I thought to buy some big land in south India and build a house with a cement floor. We could put trees inside, not growing but in pots, so they could go in the trees. Covering the ceiling would be Namgyälma mantras which would always purify the minds, the negative karma, of the chickens who

are there, meaning if they die they won't get reborn in the lower realms. Then the other one is the mantra you usually put above the door to purify eons of negative karma of any being that comes near it, not only people but also mosquitoes and animals. Putting it over the door and on the ceiling, the chickens moving around down there would always get purified. I thought to do like that to help them, to have maybe a thousand chickens. Even if we can't liberate all the chickens, even if we can't buy all the chickens, we can help some.

I found a monk known for having a good heart who accepted to look after the chickens. They have a lot of smell and things like that, so it's not easy. Then, we would play mantras and prayers through speakers. So their lives could go toward enlightenment, I recorded different mantras and prayers such as the *Three Principal Aspects of the Path* to purify their karma, to be played in the morning, maybe before twelve o'clock, then two or three o'clock, and also played later in the evening, maybe around sunset. If possible they would be played three or four times a day to plant the seed to lead them to enlightenment. At the moment we are trying to buy land, having discussions about that. This is an example of how to help chickens.

There is this story. Many years ago at the back of the house we have in Washington, I saw ants' nests. I have a text on how to make charity to ants with blessed water and *mani* pills. These are His Holiness the Dalai Lama's blessed mani pills that are usually sent to Tibet and to people in prison. They are mixed with tsampa, then I recite many mantras and the tsampa is mixed with a little bit of butter. Then, a little bit of the powder is sprinkled over the ants' nests to make charity to them.

There were two monks living there doing many big water bowl offerings in the three rooms upstairs and many light offerings downstairs. Outside there is a Medicine Buddha statue made in Indonesia from volcanic stone. There is also an Amitabha Buddha made in Vietnam. I sent a drawing, a painting and the text explaining exactly how to do it, but they were so used to their own art they didn't do it exactly. So, an ex-Kopan monk who studied art in Dharamsala repainted the eyes. The Amitabha Buddha is made of white stone, what is it called? Marble. There were so many difficulties transporting it, but we got it there. We planted trees and flowers so people can come there to sit, relax and see the statues, to plant the seed of enlightenment and purify their negative karma.

We had a celebration twice, making delicious food for the people of the village and anybody who came. At the end we were supposed to get the children or anybody who could, to offer a dance to the Buddha. The idea was for the children and different people to make a connection with the Buddha. The second time, many Sherpas came and did a dance at the end. I made Tibetan food. No,

it wasn't that I made it, I ordered a monk, Kunsang, who died from cancer two years ago, to make it. He made some before and some on the actual day. The people enjoyed it so much.

A lady who lived a little bit far away came. She was the owner of the land where Merry and Harry stay. She said she never had such delicious food in her life until that day. We have a small center in the village, Dorje Phagmo Center, which also helped by making plenty of food.

I went to a big lake. I thought to put some Namgyälma protection mantras on the water, some floating on the water and some buried in the water in the corner. We did that for all the fish, to purify their negative karma and get a higher rebirth.

There is an organization—I don't know the name—which John, a monk, is a member of. If you buy something with his name you get it cheaper, so I bought a small rubber boat in his name. It cost three hundred dollars but because I bought it in his name it cost two hundred dollars. I went once on the lake to chant mantras. The sound is supposed to go in the water. We made tsampa to bless the water, mixed with His Holiness' mani pills and other pills, making them very small to make it easy for the fish to swallow. As the monk sailed the boat, I threw it in the water from a bucket to help the fish, to make charity to the fish. If this mantra goes on your body, two billion and forty million eons of negative karma are purified. As I threw the blessed tsampa outside the boat and chanted mantras, the boat went like this and this on the lake so it covered more fish.

Each month the boat goes to a different lake to help the fish. There are two flags. One has the name of the boat, the "Wish-granting Boat for the Fish," then there is one with mantras, so for people who see the flag, it purifies one hundred thousand eons of negative karma. If they see that, after fifteen days all their heavy negative karma gets purified. So, the two flags are to help the people. On top of that, we have a banner in traditional colors with mantras inside. I told them to go on a different lake each month.

The monk at the Washington house found not only a few but ten or twenty ants' nests on the mountain, so he makes food, tsampa mixed with blessed water and mani pills, and he makes charity with this to the ants every week.

You can also put His Holiness the Dalai Lama's blessed mani pills into the water you give to the birds. Because the pills have had a hundred million manis recited over them, when the birds come to wash and drink the water mixed with the precious pills, it purifies their negative karma and makes it easy for them to achieve enlightenment.

So, you should do whatever small thing you can to help others. I told you the reason. They are most important, most precious, most kind, most dear. Therefore, if you are able to help them with

even just something little, just some small comfort, that is *so* precious. It is most unbelievably precious for you to offer that. For instance, you can offer your seat to somebody who needs a seat. You should offer any offering, water or drink, big or small.

It is unbelievably important for you to save beings from suffering, whatever it is, even a small discomfort. I emphasize this. Big or small, it is so important for you. If you live your life like this, that is most pleasing to the buddhas and bodhisattvas. When somebody gives a little praise to a child that the mother loves more than her own body and life, it makes the mother so happy, and when somebody insults or harms them a little bit, it upsets the mother so much. If somebody gives the child a present it makes her so happy because she loves her child so much. Buddhas or bodhisattvas love each sentient being like the mother loves her child, cherishing all the sentient beings the most, more than themselves. Bodhisattvas live their lives totally for sentient beings; each inbreath and outbreath is only for sentient beings, not for themselves. They actualize the path to achieve enlightenment *only* for sentient beings.

I'm talking about how bodhisattvas cherish even one sentient being the most. We too need to free sentient beings, to save them from suffering and give them happiness and comfort, including freeing them from samsara through showing them the Dharma.

Just to give an example, we now have a hundred and sixty Dharma centers. Some are schools, the rest are Dharma centers. When you set up a Dharma center, you need a teacher and a translator, and the teacher needs to have studied extensive Buddhist philosophy their whole life, besides the lamrim. From learned teachers, many sentient beings who come to the center can learn the essence of the lamrim and Buddhist philosophy and the commentaries—everything on the unmistakable path to enlightenment.

Setting up the center, you need so many people to help in different parts, to work to spread Buddhadharma in the hearts of sentient beings. I'm giving one example of how to benefit so many sentient beings, to free them from samsara and bring them to enlightenment. That is the main thing. But there are also many other social services depending on the center and how many people there are to help.

Looking at one bodhisattva, this is the offering that pleases that bodhisattva the most; it is the best offering. Similarly, helping even one sentient being pleases a buddha; it is the best offering to that buddha. Now there are numberless buddhas and numberless bodhisattvas, and it pleases all of them the best, it is the best offering you can make to them. Of course, normally when you die there

are numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas helping you, guiding you, especially if you practice the good heart. Like that, there is no place for depression.

This is how to live your life from now on. You have to understand how this is the best life. Then naturally in your everyday life all your prayers and wishes succeed by fulfilling others' wishes, insects or people. Then your wishes to achieve enlightenment happen easily.

I'll stop here.

## **REFUGE: WHAT TO ABANDON AND WHAT TO PRACTICE**

With refuge, there are the *upasika* or lay vows, the precepts you can take, either all five or four or three or two or even just one precept. Or even if you can't take any vow but just refuge, there are unbelievable merits you collect in your daily life.

Did you go through refuge, the three things to abandon and the three things to practice? [*Ven. Ailsa*: Yes, Rinpoche.] OK. If you rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, if you just pray to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, success happens without problems. Otherwise, if you rely on ordinary people, the ordinary way, without relying on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, it is like the cow with a ring through its nose tied by a rope, having to go wherever it is pulled. If you rely on ordinary people, it is up to them where they lead you. It becomes very complicated; you get into many problems having to rely on different people, like the cow with the ring in its nose. You become like that.

It is said in the texts that if you pray to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, you can achieve all the success up to enlightenment. That is intelligent; that is wise. Then things happen.

By taking refuge in the Dharma, one of the things you should abandon is [showing disrespect to] Dharma texts and what you should practice is [respecting them]. Any Dharma text, even if it is not even a full text but has pages missing, some parts of the subject or something, even if it is just two or three lines or it is torn, you don't throw it in the garbage. You put it in a high, clean place, in an envelope or something, wherever you normally keep those missing or torn pages.

In Solu Khumbu there was a small square house built in a big cave, where no rain could get in. There was a small stupa but it didn't have a roof. All the missing pages from Dharma texts were put inside that. In this way, rain didn't come and they were respected. That is what people do in the mountains. In the West, to respect a text, sometimes I put it around a tree and then put a bandage around the tree.

The last thing is if you don't have a place then you can burn the texts, but when you do you are not burning the text, treating the letters like garbage, like you are burning garbage. If you do that with Dharma texts, you are not respecting them. That is called casting away the object of respect; that is avoiding Dharma. It is to do with how you think. In that way, avoiding the Dharma is such heavy negative karma. If you abandon the holy Dharma it creates more negative karma than having completely destroyed all the temples, statues, stupas and scriptures in the world.

For example, if you don't understand the teachings on emptiness or the *Abhidharmakosha*, which are the Buddha's teachings, if you read them and don't understand them, if you think, "They are useless; this is not for me," you are kind of abandoning the Dharma. You are supposed to think, "I don't understand it now but I hope to understand it in the future." You're supposed to think like that, not "This is not for me," and completely abandon it like garbage.

You have to know what abandoning the holy Dharma means. While it is the Buddha's teachings, if you abandon it you create so much negative karma in this life, even if you are trying to practice. When you don't know what abandoning the holy Dharma is, this can so easily happen.

If you have to burn some Dharma, visualize that all the letters become a syllable A, then the A absorbs into your heart. Then, you think that the paper is empty. During these teachings here I didn't get to recite the *Heart Sutra*, but you recite the *Heart Sutra* while meditating on emptiness when you burn the empty paper. That is what you have to do to not disrespect the Dharma texts. So, in general, any letters which are Dharma, you should keep in an envelope, but if there is no other way you can burn them in the fire, but without losing faith, as I explained.

In Tibet, when the Kadampa geshe, those great, great meditators, those realized holy beings, saw even one syllable of a Tibetan letter in the garbage, they would pick it up, put on their head because it shows the path to enlightenment, and then put it in high clean place, like that. This is how they practiced.

Please also understand this. In many of our centers, the person working for the center, the spiritual coordinator or something, puts prayer books on the cushions or the seats without anything on top. You can't do that. You can't put them on the floor or on the bed. You have to put something under them, a cloth or something, but many centers put them on chairs without anything on top of the chairs. That is disrespect; you can't do that. You also can't put material things on Dharma texts such as glasses. For example, you are reading an English Dharma text and then put your glasses on the book. You can't do that. You can't even put statues or stupas on top of texts. Normally, in a gompa the Dharma texts are highest, up there on top, and then statues are below, or

the Dharma texts are on the side. You don't put statues higher and then Dharma texts below. That is the simple practice of refuge. You have to know that.

You can't put your malas on Dharma texts. I don't see many Westerners doing that; it's more Tibetan or Eastern people doing that, putting malas or glasses on top. And also, something Eastern people do that Westerners don't is spit to make their finger wet so they can turn the page. You can't do that. Kyabje Ling Rinpoche, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's elder guru, in an initiation in Darjeeling once, said you will be reborn in the hell realms for putting your spit on Dharma pages. Many people in the East do that because they don't know. My teacher, Kyabje Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche, was given clean water which he touched the edge of the page with. When you read many texts, you can do like that. You have to understand all these things.

Please also be aware, when there is group sitting and there are Dharma texts on the table in front of you, you can't step over them. That is very common in the West. They don't know, it was not well explained. The Dharma texts are there and you should walk over them. You can go around them but not step over them. You must know you can't do that. Also, if you are carrying a Dharma text and a cushion at the same time, you can't carry the text in the same hand as the cushion; you have to keep the cushion separate.

Any disrespect like this becomes an obscuration to your mind, obscuring you from achieving bodhicitta, renunciation, emptiness. It becomes an obstacle to achieving nirvana, to achieving enlightenment. It blocks you from being able to benefit numberless sentient beings, from perfectly freeing them from samsara. Then, you can't bring them to enlightenment; you can't do that perfect benefit. It blocks that; it obscures the mind. You have to understand that.

Then, what else? The real Dharma is the wisdom realizing emptiness, directly perceiving emptiness, that ceases the seed of delusion. With that, you achieve cessation of suffering, becoming free from samsara and achieving nirvana. That is the real Dharma, so you have to respect those who explain the path to not be reborn in the lower realms, to be free from samsara and to achieve enlightenment. The actual Sangha, the real arya Sangha, are those who have realizations, who have direct perception of emptiness and achieved the cessation of obscurations and sufferings. That can be a lay person; they don't have to be ordained, and the arya Sangha can refer to one lay person; there doesn't have to be four.

The ordinary Sangha, *gendun*, are those who don't have the direct perception of emptiness and the cessation of suffering. For that, there have to be four. Why four in number? Because when you do activities in a monastery, it usually needs four Sangha to decide which activities to do. Of course,

ordinary Sangha doesn't just mean Tibetan, with Tibetan-style robes; it can be the yellow robes of the Theravadin, or it can be Chinese style, wearing white, blue or yellow color. When you see a member of the Sangha coming toward you, you should think, "This is my guide who liberates me from samsara." Whether you know them or not, by thinking like that, you generate respect and create so much good karma with body, speech and mind.

You can't step over a Sangha's robes or the *dingwa*, the seat cover. This is disrespect to the Sangha; it obscures your mind, blocking realizations and sending you to the lower realms. What the Kadampa geshe practice is, even if there is a piece of robe on the road, by thinking of the qualities of Sangha, they put it in high place. The Kadampa geshe do that even with a piece of yellow or red robe on the road.

For example, my guru, Kyabje Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche, was a great, learned, pure, strict, unbelievable lama, whose holy mind was like a library, rich in experience of sutra and tantra. When Rinpoche came in for an initiation, in the gompa there would be many monks' seats covered but, no matter how crowded it was, Rinpoche would walk between the seats to go to the throne, never stepping over even one. That is refuge practice, perfect respect for the Sangha. He always went between the seats, never over them, showing respect for the Sangha. This is how these great lamas in their ordinary aspect practice, showing respect to the robes of the Sangha. Thinking of their qualities you never step over the robes.

By taking refuge in the Dharma, the thing to avoid is harming other sentient beings. That is the main practice of the Dharma, to stop harming sentient beings. You have to understand that. If you don't have devotion for the guru or the Buddha, even if you are in front of the Buddha, from there you can get reborn in hell. The most important thing is to protect your karma, to abandon negative karma and create positive karma, the cause of happiness. That is the most important way to save yourself.

Otherwise, basically if you are in front of the Buddha without devotion, you are like the gelong Lekpai Karma, who served the Buddha for twenty-two years but always thought the Buddha was a liar. He labeled the Buddha a liar and he believed that. He saw him only as a liar, even though the Buddha had become enlightened eons before and could see all past, present and future events at the same time. Even though Lekpai Karma was with the Buddha for twenty-two years, he always labeled him a liar and saw him like that. He had more faith in his Hindu teacher.

The reason is that one day, when they went for alms, a young girl made an offering of grain in the Buddha's begging bowl and the Buddha predicted she would become enlightened as Sangye

Tenye. Lekpai Karma thought the Buddha was flattering her too much, [that it was impossible such a small action could produce such a huge result]. From that time he recognized the Buddha as a liar, even though what the Buddha said was true. The Buddha is such a powerful object, therefore offering to the Buddha creates the cause of enlightenment. That's true but he didn't have karma to understand that.

I have to repeat this because it is very important to understand karma. In Malaysia, there is a wealthy family I stayed with a couple of times. Tony Wong arranges venues for my teachings in places where we don't have centers. Since Losang Drakpa Centre [in Kuala Lumpur] started, this hasn't happened much but for places without a center he organizes the venue and finds a place for me to stay in a family's house.

At one house I stayed in, the family's daughter was the main person allowed to offer lights, in the house and in the father's office where he does practice with sick people. What happened, Tony Wong would take the family to an initiation, to go to see lamas. They didn't study lamrim, didn't hear explanations about karma, about refuge, they didn't get to study, they just followed people, showing devotion outside but didn't really study karma.

One day their son suddenly died and then the family, the father and mother, lost faith, thinking the Buddha hadn't really helped them. They had many statues in their room given to them by lamas but they threw all those statues on the floor. This happens if you just externally follow people but don't study what Buddhism is—about karma, about refuge, what qualities the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha have, how they can guide, how the Buddha is a pure holy being that you can trust—they didn't study any of these reasons, just following what people did. Then, when their son died, they thought the Buddha hadn't helped them and they threw the statues on the floor. There is this danger if you don't study. Buddhism is logic. Buddhism is the closest thing to Western science; [the connection between the two] is now getting more and more. If you study karma you won't do that. It was due to karma that the son died; it wasn't the Buddha's fault. In the *Samadhiraja Sutra* the Buddha said,

Buddhas do not wash away negativities with water,  
Clear away beings' suffering with their hands,  
Or transfer their own knowledge to others;

They liberate by teaching the truth of reality.<sup>40</sup>

The Buddha doesn't wash away karma with water like Hindus do in the Ganga River. He doesn't take sentient beings' suffering away like pulling a thorn out with his hand. The Buddha doesn't liberate us from suffering like that. He doesn't transplant his realizations into our heart, not in that way. He liberates us by revealing the truth. Sentient beings get liberated from samsara by having the truth revealed to them by the Buddha.

Sorry, I didn't mean to start with an explanation on emptiness but that's the truth. I told you that you have to do the four-point analysis then you can have some idea. The Buddha has taught 84,000 teachings, the Lesser Vehicle path, the sutra Mahayana path and the tantra Mahayana path. The Buddha has taught everything, the whole path to achieve enlightenment, and even the quick path to achieve enlightenment in one life, tantra. Even that can take a long time, so he taught highest tantra which allows you to achieve enlightenment in the brief lifetime of degenerate times, the quickest way to achieve enlightenment. The Buddha has taught everything.

Now, it is up to you, whether you look for it or not. Even though sentient beings might be born human, most don't have the karma to meet Buddhism, so now it is up to you, you who have the karma to meet Buddhism. Now it is up to you whether you learn or not, whether you practice or not. That family in Malaysia threw the statues on the floor like that because they didn't know karma.

## **REFUGE CEREMONY**

Those of you who are taking refuge, do three prostrations to the statue of the Guru Shakyamuni Buddha behind. You do prostrations like when you take eight Mahayana precepts. You can do three prostrations to the Buddha and then three prostrations to me, the one who gives refuge.

Those who can, kneel down, like taking precepts in the morning; those who can't kneel can sit. Put your hands like this at the heart. Then, think this, "I have been under the control of delusion and karma from beginningless rebirths, therefore I have been suffering from beginningless rebirths up to now, all the suffering of the six realms." That is what you have been meditating on during the month, all those sufferings. "If I don't practice Dharma, if I don't actualize the path, I will have to suffer again in samsara without end. This is one time I have received a perfect human rebirth; I have met Buddhadharma, met the qualified guru revealing the unmistakable path to enlightenment.

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<sup>40</sup> Quoted in His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Thubten Chodron's *Buddhism: One Teacher, Many Traditions* 2014, p. 17.

Therefore, I must not only free myself from samsara, but also achieve enlightenment for all sentient beings. Therefore, I am going for refuge to the Buddha as founder of refuge, like a doctor. I am going for refuge to the Dharma, the actual refuge, which is like medicine that cures sickness. I am going for refuge to the Sangha, who are like nurses, helping me to actualize the Dharma, the whole path to enlightenment, to achieve nirvana in my own heart. I will rely upon the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.” From now on, think like that. Now, repeat the prayer I recite.

[Rinpoche gives the refuge ceremony]

[Referring to people pronouncing the Tibetan well, which is due to it being projected on the screen] You did very well. You get the first degree.

Since there are people who are doing different things here, maybe some are only taking refuge, still there are three negative things to abandon and three positive things to practice, there are seven or eight advices to take. Have you gone through that? [*Ven. Ailsa*: Yes, Rinpoche.] There is a lot of merit. Your life became so meaningful by taking these precepts—one or two or three or four, however many you have decided to take. Think that in front of me you have received that vow, that precept, mentally think that. Whatever you are taking, think you have received that.

Now you can stand and do the dedications.

## **DEDICATIONS**

“May the paramita of morality be completed without mistakes; may it be kept purely without pride.”

Then after that, “Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may bodhicitta be generated in the hearts of all the sentient beings who have been my mother and unbelievably kind from beginningless rebirths. The way they took care of me is with ignorance, anger, attachment, with the self-cherishing thought, creating unbelievable negative karma from beginningless rebirths. Because of that, they have had to suffer unbelievably, now and again. Therefore, if I don’t practice the Dharma, if I don’t actualize the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, I will have to be reborn in samsara again, being reborn to sentient beings, and again they will have to suffer without end, until the end of samsara.

“May bodhicitta be generated in all their hearts, especially in the hearts of sentient beings in this world, the sentient beings in Nepal, in the hearts of all the students of FPMT, in the hearts of all of us here, including our family members. May bodhicitta be generated in the heart of any sentient being, even an insect or an animal, who sees me, hears me, remembers me, who touches me, who mentions my name, who sees my photo, who dreams of me.”

We dedicate for the world: “Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may wars happening now and all future wars be stopped immediately. May all disease and famine be stopped immediately, all the dangers of earth, water, fire and wind be stopped immediately. May global problems be stopped immediately. May the Buddhadharma, the source of peace and happiness, last a long time.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may I be able to cherish every single sentient being, more precious than the sky filled with wish-granting jewels.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may any sentient being who sees me, hears me, remembers me, touches me, sees photos of me, dreams of me, just by that may all their suffering be pacified immediately.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, which exist in mere name, may the I, who exists in mere name, achieve buddhahood, which exists in mere name, and lead all sentient beings, who exist in mere name, to that buddhahood, which exists in mere name, by myself alone, who exist in mere name.”

[Rinpoche blesses some malas to hand out] Those who have malas already don't need these but if you don't have a mala, you can have these. I've blessed them, I've made prayers. Also, those who need a picture can take one. This is Mickey Mouse's picture. Please come. [Rinpoche offers all those who took refuge a mala, pictures and so forth]

## Lecture 11: The Seven-Limb Prayer

December 14, 2017

### THE SEVEN-LIMB PRAYER

[Rinpoche chants in Tibetan what seems to be an oral transmission]

So, just a few words. We have the seven-limb practice every day. Many other practices begin with the seven-limb practice, with the preliminary practices. Within that, each practice becomes a remedy, an antidote, to the different types of delusion. Prostrating is a remedy to pride. Offering is a remedy to miserliness. I think confession is a remedy to the three poisonous minds. Then, rejoicing is an antidote to jealousy.

I think requesting to turn the Dharma wheel can be an antidote to ignorance, because receiving teachings reduces ignorance as well as purifying avoiding the holy Dharma, which is a very heavy negative karma. In *Lamrim Chenmo* and *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, it is mentioned that the negative karma created is heavier than destroying all the temples, all the monasteries, all the stupas, all the scriptures and all the statues that exist in the world; it destroys everything. The negative karma of avoiding the holy Dharma is much heavier than that. So, requesting to turn the Dharma wheel is an antidote to that; it purifies that negative karma of heresy to the Dharma.

Then, requesting the guru—the buddhas in ordinary aspect—to have a stable life is the antidote to having disturbed the guru's holy mind. This is very important because it purifies the heaviest negative karma, it becomes the antidote to that.

For each one, there is a temporary and an ultimate result explained. The ultimate result is to achieve the immortal vajra holy body, the buddha's holy body. That is the ultimate goal.

Requesting the guru to have a long life becomes the method to pacify your life obstacles and karma and to have a long life. That's the karmic result. Actually, although [the long-life puja] is in my name, it becomes [a cause of] long life for all of us here. Those who are living in pure morality, whatever they pray for has a lot of power because of that Dharma connection. It is very powerful—the guru praying for the disciple, the disciple praying for the guru, parents praying for their children, children praying for their parents, for blood relationships and so forth. And then praying for people staying in the same house, for material relationships, praying for each other—these strong relationships have more power. This is mentioned in the teachings.

What I am saying is that the long-life puja is for everybody's long life; that's the reality. Due to your connection, your prayer has the power to help. There is not much else you can do because others don't know the Dharma. You can advise others to not kill, to not do things like that. If there is something like that, you can help other people in the world like that. That's all I want to say.

[Prayers in Tibetan]

## Lecture 12: Vajrasattva Jenang

December 15, 2017

### PRELIMINARY TO THE VAJRASATTVA JENANG

[The chant leader begins to recite the protector prayers]

We are going to begin. This is the style of my root guru, Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, beginning the *jenang* with protector prayers, mainly Mahakala and Kalarupa. But here I've added a Namthose and Palden Lhamo puja. When there is time we will also do Hayagriva.

First of all, most importantly, this is for His Holiness' wishes to succeed immediately and all the obstacles to be pacified. Second, for all the activities of the FPMT to spread and preserve the stainless Dharma teachings, in particular those of Lama Tsongkhapa, to be most effective for sentient beings in all the activities. And for Khachoe Ghakyil Ling Nunnery and all the Sangha who are learning the Dharma, who are preserving and spreading the Dharma. And the next is for yourself, to be able to complete the Dharma practice in this life. That contains many things, the complete Dharma practice in your life.

So, we'll recite the Dharma protector prayers.

[Restricted tantra teachings]

### ***Quicker and quicker***

Sorry, again it is taking time. In this particular tradition, Lama Tsongkhapa's tradition, in the *Lama Chöpa*, in the special motivation of bodhicitta to practice Dharma [LC 5] there is *nyur wa nyur war*, "quicker and quicker." [Generally when we say that] the first "quick" is the lower tantra path. The lower tantra is much quicker to achieve enlightenment [than the Sutrayana.] You can achieve buddhahood in one life by practicing even the lower tantra, whereas by only practicing Mahayana Sutrayana, you can still achieve enlightenment but it takes three countless great eons to complete the merits of wisdom and merits of virtue. Therefore, "quick" here refers to the lower tantra. Then, the next "quicker" of "quicker and quicker" is highest tantra.

That is normally how it is, but here in the *Lama Chöpa*, the first "quicker" means highest tantra, general highest tantra, and the next "quicker" means practicing Guhyasamaja, Yamantaka and

Chakrasamvara without separation. The quickest way to achieve enlightenment is to practice all three without separation.

So, in *Lama Chöpa* itself, you begin with generating yourself as Yamantaka. Then the extensive offerings are from Heruka. Then, before the offerings, there is a visualization of the merit field. The Guhyasamaja body mandala in your guru's holy body, to realize it in that nature. *Lama Chöpa* indicates all three deities, therefore it is the quickest path to enlightenment.

### ***The three protectors in Tsongkhapa's tradition***

In Lama Tsongkhapa's tradition there are three main protectors for the practitioner of the lamrim: Mahakala, Kalarupa and Namthöse. They are the protectors of the paths of the three capable beings: the lower capable being, the middle capable being and the higher capable being. Kalarupa is the Dharma protector of the lower capable being, Namthöse is the Dharma protector of the middle capable being and Mahakala is the Dharma protector of the great capable being. They are also protectors of the three principal aspects of the path. Namthöse is the Dharma protector of renunciation, Mahakala is the Dharma protector of bodhicitta and Kalarupa is the Dharma protector of emptiness. They are also the protectors of the three higher trainings. Namthöse, the one riding a lion, is the protector of the higher training in morality; Mahakala is the protector of the higher training in concentration, shamatha, calm abiding; and Kalarupa is the protector of the higher training in wisdom. That is in the Lama Tsongkhapa tradition. Palden Lhamo has been added by His Holiness and has continued from many great yogis and pandits in history.

[Rinpoche begins the jenang]

### ***The power of compassion to purify***

As I mentioned before, it is important to generate [compassion] and loving kindness toward sentient beings. No matter how much they desire happiness, day and night, all the time, they destroy the cause of happiness. It is like this in reality. They desire happiness but always destroy the cause of happiness by, for example, rising heresy and anger to different living beings, to ordinary beings and to bodhisattvas and buddhas. One second of anger of a non-bodhisattva to a bodhisattva destroys one thousand eons of making charity to sentient beings and making offerings to buddhas. That is what *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* says. There is unbelievable harm in having anger for even

one second to a bodhisattva, and you don't know who is a bodhisattva and who is not a bodhisattva. You can't tell.

I'll mention some stories. For example, Asanga, the pandit from Nalanda, did twelve years retreat in the cave but didn't see Maitreya Buddha, nothing. Then, when he left and saw a dog whose lower part of the body was filled with maggots, he got unbearable compassion. It was Maitreya Buddha but Asanga's mind was obscured that time, so he could only see Maitreya Buddha as a dog—not even as a human being but as a dog full of maggots. What made him see Maitreya Buddha as Maitreya Buddha was the unbelievable compassion he felt and how he sacrificed his life, cutting the flesh of his leg and spreading it out for the maggots to eat. Then, he went to pick them out [with his tongue]. Only then, on the road, he saw Maitreya Buddha. Even though he had meditated in the cave for twelve years, nothing had happened. You have to understand the point; the whole point is compassion. It only happened that he saw the wounded dog on the road and generated compassion, and then he saw Maitreya Buddha. To generate compassion in your life is so important; it is the quick path to enlightenment. Whether you are learned or not, compassion is the most important. Unless you can generate compassion, even for one sentient being, there is no enlightenment.

I think I also told you about Getsul Tsimbulwa, who saw Vajrayogini. He generated compassion for a lady who had leprosy, with pus and blood coming out, unbelievably filthy. It was Dorje Phagmo, but he could only see her after he felt unbelievable compassion for her. He didn't refuse to touch her because he was a monk and she was a lady or because he would get leprosy. Without thinking, there was unbelievable compassion and when she asked him to take her to the other side of the river, he immediately grabbed her and put her on his back. He didn't cross the whole river, halfway across his karma was purified. She was Dorje Phagmo but he couldn't see that; he was too obscured. But by generating compassion, by sacrificing his life, the ordinary karmic appearance was finished. Then she took him without needing to die to Dagma Kachö pure land. It is possible he got enlightened before his guru, Ngagpo Chopawa.

You have to know what is the most important practice in your daily life. You have to pay attention. Doing retreats, trying to finish a big number of mantras—I'm not sure whether that is qualified, it's even difficult to know what the motivation is with that kind of retreat. You understand the point.

You need compassion, like Asanga. Maitreya Buddha took him to Tushita pure land. One morning in Tushita is fifty years for human beings. In one morning Maitreya Buddha taught Asanga, then Asanga came down and wrote five commentaries, and numberless beings have become

enlightened by realizing what Maitreya Buddha taught. They have realized the path and become enlightened. This happened in the past and will happen in the future, and all that is due to Asanga's compassion for the wounded dog. You have to pick up the point and practice, not just leave it as a story.

To develop compassion is the most important thing in life. It is the most important practice in daily life. In the monastery, for their whole life monks learn the five great scriptures: *Pramanavartika*, *Abhisamayalamkara*, *Madhyamaka*, *Abhidharmakosha* and *Vinaya*. These are all condensed in the lamrim, the graduated path to enlightenment, the subjects of the lower capable being in general, the middle capable being in general, all of which talk about how the nature of samsara is suffering, the suffering of the lower realms, the three higher rebirths, the general suffering of samsara, the six types of suffering, how you cycle in samsara, the twelve related limbs. You need to not only study these, to not only understand the words; you have to meditate, you have to feel it, you have to get realizations in effortful meditation and effortless meditation.

Then you can generate compassion not only for the beings of the lower realms but also compassion for human beings, for form realm beings and formless realm beings. You can generate compassion for all beings if you study the lamrim. Then the compassion you generate will be for all, not just limited compassion for some.

### ***The early days of Kopan***

Even if you explain to people about the correct way to create the cause of happiness, they get scared and run away. For example, in our course here so many people run away. They get afraid, they run away. That is just a small example.

Sorry, I have to tell you this. In the past, many years ago, the course was done many times under a roof of iron sheeting. This was well before we built the Chenrezig gumpa. After the third and fourth courses were done in the old gumpa here, many people came, so we put a tent at the back. We put some grass and the young monks slept on the dry grass. The temporary houses built were for the Western students. Norbulingka was quickly built of three stories or something, but because it was needed for the Western students, the young monks slept on beds of grass.

We did a few courses in the tent before we moved into the room with iron sheets. Then they put bamboo around, which the little monks painted on, doing whatever they liked. They stuck the

paintings all around. There was one door where you came in and another door at the end. What was I saying? I forget.

Then, I talked about the eight worldly dharmas and the hell realms for two or three weeks. People went like this, like the weather when there is no sun or moon, just filled with fog. Then, Lama Yeshe came and everybody woke up. When Lama came everybody laughed; it was kind of healing. He didn't come every day, just from time to time. After the talk, people went out to have lunch under the tree but then the toilet smell came from nearby. The toilets were not well taken care of. People sat under the tree eating their food, and then the toilet smell came, an offering for the nose! This didn't just happen once, it happened many times.

The people who attended the early courses went through so much. Now Kopan has become a five-star, a ten-star monastery, but the people who attended the early courses went through so many hardships you wouldn't believe it. Because of them bearing hardships, we are able to continue the course and able to spread Dharma in the West. They went back and what they found beneficial they wanted to introduce to their friends, so that is how the 160 centers and some schools started. That is what has happened up to now, and that all came from people in the early days bearing hardships to learn the Dharma. The people working in the monasteries, all the staff and all the students coming to do the course, all had to bear so many hardships. It was very kind of them. Because everybody in the monastery and from outside, the students, together bore so many hardships, development happened, not only the development of Kopan but of FPMT in the whole world. This means FPMT has been able to help different people in different countries in the world. It has been able to help, not only by teaching Dharma but in many different ways.

### ***Loving kindness and giving our body***

Our loving kindness should not only be wishing others temporary happiness, but wishing them ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara, and not only that but peerless happiness, buddhahood. And it should not just be a wish, but with great loving kindness we take the responsibility on ourselves. First of all, there is giving the body to sentient beings. My root guru, Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, said you can't visualize offering this ordinary body, made of pieces of flesh, with a skeleton, wrapped with nerves, covered with skin. It's as if everything is just put in a sack covered with skin. Rinpoche didn't say that but he said you cannot make charity with such a body. He didn't mention *chöd* but in *chöd* there is red distribution and white distribution. In the white distribution

you transform your body into nectar and offer it to the spirits. In the red distribution, you transform your body into mountains of blood and flesh. Those who like flesh get flesh, those who like bones get bones. The spirits come from ten directions and eat the red distribution. You don't do that here.

In lamrim Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche said you visualize your body as a wish-granting jewel. If you think of the meaning, that is OK. Many times, in thangkas of the eight auspicious signs you see wish-granting jewels, either piled up or just one jewel. Sometimes the bodhisattva wheel-turning kings find them in the ocean. I saw a Tibetan medical book where it said that the Buddha's relics in the end go into the ocean and become wish-granting jewels. They have to be cleaned of mud three ways, the last way the smell is cleaned, and then they are put on a banner on the fifteenth day. Then you pray to them.

The main thing to understand is that the person who prays has unbelievable karma. The jewel is the condition, and then you get whatever you pray for, all the material things and comforts of this life, however many swimming pools you want, however many cars you want, however many helicopters you want. Sai Baba did like this. He gave some people watches, some people gold chains, and they were not things that disappear. I heard of somebody who put huge piles of money in people's hands but on the way home it disappeared. Sai Baba didn't do like that. You could keep things for a long time.

[Visualize] your body is transformed into wish-granting jewels filling the whole sky. Then you offer them to numberless hell beings, numberless hungry ghosts, numberless animals, numberless human beings, numberless sura beings, numberless asura beings, numberless intermediate state beings, to everyone. With the wish-granting jewels filling whole sky, they get everything they want exactly according to their wishes, whatever they are looking for. Then, you think that they receive everything they need. First of all they get what they desire, then second, what they need.

Everyone receives a perfect human rebirth, which is what they need. They meet the Mahayana teachings and meet the perfectly qualified Mahayana guru revealing the unmistakable path to enlightenment. Then, they actualize the path, the foundation, sutra and then tantra. They actualize the whole path. Then, once all the gross and subtle obscurations are removed, they achieve the dharmakaya and rupakaya, the holy mind of a buddha and the holy body of a buddha. Everyone—hell being, hungry ghost, animal, human being—everyone becomes a buddha. That is the end. That is what they all need.

First of all, they receive what they desire; then second, they receive what they need. Then after that, you dedicate all your enjoyments, however many you have. You have different hats to wear to

different places, to parties and other places. That's just an example. Or shoes. You have summer shoes, winter shoes, autumn shoes, spring shoes, outside shoes, inside shoes, shoes for parties. You have so many shoes. But even if you only have one pair of shoes, if you dedicate them for the numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, suras, and asuras, if you make charity to all sentient beings, from that one pair of shoes you collect infinite merit.

In each realm there are numberless sentient beings, so you create numberless merits by making charity to each realm, even if you only have one pair of shoes, for example. You have many, many shoes. I'm just talking about dedicating your enjoyments to sentient beings. Can you imagine? All the money in the bank, all the dresses—you have so many dresses for different times, outside, inside—all your enjoyments you dedicate for numberless sentient beings in each realm.

Then, like the wish-granting jewel, you dedicate for every hell being, hungry ghost, animal, human being, sura, and asura. They get everything they desire. Then, the next thing, they get what they need: a perfect human body, to meet the Mahayana teachings, to meet the perfectly qualified Mahayana guru revealing the unmistakable path to enlightenment, who teaches the Dharma. Then they actualize the path, the base of the sutra and then the result, tantra. They remove all the gross and subtle obscurations and achieve the dharmakaya and rupakaya. Everyone becomes enlightened.

So, you collect unbelievable merits each time you dedicate like this. First of all, there are unbelievable merits by making charity of your body to the numberless sentient beings in one realm. Then dedicating each enjoyment you have, with each one you dedicate for numberless sentient beings in each realm, because they are numberless, you collect unbelievable, limitless merit. You can't imagine how much merit you collect with that.

Then, after that, you dedicate your merits collected from beginningless rebirths, you are collecting now, and which you will collect in the future. You give the three-time merits that you collect to every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal, every human being, every sura and asura. Don't just think of animals in general, but all those in the sky, the numberless mosquitoes, the numberless fleas, the numberless ants, the numberless rats. Sometimes, it is good to think like that. It is very effective when you think of a particular sentient being you don't want to think of, like snakes or rats. It is so good for your mind. And think of the numberless human beings, numberless sura beings, numberless asura beings. They get everything they desire.

After that, they get everything they need; they attain a perfect human rebirth, meet the Mahayana Dharma and meet the perfectly qualified Mahayana guru revealing the unmistakable path to enlightenment. After that, they all actualize the path—the basic [causal] path, the sutra path, and

then the resultant path, tantra. Think like that. Then, they remove all the obscurations and become enlightened, achieving the dharmakaya and the rupakaya. They all achieve a buddha's holy body and a buddha's holy mind.

In that short time, the merits you collect are unbelievable, unbelievable, unbelievable, unbelievable. It's beyond our concept. As I told you before,

Even if you don't benefit them, the mere thought to benefit somebody is much more special than making extensive offerings to all the buddhas, like clouds in the sky.

I've already told you how much merit you collect making an offering of one tiny grain of rice or one tiny flower. Now here, you collect even more with the thought to benefit somebody, not all sentient beings, just to benefit one sentient being. Even if you didn't get to actually benefit them, but it's just the mere thought that you are giving to numberless sentient beings. Can you imagine? The merits you collect are unbelievable, unbelievable. Practicing tonglen like that, special bodhicitta, is the quick way to be free from samsara and the quick way to achieve enlightenment. I didn't get to explain it before, so this is how to do the giving.

In your life, when you meet some people and they talk about their problems—relationship problems or incredible dangers or life-threatening diseases—you do tonglen. From your side, you keep quiet and do tonglen, taking not only those problems you hear about, but the problems of all sentient beings. You take those problems on yourself, into your heart to destroy the self-cherishing thought and even the object of ignorance, the real I, which is not there. You meditate on that.

Doing that, there have been many times when people have recovered from their problems. Then, you pray to the deity you have the strongest connection with or faith in, like Medicine Buddha or Tara. That will help. There are many stories about this but there is no time. For example, I was in Bodhgaya when I heard that somebody had been kidnapped in Singapore. I didn't have time to pray because I had to go to the gompa to talk, so I relied on the Medicine Buddha, saying sort of like, "It's up to you." It's like handing it over to him. I relied on Medicine Buddha because I didn't have time to pray, I had to go to the gompa. The person who had been kidnapped was freed the next day. Then, another one was kidnapped, again either in Singapore or Malaysia. I was outside so I thought of Medicine Buddha. That person was also freed. This happened. There are many other stories of people's experiences, just by relying on the deities. So, tonglen is very good. I will stop here.

[Rinpoche gives the Vajrasattva initiation]