

Lama Zopa Rinpoche



Teachings from the
Vajrasattva Retreat

*Land of Medicine Buddha
February – April, 1999*

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FROM THE
VAJRASATTVA RETREAT



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LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

TEACHINGS

FROM THE

VAJRASATTVA RETREAT

Land of Medicine Buddha, February–April, 1999

Edited by Ailsa Cameron
and Nicholas Ribush

LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE • BOSTON

A non-profit charitable organization for the benefit of all
sentient beings and a section of the Foundation for the
Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition

www.fpmt.org

First published 2000
Print-on-demand edition 2018

LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE
PO Box 636
Lincoln
MA 01773, USA

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ISBN 1-891868-04-7

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Front cover: Vajrasattva, painted by Peter Iseli, photo by Ueli Minder
Back cover photo of retreat group, April 30, 1999, by Bob Cayton
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PUBLISHER'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are extremely grateful to our friends and supporters who have made it possible for the LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE both to exist and to function. To Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche, whose kindness is impossible to repay. To Peter and Nicole Kedge and Venerable Ailsa Cameron for developing the ARCHIVE during the first decade of its existence. To Venerable Roger Kunsang, Lama Zopa's tireless assistant, for his kindness and consideration. To our sustaining supporters: Drs. Penny Noyce & Leo Liu, Barry & Connie Hershey, Roger & Claire Ash-Wheeler, Joan Terry, Claire Atkins, Ecie Hursthouse, Lily Chang Wu, Thubten Yeshe, Tom & Suzanne Castles, Perpetual Trustees, Wang Fu Chen, Datuk Tai Tsu Kuang, Chuah Kok Leng, Wisdom Books (London), Tan Swee Eng, Salim Lee, Ueli Minder, Richard Gere, Cecily Drucker, Lillian Too, Lynnea Elkind, Sandra Magnussen, Janet Moore, Su Hung, Carol Davies, Anet Engel and Amy McKhann. And to all our other benefactors, great and small, whose help we appreciate enormously. Without the help of all of you, our efforts for the sake of all sentient beings would not be possible. Thank you so much.

We also thank the people who contributed directly to this book. Most of our fellow Vajrasattva retreaters not only bought personal copies but also sponsored extra copies and/or made donations towards the project in general. Thank you all so much. Angela Wang, co-director of Land of Medicine Buddha, made a most generous contribution, as did Tracy Chung, Richard Chen and Miki Su. The former director of the FPMT International Office, Sharon Gross, made a donation on behalf of the organization so that each FPMT center library could receive a free copy. Ueli Minder sponsored fifty copies to be offered to Lama Zopa Rinpoche; Cecilia Tsong sponsored free copies for the Sangha; Cheryl Gough and Tony Steel made generous donations; and Bob Cayton just kept on contributing! Finally, we are extremely grateful to Ven. Tenzin Namdag and her staff at LMB for organizing the retreat so well and for most kindly allowing us to raise the funds for this project on the premises.

TEACHINGS FROM THE VAJRASATTVA RETREAT

Many thanks also go to Linda Gatter and Wendy Cook for copy-editing the book and to Mark Gatter for designing and laying it out.

Thank you all so much for helping make this book a reality.

Through the merit of having contributed to the spread of the Buddha's teachings for the sake of all sentient beings, may our benefactors and their families and friends have long and healthy lives, all happiness, and may all their Dharma wishes be instantly fulfilled.

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

This book is an edited transcript of Lama Zopa Rinpoche's teachings at a three-month Vajrasattva retreat held at Land of Medicine Buddha, Soquel, California, from February 1 to April 30, 1999. The retreat was led by Venerable Marcel Bertels.

About 125 people participated in the three-month retreat, seventy-five of them full time, including twenty nuns and monks. In addition, Rinpoche offered weekend public talks, which were attended by many people from outside of the retreat. The Vajrasattva initiation on February 6 and the long life puja and Amitabha initiation on April 30 were attended by about 250 people.

Rinpoche's teachings during these three months were essentially of three types: the weekend public teachings, which tended to be discourses two to three hours in length; teachings at special events, such as a light offering meditation, two long life initiations, a Medicine Buddha puja preceding a *jang wa* ceremony for the dead, and an animal liberation ceremony; and teachings during Vajrasattva retreat sessions, at which Rinpoche would often arrive unannounced and proceed to explain various parts of the practices being done at the time. Rinpoche's eagerly-awaited drop-ins were more frequent during the first part of the retreat—before he went to India for two weeks in March, to attend the Gelug conference in New Delhi organized by the FPMT—and the long discourses became more frequent after Rinpoche's return.

Rinpoche expressed his happiness with the retreat several times. For example, on February 9, Rinpoche explained one of the purposes of the retreat and why he was explaining the practices:

“One point I want to emphasize is that my purpose in telling you how to do this and that meditation or prayer is to educate you about how to guide a Vajrasattva retreat. If somebody later asks you how to do a Vajrasattva retreat, you will know what to explain to them. It's an education in how to do Vajrasattva meditation in order to make it effective. Doing Vajrasattva retreat is not simply about reciting the mantra and saying some

prayers. It is about making the practice effective for your mind, making it the quickest, most powerful way to transform your mind. You are learning how to make the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation the most powerful purification. It's an education in how to guide a Vajrasattva retreat, so that you, both Sangha and lay people, can teach others how to do Vajrasattva retreat in the future. As well as this, you are learning how to do *Lama Chöpa*, or *Guru Puja*, in an effective way. The arrangement of the prayers helps you do the practice effectively."

On March 12, Rinpoche referred to the retreat as a learning experience:

"This retreat has also been part of your Dharma education. You have gained experience yourself and you will also be able to teach others how to do retreat and the various other practices. This is very important. We always have a shortage of experienced people. We need so many spiritual coordinators at the centers. The number of centers is increasing all the time, and every center needs someone to guide people in the various retreats and practices. This retreat has also become part of your education, so that if you would like to help in one of the centers, you now know how to guide various practices. This is very, very important . . .

"One point is that it is helpful for you to learn more about various practices—guiding lamrim meditations is the main one, of course. The other point is that it helps you to help others, to benefit others. You can help others to purify their negative karma and to collect merit, so that they can have realizations of the path to enlightenment.

"We always have a shortage of spiritual coordinators at the centers, of people who can give advice on how to do retreats and various practices. The more such people we have, the more productive and beneficial to sentient beings we can make the centers. Even if there is a geshe at the center, we still need a spiritual coordinator or some other person who can lead meditations and practices and who can be consulted by the students. We still need that."

Finally, at the long life puja on the last day of the retreat, Rinpoche again expressed his satisfaction with it:

"Some of the retreat people I met expressed the wish to do this retreat again and were hoping another would be organized. This is an extremely good sign. However, by doing this retreat, whether you did the whole three months or just part of it, as much as you did, you have made your future lives that much easier—you have made it much easier to achieve

realizations and have decreased the obstacles you will have to overcome. Many obstacles—negative karma created in relation to your gurus, other holy objects and sentient beings—have been purified during this retreat. You won't encounter these in future lives

“Before, you may not have had that much feeling for Dharma, but now, after participating in the retreat, there's more of a Dharma feeling in your heart. Your heart has become more Dharma than before. That's a sign of having purified obscurations. You feel more compassion for others—that's one of the best signs of purification; more devotion to the Triple Gem, more devotion to the guru, more faith in karma than before—those are the best signs of purification.”

RETREAT SET-UP

Please see Appendix 7 for a detailed retreat schedule. The first session of the day was a combined *Lama Chöpa/Jorchö* puja, especially arranged by Rinpoche. This and every other session of the retreat began with prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas. On approximately half the days of the retreat we took the Eight Mahayana Precepts.

There were four or five Vajrasattva sessions every day. On the days there were four, there was a discussion group usually led by one of the nuns or monks, focusing on details of the various levels of precepts and other matters pertaining to purification. After prostrations, each Vajrasattva session would begin with recitation of a glance meditation on the lamrim, using texts such as Lama Tsongkhapa's *The Foundation of All Good Qualities* or *Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, Losang Jinpa's *All the Important Points of the Lamrim*, or *Calling the Lama From Afar*. There were three Vajrasattva sadhanas used: a long, a medium and a short. The long one was usually done for the day's first Vajrasattva session and was a slightly modified version of the sadhana compiled by Lama Yeshe. Once a week we also did the Heruka Vajrasattva tsog that Lama composed. For these practices and Lama Yeshe's complete Vajrasattva teachings, see *The Tantric Path of Purification* (Wisdom Publications).

During the breaks between sessions, and especially during the long afternoon break, retreat participants did their karma yoga jobs, thus ensuring the smooth running of the retreat. The gompa was kept clean and light, many, many water bowls were offered, beautiful flower displays

TEACHINGS FROM THE VAJRASATTVA RETREAT

were made, paths were swept, dishes were washed and in general, everything was well taken care of.

THE NEW TRADITION

During this retreat Rinpoche introduced what he referred to as a “new tradition” within the FPMT. This is greatly clarified during the teachings in this book, but basically, Rinpoche explained how to meditate on regret, impermanence and death, and bodhicitta in the early stages of purification practices like the Thirty-five Buddhas and Vajrasattva recitation-meditation, and how to meditate on emptiness before doing dedication.

THE FPMT PRAYER BOOK

The retreat also introduced to the FPMT Venerable Connie Miller’s prototype of a standardized book of prayers and practices to be used throughout the organization, prepared on behalf of the International Office’s Education Department. All the practices done during the retreat were to be found in this excellent manual. Each retreat participant was asked to evaluate the book at the end of the retreat and copies have been further distributed to various FPMT centers for wider evaluation. Since everything we did during the retreat is in the *Prayer Book*, we have not included these practices in this book.

ABOUT THE EDITING

We have not been able to check this work with Rinpoche, therefore it is possible that it contains errors, all of which are our responsibility. If you have questions about anything in the book, please contact the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive or the FPMT Education Department at International Office in Portland, USA.

This book is a slightly more than lightly edited, day by day transcript of Rinpoche’s teachings during the Vajrasattva retreat. The paragraphs in quotation marks are what Rinpoche was suggesting people think. Generally, round brackets are around Rinpoche’s asides, square brackets around the editors’ insertions. Less common Tibetan and Sanskrit terms are italicized the first time only, unless they form a key part of the discussion

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

or might be misunderstood if not in italics; also, they are phoneticized according to their approximate pronunciation, not their transliteration.

The content of Rinpoche's comments and clarifications during retreat sessions for the most part should reveal the context. Again, we have not included here the relevant parts of the texts or prayers upon which he was commenting as they are all in the *Prayer Book*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank Rinpoche for his eternal kindness and compassion for his many students and for being the constant and awe-inspiring example of what is possible that he is. With special gratitude we thank him for having organized the Vajrasattva retreat. May we all become like him.

We also thank Ven. Marcel for his great leadership of the retreat and Ven. Tenzin Namdag, Ven. Drolkar, Kendall Magnussen and all the other LMB staff who worked so hard to make the retreat the success that it was. We thank Ven. Connie Miller for the *FPMT Prayer Book*. And we thank our fellow retreaters, without whom none of this would have been possible.

Wendy Cook of the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive taped all the teachings and organized the transcription of the tapes by Vens. Paloma Alba, Chantal Carrerot and Tenzin Namdrol, who completed the entire job within a short time of the retreat finishing. We are grateful for their excellent, dedicated work.

Ailsa Cameron
Chenrezig Institute
Eudlo, Qld., Australia
September, 1999

Nicholas Ribush
Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive
Weston, MA, USA
September, 1999

“I’m not telling you why we should benefit others because it is something that you haven’t heard before. Those who have received lamrim teachings have heard this many times. I’m doing it to remind or inspire those of you who already know these things and to inform those of you who don’t, but need to know. Why? Because this is the most important education of all. This is more important to know than anything else in life. This is the most important thing you will ever learn.”

—*Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche*

PROLOGUE
PRACTICING GURU DEVOTION WITH
THE NINE ATTITUDES

I request the kind lord root Guru,
Who is more extraordinary than all the buddhas:
Please bless me to be able to devote myself with great respect
To a qualified lord Guru in all my lives.

Realizing that correctly devoting myself to the kind lord Guru—
Who is the foundation of all good qualities—
Is the root of happiness and goodness, I will devote myself
to him
With great respect, not forsaking him even at the cost
of my life.

1. Thinking of the importance of the qualified Guru,
I will allow myself to enter under his control.
May I be like an obedient son, acting exactly in accordance
with the Guru's advice.
2. Even when maras, evil friends and the like try to split me
from the Guru,
May I be like a vajra, inseparable forever.
3. When the Guru gives me work, whatever the burden,
May I be like the earth, carrying it all.
4. When I devote myself to the Guru, whatever suffering occurs,
May I be like a mountain, immovable.
5. Even if I have to perform every unpleasant task,
May I be like a servant of the king, with a mind undisturbed.

6. Having abandoned pride, holding myself
Lower than the Guru, may I be like a sweeper.
7. May I be like a rope, joyfully holding the Guru's work,
No matter how difficult or heavy the burden.
8. Even when the Guru criticizes, provokes or ignores me,
May I be like a dog, never responding with anger.
9. May I be like a ferry boat, never upset
At any time to come and go for the Guru.

Glorious and precious root Guru,
Please bless me to be able to practice in this way.
From now on and in all my future lives,
May I be able to devote myself to the virtuous friend in this way.

If you recite these words aloud and mentally reflect on their meaning, you will have the good fortune to be able to devote yourself correctly to a virtuous friend in life after life.

If, with these nine attitudes, you serve and respect the virtuous friend, even if you do not practice intentionally, you will naturally develop excellent qualities within your mindstream and complete the extensive merits of virtue, thereby quickly becoming a perfectly complete buddha.

Colophon

Written by the highly attained lama, Shabkar Tsogdrug Rangdrol. Translated by Lama Zopa Rinpoche at Aptos, California, in February, 1999. Edited by Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive Editing Group at Land of Medicine Buddha, March, 1999. Revised February 2005, December 2005, October 2016. The editors are responsible for any errors.

Saturday, February 6

EVENING: VAJRASATTVA *JENANG*

LAMA YESHE'S TRADITION OF VAJRASATTVA RETREAT

First, I want to say that I'm very happy to see everyone. I want to express how extremely happy I am that this Vajrasattva retreat was planned and that so many of you have taken the opportunity to do it, have given yourself time to do the retreat.

Also, some of us are direct disciples of Lama Yeshe, our virtuous friend whose holy name is difficult to mention and who was kinder than all the buddhas of the three times—our doing Vajrasattva retreat would be most pleasing to Lama Yeshe. Others here might be indirect disciples of Lama Yeshe. Previously, there was no such system of giving disciples the commitment of doing a Vajrasattva retreat after they'd taken the Vajrasattva *jenang*, or permission to practice.

In other traditions, it is very common to do Vajrasattva retreat before taking a Highest Yoga Tantra initiation and doing the retreat of such a deity. In Solu Khumbu, in the mountains of Nepal, where I was born, there is a system of doing all four major preliminary practices before doing a retreat on each deity. Even though there are many other preliminary practices, the four major ones are guru yoga, Vajrasattva practice, prostrations and mandala offerings. The preliminary practice of guru yoga is mainly done to receive the blessings of the guru in order to achieve realizations of the path to enlightenment; Vajrasattva practice and prostrations with meditation on and recitation of the holy names of the Thirty-five Buddhas are done to pacify obstacles; and mandala offerings are done particularly to collect merit, the necessary condition to have realizations of the path to enlightenment.

I'm not sure whether you have to do 400,000 of each of these four preliminary practices before doing each deity retreat, but this is the general system in the Nyingma tradition in Solu Khumbu. As far as I am aware,

this is not a common practice in the Gelug tradition at the present time. The nine preliminaries are done before a three-year retreat on a deity, but there is no precise instruction to do the four preliminary practices before retreat on each deity. It is generally advised that you do some preliminary practices to purify and to collect merit before you begin a retreat, so that no obstacles arise and the retreat can be successful, but no particular number is mentioned. For example, you might make some *tsa tsas* or do some Dharma protector pujas for the success of the retreat.

Giving a commitment to do Vajrasattva meditation-recitation in retreat after a Vajrasattva jenang is not common generally in the Gelug tradition. Lama Yeshe, with his skillful means and his compassion for us, his students, kindly started this tradition of practice. It is extremely good that people have to make the commitment to do the retreat after they have received the Vajrasattva jenang. In this way, many people have had the opportunity to purify many eons of negative karma through taking a Vajrasattva jenang, or blessing, and then doing Vajrasattva practice and retreat—not just reciting some big number of mantras but also doing meditation. Since Lama started this tradition, many thousands of people have benefited.

I don't remember the exact year that Lama started this tradition. It was when we were in Nepal, living in the old house at Kopan. It doesn't exist any more; it's now been transformed into another mandala. It was an old house built in the British style by the previous king of Nepal, King Mahindra, for his astrologer. We lived in that house for quite a number of years, perhaps six or seven. Then, around the time of the Sixth Kopan Course, it housed the Western Sangha and was the place where they did morning puja, especially *Jorchö*, the preparatory practice. Those times were very good times. It still is a very good time. I think *we* have to make it a good time.

I think that Lama gave the first Vajrasattva initiation to three students, Jan Willis and Robbie and Randy Solick. These three Americans were the first disciples of Lama's Vajrasattva initiation. They received the initiation and then did retreat in Ram's house, which is close to Kopan Monastery. Ram is a Nepalese man who worked at Kopan in the early times; he used to help with the building and at the beginning he sometimes also cooked. Ram and his family lived downstairs, and they rented the upstairs to

Western students. They had a fire downstairs, so the upstairs would fill up with smoke. I think they enjoyed very much doing Vajrasattva retreat in a room full of smoke. Actually, I remember that one time they did have some difficulty with the smoke.

Giving Vajrasattva jenang with the commitment to do Vajrasattva retreat started at that time, and since then groups have been doing retreat at Kopan, at Tushita Meditation Centre in Dharamsala, and at other centers. I think in recent years there has been a group Vajrasattva retreat almost every year at Tushita.

Since Lama started this tradition, there has been unbelievable benefit. Many thousands of people have been saved from the lower realms, from spending many eons suffering as hell beings, hungry ghosts or animals. They purified many negative karmas, the obstacles that interfere with the generation of realizations of the path to enlightenment. By taking the Vajrasattva initiation and doing Vajrasattva practice and retreat, many thousands of people have been brought closer to the path to enlightenment. Thus, they have come closer to enlightenment and closer to being able to free numberless beings from all their suffering and its cause and bring them to full enlightenment. It has had this great benefit.

By making the time to do this retreat, you are also making preparation for death, your own death. Perhaps you will cause all the people who are doing hospice work to lose their jobs! They will have no one to take care of because you will have liberated yourself. By doing this retreat, you are becoming your own guide and liberating yourself.

By making powerful preparation for your own death, you even make it much easier for other people when they die. Your happy, easy, peaceful death enables other people to have less worry and fear at the time of death. Your happy, peaceful death causes others to rejoice and inspires them to practice Dharma, to practice the good heart. Your death causes devotion to develop in the minds of others, and that devotion will bring them to enlightenment. That devotion will bring them so much happiness, including all the realizations of the path to liberation and enlightenment. Through that devotion they can achieve all happiness, up to enlightenment.

We can also use this Vajrasattva retreat as a long life puja for the Buddha of Compassion, His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The activities of buddhas

depend on the karma of sentient beings, on our state of mind. Our karma determines how long we can see the Buddha of Compassion in the form of this particular human body that benefits so many sentient beings in this world. Therefore, our doing this Vajrasattva retreat definitely becomes a means to ensure the long life of the Buddha of Compassion, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, as well as other holy beings. Besides pleasing Lama Yeshe, our doing Vajrasattva retreat is also very pleasing to the holy mind of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The most powerful purification comes when you do something that pleases the virtuous friend. This is the most powerful way to purify whatever obstacles you have to achieving realizations of the path to enlightenment—or, in other words, to achieving happiness. Only through purifying obstacles can realizations be achieved.

We can make an offering of this retreat to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. At the end we can count up all the mantras recited by all the people who did the retreat and offer it to His Holiness as an offering of practice. We can also dedicate the retreat to the successful accomplishment of all His Holiness's wishes. It is a very critical time at the moment, so it would be very good to dedicate the retreat, the merit we will collect every day, to the success of His Holiness's wishes.

BENEFITS OF VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

It is mentioned in tantric texts such as the Guhyasamaja commentary that reciting even twenty-one Vajrasattva mantras stops the multiplying of negative karma and blesses the mind. And reciting 100,000 Vajrasattva mantras can completely purify all negative karma. It can purify the ten non-virtuous actions and even the broken root vows of a fully ordained monk or nun. Even if a fully ordained person has received the four defeats by killing a human being, stealing, having sexual intercourse and telling the big lie (saying that they have realizations when they know that they do not), they can completely purify these heavy negative karmas by reciting 100,000 Vajrasattva mantras.

It is also mentioned in the root tantric text, *Zag gyü theg nyi gyü pa*, that one of the benefits of Vajrasattva practice is that it can purify the five uninterrupted negative karmas (having killed the mother or father of this life, caused disunity among the Sangha, killed an arhat or caused blood to flow from a buddha). Having committed one of these negative kar-

mas, without the interruption of rebirth in another realm, one falls down into the major hell realm immediately after one's death. As well as these five uninterrupted negative karmas, negative karmas such as cheating the *tathagatas* and abandoning the holy Dharma are purified. We abandon, or avoid, the holy Dharma when we think, "Oh, what use is this to me?" when we encounter any of Buddha's teachings in which we don't have any faith or interest or which we can't understand, such as the philosophical scriptures. Criticizing or rejecting any of Buddha's teachings is abandoning Dharma.

Tibet has four Mahayana traditions, and Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo mentions in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* that criticizing the other traditions is avoiding the holy Dharma. This happens, for example, if Nyingma or Kagyu followers criticize the Gelug teachings by saying that they are not pure, or if Gelugpas criticize the teachings of the other traditions. So there is no doubt that Mahayanists who criticize Hinayana teachings and Hinayanists who criticize Mahayana sutra or tantra teachings are avoiding the holy Dharma. These are very heavy negative karmas. In the *Lamrim Chenmo*, Lama Tsongkhapa quotes from a sutra that explains having abandoned the holy Dharma is much heavier negative karma than having destroyed all the stupas in this world.

Vajrasattva practice can purify all the heavy negative karmas of having avoided the holy Dharma, degeneration of lay precepts and ordination vows, and any other negative karma, or unrighteous action. It can also purify the mental pollution that comes from the negative karma of wrong livelihood. The *Jorchö* commentary mentions five types of wrong livelihood that can pollute the mind and become a very heavy obstacle to realizations. All these heavy vices can be purified through Vajrasattva practice.

The root tantric text *Theg nyi gyü pa* by the great master Kunying [Kunga Nyingpo] then concludes, "When Vajrasattva becomes stabilized in the heart of a practitioner, that practitioner achieves all realizations, both common and sublime." This is also explained in the commentary to this root tantra by Sakya Shenying [Sherab Nyingpo].

It is also explained in the Yamantaka teachings that the hundred-syllable mantra pleases one's special deity, which means the deity with which you practice oneness day and night.

INCREASE OF NEGATIVE KARMA

In *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo gives the following example. If we kill one tiny insect today, a mosquito or a louse, and we do not purify with Vajrasattva practice before we go to bed, the negative karma becomes double by tomorrow, triple by the third day and so on. By increasing day by day, after fifteen days that one small negative karma becomes as heavy as our having killed a human being. And after eighteen days, Pabongka Rinpoche says, it will have increased by a factor of 131,072. This means that one small negative karma that we failed to purify at the end of the day will go on increasing day by day. As the months and years go by, it will keep on increasing until by the time of our death that one small negative karma will be huge, like the size of this earth.

That one small negative karma will become so heavy that it will make death very difficult and many future lives as well. It will cause us to abide for an inconceivable length of time in the lower realms, where we will experience unimaginable suffering. And even when we are reborn in a human or deva realm, we will have to experience many suffering results of that negative karma.

Reciting the Vajrasattva mantra just twenty-one times at the end of the day can stop that small negative karma from multiplying the next day. Not only will it stop that, but it will stop the multiplying of all the negative karmas collected with our body, speech and mind during that day. By multiplying day by day, each of the negative karmas we collected today, if they were materialized, would become as heavy and huge as a mountain the size of this earth. Reciting the Vajrasattva mantra just twenty-one times at the end of the day stops the multiplication of all these negative karmas. It can also purify all the negative karma created that day and all the negative karma created in this life and in our past lives as well. Therefore, there is no doubt about the benefit of reciting a much larger number of mantras, such as 100,000. The benefit and power of that is unimaginable.

PREPARATION FOR THE VAJRASATTVA JENANG

The Vajrasattva jenang, or permission to practice, involves graduated activities from the side of the lama and from the side of the disciple. The preparation from the side of the lama includes self-generation, front gener-

ation, blessing the vase and so forth. The graduated activities from the side of the disciple include rinsing the mouth, making prostrations, receiving the flower and offering a mandala. Before the mandala offering, however, we need to give a *torma* to the interferers who interfere with the granting and receiving of the Vajrasattva jenang.

Of course, saying that you should visualize me as Vajrasattva is like saying that you should think of kaka as gold. However, visualizing the lama as Vajrasattva has a special purpose for the disciple.

According to the Theravadin way of devoting correctly to the virtuous friend, you respect and obey the abbot as if he were like Buddha. The Mahayana Paramitayana way is to look at the essence of the virtuous friend as Buddha. Now, according to the Mahayana tantra way of devoting to the virtuous friend, not only do you look at the essence of the virtuous friend as Buddha, but you visualize even the aspect as the pure form of Buddha. You stop your view of the virtuous friend as an ordinary person and then practice a pure view of the virtuous friend in the aspect of a buddha, in the form of a deity. Since we are practicing Mahayana tantra, the meditation involves the practice of pure appearance, in which you visualize the virtuous friend in the aspect of a buddha—in this case, Vajrasattva.

Transform your body, speech and mind, as well as your own merits of the three times, into clouds of offerings that decorate the entire universe, and then offer them without any clinging, in order to receive the permission to practice, or blessing, of Vajrasattva.

VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE WITH PROSTRATIONS

If there is enough space, in the one or two afternoon sessions, rather than sitting, you can do prostrations while reciting the Vajrasattva mantra. In these particular sessions it is easy to fall asleep, though in which session it is easy to fall asleep depends on the individual person. My suggestion is that in the one or two sessions after lunch, you do the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation with prostrations. In this way you will also be using your body to purify and to collect inconceivable merit. With each prostration, you will collect inconceivable merit. While doing the prostrations, you still do the same meditation of purification, with nectar coming from Vajrasattva and purifying you. Visualize numberless buddhas in all

directions, think that they are the guru in the aspect of Vajrasattva, then make the prostrations.

FOUR POWERFUL MEANS OF ACCUMULATING MERIT

Four powerful means of collecting extensive merit, good karma, are explained in the lamrim teachings at the end of the topic of karma.

1. *The power of attitude.* The first is the power of the attitude, which means bodhicitta, through which we can collect infinite merit.

2. *The power of the object.* The second is the power of the object, and the highest or most powerful object is the virtuous friend. As I often mention, ordained Sangha are a more powerful object with which to collect merit than the parents of this life; arhats are more powerful than ordained Sangha. One bodhisattva is a much more powerful object than numberless arhats; one buddha is a much more powerful object than numberless bodhisattvas; and one virtuous friend is a much more powerful object than numberless buddhas. For you, one virtuous friend is the most powerful object with which to collect merit.

A Dharma connection is established the moment you make the decision that someone is your guru (not just a guru in general but your own guru) and recognize yourself as their disciple, and on the basis of this determination, receive even one verse of teaching or the oral transmission of a few syllables of a mantra. Even if from their side that virtuous friend is an ordinary person, your Dharma connection creates power and makes that person the most powerful one in your life. This is the person with whom you can create the most extensive merit.

Also, the power of any harmful action done in relation to these objects increases from your parents of this life up to the guru. The karma is so powerful that you can start to experience its result as sufferings, or problems, in *this* life.

There are three types of karma: karma that you create and see its result in this life; karma that you create and see its result in your next life; and karma that you create and see its result after many lifetimes. With these powerful objects, you create the karma whose result you see in this life. Even if you cause a small harm—for example, show some slight disre-

spect—to one of these objects, from your parents up to the guru, because the object is so powerful you start to experience its result, suffering, in this life. And even if you perform a small good karma, offer a small service, to one of these objects, the good karma is so powerful that you start to experience its result, happiness, in this life.

I normally liken the guru-disciple relationship to putting two batteries together, which creates the power to give light. It is similar here. Making the decision in your mind and establishing a Dharma connection create the power; the Dharma connection makes the guru the most powerful object in your life.

If you visualize numberless buddhas, think that they are the guru in the aspect of Vajrasattva, and then make prostrations, you are prostrating to the most powerful object possible. Therefore, you collect the most extensive merit.

3. *Living in vows.* The third powerful means of collecting extensive merit is living in vows. If you are living in ordination or you are a lay person who lives in the five or eight lay vows, any merit you collect in your daily life becomes very powerful. Living in vows increases any merit that you collect in daily life.

I often mention the example given in the sutra, *Heaped Jewels*. On one hand, say every being in the three realms (desire, form and formless realms) becomes a wheel-turning king and each one makes a light offering to the buddhas with a Pacific-like ocean of butter and a wick like Mount Meru. (A wheel-turning king is the most powerful king. He has complete control over not just one country but one entire human continent. As a result of his past merit, his wealth and power are incomparable; no other king can match him. The teachings also explain that a wheel-turning king is able to fly around Mount Meru. Wheel-turning kings exist only in the times when the human life-span is 80,000 years. They existed at such times in the past.)

On the other hand, say one person living in ordination makes a tiny light offering to the buddhas with butter the size of a mustard seed and a wick the size of a hair. This person who is living in vows collects far greater merit than all those other beings of the three realms who became wheel-turning kings and made such extensive light offerings to the Buddhas.

The Eight Mahayana Precepts

Therefore, if you are doing retreat, whether or not you have taken the five lay vows (though it is good if you have taken them), it is especially good if you can take the Eight Mahayana Precepts. If it is a long retreat, you can take both breakfast and lunch but then not eat after twelve o'clock.

According to His Holiness Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche, you can't drink juice after lunch, but I think you can have clear apple juice or any other kind of juice that is clear, without any pulp in it. Rinpoche said that you can't drink juice, but I think that if you check the fine details, the main point is whether the juice contains any substances that can become kaka in the stomach—or outside the stomach! I'm joking! I think you keep the vow more precisely if you drink clear juice that has no pulp in it.

Rinpoche mentioned juice but he didn't say anything about tea. I didn't get the opportunity at that time to ask about tea. I am talking here about milk tea. Usually I try to use a lot of water. I mean, I should do it every day, but on the days when I take the Eight Mahayana Precepts, I try to make the tea very watery, as light as possible. In this way the vow is kept more neatly. I'm not sure about Tibetan tea. Tibetan tea has butter and some has milk, some doesn't. It depends how the tea is made.

Theravadin monks don't drink milk tea. I'm not sure whether they drink it in the morning, but after twelve o'clock they don't drink milk tea. One time after I had been to Australia, I went to Sri Lanka with Thubten Yeshe, who was then a nun. I'm not sure where Lama Yeshe was at that time—perhaps teaching at the university in America. Thubten Yeshe was helping me as secretary-attendant in Australia. She had been to Sri Lanka before, and she suggested that since Sri Lanka was on the way from Australia to Nepal, we should go on pilgrimage to Kandy, where there is a holy relic of Buddha's tooth. Sri Lanka is not on the way from Australia to Nepal; but, to keep the story short, I agreed to go.

We stopped one night in Colombo, then the next day we went to Kandy, where we stayed in a very old English hotel close to the temple that has the Buddha's tooth. In the morning I went to the temple. I took a copy of *Bodhicaryavatara* with me and read it aloud. I tried to read very loudly because every five minutes a group of tourists came into the temple and I thought they might hear it. After that I did some full-length prostrations. Because full-length prostrations are not traditional there, everybody was very curious. Some monks were watching me.

At the end, nobody was there except one man, the caretaker of the temple. He asked me to come with him, and I thought, "Where is he going to take me?" Thubten Yeshe wasn't there; she was in the hotel. The thought occurred to me that in India people are sometimes kidnapped and hanged; the kidnappers then make a fire below the body and produce oil from it. This thought came into my mind. I wasn't at all sure where he was going to take me. Anyway, he took me upstairs. Actually, I think the monks asked him to invite me upstairs before I left.

There were two monks upstairs, and they were very happy to meet a Tibetan monk. I think they had met other lamas in the past. They asked me, "Would you like milk or tea?" I said, "Tea." But from my point of view tea meant tea with milk not black tea. In India tea means with milk, so I said "tea" with the expectation of milk tea. I didn't have any other idea of tea. They then brought me black tea. From their point of view, tea meant black tea. This was good as they don't drink milk tea after 12 o'clock. By asking for tea, I succeeded despite myself. Anyway, this is just a story.

If you are drinking milk tea, make it as light as possible. I think the very strict way to keep the vow would be to drink just black tea, as the Theravadin monks do.

If you are taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts for an extended period, you can eat both breakfast and lunch. To keep the precept properly, however, you should not eat after twelve o'clock.

By taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts, you increase the merit from the many virtuous practices you do during the

retreat; the merit from each practice that you do is increased unbelievably. It is good to keep this in mind. It is very good to take the Eight Mahayana Precepts from time to time during your normal working life, but it is especially good to take them during retreat. The point here is that we are trying to purify our mind as powerfully as possible. The more we can purify and the more merit we can collect, the easier it will be for us to achieve enlightenment. Even though we don't have realizations of lamrim at the moment, living in these vows is something that we can practice immediately. The teachings of the Buddha can be divided into two categories: scriptural understanding and realizations. Living in vows is part of the realizations of the teachings of the Buddha. Even though we don't have other realizations at the moment, this is something that we can do right now. This is the power of living in the vows.

4. *The power of phenomena.* The fourth power that helps to collect extensive merit is the power of phenomena. This means that in terms of giving, it is giving of Dharma that collects the most extensive merit. Teaching Dharma to other sentient beings, whether it is an oral transmission or a commentary, collects extensive merit. Through explaining one stanza, four lines, of Dharma to one sentient being, one collects much more merit than if one had given every one of the numberless sentient being in the desire, form and formless realms the whole world filled with gold.

These four powers—the power of the intention, the power of the object, the power of living in vows and the power of phenomena—are the means we can use to collect the most extensive merit, which means the most good karma, the most good luck.

VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE WITH PROSTRATIONS

Before discussing the four powers, I was talking about doing prostrations while reciting the Vajrasattva mantra. The most important point is the power of the object. You have to remember the guru and be aware that the guru is oneness with Vajrasattva. You can practice this awareness while you are doing the prostrations and reciting the mantra.

You can count the mantras while you are doing the prostrations. Using

a short mala, as the Chinese usually wear, is a very easy way to do this. Many people in Hong Kong and Singapore wear a short mala, but with beads as big as those in Six-arm Mahakala's big mala.

It's very good to do prostrations because then you are also using your body to collect merit. You work very hard and spend a lot of money to take care of your body, so now you are using it to create the cause of enlightenment. You are making it useful by using it to achieve enlightenment in order to enlighten numberless sentient beings. This gives meaning to and makes worthwhile all the expenses you have incurred to take care of your body.

Your parents also suffered so much to look after your body. For so many months while you were in the womb and for so many years afterwards, they sacrificed their lives to take care of your body. They bore many hardships for many years to care for your body. Now you are making their sacrifice meaningful. By using your body to practice Dharma, you purify obstacles and collect merit in order to have realizations of the path to enlightenment. This gives meaning to your parents' sacrifice; it gives meaning to their suffering so much and creating so much negative karma for so many years in order to take care of you. What you are doing here now—using your body to practice Dharma, to do Vajrasattva retreat and prostrations—gives meaning to all the time and effort they spent on you. You were the sole focus of their attention, day and night, for so many years. And they incurred many expenses in taking care of you, using money they earned with much hardship after many years of study, starting from kindergarten, struggling to find a job and so forth. You are now giving meaning to all the effort that they put into caring for you.

Actually, my motivation was not to talk about this topic—my plan was to talk about the hell realms, our past residence, and the hell sufferings. So I think it is now time to go to bed!

WHY IS IT DIFFICULT TO PRACTICE DHARMA?

What makes it difficult for us to practice Dharma? Dharma comes very naturally to some people. They find it very easy to practice, and Dharma is oneness with their life. Like water flowing, Dharma practice comes very naturally to them; they do not find it hard. Many of us, however, find it difficult to practice Dharma. The obstacles are not outside. The obstacles

that make it difficult for us to practice Dharma are not outside; the obstacles are our own mind, or within our own mind. It is our attitude, our way of thinking, that makes it difficult for us to practice Dharma.

If you are not concerned about the future but only concerned about this life, about your present comfort and happiness, you will find it difficult to practice Dharma. Your attitude, your way of thinking, your concern for what is happening right now rather than in the future, make it difficult to practice Dharma. It looks as if the difficulty comes from the side of Dharma, but the difficulty comes from the side of your own mind. Difficulties in life have to do with how you make decisions in your life.

With one way of making decisions, it becomes very easy and natural to practice Dharma; with another way of making decisions, you find it impossible or very difficult to practice Dharma. It all has to do with your decisions in life, whether you are concerned about your comfort and pleasure right now or about your long-term happiness; whether you are concerned about yourself or about others. This determines whether or not you find it difficult to practice Dharma. When you are concerned about yourself, it is difficult for you to practice Dharma, to make your actions become Dharma. When you are concerned about others, however, Dharma comes naturally. Whether you are doing retreat or not doing retreat, your life naturally becomes Dharma. If your concern is your own immediate happiness, you find many obstacles to practicing Dharma, to living in vows.

You need to switch your concern from now to the future, to the more important long-term happiness of enlightenment, liberation from samsara, or at least a good rebirth in your next life. This life is very short. The appearance of this life that we have now is not long; it's very brief. And not only is it short, but it can stop at any time. If you think about this in your daily life, there will be no obstacles to your Dharma practice. There will be no obstacles to the activities of your daily life becoming Dharma, and you will have no obstacles to any Dharma practice that you do, such as taking and living in vows. The obstacles appear to come from outside, from other people. It seems that this person and that person are making your life difficult. However, it all comes from your own mind. Even though it appears that way, if you analyze the situation, you find that it all has to do with your own attitude, your own way of thinking.

THE THREE TYPES OF SUFFERING

This samsara, these aggregates, this association of body and mind, is caused by karma and delusions. Because these aggregates are created by the impure cause of karma and delusions, they are in the nature of suffering. This is why these aggregates experience suffering.

That these aggregates are contaminated by the seed of disturbing thoughts could be one meaning of “pervasive.” Meeting a certain condition causes delusion to arise, then again one suffers. When we meet an object of desire, for example, the emotional mind of desire arises and then tortures us. The arising of these disturbing, emotional thoughts is one suffering. The main suffering for most people is not hunger, thirst, heat or cold but emotional suffering. The main suffering is mental problems, sickness of the mind. This is what causes so many people to commit suicide, despite their having many friends and much wealth. Most of our suffering comes from emotional problems, from mental sickness, not from hunger and thirst or heat and cold.

These aggregates are contaminated by the seed of disturbing thoughts. On top of that, these aggregates are under the control of karma and delusions. This means that when they meet certain objects of the senses, there is an experience of pleasure, but when we analyze that pleasure, we discover that it is only suffering. Our hallucinated mind sees that feeling as pleasure, and we believe it to be pleasure; but in the view of the detached mind, in the view of the mind of Dharma wisdom, that feeling is only suffering.

The mental pain from desire, anger, jealousy and so forth and physical pain are the suffering of suffering. When these aggregates encounter different conditions, we experience different types of suffering. And even the feeling of indifference is suffering, because these aggregates are contaminated by the seed of disturbing thoughts. In *Liberation in the Palm*, Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo explains that feelings of indifference are counted as part of pervasive suffering. Any feeling that arises through contact with sense objects is only in the nature of suffering.

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

There is no happiness, no pleasure, in samsara that we have never experienced. There is no new pleasure to be experienced. We have experienced

every samsaric pleasure numberless times. And there is no new samsaric suffering to experience; we have experienced them all numberless times. It is just because we do not remember our past lives that when we encounter problems, it seems to us that we are experiencing the problem for the first time. It is not for the first time. We have experienced that problem numberless times in our past lives. Think, “This time I *must* free myself forever from this samsara, from this ocean of suffering that I have experienced numberless times during beginningless rebirths.”

Even if you achieve this, however, you have still not found the real meaning of your life. Even an ant has this attitude of seeking happiness for the self. Even tiny insects that can only be seen through a microscope have this thought. Ants keep themselves unbelievably busy with this thought of seeking happiness for the self; it causes them to run up and down non-stop to collect food. If this is your attitude, there is no difference between you and an ant.

The purpose of your life is to free the numberless other beings from all their suffering and its causes and bring them from happiness to happiness to the peerless happiness of full enlightenment. This is the real purpose of your life. Benefiting other sentient beings is the real purpose of being alive as a human being. Being alive for an hour, a minute or even a second is for the purpose of achieving enlightenment in order to enlighten all sentient beings.

Cherishing the I opens the door to all problems, to all sufferings. The minute you cherish the I, you have a problem in your life. The minute you cherish the I, there is unhappiness in your life; there no peace or satisfaction in your heart. Cherishing the I is itself the problem. It creates problems; it opens the door to problems. Cherishing others, on the other hand, opens the door to all qualities and to all happiness, including enlightenment. The minute you cherish others, you open the door not only to your own happiness up to enlightenment but to the happiness of all other living beings. Why?

As a result of you, the one person, generating bodhicitta, the thought that cherishes others, the numberless hell beings will be liberated from all their sufferings and achieve all happiness. Your bodhicitta will make numberless hell beings achieve enlightenment and all happiness. The bodhicitta of you, just one person, will cause numberless hungry ghosts

to achieve enlightenment. Your bodhicitta will free numberless animal beings from all their sufferings and cause them to achieve enlightenment, which includes all other happiness. The bodhicitta of you, just one person, will free numberless human beings from all their problems and cause them to achieve enlightenment. Your bodhicitta will free numberless asura and sura beings from all their sufferings and cause them to achieve enlightenment. And the bodhicitta of you, the one person, will also cause numberless intermediate state beings to achieve enlightenment.

Without talking about all animals, let's just consider one type of animal, fish. The bodhicitta of you, the one person, will free numberless fish from all the sufferings of samsara and cause them to achieve enlightenment. Even this is wonderful. It is incredible that even one type of animal, the numberless fish that live in the ocean, will become enlightened because of your bodhicitta. This is wonderful! And even in the animal realm, there are countless numbers of each different type of animal.

Your bodhicitta, your thought of cherishing others, opens the door to happiness for numberless other living beings. The bodhicitta of you, the one person, is the source of happiness for the rest of the numberless living beings. Therefore, the situation is urgent. It is unbearable for you to delay generating bodhicitta for a day, for an hour or for even a minute. It is unbearable for you not to have this realization. Because other sentient beings are suffering so much and they need happiness so much, they need you to change your attitude from cherishing the I into cherishing others. This can't wait. The need for your bodhicitta is a million times more urgent than a heart attack victim's need for emergency treatment in a hospital. The need for your bodhicitta is a million, billion, trillion times more urgent. You must change your attitude from cherishing the I into cherishing others.

Also, if there is just one sentient being in your life whom you don't cherish—for example, someone who doesn't like you and always criticizes you and puts you down—there is no enlightenment. If you don't cherish this person, you can't achieve enlightenment. If you cherish this person, you can achieve enlightenment. Therefore, this person is the most precious one in your life. This one sentient being is the most precious in your life, because by cherishing that person you can achieve enlightenment. You can cease all the defilements of your mind, liberate yourself from all suffering

and achieve peerless happiness with all the realizations; and you can then enlighten the numberless other sentient beings. Therefore, this person is the most precious one in your life.

Since all suffering comes from cherishing the I, the I is to be renounced forever. Since he or she is the source of all your happiness, this one person is the object to be cherished forever. And every single sentient being is exactly the same as this one person. Every single one of them is the source of your happiness and extremely precious to you.

All your happiness of the three times comes from good karma. Your good karma is the action of buddha, or came from buddha; buddha came from bodhisattva; bodhisattva came from bodhicitta; bodhicitta came from great compassion; and great compassion is generated in dependence upon the kindness of the existence of suffering sentient beings. Simply by existing, suffering sentient beings help you to develop compassion, to be liberated from the oceans of suffering, and to become enlightened. Therefore, you receive all your past, present and future happiness, including enlightenment, by the kindness of each sentient being. Therefore, each sentient being is the most precious object in your life, more precious than Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, which come from each sentient being. Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are the objects in which you take refuge in order to be free from all the defilements and all the sufferings of samsara, especially the lower realms. They are the objects to which you pray and in relation to which you collect merit in order to achieve realizations of the path to enlightenment. Buddha, Dharma and Sangha come from each sentient being; they depend on the kindness of the existence of each suffering sentient being. Therefore, each sentient being is the most precious object in your life.

In your life, there is nobody to work for except other sentient beings. There is no purpose in living your life except to work for sentient beings. Any work other than that for sentient beings is meaningless.

Now, what sentient beings want is happiness and what they do not want is suffering. So, what should you do? Your job is to free all sentient beings from all their suffering and its causes and bring them to enlightenment. And you should do this by yourself *alone*. There is no other means to do that except by first achieving full enlightenment yourself. To achieve enlightenment, you need to actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment; to do that, you need to purify the negative karma and defilements,

which are obstacles to realizations. It is for this reason that you are going to take the Vajrasattva jenang. In your heart feel that you are taking the initiation purely for the numberless other sentient beings, who have been your own kind mother numberless times.

Now we'll do a five-minute initiation! Well, maybe a little longer.

OBJECTS OF REFUGE

Absolute Sangha are those with the wisdom that directly perceives emptiness, which causes the cessation of all defilements and suffering. You label "Sangha" on that. When you take refuge in Sangha, your main focus should be that they are your guides, or helpers, who are helping to liberate you from samsara, from all the defilements.

Generally, we can talk about absolute Buddha and conventional Buddha. The absolute Buddha is the dharmakaya, the holy mind of wisdom. The conventional Buddha is the sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya aspect Buddhas. Dharma also has conventional Dharma and absolute Dharma. Conventional Dharma is the scriptures that explain the three levels of the paths—the Hinayana, Mahayana Paramitayana and Mahayana Tantrayana paths. Conventional Sangha means four members who are living purely in full ordination but who do not have realization of absolute Dharma. Taking refuge normally includes taking refuge in all these.

[The initiation was given.]

Sunday, February 7 (A)

AFTERNOON: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Rinpoche: Are there one or two questions?

Nick Ribush: In the Vajrasattva sadhana, Lama Yeshe said to visualize either Heruka or Vajradhara as the object of refuge. Then, before the nine-round breathing meditation is done, Lama said to absorb the object of refuge and yourself appear as Heruka or Vajradhara, according to what you had visualized. After the absorption, you have the clear appearance of yourself as Heruka or Vajradhara, but without holding divine pride. If you haven't had a Highest Yoga Tantra initiation, what should you do at that point?

Rinpoche: Then you hold ordinary divine pride. Not special divine pride, but ordinary divine pride, whose continuity has no beginning and which thinks not only that the I is not merely labeled but also that "I'm ordinary."

Nick: Rinpoche, my question is, because you are not supposed to visualize yourself as a deity if you haven't had the initiation, do you then just visualize yourself in your ordinary form?

Rinpoche: You can generate yourself as an American guy or an Australian guy! I think Lama's explanation might be based on people who have received a Highest Tantra initiation such as Heruka. If you haven't received a great initiation, you can think that the refuge merit field, whether you have visualized Heruka or Vajradhara, melts into light and is absorbed at the point between your eyebrows. This is what is normally explained in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* and in other commentaries. The texts explain that even if you cannot visualize the merit field melting into light and absorbing into you through your crown, you can think that it absorbs into you at the point between your eyebrows and then blesses your body, speech and mind. The blessing can be received in this way.

In the case of the Guru Shakyamuni Buddha meditation, when I

checked with Denma Lochö Rinpoche, Rinpoche said that even if you haven't received a great initiation, which means from one of the lower tantras or from Highest Yoga Tantra, you can still visualize yourself as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. This is an exceptional case because Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is the founder of the present Buddhadharma. This was Rinpoche's answer, though I'm not sure whether every lama would say the same thing. I asked the question because in the early Kopan courses we started this tradition of becoming Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. You become Guru Shakyamuni Buddha for a little while, and then become a sentient being again. For a little while you are high, and then you have to come down. . . .

This was Denma Lochö Rinpoche's answer. When I then asked about visualizing yourself as Medicine Buddha, Rinpoche said that in the case of Medicine Buddha, you might first need to receive a great initiation.

I think that Lama's advice was for people who had already received a great initiation of Highest Yoga Tantra, such as Heruka.

Student: If we were at the empowerment last night, are we empowered to visualize ourselves as Vajrasattva if we haven't received a Highest Yoga Tantra initiation?

Rinpoche: No, you are only permitted to visualize your nose as Vajrasattva! The blessing of the holy body, holy speech and holy mind, which is called a *jenang*, or permission to practice, is actually supposed to come after a great initiation, according to Lama Tsongkhapa's *Great Graduated Path of Tantra* and the main tantric scriptures. This short initiation, the permission to practice, is based on having first received a great initiation. This is why the meditation during the initiation involves generating yourself as a deity.

Of course, this is not strictly true because during the preparation for a great initiation, there is the inner initiation. After the bodhisattva and tantric vows are granted, in the case of Highest Yoga Tantra, or just the bodhisattva vows in the case of the lower tantras, an inner initiation is given to generate the disciple as the son of the vajra master. The term "son" is not used in dependence upon the characteristics of the body but of the mind. This term is used because it is normally the son who becomes the king. The daughter becomes the queen, but does not become the king. Because this example is applied here, the disciple is called "the son of the vajra master," but it has nothing to do with the body.

The ordinary form of the disciple melts into light and goes through the mother's body into the womb, where the disciple then generates into the deity. Before this, however, the disciple has not necessarily received a great initiation.

Initiations like the Vajrasattva jenang should be based on generating oneself as the deity. The foundation should be the disciple generating as the deity after having taken the vows. On that basis, the blessings of the deity's holy body, holy speech and holy mind are then granted. This is why, generally speaking, you should have previously taken a great initiation, which permits you to generate yourself as a deity and to practice tantra, either the yoga with signs or the yoga without signs of the lower tantras or the generation and completion stages of Highest Yoga Tantra.

Therefore, if you have previously taken a great initiation, either of one of the lower tantras or of Highest Yoga Tantra, you are qualified to receive the complete blessing, the complete jenang, when you take any of the blessings of the deity's holy body, holy speech or holy mind because you are allowed to do all the meditations of generating yourself as the deity and so forth.

Otherwise, without a great initiation, you receive some blessing rather than the actual jenang, and the blessing that you receive depends on the qualities of the lama and on the devotion of you, the disciple. In dependence upon the disciple's devotion and the lama's qualities, the disciple receives at least some blessing, some protection. The lama visualizing the disciple as the deity can give some protection to the disciple. Through the disciple's devotion and the lama's qualities, the disciple receives some blessing of the deity, but not the complete jenang. If you can take a great initiation, it means that when you take all these short initiations, or blessings of the deity, you then receive the complete jenang, or permission to practice.

Of course, after you have taken a great initiation, either of the lower tantras or Highest Yoga Tantra, you have to attempt as much as possible to keep the samaya vows. To be able to keep everything purely, first of all you need stable realization of the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment. With stable concentration, you then practice the yoga of the generation stage, in which you look at everything as pure. You look at your own body as the deity's holy body, the place as the deity's mandala and so forth. On the basis of the lamrim, you are able to keep vows, including tantric vows, more purely.

With stable realization of the generation stage, everything appears to us as pure—our own body and those of others appear as the deity’s holy body, and the place appears as the mandala of the deity. By looking at everything as pure, as manifestations of the deity, you then see everything as pure. Without this realization, we constantly collect negativities because in every second we see so many objects as ordinary. After discussing this point, two geshe reached the conclusion that it is better not to practice tantra because otherwise you collect so many negativities in each second through seeing objects as ordinary. Since it is impossible to keep difficult vows such as seeing everything as pure, they thought it better not to take a great initiation of tantra. Their conclusion is that taking a tantric initiation creates more obstacles to achieving enlightenment.

Lama Atisha responded that the view of the two geshe was like a blind yak eating grass. When a blind yak eats grass, because it cannot see all the grass that is available, it eats just a small part of what is there. Lama Atisha said that the two geshe made their comment because of their lack of knowledge that there is a powerful practice of purification called Vajrasattva with which you can purify these negativities.

Lama Atisha explained, “Practicing Vajrasattva is like throwing one stone and chasing away a hundred birds.” Vajrasattva, a powerful purification practice, can be used to purify at one time all the negativities collected from breaking the subtle tantric vows, which are very difficult to keep. Even though you have collected negativities like a car collects dust when left out in the open, Lama Atisha advises that you can wipe them all out at once by doing Vajrasattva practice.

Therefore, the conclusion is that even though we are unable to keep all the tantric vows, especially the subtle ones, after we have taken a great initiation, if we do the powerful practice of Vajrasattva we can still achieve enlightenment.

THE RARITY OF TANTRA

Generally speaking, most of the people who take a great initiation cannot keep every single tantric vow, but it is a great and very rare opportunity. It is just this one time that we have a precious human body. And we have not only a precious human body but a perfect human body qualified by eight freedoms and ten richnesses, which is much more rare. It is just this

one time that we have this, so it is just this one time that we have the opportunity to practice Dharma. Being able to be a human being again in our next life depends on our creating the cause to be born human, which means living in pure morality. It is only on the basis of this that we can receive a human body, and there are many obstacles to living purely in vows. There are many obstacles from within our mind, and because of these there are also many external obstacles. To achieve a perfect human body we need to create all the causes for all eighteen qualities, and it is extremely difficult to create these causes.

On top of this, meeting the Buddhadharmā, even the Hinayana teachings, is extremely rare. It is even more rare and difficult to meet the Mahayana teachings, which enable us to cease not only the gross defilements but even the subtle ones; which contain the skillful means of achieving enlightenment. It is especially rare to meet the Mahayana tantra, which has the skillful means of achieving enlightenment in one lifetime, and even more rare to meet Highest Yoga Tantra, which contains the greatest skillful means of all. Through practicing Highest Yoga Tantra, we can achieve enlightenment in the brief lifetime of the degenerate age or even within a few years.

Meeting tantric teachings is much rarer than meeting the Mahayana Paramitayana teachings. As often mentioned during initiations, the *uttamvara* flower grows only when Buddha descends on this earth, only in that fortunate time. It does not grow during all the other eons. When Buddha passes away, this flower then decays. This flower is used as an example for the rarity of Buddha's descent and of our meeting Buddha. Meeting tantric teachings, however, is much rarer than Buddha's descent in this world and our meeting Buddha. This example is normally mentioned during initiations to help us to generate happiness at having met the tantric teachings.

The door to enter Buddhadharmā is refuge and the door to enter tantra is initiation. It is also mentioned during initiations that of the one thousand buddhas who will descend in this fortunate eon, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is the first one to teach tantra. Most of the other buddhas will not teach tantra. The seventh one, Gyalwa Senge Nada, who is an embodiment of Lama Tsongkhapa, will teach tantra, but after that, so many buddhas will not teach tantra. The last buddha promised to teach whatever Dharma the previous buddhas taught, so for this reason, it is assumed that the last

buddha will also teach tantra. It is not that only Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and the other two buddhas know tantra and the rest of the buddhas do not. It is because the sentient beings who live during the times of the other buddhas do not have the karma to meet and to practice tantra.

Analyzing in this way makes us realize how fortunate we are. It enables us to recognize our incredible opportunity and to appreciate the good karma that we must have created in the past. It then inspires us to practice tantra. It gives us the courage to take tantric vows and to attempt to practice tantra. When our mind is weak and we feel unable to take initiation and practice tantric vows, we can strengthen our minds by clearly recognizing how rare this one-time opportunity is and how fortunate we are to have it.

Sorry, I talked for a long time.

Student: Could you give some instructions as to how you should practice if you have not had an initiation and cannot visualize yourself as a deity?

Rinpoche: You can visualize Vajrasattva on your crown or in front of you and do the meditation. Not being able to visualize yourself as the deity doesn't mean that you do not have an object of concentration. Your meditation object is Vajrasattva. When you do the practice, Vajrasattva is the main object of meditation.

Christina Lundberg: If you took the Vajrasattva initiation as a great initiation, during the mantra recitation and the sadhana, do you see yourself as your own special deity saying the Vajrasattva mantra?

Rinpoche: If you have taken a great initiation, you can see yourself as Vajrasattva. If the Vajrasattva is from Highest Yoga Tantra, which means embracing the wisdom mother, you need to have had a great initiation of Highest Yoga Tantra. A lower tantra initiation is not enough. The single aspect of Vajrasattva, which means the father alone, is a lower tantra aspect, but I'm not sure whether it belongs to Charya Tantra or Kriya Tantra. It needs to be checked. Kriya Tantra has three divisions: lotus race, tathagata race and vajra race; I think lotus race is the lowest division. To visualize yourself as a Kriya Tantra deity, I'm not sure whether, strictly speaking, you need to have received the initiation of that deity or of one from a higher race. It is something that also needs to be checked.

If the single aspect of Vajrasattva belongs to Kriya Tantra, I think it

would be okay to visualize yourself as Vajrasattva if you had received a great Chenrezig initiation. If it is Charya Tantra, however, I don't think that a great Chenrezig initiation qualifies you to do that. It needs to be checked.

If you have received a Yamantaka or Kalachakra initiation, for example, you can visualize yourself as Vajrasattva father-mother. In a great initiation of Highest Yoga Tantra, you visualize Vajrasattva during the vajra master initiation. Therefore, if you have received a Highest Yoga Tantra initiation, you can definitely visualize yourself as Vajrasattva father-mother and recite the mantra at your heart.

As I explained before, having received a great initiation in the past means that you are fully qualified, so you actually receive the complete jenang, the permission to practice a deity. Otherwise, in dependence upon the lama's qualities and your devotion, you receive some blessing of the deity; but you do not receive the complete permission to practice, the complete blessing of the deity. This is always specified by the lama during the initiation.

Actually, the strict way of giving jenangs is by restricting them to people who have received a great initiation. People who haven't received a great initiation are not meant to hear the meditations of generating themselves as a deity. There is a tradition of certain jenangs—the initiations of long-life deities, for example—being given publicly by great lamas, such as the tutors of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. During the jenang, however, the lamas specify the meditations that the disciples are and are not allowed to do if they have not received a great initiation. There is a tradition of giving jenangs in this way, but to be really strict, only people who have received a great initiation should be there. It seems to mainly depend on the lama. I think from the initiations I've given, I'll be making many visits to the hell realms.

The permission to practice given last night does not qualify you to visualize yourself as Vajrasattva; it was not a great initiation. To visualize yourself as Vajrasattva father-mother you need to have received a great initiation, which involves the vase, secret, wisdom and word initiations. These four initiations definitely plant the seeds of the four kayas, which we need to achieve in order to do perfect work for all sentient beings. At the very least you need to receive the first one, the vase initiation, which gives you permission to visualize yourself as a deity. Unless you receive

that, whether from the lower tantras or from Highest Yoga Tantra, you cannot visualize yourself as a deity.

For example, His Holiness Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche used to advise that it would be better for people to take the great Chenrezig initiation before they do *nyung näs*, because they are then more qualified to do nyung nä practice. Their nyung nä practice then becomes perfect. Rinpoche emphasized that I should give the great Chenrezig initiation before nyung näs. In one way giving the initiation also helps the lama to keep the vow not to reveal the secrets of tantra. There is no question of this with the great lamas, who are enlightened beings, but it helps Mickey Mouse lamas like me.

Sunday, February 7 (B)

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

MOTIVATION FOR THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS PRACTICE

“The purpose of my life is to free all sentient beings from all their suffering and bring them to full enlightenment. To do this, I myself must achieve enlightenment, so I must actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment. Therefore, I need to purify all my defilements, negative karmas and downfalls.”

Think of the lower realms, of the hell realms. “If I were now in a hell realm, how would it be? I would be totally overwhelmed by suffering, by the heaviest suffering of samsara. I would have no freedom to practice Dharma.”

Then think, “Even though I’m not dead yet, my death could happen at any moment. At any moment, I could be there in the most terrifying hell realm, the Unbearable Suffering State. Therefore, without even a second’s delay, I must purify all my defilements, all my negative karmas, all my downfalls. Therefore, I’m going to do prostrations with the meditation-recitation of the Thirty-Five Buddhas, *The Practice of Prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas*, to cause all the happiness up to enlightenment to all sentient beings; in other words, to benefit all sentient beings.”

Your attitude should be one of wishing to purify, but at the end expand your attitude to include others with the wish to benefit all sentient beings by bringing them all the happiness up to enlightenment. With the strong wish to purify in order to benefit others, you then do the prostrations. Even if we do just a few prostrations, if we do them with this strong thought of purifying in order to benefit others, each prostration and recitation of each of the Thirty-five Buddhas’ names becomes extremely powerful.

FEELING PURIFIED AT THE END OF THE PROSTRATIONS

After the prostrations are finished, it is very important to generate strong faith that you have been completely purified of all defilements, negative karma and downfalls. You are completely purified by beams emitted from all the holy objects in the merit field and by the power of the Thirty-five Buddhas' names. The names of the Thirty-five Buddhas are unbelievably powerful; reciting each name once purifies so many eons of negative karma. Reciting the name of the first Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha, just once has the power to purify 80,000 eons of negative karma. You can think of this from time to time during the prostrations, but it is especially important to generate this strong faith of having been purified at the end. In a commentary to Vajrasattva, Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo mentions that it is important to generate strong faith when Guru Vajrasattva explains that the negative karma has now been purified. How much negative karma is purified is determined by how much faith we can generate. Our mind creates the negative karma, but our mind can also purify it.

Of course, there is a dedication already included within the Thirty-five Buddhas' prayer, but at the very end, when you have stopped prostrating, you can say, "Whatever merit I have collected by doing prostrations, making offerings, confessing, rejoicing, requesting the Buddhas to have stable lives and to turn the Dharma wheel, I dedicate it all for sentient beings to achieve enlightenment."

CALLING THE GURU FROM AFAR

When you recite *Calling the Guru from Afar*, it's not just a question of reading the words; you have to do the meditation. Visualize your root virtuous friend on your crown, with the awareness that he encompasses all the buddhas. It is with this awareness that you should do the practice *Calling the Guru from Afar*. Meditate on the kindness of the guru and make a strong request to the guru, just like a child calling for its mother. Just as children totally rely upon their mother and appeal to them for help, make a strong request to the guru. Visualize Lama Yeshe or your root virtuous friend on your crown, then recite the prayer.

At the end, recite the verse, "May I never rise heresy even for one second

in the actions of the glorious guru. May I see whatever actions are done as pure. With this devotion may I receive the blessings of the guru in my heart.” This is an extremely important prayer, because generating negative thoughts such as anger, heresy and so forth is the heaviest obstacle to achieving your own success and the success of others. Your own success refers to your achieving enlightenment, with cessation of all the faults of the mind and completion of all the realizations. The success of others refers to your bringing all other sentient beings to enlightenment. Since generating negative thoughts towards the guru is the heaviest obstacle, this prayer is extremely important.

Those who have received a great initiation of Highest Yoga Tantra can meditate here on the guru entering the heart. Or you can meditate that the guru melts into light, absorbs into you at the point between your eyebrows and blesses your body, speech and mind.

GENERATING YOURSELF AS HERUKA

At this point [in the long Vajrasattva sadhana, after having taken refuge], those who have received a great initiation of Heruka can generate themselves as Heruka, as Lama describes. That is up to the individual.

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

Next we have to generate a pure motivation for doing the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation so that our practice becomes pure Dharma. This can be a continuation of the motivation we generated before the prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas.

Generate strong renunciation of this life, a strong wish to cut attachment to this life, to samsaric happiness and perfections. Generate renunciation of samsara by thinking very strongly of impermanence and death, that your death could happen at any moment, which means that you could be in the lower realms at any moment. Therefore, you must purify right now, without even a second's delay. And you must purify not just for your own happiness but for that of all sentient beings. Try to generate some feeling of bodhicitta, the altruistic thought to achieve enlightenment for the sake of other sentient beings. Think, “I must free the numberless sentient

beings, who are the source of all my past, present and future happiness, from all their sufferings and bring them to enlightenment. Therefore, I'm going to do the Vajrasattva meditation practice."

Simply to feel, "Oh, I'm going to be reborn in the lower realms; therefore, I must purify," is rather self-centered. Even though that thought does happen, it should somehow lead to your practicing Vajrasattva for others. You should feel in your heart that you are doing the Vajrasattva practice for the numberless other sentient beings.

There is, perhaps, no need to recite "I myself will become Heruka for the sake of all living beings . . ." In its place you can have a very short break, just to again strengthen your bodhicitta motivation for doing the Vajrasattva practice. Perhaps you can meditate for three seconds on renunciation, two seconds on bodhicitta and half a second on emptiness! Just leave a very short silence in which you generate a strong motivation of impermanence and death, and bodhicitta. Then simply start visualizing Vajrasattva.

RINGING THE BELL AT THE END OF THE MANTRA RECITATION

At the end of the mantra recitation, you can recite the Vajrasattva mantra together and ring the bell. When we do sadhanas, in some parts the ringing of the bell is an offering and in other parts, such as here with the Vajrasattva mantra, it is to meditate on emptiness. The sound of the bell is to remind us that the way all phenomena exist is by being merely labeled by mind, so nothing has inherent existence. Even though everything appears inherently existent to us, no phenomenon has inherent existence. Every phenomenon is totally empty. With this awareness, you ring the bell and meditate on the meaning of the sound of the bell. And the bell itself signifies wisdom, emptiness. Also, in emptiness, there is no I, no creator of negative karma; there is no action of creating negative karma; there is no negative karma created. Meditate also on this.

THINKING THAT THE NEGATIVE KARMAS ARE PURIFIED

When Guru Vajrasattva says, "Your degenerated commitments are now cleansed and purified," generate very strong faith that, as I mentioned

before, all your defilements, negative karma and degenerated samaya vows have been completely purified, just as Vajrasattva says.

To be more specific, you can also think that you have completely purified all the negative karma you have collected with your body, speech and mind during beginningless rebirths; that you have completely purified all the pratimoksha, bodhisattva and tantric vows you have broken during beginningless rebirths; and that you have completely purified the heaviest negative karmas, those in relation to the guru, collected during beginningless rebirths. Try to see your mind as totally free and pure.

MAKING THE VOW NOT TO COMMIT NEGATIVE ACTIONS AGAIN

Before Vajrasattva absorbs within you, to complete the remedy of the four powers, you apply the power not to commit negative actions again by saying, “From now on I will abandon all the negative karmas that I can. The subtle ones, which are difficult to give up, I will abandon for either one day, one hour, one minute or at least a few seconds.”

ABSORPTION

Because of the commitment you have made, your crown-Vajrasattva is extremely pleased with you. Vajrasattva melts into light and absorbs within you. Those who know the Highest Yoga Tantra meditation of the guru absorbing into the heart can do that at this point.

The three doors mentioned here refer not to your gross body, speech and mind but to your subtle body, speech and mind. The body and mind have three levels—gross, subtle and extremely subtle. Here it is referring to the extremely subtle level. This is also a secret subject, but in any case, I have already mentioned it.

DEDICATION

When you do Vajrasattva meditation in daily life, you normally do the dedication at this point. You do the dedication with awareness that you; the action of dedicating; the merits; the goal to which you dedicate the merits, enlightenment; and the sentient beings for whom you dedicate are

empty of inherent existence. By looking at all these as empty, you then dedicate, “Due to these merits may I achieve Guru Vajrasattva’s enlightenment and lead all sentient beings to Vajrasattva’s enlightenment.”

Or you can look at everything as a dream. You, the action of dedicating, the merits, enlightenment, the sentient beings—everything is like a dream. It’s like you are doing the dedication in a dream. When you do this, the understanding that naturally comes in your heart is that nothing is real, nothing exists from its own side. You then fulfill the definition of a pure dedication. As mentioned in *The Seven-point Thought Transformation*, “Abandon food mixed with poison.” What is the poison here? The poison is the concept of inherent existence. When your dedication is not mixed with this poison of the concept of inherent existence, it becomes pure.

Another way to dedicate is to do what I normally do—say “merely labeled this” and “merely labeled that.” Covering everything with the term “merely labeled” has the same effect; the understanding that comes into your heart is that everything is empty. You use the words “merely labeled,” but it causes you to understand that everything is empty.

You can do this dedication here or at the very end of the session.

“Due to the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and other sentient beings, may Jaffa’s father, who has passed away, all those whose names have been given to me, who rely upon me and for whom I have promised to pray, and all those who have passed away immediately be liberated from the lower realms, never ever be reborn in the lower realms. May they always receive a perfect human body with the four Mahayana Dharma wheels (which means always having all the necessary conditions to practice Mahayana Buddhism, such as being born in the right environment, in the right family and with the opportunity of meeting and practicing Mahayana Buddhism and actualizing the path). By being ordained in the teachings of the Buddha as a child, may they not waste their lives from the time of their youth. By meeting perfectly qualified Mahayana virtuous friends and only pleasing their teachers’ holy minds, may they be guided by them. Because of that, may they train their minds well in the three principles of the path and then complete the ripening of their mind in the generation stage and in the liberating path of the graduated completion stage, and thereby achieve the unified state of

Vajradhara, which has seven qualities, including continuous compassion, great bliss and so forth. May they quickly achieve all this.

“Whenever I hear that a sentient being is sick, may my hearing about it cause that sentient being to immediately be healed. Whenever I hear that a sentient being has died, may my hearing about it cause that sentient being to immediately be liberated from the lower realms and reincarnate in a pure land, where they can become enlightened, or receive a perfect human body in all their future lifetimes and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. If the being is simply born a human being, they may have no opportunity to practice Dharma, so may they receive a perfect human body and then achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible by meeting a perfectly qualified Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings.”

Monday, February 8

MORNING: EIGHT MAHAYANA PRECEPTS CEREMONY

THE EIGHT MAHAYANA PRECEPTS

Taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts [see Lama Zopa Rinpoche's *The Direct and Unmistaken Method*, Wisdom Publications] today is for your happiness and the happiness of all other sentient beings from now up to enlightenment. Taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts becomes the means to accomplish all that. In regard even to your own happiness, relying upon or practicing this is of the utmost need. Your need to do this practice is a billion times more urgent than your need to go as quickly as possible to a hospital when you have a heart attack. You should feel an urgent need to do this practice for your own happiness, from now up to enlightenment, as well as for the happiness of the numberless other sentient beings.

Living in these eight precepts means abstaining from eight negative karmas that harm you and other sentient beings directly or indirectly. You can understand that abstaining from these eight negative karmas naturally becomes a source of happiness. It is a root of happiness for you and for other sentient beings.

SPECIFIC BENEFITS OF THE INDIVIDUAL PRECEPTS

Explanations are given of the general benefits of the eight precepts and of the specific benefits of the individual precepts. From those two, today we will concentrate on the specific benefits of the individual vows.

The benefits of avoiding taking the life of others, or killing. This is the basic cause of long life—you will live long and not have sicknesses in all your future lives. No matter how many hospitals you visit and how much treatment you have, if you haven't created the good karma from your side—for

example, by living in the morality of abstaining from killing or harming others—you cannot have a long life no matter how many hospitals and other health organizations or medicines exist. No matter how many hospitals, doctors and medicines there are in the world, having a long life is based on first having good karma. It is all based on morality. There has to be good karma from the side of the person. Without this, no matter what is set up externally, nothing can help give someone a long life. External factors can help only on the basis of the person having good karma, such as that from practicing the morality of abstaining from killing.

Many diseases are based on this negative karma of killing, including even the inability to digest food. Many people have problems with their digestion throughout their whole life. This sickness is not the only one caused by the negative karma of killing; it is one of many. This is mentioned in the *Tenth Bhumi Sutra*.

Another benefit of abstaining from killing is that you become glorious, or magnificent, now and in the future. These good results are not related only to future lives; when the karma is powerful, it can also affect this life. You become glorious, or radiant, similar to the way we see His Holiness the Dalai Lama or we saw His Holiness Ling Rinpoche.

The benefits of avoiding taking what has not been given, or stealing. In all lifetimes, you will have perfect enjoyments and receive them effortlessly. You will receive things just by wishing for them. Also, no one will interfere with your enjoyments by confiscating or stealing them.

These benefits will not only come in future lives. When the karma is powerful, changes can happen even in this life, so don't think that karma begins only after this life and there is nothing you can experience in this life. For example, at the beginning you might be able to make very few or very poor quality offerings, but as you continue the practice of making offerings to holy objects or of making charity to other sentient beings, you are gradually able to make more extensive and better quality offerings and more extensive charity. As a result of your good karma, you can have perfect enjoyments, so your offerings to the merit field and your charity to others can become better and better and more and more extensive. Because you created the cause through your previous small offerings and small acts of charity, sooner or later in this life, you can make better and more extensive offerings.

Kadampa Geshe Potowa, I think it was, explained this in relation to the offering of incense. At the beginning, he offered incense using a plant that grows on high mountains; it looks like hair and has a very nice scent. Because he offered this incense to holy objects, later he gained many advantages and was able to make better and more extensive offerings of incense. This is an example of how karma works, of how your life can become better even in the immediate future.

The benefits of living in the morality of abstaining from the sexual act. The eight precepts of the Lesser Vehicle path refer to abstaining from any sexual misconduct, but here in the Eight Mahayana Precepts it is any sexual act. The benefits of living in this vow are that in all lifetimes you will have a beautiful body and a beautiful complexion. I guess this will save a lot of expenses on cosmetics and plastic surgery. You won't need to have a big operation on your face to straighten this bit and stretch that bit back and forth. I heard that it's very expensive! Keeping this precept will also incidentally save you a lot of money. The only problem is perhaps that it will cause other people to lose their jobs. There won't be any need for shops full of cosmetics, for all those billions of different cosmetics in different colors. Anyway, I'm joking.

Another benefit is that you will have perfect sense organs. When we know the benefits, we can automatically understand that someone has some physical disability as a result of not having practiced this or that morality. When you hear about the shortcomings of the complete ten non-virtuous actions, you naturally understand the good results that you will achieve through living in the morality of the ten virtues. By hearing about the positive results, the benefits, of living in the precepts, you come to know the causes of various problems such as being born with an imperfect or ugly body, with missing limbs or imperfect senses.

Physical disabilities cannot be explained simply by an imperfect egg or sperm, as scientists tend to do. It is just a condition for the problem, not its main cause. There might be an imperfect egg, with some cells missing or something, but you need to explain why the imperfect egg happens. The answer is incomplete. Even though the cause is traced back to a defective egg or sperm, this is not the final answer because it is talking only about the physical condition. We are still left with the question, "But what causes the defective egg?" Here, by understanding the benefits of abstaining from

the sexual act, you come to know its opposite, the result of sexual misconduct, or the sexual act that becomes negative karma.

The benefits of abstaining from telling lies. In all lifetimes you will not be cheated by others. In our daily lives, whenever we find that somebody has cheated us, we should immediately remember that we are experiencing the result of having told lies in the past. Rather than just becoming upset and angry and making ourselves unhappy and rather than putting all the blame on someone else, we should think, “This is the result of my past negative karma of telling lies.”

In this way, our delusions—the three poisonous minds of ignorance, anger and attachment—and our negative karmas become only inspirations; they remind us that from now on we should be careful in our practice of morality, we should practice the morality of abstaining from telling lies. When we encounter problems in our life, remembering the cause that we created in the past only encourages us; it gives us the strong determination to abandon the cause of the problems. We resolve, “From now on I will not create the cause of this problem. Instead I will create its opposite, the cause of happiness.”

Another benefit of abstaining from lying is that everyone values our speech, everyone believes what we say. In our daily lives, when we say something and other people don’t listen to or don’t believe us, when our speech is powerless, we should realize that this is the result of our past negative karma of telling lies. This sometimes happens in our daily lives.

The other way, someone who normally doesn’t listen to others somehow has to accept a particular person’s request, even though it is a difficult one. This is because that particular person has power in his speech. He comes in, asks for something, and somehow the other person naturally has to accept. There is a reason for this. It comes from the past good karma that person created by living in the morality of abstaining from telling lies.

The benefits of abstaining from drinking alcohol. In all lifetimes you will have a great memory. This can be to do with past lives, but I also think you can tell that much of it is the result of this life. The memory of a person who lives in pure vows is very clear. Take Geshe Sopa Rinpoche, for example. There are eight prayers, including *The King of Prayers*, a praise

to Maitreya Buddha and a prayer to be born in Maitreya's pure land, that are normally recited for others.

[The morning tea bell is heard outside.] The donkeys are coming! From Tibet. The horses and mules in Tibet always have bells, so that sound reminded me of Tibet, of donkey bells.

Geshe-la said that he had not recited those eight prayers since leaving Tibet, which was about forty years ago. In Tibet, those prayers are recited every day when all the monks do puja in the assembly. When I was in Madison during the commentary on great insight, it happened a few times that a Tibetan or Western person passed away and Geshe Sopa Rinpoche was asked to pray for them. I respected very much the way that Geshe-la took care of each request very precisely. I thought it was fantastic. He paid very special attention when he was requested to pray for someone who had died. He called the monks who were around and had everyone pray together in the room. This is fantastic, because there is a lot of benefit for the people who have passed away. Because those praying, principally Geshe-la himself but also the other geshe, are all living in pure vows, their prayers have a lot of power.

One of the people Geshe-la did prayers for was a Tibetan man who used to take tourists to the very high mountains in Nepal. I think he died when his airplane crashed. He was a very good man with a big family; it seems that everyone loved him very much because he was so kind-hearted. I think that his daughter has some association with the Hyatt Hotel in Chicago.

After he finished reciting the eight prayers, Geshe-la said, "I haven't recited these prayers since I left Tibet, but it is OK—I can remember all of them!" I mean, forty years is a long time.

The point I am trying to make is that it seems the good memory is the result not only of past lives but of this life. The way you live your life has an immediate effect on your mind. There can be a positive result even in this life if you lived in morality in the earlier part of your life.

Other benefits of living in the morality of abstaining from alcohol, abandoning alcohol, are that all your senses become clear and that you have perfect wisdom.

Many people become like vegetables later in life; they are not dead but they are unable to function. It could be the result of past karma, but I think much of it has to do with the karma of this life, with how they lived

earlier this life. If you study how these people lived, if you analyzed their attitudes and their behavior, you might be able to see how this particular problem happened; otherwise, there is no way to explain it. Without knowing the karma, there is no way to explain it.

The benefits of avoiding sitting on high or expensive thrones and beds. This means sitting on such a throne or bed without a Dharma reason, without the thought to benefit others or show respect to the teachings. Sitting on high or expensive thrones and beds with a motivation of attachment that clings to this life, pride and so forth becomes negative karma. Here, “high” means higher than a cubit.

By living in this vow, you will always be praised and respected by others. In this way, you will be able to benefit others. When others praise and respect you, you can bring them into Dharma, into the path to enlightenment. Also, especially if you are a bodhisattva or an ordained person, praising and respecting you helps others to create good karma.

Another benefit is that you have many enjoyments, such as comfortable bedding and animals to ride when you travel. The text says specifically that you receive many things to ride on, which means animals, but I think you can include here other vehicles such as cars and airplanes.

The benefits of avoiding eating at the wrong time. In all lifetimes you will have perfect crops and you will receive drink and food without any effort. Difficulty in obtaining the means of living comes from not practicing the morality of abstaining from eating at the wrong time in the past and from eating with attachment.

The benefits of avoiding perfumes and wearing garlands and ornaments. In all lifetimes your body will have a scented smell—not a scented smell from the shops, but one that comes naturally from the body. I remember in Solu Khumbu when I was very young, there was a small incarnate lama with a naturally scented smell. It made a strong impression on my mind. You also notice this smell when you meet some lamas. It is not like the smell of perfume; it is a holy kind of smell.

Different scents such as different manufactured perfumes have different effects on the mind. Some perfumes make you feel serene and peaceful; others have the opposite effect, causing you to generate attachment.

Other benefits are that your body will have a good color, a beautiful shape, and many special signs similar to those on the bodies of holy beings.

The benefits of living in the vow of avoiding singing and dancing. In all lifetimes you will have subdued conduct, with a very subdued mind and body. The sound of Dharma will also come continuously from you. We meet people like this in our daily life; when the person talks, the Dharma always comes out in their conversation. This could also refer to reciting prayers and mantras.

MOTIVATION FOR TAKING THE EIGHT MAHAYANA PRECEPTS

Think, “It is not sufficient just to receive a deva or human body in my next life, just to avoid being reborn in the lower realms. This alone is not the ultimate meaning of my life. And even to be free from samsara is not the ultimate meaning of my life. Sentient beings, who are numberless, who are like the sky, are the source of all my past, present and future happiness. The ultimate goal of my life is to free them from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment. To do that, I need to achieve enlightenment, and for that, I need to actualize the path to enlightenment, which depends on the root, living in morality. Therefore, for the benefit of each sentient being, for all happiness up to enlightenment of each sentient being, I’m going to take the Eight Mahayana Precepts.”

VISUALIZING THE LAMA AS GURU SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA

Because the practice of the Eight Mahayana Precepts comes from Kriya Tantra, in addition to looking at the lama as the Buddha in essence, you have to visualize the lama as the Buddha in aspect. Visualize the lama from whom you take the precepts as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha [or Avalokiteshvara, as in *Direct and Unmistaken Method*]. Think that he is surrounded by all buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions and that you are taking the precepts in their presence.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WISE HORSE AND GREAT ELEPHANT

The precepts ceremony text might sound a bit funny when it says that Buddha is like a horse or an elephant, but there are reasons for this. “The wise horse” is a horse with the capacity, or skill, to carry its rider very carefully to wherever the person wants to go. Even on a dangerous road, the wise horse walks so carefully that it never disturbs its rider. Buddha carefully guides sentient beings to enlightenment in a similar way, so that they are not harmed or disturbed. As talked about in stories, the wise horse is a special horse that can fly.

The reason that Buddha is likened to “the great elephant” is that just as the elephant is very powerful and can carry very heavy loads, Buddha takes on the total responsibility of freeing the numberless suffering sentient beings from all their oceans of samsaric suffering and its cause, and bringing them all happiness, including that of enlightenment.

By understanding the essential meaning of these examples, you feel devotion to Buddha; you feel closer to Buddha.

THE DEFINITION OF SUNRISE

If you are doing practices such as nyung näs, there are different ways of defining sunrise. It can refer to the sun rising in your area, with sunlight actually reaching your area. Or, as explained by Pabongka Rinpoche and in the sutras, it can refer to dawn-time, when a whitish light starts to appear in the east. Even though the rest of the sky is dark, when there is a little bit of white in the east, this beginning of the dawn is the very beginning of the day. In nyung näs, soup or some other food is offered early on the third morning. When you made the commitment not to eat “until sunrise tomorrow,” if sunrise is defined as the beginning of the day, when the sky is whitish in the east, you can then eat something at this point, before you start another nyung nä. This is just to be more precise in keeping the commitment. If you have defined “sunrise” as when it is light at the place where you are, however, you should then eat after that time.

THE PRAYER OF THE PRECEPTS

When you read the phrase “in order to benefit them,” think of bringing temporary happiness to other sentient beings; and with “in order to liberate them,” think of bringing them ultimate happiness and benefit—liberation from all the sufferings of samsara and complete enlightenment. Ultimate benefit, or happiness, refers to both liberation from samsara and great liberation, enlightenment.

While saying “. . . in order to benefit them, in order to liberate them, in order to eliminate famine, in order to eliminate sickness . . .,” think that the reason you are taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts is to bring all these benefits to sentient beings and to stop all their problems. Remember all the sick people in hospitals or at home and think, “I am taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts for all the sentient beings who have the karma to be sick.” Think of all the people who are dying from AIDS; think of all the people who are dying from cancer. Here today you are doing something that is of the most practical benefit to them.

The prayer at the end can be abbreviated as follows: “Just as the previous tathagatas practiced the Eight Mahayana Precepts to benefit all sentient beings, I’m also going to keep the Eight Mahayana precepts until sunrise tomorrow in order to cause all these benefits to all sentient beings.”

Without a wandering mind you must then generate the strong determination that you have received pure ordination of the Eight Mahayana Precepts in the presence of your guru, visualized as Buddha, and of all the ten direction buddhas and bodhisattvas.

DEDICATION

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I, the members of my family, all the students and benefactors of this organization, as well as all other sentient beings complete the *paramita* of morality by keeping morality purely and without pride.”

Next dedicate for everyone to generate bodhicitta within their mind.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by others and myself, may the father and mother sentient beings have happiness, may the three

lower realms be empty forever, may all the bodhisattvas' prayers be accomplished immediately and may I be able to cause all this, by myself, alone.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, which are empty from their own side, may I, who am empty from my own side, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment, which is also empty from its own side, and lead all sentient beings, who are all empty from their own side, to that enlightenment, which is also empty from its own side, by myself alone, who is also empty from its own side.”

Tuesday, February 9 (A)

MORNING: VAJRASATTVA SESSION

THE FOUR POWERS

I would like to outline the four powers in relation to the Vajrasattva practice, just in case they're not clear to everybody. In long sadhanas, the reason that we recite the refuge and bodhicitta verse again before the Vajrasattva practice, even though we have begun the sadhana with refuge and bodhicitta, is to make sure that we practice the remedy of the four powers. It is to ensure that our confession is perfected with the remedy of the four powers.

The teachings mention that when a person falls down on the ground, they get up by depending on the ground. In a similar way, we purify any negative karma collected in relation to the holy objects of guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha by taking refuge and we purify any negative karma collected in relation to sentient beings by generating bodhicitta, which means by depending on the sentient beings. This is the power of dependence. Some people translate it as “the power of reliance.” This translation is also fine, as we purify negative karma through relying on refuge and on bodhicitta. In terms of the power of dependence, we purify negative karma through depending on Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha and on sentient beings. I think that both translations are meaningful.

The prayer book mentions the power of regret, or the power of reflecting on the shortcomings of negative karma. The term for this is *nam pa sun jin pä tob* in Tibetan. *Sun* means mistakes and *jin* means giving. It means giving the blame to the negative karma for whatever specific problems you experience. The power of regret is mentioned at the end of the long Vajrasattva sadhana, just before Guru Vajrasattva says that everything has been purified, but it should also come before you recite the Vajrasattva mantra or while you are reciting it.

The way to do this is to first think of the definition of negative karma, or non-virtuous action. A negative karma is any action that brings a result of suffering. This is the general definition of a negative karma, or non-virtue. To make the definition more specific, we can say that a negative karma is any action that is motivated by a non-virtuous thought. This can mean ignorance or anger, but we should think in particular of attachment, because we live most of our life with the non-virtuous motivation of the attachment that clings to this life. For ordinary beings like us, our usual attitude is one of worldly concern. This means that during each twenty-four hours, all our activities become non-virtues, because our motivation is worldly concern. It is like this from our birth until our death, and it has been like this throughout our beginningless rebirths. Because this has been our attitude, our actions have become non-virtue. This applies even to those who are practicing Dharma. We think that we are practicing Dharma, but while we might create some virtue, we mostly create non-virtue because our motivation is the attachment that clings to this life.

Once you have clarified what non-virtue is, you can then see that all your actions throughout your entire life have been negative karmas. You have this broad perspective. On this basis, the result can only be suffering and obstacles to realizations.

After this, consider all the times that you have broken your pratimoksha, bodhisattva and tantric vows, not only in this life but also in past lives. Breaking these vows has very heavy shortcomings.

On top of that, think about the heaviest negative karmas of all, those collected in the relationship with the virtuous friend. These include harming the holy body of the guru, disregarding advice, disturbing the holy mind, generating angry or negative thoughts towards the guru and giving up the guru. You have done these negative actions in this life and in beginningless past lives. This is the heaviest negative karma.

When you examine each of these different negative karmas in this way, you can see the whole package. What needs to be purified—the obstacles to achieving enlightenment and to doing perfect works for all sentient beings—becomes very clear.

Then feel strong regret. The teachings say that you should feel as if you have swallowed a deadly poison. If there's poison in your stomach, you'll immediately do everything you can to get rid of it. In the same way here,

you can't wait even one second to purify all these negative karmas. Since death can happen at any moment, you *must* purify them all. It's unbearable to delay freeing yourself from all these negative karmas for even one second.

Think like this just before you start to recite the Vajrasattva mantra or while you are reciting it. This is the way to practice the power of regret.

The power of the remedy, *nyen po kun tu chö pä tob*, refers generally to any virtue because virtue is the remedy that purifies negative karma. Here, taking refuge, generating bodhicitta, meditating on Vajrasattva and reciting the mantra are all part of this power of the remedy.

At the end of the sadhana, after Vajrasattva says that you are purified, you practice the power not to commit the negative actions again. This is how you perfect the practice with the remedy of the four powers. It is very important to do this when you do Vajrasattva retreat. Make sure that you practice the four powers, and as strongly as possible.

THINKING THAT THE NEGATIVE KARMAS ARE PURIFIED

The literal translation from the Tibetan [of *rig kyi bu*, “child of good family”] is “son of the race,” but the term “son” has nothing to do with the physical body. It is similar to “vajra master's son” in an initiation.

Generate strong faith that all your defilements, negative karmas and degenerated samaya vows have been completely purified. Everything has been purified.

Next, practice the power of not committing the negative actions again. As I mentioned yesterday, make the vow so that it does not become telling lies or it lessens the vice of telling lies.

Guru Vajrasattva is extremely pleased with you and absorbs within you. Your body, speech and mind are blessed in the essence of Vajrasattva's vajra holy body, holy speech and holy mind.

In emptiness there is no I, no creator; there is no action of creating negative karma; there is no negative karma created. All these are totally empty—not space, but like space.

With continual awareness of everything as empty, dedicate the merits.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I achieve Guru Vajrasattva's enlightenment and lead all sentient beings to Guru Vajrasattva's

enlightenment by myself alone.” When you say “Guru Vajrasattva,” remember the absolute guru.

GURU DEVOTION WITH THE NINE ATTITUDES

If you have realized guru devotion—which means by looking at the guru as buddha, you see the guru as buddha—you have no problem, because no matter what action or aspect you see, you always have the understanding that it is the action or aspect of buddha and that every single action or aspect of buddha is meaningful. Buddha does nothing other than benefit others. If you have realized that the guru is buddha, no negative thoughts about the guru come at all; your mind is totally protected. The realization of guru devotion totally protects your mind; it makes your mind very pure towards the virtuous friend.

When you don't have this realization, however, many difficult negative thoughts can arise, especially when your wishes are not fulfilled. The times when you expect something from the virtuous friend and it doesn't happen, or the opposite of what you expected happens, are very difficult because you don't have the realization of guru devotion. Because you don't see the guru as buddha, your mind doesn't have any protection. At such times, when your mind becomes troubled, this prayer, *Practicing Guru Devotion with the Nine Attitudes* [see Prologue], is extremely good. These nine attitudes are like an atomic bomb landing on the negative thoughts. I don't know which country the atomic bomb belongs to, I don't know whether it's America or Russia

Personally, I have found this prayer very powerful, so I thought it might also be useful to you. You can recite it in the guru devotion section of the lamrim, and it's especially powerful to recite when your mind is having difficulties in relation to your guru.

I haven't had the oral transmission of this particular prayer, which is a translation from a text by Shabkar Tsogdrug Rangdrol, but it is contained in Lama Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo*. The essence is there in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, but it is not presented in this style. It is not described in detail in Lama Tsongkhapa's lamrim, but the presentation is unique. It is like an atomic bomb. It mentions very precisely to do this, this, this. There is commentary on the nine attitudes in Lama Tsongkha-

pa's *Lamrim Chenmo*. I think it might be in Lama Tsongkhapa's middle-length lamrim as well.

The stories of the lives of Tilopa, Naropa, Milarepa and the other lineage lamas in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* are commentaries to this prayer. Many people are aware of Milarepa's life-story, and you can relate everything Milarepa experienced to this prayer. Besides not giving Milarepa teachings or initiations, Marpa gave him only a hard time, scolding and beating him and making him work hard. Milarepa's story is a commentary to these verses.

I think it is extremely good to use this prayer in the guru devotion section of the lamrim meditation.

Practicing guru devotion with the nine attitudes is in Lama Tsongkhapa's lamrim, but I thought that this prayer might be beneficial in relation to the Maitreya Project.

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Tuesday, February 9 (B)

AFTERNOON: VAJRASATTVA SESSION

MOTIVATION FOR THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS PRACTICE

“The purpose of my life is to free all sentient beings from all their suffering and its causes and bring them to full enlightenment. To do this, I myself must achieve enlightenment, and for this, I must actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment. Therefore, I need to purify all my defilements, negative karmas, and downfalls.”

Think, “If I were now in the hell realm, how would it be? I would be completely overwhelmed by the heaviest suffering of samsara.”

If a burning incense stick drops on your body, you can't stand it; you immediately have to brush it off. If even a spark lands on your body, you can't stand it; without even a second's delay, you have to put it out or brush it off. If you find unbearable even a tiny spark of fire from the human realm, there is no way you could bear to suffer for many eons in the hell realm. One second of hell fire is unbelievably hot, many billions of times hotter than the fire of the human realm. Because it is extremely heavy suffering, experiencing even one second of hell fire is like suffering for many billions of years. Besides that, you have no freedom to practice Dharma.

“Now, this could actually happen to me, even in this moment, because death can come at any time. It could happen right now. Therefore, I must purify all my defilements, negative karma and downfalls right now. Without delaying even a second, I must purify right now. Also, in order to cause all happiness up to enlightenment to every one of the numberless sentient beings, I'm going to do prostrations with the *Practice of Prostrations to the Thirty-Five Buddhas*, reciting the names of, and meditating on, the Thirty-five Buddhas.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEMORIZING THE NAMES
OF THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS

If one person leads the prayer and the rest of the people do not recite it because no one has memorized the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas, only that person will get the benefits of reciting the names. Those who haven't memorized the names will get the benefits of making prostrations, but they won't get the benefit of reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas. This is a great loss. How is it a great loss? Take the very first name, that of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, for example. By reciting Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's name, you purify 80,000 eons of negative karma; if you don't recite his name, this doesn't happen. Reciting each of the Thirty-five Buddhas' names purifies a certain number of eons of negative karma or a particular negative karma. Reciting each name just one time purifies many eons of negative karma.

If someone told us that we would not get cancer for six eons, we would think it was fantastic. Or that we would not get a migraine headache for sixty years. We can understand that very clearly, and we would think, "Oh, that's fantastic!" Leaving aside the six eons, even if someone told us that we would not get cancer in this life, we would regard it as fantastic, as unbelievable good fortune. Now here, in relation to the practice of the Thirty-five Buddhas, we are talking about not getting cancer and other problems for six thousand eons, seven thousand eons, because we have purified that many eons of negative karma, which is the cause of not only sickness but all problems and obstacles. Cancer is just one tiny drop from the ocean of samsaric sufferings. Being able to purify even two thousand eons of negative karma is an incredible advantage. If death is going to happen right now, in the next moment, the most important thing is purification. The most urgent thing to do is to purify our negative karma.

[The lights suddenly come on.] We must be actualizing the clear light of death! Anyway, bless the lights with OM AH HUM, OM AH HUM, OM AH HUM.

If you were about to die, which would you prefer to be given—a billion dollars or the chance to purify this life's negative karma? Which is more important? Which is more precious? Of course, purifying even one negative karma before we die is much better than receiving a billion or even a trillion dollars.

My point is that if only one person recites the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas, only that person receives the advantage of all this purification. The people who don't recite don't receive this advantage. This is like one person eating a meal on behalf of a group of people, while the rest of the people do not eat. That one person eating food doesn't fill the stomachs of the other people; it doesn't stop their hunger, does it?

It is similar here. For the one person who recites the prayer, reciting the name of each buddha purifies many eons of negative karma, but this doesn't happen to the rest of the people. Each one of the Thirty-five Buddhas purifies many eons of negative karmas, but the people who do not recite the names do not receive all this advantage. When we were doing the Hayagriva retreat at Vajrapani Institute, I made a regulation that during the retreat everybody had to memorize the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas.

When I hear some of the names in English, they sound different. When I say "Buddha of Sandalwood" in English, it makes me think of sandalwood; but that picture of sandalwood doesn't come in my mind when I say the name in Tibetan, even though it has the same meaning.

After the Thirty-five Buddhas, recite the names of the seven Medicine Buddhas, who are extremely powerful not only for healing but for success generally. The Medicine Buddha did many prayers in the past for sentient beings to be granted all their wishes, to have their prayers actualized, through reciting the name and the mantra of Medicine Buddha. It is very important to do this practice. Kachen Yeshe Gyaltzen and other recent lineage lamas also recited the names of the Seven Medicine Buddhas after reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas. This is very good and makes the practice very powerful.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE PRACTICE

At the end of the prostrations, think that nectar beams are emitted by all the beings in the merit field and enter within you and purify all your defilements, negative karma and downfalls. Everything is purified. Nothing in the slightest is left in your mental continuum.

Then meditate that in emptiness, there is no creator of negative karma, there is no action of creating negative karma, there is no negative karma created.

Finally, dedicate. “Due to the merits collected by having done prostrations, made offerings, confessed, rejoiced and requested the gurus to have stable lives and to turn the Dharma wheel, may I achieve enlightenment in order to enlighten all sentient beings.”

BENEFITS OF RECITING LAMRIM PRAYERS

One purpose of reciting the lamrim prayer is to use it as a motivation. The other point is that each time we recite a prayer that contains the essence of the whole path, it makes our mind closer to the realizations of the path to enlightenment. In other words, it makes us closer to enlightenment and to our being able to enlighten all sentient beings. This is the main reason that we are doing this Vajrasattva retreat. The main reason for doing Vajrasattva purification practice is not to be healthy or to have a long life, but to have realizations of the path to enlightenment so that we can benefit others by liberating them from all their suffering and bringing them to enlightenment.

Therefore, as often as possible, at the beginning of each session we should recite one of the lamrim prayers as the motivation, to bring our mind closer to the realizations of the path to enlightenment. Because each lamrim prayer has a different presentation, reciting different lamrim prayers, like eating different types of food, has a different effect on the mind. Also, you’d get bored if you recited the same prayer all the time.

GENERATING AS HERUKA

Since we are not doing the Heruka practice, you can leave the part about generating yourself as Heruka. Recite the refuge verse, then leave a short silence in which to generate a strong motivation of bodhicitta.

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

Feel strong regret, then generate strong thoughts of impermanence and death, that death might happen right now. After that, generate strong bodhicitta motivation. Think of the lower realm sufferings, the general sufferings of samsara and of the living beings who are experiencing all these sufferings. Remember how kind and precious other living beings

are, then think, “I, myself alone, must take full responsibility for freeing all living beings from the ocean of samsaric suffering and its cause, the defilements, and for leading them to enlightenment. I must achieve enlightenment in the quickest way possible, because it is so unbearable that sentient beings are suffering in samsara for even one second; it’s like they are suffering for eons. Therefore, I am going to do the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation to purify all my obscurations, defilements, negative karma and downfalls.”

DEDICATION

Before making the dedication to achieve Vajrasattva, we should meditate on emptiness as follows: “In emptiness there is no I, no creator; there is no action of creating; there is no negative karma created. Everything is totally empty, non-existent from its own side. Everything is empty—not space, but like space.” We are not meditating on space, but that everything is empty, like space; empty of existence from its own side, like space.

With our mind in the state of this awareness we then dedicate the merits.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I achieve Guru Vajrasattva’s enlightenment and lead all sentient beings to that enlightenment by myself alone.”

I’d just like to make a few comments about the dedications. There are some additional general dedications in the Guru Shakyamuni Buddha meditation booklet, *A Daily Meditation Practice*, which are good to do at the end of the sessions. You can divide these dedications so that you do a few at the end of each session. In this way, they all get done each day without your needing to do them all together at the end of the final session, which would take a long time.

At the end of the morning session of *Guru Puja*, which is basically guru yoga practice, you should do the very important dedication, “Due to the merits of the three times created by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I, the members of my family, all the -students and benefactors of this organization, and all the rest of the sentient beings meet only perfectly qualified Mahayana gurus in all our future lifetimes.

From our side may we see them only as enlightened beings. May we do only actions most pleasing to the holy minds of the virtuous friends. May we be able to fulfill all their holy wishes immediately.”

This dedication contains four very, very important prayers: to meet perfectly qualified gurus, to see them only as enlightened beings, to do actions only most pleasing to their holy minds and to fulfill their holy wishes. We should do this dedication every day, because without the accomplishment of these prayers, nothing can succeed. We cannot achieve realizations or enlightenment. This dedication is extremely important as a means of ensuring that in this life and in all our coming lives we will be able to practice better. If we can practice in accordance with these four prayers, we will achieve enlightenment without any obstacles. This is the essential key to our ultimate success—completing our Dharma practice and being a perfect guide to lead other sentient beings to enlightenment.

Do this dedication prayer at the end of the morning session and divide the others among the remaining sessions so that you do a few at the end of each.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may any sentient being who hears me, touches me, remembers me, thinks about me, talks about me (whether praising or criticizing), abuses me or treats me badly, simply by having made that connection with me, never ever be reborn in the lower realms. May those sentient beings immediately be liberated from all disease, spirit harms, negative karma and defilements and quickly achieve enlightenment, by actualizing the whole path, especially bodhicitta.

“May I immediately be able to heal anyone with a sickness that is difficult to cure or has no cure, such as cancer, AIDS or arthritis, and especially anyone whose mind has become crazy and uncontrolled because of spirit possession and so forth. When that person is dying, simply by seeing me, hearing my voice or being touched by me, may they immediately be freed from all their worry and fear and feel incredible bliss and peace in their heart; and may they be able to reincarnate in a pure land where they can become enlightened.”

We need to specify “a pure land where they can become enlightened” because there are pure lands from which sentient beings can again be reborn in the lower realms. We are dedicating for rebirth in a specific type

of pure land, one from which sentient beings can never be reborn in the lower realms and where they can become enlightened.

This prayer can be added to the dedications in the meditation booklet. Generating this wish every day builds the potential to sooner or later be able to benefit others in this way.

GENERATING AS HERUKA

I now see why Lama wrote here in the long sadhana to generate yourself as Heruka. It is because later you have to make an inner offering. In order to bless the inner offering you have to generate yourself as a deity; the ordinary I cannot bless the inner offering. To bless the inner offering you need the pure appearance of yourself in the deity's holy body and to hold divine pride, "I am Heruka." It is only with this deity yoga that you can bless the inner offering, in order to dispel interferers and purify the offerings—which appear ordinary, or inherently existent, to you—in emptiness. In Highest Yoga Tantra, you have to generate offerings with three qualities: the aspect is the offering, the essence is emptiness of inherent existence and the function is to give great bliss. To generate offerings with these three qualities, you need to generate yourself as a deity.

If you haven't received a Heruka initiation but have received a Yamantaka initiation, for example, you can generate yourself as Yamantaka and do the blessing, visualizing as nectar and so forth according to Yamantaka practice. The same applies if you have received the Kalachakra great initiation.

If you haven't received a Highest Yoga Tantra initiation, you don't need to bother about generating yourself as a deity. You just make the offerings.

MAKING OFFERINGS

Each time we make offerings with *argham*, *padyam*, *pushpe*, *dhupe* . . . , whether in the section of offering in the *Guru Puja* or in the Vajrasattva practice, it is good to remember all the offerings—all the lights, all the flowers, all the waterbowls—that have been made here. You can also visualize offerings. Then you collect unbelievable merit. Some people can visualize clearly; others cannot. However, everyone can offer all these many physically performed offerings.

Take the many lights here in this gampa, for example. I'm not sure how many there are, but let's say that there are one thousand lights here. By offering these one thousand lights to Vajrasattva or to the *Guru Puja* merit field, you immediately create one thousand causes of enlightenment. If there are five thousand lights, simply by thinking, "I am offering all these lights," in that second you create five thousand causes of enlightenment—and that means incidentally, you also create five thousand causes to achieve liberation from samsara and five thousand causes to achieve good rebirths in your future lives.

This is my daily advertisement—an advertisement to inspire people to create good karma. People advertise hotels or companies on huge billboards on major roads. Before you reach the hotel it has already been advertised for miles. There are advertisements everywhere—in *Time* magazine, in airline magazines. So this is my advertisement.

Making one offering to Buddha results in a good rebirth not just in one life but in hundreds, thousands, of lives. Why? Because karma is expandable. From even one small good karma, you can experience the result for many lifetimes. It affects not just one life, but many different lifetimes, because karma is more expandable than external phenomena. If you plant one small seed, you can grow a huge tree with many thousands of branches, and hundreds of thousands of seeds can come from that tree. Karma, however, is even more expandable than such external phenomena.

Making offerings is just one means of creating good karma; there are many other practices. With each of these practices, you incidentally take care of this life. You incidentally take care of everything in this life—your health, long life, wealth, success. Even if you are not attached to this life, your Dharma practice incidentally takes care of this life. Even though it is not your motivation, you achieve the result. As is said in the lamrim teachings, if you plant a seed in the ground and it has all the conditions (water, nutrients and so forth) necessary for growth, no matter how much you pray for it not to grow, it will grow. It is similar with the merit that we create through making offerings, prostrations and so forth to the merit field. No matter how much you pray not to achieve enlightenment, you will achieve enlightenment from that, because once there is the cause of enlightenment, you achieve the result of enlightenment.

Many offerings might have been physically arranged, but you don't think of them when you are actually making offerings. However, your visualization of offerings might not be clear—perhaps not even one offering is clear; so sometimes it might be better to think of the physical offerings. They are already there, so it's just a question of your mind thinking to offer them. That is all you have to do. Someone else has put effort into setting up all the offerings—the only effort you need to make is to think of them and offer them mentally. With these waterbowls, for example, you create many thousands of causes of enlightenment in that second.

I started this tradition of making extensive offerings in Taiwan about five years ago. In Kaohsiung there is a nunnery that has supported the Kopan monks and nuns. I led a Medicine Buddha retreat there, during which I gave a complete commentary on the mandala offering, as well as some commentary on the seven-limb practice and some other preliminary practices. Not all, but some of the nuns are interested in lamrim. They had been studying lamrim before with some other Chinese students involved in lamrim study groups.

When I said that I wanted to make extensive offerings, the abbess of the nunnery went to buy many orchids, which are very expensive flowers, and the other nuns were very energetic in setting up very beautiful offerings.

From Kaohsiung I went to the Taipei Center, where I started the same tradition, with the setting up of many sets of seven offerings in the gumpa. I also started the tradition at the Taichung Center. When I went to Nepal, I then started waterbowl offerings in a room on the roof of the gumpa. The room, which has glass walls, was actually built as an outside dining room, but after I got back it turned out not to be for eating but for waterbowls. I bought about seven hundred stainless steel bowls in Nepal. They are very good because they are light, shiny and very easy to keep clean; they don't become covered inside with rust the way brass bowls do. Some people offer water in rusty brass bowls because they think they must be very holy, or something, because they are Tibetan bowls. But brass bowls are very dirty and sometimes even the water becomes dirty.

I wasn't satisfied with the one room because all the bowls could not be used, so I had another room built on the roof. Two nuns have been offering these bowls there for a long time. One nun, Gloria from Hong Kong, offered the bowls for two or three months. Zug-ku also offered for

some time. Gloria spent so much time out in the sun offering the bowls that her right arm, which was not covered by her zen, became dark while her left arm was white. Maybe in Western terms this was a good thing, some kind of success!

When I was staying at Tushita in Dharamsala, I thought to build a similar room there for offerings as there is a lot of space outside. So I've produced the idea, but my stay in Tushita was too short to get anything built.

My main concern regarding the house in Aptos was to have a large room for offerings. In the offering room there, which is not an actual room, there are about 4,000 lights, many small ones and some big ones, the beautiful Chinese lotus lights. There are now also more than 250 water bowls—probably 257, as Pam and Karuna gave another set of crystal bowls yesterday. There are also flowers in our garden, but the flowers are now asleep, doing sleep meditation—in the clear light! [So we can't offer them.]

I thought that if some people have the time and there is the space out here on the verandah for some tables, more offerings of water bowls could be done.

It is very good for meditation centers even to hire people to do the offerings. Paying people to make extensive offerings is extremely worthwhile. It is not a waste of money, because those people get paid for their work of making offerings, and the people who sponsor them gain much merit. Tibetan monasteries and even rich Tibetan families have someone to make offerings every day. Rich families have a shrine room, so they support one monk, whose responsibility it is to clean the shrine room and make very good offerings every day. The monk takes care of the shrine room and the family takes care of the monk, offering him food and a bed in the shrine room. Even if the family members themselves don't have time to do more than come to the gompa to make three prostrations and to pray, the monk takes care of the work of cleaning and making offerings.

I suggested to Tara Institute in Melbourne that they hire one person especially to make extensive offerings. Everybody else could then put some money into the cost of buying the offerings. Each time the students from the center do a sadhana, they could then think of the offerings that had been set up on the altar at the center and offer them. Also, while they were travelling back and forth to work in their cars, they could simply think of the offerings and offer them. This is such an easy way to collect extensive

merit. Even if you yourself don't have time to make such offerings, you can collect unbelievable merit by organizing something like this.

This would help many people with difficulties in their life, those who have problems finding a job, who have problems with their work or who have obstacles to success in business. Arranging these extensive offerings would help all the students, because it helps everybody to create good karma, which can change their lives and make them easier. It is very profitable. Just as there are many ways to make business, there are many ways to create merit, or good karma, the cause of enlightenment. It is also helpful for the people who need to offer many water bowls as part of their preliminary practices.

We are coming now to the time of the Chinese and Tibetan New Year, with the start of the fifteen special days when Buddha showed his miraculous powers to subdue particular sentient beings. For every one of these fifteen days the merits from every practice we do are multiplied one hundred million times. The merit from each offering is increased one hundred million times. One light offering becomes one hundred million light offerings, one water bowl offering becomes one hundred million water bowl offerings, and it is the same with prostrations. It is good to make more offerings during this period; everybody can then make the offerings. Some people have to put in the effort of physically making the offerings, but then everybody gets the chance to make extensive offerings, so it's very good. Giving other people the chance to make many offerings is also a way that you can help bring happiness to others and enable them to achieve enlightenment quickly.

GENERATING AS A DEITY

Now, those people who haven't received a great initiation don't need to bother about generating themselves as a deity. Those who have received a great initiation can visualize themselves as Heruka, Yamantaka, Kalachakra or any other deity whose initiation they have received; you can individually generate yourself as that deity. Basically, the offerings in the various Highest Yoga Tantra practices are similar; there are different mantras, but the visualization and blessing of the offerings are basically the same.

Even though the self-generation as Heruka can be recited, each individual can decide which deity to practice, and it should be specified that

those who haven't received initiation don't need to do that, you can drop that out.

USE OF BELL ALONE FOR INVOCATION

I don't know the reason for it, but normally the bell is rung without playing the *damaru* for the invocation of [and offerings to] the wisdom beings and the initiating deities. There is just the ringing of the bell. Sometimes there is no music offering to these deities, not even the *mudra*, but it seems to depend on which tantric tradition a particular monastery follows. Most Gelug monasteries usually follow the traditions of the Upper Tantric College or the Lower Tantric College, but some Gelug monasteries have their own tradition, based on the practices of their founding lama.

It seems, however, that normally only the bell is played for the wisdom and empowering deities. With Vajrasattva itself you can play the damaru as well.

THE POWER OF REGRET

The outline in the *FPMT Prayer Book* has “The prayer of the opponent power”—in other words, the power of regret—at the end, after you have already recited the Vajrasattva mantra. As I mentioned yesterday, you should generate regret for the negative karma you have created either before you start to recite the Vajrasattva mantra or along with the recitation. Your Vajrasattva meditation then becomes very powerful. The outline in the Prayer Book should be changed, so that it comes before the mantra recitation at the point where you request Vajrasattva to purify all your negative karmas; otherwise, you are practicing the power of regret after you have already finished the meditation.

Also, the sub-heading “Absorption” is in the wrong place. It should not be where Vajrasattva says, “O child of good family . . .,” but just before “Dorje Nyemma Karmo is transformed into light . . .”

Yesterday I left out one point. I forgot to mention that after you generate the thought of regret in a broad way by considering the general definition of non-virtuous actions of body, speech and mind, you then think about the ten non-virtuous actions; you reflect on how many of the ten non-

virtuous actions you committed today, on the way you have committed them again and again in this life, and on how you have committed so many during beginningless rebirths. After that, if you have taken pratimoksha, bodhisattva or tantric vows, you consider all the vows that you have broken. On top of that, you then reflect on how many times you have created negative karma in relation to your gurus, the heaviest obstacle of all. By reflecting on negative karma in this way, you get the broad view of what you need to purify and your regret becomes very strong. It is very, very good to practice in this way because you cover everything that needs to be purified.

MEDITATING ON EMPTINESS

At the point in the sadhana where Lama talks about bliss and voidness, “the bliss of shunyata” and so forth, you should meditate on emptiness. You can also think, as I often mention, that there is no creator, no action of creating and no creation.

Right after you have meditated on emptiness, with continuation of the same awareness, you dedicate with *Ge wa di . . .* and *Jang chub sem chog . . .* The dedications then become very powerful.

THE POWER OF NOT COMMITTING NEGATIVE ACTIONS AGAIN

After Vajrasattva tells you that your broken pledges are cleansed and purified, stop for a short while to practice the power of not committing negative actions again. As I mentioned yesterday, you promise to abstain from negative karma—with the subtle negative karmas that are very difficult to abstain from completely, you promise to abstain from them for one hour, one minute or at least a few seconds. By making this strong determination, you perfect the remedy of the four powers, which makes your confession very powerful.

You must do this practice of the power not to commit negative actions again. It is not mentioned here in the sub-headings, so it would be good to write it in as a guide to the practice.

If you practice the remedy of the four powers, your confession is perfect. Therefore, you won't have to experience the four suffering results of a

complete negative karma—the ripening aspect result, rebirth in the lower realms; and the three results that are later experienced in the human realm. These three are creating the result similar to the cause, experiencing the result similar to the cause and the possessed result. Experiencing the result similar to the cause of killing, for example, means that your life is harmed or shortened by others or you experience a lot of sickness. The possessed result of killing is that you are born in an unhealthy environment where there are many dangers to life from sickness and so forth and a lot of fear. With perfect confession, you won't have to experience these four suffering results.

Tuesday, February 9 (c)

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

VISUALIZATION WITH *CALLING THE GURU FROM AFAR*

On the crown of your head visualize your root virtuous friend, who is the encompassment of all the buddhas. Think, “All the buddhas manifested in this form in order to guide me. All the buddhas manifested in this ordinary form, to my ordinary mind, in this mistaken form, to my mistaken mind, to save me from the lower realms, from all of samsara and all the defilements, and to bring me to full enlightenment, which is the total cessation of all the faults of the mind and the completion of all realizations.

“May I never rise heresy even for one second in the actions of the glorious guru. With the devotion that sees every action done as pure, may I receive the blessings of the guru.

“Päl dän tsa wäi . . .”

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

“Since my motivation is worldly concern, attachment clinging to this life, my activities today mostly became negative karma. It is the same for this week, this month, this year and since my birth—most of my actions became negative karma. And during my beginningless rebirths, I have created uncountable negative karmas, the results of which I have not finished experiencing. On top of that, during beginningless past lives, I have created heavy karma by committing the ten non-virtues; by breaking pratimoksha, bodhisattva and tantric vows; and by committing negative actions in relation to my gurus.

“If I died now, I would immediately reincarnate in the lower realms. And it is uncertain when I could come back, when I could again receive a perfect human body with which to practice Dharma. Because of my

negative karmas, I would have to experience eons of suffering in the hell realms.

“Practicing Vajrasattva right now is the best solution. I am unbelievably fortunate to have this opportunity to do Vajrasattva meditation-recitation. Therefore, I *must* purify right now, without even a second’s delay.

“For one hell being, my kind mother, who is the source of all my past, present and future happiness, to be suffering in the hell realm for one second is unbearable to me; it is as if that being is suffering for many eons. I must liberate it immediately from all its suffering and bring it to enlightenment.

“But there are numberless hell beings, and they are all the same in that they are the source of all my past, present and future happiness. They are experiencing unbelievably heavy suffering, so I must liberate them without even a second’s delay.

“For one preta being, who is the source of all my past, present and future happiness, to be experiencing the heaviest suffering of hunger and thirst for even one second is unbearable to me; it is as if it is suffering for eons. But there are numberless hungry ghosts, who are the source of all my past, present and future happiness. They are so precious in my life. Their suffering is unimaginable, so I must liberate them without even a second’s delay and bring them to enlightenment.

“For one animal being, my kind mother, who is the source of all my past, present and future happiness, to be experiencing the unimaginable suffering of the animal realm for even one second is unbearable to me; it is as if it is suffering for eons. I must liberate them without even a second’s delay and bring them to enlightenment. Now, there are numberless animals, my kind mothers, who are the source of all my past, present and future happiness. It is much more unbearable that numberless animals are suffering, so I must liberate them without even a second’s delay and bring them to enlightenment.

“Because my mind is hallucinating, I don’t see that human beings are totally hallucinating and trapped in the suffering of samsara. In reality, for one human being, the precious being who is the source of all my past, present and future happiness, to be suffering in samsara even for one second is unbearable to my mind; it is as if that person is suffering for eons. But numberless human beings, who are the source of all my past, present and future happiness, are experiencing unimaginable suffering, so this is

much more unbearable. Therefore, I must liberate them and bring them to enlightenment, without even a second's delay.

"It is the same with one asura being or with one sura being. My hallucinating mind doesn't see their suffering, but in reality they are totally hallucinating and experience only suffering. For them to suffer even for one second is unbearable to my mind, as if they are suffering for eons. I must liberate them without even a second's delay. It is even more unbearable that there are numberless asura and sura beings suffering in this way. Therefore, I must liberate them and bring them to enlightenment without even a second's delay.

"It is the same with one intermediate state being. Its suffering for even one second is unbearable, as if it is suffering for eons. But there are numberless intermediate state beings. I must liberate them and bring them to enlightenment without even a second's delay.

"Therefore, I must achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible"—or you can think, 'without even a second's delay.'—"To do this, I need to actualize the path to enlightenment. Therefore, because I need to purify my defilements, negative karma and downfalls, I am going to practice Vajrasattva.

"My Vajrasattva meditation-recitation is purely for each hell being, each preta being, each animal being, each human being, each asura being, each sura being, each intermediate state being. It is for each and every sentient being, including the members of my family and even my enemies." If your parents or other members of your family have passed away, you can think that you are doing the Vajrasattva practice for them. Or if somebody has been very kind to you in the past and you want to do something for them, you can think of them.

GENERATING AS HERUKA

Since no offerings are involved in the short sadhana, you don't need to become Heruka.

THINKING THAT THE NEGATIVE KARMAS ARE PURIFIED

From the holy mouth of Vajrasattva, "Son of the race (or lineage), all

your negative karmas, defilements and degenerated samaya vows collected during beginningless rebirths are completely purified.”

Think that your mind becomes totally pure, as Vajrasattva says. There is not the slightest negative karma or defilement left. There is nothing left of the ten non-virtuous actions. There is nothing left of the negative karmas from having broken the three types of vows. And there is nothing left of the heaviest negative karmas collected in relation to the guru. Everything has been completely purified. Nothing in the slightest is left on your mental continuum.

CONCLUDING PRACTICES

Now practice the power of not committing negative actions again.

Because of this practice, Guru Vajrasattva is extremely pleased with you and absorbs within you. Your own body, speech and mind become inseparable from Vajrasattva’s vajra holy body, vajra holy speech and vajra holy mind.

In emptiness, there is no I, there is no action of creating negative karma, there is no negative karma created. Everything is empty, like space. Keep your mind in the state of emptiness for a while.

With this awareness of emptiness, dedicate the merits: “Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I achieve Guru Vajrasattva’s enlightenment and lead all sentient beings to that enlightenment by myself alone.”

DEDICATION

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and by all other sentient beings, may I, the members of my family, all the students and benefactors of this organization—especially those who sacrifice their lives to offer service to sentient beings and to the teachings of the Buddha through this organization—and those who rely upon me—whose names were given to me and for whom I promised to pray—have long and healthy lives and immediately accomplish all our wishes that accord with the holy Dharma.

“May we actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment, Lama Tsongkhapa’s stainless teaching, which unifies sutra and tantra, espe-

cially bodhicitta. May we completely actualize all these teachings in this very lifetime, without even a second's delay." This is a very important dedication.

"May all the meditation centers and the centers that offer service to others, such as the hospices and the leprosy project, become wish-fulfilling for all sentient beings, immediately pacifying their sufferings of body and mind. In particular, through receiving all their needs, may all the meditation centers be able to spread the complete teaching of Lama Tsongkhapa in the minds of all sentient beings.

"May all the projects of this organization receive all their needs. For example, just here at Land of Medicine Buddha there are many projects to be accomplished—the hospice, the Medicine Buddha temple, 100,000 stupas, the school and so forth. May all the rest of the projects of this organization, including Rockin' for Freedom and the 500-foot Maitreya Buddha statue, succeed immediately through receiving all their needs. May the 500-foot Maitreya Buddha statue be completed in one second through receiving everything that is needed.

"May all these centers, projects and statues cause the generation of loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta in the minds of all sentient beings. And due to that, may no sentient being ever experience anything undesirable, such as war, famine, disease, earthquake, or danger from fire, water and so forth. May these undesirable things cease to exist even in name. May all these centers, projects and statues cause all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible."

This is the ultimate goal, the ultimate purpose. We can then dedicate for the teachings of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and Lama Tsongkhapa to spread in all directions and to flourish forever.

"May all the virtuous friends, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Lama Ösel Rinpoche, have stable lives and may all their holy wishes be accomplished.

"Like Lama Tsongkhapa, may Lama Ösel Rinpoche be able to offer benefit as extensive as the sky to all sentient beings by showing the same qualities that Lama Tsongkhapa had.

"May anybody whose name has been given to me, for whom I have promised to pray or who relies upon me, all those who have passed away, and the numberless sentient beings who are now suffering unimaginably in the lower realms be liberated immediately from all those heaviest

sufferings of samsara and reincarnate in a pure land where they can immediately become enlightened; or may they receive a perfect human body in all their future lifetimes and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible through meeting a properly qualified Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may just my hearing that someone is sick cause that person to recover immediately. And may just my hearing that somebody has died cause that sentient being to immediately be liberated from the lower realms and reincarnate in a pure land where they can become enlightened. Or, if that person is born as a human being but with no freedom to practice Dharma, may that person receive a perfect human body and, by meeting a perfectly qualified Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings, achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.”

If possible, do this last dedication as above, to make it broader and unique.

THE PURPOSE OF GIVING ADVICE ON HOW TO DO VAJRASATTVA RETREAT

One point I want to emphasize is that my purpose in telling you how to do this and that meditation or prayer is to educate you about how to guide a Vajrasattva retreat. If somebody later asks you how to do a Vajrasattva retreat, you will know what to explain to them. It's an education in how to do Vajrasattva meditation in order to make it effective. Doing Vajrasattva retreat is not simply about reciting the mantra and saying some prayers. It is about making the practice effective for your mind, making it the quickest, most powerful way to transform your mind. You are learning how to make the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation the most powerful purification. It's an education in how to guide a Vajrasattva retreat, so that you, both Sangha and lay people, can teach others how to do Vajrasattva retreat in the future. As well as this, you are learning how to do *Lama Chöpa*, or *Guru Puja*, in an effective way. The arrangement of the prayers helps you do the practice effectively.

LAMA ÖSEL'S LONG LIFE PRAYER

It would be very good to recite Lama Ösel's long life prayer every day. If you want, you can recite the Mickey Mouse long-life prayer maybe once a week. You should recite Lama Ösel's long-life prayer because Lama Ösel can bring real benefit. This "benefit" doesn't necessarily mean a large number of people; it doesn't necessarily mean having many billions of disciples. The disciples can be very few, perhaps only ten, but there can still be incredible benefit. With even one disciple there can be incredible benefit—but that's another topic. People usually think of benefit in terms of a large number, like hundreds of thousands or billions, but benefit is not defined by number alone. Sometimes one person is of more benefit than hundreds of people. Benefit depends on many factors. Someone can bring great benefit through a large number of people or through even one person.

CONCLUDING PRAYERS

After Nagarjuna's *Praise to Mahakala*, you can read a few of the dedications, recite Lama Ösel's long-life prayer, then on alternate days recite "*Der ni ring du . . .*," the final dedication prayer at the very end of *Jorchö*, and *Lo sang gyäl tän ma*, the prayer for the spread of Lama Tsongkhapa's teaching.

Reciting *Lo sang gyäl tän ma* is very good because it describes the special qualities of Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings; so it also becomes a meditation on the path. It is a prayer to meet Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings—"to meet" means to actualize the path within you. The real meeting is having not only scriptural understanding, but realization of the path taught and actualized by Lama Tsongkhapa. Intellectual understanding of the path is a type of meeting, but it is not the real meeting. The real meeting is when you actually experience the path, when your mind is transformed into Lama Tsongkhapa's path.

There are different prayers for the flourishing of Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings. *Lo sang gyäl tän ma* is the common one, and there is another by Pabongka Rinpoche, which defines all the special qualities of the whole lamrim path. When you do some research and compare Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings to other teachings, you can see the difference. There is a special clarity in the teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa.

RINPOCHE'S BODHICITTA HAT

This hat is made of cloth from the robes of the Shakyamuni Buddha statue in Lhasa, the statue that was blessed by Buddha himself. The cloth came from that statue in Tibet. Ribur Rinpoche made a hat for himself and gave me this one. Rinpoche told me to wear it all the time.

Wednesday, February 10 (A)

MORNING: VAJRASATTVA SESSION

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

Your motivation should combine generating the feeling of regret, the thought of impermanence and death, and bodhicitta. I have already explained this. In short, think of the definition of non-virtuous action. Think of the non-virtuous actions that you have committed in this life and of the numberless non-virtuous actions you have committed in past lives. Consider then the heavier negative karmas, the ten non-virtuous actions. Think of the ten non-virtuous actions that you have done today, in this life and numberless times in your past lives. Next, think of the pratimoksha, bodhisattva and tantric vows that you have broken today, in this life and numberless times in your past lives. Finally, think of the heaviest negative karmas, those created in relation to the guru through harming the holy body, not following the advice, disturbing the holy mind, disrespecting, criticizing, giving up and so forth. Think of any of these negative karmas that happened today, of the many times they have happened in this life and of the numberless times they have happened in past lives.

Then think, “Many people who are the same age as I am have already died, and many others are dying today. It is amazing that so far death hasn’t happened to me. It’s a miracle. My death could happen at any moment, but I have this incredible opportunity to purify before I die.”

Also think, “The purpose of my life is not just to achieve happiness for myself, but to free every single hell being, hungry ghost, animal, human, asura, sura and intermediate state being from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment. To liberate them, I *must* achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. Therefore, I need to purify all my obstacles, defilements and negative karmas.”

Alternatively, you can think, “All the buddhas manifested as Vajrasattva to purify me” or “My guru manifested as Vajrasattva to purify me. I’m

very fortunate to be able to do this practice; therefore, I'm going to do this practice for the benefit of all sentient beings." In this way, your motivation also contains meditation on the guru's kindness.

CONCLUDING MEDITATIONS

Vajrasattva says, "How's my darling?"! No, he says, "All defilements, negative karma and degenerated samaya vows you have collected during beginningless rebirths up to now are completely purified."

Next practice the last power, the power not to commit negative actions again.

Because of your promise, Guru Vajrasattva is extremely pleased with you; he melts into light and absorbs within you. Your own body, speech and mind become inseparable from Vajrasattva's vajra holy body, holy speech and holy mind.

You can also dedicate with the awareness that everything is like an illusion, like a dream.

In emptiness there is no I, no creator; there is no action of creating, there is no negative karma created. All other phenomena are also totally empty of existence from their own side.

With this awareness that everything is empty, dedicate the merits. "Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I achieve Guru Vajrasattva's enlightenment and lead all sentient beings to that enlightenment by myself alone."

Wednesday, February 10 (B)

AFTERNOON: VAJRASATTVA SESSION

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

For the motivation, generate regret for all your defilements, negative karma and downfalls; reflect on impermanence, with the strong thought that death can happen at any moment; then generate bodhicitta. Think in the way that I mentioned before.

Think, “One of the benefits of not dying so far is that I can do this Vajrasattva retreat and purify all my past negative karmas. It’s an unbelievable opportunity. How fortunate I am!”

As I mentioned before, now generate bodhicitta.

Think, “If I die now without purifying all these defilements, negative karma, downfalls and degenerated samaya vows, especially those created in relation to the guru, I’ll go to my next life carrying a burden of heavy negative karma the size of the earth. I will then endlessly experience the sufferings of samsara, the result of these negative karmas. Besides that, I will have no realization of the path to enlightenment. Besides the fact that I will not achieve enlightenment, or even liberation from samsara, I will not even achieve a good rebirth.

“Since every single sentient being is the source of all my past, present and future happiness, I’m going to do the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation so that I myself can achieve enlightenment in order to enlighten every single sentient being. I will free every single hell being, my kind mother, from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment. I will free every single preta being, my kind mother, from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment. I will free every single animal being, my kind mother, from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment. I will free every single human being, my kind mother, from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment. I will free every single asura being, my kind mother, from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment. I

will free every single sura being, my kind mother, from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment. I will free every single intermediate state being, my kind mother, from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment.”

We are also going to do the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation for the long life of all our gurus, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and for the accomplishment of their holy wishes. And if you have anybody that you want to help, such as family members or friends who are sick or have many problems or who have died, you can do the Vajrasattva practice for them.

CONCLUDING PRACTICES

Guru Vajrasattva says, “Son of the race, all your defilements, negative karma, downfalls and degenerated samaya vows are completely purified.” Generate very strong faith that it has happened just as Guru Vajrasattva says.

Practice the last power, the power not to commit negative actions again, by thinking, “From now on I will abstain from those negative karmas that I can. And I will abstain from the subtle negative karmas, which are very difficult to abstain from, for one day, one hour, one minute or at least a few seconds.”

Guru Vajrasattva, extremely pleased with your determination to do this practice of changing your mind and your actions, absorbs into you.

In emptiness there is no I, no creator. There is no action of creating. There is no negative karma created. All other phenomena are also totally empty from their own side. They are all empty—not space, but like space.

With continuous awareness of everything as empty, dedicate the merits. “Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I achieve Guru Vajrasattva’s enlightenment and lead all sentient beings to that enlightenment by myself alone.”

Please also dedicate to generate bodhicitta. “Due to the merits of the three times, *Jang chub sem chog rin po che . . .*”

Wednesday, February 10 (c)

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

VISUALIZATION WITH CALLING THE GURU FROM AFAR

Visualize your root virtuous friend above your crown and meditate on guru devotion. By looking at the guru as buddha, see him as buddha. “In essence, the guru is the encompassment of all the buddhas. The guru appears to me in this ordinary aspect,” which means in a form that shows the aspect of having suffering and delusions, “in the view of my ordinary, mistaken mind, in order to liberate me. He appears in this aspect in order to save me from the lower realms, from samsara, and from all the defilements and to bring me to enlightenment.”

After reciting *Calling the Guru from Afar*, recite the following two verses.

“May I never arise heresy even for one second in the actions of the glorious guru. With the devotion that sees whatever action is done as pure, may I receive the blessings of the guru in my heart.

“*Päl dän tsa wäi . . .*”

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

As I mentioned during previous sessions, your motivation for practicing Vajrasattva should also include practicing the power of regret. Generate a strong feeling of regret by reflecting on all the different types of negative karma and degenerated samaya vows that you need to purify. Then generate a strong thought of impermanence and death, remembering especially that death could happen at this moment. After that, generate strong bodhicitta. Dedicate your practice during this retreat, every mantra recited, purely for sentient beings, for you to achieve enlightenment in order to free every single sentient being—every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal, every human, every asura, every sura, every

intermediate state being—from all their suffering and its causes and bring them to enlightenment.

Also dedicate the retreat or the mantras you recite to the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and other virtuous friends and to the accomplishment of all their holy wishes.

TASTING TSOG

When you offer tsog on days when you have taken the Eight Mahayana Precepts, I suggest that instead of biting the tsog, just touch it with your finger and taste it in that way. You can taste the *bala* and *madana* in the same way.

Thursday, February 11

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

LAMA TSONGKHAPA'S PRACTICE OF THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS

Even though there are some people who are unable to do prostrations because there is not enough space in here, they still have the opportunity to recite the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas while sitting or standing. Reading the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas, which are in the prayer book, gives you an unbelievable opportunity to purify negative karma. As I mentioned the other day, reciting each name once purifies so many eons of negative karma. What we are trying to do here, not just with the Vajrasattva practice but through various means, is to purify our negative karma and defilements as much as possible and to collect extensive merit.

I once asked Denma Lochö Rinpoche why, while Lama Tsongkhapa did so much practice of the Thirty-five Buddhas, there is no mention of his having done the preliminary practice of Vajrasattva recitation many times. In Lama Tsongkhapa's life story you hear only that he did many hundreds of thousands of prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas. Lama Tsongkhapa actually saw the Thirty-five Buddhas in his cave at Wölka. When he first saw the Thirty-five Buddhas, he saw their holy bodies but they had no heads. It was only after Lama Tsongkhapa prefixed the name of each buddha with the title "tathagata" that he saw the Thirty-five Buddhas with heads. Tathagata, or *de zhin sheg pa* in Tibetan, could be translated into English as "Gone As It Is" or "Mind Gone in the Sky of Emptiness."

Only the holy mind of a buddha can directly see the two truths at the same time. While directly seeing the absolute truth, a buddha's holy mind can at the same time directly see the conventional truth. I'm not completely sure, but I think that higher bodhisattvas can see the two truths together, but cannot see them directly. Only a buddha's holy mind

can directly see the two truths at the same time. In the *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga*, the verse that praises Lama Tsongkhapa's knowledge refers to understanding directly and simultaneously all objects of knowledge, or the two truths, which is a special quality of the buddha's holy mind.

So, "Gone As It Is" means that the mind is flying, or is gone, in the sky of emptiness, directly perceiving the very nature of phenomena as it is.

After Lama Tsongkhapa added the title "de zhin sheg pa," he was able to see the Thirty-five Buddhas with their heads. Lama Tsongkhapa started this tradition. In the Sakya, Kagyu and Nyingma traditions, the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas are recited without the title "tathagata," or "de zhin sheg pa." Just the name is recited.

When I asked Denma Lochö Rinpoche this question about why there was no mention of Vajrasattva, but only mention of Lama Tsongkhapa's having done practice of the Thirty-five Buddhas so many times, Rinpoche answered that it is because if you do the Thirty-five Buddhas practice just one time well, you can purify the very heavy negative karma of the five uninterrupted negative karmas (having killed your father, your mother or an arhat; caused blood to flow from a Buddha; or caused disunity among the Sangha). All these can be purified by doing confession with the Thirty-five Buddhas practice well just once. Rinpoche gave this as the reason for Lama Tsongkhapa doing so many prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas.

There are also stories of the lamrim lineage lamas doing many prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas. Je Drubkhangpa did one thousand prostrations a day. His disciple, Purchog Jampa Rinpoche—a very high lama at Sera Monastery and an embodiment of Maitreya Buddha—did three hundred prostrations every day even when he was very old. Lama Atisha's life story mentions that he was still doing prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas when he was showing the aspect of being very old and shaky. It was said that even though he was old, either Purchog Jampa Rinpoche or Lama Atisha, I don't remember which, did prostrations like a running wolf.

In *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, it mentions that Lama Tsongkhapa realized emptiness and achieved many other realizations through doing prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas.

The great advantage of having memorized the Thirty-five Buddhas

prayer is that you can recite it in the car while you are going to work. Since you spend so much time driving back and forth between home and work, it is good to spend the time doing prayers or reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas. You can also recite it when you are flying by plane. You can recite the prayer from a book, but it is so much easier if you can recite it by heart because it means that you can purify at any time. Since reciting the names even once purifies so many eons of negative karma, it's a great loss if you don't recite them. And here, if you don't recite while everyone else is reciting, you yourself incur a great loss. It also means that you will take longer to purify your negative karmas and to have realizations. It will take you longer to achieve enlightenment, which means that the numberless other sentient beings who have karmic connections with you, and depend on you, have to suffer longer.

Therefore, you must realize what a precious opportunity you have right now. This present time is the most precious time. If you don't take this opportunity to practice, it is a great loss. There is no greater loss for you than this. As I mentioned the other day, it's a greater loss than losing a million dollars. It's a greater loss than losing zillions of dollars. When their business collapses and they lose a million dollars, some people become crazy with *lung* and want to jump off a bridge or off the roof of a building. Such a loss is nothing! What you lose is just something material; it means nothing. But here, if you don't take this incredible opportunity to practice, to purify and to collect merit in such an easy way, there is no greater loss than this. This is a much greater loss than losing billions of dollars or skies filled with diamonds or gold. Even if you own skies filled with diamonds, gold or wish-fulfilling gems, that alone cannot purify your negative karma or stop your rebirth in the lower realms. However, even if you don't own any of this wealth, reciting Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's name just once has the power to purify 80,000 eons of negative karma.

Reciting the name of any of the Thirty-five Buddhas can purify not simply negative karma but many thousands of eons of negative karma. Therefore, even losing that much wealth is nothing when compared to the loss of missing this chance to practice the Thirty-five Buddhas. This is such an easy way to purify and to collect extensive merit. Simply by reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas, you can achieve unbelievable purification.

*CALLING THE GURU FROM AFAR: THE MEANING
OF JIN GYI LOB*

As His Holiness often mentions in his teachings, in the expression *jin gyi lob*, *jin* means glorious and *lob* means transforming the mind into the path, into Dharma. Transforming the mind into the path means that you transform your mind into guru devotion through *seeing* the virtuous friend as buddha by *looking* at the virtuous friend as buddha. After transforming your ordinary thoughts toward the virtuous friend into guru devotion, you transform your mind into renunciation of samsara; you renounce the attachment that clings to samsara, to samsaric happiness and perfections. You then transform your mind from the self-cherishing thought into bodhicitta. You also transform your mind from ignorance, the concept of inherent existence, into the wisdom that sees all phenomena as empty (this wisdom includes the selflessness of the person and the selflessness of the aggregates). You then transform your mind from impure thought into pure thought. With this thought, you see everything as pure, as a manifestation of the deity. You see the place as the deity's mandala; your own body and the bodies of others as the deity's holy body, and sounds as mantras, the deity's holy speech. You transform your mind into the completion of the path, up to enlightenment.

You request blessings to transform your mind (*lob*) into these glorious, or magnificent (*jin*), paths. The expression *jin gyi lob* involves the transformation of your mind into the whole path, from guru devotion up to enlightenment. Each time we say *jin gyi lob* in *Calling the Guru from Afar*, we are making single-pointed requests to the guru. We are begging the guru to transform our mind right now, on this cushion, in this session. And we are not talking about transforming mind in general, some mind in the sky, but our own mind.

At the end of *Calling the Guru from Afar* recite the following verses.

“May I never arise heresy for even one second towards the actions of the glorious guru. With the devotion that sees whatever actions are done as pure, may I receive the blessings of the guru in my heart.

“*Päl dän tsa wäi . . .*”

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

Generate a strong feeling of regret, because for purification, this is the most important of the four remedial powers. How much you purify, or lessen, your negative karma depends on how much regret you are able to generate by reflecting on the shortcomings of negative karma—of the ten non-virtuous actions, breaking samaya vows, and negativity collected in relation to the virtuous friend, the heaviest negative karma of all.

The power of regret, or of putting the blame on the negative karma, fits very well into the specific motivation for doing Vajrasattva practice.

The other place you can do this practice is when you begin the mantra recitation. You can begin by practicing this power, by generating a strong feeling of regret. Also, in the long sadhana, before you recite the mantra, you request your crown Vajrasattva to purify all your defilements, negative karmas and degenerated samaya—this can also be part of practicing the power of regret. With the recitation of the mantra, you can take time to think in more detail about all the negative karma that you have created. You can expand the subject by thinking of the various ways in which you have created negative karma.

Now meditate to generate a strong motivation of bodhicitta for doing the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation, ensuring that your motivation includes generation of the thought of regret.

CONCLUDING PRACTICES

Think, “From now on, the vows that I can keep, I will keep; the vows that are extremely difficult to keep, I will keep for one day, one hour, one minute, or at least a few seconds.”

Guru Vajrasattva, extremely pleased by your determination not to commit negative actions again, absorbs within you. Your body, speech and mind become inseparable from Vajrasattva’s vajra holy body, vajra holy speech and vajra holy mind.

In emptiness there is no I, no creator; there is no action of creating; there is no negative karma created. All phenomena are totally empty of existence from their own side. While your mind is in the state of emptiness, while you are seeing all phenomena as empty, as they are empty in reality, dedicate the merits.

DEDICATION

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I be able to bring benefit as limitless as the sky to all sentient beings, just as Lama Tsongkhapa did, by having the same qualities within me that Lama Tsongkhapa had, from now on in all my future lifetimes.”

It is extremely important to do this dedication every day in your daily life. You can understand the importance of this prayer by reading Lama Tsongkhapa’s life story and especially by studying his sutra and tantra teachings. Actually, you can understand its importance just by understanding lamrim teachings correctly.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, no matter which universe, world, country, area or place I am, simply by my being there, may the sentient beings in that universe, world, country, area or place never ever be reborn in the lower realms. May they immediately be liberated from all diseases, spirit harms, negative karma and defilements, actualize the whole path to enlightenment, especially bodhicitta, and quickly achieve enlightenment.

“Simply by my being there, may the sentient beings in that universe, world, country, area or place who are blind immediately be able to see; may those who are lame immediately be able to walk; may those in a coma immediately wake up and recover; and may those who have cancer or AIDS immediately be healed. Simply by being there in that universe, world, country, area or place, may I be able to bring all these benefits. May I bring about whatever is most beneficial. May those with relationship problems become harmonious. May those who need to find a guru find a guru. May those who need teachings be able to receive teachings. May those living in poverty immediately receive wealth. May those unable to find a job find one. May everyone achieve perfect happiness. In this way, may I become wish-fulfilling for all sentient beings, like the bodhisattva Kshitigarbha, who brings infinite benefit to sentient beings.

“I will dedicate all the merits as the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three times have dedicated their merits, and as Samantabhadra and Manjughosha realize. I dedicate all my merits in the best way to quickly enlighten all sentient beings.”

One piece of advice from His Holiness Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche is for you, at the end of your practice, to give away all your merits to all sentient beings. Give all your merits, including all the happiness up to enlightenment that results from those merits, to all sentient beings. Give everything to every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal, every human being, every asura being, every sura being and every intermediate state being.

Doing this, we again collect infinite merit, which we now dedicate in the following way. “Due to these merits, may whatever suffering sentient beings have ripen upon me, and may whatever happiness and merit I have ripen upon all other living beings.”

LAMA ÖSEL’S LONG-LIFE PRAYER

You don’t need to recite the HRIH at the beginning of Lama Ösel’s long-life prayer. It was recited in the past, but there is no need to recite it from now on.

MULTIPLYING MANTRAS

After reciting the mantras that multiply each merit 100,000 times, recite the name of the buddha that not only increases each merit 100,000 times but also causes whatever prayers we have done to be actualized (. . . NGO WA DANG MÖN LAM . . .)

Then pray, “Due to the blessings of the eminent buddhas and bodhisattvas, due to unbetraying dependent arising and due to my special attitude—“attitude” not “altitude”!—may all my pure prayers be accomplished immediately.”

Friday, February 12 (A)

AFTERNOON: VAJRASATTVA SESSION

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

Think of the definition of negative karma, or non-virtuous action. It is an action that results in suffering, an action motivated by a non-virtuous thought—by ignorance, anger, and especially the attachment that clings to this life. “Ignorance” here means, in particular, ignorance of karma. Actions motivated by any of these non-virtuous thoughts are transformed into non-virtue.

Think, “In one day how many actions of my body, speech and mind became non-virtues? Taking into account the above definition, almost every one of my actions have been non-virtuous. And it has been like this for weeks, months, years; it has been like this from birth up to now, and throughout beginningless rebirths. I have committed numberless times all these actions that only result in suffering, especially the ripening aspect result of rebirth in the lower realms.

“On top of this, how many times have I committed the ten non-virtuous actions? How many of these ten non-virtues do I commit each day? Besides the negative karmas of killing, stealing and sexual misconduct, how many times each day do I commit the non-virtuous action of gossiping? How many times do I commit the negative karma of covetousness? Of ill will? In my everyday life, how many times do I commit these negative karmas of body, speech and mind? I have committed these negative karmas an inconceivable number of times in this life and I have committed so many more during my beginningless rebirths. I haven’t finished experiencing the suffering results of numberless negative karmas.

“On top of this, even when I have taken vows, I have broken them. Even when I have taken pratimoksha, bodhisattva or tantric vows, I have broken the root and branch vows. How many times do I break my vows

in one day? How many times have I broken my vows in this life? How many times in past lives?

“And how many times have I created heavy negative karma in relation to each of my virtuous friends? How many negative karmas have I created by breaking samaya, disregarding advice, generating heresy and negative thoughts and getting angry? How many times have I done this in this life? How many times have I done this in beginningless past lives? Even though I might not have created all these heavy negative karmas in this life, I have created them in past lives.

“Not only is my death certain to happen, but it could happen at any moment, even before this session is over. Before this session finishes, I could be in the lower realms, I could be experiencing the heaviest suffering of samsara in a terrifying hell realm, just as Buddha explains in the texts. I could be there at any minute. And with all the heavy negative karmas I have created, it is uncertain when I will again have the opportunity to practice Dharma once I have fallen down into a hell realm. Therefore, without even a second’s delay, I must purify all my defilements and negative karma.

“I am extremely fortunate to have met the Buddhadharma, especially the skillful tantric method of the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation, with which I can purify my negative karma. Just as one small spark can burn a whole forest, Vajrasattva meditation-recitation can purify all the negative karma collected over many eons. And purifying this negative karma is the best thing to do with my life right now.

“The numberless hell beings, who are the source of all my past, present and future happiness, are experiencing unimaginable suffering in the hell realms. I must free them from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment.

“The numberless hungry ghosts, who are the source of all my past, present and future happiness, are experiencing unimaginable suffering. I must free them from all their suffering and lead them to enlightenment.

“The numberless animals, each of whom is so kind and so precious, the source of all my past, present and future happiness, are experiencing unimaginable suffering. I must free them from all their suffering and bring them to full enlightenment.

“The numberless human beings, each of whom is the source of all my past, present and future happiness, are experiencing unimaginable suffer-

ing. I must free them from all their suffering and its cause and bring them to enlightenment.

“The numberless asura beings, each of them is so kind and so precious, the source of all my past, present and future happiness, are experiencing unimaginable suffering. I must free them from all their suffering and its cause and bring them to enlightenment.

“The numberless sura beings, each of whom is the source of all my past, present and future happiness, are experiencing unimaginable suffering. I must liberate them from all their suffering and its cause and bring them to full enlightenment.

“The numberless intermediate state beings, each of whom is so kind and so precious, the source of all my past, present and future happiness, are experiencing unimaginable suffering. I must liberate them from all their suffering and its cause and bring them to enlightenment.

“To free all sentient beings from all the unimaginable suffering of samsara and its cause and bring them to enlightenment as quickly as possible, I myself must achieve full enlightenment as quickly as possible. Therefore, I must purify all my defilements, negative karma and downfalls, which are obstacles to achieving realizations of the path to enlightenment. It is for this reason that I am going to practice Vajrasattva meditation-recitation.”

Think also that you are practicing Vajrasattva meditation-recitation for the long life of the Buddha of Compassion, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and other virtuous friends. You are doing the practice to pacify obstacles to their lives and to accomplish immediately all their holy wishes.

And you can also dedicate your practice of Vajrasattva meditation-recitation to a specific person, to a family member or a friend who is sick or dying or who has already passed away.

CONCLUDING PRACTICES

Look at everything—subject, action, object—as an illusion. Looking at everything, even Vajrasattva, as being like a dream, an illusion, dedicate the merits.

When you don't examine carefully, everything looks as if it is there; but when you examine, it is not there. Everything appears to be inherently

existent, even though there is not the slightest inherent existence there. All phenomena are merely labeled by the mind, so look at everything as an illusion, as being like a dream, then dedicate the merits.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings—which are like a dream, an illusion, and appear to be inherently existent even though they are not—may the I—which is like a dream, an illusion, and appears to be inherently existent even though it is not, even though the I has never had inherent existence—achieve Guru Vajrasattva’s enlightenment—which is like a dream, an illusion, and appears to be inherently existent even though it is empty of inherent existence, even though it has never had inherent existence—lead all sentient beings—who are also like a dream, an illusion, and appear to be inherently existent even though they are completely empty of inherent existence—to that enlightenment—which is also like a dream, an illusion, and appears to be inherently existent even though it is not—by myself alone—who is also like a dream, an illusion, and appears to be inherently existent even though it is empty of inherent existence.”

Meditate on emptiness either during the Vajrasattva recitation-meditation or during the dedication. From the four powers, meditating on emptiness is the power of the remedy. Meditating for one second on emptiness is like an atomic bomb, it is unbelievably powerful in purifying delusions and negative karmas. Even thinking about emptiness, the very nature of phenomena, for one second brings powerful purification.

Even though all virtuous actions are the practice of the power of the remedy, virtuous activities without meditation on emptiness are like guns as weapons; even one second’s meditation on emptiness is like an atomic bomb.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, from now on, may every action of my body, speech and mind and everything that happens to me be most beneficial for other sentient beings. Whether I am rich or poor, am healthy or unhealthy, have cancer or do not have cancer, have a good reputation or a bad reputation, am praised or criticized, experience gain or loss, am living or dying, and even if I am born in the hell realms, may everything I experience in my life become most beneficial, through my becoming

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enlightened and then causing all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment in the quickest way possible.

“I dedicate all these merits in the best way to quickly enlighten all sentient beings, as the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three times have dedicated their merits, and as Manjughosha and Samantabhadra realize.”

Friday, February 12 (B)

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

CONCLUSION OF THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS CONFESSION PRAYER

When you have finished the prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas, with completion of the recitation of the Thirty-five Buddhas' names and the prayer of confessing downfalls, rather than simply stopping when the prayer is finished, stay a little while in silence and think very strongly that everything—all the defilements, negative karma and downfalls—has been purified through the nectar beams emitted by the merit field and through the power of the Thirty-five Buddhas' names. After that, think of emptiness, and then dedicate by saying, “Due to the merits I have collected by doing prostrations, making offerings, confessing, rejoicing, requesting the guru to have stable life and to turn the Dharma wheel, may I achieve enlightenment in order to enlighten all sentient beings.”

Right after the prayer is completed, stay a little while in silence and do these meditations, then recite the dedication prayer. It is very good to practice in this way. Reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas purifies many negative karmas, but the practice is more powerful if you concentrate strongly in this way at the end.

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

Generate a strong motivation of bodhicitta. Dedicate your Vajrasattva practice to everyone—to every single hell being, hungry ghost, animal, human, asura, sura, and intermediate state being. Your bodhicitta should be based upon reflection on all your defilements, negative karma and degenerated samaya vows and on impermanence and death, that death can happen at any moment. The best solution is to immediately do the Vajrasattva practice, which can purify all these negative karmas.

DEDICATION

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, *Jang chub sem chog* . . .

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I be able to bring benefit like the sky to all sentient beings as Lama Tsongkhapa did, by having the same qualities within me that Lama Tsongkhapa had, from now on in all my future lifetimes.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, in whatever universe, world, country, area or place I am, simply by my being there, may the sentient beings in that universe, world, country, area or place never ever be reborn in the lower realms. May they be liberated from all disease, spirit harm, negative karma and defilements and be able to actualize the whole path to enlightenment, especially bodhicitta, as quickly as possible.

“Simply by my being in that universe, world, country, area or place, may the blind be able to see, the deaf be able to hear, the lame be able to walk. May those with sicknesses and those possessed by spirits that make them crazy and out of control immediately recover. May those with incurable diseases such as cancer, AIDS and so forth recover immediately. May those who are experiencing poverty or having difficulties finding the means of living find wealth. May those who are jobless be able to find jobs. May those who are looking for a guru be able to find a perfectly qualified guru and be able to receive teachings. May those who want to practice Dharma, to do retreat, be able to receive all the necessary conditions. May those who live in vows, the Sangha, be able to receive all the necessary conditions, the means of living and so forth, to support the continuation of their practice. May the places where there are fighting and war immediately have peace, happiness and harmony. Simply by my being there in that universe, world, country, area or place, may everyone have perfect peace and happiness. Just like Kshitigarbha, may I be able to bring infinite benefit to sentient beings.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may those who have passed away whose name was given to me or for whom I promised to pray, those who

rely upon me, immediately be liberated from the unimaginable suffering of the lower realms and be reborn in a pure land where they can become enlightened. Or may they receive only a perfect human body now and in all their future lifetimes and achieve enlightenment quickly by meeting a perfectly qualified Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I, the members of my family, all the students and benefactors of this organization, especially those who bear much hardship and sacrifice their lives to serve others and the teaching of Buddha through this organization, and also those who rely upon me, whose name was given to me and those for whom I promised to pray, have long lives and be healthy. May all our wishes that accord with the Dharma succeed immediately.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may all the meditation centers and the public service projects, such as the hospices, leprosy project and Dharma publications, become wish-fulfilling for all sentient beings. May they immediately pacify all the sufferings of body and mind of sentient beings and bring perfect happiness to others. Through receiving all their needs, may all the meditation centers be able to spread the complete teaching of Lama Tsongkhapa in the minds of all sentient beings. Through receiving all their needs, may all the projects of this organization succeed immediately. And through receiving everything needed, may the 500-foot Maitreya Buddha statue be completed as quickly as possible. May all these projects and statues cause all sentient beings to generate loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta in their minds. Due to this, may no sentient being experience famine, war, disease or any other undesirable thing; may no sentient being experience danger from the elements through earthquakes, floods, fires and so forth. May all these centers, projects, statues and so forth be able to cause all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“May all the virtuous friends, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Lama Ösel Rinpoche, have stable lives. May all their holy wishes be accomplished immediately. Like Lama Tsongkhapa, may Lama Ösel bring benefit like the sky to all sentient beings by showing the same qualities as Lama Tsongkhapa.”

MULTIPLYING MANTRAS

Recite the mantras to increase each merit we collected today one hundred thousand times.

The last mantra (. . . NGO WA DANG MÖN LAM . . .) not only increases each merit 100,000 times but also actualizes all the prayers that we have made.

“Due to the blessings of the eminent buddhas and bodhisattvas, due to infallible dependent arising, and due to my special attitude, may all my pure prayers be accomplished immediately.”

CONTINUING VAJRASATTVA RETREAT AT HOME

Those who cannot stay to finish the Vajrasattva retreat but wish to continue to do the practice at home are most welcome to do so. Generally, the preliminary retreat instructions in the texts advise that one should finish a retreat in one place. Even when you are doing the preliminary practice of prostrations, when you are counting 100,000, 200,000, 300,000, 400,000 or whatever, the texts say that you should finish at one place. Generally, this might be a skillful means to ensure that you complete the practice, because there will be fewer obstacles if you do it in the one place. I think the reason might be that there are fewer obstacles, which means that you can continue the practice every day and complete it.

However, practices can be done in a loose way or a strict way. When doing retreat in a strict way and when visualizing yourself as a deity, the commentaries normally mention that you have to finish the retreat where you begin it; you have to finish the retreat on the same seat.

Recently Lillian Too from Malaysia was carrying a cushion with her, and she said, “I am carrying my cushion back home, so this way I can do the retreat on the same seat.” This thought never entered my mind. It’s a completely new idea.

In Vajrasattva practice, however, you visualize Vajrasattva on your crown; you don’t visualize yourself as Vajrasattva. And if you are not visualizing yourself as a deity, you can do the practice on different seats. There is no question of loose or strict retreat here; this is the normal instruction. Since in the case of Vajrasattva you are not visualizing yourself as Vajrasattva, those who cannot finish the retreat here can complete the 100,000

mantras by doing the practice every day at home, if they wish. I think it is extremely worthwhile to do this, because the Vajrasattva practice then gets done, and as we have been thinking in the motivations, you never know when death will happen. I think it is very good if those who have to leave before the end want to continue the practice at home every day and finish their 100,000 mantras.

There are different versions of the Vajrasattva practice, including the very short sadhana that we have been using for one or two sessions each day. At home you can use whichever length Vajrasattva sadhana you like. I heard that some people who have to leave because they have to return to work were asking whether it is possible to continue the retreat at home. I think that continuing the retreat is extremely wise and extremely good, and I thank you very much.

Saturday, February 13 (A)

WEEKEND TEACHING

LIVING WITH COMPASSION

What is it that makes your life easy and free of confusion and problems? What is the source of all happiness and peace? What brings happiness and peace into your daily life and every happiness up to enlightenment, allowing you to bring happiness and peace to numberless sentient beings? It's your attitude—the unmistakable attitude with which you live your life, the attitude by which you live your life according to its meaning, fulfilling your purpose of having been born human.

What is that best attitude that gives the most meaning to your life? It is living with compassion, for the benefit of others.

When your attitude is that of simply seeking your own happiness, the attitude itself attracts many difficulties and creates obstacles to your own success. Even if you are trying to serve others, when your basic motivation is that of seeking your own happiness, you experience many ego clashes and personality problems in trying to work with other people. Whether you are working in a meditation center or an office, if you are self-centered, you will bring all kinds of useless garbage into your life, especially when associating or dealing with others. All kinds of emotional problems will arise.

So even though the work you are doing—working for the welfare of others—is good, your self-centered mind generates all sorts of harmful, unnecessary emotional thoughts—thoughts that are totally useless as far as your job is concerned; thoughts that make others unhappy and angry and disturb their minds. Thoughts such as anger and jealousy create much disharmony between yourself and others. These harmful emotions impede the success of your work, bring no peace, happiness or harmony, interfere with your work and your health, and can even create obstacles to your

life, to your very survival. By leading you to suicide, such thoughts can even cause your death—you're not killed by someone else; you're killed by your own emotional mind.

The moment you begin to cherish yourself is the moment you have created an obstacle to success in working for others. Self-cherishing brings constant problems. Broadly speaking, if you have self-cherishing, you cannot develop bodhicitta. As long as you do not renounce self-cherishing, you cannot develop the holy mind of cherishing others. That means you cannot attain enlightenment, cannot work perfectly for the sake of all the numberless sentient beings.

Thus you can see how the self-centered mind is the main obstacle that prevents you from benefiting others. It is from the self-centered mind that desire, anger and all other negative, emotional thoughts arise, obscuring your mind, blocking your wisdom. Even though there may exist many methods for solving a particular problem and you have the potential to apply them, your self-cherishing attitude totally obstructs your wisdom and prevents you from either seeing or applying them. These emotional thoughts obscure your mind and cause it to hallucinate. Therefore, you cannot perceive the methods that would bring happiness, peace and harmony. Even though, simply by changing your attitude—something that your mind is quite capable of doing—you could apply those methods and solve your problems very easily, somehow you never see it or are unable to do it.

Also, when you are not clear about the purpose of life, you are never clear when it comes to making decisions that affect your life. You always hesitate and are always in danger of making the wrong decision. When your single purpose for living is nothing other than the benefit of others, it is very easy to make the right decision. It is easy because you are very clear about why you are alive.

If there is compassion in your heart, you do not harm others. All other sentient beings receive no harm from you, the one, individual person. Instead of receiving harm from you, they receive peace and happiness. Not only do you not harm them, but out of compassion and according to your ability, you benefit them as much as you can. On the basis of not harming, you benefit. Therefore, numberless sentient beings receive so much peace and happiness from your compassion.

So whether or not numberless sentient beings receive that great peace

and happiness from you is entirely up to you. Giving great peace and happiness to others is completely up to you, because it depends upon what you do with your mind, whether or not you practice compassion towards others. Your own mind makes the decision—either you keep going from life to life harming sentient beings directly or indirectly, or you change your attitude from ego to compassion and offer sentient beings all peace and happiness up to enlightenment. All this depends completely on what you do with your own mind.

Therefore, each of us here is responsible for the peace and happiness of all sentient beings, of each sentient being—all happiness up to that of enlightenment.

The purpose of our lives is, on the basis of abstaining from harm, to bring happiness to others, to be useful for others, to free them from all suffering and bring them all happiness. One kind of happiness is that of this life, but long term happiness—happiness in all coming future lives—is much more important than that. And while causing others to experience happiness in all future lives is highly meaningful, it is even more important to lead them to the everlasting happiness of total liberation—cessation of the entire round of suffering and its causes, delusion and karma. This is more important than simply the long term happiness of future lives, because the happiness of future lives is still contaminated happiness, while the happiness of liberation never diminishes or degenerates. It is the complete cessation of suffering and its causes. Once the seed, or imprint, of delusion has been eradicated, there is no cause for delusion, and therefore suffering, to ever arise again.

But even more important than that is to bring all sentient beings into the peerless happiness of full enlightenment—the cessation of even the subtle faults of mind, the subtle defilements, and the completion of all realizations. However, saying that bringing others to enlightenment is the most important thing does not mean that you should not try to give others the happiness of this life. It means that starting from the intention of enlightening all sentient beings, according to your own ability, you should offer whatever service you possibly can to all other sentient beings. In other words, on the basis of bringing the happiness of this life to others, you lead them to the ultimate happiness of full enlightenment. Or, on the basis of offering others the greatest benefit possible, that of bringing them to enlightenment, you also offer whatever you can of those previous services.

ACHIEVING ENLIGHTENMENT

In order to be able to do perfect work for the numberless other sentient beings, eliminate all their sufferings and lead them from happiness to happiness to full enlightenment, first you have to achieve the omniscient mind of enlightenment yourself. How do you achieve enlightenment? It doesn't happen without cause or by practicing the wrong cause, by following the wrong path. Nor does it happen if you practice an unmistakable method incompletely, for example, spending your entire life—twenty, thirty, forty, fifty . . . eighty, ninety years of life—just doing breathing meditation. Even though breathing meditation is recommended as a tool to calm your mind down and might be useful for developing single-pointed concentration and making your mind peaceful, that alone does not get you anywhere, does not transform your mind into virtue or diminish or eradicate delusions.

To terminate delusions, you need to realize emptiness. To eradicate ignorance, the root, or cause, of all the delusions, you have to realize emptiness. So how can you do that just by practicing breathing meditation? How can you escape from samsara by spending your whole life watching your breath? There's no way. Spending your entire life practicing mindfulness of the body, watching your abdomen rise and fall—after you've eaten a big meal or when your belly is empty! Anyway, I'm joking. Spending your whole life developing awareness of your bodily sensations might help you prevent strong anger or strong desire from arising at the time, but even if you spend your whole life with your mind watching your mind, your mind meditating on your mind, if you meditate on only the conventional nature of mind and not its ultimate nature, if you simply practice single-pointed concentration on the conventional nature of mind, how can that stop ignorance? How can that cut the root of samsara? There's no way.

Spending your time doing that is like trying to stop a poisonous plant from growing by planting another one next to it. It's like trying to destroy a poisonous plant by putting cotton wool alongside it. Even if you spend your whole life practicing mind concentrating on mind, how can that eradicate the root of samsara, the concept of the inherently-existent I, the inherently-existent aggregates? It's impossible. It would not affect that one bit; it would not do anything.

The root of samsara is the perverted mind (Tib. *log she*). While there is no I on the aggregates—not even a merely labeled I on the base, the aggregates—after the I is merely labeled by the mind, it appears to our hallucinating mind as if it's *on* the aggregates—like a brocade tablecloth covering a table, like a book lying on a table. You see that it is *there* on the aggregates—which is the same as saying that the I appears from its own side—the merely labeled I, the I that is merely labeled by your mind, appears back to your mind, your hallucinating mind, as if it exists from its own side. Then you allow your mind to believe that it is true. You allow your mind to hold on to that inherently-existent I. That concept is *log she*, the totally perverted mind, the totally wrong concept, the totally hallucinating mind. The *only way* to eliminate this is to recognize what it is that the concept is holding on to, to recognize the way this concept apprehends the I.

When you don't investigate, it looks like it's there, but when you examine it more closely, you see that it is not there. While your mind is unaware, not analyzing, it looks as if it's there, but when your mind investigates, it cannot be found either on the aggregates or anywhere else. It is totally non-existent.

Even though you cannot find the merely labeled I on the base, on the aggregates, you can find it where the aggregates are. Where there is the base, there you will find the merely labeled I. You just can't find it *on* the base.

The object that this ignorance, the root of samsara, the concept of inherent existence, apprehends, what it holds onto, cannot be found either on the aggregates or anywhere else. It is totally non-existent, it has *never* existed since beginningless time. From beginningless rebirths, the inherently existent I has never existed; it doesn't exist now, and it has never existed.

All buddhas realize that there is no inherently existent I, even though the merely labeled I, merely labeled actions, merely labeled objects, merely labeled hell, merely labeled enlightenment, merely labeled path, merely labeled samsara, merely labeled nirvana, merely labeled happiness, merely labeled suffering, merely labeled virtue, merely labeled non-virtue—which in reality exist merely in name and are completely empty of inherent existence—are covered by our hallucinating view with the appearance of inherent existence. Our hallucinating view covers everything—the merely

labeled I, merely labeled actions, merely labeled objects, merely labeled enemies, merely labeled friends, merely labeled money, merely labeled jobs, the whole thing—all phenomena, which exist in mere name and are empty of inherent existence, with the appearance of inherent existence. This is how it is; this is our world. But what the numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas who have realized emptiness see is that all these appearances are completely non-existent; that there is not the slightest atom of inherent existence anywhere.

So, to go back to what I was saying before, even if you spend your entire life watching your mind, single-pointedly concentrating on your mind, that alone will not have the slightest effect on the root of samsara. It will give no harm to your ignorance; your ignorance will remain very comfortable, with its entourage of the delusions very well established. That kind of meditation alone can never help liberate you from samsara; it does nothing.

To make it impossible for delusions to arise, you have to eradicate their seed. To prevent the cause of samsara, delusion and karma, from ever arising, to make sure that ignorance, attachment and anger never arise at all, ever again, you have to eradicate the seed of delusion, which is in the nature of imprints on the continuity of your consciousness, according to the Prasangika school of Buddhist philosophy, the merely labeled I. Only by realizing emptiness, by developing the wisdom that directly perceives emptiness, can you eradicate the seed of delusion. Nothing else can directly do this.

Therefore, if you spend your entire life just doing breathing meditation—or even “mind concentrating on mind” meditation, which has nothing to do with the ultimate nature of mind—you cannot remove the seed of delusion or put a final end to the delusions, and you certainly can’t reach enlightenment. That’s totally out of the question.

In order to attain enlightenment, you have to practice all the methods without exception. Not only that, you have to practice these methods in the right order, without mixing them up. If you practice them out of order you cannot attain enlightenment. To reach full enlightenment, to actualize the lamrim, the steps of the path to enlightenment, you have to actualize the graduated path of the practitioner of highest capability. Doing that depends upon your having actualized as a foundation the graduated path of the practitioner of intermediate capability. That in turn

depends upon your having prepared by actualizing the graduated path of the practitioner of least capability.

GURU DEVOTION

I was thinking to read a little from Lama Tsongkhapa's *Great Exposition of the Steps of the Path (Lamrim Chenmo)*. I was actually thinking of reading the entire text—perhaps in fifteen minutes!

Anyway, you need to actualize the graduated path of the practitioner of least capability in order to actualize the graduated path of the practitioner of intermediate capability, and for that, as Lama Tsongkhapa mentions in his short lamrim text, *The Foundation of All Good Qualities*, you need to see that correct devotion to the kind guru, who is the foundation of all good qualities, is the root of the path. That is the foundation of all realizations, from the graduated path of the practitioner of least capability, from the realization of the perfect human rebirth, all the way up to enlightenment. That is not only the foundation of all realizations; it is also the foundation of every good thing that ever happens in your life, of any happiness you have ever experienced, in past lives, in this life, and in all future lives up to enlightenment. Every good thing, every single happiness, comes from that field that is the guru. Therefore, correct devotion to your guru is the root of the path.

The text continues: “By clearly seeing this and applying great effort, please bless me to rely upon him with great respect.”

The words “great effort” here have deep significance. What Lama Tsongkhapa is saying here is that seeing your virtuous friend as pure, as buddha, has to come with much effort from your own side. Seeing your guru as buddha doesn't come from his side, independently. It has to come from your own side, and with much effort. Seeing him as pure takes much, continual effort. Seeing him as pure, as having eradicated all the errors of mind and possessing all the good qualities, takes not just a few days, not just an hour's meditation session, not just two or three months of meditation, but year after year, life after life, of effort. This is how much effort it takes to be able to practice guru devotion with thought and action correctly. That's what this teaching means. Not just a few minutes' practice then stop; an hour's practice, then stop; a year's practice, then stop. Not like that.

However, this is not the main thing I wanted to talk about right now.

I can deal with that another time. I also wanted to go into the nine attitudes of guru devotion that Lama Tsongkhapa explained in the *Lamrim Chenmo*. How to correctly devote yourself to your guru with those nine attitudes. So I can do that another time.

THE PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH

What I want to talk about now is what Lama Tsongkhapa mentions in the second verse of *The Foundation of All Good Qualities*, that on the basis of correct guru devotion, we should understand that this time not only have we found a precious human body, which in itself is extremely rare, but one that is qualified by eight freedoms and ten riches, which is much more rare. And specifically, at this time we have met the precious Buddhadharma and a virtuous friend revealing not only the unmistakable path but also the complete path, with nothing missing. Therefore, we have every opportunity to practice all the steps of the entire path to enlightenment. This is what we have received, just this once.

When you are born in the hell realms, at that time you encounter all the obstacles. This time you have all the opportunities to practice Dharma. Whatever happiness you want—any great meaning of this life, the happiness of future lives, liberation from samsara, the full enlightenment of buddhahood—whichever of these you want, you can achieve with this present perfect human body. What you want is happiness; what you don't want is suffering. So with this highly meaningful perfect human body you can abandon all the causes of suffering and create all the causes of happiness, because all happiness comes only from virtue, only from Dharma, and all suffering comes only from non-virtue. As Nagarjuna explained, actions born from attachment, anger and ignorance are non-virtuous—from those, all suffering transmigrators arise—whereas actions born from non-attachment, non-anger and non-ignorance are virtuous—from those, all happy transmigrators arise.

Therefore, what you should do is practice only Dharma, nothing else, because happiness is what you want. Since that is your wish, you should create only virtue, you should practice only Dharma. Not only that, but you must practice Dharma in this life. You cannot leave it for future lives because it will be extremely difficult to find such an opportunity again. After this, it will be hard to receive such a perfect human body

as you have now, with which you can achieve all the different levels of happiness beyond this life—the happiness of future lives, liberation from samsara and full enlightenment. With this body you can achieve whatever you want, but you have found it only this once and such a body will be extremely difficult to find again in the future.

IMPERMANENCE AND DEATH

Not only should you practice Dharma in this life, but you must practice it right now. Not only is death certain, but it can come at any time, even today, even at this very moment. Therefore, you should practice Dharma right now, and you should practice only Dharma, because at the time of death nothing else will help. Your entire family and even your own body, which of all sentient beings' bodies you cherish the most, have to be left behind. No matter how many friends you have, how much wealth, none of it can be carried into your future lives. Naked, your consciousness goes alone into your next life. As many lamas have mentioned in their lamrim teachings, when you pull a hair from butter, it slips out with no butter attached. Like that, your bare consciousness will go into your next life, therefore, at the time of death nothing other than Buddhadharma can be of benefit. Furthermore, only Dharma can benefit your next life and those beyond. Therefore, practice Dharma and only Dharma.

[Rinpoche reads from a text by Lama Tsongkhapa.] Lama Tsongkhapa says that at the time of death, nothing other than the holy Dharma can be of benefit. There are three things to think. When you see you have to go to the next life, away from this life, away from this world, even if at the time of death you are surrounded by your relatives and friends, no matter how much they love you, how much affection they have for you, none of them can go with you. And no matter how much wealth you possess, how many piles of beautiful objects, you can't take even an atom of it with you. Finally, you have to leave behind even the flesh and bones that you were born with. If you have to leave even your flesh and bones, there's no question that you also have to leave behind the other perfections of this life. Therefore, you should think, "It is certain that I will pass to another world and that when I do I will leave all this behind." Moreover, you should think that this will happen today, and think how at that time, *only* the Dharma will be your savior, refuge and guide.

Then Lama Tsongkhapa refers to two quotations. One is from the writings of Karnikarnika, who says, “When the view of the ripening aspect result of previous karma arises and the Lord of Death invites them to follow their new karma, all migratory beings have to leave behind everything but their negative karma and virtue; nobody comes along with them. Understand this and practice well.”

The other quotation says basically what Lama Tsongkhapa explained just before, so I won’t repeat it. However, he says that leisure has great significance, is extremely difficult to find and decays very easily, so remember death. If you don’t try to achieve happiness beyond this life, even though you have received a human rebirth, it’s as if you have not, and your life will have no more meaning than that of an animal. As far as achieving happiness and avoiding suffering up until the time of death are concerned—in other words, attaining the happiness of this life, solving the problems of this life—Lama Tsongkhapa says that animals are even better at it than humans. But we should conduct ourselves better than animals. Since being born human is special, our conduct should surpass that of animals. Otherwise, Lama Tsongkhapa says, even though you have achieved the body of a happy transmigrator, it is as if you haven’t.

If you lead your life no better than an animal, if your attitude is simply that of seeking the happiness of this life, your own happiness, no matter how successful you are in achieving this life’s happiness, your life is no more special than that of an animal. No matter how powerful or famous you become—or whatever other happiness of this life you seek—your attitude and conduct is no better than that of an animal. If this is how you live your life, your having achieved this human body has no meaning.

In the *Bodhicaryavatara*, Shantideva says, “It is not rare for animals to engage in meaningless activities, but freedom and richness, which are extremely difficult to find, are destroyed through being tormented by karma.” [Chapter 8, verse 81.]

I’m not one hundred percent sure, but my guess is that he means that insignificant or meaningless activities are not hard to create; even animals can do those well. But if we use our perfect human rebirth, which is so difficult to find again, for that, and create negative karma instead of trying to achieve the happiness beyond this life all the way up to enlightenment, we are destroying this precious opportunity we have. If, instead of creating good karma, the cause of all happiness, we use our perfect human body

to create negative karma, all these good results—good rebirths, liberation from samsara, enlightenment—are destroyed, and we will have to experience rebirth in the lower realms.

I think this is what Shantideva means by “destroy.” For example, when you get angry, the anger destroys your liberation. How? By destroying your merits. Because anger destroys your merits, anger destroys your liberation. Shantideva’s meaning might be similar to that. If, with this perfect human rebirth and that kind of attitude you create negative karma, you will experience only suffering rebirths and will not achieve all those good rebirths, from better future lives all the way up to enlightenment. It’s like the negative karma destroyed all those good results. I think that’s what it could mean.

Then Lama Tsongkhapa says that even though it is difficult to generate, it is the foundation of the path, so you must try.

From the holy mouth of the Kadampa Geshe Potowa: “Meditating on impermanence in order to eliminate the appearance of this life should be your main practice. Eliminate the appearance of this life, your family, relatives, possessions and so forth, knowing that you yourself must go from this life unaccompanied, alone, and nothing other than Dharma can help you at that time. Thinking in this way, live without attachment to this life. Until this thought arises in your mind, your entire Dharma path is blocked.”

Geshe Potowa is saying that until the thought of impermanence and death arises in your mind—the thought that death can come at any moment and that at the time of death none of the perfections or activities of this life can be of benefit and you have to go alone into the next life—and you have developed detachment from this life, the entire path of Dharma is blocked.

In other words, the concept of permanence, the attachment clinging to this life, the thought, “I am going to live for a long time,” which is opposite to the thought of impermanence and death, blocks the path of the entire Dharma. First of all, it prevents your mind from becoming Dharma, it does not allow your daily attitude to become Dharma. This prevents all your actions from becoming Dharma; therefore, they all become non-virtuous. That is the immediate obstacle—your attitude of mind in daily life not becoming Dharma and as a result, all your actions not becoming Dharma actions.

Therefore, you cannot gain the realizations of the graduated path of the practitioner of least capability, those of the graduated path of the practitioner of intermediate capability or those of the graduated path of the practitioner of highest capability. Since you have no renunciation of this life, no renunciation of future lives in samsara, you cannot achieve the graduated path of the practitioner of intermediate capability, which is the foundation. Similarly, you cannot achieve the graduated path of the practitioner of highest capability, bodhicitta or the rest of the Mahayana path. Therefore, you cannot receive enlightenment. That's the meaning of the entire Dharma path being blocked.

Kadampa Geshe Torwa said, "If by the way you practice precisely, try to collect merits and purify your defilements with effort and zeal, and make requests to the guru and the deity, even though you think you won't attain any realizations for a hundred years, because causative phenomena cannot remain as they are, realizations will come."

What he is saying is that if you practice whole-heartedly, correctly, with effort and precision; if, while you are meditating on the path, you also constantly, from the bottom of your heart, pray, make single-pointed requests to the guru-deity; if you continue to practice like this, even if you think that you will never gain any realizations, such as those of emptiness, bodhicitta, renunciation or tantra, even if you think, "Oh, how could it possibly happen? Poor me! I'm this and that . . . how could someone like me attain realizations? It will take ages, a hundred years," even if that's what you believe about your gaining realizations, because of all the practices you do and because your mind is a causative phenomenon—it exists through dependence upon causes and conditions—without choice, your mind has to change. It cannot stay as it is. Your mind cannot remain in its old, hard state, it has to change. That's what the Kadampa Geshe Torwa is saying—realizations can happen very easily, without taking a hundred years.

In the quotation above, "by the way" could mean while you are meditating on the path, training your mind in the lamrim. Or it could mean trying to use even your daily activities—eating, sleeping, washing and so forth—as a means of collecting extensive merits and purifying defilements. "By the way" could mean either of those things.

So today I'll stop here, but somehow I've skipped ahead and I haven't covered the subject that I wanted to talk about!

LAMRIM AND RETREAT

Basically, I don't plan to go over the entire lamrim from the beginning to end. Anyway, it's never happened yet! That would be like seeing stars in the daytime. What I hope to do is to cover some of the lamrim subjects that relate to the Vajrasattva retreat, such as guru devotion, to help the Vajrasattva retreat become a stronger, more powerful purification, to become a support for that; to increase our determination to practice Dharma so that we can defeat the delusions, overcome the obstacles that prevent us from achieving enlightenment—the self-cherishing thought and so forth; and to strengthen our minds so that we can overcome our inner obstacles, which prevent us from freeing ourselves from samsara.

Our getting free from samsara or remaining trapped within it depends entirely on which is stronger, the delusions or the mind. It's a question of this. If our mind becomes stronger than our delusions, we'll get free from samsara. If we allow our mind to be weak and our delusions to be strong, if we give freedom to our delusions instead of ourselves, we will not find liberation, only more samsaric suffering.

The conclusion is this. Not all of us can live ascetic lives in isolated places, but we all have to practice Dharma as much as possible. There's no choice. Therefore, we have to remember impermanence and death as much as we possibly can, since this is the mind that serves as a remedy to the attachment clinging to this life. This attachment is what brings us all our problems, confusion and obstacles to Dharma practice. It prevents our attitude and actions from becoming Dharma and prevents the Dharma that we do practice from becoming pure. Meditation on impermanence and death must become our fundamental weapon, our main remedy, or antidote, to the delusions.

On the basis of this, we should generate the good heart, bodhicitta, the thought of benefiting others. This is our best refuge, especially for those of us whose lives are very busy, who don't have much time for sitting or other traditional forms of practice. On the basis of reflecting on impermanence and death, we should make the good heart the main object of refuge in our lives. This allows all our actions to become Dharma, the cause of enlightenment and the cause of happiness for all sentient beings. Therefore, we should lead our lives with this attitude, the thought of benefiting all sentient beings.

If you recite the Vajrasattva mantra once with bodhicitta, you get the same benefit as you do from reciting 100,000 without it. If you make one light offering with bodhicitta, you get the same amount of merit as you do from making 100,000 light offerings without it. If you make charity of one dollar to a sentient being—a beggar or a homeless person—with bodhicitta, you get the same amount of merit as you do from making charity of \$100,000 without it.

It is said in the scriptures that if the sentient beings of three galaxies—the Tibetan term is *tong sum*, but I'm not exactly sure how best to translate it, you should check for yourselves—all build stupas of the seven precious substances, such as gold, diamonds and so forth, and fill the whole world with these stupas, the merit of that is far less than that created by just one person offering a tiny flower to the Buddha with bodhicitta motivation. The person making this small offering with bodhicitta motivation creates far more merit than three galaxies of sentient beings covering the world with stupas made of the seven precious substances without it.

Try to imagine this. If you build just one stupa you create unbelievable merit. It directs your life to enlightenment and is an amazing purification. So here we have three galaxies' worth of sentient beings, each one building a stupa of the seven precious substances—not with bricks and mortar but with precious jewels—and covering the world with these. Nevertheless, the merit of one person offering a tiny flower to the Buddha with bodhicitta motivation creates far more merit than that.

Thinking about this should inspire you to make bodhicitta your heart practice. It transforms your life like iron into gold or kaka into diamonds. Bodhicitta motivation gives your life its greatest possible meaning and makes every single action of your daily life as beneficial as it can possibly be. You should remember bodhicitta from morning to night, twenty-four hours a day. Hold it as your most precious possession, as your wish-fulfilling jewel. You should cherish your bodhicitta motivation above all else; remember it constantly and practice it at every moment.

If you do one prostration with bodhicitta it's as if you did 100,000 prostrations. In *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo explains that if you recite the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* with bodhicitta, you get the benefit of having recited it 100,000 times. Hence, if you are doing pujas or reciting prayers for others, if you do them with bodhicitta, they become much more powerful and create far more merit.

Therefore, how much purification you get from the Vajrasattva retreat doesn't depend upon how many mantras you recite but on their quality. Of course, the number has power, but the quality of your recitation is much more important. So even if you recite just one Vajrasattva mantra, how much negative karma gets purified depends on how you recite it. Therefore, when you do your motivation you should meditate very precisely on the lamrim, especially bodhicitta, and generate regret.

Ordinary people might think regretting your mistaken actions is negative thinking, but people who are practitioners, who have faith in the Buddha's teachings and the lamrim and have been practicing deeply, see it as positive. Beginners, too, might think that generating the thought of regret is negative. But if you understand the Dharma—especially Mahayana practices such as the Thirty-five Buddhas practice, where you recite the names of those extremely powerful buddhas, and in particular, the skillful methods of Highest Yoga Tantra, such as the practice of the Highest Yoga Tantra aspect of Vajrasattva—your regret serves as medicine; it heals you.

The lamrim teachings cite six methods of purification. Practicing Vajrasattva, for example, with your knowledge of Buddhadharma, especially the powerful purification methods of the skillful means of tantra, your regret becomes a technique of healing. It purifies your negative karma so that you avoid obstacles and don't have to experience its suffering result, and even if you do, the experience is either very light or delayed for a long time; many lifetimes, even eons. Thus, the generation of regret heals, purifies negative karma, brings happiness and peace, not only in this life but in all lives, from now to enlightenment.

Even if you don't do these methods of purification—Vajrasattva, prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas while reciting their names, making *tsa tsas* and statues of buddhas and so forth—just feeling regret for the negative karmas you have created or for the harm you have given others lightens that negative karma. The stronger the regret, the lighter the negative karma becomes. Therefore, feeling regret is positive, is healing, is purification. Generating regret is the path to happiness, even though at the time it might feel unpleasant. Never mind; it has a good future! When you tally your negative karmas, count them one by one, make an account of them, you might not feel so good, but that feeling of regret has a good future because it purifies them, at least makes them lighter and shorter. Therefore it is positive.

Therefore, it is wrong to think that just because at the moment something feels unpleasant, it must be negative. That kind of thinking becomes an obstacle to purifying your negative karma, to avoiding your future suffering, to freeing yourself from samsara, to attaining enlightenment, to achieving realizations. Instead of focusing on the incredible benefits you will gain, all that future peace and happiness, interpreting the whole thing as negative becomes a huge block to all those good results.

A similar thing can happen when you don't know how to think about impermanence and death properly. If you don't know Dharma or don't practice, thinking about impermanence and death can be like torturing yourself because you don't have a solution to the problem. But if you know Dharma, and especially if you practice, then instead of becoming unpleasant, thinking about impermanence and death can become incredibly beneficial. You can overcome all your delusions, you can begin to practice Dharma without obstacles, you can continue to practice without obstacles, and you can complete your practice without obstacles and attain enlightenment. These are some of the benefits, as mentioned in the lamrim teachings. If you practice Dharma, you receive these benefits, but if you don't, then thinking of death just makes you unhappy.

If you practice Dharma, thinking about impermanence and death allows you to overcome death itself. When you start to meditate on impermanence and death, you are afraid of death, but this fear makes you practice Dharma. Then, through practicing Dharma, you gain the realizations of renunciation of samsara, bodhicitta and emptiness, and in that way gradually overcome your fear of death. Eventually, you become free of even death itself. As Milarepa said, "Afraid of death, I fled to the mountains, where I realized the ultimate nature of the primordial mind. Now even should I die, I'll be unafraid."

In that way, Dharma practitioners think about impermanence and death, which spurs them on to develop their practice until they have overcome not only the fear of death, but death itself.

So again, I have gone on for a long time, but now it's really time to stop, this is really the end!

Saturday, February 13 (B)

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

DEDICATION

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may bodhicitta, the source of all happiness and success for me and for all sentient beings, be generated within my mind and in the minds of all the sentient beings without even a second’s delay. And may the bodhicitta that has been generated be increased.”

DEDICATING WITH BODHICITTA

Even though you pray to generate bodhicitta when you do the lamrim prayers, it is still good to do this dedication at the very end. There are two reasons for this. The first is that generating bodhicitta is the door of the Mahayana path to enlightenment. Without bodhicitta, you cannot enter the Mahayana path, which means that you cannot achieve enlightenment and cannot enlighten all sentient beings. Without bodhicitta, you cannot do perfect work for sentient beings. Without bodhicitta you cannot purify all your subtle defilements. Of course, the direct purification of subtle defilements has to do with wisdom, but it requires the support of bodhicitta. Even if you have the wisdom that directly perceives emptiness, unless you also have bodhicitta, you cannot cease the subtle defilements. You cannot cease the subtle defilements with that wisdom alone; you need the support of bodhicitta. With bodhicitta you can then complete all the qualities of the realizations. It is only with bodhicitta that you can do perfect work for other sentient beings. Without bodhicitta, even if you have wisdom, you cannot do perfect work for other sentient beings.

The second reason for dedicating to generate bodhicitta is that it becomes practicing the power of prayer, one of the five powers that you practice in thought transformation. Your whole life’s practice can be integrated into

the five powers, one of which is the power of prayer. [The others are the powers of the white seed, familiarity, determination and repudiation. See p. 612 ff. in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*.] You dedicate your merits by praying to actualize bodhicitta and to never be separated from bodhicitta in this life and in all future lives. The power of prayer is also part of the five powers to be practiced at the time of death, a Mahayana (though not tantric) technique for transferring the consciousness. [The other powers at death have the same names and page references as above.] As the time of your death approaches, you also pray to never be separated from bodhicitta at the death time, in the intermediate state or in future lives. If you are practicing thought transformation by following these outlines, you accomplish the practice of the power of prayer by dedicating to develop bodhicitta. This is one reason that we dedicate especially to develop bodhicitta, even though there are so many other realizations.

THREE OTHER DEDICATIONS

Dedication is generally also done for the long lives of the holy beings who preserve the Dharma. You dedicate for your own virtuous friend to have stable life. The happiness of sentient beings depends on the teachings of Buddha, and the existence of the teachings depends on the existence of the holy beings who preserve and spread the Dharma. This is why we dedicate for the holy beings to have stable life and for their holy wishes to be fulfilled. We dedicate principally for the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who is the holder of the entire Buddhadharma (not only Hinayana, but Mahayana Paramitayana and Mahayana Secret Mantra) in this world, and then for other holy beings.

We then dedicate the merits for the flourishing of the teachings and next for the happiness of sentient beings. Dedications are made for these three purposes. However, dedicating the merits for the teachings to exist and to spread includes the other dedications.

DEDICATING OTHERS' MERITS

There is a reason why I always mention dedicating your own merits and also the merits of others. For example, if one million people each give one dollar to a charity, it makes a total of one million dollars. Even though the

amount that each person gives is very small, just one dollar, it combines with all the other donations to become one million dollars. And with one millions dollars, you can accomplish big projects that help many thousands of people. The one dollar that you give combines with the others to become something that is very powerful and that can be used for a long time. In a similar way, even though your merit is very small, by combining it with the merit of others, your merit becomes very powerful and inexhaustible.

Dedicating to achieve enlightenment for the sake of sentient beings again makes the merit inexhaustible. It is like putting one drop of water into the ocean. That one drop gets mixed with the rest of the ocean, and until the ocean is exhausted, that one drop is never exhausted. By dedicating the merits to achieve enlightenment, you can enjoy the benefits of the merit until you achieve enlightenment; and even after you achieve enlightenment, you still enjoy the result of the merits because you can then enlighten other sentient beings. You continuously enjoy your merit. Otherwise, you enjoy the result of your merit just once, and then it is exhausted. Dedicating the merits to achieve enlightenment makes the merits powerful and inexhaustible.

DEDICATING IN EMPTINESS

The reason that we dedicate the merits by sealing them with emptiness is that if we do not do this, our dedication is not pure because it is stained by the concept of inherent existence. This is the “poisonous food” referred to in *The Seven-point Thought Training* when it advises, “Abandon poisonous food.” When we dedicate the merits by sealing with emptiness, the merits are protected from being destroyed by anger and heresy. Otherwise, anger and heresy can destroy our merits. Since our mind is so uncontrolled and we do not apply meditation all the time, anger and heresy can arise at any moment. Therefore, it is very important to protect the merits that we have put so much effort into creating. Like putting our money in the safest bank, sealing our merits with emptiness is the best way to protect them. When we dedicate our merits in daily life, we should dedicate for bodhicitta, to achieve enlightenment for the sake of sentient beings, and we should seal our dedications with emptiness. At the very least our dedications should include these two factors.

THE ACTUAL DEDICATIONS

“Due to the three times merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I be able to offer benefit as extensive as the sky to all sentient beings, just as Lama Tsongkhapa did, through having the same qualities within me as Lama Tsongkhapa had, from now on in all my future lives.”

We give all our past, present and future merits—including all the merits we collected today by doing *Guru Puja*, Vajrasattva practice, prostrations and so forth—and all the resultant happiness, up to enlightenment, to every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal, every human being, every asura being, every sura being and every intermediate state being. (To do this more elaborately, we can also give our body, which we visualize as a wish-fulfilling jewel, and all our possessions.) Because of this, sentient beings receive everything that they need, and all these enjoyments then cause them to cease all their defilements and to actualize the path of method and wisdom. They all become enlightened in the aspect of whichever buddha we practice.

By doing this practice of giving, we collect skies of merit, which we now dedicate. “Due to all these merits, may whatever suffering sentient beings have ripen upon me and may whatever happiness I have ripen upon all sentient beings.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me and others, wherever I am—whichever universe, world, country, area or place—simply by my being there, may the sentient beings who are in that universe, world, country, area or place, never ever be reborn in the lower realms. May they immediately be liberated from all diseases, spirit harms, negative karmas and defilements and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible by actualizing the whole path, especially bodhicitta.”

Then dedicate more specifically: “Simply by my being in that universe, world, country, area or place, may those who are blind be able to see; may the deaf be able to hear; may the lame be able to walk; may those with cancer immediately be healed; may those with AIDS immediately be healed; may those in a coma immediately regain consciousness; may those with arthritis immediately be healed; may those who are crazy because they are possessed by spirits immediately be released from spirit possession; may those living in disharmony become harmonious and find peace

and happiness; may those who have obstacles to practicing Dharma, to doing retreat, be free from all those obstacles; may those who are looking for a guru be able to find a perfectly qualified guru; may those who are looking for teachings be able to receive all the teachings that they need. May everyone receive perfect happiness simply through my being there in that universe, world, country, area or place. May I become wish-fulfilling for all sentient beings, like Kshitigarbha, who brings infinite benefit to all sentient beings.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may the father of Fred (a member of Amitabha Buddhist Centre in Singapore) who died recently, as well as all those who have died and whose names have been given to me and for whom I have promised to pray, those who rely upon me, as well as all the numberless sentient beings who are suffering unimaginably in the lower realms immediately be liberated from all those sufferings and reincarnate in a pure land where they can become enlightened. Or may they receive a perfect human rebirth in all their lifetimes and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible through meeting a perfectly qualified Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings.

“Whenever I hear that somebody is sick, may my hearing about it cause that sentient being to immediately be healed. Whenever I hear that somebody has died, may my hearing about it cause that sentient being to immediately be liberated from the lower realms and reincarnate in a pure land where they can become enlightened; and if the sentient being has been born as a human being but with no opportunity to practice Dharma, may they receive a perfect human body and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible by meeting a Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas, and all other sentient beings, may I, the members of my family, all the students and benefactors of this organization, especially those who sacrifice their lives and bear hardships to serve others and the teachings of Buddha through this organization, and those who rely upon me, whose names have been given to me and for whom I promised to pray, have long lives and be healthy. May all our wishes be fulfilled immediately in accordance with the holy Dharma. And most important, may we actualize the path to enlightenment, especially bodhicitta, in this very lifetime without the delay of even a second.” (While we are doing this dedication,

since it is also a request, we can think of Medicine Buddha and think that we are making the request to Medicine Buddha. This makes our request very powerful.)

“May the whole organization—all the meditation centers, Dharma publications, hospices, schools, leprosy project, and other public service projects—become wish-fulfilling for all sentient beings, pacifying immediately all their suffering of body and mind.

“By receiving all their needs, may all the meditation centers be able to spread the teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa in the minds of all sentient beings. May all the projects of this organization succeed immediately by receiving all their needs. May the 500-foot Maitreya Buddha statue be completed immediately by receiving all the needs. And may all these projects and statues generate loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta in the minds of all sentient beings. Due to that, may no sentient being experience war, famine, disease, earthquake, fire, flood or any other undesirable thing. May all these projects and statues cause all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“May the teachings of Buddha and Lama Tsongkhapa always flourish and spread in all directions.

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

MULTIPLYING MANTRAS

Now recite the mantras, the names of the buddhas, that multiply each merit we have collected today 100,000 times.

Reciting the last buddha’s name (. . . NGO WA DANG MÖN LAM . . .) also increases the merits 100,000 times, but its particular quality is that it actualizes whatever prayers we have done.

“Due to the eminent blessings of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, due to unbetraying dependent arising, and due to my special attitude, may all my prayers be fulfilled immediately.”

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Sunday, February 14

AFTERNOON: VAJRASATTVA SESSION

THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS PRACTICE

The seven Medicine Buddhas are extremely powerful not only for healing but for success generally. By reciting the Medicine Buddha mantra and the names of the Medicine Buddhas, we can actualize the prayers that we normally do. This happens because the Medicine Buddhas made many prayers in the past to be able to actualize the wishes of sentient beings. This is why it is very important to recite the names of the seven Medicine Buddhas after those of the Thirty-five Buddhas, and this is how Kachen Yeshe Gyaltsen and other recent lineage lamas practiced. It makes the practice very powerful.

At the end of the recitation, visualize that nectar beams emitted by all the figures in the merit field enter within you. Everything is purified; all defilements, negative karma and downfalls are purified. Nothing in the slightest is left in your mental continuum.

In emptiness there is no creator, there is no action of creating negative karma, there is no negative karma created.

“Due to all the merits collected by having done prostrations, made offerings, confessed, rejoiced, requested the gurus to have stable life and to turn the Dharma wheel, may I achieve enlightenment in order to enlighten all sentient beings.”

THE PURPOSE OF RECITING THE LAMRIM PRAYERS

One purpose of the lamrim prayer is as a motivation. Another reason is that each time we recite a lamrim prayer, since it contains the essence of the entire path, our mind becomes closer to the realizations of the path to enlightenment, which means closer to enlightenment and closer to our being able to enlighten all sentient beings. This is the main reason that

we are doing this Vajrasattva retreat. We are not doing this practice of purification just to be healthy or to live a long time. Our main reason for doing this practice is to have realizations of the path to enlightenment so that we can benefit others, so that we can liberate others from all suffering and lead them to enlightenment. This is why we should recite one of the lamrim prayers as the motivation at the beginning of each session. It brings our mind closer to the realizations of the path to enlightenment.

Each lamrim prayer has a different presentation, so reciting a different one each time, like eating different styles of food, has a different effect on your mind. Also, in this way you won't become bored by reciting the same prayer all the time.

GENERATING AS HERUKA

Since we are not doing Heruka practice in the short sadhana, we can leave out the part about becoming Heruka. Recite the refuge verse then leave a short silence in which to generate a strong motivation of bodhicitta.

BODHICITTA MOTIVATION

I mentioned yesterday the importance of the motivation of bodhicitta. Even here when we listen to the teaching, we need to generate the purest motivation of bodhicitta—one that is unstained by the self-centered mind.

Think, “The purpose of my life is to free the numberless other sentient beings from all their suffering and its causes and bring them to full enlightenment. To do this, I must achieve full enlightenment; therefore, I'm going to listen to the profound holy Dharma, to the lamrim teachings.”

Please listen to the teachings well by clarifying the motivation of bodhicitta and observing the proper conduct for listening to teachings.

In the past, in the early courses, I repeated the motivation all the time, but now it doesn't happen much. I think it's a sign that my mind has degenerated!

Even though you generate the motivation at the beginning of the Vajrasattva sadhana, after the verse of taking refuge and generating bodhicitta, it's also good to make sure of your motivation when you actually begin the mantra recitation. Again think, “I'm going to recite this mantra for the benefit of every single one of the numberless hell beings, of the number-

less hungry ghosts, of the numberless animals, of the numberless human beings, of the numberless asura beings, of the numberless sura beings, of the numberless intermediate state beings.”

Also, while you are reciting the mantra, check your motivation from time to time to see whether it has become a self-centered one. Try to keep in mind continuously that your purpose for doing Vajrasattva practice is to benefit others. Check your motivation from time to time, and if you have lost the continuity of that thought of bodhicitta, clarify it again by thinking, “I’m doing this Vajrasattva meditation-recitation for the benefit of other sentient beings.”

In this way, your practice becomes very powerful. Also, the nature of that thought of benefiting others, of doing the Vajrasattva practice for others, is very pleasant and very satisfying. As much as possible, try to do the mantra recitation with the thought of benefiting all sentient beings. You should not simply generate a bodhicitta motivation at the beginning. If you don’t keep checking our mind, since you don’t have the stable realization of effortless bodhicitta, there is a risk that after some time, your motivation will become self-centered. The benefit of reciting the Vajrasattva mantra then becomes limited, and you will not collect skies of merit or purify many lifetimes or many eons of negative karma. As I mentioned yesterday, by reciting the Vajrasattva mantra once with the thought of bodhicitta, you gain the merit of having recited the Vajrasattva mantra 100,000 times. Without bodhicitta motivation, you will not receive all this inconceivable benefit.

It is similar with tantric practice. Even though tantra is the quick path to enlightenment, without bodhicitta, without the lamrim, you cannot achieve enlightenment by practicing tantra. Without the lamrim, you cannot achieve enlightenment by practicing tantra alone. There is even the risk that you will be reborn in the hell realms if you practice tantra without the lamrim. By meditating on deities without the lamrim, you can be born as a hungry ghost. Many of you will remember such stories from reading *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* or from hearing teachings. Practicing tantra without knowing how to practice Dharma, without even knowing what Dharma is, is dangerous. If, instead of entering the Mahayana path, you fall into the Lesser Vehicle path and achieve the lower nirvana, it is a great loss because you have missed the real meaning of life, but at least it is still some kind of positive result. It is much worse to reborn in a hell

realm or as a hungry ghost. It is bodhicitta that makes tantra the quick path to enlightenment.

Arhats have the wisdom that directly perceives emptiness. If you realize the wisdom that directly perceives emptiness, the highest you can achieve is arhatship, with cessation of just the gross delusions. From the two types of obscurations, you cease only the gross one, which interferes mainly with your achievement of liberation from samsara. Even with the wisdom that directly perceives emptiness, you cannot achieve anything higher than arhatship.

Not only here during this Vajrasattva retreat but during any retreat, we should pay most attention to generating bodhicitta. We should make sure that we generate a strong motivation of bodhicitta at the beginning, and even during the recitation-meditation we should remind ourselves from time to time to keep our mind on bodhicitta. Just as we concentrate on keeping the car in the correct lane when we are driving, we should concentrate on keeping our mind continuously in the motivation of bodhicitta when we are meditating.

Reciting OM MANI PADME HUM one time with a bodhicitta motivation has the power to purify the very heavy karma of the five uninterrupted negative karmas (having killed one's father, mother or an arhat; caused blood to flow from a buddha; and caused disunity among the Sangha) and the ten non-virtuous actions. By reciting OM MANI PADME HUM one time, a fully ordained monk can purify the very heavy negative karma of having broken all four root vows, of having received all four defeats (having killed a human being, taken what has not been given, had sexual intercourse and told the big lie, which means saying that he has realizations when he knows that he does not). Again, this refers to reciting OM MANI PADME HUM with a bodhicitta motivation.

It is similar with Vajrasattva. The amount of negative karma you purify with one Vajrasattva mantra depends on how you recite that one mantra. It depends especially on whether or not you have recited the mantra with a bodhicitta motivation. This is what determines how much negative karma you purify and how much merit you collect. Not just during retreat but generally in your daily life, even if your only practice is reciting one mala of OM MANI PADME HUM, you must make sure that you pay the most attention to bodhicitta. Even if you are only going to recite a total of one mala, half a mala or just twenty-one mantras, first make sure that you

generate a motivation of bodhicitta. The benefit you gain from doing this is unimaginable; you purify inconceivable negative karmas and collect skies of merit.

If the only time you spend on practice in your daily life is the time it takes you to recite one mala of OM MANI PADME HUM or one short sadhana and you don't even do that properly, it is a very sad life. If even the small amount of practice that you do does not get done properly and does not become Dharma—not only does it not become the cause of enlightenment, but it does not even become Dharma—your whole life becomes empty. Not only do you waste your perfect human body, but you use it to create suffering, to be born in the lower realms. Instead of using your perfect human body to experience happiness, you use it to experience suffering. Not only do you make your life empty and meaningless, you actually use your perfect human body as a tool to create more suffering.

Even if you do only five minutes of practice out of the twenty-four hours in each day, even if you recite only a few mantras, you must put all your effort into doing it in the best way.

GEN JAMPA WANGDU

Some of the old students here were in Dharamsala during the First Dharma Celebration, and many of them have met the great meditator, Gen Jampa Wangdu, who was Lama Yeshe's and my best friend in Dharamsala. Each time Gen Jampa Wangdu came to see us was the best time. Gen Jampa Wangdu was an old meditator—not “old” in terms of age, but “old” in terms of meditation experience. He meditated and lived an ascetic life in Tibet, then continued in Buxa and Dalhousie when he came to India.

Even when he was at Buxa he was totally different from the other monks that I saw. I would see him from time to time walking around outside or going to the toilet. At the back of where I lived, there was a long line of toilets. It was very difficult to take care of the toilets well, and a strong “incense” smell would come from the toilets during lunch. We would have to hold our noses to eat our food. Even at that time, Gen Jampa Wangdu's conduct and appearance was very different from that of other monks. The way Gen Jampa Wangdu wore his robes was very proper, in accordance with the vinaya, and he walked in the way an arhat walks, as described in the lamrim teachings. You could see that his mind was totally

concentrated. He did not have a monkey mind or a bird mind. A bird looks here for one second, there for one second, here for one second; it is impossible for it to concentrate. Just from Gen Jampa Wangdu's proper manner when going to the toilet, you could see that he practiced Dharma continuously, with full awareness of his body, speech and mind.

It was the same when he was in Dalhousie. I was in Dalhousie for six months at the school set up by the British nun, Freda Bedi, who was the second Western nun and who became a very close disciple of the Karmapa. I think she might have originally been a Christian. She then lived in Sri Lanka and became a Theravadin. She was wearing some kind of yellow dress when she first started helping the monks who had escaped from Lhasa in Musamari in Assam. At that time I think her son was attending the same university as the son of prime minister Nehru. They were friends, and the Indian government gave her the job of looking after the Tibetan monks who had recently escaped from Tibet, mainly monks from Sera, Ganden and Drepung. Musamari is an unbelievably hot and very unhealthy place. I haven't been there, as I went directly to Buxa; but other monks who came to Buxa were first sent to Musamari.

So, Freda Bedi was asked to be in charge of taking care of the monks. She even had a Tibetan monk as a cook, I think. When she first came to Buxa, she was not a nun but dressed in yellow saris in the Theravadin style. However, she must have had strong karma with Tibetan Buddhism and lamas. She went to see many incarnate lamas, and because I bear the dry name "incarnate lama," she also came to see me. She came to Buxa one or two times. She organized a school for young lamas from all four traditions, first in Delhi for six months and then she moved the school to Dalhousie, where she continued for five years. Every year after six months at the school the lamas would go back to their own monasteries to study. Because she insisted very much that I come, I went one time to Dalhousie.

Gen Jampa Wangdu was in Dalhousie, doing retreat in the ruins of an old house. The place was tiny, with just a roof and some pieces of flat stone. It seems that many people had been killed in that house during the time of the British. Geshe-la said that there were many spirits there; while he was doing his practice, the spirits would walk through and make a lot of noise. He had no fear, and sometimes he would give the spirits Dharma teachings, teachings on bodhicitta.

On Sunday we had a holiday. I think we played football two or three

times. When the school was in Delhi for six months, they gave us a football and on Sundays, all of us young lamas, played football in the school compound. Then one day the Delhi representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama came while we were playing. His name was Shakabpa. When Tibet was independent, he was one of the Tibetan officials from aristocratic families who had been educated abroad, in India and in other countries. He told Freda Bedi that we should not play football, so from that time we were no longer allowed to play.

On Sundays in Dalhousie we would go around the mountain. One day I met Gen Jampa Wangdu in the road. When I asked him where he was going, he said that he was going to collect firewood. He didn't look like someone who was collecting firewood. Everything about him was perfect, and his manner was very subdued.

In Buxa, Gen Jampa Wangdu was in a small group with a few other monks. I heard that if he was there in the morning when the other monks were discussing what to make for lunch and they decided to make momos—momos are not only Tibetan food but also Chinese, though the name in Chinese is different—he would never come for that meal. I think this is similar to the way the Kadampa geshes applied the remedies to delusions.

It is similar to the behavior of Kadampa Geshe Ben Kungyal, who was very famous in his early life as a robber in the daytime and a thief at night. In his belt and on his body he carried many weapons, such as knives, arrows and slingshots. Once, after he had begun to practice Dharma, he was in a temple where a benefactor had offered curd to all the monks. Geshe Ben Kungyal was sitting near the end of the row of monks, watching the person serving the curd to the monks at the top of the line. When he saw that a lot of curd was being dished into the bowls of these monks, he was worried that it would all be gone by the time it came to him. Then he suddenly realized what was happening in his mind. He suddenly recognized that his attitude was one of worldly concern. To renounce the thought of the eight worldly dharmas, he then turned his bowl upside down. When the person came to serve him the delicious curd, his bowl was upside down. In this way he practiced the remedy to the attachment that clings to this life. Gen Jampa Wangdu was acting in a similar way at Buxa.

At Dalhousie Gen Jampa Wangdu accomplished *shamatha*, or calm

abiding, which has nine levels. It is only with this realization that you achieve perfect concentration, free from attachment-scattering thought, *gö pa*, and sinking thought, *jing wa*. The term “scattering thought,” or *tro wa*, can refer to the mind scattering from the object of meditation to an object of attachment, which is non-virtuous, or to a virtuous object, such as a buddha, which is virtuous. However, if you are trying to concentrate single-pointedly on a particular deity as your object of meditation and your mind scatters to another deity, that scattering thought is considered to be an obstacle to your meditation. The point I am making is that we add the word “attachment” to differentiate attachment-scattering (*gö pa*) from scattering in general (*tro wa*).

After reaching the ninth level of calm abiding, you are free from these two obstacles to perfect meditation. You then experience extremely refined rapturous ecstasy of body and mind. According to *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, after you achieve the extremely refined rapturous ecstasy of mind, it seems that you experience some small decrease in the ecstasy. However, after experiencing these two, you achieve the fully characterized, or actual, shamatha.

Gen Jampa Wangdu completed the realization of shamatha there in Dalhousie. Geshe Rabten Rinpoche was sent by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to check the meditators in Dalhousie. As well as Gen Jampa Wangdu, there were a few incarnate lamas and geshe who had completed their studies and were trying to meditate on the path. They had been selected by Trehor Kyorpen Rinpoche, a very high lama from Drepung Monastery. After he became a *lharampa* geshe, he went to a very high mountain near Lhasa to meditate in a cave. Trehor Kyorpen Rinpoche became a geshe at the same time as His Holiness Serkong Dorje Chang. I think this must be the Serkong Dorje Chang who lived at Swayambhunath in Nepal and passed away there. I sometimes get this great yogi mixed up with his previous incarnation. In that previous life, Serkong Dorje Chang was one of the Gelugpa lamas recognized by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama as fully qualified to have a consort, a wisdom mother.

After Trehor Kyorpen Rinpoche became a geshe, he went looking for a cave on Lhumbo Tse, a very high mountain near Lhasa. Accompanied by one monk-attendant, he carried on his back just one text, *Lamrim Chenmo*, and the robes that a monk is required to have.

While he was looking for a cave on this high mountain, stones kept on

coming down near him as if thrown from up above him. He followed the stones, and after some time he came to a cave; the stones were dropping on that cave. When he went into the cave, he found a skeleton sitting in meditation posture. Trehor Kyorpen Rinpoche then sat down and offered a mandala. After he finished offering the mandala, the skeleton collapsed. He then decided to practice in that cave.

It seems that he lived there in that cave, and his disciples meditated in places scattered around the mountain. This lama spent his life in practice and continued to experience the path when he came to Dalhousie. Some geshes and meditators that he had selected also meditated on the path there in Dalhousie.

Gen Jampa Wangdu never talked much about his realizations to other people. He would never normally say, “I have this realization,” but to those of us who were very close to him, he would express things in such a way that we knew he had realizations. In terms of the achievement of shamatha, Gen Jampa Wangdu would fold his arms across his chest and say things such as, “Until you achieve shamatha, what you think is meditation is not meditation.” This was really an expression of his own success. I think what he said is true. Compared to the meditation of someone who has realized shamatha, what we call meditation is not meditation because it is full of obstacles, full of gross and subtle attachment-scattering thoughts and sinking thoughts. He also talked about the bliss from shamatha.

One time in Dharamsala we were receiving teachings from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, either on Lama Tsongkhapa’s commentary on the Heruka root text, *Clarifying All the Hidden Meanings*, or on the four lam-rim commentaries. It was raining very heavily, and in one of the break times, Gen Jampa Wangdu showed the aspect of falling down on some steps outside His Holiness’s office. He knocked his head on the concrete and started to bleed. His Holiness saw what happened and blew on the wound. Gen Jampa Wangdu said that when he fell down and knocked his head on the ground, he experienced bliss. Normal people would feel pain, but all he felt was bliss. This is because of his realizations—not just of shamatha but of the completion path of Highest Yoga Tantra.

After he had accomplished shamatha in Dalhousie, Gen Jampa Wangdu moved to Dharamsala. He lived in a cave under a big rock down below the home of His Holiness Ling Rinpoche, Senior Tutor to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I think he lived there for seven years, and it seems that

he realized emptiness there. Around that time I was receiving teachings on mahamudra from Geshe Rabten Rinpoche, and Geshe Rabten Rinpoche often praised Gen Jampa Wangdu, saying that he was a very lucky person. Geshe Rabten Rinpoche said that if we had any questions on emptiness, we should ask Gen Jampa Wangdu because he had fresh experience of emptiness. So it seems that Gen Jampa Wangdu realized emptiness in that cave.

It also seems that he achieved the realization of bodhicitta in Dharamsala. A sign of this is that one night he told Lama Yeshe and me that it had been seven years since he had been to anyone's house for his own sake. (Gen Jampa Wangdu didn't normally eat in the evening, because the main practice of these meditators is that of the Kadampa geshe. Externally they are like arhats, with a very subdued manner; internally they are bound by love, compassion and bodhicitta; and secretly they have realization of the two stages of tantra.) Anyway, not going to anyone's house for himself is just an example, the implication being that he had realized bodhicitta seven years previously and since then had done no action for himself. With the way Gen Jampa Wangdu thought about sentient beings, there is no doubt at all that he had the realization of bodhicitta. Even if he hadn't said this, there would still be no doubt.

Gen Jampa Wangdu also had great success in realizing the Six Yogas of Naropa and the rest of the Highest Yoga Tantra path. Sometimes we would come back together to Tushita after His Holiness the Dalai Lama's commentary, have some tea and then discuss the teachings. Gen Jampa Wangdu had a lot of answers from his own experiences, so these proved that he had the realizations.

After Lama Yeshe passed away, I went back to Dharamsala. His Holiness was giving oral transmission, with commentary, of the nine lamrim teachings, and I arrived for the graduated path of the being of middle capability. Early in the morning of the last day, there was to be a long life puja for His Holiness and there were one or two pages from each text left to be finished that morning. The day before, Geshe-la had mentioned that things didn't look good and that he might pass away, though generally he was very healthy. Early that morning, around five o'clock, I received a message from a German woman, Geshe-la's student, that Geshe-la might be passing away or might need to go to the hospital.

Geshe-la never usually accepted students, but somehow he accepted

this woman. She spoke Tibetan very well and had studied for some years at the Tibetan Medical Center. She moved into the house next to Geshe Rabten's house, where Gen Jampa Wangdu was living, and began studying *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*. She asked Gen Jampa Wangdu many questions. Every day she would go to the house with the text, and Gen Jampa Wangdu would explain to her. She hadn't asked him to be her guru, but when she reached the guru devotion section in the text, she did prostrations and requested him to be her guru. Geshe-la normally never accepted disciples, but after having given her so many explanations and after she insisted, somehow there was some strong karma, and he had to accept her as his disciple. He then continued to give her teachings, and I think they completed the text. Gen Jampa Wangdu was not a lharampa geshe and had not done any extensive study of philosophy, but he had spent his life actually meditating on the path and had successful realization of the lamrim, so she received teachings from his own experiences. She was fully satisfied and didn't seem to need any other teacher. Gen Jampa Wangdu alone was sufficient, and it seems that she didn't even need His Holiness the Dalai Lama. She was fully satisfied having just Gen Jampa Wangdu as her guru.

Anyway, I received a message from her that Gen Jampa Wangdu might be passing away or might need to be taken to the hospital. I then went to Geshe-la's house to do prayers. Geshe-la was in the meditation state for three days, I think. Even after the meditation was over, his holy body looked magnificent and completely healthy, so it wasn't easy to check whether or not his meditation was finished. So, with Lama Gyüpa, I checked whether any bodhicitta, any sperm, had come out. I also checked with Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche, who was one of Geshe-la's friends. Rinpoche came inside and just by looking at Geshe-la's face, Rinpoche said the meditation was over. I don't remember whether it was before or after that that we checked whether any sperm had come out.

Geshe-la was somebody who actually had experienced the very essence of Highest Yoga Tantra, which enables the achievement of enlightenment not only in one lifetime but in one brief lifetime of the degenerate time. He had achieved realization of clear light and the illusory body, of the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness. Realization of the illusory body enables you to complete in such a short time, in one brief lifetime, the collection of merit that takes three countless great eons to

collect in the Mahayana Paramitayana path. Gen Jampa Wangdu achieved great success in even Highest Yoga Tantra realizations.

When I came to Hong Kong in 1989, we went for a picnic with all the students who came to take refuge and for the teachings. One family had a little boy who liked me very much, and a question arose in my mind. At that time the center was in Peter's apartment, so that night I did a lot of divinations with rolled papers. I thought the boy could be the reincarnation of one of my teachers, either Geshe Rabten Rinpoche or Gen Jampa Wangdu. Just before Gen Jampa Wangdu passed away, I received from him the lineage of *chu len*, "Taking the Essence." I hadn't received it during the First Dharma Celebration, when Geshe-la gave many of the Sangha the lineage of the teaching on "Taking the Essence," or the pill retreat. The purpose of the *chu len* practice is to save time for those living on high mountains or in isolated places. They eat the pills and don't have to waste time looking for food. They live on the pills and do their meditation; it is especially good for shamatha meditation. Many of the Sangha did the pill retreat. One or two of them didn't succeed, but most of them did the pill retreat for twenty-one days, and some had great success.

I didn't receive the lineage at that time, but I later received the *chu len* lineage in case it becomes rare in the future. I also received some instructions in response to my question, "What is the quickest way to have realizations of lamrim?" Answering from his own experience, Gen Jampa Wangdu said to always practice the remedy to the self-cherishing thought. It's a unique answer, but it is very true because all the obstacles come from the ego. So when you renounce the ego, when you always practice the remedy to the self-centered mind, there are no obstacles to your Dharma practice. What you believe to be an obstacle is no longer an obstacle. This one answer covers everything. It takes care of everything. If you follow this advice, anger doesn't arise, and the emotional mind of desire doesn't arise. Everything is taken care of when you do this practice, and obstacles don't arise.

In my divinations that night, it came out that the boy might be the reincarnation of Gen Jampa Wangdu. That same year I went to South India to receive the commentary of *Lamrim Chenmo* from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, which was given at Drepung Loseling Monastery and was attended by the monks from Sera, Ganden and Drepung. At that time I mentioned this boy to His Holiness, saying that I thought he might be the incarna-

tion of Gen Jampa Wangdu. When I mentioned this, I had the feeling that His Holiness accepted the suggestion. His Holiness then checked very quickly and the next day said that it came out that the boy was Gen Jampa Wangdu's incarnation and that the divination was extremely good. I said that I would put him in a monastery for his education. Anyway, this is how it happened.

Now, this whole story is just a preliminary to what I was going to mention. This boy [Lungtog Rinpoche], even when he was very young, had incredible answers to give people when they consulted him. His character is very like that of Gen Jampa Wangdu; he has a very compassionate nature. Almost every month the Hong Kong center liberates animals. It has been saving the lives of animals for many years ago, as has Amitabha Buddhist Centre in Singapore and the centers in Taiwan. The merits are dedicated for the long lives of His Holiness and all other holy beings; for the members of the Sangha to complete their studies and achieve realizations of the path; for the benefactors who serve the Sangha and the teachings to have long lives and for their wishes to offer service to be successful; for all the people who do good things for others to have long lives; for those for whom it is more beneficial to live, to have long lives; and also for people who have AIDS, cancer and so forth to have long lives and to be free from life obstacles. This is how I would dedicate at the beginning or at the end of liberating the animals. The group I left out is that of the evil beings; so one day I asked him whether we should dedicate for the evil beings, and he replied that we should dedicate for the evil beings, that we should dedicate for them to meet Dharma and then have long lives.

So, now I've reached the main point of what I was going to say! His mother spends one or two hours each day reciting different mantras and meditating. One day he told his mother, "Rather than spending two hours with a scattered mind, with your mind wandering all over the place, you should meditate for five minutes without your mind wandering at all." This is what he advised his mother. And this is also what most of us do.

WATCHING THE MIND

While you are doing the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation, from time to time watch what your mind is doing to see whether it is meditating or

not. Check whether your mind is meditating on Vajrasattva or on the delusions. Check to see if your mind is trying to achieve samsara.

Watch your mind from time to time. If your mind is very disturbed by anger or attachment, you can do breathing meditation, but a very important remedy is to think very strongly of death. Remember that your death could happen today, even in this moment. Perhaps it is better to decide that you are actually going to die today, and that you could even die within an hour. Your breath could stop at any moment; the vivid appearance of this life—the people around you, this center—could stop at any moment. And throughout beginningless past lives, you have created so many negative karmas because of non-virtuous actions of your body, speech and mind—the ten non-virtuous actions; breaking pratimoksha, bodhisattva and tantric vows; and the heaviest negative karma, that created in relation to your gurus through anger, heresy, negative thoughts and so forth. Right after your breath stops, right after the appearance of this life stops, you will definitely be in the heaviest sufferings of the hell realms and will have to suffer there for an inconceivable length of time. What you will see then will be terrifying, the complete opposite of what you see now, and you will have to suffer there for an inconceivable period.

Think, “This is the only opportunity that I will have in my life to do Vajrasattva meditation-recitation and purify all these negative karmas. The only opportunity I have is right now. Therefore, I must put every single effort into this practice and not allow my mind to wander.”

Make this very strong determination when you begin the meditation and plan from the very beginning to keep a close watch on your mind. Concentrate with most of your mind on the meditation—Vajrasattva, yourself as the deity, the main visualization of purification or whatever—but with a small part of your mind watch what is happening. While you are doing the meditation, one corner of your mind should be watching, spying. Instead of concentrating your whole mind on Vajrasattva’s holy body or the visualization of purifying, use one portion of your mind to check whether or not you are meditating. If your mind is very disturbed and uncontrolled, this can be a skillful way to help maintain your concentration. By keeping your mind away from distractions, it becomes the means to maintain your concentration.

It is mentioned in the *Bodhicaryavatara* that if you tie the elephant of the mind well with the rope of constant remembrance, no fear or danger

will arise, and you will receive all virtue in your hand. Like its use in “liberation in the palm of your hand,” the expression “in your hand” means easily. Receiving all virtue in your hand means that you will easily achieve all success, which refers, broadly speaking, to liberation from samsara and enlightenment.

By meditating single-pointedly on the Vajrasattva purification practice, you don’t waste your life. Your life becomes meaningful, and from the meditation you receive all the virtues, all the benefits, up to enlightenment. You purify all your negative karmas, so you don’t have to experience the four suffering results of each negative karma. And you achieve a good rebirth in all your future lives. “All virtue” means all these benefits.

Also, the thirty-eighth or forty-eighth chapter of the sutra called *Könc-hog Tsegpa* says, “If the arrogant mind possesses conscientiousness, all your wishes will be fulfilled.” This has the same meaning.

VISUALIZATIONS DURING MANTRA RECITATION

Vajrasattva father-mother are complete in all qualities and powers, but to increase your faith, there is the invocation of the wisdom beings and the initiating deities. In addition to visualizing Vajrasattva, you then invoke the wisdom and initiating deities to help you to generate strong faith that a real Vajrasattva is there rather than your mere visualization. It is not that Vajrasattva needs more power or help from other buddhas or anything like that. It is done just to make your faith stronger. From your side, think that Vajrasattva is very powerful and magnificent, with the power of all the buddhas to purify.

It is also very good to think that all sentient beings are on a moon disc at your heart. Visualize that beams emitted by all the buddhas in the ten directions enter Guru Vajrasattva, who becomes very radiant. Beams then emit from Guru Vajrasattva’s heart and enter within you and within all the sentient beings in your heart. As soon as the beams touch you and all the sentient beings, all defilements are completely purified. Simply being touched by the beams immediately purifies you. Think that nectar-beams are emitted, with the nectar flowing along the beams as dew drops flow along wire. At the end, you and all sentient beings become Vajrasattva.

Another meditation is to visualize that there is a Vajrasattva father-

mother on the tip of each beam emitted from the Vajrasattva at your crown. A Vajrasattva descends on the crown of each sentient being and purifies them. Vajrasattva father-mother then melt into light and absorb into each sentient being. This is part of a more elaborate Highest Yoga Tantra meditation, but there is no need to mention it in more detail.

You can do these meditations in addition to the general meditations of purifying down, purifying up and instant purification. When purifying down, you visualize that the nectar beams clean downward through your body. When purifying up, you visualize that the nectar beams push all the negativities upward and out of your body through your crown, just as all the dirt in a glass is pushed up and out when you fill it with milk. All the defilements, negative karmas and downfalls are washed upward and come out from the crown. One explanation is that you feel as if a wind has suddenly blown off your hat.

In the third visualization, the purification is like a bright camera flash. You visualize all your defilements, negative karmas and downfalls—not just from this life but from beginningless lives—in the form of darkness at your heart. Extremely bright light, like a camera flash, comes from Guru Vajrasattva’s heart and the darkness at your heart suddenly becomes completely non-existent; it is instantly purified. Sometimes lamas say to visualize a big pile of garbage at your heart, with strong nectar beams coming like a flash flood, immediately flushing the garbage away, so that you are not even sure where it went. It becomes completely non-existent.

These are the usual meditations that accompany recitation of the Vajrasattva mantra.

Sometimes you can meditate on guru yoga while you are reciting the Vajrasattva mantra. Just single-pointedly focus on Vajrasattva father-mother, seeing Vajrasattva and the guru as inseparable. Remembering some quotations from the texts might help you to see the oneness of the guru and Vajrasattva.

The tantric text *Dorje Kur (Vajra Tent)*, which might be a Hevajra text, says, “I, who am called Vajrasattva, will take the form of the vajra master in order to benefit other sentient beings. I will abide in an ordinary form in order to benefit others.” The phrase “in order to benefit others” refers to the fact that we sentient beings do not have the karma to see the aspect of Buddha Vajrasattva; we can only see ordinary aspects. The definition of an ordinary aspect is one with faults, with delusions and samsaric suf-

fering. This is the only aspect we can see. Why? Because at the moment our mind has faults. Because our mind is impure and obscured, this is the only aspect we can see. Therefore, the only way the buddhas can benefit us is by manifesting in an ordinary aspect, one that shows the aspect of having delusions and samsaric suffering. It is only in such an aspect that the buddhas can benefit us and directly guide us. In such an aspect, they can communicate with us and help us purify all our negative karma by giving us teachings, vows and initiations. In such an aspect, they can give us the opportunity to practice Dharma, thus saving us from the unimaginable sufferings of the lower realms and leading us to higher rebirths, liberation from samsara and, with cessation of even the subtle defilements, enlightenment. This is the commentary to “I will abide in an ordinary form in order to benefit others.”

Another quotation to consider is, “At the end of the 500-age, I will manifest as the vajra master in the form of various means. At that time think of this form as me, Vajrasattva, and generate devotion,” but I would have to check the original to make this translation more precise.

Also, at the time when Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was passing away, the bodhisattva Meaningful to Behold asked Buddha, “At the moment we receive teachings from Buddha, but when Buddha passes away, from whom are we going to receive teachings?” Buddha replied, “Don’t worry, Meaningful to Behold. In future times I will manifest in the bodies of abbots, I will manifest in the bodies of vajra masters. In order to benefit other sentient beings I will show birth, sickness, old age and death.” This means that in order to guide us sentient beings Buddha will manifest as an ordinary being, as a being with delusions and suffering, and with that aspect Buddha will liberate us sentient beings from suffering and guide us to enlightenment.

Remembering these quotations helps you to realize the inseparability of the guru and Vajrasattva, the oneness of the guru and Vajrasattva. With the help of these quotations, you look at the guru and Vajrasattva as one, and you then see them as one. Concentrate single-pointedly on the fact that the guru is Vajrasattva, and with this single-pointed guru devotion, recite the mantra. This is reciting the Vajrasattva mantra with the guru yoga mind.

Also, you can sometimes meditate on emptiness. The I, the action of purifying, the negative karma that is purified and Vajrasattva—none of

these contains the slightest atom of inherent existence. Meditating on this emptiness, you then recite the Vajrasattva mantra.

You can also meditate on bodhicitta while you recite the Vajrasattva mantra. You can also do lamrim meditation while reciting the mantra.

You can meditate in different ways as you recite the mantra. If your mind becomes bored with always doing the purification visualizations, you can do these other meditations.

DEDICATION

Due to all these merits may I reach Vajrasattva's enlightenment and lead all sentient beings to Vajrasattva's enlightenment by myself, alone.

Monday, February 15

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

REVIEWING VOWS

We have been talking about the importance of generating regret at having created negative karmas, committed downfalls and degenerated samaya vows. The strength of our regret determines how much lighter our negative karma will become. Simply by generating the power of regret, without all the rest of the practice, we lighten our negative karma. In terms of confession and purification of negative karma, feeling regret is the main factor. From the four powers, the power of regret is the most important one. Generating regret about the negative karma we have created determines how much negative karma is purified.

Therefore, during the discussion groups or at this time, it might be a good idea to go through all the vows. Those who have taken bodhisattva vows can go over the bodhisattva vows and check how many they have broken. Actually, everyone can go through the bodhisattva vows. On another day, just those who have taken Highest Yoga Tantra initiation can go over the tantric vows, the root and branch vows, the mother tantra samayas and so forth. In this way you will know how many you have degenerated or broken. On another day, the Sangha can go over their vows. A group of just those who are living in thirty-six vows can go over the thirty-six vows. On another day, the *gelongs*, the fully ordained monks, can go over the gelong vows by themselves.

By making you more aware of how many vows you have degenerated, doing this will help your purification during this Vajrasattva retreat. When you generate the thought of regret, you will have a clear idea of how much you have to regret and to purify. Your practice of purification will then become very powerful and very effective, because you will see how Vajrasattva practice is of the utmost need.

You do not have to finish reviewing each set of vows in one day. You

can divide the vows so that they are covered in several discussion groups. However, you should go over all the different types of vows you have taken at least once each month during these three months.

Generally, besides the general negative karmas, or non-virtuous actions, the ten non-virtuous actions have to be checked. Those who have taken lay vows can go over the lay vows. Everybody, lay and ordained, can go over the bodhisattva vows together. And those who have taken tantric vows, both lay and ordained, can go over them together. And those living in ordination can go over their vows in separate groups. Those who live in thirty-six vows can go over their vows together, and the fully ordained monks and nuns can go over their vows in separate groups.

This is a very effective and powerful way to do Vajrasattva retreat. You should reflect on all the shortcomings of having broken your vows; reflect on all the harm it does, in this life and after this life, to your own liberation and enlightenment. Going over your vows will help you to do your Vajrasattva practice more strongly and your Vajrasattva practice will help you to keep your vows more purely. These two will help each other.

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

Now, generate a strong thought of regret about the number of times you have committed general negative karmas and the ten non-virtuous actions. First think of the definition of a non-virtuous action. A non-virtuous action is any action that results only in suffering, any action that is motivated by the attachment that clings to this life. A non-virtuous motivation, which means a non-virtuous thought, makes an action non-virtuous. The number of times we have done such actions today, this week, this month, this year, since our birth and during beginningless rebirths is inconceivable. On top of that, consider how many times we have created the specific heavy negative karmas, the ten non-virtuous actions, in one day, one week, one month, one year, since our birth and during beginningless rebirths. And even if we have taken vows, consider how many times we have broken our pratimoksha, bodhisattva and tantric vows in this life and during beginningless rebirths.

Next consider the heaviest obstacle of all, the negative karmas collected in relation to the virtuous friend through generating heresy, anger or negative thoughts towards the virtuous friend, through not following

his advice, through disturbing his holy mind, through harming his holy body. We have done some of these things in this life, and those that we haven't done in this life, we have done in past lives.

Also, one day I will go over the eight shortcomings of making mistakes in devotion to the virtuous friend. These eight shortcomings are explained at the beginning of the guru devotion meditation, after the explanation of the eight benefits of correct devotion to the virtuous friend. It is good to go through these sometimes. It is very powerful.

If we don't recognize the negative karmas we have created, we won't generate the thought of regret in relation to those negative karmas and they'll also be left out when we purify our negative karmas. This is why it is very powerful to examine in this way the various mistakes we have made in relation to the guru and to reflect on the heaviness of these eight shortcomings. Recognizing the specific negative karmas we have created—even if we can't remember the ones we created in past lives, at least we can remember the ones we have done in this life—causes us to generate a strong thought of regret. Then the thought to purify them arises. This is the way we should do the Vajrasattva retreat.

Sometimes go over the eight shortcomings. First reflect on the negative, or non-devotional, thoughts you have generated towards the virtuous friend. Think of how many times you have generated anger and heresy. Then think about how many times you have not followed the guru's advice, harmed the guru's holy body and so forth. Even if you haven't done these things in this life, you have done them in past lives, so they need to be purified. You need to analyze the specific negative karmas that you have created with each guru—"With such-and-such guru I created this negative karma" and "With that particular guru I collected these many negative karmas." Next, you need to go over the eight shortcomings of making mistakes in the guru-disciple relationship. After that, generate a strong motivation of impermanence and death and bodhicitta, and then do the Vajrasattva practice.

This can sometimes be done as a group, because almost everyone doing the practice has met a virtuous friend. Of course, if you haven't made any mistakes, you can rejoice. Generally, you have also done many good things, so you can rejoice at those. It might be difficult to rejoice and to feel regret simultaneously. Perhaps we can feel regret on rainy days and rejoice when it's sunny!

Now generate a strong thought of impermanence and death. “I could die right now. I could die today, during this session; even this minute. That means I could be in the terrifying hells that the Buddha’s teachings talk about, the realm with the heaviest suffering of samsara. I could be there today, during this session or even in this minute. Before this happens, I *must* purify all my defilements, negative karmas, downfalls and degenerated samaya vows.”

This is a billion times more urgent than finding a hospital emergency room when you have a heart attack. If you have no negative karma, even if you die, you won’t be reborn in the lower realms; you can go to a pure land of Buddha and have a better life. Your death isn’t bad, because you go to an even better life. But if you have negative karma, you go to the lower realms. Therefore, purifying your negative karma is a billion times more urgent than finding a hospital when you have a heart attack.

Think as follows. “If there is one sentient being who dislikes me, who is angry with me, and I cherish this sentient being, I achieve enlightenment. If I practice bodhicitta with this one sentient being, I achieve all the realizations of the Mahayana path, including the ultimate result of full enlightenment, with cessation of all my faults of mind and completion of all the qualities of the realizations. This is what this sentient being gives me if I cherish them, if I practice bodhicitta with them. I achieve the infinite qualities of a buddha. A buddha’s holy body, holy speech and holy mind have infinite qualities—if I cherish this sentient being, they will give me the infinite qualities of a buddha. This sentient being causes me to become enlightened and to possess infinite skies of qualities. Therefore, this sentient being who doesn’t love me, who is angry with me, who criticizes me, is the most precious one in my life.

“It is the same with all the rest of the sentient beings. The numberless hell beings are the most precious ones in my life; the numberless hungry ghosts are the most precious ones in my life; the numberless animals are the most precious ones in my life; the numberless human beings are the most precious ones in my life; the numberless asura beings are the most precious ones in my life; the numberless sura beings are the most precious ones in my life; the numberless intermediate state beings are the most precious ones in my life. All sentient beings are the most precious ones in my life.

“Since what they need is happiness and what they do not want is suffer-

ing, I must free them from all their defilements and sufferings and bring them to full enlightenment by myself *alone*.

“Therefore, I *must* achieve enlightenment and do so as quickly as possible. For this, I need to purify all my defilements, negative karmas, downfalls and degenerated samaya vows. Therefore, I am going to practice the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation for the benefit of every single one of the numberless sentient beings: for each hell being, each hungry ghost, each animal, each human being, each asura being, each sura being, each intermediate state being.”

There are many people dying right now in hospitals or in other places, from sicknesses and other causes, so dedicate for them. Also dedicate your practice to those people who have cancer, AIDS and other sicknesses. And as well, dedicate your practice to the long life of our virtuous friend, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and for all his holy wishes to be accomplished immediately.

CONCLUDING PRACTICES

Guru Vajrasattva says, “Son of the race, all your defilements, negative karmas, downfalls and degenerated samaya vows are completely purified.”

Think, as Guru Vajrasattva says, that all your defilements, negative karmas, downfalls and degenerated samaya vows are completely purified. Nothing in the slightest exists on your mental continuum.

Now practice the power not to commit negative actions again. “The vows that I can protect, I will protect from now on; the vows that are extremely difficult to protect, I will protect for one day, one hour, one minute or at least a few seconds.”

This way of making the commitment is more sincere than saying, “From now on, I will never commit these actions again.” If you say this, when you know that you are going to commit those actions again, you are telling lies in the presence of the holy objects. It is good to be precise about what vows you can and cannot keep. With vows that are extremely difficult to keep, make a determination to keep them for at least a few seconds. Practicing in this way is more genuine, because you are not lying or at least lying less.

Guru Vajrasattva, extremely pleased by your vow not to commit negative actions again, absorbs within you.

In emptiness there is no creator, no I; there is no action of creating; there is no negative karma created. All other phenomena are also totally empty of existence from their own side; they do not exist from their own side.

DEDICATION

While everything—subject, action, object—is empty, totally empty, label in this way: “Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I achieve Guru Vajrasattva’s enlightenment and lead all sentient beings to that enlightenment by myself alone.” Dedicate the merits meditating that everything is empty—at the same time, it exists in mere name.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may bodhicitta, the source of all happiness and success for me and for all other sentient beings, be generated without even a second’s delay in my own mind and in the minds of all sentient beings. And may the bodhicitta that has been generated be increased.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I be able to offer benefit as extensive as the sky to all sentient beings as Lama Tsongkhapa did, by having the same qualities within me that Lama Tsongkhapa had, from now on in all my future lifetimes.”

Dedicate all the merits you have collected today and all your past merits, as well as all the resultant happiness up to enlightenment. To elaborate, you can also dedicate your own body, by visualizing it as a wish-fulfilling gem, and also all your belongings. Just as Buddha gave everything, including his family and possessions, to other sentient beings, give everything to every single hell being, every single hungry ghost, every single animal, every single human being, every single asura being, every single sura being and every single intermediate state being. Give everything to all the rest of the sentient beings, all the unenlightened beings, including arhats and bodhisattvas. They receive from you whatever they want, whatever they need, and these enjoyments then cause them to actualize the path of method and wisdom in their mind. These two paths cease completely all their defilements, and everyone becomes enlightened. Their body becomes rupakaya and their mind becomes dharmakaya. You can think that all

sentient beings become enlightened as Vajrasattva or as the deity that you practice.

By dedicating all our merits to all sentient beings, we collect numberless merits; by dedicating our body, we also collect numberless merits; and by dedicating all our possessions, we collect numberless merits. Also, by dedicating the merits of other people, we collect numberless merits. Each time we collect skies of merit.

Now dedicate all this merit. “Due to all this merit, may whatever suffering sentient beings experience ripen upon me and whatever happiness I experience ripen upon all other sentient beings.”

Also dedicate in this way: “Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, wherever I am—in whichever universe, world, country, area or place—just by my being there, may the sentient beings who are in that universe, world, country, area or place never be reborn in the lower realms. May they immediately be liberated from all disease, spirit harm, negative karma and defilements and may they achieve enlightenment quickly by actualizing the whole path, especially bodhicitta.”

“May those who are blind be able to see; may those who are deaf be able to hear; may those who are lame be able to walk; may those who have cancer or AIDS be healed immediately; may those who have relationship problems generate loving kindness and compassion in their minds, only benefit each other and find peace and happiness; may those who cannot find a job be able to find a job; may those who are poor have wealth; may those who have life obstacles that could bring death in car accidents, airplane crashes or something else be free from life obstacles and have long and meaningful lives; may those who are suffering so much because they have failed in business have success in business and become wealthy, and may their wealth be meaningful and beneficial for other sentient beings, which means it will also be beneficial for that person.

“May everyone in that universe, world, country, area or place achieve perfect happiness. May all those who are possessed by spirits and have become wild and crazy immediately be released by the spirits and recover. May those in a coma, who are like living vegetables, immediately regain consciousness just by my being in that universe, world, country, area or place.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas,

bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, which are like a dream, may the I, which is like a dream, achieve Guru Vajrasattva's enlightenment, which is also like a dream, and lead all sentient beings, who are also like a dream, to that enlightenment, which is like a dream, by myself alone, who is also like a dream."

With this dedication, the understanding should come in your heart that everything is empty, that nothing exists from its own side.

"Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may any member of my family who has passed away and anyone who has passed away whose name was given to me or for whom I promised to pray or who relied upon me, as well as all the numberless sentient beings who are now experiencing unimaginable suffering in the lower realms, immediately be liberated from all those sufferings and reincarnate in a pure land where they can become enlightened; or may they achieve enlightenment quickly by receiving a perfect human body and meeting a Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings.

"Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, whenever I hear that somebody is sick, may just my hearing about it cause that sentient being to recover immediately; whenever I hear that somebody has died, may just my hearing about it cause that sentient being immediately to be liberated from the lower realms and reincarnate in a pure land where they can become enlightened. Or if that sentient being has been born a human being but with no opportunity to practice Dharma, may that person immediately receive a perfect human body and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible by meeting a Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings.

"Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I, the members of my family, all the students and benefactors of this organization—especially those who bear many hardships to offer service to other sentient beings and the teachings of the Buddha through this organization—as well as all those who rely upon me, for whom I have promised to pray or whose name has been given to me all have long and healthy lives. May all our wishes be accomplished immediately in accordance with the holy Dharma.

"And, most important of all, may we be able to actualize Lama

Tsongkhapa's complete, pure path to enlightenment, which unifies sutra and tantra, in this very lifetime without even a second's delay.

"May all the social service projects—hospices, the leprosy project, schools and so forth—become wish-fulfilling for all sentient beings, causing them perfect happiness and immediately pacifying all sufferings of body and mind. May all the meditation centers be able to spread the complete teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa to all sentient beings by receiving all their needs. May all the projects succeed immediately by receiving all their needs; and may the 500-foot Maitreya Buddha statue be completed immediately by receiving all its needs. May all these centers, statues and projects cause all sentient beings to generate loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta in their minds. Due to that, may no sentient being experience war, disease, earthquake, famine or any undesirable thing from fire, water, wind or earth. May all these projects, statues and centers cause all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. May Buddha's teachings in general and Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings in particular flourish and spread in all directions."

MULTIPLYING MANTRAS

We'll now recite the mantras with the names of the buddhas and bodhisattvas to multiply each merit that we collected today one hundred thousand times.

The . . . NGO WA DANG MÖN LAM . . . mantra is that of the Victorious One who can accomplish all dedications, all prayers. Recitation of this buddha's name has the power to actualize all of our prayers.

"Due to the eminent blessings of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, unbetraying dependent arising, and my special attitude, may all my pure prayers be accomplished immediately."

Tuesday, February 16

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

Generate a strong thought of regret and intense thought of impermanence and death. Think, “I could die today, even before finishing this session. I could even die this very moment. Therefore, I can’t stand the thought of keeping all these negative karmas, downfalls and degenerated samaya vows for even one second more.”

It is as if you have swallowed food mixed with a deadly poison—just as you would want to get rid of the poison immediately, so you want to rid yourself of all these negativities, which result in inconceivable eons of suffering and are obstacles to realizations, to your achieving liberation from samsara and enlightenment, and to your being able to liberate and enlighten other sentient beings.

Think, “Because I can’t stand having these obstacles, I must purify them right now, without even a second’s delay.”

Then generate a strong thought of bodhicitta to do the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation for the benefit of all sentient beings.

CONCLUDING PRACTICES

From the holy mouth of Guru Vajrasattva comes, “Son of the race, all your defilements, negative karma, downfalls and degenerated samaya vows collected over beginningless rebirths are now completely purified.”

Think that, as Guru Vajrasattva says, all your defilements, negative karma, downfalls and degenerated samaya vows collected over beginningless rebirths have been completely purified.

Next, practice the power not to commit negative actions again.

Guru Vajrasattva is extremely pleased by your vow not to commit negative actions again and absorbs within you. Your body, speech and mind

become inseparable from Guru Vajrasattva's vajra holy body, vajra holy speech and vajra holy mind.

In emptiness there is no creator, no I; there is no action of creating; there is no negative karma created. All other phenomena are also totally empty—empty of existing from their own side.

DEDICATION

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I be able to offer benefit as extensive as the sky to all sentient beings as Lama Tsongkhapa did, by having within me the same qualities that Lama Tsongkhapa had, from now on in all my future lifetimes.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, wherever I am—in whichever universe, world, country, area or place—may just my being there cause the sentient beings in that same universe, world, country, area or place never to be reborn in the lower realms. May they immediately be liberated from all disease, spirit harm, negative karma and defilements and may they achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible by actualizing the whole path, especially bodhicitta.

“May those who are blind be able to see; may those who are deaf be able to hear; may the lame be able to walk; may those with cancer be healed immediately; may those with AIDS be healed immediately; may those with incurable illnesses be cured; may those sentient beings who are being harmed by spirits, nagas and so forth and those who are crazy be released from those harms and recover immediately; may those who live in disharmony, with quarreling and fighting, experience much peace and happiness and generate loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta in their hearts; may those who are poor and unable to find the means of living find wealth; may those who are unable to find a job find a job; may those who unable to find a guru find a perfectly qualified Mahayana guru and receive unmistakable Mahayana teachings; may those who have obstacles to their Dharma practice be free from obstacles and receive all the necessary conditions to practice Dharma; may those monks and nuns who have obstacles to their Dharma, to living in their vows and so forth, be freed immediately from all outer and inner obstacles and receive all the

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necessary conditions to live in their vows and to actualize the realizations of the path to enlightenment as well as scriptural understanding.

“May just my being in that universe, world, country, place or area cause everyone to live with loving kindness, compassion and the thought of bodhicitta and to have perfect happiness.

“As the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three times have dedicated their merits, and as Samantabhadra and Manjughosha realize, I dedicate my merits in the best way to quickly enlighten all sentient beings.”

Wednesday, February 17 (A)

MORNING: FIRST SESSION
(*LOSAR*; TIBETAN NEW YEAR)

COMBINED JORCHÖ/LAMA CHÖPA PUJA

Happy Chinese new year, happy Tibetan new year, happy everyone's new year!

TAKING THE BODHISATTVA AND TANTRIC VOWS

I have emphasized that when the *Guru Puja* is done in the centers, the prayers for taking the bodhisattva and tantric vows must be recited. However, since there are many people who have never taken bodhisattva and tantric vows, it might be good, just before reciting the prayers, to specifically mention that these are prayers for taking the bodhisattva and tantric vows. Those who have not taken the vows do not have to recite the prayers. Of course, if they don't think of the meaning of the prayers, they will mean nothing to them, but if they do think of the meaning, they might feel uncomfortable that they are taking vows and making the determination to do this and that when they don't have to do this and that. If the situation is explained beforehand, they won't feel confused because they will know what is happening, why the prayers are being done.

It is very important to recite these prayers because many people have taken bodhisattva and tantric vows. By reciting the prayers and taking the vows again, these people revive the vows that they have degenerated. Their vows become pure again. It is helpful, especially if you have broken bodhisattva root vows, the result of which is rebirth in hell. Taking the bodhisattva vows protects you from the hell realms. And with each second that passes after you have broken a tantric root vow, you are creating the cause to experience that many eons in the eighth level of the hot hells, Unbearable Suffering State, *Avici* in Sanskrit, which has the heaviest suffering.

By reciting the prayer of taking the tantric vows, those who have broken tantric root vows can stop the result of that particular negative karma, rebirth in the heaviest hell realm. Reciting this prayer has very practical benefits—it stops the heavy negative karma of continuously being in this hell realm and it enables you to achieve enlightenment quickly.

Therefore, we should specify at this point in the puja that those who have taken bodhisattva and tantric vows are going to recite the prayers to take the vows again, so that those who do not know about the vows or have not taken them will not feel uncomfortable or confused.

It is also very good to either mention the motivation or to have each person individually generate the motivation for taking the vows. Think, “The purpose of my life is to free all sentient beings from all their sufferings and to bring them to full enlightenment. Because it is not possible to do this without the bodhisattva vows, I am going to take the bodhisattva vows.”

Generate a similar motivation for taking the tantric vows by thinking, “Since it is so unbearable that my kind mother sentient beings have to suffer in samsara even for one second, I need to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. Therefore, I am going to take the tantric vows.”

It is good to write down these motivations and to repeat them, whether individually or as a group, before the prayer of taking the vows is recited. It clarifies what is happening and also helps those who are taking the vows to generate a strong determination.

So, my advertisement has finished!

THE MEANING OF THE PROSTRATION VERSE MUDRAS

It might also be good to know the purpose of the mudras done during the verses of the prostration prayer. With the first line of each verse, you circle the vajra. With the second and third lines, you do the turning lotus mudra. At the end, with the last line, you place your hands together in a hand prostration.

To understand the meaning of these mudras, first reflect on the fact that no matter how many different aspects there are in the merit field, they are just one. What is that? That is the guru. And what is that? That is the holy mind of all the buddhas, the primordial mind with no beginning and no end, the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness. “The

transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness” is actually a secret term from Highest Yoga Tantra teachings.

Talking about this has reminded me of the time Lama Yeshe gave a talk at the Oberoi Hotel in New Delhi many years ago. Gelek Rinpoche introduced each speaker. His Holiness the Dalai Lama gave a talk in the morning; Samdong Rinpoche, head of the Tibetan university in Sarnath, gave a talk on emptiness in the afternoon; and Lama gave a talk on tantra in the evening.

Lama didn't start to talk immediately. Because of the short period of silence at the beginning, one Tibetan there thought that maybe Lama didn't know anything about tantra. Lama then gave a talk on tantra, but he made no mention of the actual terms “bliss” or “great bliss.” From what I remember, the point of the talk was that if there is wisdom and control when people have sexual enjoyment, the experience can be meaningful. I think Lama meant it could be meaningful in terms of achieving enlightenment.

Lama was actually referring to the path of Highest Yoga Tantra. Even though Lama never mentioned actual terms from Highest Yoga Tantra such as “the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness,” his talk contained the tantric path. Anyone who knew about tantra could see this. I think by the end, Gelek Rinpoche and the other lamas were very surprised by Lama's skill in talking about tantra without mentioning the actual terms from Highest Yoga Tantra.

Anyway, I'm not going to talk on and on. It's just that this story came into my mind . . .

All the merit field is one. No matter how many different aspects there are in the merit field they are all the guru. And what is that? The transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness, the dharmakaya, the holy mind of all the buddhas. This primordial mind, which has no beginning and no end, pervades all existence and is bound by infinite compassion, which embraces all sentient beings. That mind is the absolute guru; to guide us to enlightenment, however, it adopts pure and impure aspects, such as that of a specific guru.

The guru guides us to enlightenment through the three kayas, and this is signified by the mudras you do during the verses of prostration. The first mudra of circling the vajra signifies the dharmakaya and the mudra of the turning lotus signifies the sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. It is

also effective to think that from the guru first guiding us to enlightenment through the three kayas, we can then guide other sentient beings through the three kayas. Although I haven't seen this mentioned in any text, it describes what is going to happen in any case. First think of how the guru guides you and then of how, because of that, you can guide other sentient beings.

This mudra has this very profound meaning. The prostration verses themselves describe what the guru is and the guru's extensive kindness, and even the mudra describes the kindness of the guru and how the guru guides us.

Now my second advertisement has finished!

REJOICING

Without merit, there can be no happiness or success. Therefore, merit is extremely precious. Think, "I have collected inconceivable merit in the past, I am collecting merit now and I will collect merit in the future. How wonderful it is!" Each time you rejoice in your own merit in this way, you collect merit like the limitless sky. Each time you feel happiness in your heart at your collection of the merits of the three times, your merit increases like the sky.

Repeat over and over again, "I have collected so much merit in the three times—how happy I am!" Rejoice in this over and over again.

After this, rejoice in the merits of the three times of the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings. From their merits of the three times, all the bodhisattvas and other sentient beings can receive so much peace and happiness, up to enlightenment. Also, the bodhisattvas completely dedicate all their merit to the numberless sentient beings; they use their merit to complete the realizations and achieve enlightenment for us sentient beings. So rejoice in this, as well as in the merit of all the buddhas. Think over and over again of the merits of the three time of others, "How wonderful it is, how wonderful it is . . ." By doing this, you again collect merit like the limitless sky.

Conclude by thinking, "For the benefit of each sentient being, may I be able to collect as much merit as the buddhas and bodhisattvas have collected."

This, in short, is how to do the practice of rejoicing.

BLESSING AND OFFERING FOOD

At the end of the morning session, before leaving your seats to go to lunch, transform the food in the kitchen into nectar in a jeweled container (or in whatever container accords with Highest Yoga Tantra). Your attitude in making the food offering should be to achieve enlightenment in order to cause all happiness, including enlightenment, to all sentient beings. Visualize that the nectar becomes limitless, like the sky. Then, meditating that their essence is the guru, offer the nectar to all members of the *Guru Puja* merit field, all the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha of the ten directions, and all statues, stupas and scriptures in the ten directions. This is the way to collect the most extensive merit.

After blessing and offering the food, dedicate in the following way. “Due to these merits, may I, the members of my family, all the students and benefactors of this organization and all other sentient beings never be separated from the Triple Gem in all our lifetimes. May we always collect merit by making offerings to the Triple Gem and always receive the blessings of the Triple Gem”—which means all the realizations from guru devotion up to enlightenment, especially the sutra realization of bodhicitta and the Highest Yoga Tantra realization of clear light. “May the entire path to enlightenment be actualized within my mind and within the minds of all the rest of the sentient beings without even a second’s delay.”

Please enjoy the food; please enjoy the extraordinary bliss.

MAITREYA BUDDHA MANTRA

There is a reason that I added recitation of the Maitreya Buddha mantra at the end of *Lama Chöpa*. The lamrim prayer requests, “If we are unable to complete the path in this life (not just the lamrim but the clear light and illusory body of the completion path, which enable us to achieve enlightenment in this life), may we be the heart-son of and never be separated from our root virtuous friend in all our future lives.” [Verse 114.]

If even that doesn’t happen, our final request is, “When Shakyamuni Buddha’s teachings have stopped and Maitreya Buddha descends, at that time may we meet Maitreya Buddha, receive his prediction and achieve enlightenment.”

The advantage of reciting the Maitreya Buddha mantra is that when Maitreya Buddha descends, if we haven't become enlightened during the time of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings, Maitreya Buddha looks for us wherever we are and liberates us. We meet Maitreya Buddha, become the direct disciple of Maitreya Buddha and receive teachings and the prediction of our enlightenment. It is a way of achieving enlightenment quickly. It also helps to bring prosperity and many other benefits. And it is the best mantra to recite to liberate animals, because it means that they are never reborn in the lower realms.

Wednesday, February 17 (B)

EVENING: FINAL SESSION

LIGHT OFFERING PRACTICE

Since there are many light offerings inside and outside the gompa, everyone should do the meditation of offering lights [see Appendix 2]. If there are five thousand lights, for example, everyone will then create five thousand causes of enlightenment, as well as five thousand causes of liberation from samsara and five thousand causes to receive a good rebirth. It is mentioned that from making one offering to buddha, one receives a good rebirth not just in one life but in hundreds or thousands of lives. Because karma is expandable, one achieves a good rebirth not just once but hundreds or thousands of times. A small good karma or a small negative karma is much more expandable than any external phenomenon. From planting one small bodhi seed, we get a huge tree with many thousands of branches, leaves, flowers and seeds. Many things come from that one small seed. The inner factor of karma, however, is much more expandable. The results from one small virtue or one small non-virtue are much more extensive than from any external phenomenon.

And, of course, making light offerings incidentally takes care of this life, of your health. Whether or not you know you have life obstacles, any life obstacles are naturally pacified when your virtue is strong.

Not that I checked, but when Princess Diana died, the woman for whom the whole world cried, I thought that if she had practiced White Tara or another of the long-life deities every day—even just recited the mantra twenty-one times—she probably would have escaped from the obstacle. She would not have died in the car crash; she would have lived longer. This is just a thought that came to me. This kind of untimely death can often be eliminated if one practices the meditation-recitation of one of the long-life buddhas. Your virtue becomes stronger through benefiting

other sentient beings, making offerings to the Triple Gem, generating strong compassion or bodhicitta, meditating on emptiness or rejoicing, and you collect a lot of merit. Even if there are obstacles to your life, making your virtue stronger can pacify the obstacles that could result in your sudden death in a car accident or something similar.

Daily practice—whether you recite the mantras of these buddhas, do sadhanas or whatever—generally takes care of your life. Such continuous practice somehow prevents the many problems that can arise. One way in which these practices stop the experience of these problems is through purifying negative karma. Even though you are not aware of its effect on your mind, your daily practice purifies the heavy problems that arise from negative karma—and of course, every problem or difficulty that happens comes from negative karma. Even if you don't do anything special, your daily practice can purify your negative karma, and once that negative karma is purified you are free from those problems or difficulties of this life. Doing these daily practices continuously and well takes care of many things, whether you are talking about health, a long life or success in your work. This becomes the answer, the solution. We look outside and pay a lot of money to try to find the solution to so many problems, but these problems will not even happen if we do these daily practices well. You won't then need to have operations or go to see psychologists. Of course, having karma and delusions does give these people their jobs—it is perhaps its one benefit!

Collecting merit through creating virtue in our daily life, through doing daily practice, is actually the best way to take care of our life, to take care of everything. It is the answer to all our problems. And our daily practice can save us many thousands of dollars in expenses. Even a daily practice of reciting one mala of OM MANI PADME HUM can save us from some very expensive problems; it can save us from so much worry and even from falling into debt.

I will just quickly read the introduction to the light offering practice text. Some people will be familiar with it, but many others may not.

“It is said in *The Ten Wheel Sutra of the Essence of Earth (Kshitigarbha)*, ‘All comfort, happiness and peace in this world come from making offerings to the Rare Sublime Ones (the Triple Gem). Therefore, those who want

comfort, happiness and peace should always try to make offerings to the Rare Sublime Ones.’

“In general, all goodness in samsara and nirvana comes from making offerings to the Triple Gem, but specifically, different kinds of offerings bring you different benefits. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, the fourth of the thousand buddhas of this fortunate eon, whose holy mind was enriched with the ten powers, announced in the *Tune of Brahma Sutra Clarifying Karma* that making light offerings brings you ten benefits:

1. You become like a light in the world. (This refers to great holy beings, such as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, Shantideva, Lama Atisha, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and so forth, who are like lights for many sentient beings. Basically, because you eliminate the darkness of ignorance of so many sentient beings, you become like a light in the world.)
2. You achieve (when born human) the clairvoyance of the pure flesh eye. (With this clairvoyance your eyes can see very far.)
3. You achieve the devas’ eye. (There are five types of clairvoyance of the pure eye. Another way of enumerating these, however, gives six types of clairvoyance, the sixth being uncontaminated clairvoyance, with cessation of the defilements. Buddha has this sixth type of clairvoyance, but I’m a little unclear as to whether higher bodhisattvas also have it. If this type of clairvoyance refers to cessation of both the subtle and gross defilements, only buddhas possess it. But if it refers to cessation of just the disturbing-thought obscurations, the higher bodhisattvas—those on the eighth, ninth and tenth bhūmis—should also have it. I don’t remember at the moment whether this clairvoyance also involves cessation of the subtle defilements.)
4. You receive the wisdom of knowing what is virtue and what is non-virtue.
5. You are able to eliminate the darkness of ignorance, the concept of inherent existence.
6. You receive the illumination of wisdom; even in samsara you never experience darkness. (Being in a place where there is no light—or in a place where the lights keep going out!—is a

result of non-virtuous karma, because it is unpleasant. At the moment we have sunlight during the day and electric light at night; these are also benefits of our having made light offerings to holy objects, such as buddha, in the past.)

7. You receive great enjoyments and wealth.
8. You are reborn in the deva or human realm.
9. You quickly become liberated.
10. You quickly attain enlightenment.”

These are the ten benefits of making light offerings.

It seems that any offering we make, even ringing a bell or beating a drum, generally has these ten benefits. When we ring a bell, if we think of Buddha and make an offering of the sound of the bell, we receive ten benefits. When we beat a drum, if we think that we are making an offering to Buddha each time before or while we beat it, we receive ten benefits. It seems that we receive ten benefits from each of the various types of offering if we make them to Buddha. The ultimate benefits are liberation from samsara and enlightenment.

“Devas or human beings who accumulate the merit of making one light offering—or even a handful of flowers—will see the fully enlightened buddha, Maitreya.

“The *Sutra of Arya Maitreya* says, “Those who offer a thousand lights or a thousand blue utpali flowers or make the pinnacle of a stupa or a holy form will be reborn when Maitreya Buddha shows the deed of gaining enlightenment and will receive his first Dharma Teaching.

“It is also said that those who offer even one flower or rejoice at the merit of others who offer will achieve buddhahood. This means that even if you don’t get enlightened during the time of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s teaching, during Maitreya Buddha’s teaching your mind will ripen and you will gain liberation.

“Offering light, in particular, is a special door of dependent arising for quickly completing the accumulation of merit and receiving great blessings. It is said in the second chapter of the root tantra of Chakrasamvara, who is a manifestation of Shakyamuni Buddha, “If you want sublime realizations, offer hundreds of lights.

“If you want to know the detailed results of making offerings to holy

objects or of offering service to the buddha or other holy objects, you should study *The Sutra of the One Who Looks with a Compassionate Eye (Avalokiteshvara)*, *The Sutra of Sogyal*, where Buddha gave instruction to King Sogyal”—not ‘Sangyal’—“or the *Könchog Tala*.

“The text, *Immortal Drum Sound Mantra*, says, “If you devote yourself to the Inconceivable One, the results will similarly be inconceivable.” In the same way, *The Sutra of the One Who Looks with a Compassionate Eye* says, “Since the dharmas (i.e., the qualities) of the Buddha Gone As It Is (tathagata) are limitless, making offering to the tathagata brings limitless, infinite, inconceivable, incomparable, unimaginable, numberless benefits.

“*The Small Quotation (Lung ten tseg)* sutra says, “It is possible for the moon and stars to fall to earth, for mountains and forests to rise up into the sky and for the water of the great oceans to completely dry up, but it is not possible for the great sage (the buddha) to tell a lie. Keep this in mind and generate strong devotion to and faith in the root of all happiness and goodness—actions and their results (karma) and the blessings of the Three Precious Rare Sublime Ones. While you have this body and possessions—which are as if borrowed for a year, a month or a few days—night and day, all the time, attend to the practice of taking the essence of this human life, whose short duration is like a flash of lightning, by planting as many seeds as possible in the special field of merit.”

HOW TO MAKE OFFERINGS

The text then goes on to talk about what to do when you actually light the candles. After these instructions, the meditation begins.

Of course, many of you are familiar with this from the lamrim teachings, but I’ll go through it for those who are not. As soon as you turn on the electric light or light the candle, before you offer the light, you must bless it with the mantra OM AH HUM. After that, think that the interferers abiding in the light offerings are dispelled—after you bless the light offering with OM AH HUM, the particular types of interferers that abide in the various kinds of offering cannot possess your mental continuum. For example, a particular interferer called *tse bu chig pa* abides in light offerings and, as far as I remember, causes drowsiness and sleep during teachings. If you do not bless the light offering, this particular interferer can possess your mental continuum and cause drowsiness or sleep when you listen to

teachings, read Dharma texts or meditate. It interferes when you try to do some Dharma practice.

Similarly, other offerings have particular interferers that abide in them and can create certain obstacles for you. For example, when you offer flowers, if you don't bless them immediately by reciting OM AH HUM, the interferer that possesses your mental continuum causes very strong attachment, desire, to arise and makes your life very uncontrolled. Because you are totally overwhelmed by attachment, you have no control, no freedom. This then causes many obstacles to your Dharma practice, to your living in vows. You have no control, no freedom.

If possible, say OM AH HUM as soon as you light the candle. Then, whether or not you have an altar, offer the light to the *Guru Puja* merit field by thinking that they are all in essence the guru. After that, offer the light to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha of the ten directions by thinking that they are all the guru. After that, offer the light to all the statues, stupas and scriptures in the ten directions by thinking that they are all the guru. With the one light you make offering to every single holy object and thus create numberless causes of enlightenment, as well as numberless causes of liberation, good rebirth and all other happiness. By meditating in this way, you create numberless causes of all these types of happiness, even if what you offer is just one light. If you offer one hundred candles and do this meditation while you are lighting them, when you have finished lighting them, they have already been offered; you have already done the meditation. Even if you don't have time to do extensive blessings and offerings after you have lit the one hundred candles, you have already done the offering practice, so it is very convenient.

It is the same when you offer water bowls. Recite OM AH HUM while offering the water, then think that this nectar generates infinite bliss in the holy minds of the *Guru Puja* merit field. If it is difficult to think of the entire *Guru Puja* merit field, simply think of your root guru and think that he embodies all Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and all statues, stupas and scriptures of the ten directions as well. By the time you have finished filling the set of bowls, you have already made offering to them all. You can meditate in this way each time you offer water. Or when you offer food or water, think of it as nectar and offer it to all the many pictures and statues in the gumpa or the meditation room. The essence of all these hundreds

or thousands of pictures and statues is your root guru, so think that by this offering, you have increased the infinite bliss in his holy mind.

By the time you finish filling the set of water bowls—whether it is a set of twenty, one hundred, five hundred or a thousand bowls—you have already offered them. Of course, if you have time, you can then do the extensive blessing and offer them again with this extensive meditation of offering.

THE LIGHT OFFERING MEDITATION

We will now do the meditation. First of all, make charity of all the lights inside and outside the gompa to every hell being, hungry ghost and animal. At the house where I am staying there are also around 250 water bowls and more than 3,000 light offerings, which are offered day and night, inside and outside the house. We can also offer those.

Now make charity of all these offerings to every human being, asura, sura and intermediate state being. Make charity to all sentient beings. With the water bowls, we are not just offering empty bowls without the water that they contain. Make charity of all the bowls here and those at the house to all sentient beings.

Now think, “In order to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, I am going to make offerings together with all the sentient beings.” Think that you are making the offerings either together with all sentient beings or on behalf of all sentient beings. If before making the offerings you first think that you have given them to all sentient beings, if you think that the offerings belong to all sentient beings, it helps stop you from thinking that the offerings are yours; it helps you be less egocentric. Therefore, generate a motivation like this.

[The light offering practice is done.]

Friday, February 19

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

MAKING VAJRASATTVA RETREAT POWERFUL— THE POWER OF REGRET

Since there are people who are coming to do the Vajrasattva retreat for a short time, sometimes for just a few days, it might be nice to have a page on the power of regret to give them. The main thing that makes the Vajrasattva practice powerful purification is reflecting on all the negative karma, degenerated samaya vows and downfalls that we have done in this life and in past lives. I think I have already seen one page on how to generate the thought of regret; it was available one or two days after I had explained that power.

Since the whole thing cannot be explained every time a new person comes to join the retreat, there needs to be a sheet on how to generate the thought of regret. It can be put together from those few days I talked about, then given to everyone who comes to join the retreat for a few days or for the rest of the time. In this way even if no other explanation is given, the person is aware of the specific things to be purified—unless, of course, the person doesn't have past lives. I think that if there are no past lives, there is no negative karma and also there is no good karma. There's no karma. Well, *if* there are no past lives, it means that nothing exists

Reflecting on our negative karma is the main meditation during the Vajrasattva sessions. The most important meditation is to review and recognize our negative karmas, so that they get purified. It would be very helpful to compile a page from the explanations of the power of regret given in those two or three days at the beginning of the retreat, with perhaps the addition of material from some other times. Also, if there is some meditation on generating the thought of regret in Lama Yeshe's commentary, you could also have a separate page with that. You could

have several different pages. In one session you can do the meditation in one way; in another session you can do it in another way. This would be very helpful for the people who were not here during the explanations and for those who come later. Even if people do the retreat for only a few days, that few days of retreat then becomes very powerful purification.

WHAT IS A NON-VIRTUOUS ACTION?

Of the four powers, the most important is the power of regret. The strength of the thought of regret you generate determines how much negative karma gets purified.

First, start by defining negative karma, or non-virtuous action. What is a non-virtuous action? The shortest definition of a non-virtuous action is “any action that results only in suffering.” To make the definition clearer, we can say “any action motivated by non-virtuous thought.” And what is non-virtuous thought? Basically, it is ignorance, particularly ignorance of karma, or anger or attachment.

What attitude dominates our lives? It is not anger but attachment. Most of the time we live our life with an attitude of attachment, the attachment that clings to this life. We live our life with the thought of the eight worldly dharmas. We are attached not just to our own happiness but to our happiness in this life. It is not just that we have the thought of seeking a good reputation, material rewards, praise and comfort—we can seek these out of a good heart, out of a wish to benefit others. Here it is the thought of seeking these things for our own happiness in this life, for example, seeking a good reputation or power, not to benefit others but for our own happiness, comes from attachment clinging to this life.

If we are seeking a good reputation or power in order to benefit other sentient beings, it becomes Dharma. If this is our motivation in seeking a good reputation, wealth or power, it becomes Dharma, especially if we use our reputation, wealth and power to benefit others. Otherwise, we are just collecting additional suffering. If our attitude is one of clinging to this life, all these things just bring us additional suffering.

One way of putting it is that if we have realized the three principal paths (renunciation of samsara, bodhicitta and right view), our reputation in the world does not become harmful to us; it becomes beneficial to other sentient beings. If we have realizations, our good reputation becomes very

worthwhile. It cannot damage our mind or harm us. It is only beneficial for others; it enables us to benefit others.

Many years ago at Kopan I used to spend a lot of time teaching courses—both Nick and Marcel were there for those courses. I think that one time I spent ten days on the thought of the eight worldly dharmas. In those early times, because I was trying to practice just a tiny bit of Dharma, my mind was very scared of having a reputation. Now, of course, it is not like before—I have totally degenerated! At that time, I would spend weeks talking about the hells and weeks talking about the thought of the eight worldly dharmas, accompanied by the hells, like ice cream with a cherry on top—the eight worldly dharmas are like the ice cream and the hells are like the cherry!

I first saw the text *Opening the Door of Dharma: Training the Mind at the Very Beginning* when I stayed a long time at Lawudo to supervise the building of the monastery. *Opening the Door of Dharma*, which has many stories of the Kadampa geshe, is basically about what Dharma is and how to practice Dharma. [Rinpoche's teachings on this text are published by Wisdom Publications in *The Door to Satisfaction*.] I hadn't seen the text before that visit to Lawudo. I was supposed to be watching the workers, checking whether they were just wasting time chatting or cutting the stones to build the temple. Instead, I spent most of the time in the cave and I would go out just before sunset to pay them their money. Giving wages to the workers felt very strange to me, because I was more accustomed to receiving money from other people as offerings. I knew that some of the people I paid didn't actually work that day or didn't do a full day's work. I was the secretary, I was the bookkeeper—I was everything. (This was not the case all the time but on one of the times I visited Lawudo.) I kept the money in a small plastic suitcase, and with paying the workers every day, it would go down, down, down. And when it got right down, somebody would appear and it would go up again. I did that job for a little while.

Anyway, compared to then, I have now become totally lazy; at that time I was able to do many things. What I couldn't do was read texts and watch the workers at the same time. The only time I could see the workers was when I went for pipi, and many times they would be sitting around chatting, not working. But what could I say? I found it difficult to scold them. Somebody else might have been able to scold them, but to me, scolding just seemed very strange.

After reading *Opening the Door of Dharma* for months, I checked back on my life. I was in Buxa for eight years, and during all those years I didn't really study Dharma. I spent most of my time playing or washing in the river. It was so hot that many monks would go to wash in the nearby river. At night we would wash under a tap, but during the day we would go to the river to wash, mainly because it was unbelievably hot. All the monks put their red and yellow robes on the bushes and would swim in just their shorts. When you looked down on the river from the mountain, the robes on the bushes would look like flowers. During those years I took teachings, memorized texts and did some debating, but it was like a child playing. After reading this text, I could not see that anything I had done had become Dharma.

I was born in Solu Khumbu but left for Tibet when I was ten or eleven years old. I then lived in Tibet at a place called Pagri for three years. I memorized every morning then went to puja. I spent that three years of my life doing pujas at the houses of benefactors. In the morning I memorized texts or the prayers that had to be recited at Domo Geshe's monastery, where I was ordained and where I had to do my examination. There were two volumes of texts to be memorized; I memorized one but I didn't get to memorize the other. At the time I did my examination, Tibet had already been overtaken by the Chinese Communists. After reading *Opening the Door of Dharma*, I looked back at this period and could not find anything that had become Dharma. Looking back at my whole life, I could not find anything that had become Dharma.

Because the mind is a dependent arising, which means that it exists in dependence upon causes and conditions, the mind can be transformed this way or that. Because the mind is a causative phenomenon, it is possible to have realizations; because the mind is a dependent arising and not independent, it is possible to have realizations, though having realizations was not my experience.

Through reading *Opening the Door of Dharma*, my mind became scared when people brought me offerings. In Solu Khumbu the Sherpas often brought offerings to the cave. They would fill with corn (or whatever else they had) the brass container from which they usually drank *chang* or ate food. Because of having read the text, I was scared to receive these offerings. Even though, unfortunately, having realizations was not my

experience, it does show that if one does practice, the mind can change. If one does practice, one can have realizations. Even that immediate small change of mind can be used as a logical proof that it is possible to achieve enlightenment.

However, to return to the point, if you have realizations, it is very worthwhile to have a good reputation in the world because you can then benefit others.

This just happened as side talk, as Geshe Sopa often says during his teachings.

A non-virtuous action is any action that brings only a suffering result, and especially it is any action done with ignorance of karma, anger or, in particular, the attachment that clings to this life. The reason that I say “in particular” is because as ordinary beings, we live our life mostly with attachment. Every action we do with this motivation of attachment, clinging to the happiness of this life, becomes a non-virtue. This applies not only to the actions of this life but to those we have done during beginningless rebirths.

THINKING ABOUT NON-VIRTUE

Think now about the ten non-virtuous actions. From those ten actions, how many have we committed today? This week? This month? This year? This life? And how many times have we committed the ten non-virtuous actions during our beginningless past lives?

Now think about the times we have broken our pratimoksha, bodhisattva and tantric vows. We have degenerated our samaya vows in this life, and even though there are some that we haven't degenerated in this life, we have degenerated them many times in past lives.

Then think about the very heavy negative karma created in relation to the virtuous friend. Think of the samaya you have broken with the guru. This has happened many times in this life, but this is not the first time we have broken our samaya. We have broken it many times in our past lives.

More specific details about all these non-virtues and their results might come later in the teachings. So far I'm just introducing the basic outline so that you can recognize what needs to be purified.

THINKING ABOUT DEATH

Then think about death. Today, in this world, many people your age died. Many healthy people, who did not have cancer or any other sickness, died suddenly in car accidents or in other ways. They were very healthy, but suddenly they died today. And there are many people in this world dying right now and heading for the lower realms. Even though they received a human body, they didn't meet the Dharma—or they met the Dharma, but didn't get to practice. Many people are dying right now and facing the lower realms.

GENERATING BODHICITTA

Think, “What is happening to these other people could happen to me today—it could happen even during this session. Death can happen at any moment. So, before my death happens, I must purify completely all my negativities. I can't stand for even one second not to have purified the causes of eons and eons of suffering in the lower realms and the obstacles to actualizing the path to enlightenment and to my liberating and enlightening all sentient beings. I must purify right now without even a second's delay.

“Just as my present-life mother has been my mother and kind to me numberless times, every sentient being has been my mother and kind to me numberless times. My present-life mother kindly gave me this precious human body, which allows me to practice Dharma, and she has done the same thing numberless times in past lives. Just like this, every sentient being has been my mother and numberless times has given me a precious human body with which to practice Dharma. Each sentient being has been so kind to me; they are so precious in my life.

“When I was in the womb of my present-life mother and when I was a baby, my mother was also kind in saving me from dangers to my life hundreds of times every day. Every day for many years she protected my life from hundreds of dangers. And she had been kind in protecting my life from danger numberless times in past lives. Every sentient being has also been my mother and protected my life from hundreds of dangers numberless times during beginningless past lives. Each sentient being has been so kind to me; they are so precious in my life.

“My present-life mother also led me in the path of the world; she educated me. And she has been kind in this way numberless times during my beginningless past lives. Just like this, every sentient being has also been kind to me by being my mother and giving me an education numberless times. Each sentient being has been so kind to me; they are so precious in my life.

“My present-life mother also bore many hardships to ensure my happiness and well-being, to ensure my survival. In being my mother, she bore many hardships. She created much negative karma in order to take care of me, and as a result has experienced much suffering—I obliged her to create negative karma; she has had to experience the suffering results. For my happiness and well-being, for my very survival, she bore hardships numberless times during my beginningless past lives. Exactly like my present-life mother, every sentient being has been my mother and borne much hardship numberless times during beginningless past lives. Each sentient being has been so kind to me; they are the most precious one in my life.

“Therefore, I must repay their kindness. The best way to repay their kindness is to free them from suffering and its causes and bring them to enlightenment. This is the best way to repay their kindness.

“To do this, I first need to practice Dharma myself. I need to have realizations of the lamrim so that I can reveal Dharma to the sentient beings and cause them to practice Dharma. This is the best way to repay the kindness of my kind mother sentient beings. Even though my kind mother sentient beings want happiness very much, they are devoid of happiness. Even when they have temporary happiness, they are devoid of the ultimate happiness of liberation from samsara. And even when they have liberation from samsara, they are devoid of the peerless happiness of enlightenment. Therefore, I must cause them to have all happiness and the cause of happiness. No matter how much they don’t want to suffer, my kind mother sentient beings constantly suffer. They keep themselves busy constantly creating the cause of suffering. I must free them from all suffering and its causes. And this work of freeing them from all suffering and of bringing them all happiness, including full enlightenment, I must do by myself *alone*.”

Take the complete responsibility for this upon yourself. Generate this special attitude of voluntarily doing this work for sentient beings.

“I will free every hell being from their suffering and bring them to enlightenment by myself *alone*. I will free every hungry ghost from their suffering and bring them to enlightenment by myself *alone*. I will free every animal from their suffering and bring them to enlightenment by myself *alone*. I will free every human being from their suffering and bring them to enlightenment by myself *alone*. I will free every asura and sura from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment by myself *alone*. I will free every intermediate state being from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment by myself *alone*.”

“There is no other means of accomplishing this work for others except by first achieving full enlightenment myself. I need to have omniscient mind, which directly knows all the levels of mind, wishes, karma and intelligence of every sentient being, as well as all the various methods that are suitable for them. Therefore, I need to actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment. Therefore, I need to purify my defilements, negative karma, downfalls and degenerated samaya vows. Therefore, I am going to practice the meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva . . . for one minute!”

VISUALIZATION DURING MANTRA RECITATION

Especially for the third purification, the instantaneous purification, when Vajrasattva sends strong nectar-beams it might be useful to think that your body becomes in the nature of light. This makes it easy to generate strong faith that you have actually purified the negative karma, downfalls and degenerated samaya vows.

It is also mentioned that as you recite the Vajrasattva mantra, all the sentient beings you have visualized on a moon disk at your heart are also reciting the Vajrasattva mantra at the same time. As you are purifying them, they are also reciting the mantra.

Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche also gave some advice about this particular visualization. Once I asked Rinpoche how to make effective the *powa* meditation, in which you visualize transferring the consciousness of a dead or dying person to a pure land. Rinpoche said that you will be able to do *powa* meditation more effectively for others if, when you do the Vajrasattva meditation, you visualize all sentient beings on a moon disk at your heart, then visualize purifying them with nectar beams emitted from Vajrasattva. This meditation helps you transfer another sentient being's

consciousness to a pure land by doing the powa meditation. When you do Vajrasattva practice in your daily life, visualize all sentient beings on a moon disk at your heart, and as you do the meditation of purifying yourself, also purify them. This is Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche's special advice.

There are many people, especially in the West, interested in hospice work. As I have been suggesting for some years, powa is a very important method of helping someone who has died. It is a very important service that saves other beings from the lower realms. In some pure lands, the sentient being definitely becomes enlightened. In other pure lands, the sentient being doesn't become enlightened, but it is impossible for them to again be reborn in the lower realms.

It would have been nice to have had the Medicine Buddha celebration today, but it's been scheduled for tomorrow. Unfortunately, rain has been forecast for tomorrow. However, now let's do some more prayers—Four-arm Mahakala, the praise and tea offering to Palden Lhamo and perhaps Six-arm Mahakala.

PRACTICES FOR SOMEONE WHO HAS DIED

It came out very beneficial to recite one mala of OM MANI PADME HUM dedicated for Arthur B., who died recently in Boston. Visualize the Thousand-arm Buddha of Compassion. Nectar beams emitted by the Buddha of Compassion purify, in particular, Arthur B. of all the negative karma he collected in this life and during beginningless past lives. You can also think that all sentient beings are purified of all their negative karma as well.

Make a strong request to the Buddha of Compassion that no matter in which realm the consciousness of Arthur Biotti may be, may it immediately be transferred to a pure land where he can become enlightened or be reborn in a perfect human body and soon achieve enlightenment by meeting a perfectly qualified Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings. [The retreat group recites together one mala of *manis*.]

According to my divination, recitation of *King of Prayers* also came out very beneficial for this person. [The group recites *King of Prayers*.]

Put yourself in the place of this person who has died. If it was you who had died this morning, how would it be? At the time of death and espe-

cially after death, you need so much help from others. If it was you who had died this morning and you knew that a group of people were praying for you, you would be so happy to have such incredible support. Even after death, such practice is very beneficial for the person who has died, and it is also beneficial as a practice that will enable you to benefit sentient beings like all the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three times do.

When I was in Madison last year, I got translations of some of the eight prayers that are commonly recited in Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism as dedications for yourself and others, one of which is *King of Prayers*. I don't know who did the translation, but it is excellent. One is a prayer to be born in the Blissful Realm, the pure land. I thought that it would be good to alternate *King of Prayers* and the *Prayer to be Reborn in the Land of Bliss*. It is not necessary to do all eight prayers one after another, but I thought it might be nice to have a change and do different dedication prayers. It is especially good to do *Prayer to be Reborn in the Land of Bliss (De wa chen gyi mon lam . . .)*. Then we know how to pray for all the important things.

As I mentioned at another time, when I was in Madison studying with Geshe Sopa Rinpoche last year, from time to time Geshe-la would receive requests for prayers from people. Geshe-la would call everybody there—all the other geshes and lamas—to do prayers. I thought it was extremely good that Geshe-la, when requested, took such precise care of people who had died and needed help. Geshe-la specifically decided to do prayers in the gomba room together with all the geshes and lamas there. Geshe Tenge, an old geshe who is one of Geshe-la's disciples, led the prayers. Even though this *Prayer to be Reborn in the Land of Bliss* was not new to me, because he led the prayer, I somehow found it very effective and beneficial for my mind. It is actually a common prayer. I had thought to translate it into English and make it available so that students also get the chance to recite this prayer, but it seems that somebody has already translated it. I don't know who did the translation, but it's translated extremely well. I have a copy of the English translation, and I think it is very good to recite this to pray for yourself and for others. [See the *FPMT Prayer Book*.]

I think that is all. Thank you.

Sunday, February 21 (A)

AFTERNOON: VAJRASATTVA SESSION

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Is there one question? [Silence.] . . . half a question?

Judy Lin: I'm wondering if the Vajrasattva meditation can purify the most subtle obscurations?

Rinpoche: Yes, it can help to purify subtle obscurations. Vajrasattva meditation purifies subtle obscurations, but not by itself alone. By purifying the obstacles, negative karma, Vajrasattva practice allows us to actualize the realizations of the path to enlightenment; it helps us to actualize the remedy of the path, which is what ceases the subtle defilements.

Ven. Michel: If we don't finish the number of mantras, may we continue reciting the Vajrasattva mantra after the retreat but on the basis of another deity instead of Heruka?

Rinpoche: There is no problem with doing that. Since the meditation has to do with visualizing Vajrasattva on your crown, it doesn't matter what deity you generate yourself as or whether you change the deity. It won't bring any obstacles.

For example, when you do the Vajrayogini sadhana, you recite some Vajrasattva mantras at that time, and the same applies when you do the practices of Heruka and Yamantaka. With each sadhana that you do, you can count the Vajrasattva mantras that you recite. There is no problem; it won't become an obstacle.

Merci beaucoup!

Ven. Paloma: Rinpoche, I would like to know what it means to disturb the mind of the guru.

Rinpoche: I'm speechless! It means to displease the mind. That's all. Finished.

Julia Hengst: Rinpoche, two reasons are explained as to why we can purify negative karmas—because they are impermanent and because they are dependent arisings. I'm wondering why are we able to purify negative karmas because they are dependent arisings?

Rinpoche: Your question itself is the answer. It's the same as washing ourselves. When our body is dirty, we can clean it with soap and water. How do the soap and water clean our body of the dirt? Or, when our clothes are dirty, we can clean them with soap and water. With one set of causes and conditions, our body or our clothes become dirty; with another set of causes and conditions—water, soap and so forth—our body or our clothes can be cleaned. The imprint, the seed of delusions left on our mental continuum, is the main cause for the arising of delusions. When we meet the objects of our delusions (the conditions), since we do not practice Dharma, since we do not practice mindfulness and do not apply the necessary antidotes, we have no protection against the arising of delusions. Because the seed of delusions has not been removed, delusions arise and again leave negative imprints on our mental continuum, and motivate negative karma as well. It transforms our actions into negative karma. Each time a delusion arises it leaves an imprint; it obscures the mind. The negative karma also obscures the mind.

Here, in the case of Vajrasattva, we purify the negative karmas and defilements with a different set of causes and conditions—meditating on Vajrasattva, emptiness or bodhicitta, generating compassion, reciting mantras and so forth. The Vajrasattva mantra has power because of the qualities of Vajrasattva. Vajrasattva, a manifestation of the holy mind of all the buddhas, the absolute guru, is bound by infinite compassion and manifested especially to purify the minds of sentient beings. Because Vajrasattva especially took this aspect for purification, it is very powerful in purifying defilements. Even though reciting any buddha's name can purify, the Vajrasattva mantra is recited in particular because Vajrasattva manifested specifically to purify defilements. Purification is the main function of Vajrasattva. Due to the power of compassion and the power of this deity's aspect, which is manifested particularly to perform the function of purification, Vajrasattva is able to purify if you do the meditation-recitation.

Basically, as you mentioned, negative karma is a causative phenomenon. Therefore, it is not independent; it is a dependent arising. Not only is negative karma a dependent arising, but it is also a causative phenomenon, so you can purify it. In dependence upon one set of causes and conditions, negative karma is created. In dependence upon another set of causes and conditions, it can be purified. That's all.

And your own faith is another factor. How much negative karma you purify depends on how much faith you can generate that you have purified the negative karma. When we do Vajrasattva meditation-recitation, generating faith that we have purified our negative karma and defilements also has power.

Bethanne Lai: Could Rinpoche explain how we're supposed to visualize the environment as the mandala.

Rinpoche: How do you visualize the place as the Vajrasattva mandala? When your room or the place you live becomes very disturbing, how do you visualize it as the mandala? Is that the question?

Bethanne: The commentary says that we are supposed to practice seeing the environment as the mandala of the deity and all objects as pure rather than ordinary. I don't really know what it means or how to do it. How do I visualize the mandala?

Rinpoche: When you take a great Vajrasattva initiation, there is visualization of the mandala. I had a picture of the Vajrasattva mandala for a long time. I think an old monastery in Solu Khumbu had a Vajrasattva mandala on its ceiling, and for a long time I had a picture of it on the cover of my book. Now I have lost it. It was like the usual mandala of the deity, with Vajrasattva in the center. There are small differences in mandalas according to whether the deity is Guhyasamaja, Yamantaka, Heruka Chakrasamvara or whatever, but the general design is the same.

Now, in relation to you, you can visualize the mandala of any deity whose great initiation you have received, whether it is Heruka, Yamantaka, Hevajra or another deity. Even though in relation to your present practice you are doing a Vajrasattva retreat, in relation to visualizing the mandala, you can visualize that deity's mandala.

What was your other question? Was it about visualizing things as pure?

Bethanne: I read somewhere that to see things as ordinary breaks a tantric vow. How are we supposed to stop seeing things as ordinary?

Rinpoche: It is mentioned that we should think that every thought that arises is the dharmakaya, every sound we hear is the holy speech of the deity or mantra and every form that appears is the holy body of the deity. It is like this with the holy body, holy speech and holy mind. This is called the yoga that utilizes the three in the path to enlightenment, or, in Tibetan, *ku sum kyi näl jor*. When you do this yoga, your mind becomes pure, from being an impure mind that projects the impure. Projecting the impure has two aspects, appearance and belief. Things appear to you as ordinary, and you then believe that they are ordinary.

Generally, there are two ways to look at things as pure, which includes looking at the place as a mandala, your body and the bodies of others as the deity's holy body, and food and drink as nectar. One way is to look at the essence of everything as bliss and voidness. The other way is to also see things with a pure appearance. It is not necessary to change everything into another form; you don't have to transform everything into a pure aspect. For example, in the mandala there are cemeteries with zombies, guardians, corpses and skeletons—you don't visualize them as the deity. Even though you stop the appearance of the place as ordinary and the concept that believes it is ordinary and visualize the mandala, it is not necessary to visualize all the beings in the cemeteries as the deity.

In the case of the cemeteries, the meaning of practicing pure appearance is that the essence of everything is the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness, even though it appears as corpses, trees, guardians and so forth. Since everything is a manifestation of the deity's holy mind, the dharmakaya, it is pure. This is how you look at it as pure.

I think that even looking at the essence of everything as wisdom and bliss, the deity's holy mind, the dharmakaya, helps a lot. It is one way of looking at things as pure.

For example, in the practice of guru devotion according to the sutra Mahayana, there is no instruction to stop the ordinary appearance of the guru and there is no mention of visualizing the guru as the deity. This is mentioned only in the guru yoga practice of tantra. The teachings of Mahayana sutra mention that you use quotations and logical reasoning, supported by your own particular experiences (if you have any), to see the essence of the guru as buddha. And you see the holy mind of the guru

as the dharmakaya. By looking at the guru as buddha, you then see the guru as buddha, as pure, even though his appearance is ordinary. The appearance of the guru doesn't change into the pure form of the deity's holy body. When by looking at the guru as buddha, you see the guru as buddha, the appearance of the guru doesn't change. This is the main point.

In tantra, on top of that, even the external appearance is pure. Tantric guru yoga practice is done on the basis of the sutra practice. First you use logical reasoning and personal experiences to prove to your mind, which sees the guru as ordinary, that the guru in essence is buddha. This is the foundation. On this basis you then see the guru in the aspect of the deity by looking at the guru in the deity's aspect. Before you visualize the guru as inseparable from the deity, you must have the foundation of the sutra practice of guru devotion. This is the foundation when you do *Lama Chöpa*, six-session yoga or any other guru yoga practice in which you generate the deity. You have to establish the mind of guru devotion in place of the mind that projects ordinary appearances and concepts of the guru, especially in relation to the mind of the guru. By using quotations, reasoning and your own experiences, you have to prove that the essence, or the mind, of the virtuous friend is dharmakaya.

What I'm trying to explain is that even though the external aspect of the guru doesn't change into the deity's aspect when you see that the essence of the guru is dharmakaya, it is an important foundation for that realization. It is very important in the practice of seeing the virtuous friend as pure.

Ven. Ailsa Cameron: Rinpoche, in the visualization of Vajrasattva and the consort is there also a mantra garland around the seed syllable at the heart of the consort?

Rinpoche: I have never thought about that! I have never dreamt about it! I think you can visualize that. You can visualize as many mantra garlands as possible—at the father's heart, at the mother's heart, at the daughter's heart, at the son's heart

So far I have not seen any commentary that says to visualize the mantra at the mother's heart. It usually says at the father's heart. But if you would really like to visualize the mantra also at the mother's heart, I don't think that there should be any problem from doing that. Maybe it would be helpful to have more nectars flowing down.

Todd Ring: If there is awareness that thought and consciousness are not separate, does that suppress the causative power of karmic appearances or purify them? And can one practice that way?

Rinpoche: Does it make karma cease to function? What do you mean by “not separate”?

Todd: Thought and consciousness are both empty and non-dual, so aren't they therefore not separate? And if one remains in the awareness of this . . .

Rinpoche: Remaining in the awareness that all phenomena—not only thought and consciousness—are empty, or non-dual, makes negative karma unable to function and good karma able to function. Everything is empty, not just thought and consciousness. If you look at the numberless phenomena as empty, like space, if you can keep your mind in that state, it is only negative karma that is unable to function; good karma functions. It is similar to what was mentioned before about dependent arising.

Todd: I don't understand how negative karma is unable to function but good karma is still functional.

Rinpoche: To understand that, you need to know more about what emptiness means. It will then become more clear how that can enable good karma to function.

Negative karma is made unable to function by the power of that meditation on the very nature of phenomena. Positive karma is made functional because you collect inconceivable merit when you do that meditation. Meditating on emptiness is the most powerful way to cease the delusions, or defilements. The wisdom that realizes emptiness is actually the only thing that can directly cease the delusions, especially the very root of all delusions, ignorance, the concept of inherent existence. The wisdom that realizes emptiness is the most powerful agent in purifying negative karma.

Negative karma is the obstacle to many things—happiness, success in business, health, longevity, harmonious relationships, realizations. Negative karma is the obstacle to our achieving enlightenment and our benefiting and enlightening others. So, the wisdom that realizes emptiness purifies negative karma. Not only that, but it collects inconceivable merit, inconceivable good karma. This wisdom is very powerful, like an atomic bomb. It is the most powerful means of purifying negative karma. And because you purify negative karma, the past good karma you have

collected is strengthened and ripened. For example, if you are eating the wrong diet or something poisonous and you are also taking medicine, the medicine becomes more powerful and works better when you reduce your intake of the wrong food or the poison. Similarly, by meditating on emptiness, you purify more negative karma and at the same time collect inconceivable merit, so your past merit is then experienced. You are then able to have realizations of the path to enlightenment.

Does this make it a little clearer? Anyway, you can think and meditate more on this point, and an understanding of it will then gradually come.

Ven. Michel: On the crown of Vajrasattva, do we visualize Akshobhya alone or with the consort?

Rinpoche: The question from the very famous venerable from Nalanda is, “When you initiate the Vajrasattva on your crown and the surplus water becomes Akshobhya, should you visualize Akshobhya in the aspect of father and mother embraced?” I don’t remember seeing a commentary that specifies the aspect of Akshobhya, but I think that it should be okay to visualize father and mother.

There is a general explanation that shows the purpose of visualizing one of the five types of buddhas on the crown. Even though I’ve been using the term “*Dhyani* Buddha” for numberless years and many people have become familiar with the term, I don’t really know what *Dhyani* means in this context. After all these years, I’m still not sure what it means.

The Tibetan term is *rig nga*, which could be translated as “five types of buddhas.” The word *rig* can mean “type” or “race,” as in Mahayana race. Mahayana race has nothing to do with the body; it has to do with the mind. Those who have the realization of bodhicitta are of the Mahayana race, or type. Sometimes *rig* is translated as “family,” but you can’t really talk about the Mahayana family; it should be the Mahayana race or Mahayana type. Of course, as far as the words are concerned, it doesn’t really matter. Whatever label you use, once its meaning is explained and people understand the meaning, the label itself doesn’t matter very much. Once the meaning of the term is known, it doesn’t really matter if the term is not precise.

This applies to some translations of Tibetan terms. Take “emptiness,” for example. In tantric sadhanas, before we generate something pure, a deity or a mandala, we purify in emptiness the ordinary object, our body

or the place. At that time we use the words *tong pa nyi du gyur*, not simply *tong pa gyur*, which means “it becomes empty.” In Tibetan, the extra word *nyi*, which means “only,” is added after *tong pa*, which means “emptiness.” Adding *nyi* makes the emptiness specific; it is not just ordinary emptiness but a specific emptiness. The Tibetan term, with the addition of the extra word *nyi*, becomes something special, something specific. The addition of *nyi* makes it clear that you are not just visualizing empty space or saying that something doesn’t exist there. If you don’t add *nyi* to *tong pa*, you are referring to ordinary emptiness, which is like space or the absence of form. By adding *nyi* after *tong pa*, however, you know that you are not simply visualizing that a substantial phenomena becomes non-existent, which is ordinary emptiness. The *nyi* makes the emptiness something particular, something special; it cuts the concept of ordinary emptiness. The *nyi* specifies that the type of emptiness is the emptiness of inherent existence.

The English word “emptiness” is not a precise translation of the Tibetan term *tong pa nyi*, where *tong pa* means emptiness and *nyi* means only. Every single word of the Tibetan has not been translated—the *nyi* has been left out. However, for quite a number of years now, the term “emptiness” has been used to mean the absence of inherent existence, and people have become familiar with this use. In some contexts, the English word “emptiness” refers to the absence of inherent existence; in other contexts, it does not necessarily have this meaning. The Tibetan term *tong pa nyi*, however, always refers to the absence of inherent existence. There is no danger of being misled and thinking of ordinary emptiness from the side of the words; this can only happen if someone doesn’t understand the meaning of the words.

You can say that all the buddhas are manifestations of the one, Buddha Vajradhara, who is of the sixth type, or race. Or you can say that all the buddhas are manifestations of the three, the holy body of Vairochana, the holy speech of Amitabha, the holy mind of Akshobhya. Or you can say that all the buddhas are manifestations of the five Dhyani Buddhas.

Saying this has reminded me that the essence of the hundred syllable Vajrasattva mantra is the one hundred types, or races, of peaceful and wrathful deities—*shi tro tam pa rig gya* in Tibetan. There is a way of counting one hundred types of deities (*rig gya*), five types of deities (*rig nga*) and one type of deity (*rig chig*), which refers to Vajradhara. The HUM in the

center signifies the sixth type (*rig drug pa*), or race, Vajradhara. The hundred syllables signify the hundred types of peaceful and wrathful deities.

The five Dhyani Buddhas are manifestations coming from Buddha Vajradhara, so in that sense *rig* could perhaps be translated as “lineage.”

Basically, a king’s race has to do with the children born from that king; it has to do with the blood lines. There are many such races in India. Here, the term *rig*, or “race,” has to do with the mind.

However, according to Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche’s explanation, *rig*, or “type,” refers to the sentient beings. Rather than referring to the Dhyani Buddhas, it refers to the types of sentient beings. For the type of sentient being whose main delusion is attachment, Amitabha manifests in order to purify their strong attachment. Akshobhya manifests to pacify the anger of those sentient beings whose main delusion is anger. In a similar way, each of the five Dhyani Buddhas acts as a particular remedy to one of the five main delusions. In this case, the “types” in the expression “the five types of the Victorious Ones”—*gyel pa rig nga* in Tibetan—is related to the types of sentient beings in terms of their delusions, and each of the five Dhyani Buddhas manifests in order to purify those types of sentient beings. As I mentioned before, for the “type” of sentient being who has strong attachment, Amitabha Buddha manifests to purify their delusions, particularly their attachment. So, in this context, “five types” seems a more suitable translation of *rig nga* than “five lineages.” How you translate the term *rig nga* depends on its context.

After some time, before the retreat finishes—or maybe after the retreat finishes—I thought to go through the commentary on the extensive Vajrasattva practice from the long version of the Yamantaka or the Heruka sadhana. In his Vajrasattva commentary, I think Lama Yeshe might have explained the elaborate visualizations from the long Heruka sadhana.

Invoking the wisdom beings and initiating the deity are not done for the deity but for our own mind. Initiating the deity is done to purify our own delusions, because a buddha has nothing to purify. If there were something to purify, the being would not be a buddha, but as in the *Jorchö* bath offering we’re doing every morning, the reason we still do the meditation is to purify our own mind, as well as to generate strong faith. It is for this purpose that we invoke the wisdom being.

We might have the idea, “Oh, this is just a visualization. It comes

from my own imagination, so how can it purify my mind?” To stop such thoughts, which are obstacles to having strong faith, we invoke the wisdom beings and so forth. We can then develop faith and feel that it is the real Vajrasattva that is purifying us.

The water that comes out of the crown transforms into one of the five types of buddhas. This is to show the particular type of buddha, from the five types, in the essence of which one becomes enlightened. It also helps to generate faith in the existence of this buddha.

Another explanation of the buddha on the crown is also given. Even after they become enlightened, buddhas still respect their guru, because they become enlightened in dependence upon the kindness of their guru. The buddha on the crown signifies that the deity still pays homage, or respect, to the guru even after becoming enlightened. Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo gave this explanation in the Cittamani Tara commentary, and there are some other commentaries that explain it this way, too.

Again some obstacles happened so that I didn't get to read the text [that Rinpoche has brought with him several times]. I thought to read you some fantastic stories, something really exciting that would make you levitate five feet in the air! Maybe next time . . .

DEDICATION

“Due to the merits of the three times collected by myself and others, which are empty, may the I, which is empty, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's or Guru Vajrasattva's enlightenment, which is also empty, and lead all sentient beings, who are also empty, to that enlightenment, which is also empty, by myself alone—which is *not* empty! That's the only one that is not empty! Everything else is empty, except me. No, that one is the most empty of all! I'm joking!”

Sunday, February 21 (B)

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

MOTIVATION FOR THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS PRACTICE

I'm always very happy to lead others in the motivation—but not to do the practice myself!

“The purpose of my life is to free all sentient beings from all their suffering and its causes and bring them to full enlightenment. Therefore, I must achieve enlightenment; therefore, I must actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment; and therefore, I must purify all my defilements, negative karmas and downfalls.

“If I were now in the lower realms, in a hell realm, how would it be? I would be completely overwhelmed by the heaviest suffering of samsara. Besides this, I would have no opportunity to practice Dharma.

“Not only is death definite but it could happen at any moment. It could happen today; it could even happen right now. So, before death comes, I must purify all my defilements, negative karmas and downfalls without even a second's delay.

“Having all these defilements, negative karmas and downfalls is billions of times more harmful than having taken a deadly poison. Even though taking the poison can cause my death, that alone cannot cause me to be reborn in the lower realms and suffer there for many eons. But if I die with these defilements, negative karmas and downfalls on my mind-stream, I can be reborn in the lower realms and experience suffering there for many eons. Therefore, I must purify all these negativities right now without even a second's delay.

“To bring all happiness, up to enlightenment, to all sentient beings, I'm going to do prostrations while reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas and *The Practice of Prostrations to the Thirty-Five Buddhas*.”

In your heart, feel that you are making each prostration for the benefit of every hell being, to free them from suffering and bring them to

enlightenment; for the benefit of every hungry ghost; for the benefit of every animal; for the benefit of every human being; for the benefit of every asura; for the benefit of every sura; for the benefit of every intermediate state being. You are doing every single prostration for them.

GENERAL CONFESSION

Next is the general confession. [Rinpoche reads *General Confession* up to “. . . have created the ten negative actions by means of body, speech and mind . . .”]

Think of how the ten non-virtuous actions appear to you. If they appear to you as not merely labeled by your mind, as real ten non-virtuous actions that exist from there, think that that is a hallucination, that is the object to be refuted. Those ten non-virtuous actions are totally non-existent right there. Reflecting on the emptiness of each negative karma is the most powerful way to purify negative karma. While you are listing the various negative karmas and regretting them, at the same time purify them in emptiness. It is extremely powerful to do this as you go through the various negative karmas.

“I have engaged in the five heinous actions . . .”—meditate that they are empty—“. . . the five parallel heinous actions . . .”—empty—“. . . I’ve transgressed the vows of individual liberation . . .”—empty—“. . . contradicted, transgressed the bodhisattva vows . . .”—empty—“. . . broke the tantric commitments . . .”—they become empty. Here it would be better to use “vows” than “commitments,” because the word “commitment” is used more to refer to prayers. We are referring to the samaya vows taken during initiations, and reciting prayers is just one part of this.

“I’ve been disrespectful to my kind parents and spiritual master . . .”—that becomes empty—“. . . and spiritual friends, the vajra brothers and sisters . . .”—empty. “I’ve committed actions harmful to the Three Jewels . . .”—empty—“. . . avoided the holy Dharma . . .”—empty.

There is a mistake here [in the *FPMT Prayer Book*]. It says “stolen from the Sangha,” but it should say “criticized the Sangha.” Stealing from the Sangha doesn’t happen much and perhaps only applies to lay people. Criticizing the Sangha, however, is what happens most, and it applies to both lay and Sangha.

“. . . criticized the Sangha . . .”—again, it becomes empty—“. . . harmed

living beings . . .”—empty. “These and many other destructive actions I’ve done . . .”—empty—“. . . have caused others to do . . .”—empty—“. . . have rejoiced in others doing . . .”—empty.

“In short, I’ve created many obstacles to my own high rebirth and liberation and have planted countless seeds for further wandering in cyclic existence and miserable states of being. Now, in the presence of spiritual masters . . . I promise to refrain from doing these negatives actions again in the future . . .” As I mentioned in relation to the Vajrasattva practice, think, “From now on, I will abstain altogether from those that I can, and will abstain for a day, a night, an hour, a minute or at least a few seconds from those that are difficult to abstain from.”

At the end, feel that you have completely purified everything, and dedicate the merits. “I dedicate the merits of having done prostrations, made offerings, confessed, rejoiced, requested the gurus to turn the Dharma wheel and to have stable lives to achieve enlightenment in order to enlighten all sentient beings.”

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

Generate a strong thought of regret and an intense thought of impermanence. From the bottom of your heart, think that death will happen and that it could happen right now. What would happen then?

Think, “I must achieve full enlightenment in order to offer extensive benefit to all other sentient beings, who are the source of all my past, present and future happiness. I must free them all from all their sufferings and bring them all happiness, including full enlightenment. This is why I am doing the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation.”

CONCLUDING PRACTICES

From the holy mouth of Guru Vajrasattva: “Son of the race, all your defilements, negative karmas and degenerated samaya vows are completely purified.” Think that your mind has become completely pure, exactly as Guru Vajrasattva said.

Make a vow to abstain from now on from those vices that you can abstain from and to abstain from the difficult ones for one day, one hour, one minute or at least a few seconds.

“In emptiness there is no creator, no I; there is no action of creating negative karma; and there is no negative karma created. Nothing exists in the slightest from its own side. Everything is totally empty. Everything is totally empty of existing from its own side.”

While your mind is contemplating in this way, looking at all phenomena as totally empty, dedicate the merits.

“Due to all the three time merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I achieve Guru Vajrasattva’s full enlightenment and lead all sentient beings to Guru Vajrasattva’s enlightenment by myself alone.”

Monday, February 22 (A)

MORNING: FIRST SESSION

CONCLUSION OF THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS PRACTICE

The power of the mantra, the power of the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas and the beams emitted by them completely purify all the defilements, negative karma and downfalls. All the negativities collected during beginningless rebirths have been completely purified. Your mental continuum becomes completely pure.

“In emptiness there is no I, there is no action of creating negative karma, there is no negative karma created.”

Dedicate all the merit collected from having done prostrations, made offerings, confessed, rejoiced and requested the gurus to turn the Dharma wheel and to have stable lives, to your achievement of enlightenment so that you can then bring all happiness, including enlightenment, to all sentient beings.

COMBINED JORCHÖ/LAMA CHÖPA PRACTICE

The supreme mandala

After you have recited the verse for taking refuge and generating bodhicitta (*sang gyä chö dang . . .*) three times, a replica of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, the central figure in the refuge merit field, descends to your crown and absorbs within you. You become enlightened in the essence of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. You then send beams from the pores of your body with a Guru Shakyamuni Buddha on the tip of each beam. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha descends to the crown of each sentient being and purifies them. Every sentient being becomes enlightened in the aspect of

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha; their mind becomes dharmakaya and their body becomes rupakaya.

You then rejoice, “How wonderful it is that I have enlightened all sentient beings.” When you think about whether or not they have actually become enlightened, however, you find that they are not enlightened, and this has simply been your visualization. Why aren’t they enlightened? Because they still have discriminating thoughts of anger and attachment and are suffering. You then think, “Therefore, I must generate the four immeasurable thoughts.”

The four immeasurable thoughts

If you can, do tong len practice along with the four immeasurable thoughts. With the first verse, immeasurable equanimity, take in all the sufferings, all the problems, caused by discriminating thoughts of anger and attachment as well as the anger and attachment themselves in the form of pollution. Take this pollution into your heart and use it to destroy your own self-cherishing thought, or ego. Your self-cherishing thought becomes completely non-existent.

With the next verse, immeasurable loving kindness, do the practice of giving. Think that you give away your body (which you can think of as a wish-fulfilling gem), your merits of the three times and all your possessions.

With the third verse, immeasurable compassion, again take from sentient beings their suffering and its causes.

And finally, with immeasurable joy, again do the practice of giving.

In this way, besides collecting infinite merit by generating each of the immeasurable thoughts, you collect infinite merit by doing the tong len meditation. Each time you do the practice of taking the sufferings of sentient beings, you collect infinite merit. Each time you give your body, you collect infinite merit; each time you give your merits of the three times, you collect infinite merit; and each time you give your possessions, you collect infinite merit.

Generating special bodhicitta

Next comes the generation of special bodhicitta to practice tantra. Here we need to generate very strongly this special motivation of bodhicitta.

Think, “For one hell being, who has been my kind mother numberless times and is the source of all my past, present and future happiness, to suffer in the hell realms for even one second is unbearable for my mind. It is like they are suffering for many eons. I need to lead them to full enlightenment immediately. And there are numberless hell beings, who are the same in that they have all been my kind mothers and are the source of all my past, present and future happiness. Their suffering in the hell realm even for one second is unbearable for my mind, as if they are suffering for eons. Therefore, I must enlighten them without even a second’s delay.”

By thinking in the same way about the sentient beings in each realm, generate strong compassion and bodhicitta, the thought that seeks enlightenment for the sake of others, that seeks to accomplish work for others.

After all this, think, “I *must* achieve enlightenment for them without even a second’s delay, in the quickest possible way.” Generate this thought of seeking enlightenment, of seeking to accomplish work for other beings, after you have meditated on the sentient beings in each realm or at the very end, after you have meditated on the beings in all the realms.

It is very important to generate this intense thought of bodhicitta at the beginning as the motivation for the whole practice of guru yoga. As mentioned in the verses on special bodhicitta, this is your only reason for practicing guru yoga. After you have generated this thought of achieving enlightenment yourself in order to accomplish work for others, recite the verses. Only after feeling the meaning in your heart, only after transforming your heart into this thought, do you recite the words of the prayer.

Meditating on the three kayas

After this, those who have received a great initiation of Highest Yoga Tantra and know how to meditate on the three kayas can do that meditation here. This meditation purifies ordinary death, ordinary intermediate state and ordinary rebirth; ripens the mind in the path-time dharmakaya,

sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya; and plants the seed of the result-time dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. This meditation is called “utilizing the three kayas.” In other words, on the basis of death, intermediate state and rebirth, you visualize what you are going to achieve in the future, the result-time three kayas, and that itself becomes the actual path to achieving the three kayas.

Even these essential points that I have mentioned come from secret teachings, but in any case, the secrecy has already gone

So at this point, those who have received a Highest Yoga Tantra initiation can meditate on the three kayas. When reciting sadhanas, we usually stop at the meditation on the three kayas and meditate for a little while on the dharmakaya. Many of my gurus, especially His Holiness Zong Rinpoche, have emphasized this very much. Whether or not everyone knows the meditation, stop there for a little while. I guess it gives other people the chance to meditate. If possible, also stop for a while after you become the sambhogakaya. Perhaps this is to make sure that you practice divine pride during the rest of the sadhana. You then meditate on the nirmanakaya. These are the key points in practice of the generation stage of Highest Yoga Tantra.

Integrating the three deities

Those who know the meditation can do the self-generation from the Yamantaka sadhana. *Guru Puja* is a very special practice because of its integration of Yamantaka, Guhyasamaja and Chakrasamvara. It is the quickest path to enlightenment, quicker than the Highest Yoga Tantra path in general. The general Highest Yoga Tantra path exists in all four traditions, but practicing the integration of these three deities comes only in Lama Tsongkhapa’s tradition. In *Guru Puja* you begin by generating yourself as Yamantaka, the body mandala in the second merit field is from the Guhyasamaja practice and the extensive offerings are from the Chakrasamvara practice. This is the integration of the three deities.

After you have made the request, which is known as “Putting the Stake,” the guru enters your heart. Like driving in a stake to hold up a tent by hitting it many times, fervently make this request to the guru three times—make it from the depths of your heart. After the guru enters your heart, recite the Guhyasamaja, Yamantaka and Chakrasamvara mantras.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22

Reciting these mantras is also a practice of the integration of the three deities. This particular explanation comes from Geshe Senge. Of the twenty-five or so gurus that I have, Geshe Senge is the one from whom I have received almost all the teachings on Most Secret Hayagriva.

Now meditate briefly on the three kayas.

Monday, February 22 (B)

MORNING: SECOND SESSION

CONCLUSION OF THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS PRACTICE

Due to the power of the holy names of the Thirty-five Buddhas and the beams emitted by them, you are purified of all defilements, negative karma and downfalls collected from beginningless rebirths until now.

“In emptiness there is no creator, no I; there is no action of creating negative karma; there is no negative karma created.

“I dedicate all the merits collected through having done prostrations, made offerings, confessed, rejoiced, and requested the gurus to have stable lives and to turn the Dharma wheel, to my achieving enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings.”

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

Think, “Even in one day I collect so many defilements, negative karmas, downfalls and degenerated samaya vows. And I have collected an unbelievable number of negative karmas in this life. On top of all this, I have collected an unbelievable number of negative karmas during my beginningless rebirths. The thought of reincarnating again in samsara, especially of entering again into the sufferings of the lower realms, is unbearable. Besides the fact that it is the most unbearable suffering, I’ve already experienced it numberless times during beginningless rebirths. I can’t stand for even one second not to purify all these defilements, negative karmas and degenerated samaya vows.”

Feel in your heart that you are going to die during this hour. Think, “Before my death comes, I must purify. Without even a second’s delay, I must purify all these defilements, negative karmas and degenerated samaya vows.”

Then think, “Just like me, all sentient beings—the source of all my past,

present and future happiness—have suffered numberless times during beginningless rebirths in samsara, especially in the lower realms, and have collected numberless times all these negative karmas. I must liberate them from all their suffering and its causes and bring them to enlightenment as quickly as possible. To do this, I must achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. Therefore, I'm going to purify all my defilements, negative karmas, downfalls and degenerated samaya vows by doing the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation.”

CONCLUDING PRACTICES

Now practice the power of not committing negative karma again, by thinking, “From now on I will abstain from all the negative karmas that I can abstain from and I will abstain from those that are extremely difficult to abstain from for one day, one hour, one minute or at least a few seconds.”

Guru Vajrasattva is extremely pleased by this promise and absorbs within you. Your body, speech and mind become inseparable from Vajrasattva's holy body, holy speech and holy mind.

“Until I achieve enlightenment may I never transgress my samaya vows. May I lead all sentient beings to Guru Vajrasattva's enlightenment by myself achieving that enlightenment.”

Monday, February 22 (c)

MORNING: THIRD SESSION

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

Think of all your non-virtuous actions—all actions you've done motivated by attachment clinging to this life, ignorance and anger; all actions that result in only suffering. Think of all the actions that became negative karma. Think especially of the actions done out of the attachment that clings to the pleasures of this life, to a good reputation and so forth.

Think of all the ten non-virtues—killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, slander, gossip, harsh speech (which means saying words that hurt another person), covetousness, ill will and heresy—you have committed in this life and numberless times in your past lives.

Think of the times that you have broken the pratimoksha, bodhisattva and tantric vows in this life, and even if you haven't broken them in this life, you have broken them numberless times in your past lives.

Then think of the heaviest negative karmas, those created in relation to the guru through harming the guru's holy body, not following his advice, disturbing his holy mind, generating non-devotional thoughts, criticizing or giving up the guru. Even if you haven't done some of these things in this life, you have done them numberless times in your past lives.

“These negativities are obstacles that not only block my achievement of the realizations of the path to liberation and to enlightenment but also prevent my bringing every happiness to all sentient beings. On top of this, they cause me to be reborn again and again in samsara, especially the lower realms, where I have to suffer for an inconceivable number of eons. So, this is the only chance that I have to free myself from all these defilements and from the sufferings of samsara, especially the sufferings of the lower realms. This is my only opportunity to escape; this is my only opportunity to purify.

“Since death could come within this minute, I must purify all these negativities without even a second’s delay. I must free all sentient beings, the source of all my past, present and future happiness, from all their sufferings and bring them to enlightenment. Therefore, I myself must achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. It is for this reason that I am going to practice the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation.”

Those who are not familiar with the visualization of Vajrasattva can read the description in the text. Otherwise, just start to recite the mantra.

CONCLUDING PRACTICES

From the holy mouth of Guru Vajrasattva come the words, “Son of the race, all defilements, negative karma and degenerated samaya vows you have collected during beginningless rebirths have now been completely purified.”

Think that what Guru Vajrasattva says has actually happened. All your negativities have been completely purified. There is not the slightest trace of defilement left on your mental continuum. Your mental continuum is completely pure.

To make your confession perfect and most powerful, now apply the last of the four remedial powers, the power of not committing negative actions again. Think, “From now on I’ll abstain from all the vices that I can abstain from, and I’ll abstain from those that are extremely difficult for me to abstain from for one day, one hour, one minute or at least a few seconds.”

Your vow to abstain from negative karmas pleases Guru Vajrasattva, who melts into light and absorbs within you. Your own body, speech and mind become inseparable from Guru Vajrasattva’s vajra holy body, vajra holy speech and vajra holy mind.

Those who haven’t received a Highest Yoga Tantra initiation can visualize that the light absorbs at the point between their eyebrows. Those who have received such an initiation can visualize that the light absorbs through their crown and can then meditate on the guru entering their heart.

“In emptiness there is no I, no creator; there is no action of creating negative karma; there is no negative karma created.” As well as this, all

phenomena are totally non-existent, are empty from their own side. While the mind is contemplating the state of emptiness, while the mind is looking at everything as empty, dedicate the merits.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I achieve Guru Vajrasattva’s enlightenment and lead all sentient beings to that enlightenment by myself *alone*.”

DEDICATION

Please dedicate the merit for bodhicitta, the source of all happiness and success for you and all other sentient beings, to be generated within your own mind, in the minds of the members of your family and in the minds of all sentient beings. And may the bodhicitta that has been generated be increased.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may any sentient being who just hears me, touches me, remembers me, thinks about me or talks about me, never be reborn in the lower realms from that time. May they immediately be liberated from all disease, spirit harm, negative karma and obscurations. May they achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible by actualizing the whole path, especially bodhicitta.

“Due to all the merits collected by me and others, may I immediately be able to heal all sentient beings who are sick, especially those who can’t be cured by other means. May I be able to cure the heavy diseases of those who have been possessed by spirits and become crazy and uncontrolled, those who are in a coma and so forth. Just by seeing me, touching me, hearing my voice or remembering me, may any sentient being who is dying immediately be free from all fear, attachment and so forth and generate incredible joy in their heart. May that sentient being be born in a pure land where they can become enlightened.”

FOOD OFFERING

We will now make the food offering. Think that all the food in the kitchen is transformed into nectar in a jeweled container and that the Guru Puja

merit field and the numberless buddhas in all the directions receive numberless offerings. [OM AH HUM 3x, *La ma sang gyä . . .*] Meditating that the essence of all the beings in the merit field is your root virtuous friend, offer nectar to all of them. Your offering with this guru yoga mind generates infinite bliss within them. Next, meditating that their essence is the root virtuous friend, offer unceasing nectar to all Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in the ten directions. Your offering generates infinite bliss within them. Now, meditating that their essence is the root virtuous friend, offer unceasing nectar to all the statues, stupas and scriptures in the ten directions. Think that this offering generates infinite bliss within them.

Also make charity of unceasing nectar to every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal, every human being, every asura, every sura and every intermediate state being. They all fully enjoy the nectar and are liberated from all their suffering; they all become enlightened in the aspect of the deity that you practice.

“Due to all the past, present and future merit collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings and due to all the numberless merits collected by making offerings to all the numberless buddhas in the ten directions; the numberless merits collected by making offerings to the *Guru Puja* merit field; the numberless merits collected by making offerings to all the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in the ten directions; the numberless merits collected by making offerings to all the statues; the numberless merits collected by making offerings to all the stupas; the numberless merits collected by making offerings to all the scriptures; the numberless merits collected by making charity to all the sentient beings; and the numberless merits from generating the motivation of bodhicitta”—I left this out; it should have been done before the food offering—“may I, the members of my family, all students and benefactors of this organization, especially those who sacrifice their lives doing service for others, and all the rest of the sentient beings never be separated from the guru-Triple Gem and always collect merit by making offerings to the guru-Triple Gem. May they receive the blessing of the guru-Triple Gem and generate all the realizations from guru devotion up to enlightenment, especially bodhicitta and clear light from Highest Yoga Tantra. May all these realizations be actualized in my own mind and in the minds of all sentient beings without even a second’s delay.

“Due to these non-existent merits of the three times”—here you should

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understand that “non-existent” means “not inherently existent”—“may the non-existent I achieve non-existent Vajrasattva’s enlightenment and lead the non-existent sentient beings to that non-existent enlightenment by my non-existent self.”

Please enjoy the empty food.

Tuesday, February 23

AMITAYUS INITIATION

REASONS FOR GIVING LONG LIFE INITIATION

Today we're going to do the long life initiation of Buddha Amitayus. I think we've been doing too much meditation on impermanence and death, especially on the imminence of death! You think of impending death but I make your life longer! It's a good deal! By thinking of impermanence and death, your life gets longer instead of shorter. You believe your life is going to be short, and that makes it longer

Some time ago I thought to give a long-life initiation near the end of the Vajrasattva retreat, because doing it would be worthwhile. Since all of you are trying to practice Dharma and make your lives meaningful by benefiting others, it is worthwhile for you to have long lives and therefore to do a long-life initiation. However, Venerable Marcel has not been well for the last few days and, according to my divinations, there are some obstacles, so the long life initiation is needed immediately. This is why it is happening now. Also, it might benefit others, especially those who are in a similar situation with obstacles to their life. This initiation has the power to eliminate life obstacles not because I have the necessary qualities to give the initiation but because of both the compassion and blessings of Buddha Amitayus and your own faith and concentration.

There are many methods of prolonging life—right now, however, I need to prolong my nose! [Rinpoche blows his nose.]

This is the first time I have done a Vajrasattva group retreat, and because of my laziness and other obstacles I myself haven't attended all the sessions. Also, in the middle of March I have to go to India for a couple of weeks as I have been given the responsibility of organizing a meeting of Gelug lamas. When I come back, I will rejoin the retreat for the remaining month. However, my feeling is that all of you have been trying very hard, and it seems that the practice has been effective. Everyone seems to

be doing the Vajrasattva retreat as perfectly as possible, and my feeling is that it is being very beneficial. You are not just fulfilling the mantra count but doing the many other practices that make the retreat most effective and most powerful. For this reason, it is extremely worthwhile for all of you to have long lives.

VENERABLE MARCEL'S QUALITIES

Venerable Marcel is one of the people in the FPMT who is like gold. Bearing many hardships, he has offered service to Lama Yeshe and this organization for a long, long time. No matter how hard or complicated things were, no matter how many obstacles he encountered in doing what Lama asked, Marcel was like a rock. With a brave heart he continued to offer service for many years during Lama's time, and then after Lama's time. After all that service I then gave him the burden of building the 500-foot statue of Maitreya Buddha, the future Buddha—after *all* that, I gave Marcel that big mountain to carry. So he has to have a long life! He has to live long; he has to live until that statue is finished and then until all the FPMT students have become enlightened.

MOTIVATION

At this time we have found a perfect human body, which is qualified by eight freedoms and ten richnesses, or endowments. Once found, this perfect human body has great meaning, and it will be extremely difficult to find such a body again. So, at this time we have achieved this perfect human body and also we have met the precious teachings of the Buddha, which are extremely difficult to meet, and we are being guided by not just a virtuous friend who reveals the unmistaken path, who shows virtue, who leads us in a virtuous path—which is the only way to achieve happiness—who leads us to liberation from samsara, not just that, but by a Mahayana virtuous friend, who guides us to enlightenment, the great liberation, the non-abiding sorrowless state. A virtuous friend who shows us the unmistaken path, the Mahayana path—not only the unmistaken path but the complete path to enlightenment—such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama and our other lamas. We have met not just one, but many.

And then, from your own side, by having learned the Dharma, you

have the wisdom to see what is right to practice and what is wrong, to be abandoned. Therefore, you should think, “At this time I *must* do *pure* holy Dharma, and I must do it right now, because it is uncertain when my death will occur; there’s no certainty at all. It is not definite which will come first, tomorrow or the next life. I have to die—that’s definite. At the moment, I am not beyond death; I have not overcome death. With this present level of mind, I have not overcome death, therefore it is definite that I will experience death.”

After death, you don’t become non-existent, like Theravadins believe—those who follow, of the four schools of Buddhist philosophy, the first school, *Che tra mra wa*. They believe that after achieving arhatship, the sorrowless state, the continuity of consciousness ceases at that time; the aggregates, including the consciousness, cease. That’s what those lower schools believe—that when you achieve liberation, the aggregates, the consciousness, cease. However, it’s not like that.

I also heard that there is a Western philosophy that says that after a person has died, the person’s soul hangs around, like a cloud hanging around in the sky, floating around up there somewhere. I’m not sure whether they call it the consciousness or the soul—maybe the soul—but after death, it floats around like a cloud. Have you heard this? I think some people believe it, which means they believe that something exists after death. I don’t think it’s a very popular belief, but some people hold it.

However, you need to take rebirth after death. And there is no third destination; there are only two—rebirth as either a happy migratory being or a suffering migratory being. If you reincarnate, get reborn, as a suffering transmigratory being, you find yourself as either a hell being—experiencing the heaviest sufferings of hot and cold—a preta—experiencing the heaviest sufferings of hunger and thirst—or an animal, whose major suffering is being extremely foolish, very ignorant, and being tortured by getting killed for meat, skin and so forth, which even happens to animals who live among humans. However, being eaten by enemies—people and other animals—they experience unimaginable suffering, day and night; all the time.

Even if you are able to receive the body of a happy migratory being, it’s still suffering in nature, with rebirth, old age, sicknesses, death and so forth. In the six realms of samsara—including even the form and formless realms, the highest realms of samsara—from the lowest hot hell—the

unbearable hell realm, the very bottom hell, which has the heaviest suffering of all the hells—up to the highest formless realm, the tip of samsara—there is not even one single second’s experience of happiness that is not suffering; there is no pleasure that is not suffering.

Wherever in the desire, form or formless realms you reincarnate, it is all only suffering in nature. At the moment, because through meditation we haven’t realized how all these realms—desire, form and formless—are totally suffering in nature, because our minds are ignorant of this—not only ignorant, not knowing, but also hallucinating, looking at them as pleasurable—we look at samsara, at these desire, form and formless realms—as the *Guru Puja* mentions—as a beautiful park, as something whose nature is happiness, as something to enjoy, as something that is worth being attached to, as good, as beautiful. However, in reality, it is only suffering in nature. We have been born in these desire, form and formless realms numberless times; since beginningless time, we have experienced numberless rebirths in these realms; there’s nothing new.

Therefore, think, “This time, I *must* liberate myself from all these suffering samsaric realms. But just liberating myself alone is not sufficient. Sentient beings equaling the sky—due to ignorance and life changes, birth and death—do not recognize that we have all been each other’s father and mother in the past. In reality, there is not one single sentient being who has not been my own father and mother in the past, who has not been kind, who has not helped me in the past. They are so very precious.”

You can also think—if you think that friends are more important than parents, more precious than parents—that there is not one sentient being who has not been your friend in the past.

However, “These kind mother sentient beings need to be liberated from all these oceans of samsaric sufferings, but at the moment, I don’t have the capacity to liberate them completely from all these oceans of samsaric suffering. Who does have that capacity? Who has the power to do that? *Only* the fully enlightened one; no one else. Only the fully enlightened being. Therefore, I *must* achieve full enlightenment at this time. For that purpose, I’m going to take the long life initiation of Buddha Amitayus, according to the tradition of the victorious ones who achieved the One Mother, and by taking this initiation I am going to accomplish extensive work for *all* sentient beings.”

Generate the strong thought of bodhicitta like this—you are going to

take the initiation for the benefit of all sentient beings and after that are going to do extensive work for sentient beings, to make your own life as productive, as beneficial as possible, for others. In other words, you are taking this initiation for others. Your having a long life is for the benefit of others.

RECHUNGPA'S TALE

There's a story about Milarepa's disciple, his heart son Rechungpa. Once Rechungpa went to India, where he took the very profound teachings of the "Dakini with no body"—I don't know what that is—in the presence of Drillbupa, the incarnation of Guru Marpa's son, Dharma Dodé.

About the time that Rechungpa was due to return to Tibet, Lama Drillbupa advised him, "Today, go into the city where the people gather." Accordingly, Rechungpa went into the center of the city, where people gather. There he saw a yogi with a bluish body, probably a bit like Milarepa's, which had turned green because of all the nettles Milarepa ate. Anyway, this yogi had a blue holy body and was holding a horn in his hand. He stared at Rechungpa with very big eyes and said, "Oh, little Tibetan man—you are so beautiful, youthful and attractive, but you have only seven days to live." Then the yogi disappeared.

Rechungpa was very unhappy, very disturbed by this, so he quickly went to see Drillbupa and told him what had happened. Drillbupa said, "I already knew that you have only seven days to live, but I sent you into the city to hear it from someone else so that you would have faith in that prediction." Then Drillbupa said, "But you don't need to be afraid. I have a method. In western India there is a sandalwood devi forest where Machig Drubpa'i Lhamo, the Queen who has achieved the One Mother lives."

Usually "One Mother" refers to the wisdom Prajnaparamita mother. That's probably what it means here. The real meaning of "One Mother" is the wisdom realizing emptiness. Of the gone beyond wisdom of the scriptures, the gone beyond wisdom of path and the gone beyond wisdom of the result, the result is the complete one. The wisdom realizing emptiness that is the complete one is Buddha's wisdom. Buddhas, bodhisattvas and arhats, both solitary realizers (*pratyekabuddhas*) and hearer-listeners (*shravakas*), are all born from the wisdom gone beyond. Therefore, that wisdom is called the Mother. That is the actual meaning. Then that manifests

as this deity. That is the interpretive meaning. The Queen, who lived in this forest, had achieved the One Mother and gained the realization of immortality, so even though she had been alive for hundreds of thousands of years, she still looked as young and beautiful as a sixteen year-old girl.

Drilbupa told Rechungpa to go there and take long life instructions, so he went there and offered her many gold coins, and received the long life instructions. At that time, Rechungpa was forty years old, and that initiation enabled him to live to the age of eighty-four.

However, after receiving this initiation, Rechungpa went to Tibet, where he met Milarepa, who said to him, “Show me some profound teachings that I don’t have, that here in Tibet we don’t have.” Then Rechungpa offered this instruction, the Amitayus long life initiation, as a present to his guru, Milarepa. Milarepa, in turn, gave it to Tagpo Lharje, Gampopa, Milarepa’s unequalled heart son. The lineage of this initiation passed down from there, and I received it from His Holiness Serkong Tsen-shab Rinpoche at Kopan Monastery, when Rinpoche gave us the *Rinjung Gyatsa* or *Sukha Gyatsa*, those sets of hundreds of initiations. I have also received it from His Holiness the Dalai Lama and from other lamas. In this way, the blessing of the lineage of this initiation has continued without interruption.

THE INITIATION

[Initiation continues with bodhisattva vows and instruction on the four black and the four white actions. See *Liberation*, p. 717. The four black actions to be abandoned are: trying to dupe your abbot, ordination master and so forth with lies; feeling distress when others do something virtuous; saying unpleasant things to bodhisattvas out of hostility; and acting deceitfully, without any altruism. The four white actions to be cultivated are: vigilantly abandoning deliberate lies; keeping honest intentions towards sentient beings and not deceiving them; developing the attitude that bodhisattvas are teachers and giving them due praise; and causing the sentient beings who are maturing under your care to uphold bodhicitta.]

Now purify yourself in emptiness. Observe how the self appears to you—whether it appears to you as not merely labeled by mind or as merely labeled by mind. There are four schools of Buddhist philosophy. The fourth is the Madhyamaka school, which has two divisions. The second of these

is the Prasangika school. If the I appears to you as not merely labeled by the mind, that is the object to be refuted according to the view of the Madhyamaka Prasangika school. This is a very subtle hallucination, a very subtle object to be refuted, an extremely subtle object to be refuted. That's why realizing the Prasangika school's view of emptiness is very subtle. It is subtle because the object to be refuted is very subtle, not gross. It's not even like the object to be refuted according to the view of the Svatantrika school, the other division of the Madhyamaka.

Appearing to you as not merely labeled by the mind, that extremely subtle one is there, something is left there—that's the object to be refuted according to the view of the Prasangika school. That means it is a hallucination. So, while your mind one-pointedly concentrates on the hallucination, that it is a hallucination, at the same time think of the meaning of its being a hallucination—that it is *totally* non-existent, totally non-existent right there. Not even an atom of it exists. [Long meditation on emptiness.]

Then, the wisdom seeing emptiness manifests as the deity, Buddha Amitayus, the victorious one who has infinite, inconceivable life, wisdom—red in color, one face and two arms, holding a vase filled with the nectar of immortality, legs in the vajra posture, adorned with the holy marks and signs, in the aspect of the complete enjoyment body, the sambhogakaya, adorned with jewel ornaments and scarves. Visualize OM at his crown, AH at his throat and HUM at his heart.

[Initiation continues . . . concludes with Rinpoche placing the vase on everybody's head.]

Wednesday, February 24

EVENING: LIGHT OFFERINGS AT THE LMB
KSHITIGARBHA STATUE

THE PRACTICE OF OFFERING LIGHT

I would like to explain why we are doing this light offering practice here tonight.

Shelly Wang is the chairperson of the FPMT Foundation in Taiwan, the purpose of which is to help and support the three FPMT centers—Jinsiu Farlin in Taipei, Heruka Center in Kaohsiung and Shakyamuni Center in Taichung. I requested Shelly only this year to take responsibility for the Taiwan Foundation. However, she has not been well recently, so there was a need for a method to improve her well-being, to protect her life.

Making extensive light offerings to collect great merit is one such method. Another method is throwing a dog party! Organizing a party for dogs—making charity of food to dogs. So, there are human parties and there are dog parties! Maybe there are also cat parties and mouse parties too! Actually, we should throw the mouse party before the cat party—otherwise the mice may not live long enough to enjoy it! So, first the mouse party, then the cat party! Anyway, I'm joking! After the mouse party the cats might enjoy themselves more!

There are many methods for lengthening life, of which making extensive offerings to holy objects, collecting merit in that way, is one. It becomes the cause for having a long life when you make these offerings for that particular purpose and dedicate the merit for her and her family. The merit can also be dedicated to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Buddha of Compassion, and all other holy beings, the Sangha, and all the benefactors who serve the Sangha and the teachings of the Buddha—to help the benefactors spread and preserve the teachings. Finally, the merit can also be dedicated to sentient beings.

Now we are going to follow the normal process, the *usual* process [see Appendix 2].

[Taking refuge: *La ma sang gyä la ma chö . . . x3*]

[Generating bodhicitta: *Dag dang zhän dön . . . x3*]

[Purifying the place: *Tham chä du ni . . .*]

Visualize the ground of this entire place as being made of lapis lazuli, very blissful in nature and very springy, like a rubber mattress; not at all hard; very soft—when you step on it you feel great bliss throughout your whole body. Everywhere you look, whatever you see is extremely beautiful. There are many huge water ponds, full of gorgeous, precious, highly scented flowers with enormous petals. The entire landscape is dotted with wish-granting trees, wish-fulfilling trees—you get whatever you pray for—all success and enjoyment. Due to the power of the wish-fulfilling tree, you receive whatever you desire. The place itself is also covered with various flowers and the air is full of beautiful scented smells. Also visualize dakinis in space, making flowers rain from the sky. There are many lovely birds, all making the sound of Dharma—talking Dharma; singing Dharma. There is no ugliness, only perfect beauty, like Amitabha’s pure land. Having visualized all this, offer it to the merit field. You have to make the place clean and beautiful before inviting your guru or before receiving a king.

Making an offering like this to the merit field creates the karma to be born in a pure land in future lives, in a place where there are many sense enjoyments and beautiful places to enjoy.

Next bless the offerings by reciting the clouds of offerings mantra. Why is it called “clouds of offerings”? Because when you recite this mantra, numberless buddhas receive skies of offerings, clouds of offerings—which means they receive vast numbers of offerings, inconceivable offerings. By the power of this mantra, not only are the offerings blessed, but also each buddha receives numberless offerings.

[Offering prayer: *Lha dang mi yi . . .*]

But don’t offer only the lights that we’ve arranged here. Think that numberless buddhas in all directions receive numberless light offerings. You can also visualize the *Guru Puja* merit field in the sky in front of you and

think that each guru receives skies of light offerings. The mantra has the power to generate numberless offerings.

Then the final prayer, expressing the words of the truth, has the power to ensure that the merit field actually receives the numberless offerings that you have visualized. The final prayer has this power.

[Multiplying mantra: OM NAMO BHAGAVATE (x3, with music)]

[Words of truth: *Kön chog sum gyi*]

[Invocation: *Ma lü sem chän* (Cymbals at end of the invocation)]

Then do the seven-limb practice. With the prostration limb, put your palms together to the merit field and visualize your body like a mountain range . . . you can visualize yourself as the Thousand-arm Compassionate Buddha or another deity—not necessarily only the Compassionate Buddha, but the Compassionate Buddha is easy because he has a thousand arms, so it's easy to visualize covering much ground, as much ground as possible. However, you can also visualize yourself as another deity or in your ordinary human body. Visualizing your body like a mountain range, lie down and cover the whole ground; visualize yourself lying down from all directions towards the merit field—from the four directions, the four corners—doing prostrations to the merit field. If you are not doing physical prostrations, visualize yourself making prostrations while physically just putting your two palms together at your heart. This is the meditation you can do when you recite the prostration limb of the seven-limb practice in your normal practice. As many bodies as you can visualize, that much merit do you get. For example, if you visualize yourself doing prostrations in a billion bodies, you get the same amount of merit as if you had actually done a billion prostrations. The amount of merit you collect depends on how many bodies you can visualize.

[Seven-limb prayer, prostrations: *Go sum gü päi*]

[Seven-limb prayer, offering: *Ngö sham yi trül*]

Here we now make the extensive offerings.

Visualize that numberless buddhas in all directions receive numberless light offerings. Each member of the *Guru Puja* merit field receives skies of

light offerings, numberless light offerings. Or you can think that the Kshitigarbha statue here is the guru, is all the gurus, is all Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Not only that, but this statue is also all statues, stupas and scriptures. It is everything. Thinking in this way, make numberless light offerings. In this way, you make offerings to all gurus, all Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, all ten directions statues, stupas and scriptures—by visualizing Kshitigarbha as the embodiment of all this and making offerings to him.

By making offerings with the guru yoga mind, you collect the most extensive merit. You meditate that each buddha is in essence your root virtuous friend and receives infinite bliss in his mind through the offerings you make.

Also, when you make offerings to the *Guru Puja* merit field, meditate that each guru is in essence your root virtuous friend. Generate infinite bliss in each one's mind as you make the numberless light offerings, as each one receives them. Those are the offerings we visualized during the blessing, just before.

I left out sharing the offerings with all sentient beings at the beginning, then making offerings.

Make charity of all these offerings. Make charity of every light offering to every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal, every human being, every sura, every asura and every intermediate state being. Think, “I am making these light offerings on behalf of all sentient beings—Shelly and her whole family and all the rest of the sentient beings. I'm making light offerings in order to achieve enlightenment for them, for all sentient beings.”

If you do it this way, it benefits everybody, all people—people who are sick, in poverty and homeless, people who have no job, no means of living, all people who have many difficulties in their lives. Everybody gets the merit of making light offerings on behalf of all sentient beings; every human being, all people, get merit in this way, even though from their own side they don't know it. They all get merit from our dedicating like this, our doing it for them.

Visualize that the whole sky is filled with numberless light offerings—the actual lights that we're offering here, and also skies of numberless light offerings that you visualize—like the vast night sky filled with stars, or like when you look out of an airplane as it comes in to land in a big city and the whole ground is covered with numberless lights. Offer all these lights to all

the holy objects in India—all the holy objects that are in the holy places of Buddha, such as Bodhgaya, where one thousand buddhas descend and show the holy deed of attaining enlightenment, in all the monasteries in India, in individual people's houses—offer these lights to all the holy objects in India by meditating that the essence of each holy object is your own root virtuous friend and that because of these offerings, infinite bliss is generated within each one. At the same time, prostrate to all these holy objects with the palms of your hands pressed together at your heart.

Also, please include in your offering the more than three thousand light offerings and the more than two hundred and fifty water bowls at the Aptos house where I stay, which appear as nectar to the buddhas, as well as all the water bowls here in the LMB gomba, in the retreat room and outside, which appear as nectar to the buddhas, and all the water bowl offerings and lights in the Memorial Shrine. You can also offer all the offerings that are in our three Taiwan centers. In each of their gompas are hundreds of sets of offerings, so you can also include those together with all the others. Also, at Kopan Monastery there are many light, flower and water offerings in various rooms and you can offer all these as well.

Every time you offer all the holy objects found in different countries, offer them all together. This way, by offering each light, as there are an inconceivable number of offerings, you make an inconceivable number of offerings each time; you create many, many thousands of causes not only of enlightenment but also of liberation from samsara and good future rebirths—and by the way, you create infinite causes for success in this life as well, to receive whatever happiness you wish.

Now offer all the lights here and all the rest of the offerings that I mentioned just before, all this water that is nectar, to every single holy object in Tibet, by meditating that in essence they are your root virtuous friend, including the Shakyamuni Buddha statue in the Jokhang—which was blessed by Lord Buddha himself and is the most precious statue in Tibet—and the stupa that we built in Sera Monastery. At the same time, prostrate to all these holy objects with your two palms pressed together, meditating with the guru yoga mind. Don't make these offerings just once—make them as many times as possible.

Now make all these light offerings and all the other offerings as well to every single holy object in Nepal, including the Swayambhunath stupa—the original, most precious holy object in Nepal—and the Boudhanath

stupa—which fulfills the wishes of any sentient beings who circumambulates or prays, makes offerings or prostrates to it; the stupa that encompasses all Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Due to the family members who built the Boudhanath stupa, the Dharma was able to spread throughout Tibet and be preserved there, as a result of which numberless beings in Tibet became enlightened by actualizing the realizations of the path to enlightenment. Furthermore, the Buddhadharma was able to spread outside of Tibet, especially to the West, where previously it has been dark from the time Guru Shakyamuni Buddha first taught until recently. Lately, the light of Dharma has been spreading all over the world, as a result of which, every year, many tens of thousands of people have been able to find meaning and answers in their lives and have been able to follow the path to enlightenment. All that is due to the Boudhanath stupa.

Make offerings to these great stupas and all the rest of the holy objects in Nepal, and also put your palms together and prostrate to them with guru yoga mind.

By prostrating to just one holy object we immediately achieve eight or ten benefits, the last of which is enlightenment. Even putting our palms together to a painting or a statue of buddha has ten benefits. The eight benefits are that we immediately create the cause:

1. To achieve a perfect body in our next life;
2. To have perfect people around us in our next life, so that all our wishes get fulfilled;
3. To be able to live in morality in this and future lives, which is the basis of all happiness, liberation and enlightenment; all realizations;
4. To be able to have devotion, which is the foundation of all realizations;
5. To have courage, a brave heart, to do things among people, to do difficult work for others;
6. To be born as a deva or a human in our next life;
7. To achieve the arya path, the right seeing path, the path of meditation, and the path of no more learning—the Lesser Vehicle arya path and the Mahayana Paramitayana and Tantrayana arya paths. The Mahayana tantra arya path is where we

become free from suffering death and rebirth, including old age and sicknesses.

8. The final benefit, as I mentioned, is enlightenment itself.

These are the eight benefits of putting our palms together to a painting or a statue of Buddha. The ten benefits contain all these. Therefore, it's very important in our daily life that whenever we see holy objects, we take the opportunity of putting our palms together and prostrating. In everyday life, whenever you see holy objects, please take that opportunity to find happiness for yourself and to benefit all sentient beings.

Now make all these light and other offerings to all the holy objects in Nepal, meditating that the essence of each is your own root virtuous friend.

Next make all these offerings to all holy objects in all other Buddhist countries and throughout the rest of the world—Sri Lanka, Burma, mainland China, Taiwan, Thailand and so forth; then the United States, New York! In the subways! I'm joking There are many buddhas in the subways, at the beach, maybe on the beaches in Florida! I'm joking Also prostrate to them.

Next make all these offerings to all Buddha, Dharma and Sangha of the ten directions, meditating that in essence they are your root virtuous friend, and generate great bliss each time you make the offerings. Also prostrate to them.

Now make all these offerings to all the statues, stupas and scriptures of the ten directions, meditating that in essence they are your root virtuous friend, and each time you make the offerings, generate infinite bliss within them.

Next make all these offerings to all gurus—His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche, Denma Lochö Rinpoche, who are in India. Then, those who have made a Dharma connection with Ribur Rinpoche, make all these offerings to him. Those who have received teachings from Geshe Sopa Rinpoche, and also if you have teachers in Nepal, you can make offerings to all these gurus as many times as possible. Also prostrate to them.

Now there's just one left; only one! Actually, there are three! In particular, make offerings to the Thousand-arm Compassionate Buddha, who is inseparable from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the seven Medicine

Buddhas for success—by making offerings to the Thousand-arm Compassionate Buddha and the Medicine Buddhas you collect the merit of having made offerings to all buddhas. Also make offerings to Kshitigarbha, who does infinite work for all sentient beings, who fulfills the wishes of all sentient beings—by making all these offerings, you yourself can become like that. Prostrate and offer as many times as possible. Also, Kshitigarbha is inseparable from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. When you practice Kshitigarbha, when you make prayers to him, you should meditate in this way—that he is inseparable from His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Now we can do the short prayer that I put together many years ago in Taiwan, when we started to make many light offerings, when I began this tradition in Taiwan.

[The light offering prayer: “These actually arranged and mentally visualized light offerings . . . wisdom spontaneously arise.” (x3)]

DEDICATION

“Due to these infinite merits, may whatever sufferings sentient beings experience ripen on me.” We give all the merits, including their results, to all sentient beings.

Again, give all the merits and their results, including enlightenment, to every single hell being, every single hungry ghost, every single animal, every single human, every single asura, every single sura and every single intermediate state being.

Through this dedication, we have received numberless merits, so again we dedicate—“Due to all these infinite merits, whatever sufferings sentient beings experience, may they ripen on me. May whatever happiness, merit and virtue that I have collected be received by each hell being, preta, animal, human, sura, asura and intermediate state being. Through this dedication, may whatever sufferings the migratory beings have ripen on me . . .”—oh, I’m repeating myself, aren’t I? Anyway, it’s OK—that’s more merit collected!

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings . . . [*Jang chub sem chog* . . .]

“Due to the infinite merits I have collected tonight, all those collected

in the past and those I will collect in the future, as well as the merits of the three times collected by all buddhas, bodhisattvas and other sentient beings, may Shelly and the rest of her family members have long and healthy lives, may all their wishes succeed immediately according to the holy Dharma, may they be able to actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment, especially bodhicitta, in this very lifetime and may the rest of their lives be most meaningful.”

I don't want to keep you here any longer, otherwise you'll get enlightened too quickly—enlightened quickly by freezing! [It's getting cold.] Therefore, I think we'll do the last dedication. Usually it is good to do more extensive dedications—the ones that come after those we've just done—but now we'll just finish up with *Ge wa di yi . . .*

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings—which are inherently existent!—may I—who is inherently existent!—achieve inherently existent enlightenment and lead all the inherently existent sentient beings to that inherently existent enlightenment by the non-inherently existent me! . . . *alone!*”

I almost forgot the most important point—*alone!* Anyway, I said “inherently existent” all through that last dedication, but as long as you get the idea in your mind that it means non-existent, the purpose is fulfilled—even though I used the term “inherently existent,” it became the same as saying non-inherently existent; in the heart it became the same.

[*Ge wa di yi . . .*]

We can do the multiplying mantras at the end of the next Vajrasattva session, otherwise we'd do them here at this time.

Thank you so much for doing the practice together. I'm sorry it's gotten cold, but since we've been bearing a little hardship for the sake of Dharma practice, maybe it's OK!

[Shelly thanks Rinpoche for the light offering.] No, no—I just wanted people to freeze!

[Some discussion about the gong used to call people to sessions . . . first part inaudible.]

Again, ringing the gong is to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. Thinking that all Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and all statues, stupas and scriptures in the ten directions are in essence the guru, ring the gong as an offering. Each ring becomes the cause of enlightenment for yourself and all other sentient beings. That's what it means.

So, just one more. [Rinpoche rings the gong loudly.]

Thursday, February 25

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

EXTENSIVE DEDICATION

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may bodhicitta—the source of all happiness and success for myself and all sentient beings—be actualized within my mind and within the minds of all sentient beings without even a second’s delay. And may the bodhicitta that has been generated be increased.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may all the father and mother sentient beings have happiness; may the three lower realms be empty forever; and may all the bodhisattvas’ prayers be accomplished immediately. May I be able to cause all this by myself alone.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, from now on in all my future lifetimes may I be able to offer benefit as extensive as the sky to all sentient beings as Lama Tsongkhapa did, by having within me the same qualities as Lama Tsongkhapa had.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, in whichever universe, world, country, area or place I am, just by my being there, may all the sentient beings who are in that universe, world, country, area or place never ever be reborn in the lower realms. May they immediately be liberated from all disease, spirit harm, negative karma and defilements and immediately achieve enlightenment by actualizing the whole path, especially bodhicitta.”

Dedicate specifically that the people whose names were mentioned before immediately recover from their heavy sicknesses and have the most

meaningful life through meeting the Dharma, the lamrim, and especially through actualizing bodhicitta in this very lifetime.

“May those who have cancer and AIDS immediately be healed. May those who are in a coma immediately come out of their coma. May all those who have heavy diseases that are difficult to cure or have no cure, such as arthritis, leprosy and so forth, immediately be cured. May those who suffer a lot of pain because of bone disease immediately be healed. May those who are blind be able to see, those who are deaf be able to hear and those who are lame be able to walk. May those who have obstacles to their Dharma practice immediately be free of those obstacles. May those who are unable to correctly devote themselves to the virtuous friend because they have much anger, heresy and negative thoughts arising be able to change their minds immediately. Instead of creating the heaviest obstacles to their happiness and to their achieving realizations and enlightenment and thus being able to benefit all sentient beings, may they have the stable devotion that sees the guru as buddha. May they immediately be able to purify all their heavy negative karma and do only actions that please the holy mind of the virtuous friend.

“May those who are unable to find a guru be able to find a perfectly qualified Mahayana guru. May those who need teachings be able to meet unmistakable Mahayana teachings, which reveal the complete path.

“May all those who have difficulties in their lives, who are constantly tortured by problems because of their uncontrolled delusions of anger or attachment, be able to have the realization of renunciation of this life and of samsara. May they realize that samsara is suffering in nature. In this way, may they be able to find peace and happiness in their heart and be free from all delusions, especially strong attachment, to which they have become addicted during beginningless past lives. May all those with problems, whether with their relationship or with drugs or alcohol, immediately be able to change their attitude and develop renunciation of samsara by realizing that samsara is suffering in nature. May they immediately be able to realize that samsaric pleasures are only suffering in nature. May they also immediately be able to realize the nature of pervasive compounding suffering. In that way may they be able to find peace and happiness. May that also lead them to see the suffering of others and to generate compassion for all living beings and then bodhicitta.

“May everyone receive perfect happiness. May I become wishing-

fulfilling for all sentient beings, not only in this life but from life to life in all my future lifetimes. Like a wish-fulfilling gem, may I bring all sentient beings all happiness, up to enlightenment, from life to life in all my lifetimes.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, which appear to your mind to be real but are false, may the I, which appears real but is false, achieve Vajrasattva’s enlightenment, which appears real but is false, and lead all sentient beings, who appear to your mind to be real but are false, to that enlightenment, which appears to your mind to be real but is false, by myself alone, who appears real but is false.”

When I say that phenomena are “false,” I mean that they are deceptive. Here “false” relates to their appearance. In our view phenomena appear to be real, in the sense of existing from their own side, or independently. Phenomena appear to be real, but this is a false appearance. This term “false” is similar to the term “no” in the *Heart Sutra*, where it says that there is no eye, no nose, no tongue, no sleep, no food, no bathroom, no toilet . . . I simply applied the word “false” instead of “no” to the real phenomena that appear to us. We can use the word “false” as a weapon against the real phenomena that appear to us.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may any members of my family who have passed away, those who rely upon me, all those—both living and dead—whose names have been given to me and for whom I have promised to pray, and the numberless sentient beings who are now suffering unimaginably in the lower realms immediately be liberated from all those sufferings and reincarnate in a pure land where they can become enlightened, or achieve perfect human rebirths in their future lifetimes. May they achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible by meeting a perfectly qualified Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me and by others, may just my hearing that somebody is sick cause that sentient being to immediately recover from that sickness. And may just my hearing that somebody has died cause that sentient being to never ever be born in the lower realms, or if already born there, immediately be liberated from the lower realms and be born in a pure land where they can become enlightened. Or if that sentient being has been reborn as a human but with no

opportunity to practice Dharma, may they be able to receive a perfect human body and achieve enlightenment quickly.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I, the members of my family, all students and benefactors of this organization—especially the directors and others who sacrifice their lives by bearing many hardships in offering service to others and the teaching of the Buddha through this organization—and those whose names were given to me, who rely upon me and for whom I promised to pray all have long lives. May all our wishes be accomplished immediately according to the holy Dharma. Most importantly, may we be able to actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment, especially bodhicitta and clear light, in this very lifetime, without even a second’s delay.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may all the meditation centers be able to spread the teaching of Lama Tsongkhapa in the minds of all sentient beings by receiving everything they need. May the hospices, leprosy project, schools and all our other social service projects become wish-fulfilling for all sentient beings, causing them every happiness, including enlightenment, and pacifying immediately their sufferings of body and mind. May all the projects of this organization, including those here at Land of Medicine Buddha and the 500-foot Maitreya Buddha statue, be completed immediately by receiving everything they need. May all these statues and projects cause the generation of loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta in the minds of all sentient beings. Due to that, may all sentient beings never experience anything undesirable, such as war, famine, disease, earthquake or danger from fire, water, wind and so forth. In short, may all the centers, statues and projects cause all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“May all the virtuous friends—including Lama Yeshe’s incarnation, Lama Ösel Rinpoche—have stable lives, and may all their holy wishes be accomplished immediately. May everything Lama in his past life intended for the benefit of others be actualized in this life without any obstacles.”

Even though the Sangha are already included in the dedication for the FPMT students, dedicate again specifically for all the FPMT Sangha. “May all the Sangha be able to complete their lives in pure vows and in this way be able to benefit the whole world. In this life may they be able

to complete all the scriptural understanding and realizations and receive all the necessary conditions for that to happen. May nothing become an obstacle and everything become a support for them to live a pure life in their vows and to have realizations of the path to enlightenment.

“May all the countries in the whole world be guided by Dharma leaders. May everyone have perfect happiness through having loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta. May everyone live their life without harming but only benefiting each other. May the teachings of the Buddha, especially those of Lama Tsongkhapa, spread in all directions and flourish.”

[After recitation of the multiplying mantras:] “Due to the blessings of the eminent buddhas and bodhisattvas, due to unbetraying dependent arising, and due to my special attitude, may all my pure prayers be accomplished immediately.”

Thank you very much. Good night. I thought I might have missed the chocolates—I just came to get the chocolates [tsog was offered].

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Friday, February 26

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

Now I'm going to do my last job for the day

“Due to the blessings of the eminent buddhas and bodhisattvas, due to unbetraying dependent arising and due to my special attitude, may all my pure prayers succeed immediately.”

Because we finished very early tonight, we will start tomorrow morning at three o'clock! I'm joking! Good night.

Saturday, February 27

WEEKEND TEACHING

Good afternoon! Good evening!

GETTING THE BEST FROM YOUR LIFE

What makes your life most beautiful, most satisfying, most fulfilling, most worthwhile, most beneficial and most happy? I mean inner happiness, not just excited, hallucinated happiness. What brings Dharma happiness, the happiness that has completion, the happiness that can continue, increase and develop fully? The happiness that is not suffering, that is worth trying for because it never turns into suffering? The happiness that is not suffering in nature and that does not become the suffering of pain? Dharma happiness, the happiness that is worth devoting your life to attaining because it does not interfere with the happiness of others or limit your capacity to benefit others? The happiness that makes your actions only of benefit to others without discrimination?

Well, so far I've been doing a lot of advertising but I haven't mentioned the product! So, what is it? It's living in the bush—going into the redwoods and living in the bush! No, I'm joking! So, what is it that brings all that happiness? It's cherishing sentient beings; living your life cherishing sentient beings. Not that I actually do this myself, but intellectually, it's what I think. Cherish sentient beings first; put enlightenment second.

SENTIENT BEINGS COME FIRST

Why do I say put enlightenment second? For example, when you go into the kitchen, you're looking for food, not the container. Your motivation is not to get a plate but delicious food. You go into the kitchen with food on your mind. But although your main motivation is to get food, you do

need something to put it on—unless you can carry soup in your hands! Anyway, I'm joking again.

Of course, enlightenment is extremely important, because without it you cannot work perfectly for sentient beings. You cannot be a perfect guide, knowing, seeing directly, every sentient being's mind, level of karma, intelligence, wishes and characteristics, as well as the various methods that suit their individual dispositions. But what should be in your heart is sentient beings as the reason for your attaining enlightenment. The first priority in your heart should be the happiness of sentient beings. Sentient beings in your heart. What should be the first thing in your heart, in your life, the goal of your life? Sentient beings.

At present, who is the most precious person in your life, in your heart? It is yourself, or if not yourself, then your greatest object of attachment. I don't think you hold your object of anger most precious; it's your object of attachment, that particular person. So that's how you should hold sentient beings, feel them to be most precious.

No matter how much you help the person to whom you are most attached, no matter how kind you are to that person, all you want is for that person to be happy. If that person receives help, achieves happiness, you're satisfied. That's your goal, you don't want anything in return. You don't need that person to respect you, to praise you or to do something good for you in return; you don't have any such expectation. Your attitude is such that you are simply satisfied by that person's receiving happiness or help. What do you call it, unconditional love? Anyway, that kind of attitude, whether it's all sentient beings or one sentient being.

First in your heart, your first priority, at least intellectually, should be all sentient beings. Then, enlightenment is the method. As in the example above, to enjoy food you need a plate on which to serve it. When you're looking for lunch, you're not looking for the plate, your main aim is the food. So here, what we're really looking for is the happiness of sentient beings.

Although you might be thinking, "I'm working for enlightenment, practicing Dharma, doing retreat to attain enlightenment," sometimes you can make the mistake of leaving one particular sentient being out. Even though your enlightenment depends upon that sentient being's kindness, you leave that sentient being out, give that sentient being up as an object of compassion or loving kindness. That sentient being becomes the

object of your anger. You say, “I’m meditating to reach enlightenment,” but you use that sentient being who gives you enlightenment as an object of anger—to hurt, to give harm. You treat that person as useless, as worse than garbage.

If you have that kind of attitude, it’s not sure that your thought of seeking enlightenment is actual bodhicitta or not. Even though you use the term “enlightenment,” perhaps it’s just your self-centered mind wanting to attain the highest possible level of happiness for yourself. The essence, the very heart of your attitude, what’s really deep within, is the wish to experience the highest happiness yourself. It’s possible for this to happen.

Generally speaking, as much as you think it is important to attain enlightenment, equally you should be thinking that other sentient beings are important, precious, so precious, the most precious thing in your life. Such thoughts should always accompany your thoughts of enlightenment.

In the process of developing bodhicitta we often use the seven techniques of Mahayana cause and effect. On the basis of renunciation of this life and renunciation of samsara, we equalize ourselves with and exchange ourselves for others. With effort, we generate the feeling of the preciousness of other sentient beings and then the need to achieve enlightenment ourselves in order to accomplish the aims of others, to fulfill others’ wishes for happiness. This is the usual process.

The mistake is to think of attaining enlightenment but not taking care of sentient beings, giving them up. Who gives you enlightenment? Upon whose kindness do you depend in order to achieve it? And then you don’t take care of them, renounce them, pay them no attention? Instead of treating sentient beings with kindness, compassion and patience, you use them as objects of anger, to give rise to delusions.

Because parents cherish their children most in their lives, if you harm the children you also harm their parents. In general, parents cherish the health, well-being and long lives of their children more than their own. Therefore, if you cherish sentient beings, you are naturally serving and pleasing the numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas. Your serving and benefiting sentient beings makes numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas happy. Perhaps not in every case, but generally speaking, by making sentient beings happy, you also make the buddhas and bodhisattvas happy. Generally, this can be said, but I wouldn’t say that this is true in every situation. To think that it is, could lead you to make big mistakes in your life.

However, offering service to sentient beings is the best offering of service to the buddhas and bodhisattvas; making offerings to sentient beings is the best way of making offerings to the buddhas and bodhisattvas; serving sentient beings is the best offering you can make to the buddhas and bodhisattvas. This doesn't mean that you should stop making offerings to the buddhas and bodhisattvas: "Oh, I'm serving sentient beings, I don't need to do other practices"—like prostrations, mandala offerings, other offerings, the seven-limb practice and so forth—practices that are recommended for attaining realizations on the path to enlightenment. That, too, is mistaken.

EASY MERIT

Actually, because of the power of the object, the easiest way of creating good karma, the easiest way of attaining enlightenment is with holy objects—Buddha, Dharma and Sangha; statues, stupas and scriptures. In our normal daily life, we need to generate bodhicitta motivation for our actions—doing our jobs, walking, sitting, sleeping and so forth—to become the cause of enlightenment. Even for these actions to become the cause of our own liberation, we need to generate renunciation of samsara. And for them to become simply the cause of happiness in future lives, samsaric happiness, even for that we need renunciation of this life; we have to create pure, Dharma actions with a mind detached from the happiness of this life. Forget about renunciation of samsara and bodhicitta, even to have the constant thought of renunciation of this life, to maintain a pure mind, twenty-four hours a day is not easy.

But because of the power of the holy object, such as statues of buddha, stupas and scriptures, buddha's kindness and compassion for us sentient beings and the inconceivable qualities that buddha has attained, just by circumambulating or prostrating or making offerings to these symbolic holy objects, we can immediately create the causes for enlightenment, liberation and better rebirths. Even if our mind is not one of the three principal paths—I don't mean the actual realization, but even if it's not one of the artificial three principal paths, the motivation generated through the effort of thinking about the benefits of achieving enlightenment and wanting to attain it, or of meditating on how the nature of samsara is suffering and arousing detachment—even if our mind has no Dharma motivation

at all and is completely non-virtuous, even with that attitude, because of buddha's incredible compassion for us sentient beings and his inconceivable qualities, by doing those actions we can create the good karma, the merit, for liberation and enlightenment and, by the way, good rebirths in hundreds or thousands of future lives, and experience all happiness and success in this life too.

However, the purpose of collecting such extensive merit by making offerings to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, statues, stupas and scriptures is to be able to dedicate it to the happiness and well-being of other sentient beings. You create this powerful merit, this strong karma, and then dedicate it, use it, to accomplish the aims of numberless other sentient beings, to bring happiness to other sentient beings—the happiness of this life, of future lives, of liberation from samsara and the highest, full enlightenment.

ENLIGHTENMENT COMES FROM SENTIENT BEINGS

As Shantideva said in the *Bodhicaryavatara*, “Since we achieve the Dharma by depending equally on the buddhas and sentient beings, why shouldn't we respect sentient beings as much as we respect the buddhas?” [Chapter 6, verse 113.]

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha gave teachings on patience, giving us the opportunity to practice patience. He taught us how to follow the path to enlightenment, how to eradicate our defilements, and how to liberate ourselves from the suffering of samsara by revealing the path, by revealing the teachings. Therefore, we think he is so precious, so kind. However, sentient beings are equally so. Even though it was the Buddha who revealed the teachings, without the existence of sentient beings, without that sentient being who is angry at you, how can you learn to be patient, how can you realize the perfection of patience? Without that being you cannot complete the paramita of patience, you cannot attain enlightenment.

Even through this example, you can see how it is equal. Buddha gives you enlightenment by revealing the path, by giving teachings, by showing you how to practice patience. Similarly, the sentient being who is angry at you gives you enlightenment by giving you the opportunity of putting these teachings of the Buddha into practice. Therefore, just as the Buddha is kind and precious, so too is that sentient being.

The same thing applies to the entire path to enlightenment taught by the Buddha. Actualizing this path depends on the kindness of sentient beings. Without the existence of suffering sentient beings there is no way to generate loving kindness and compassion, no way to actualize bodhicitta, no way to progress along the path. There's no way to actualize the Mahayana path, to complete it, to eliminate all the defilements and achieve all the qualities of cessation, to attain all realizations without depending on the kindness of sentient beings. No way.

Similarly, the Buddha showed the path to liberation, including the three higher trainings of morality, concentration and wisdom. When you achieve liberation from samsara by following that path, you do so by depending on the Buddha. However, without the existence of the obscured, suffering sentient beings, there is no way to accomplish the three higher trainings—no way to practice morality; no way to achieve shamatha, calm abiding, perfect concentration; and no way to attain great insight by realizing emptiness through analysis and then unifying it with shamatha, producing the extremely refined rapturous ecstasy through which that great insight is derived. Thus, without depending on the existence of sentient beings, you cannot actualize the path and attain liberation from samsara even for yourself.

Similarly, you cannot receive even good rebirths or happiness in future lives without depending on the existence of the suffering, obscured sentient beings. Why not? Because even though the Buddha has taught the practice of morality—the cause of happiness in future lives, including upper rebirths—without the base, the existence of suffering sentient beings, there's no way to practice it. It is on the basis of sentient beings that we make vows not to kill, steal, engage in sexual misconduct, lie and so forth. Sentient beings are the foundation of our vows not to give this harm or that. Without the existence of sentient beings, we cannot engage in these practices, the cause of happiness. Without the existence of sentient beings, we have no way to achieve any happiness whatsoever, no way to experience the slightest comfort in our daily lives, any enjoyment or sense pleasure up to the highest enlightenment. Every single happiness we ever experience comes to us through the kindness of sentient beings; depends upon them.

Since all happiness comes from virtue and the virtue we create is the holy action of the Buddha, we depend on the Buddha for whatever happiness we experience, achieve, receive. Similarly, all our happiness also

depends on the kindness of sentient beings. That's why Shantideva asks in the *Bodhicaryavatara*, "Why don't we respect sentient beings in the same way we respect the Buddha? Why don't we treat sentient beings in the same way that we treat the Buddha?" Whatever benefit, whatever realizations we derive from the Buddha, we derive the same complete benefit from all sentient beings, from each sentient being. The inconceivable benefits we get by making just one light offering, one water bowl offering, one hand prostration to a statue of the Buddha, whichever aspect is taken, we get the same benefits from sentient beings.

I mentioned the eight benefits of making extensive light offerings when we did them the other night—the eighth is enlightenment. [February 17. Actually, Rinpoche mentioned ten.] You also receive these eight important benefits the moment you put your palms together to a statue or painting of the Buddha, including achieving the path of the *arya* beings, the actual path that eradicates your gross delusions, or defilements, and through which you attain liberation from samsara. And then with bodhicitta you can eliminate also the subtle defilements and reach enlightenment. Even if the buddha to whom you press your palms together is merely visualized and there's no actual physical holy object such as a statue, painting or picture, you still derive these eight benefits [see pp. 224 and 309 for the list]. All this is through the kindness of sentient beings.

Even though the immediate source of these benefits of prostrating to the holy object is the buddha, when you trace the evolution back you will find that their actual source is sentient beings, that you received these eight benefits through the kindness of each sentient being. The root of all the temporary and ultimate happiness you get from the holy objects—statues, stupas or paintings or pictures of buddha—is sentient beings. The inconceivable skies of benefit that you gain by circumambulating, prostrating, putting your palms together, or making offerings to these holy objects derives from sentient beings. Sentient beings are the root of all this happiness, all this good karma.

REBIRTH IN THE LOWER REALMS

During each session of this Vajrasattva retreat we purify vast amounts of negative karma. First of all, think just how heavy one single complete negative karma is. For example, gossiping, ill will, stealing, sexual

misconduct, killing and so forth. Leave aside the ripening aspect result, rebirth in the lower realms, such as the hell realms, or the hungry ghost realms, where the heaviest hunger and thirst are experienced for tens of thousands of years.

For us humans, it's not sufficient that we get enough food to fill our stomachs. We have to like it as well. It's not sufficient that the food we get fills our stomachs and is enough to live on. It should also be something we enjoy.

Compare the lives of us humans with those of the hungry ghosts, who can't find even a damp patch of ground let alone even a spoonful of water for hundreds or thousands of years. Pretas can't find a scrap of food for hundreds of thousands of years. Forget about their filling their stomachs every day, they can't even do it over a lifetime. Imagine what an incredible shock it would be for us if something happened and we had to go without food or water for a week; nothing to eat; nothing to drink. Of course, in the case of *nyung nä*, it's different. It's only a day without food and drink and you know you're going to eat the next morning. But we'd find it terrible to have to experience this not under *nyung nä* conditions. If our food and drink stopped for a day for reasons other than Dharma practice, we'd freak out. Our bodies would freak out, our minds would freak out. Everything would freak out . . . even our houses would freak out! Anyway, I'm comparing us to hungry ghosts because I myself am quite fussy about food. However, the hungry ghosts have unbearably heavy sufferings like that.

So, as I often mention, as it says in the teachings, the heat of the fire when the world comes to an end is sixty or seventy times greater than that of all the fires of our human world put together, but one tiny spark from the hell realm is seven times hotter than that. When the world ends, there's all this wind and fire that destroy everything. For example, when a volcano erupts and lava, that liquid fire, pours out, it melts everything in its path; even the rocks it touches melt. Normally, humans' fire cannot melt rocks, but lava does. So the end of the world fire is like that—everything, even huge rocky mountains, gets burned. So, one tiny spark in the hell realm is seven times hotter than the world-ending fire.

Similarly, the energy of the cold hells is beyond compare with anything we know. The combined energy of the ice and cold of our world is great pleasure compared to that of the cold hells.

Also, even when you discover one new wrinkle on your body, you get

so shocked; your mind is terrified. One more gray hair; one more wrinkle. It's such a shock. Therefore, there's no question that after having had this human body you couldn't stand reincarnating as an animal. Having been born human, it would be unbearable to see your consciousness migrate into an animal body. For example, how would you feel if your body gradually turned into that of a cat? Starting with your face; slowly your face becoming that of a cat. Even though you keep many cats around, you like cats, could you bear it? Not your whole body—just your head. Or perhaps starting from the tail? Or your body gradually turning into that of a snake? You couldn't stand it. But it's exactly the same—your consciousness leaves this body and migrates into the next. It's the same mental continuum, the same continuity of mind. It's your mind that migrates into the body of a snake, cockroach, mouse or cat. Exactly the same consciousness, the same mind; the one you have now.

So if you can't stand discovering one more wrinkle, one gray hair, your mind gets so freaked out, how will you be able to bear being reborn into an animal body, your body becoming that of an animal? There's no way. Even as a human being, *while* you are a human being, not having an animal body, if something changes, something decays, you can't stand it. You need so many instruments to repair the damage, so many chemicals to color it, so much effort and expense to re-shape, uplift and so forth.

Imagine that you're born a cat or a dog, eating the same food, drinking the same water every day from that same container, the same thing from the same shop day after day. Even if you visualize yourself like that, a pet living with people, compared to other animals, those who live in the wild, you're actually very rich, very well-off. But even that you can't stand, can't bear.

OTHER SUFFERING RESULTS

To conclude what I'm saying, the ripening aspect result of one single complete negative karma is rebirth in the lower realms, such as I've just been describing. However, there are three other types of suffering result, which we experience later, when we're finally, once again, born human. One is the possessed result, the unhealthy or fearful environment into which you're born. Even though you're born human, you find yourself in a place that endangers your life, that is filthy, dirty, full of excrement and garbage,

where people cheat each other, where resources are scarce, there's no food or other means of living, where there's constant drought, nothing grows, there's much fighting, many wars—dreadful places like that.

Then there's the result similar to the cause where what you did to others in the past, the harm you gave them, comes back to harm you in return. Even though you are born human, you receive harm similar to that which you inflicted upon others in the past.

And finally, there's the result similar to the cause where you engage in the same negative actions again. You create the same negative karma—gossiping, killing, sexual misconduct, ill will, slander and so forth—over and over again. No matter how much trouble you get into by doing these things, getting punished, imprisoned, fined or penalized, you can't stop yourself from creating these negative actions. Even though you think they're bad and that you should stop, you find it difficult to do so; your mind is very uncontrolled.

So again, you create the same negative karma in that life, and that again brings the four suffering results, one of which is creating that same negative karma yet again. That complete action, too, has the four suffering results, including that of doing it again, and so it goes, on and on, like that. If you don't purify a negative karma created today—such as gossiping, ill will, sexual misconduct and so forth—it will go on and on, and you will keep creating the result similar to the cause, bringing the four suffering results. One of these is again creating the result similar to the cause, which itself brings the four suffering results, and in this way your samsara becomes endless. There's no end to your suffering, no end at all. Your suffering becomes endless.

Here we are talking about just one negative karma done today. We are not talking about all of today's negative karma, yesterday's negative karma, this year's negative karma, this life's negative karma, previous lives' negative karma. We are not talking about all that. We are just talking about one negative karma done today, such as gossiping or sexual misconduct. Just one negative karma. If it is not purified, it makes suffering endless; the suffering goes on and on.

Therefore, by doing Vajrasattva practice or even the Thirty-five Buddhas just once—not taking into account all the other different practices but simply considering doing Vajrasattva meditation or reciting the powerful names of the Thirty-five Buddhas just once—you can purify not only hav-

ing to experience rebirth in the lower realms but also the worst of the four results—that really bad one, the terrifying one, the one that is the worst of all, worse even than rebirth in hell—the result of engaging in the same negative actions again and again. These practices have the power to purify that. Of the three suffering results that you experience in the human realm, that of creating the same negative karma over and over again is the worst because it makes your suffering endless. It is more terrifying than rebirth in hell because once you have experienced one rebirth in hell, it's over; that karma has finished. Hell suffering is not endless. You don't experience it continuously. When that hell karma finishes, the suffering of hell stops; the vision, the karmic appearance of hell, ceases.

Much more terrifying than that is the result similar to the cause where you engage in the same negative karma over and over again. That is the most terrifying of the four karmic results because it ensures that without end, you will be reborn again and again in the lower realms, as well as later having to experience all the other sufferings of the human realm. Therefore, the bad habit is worse than the suffering of hell. Putting it another way, it's like that.

THE FOUR REMEDIAL POWERS

What I'm saying here is that by doing the practice of confession with the four remedial powers [*nyen po tob zhi*], you can stop each of the four suffering results. By practicing the power of dependence [*ten gyi tob*], you purify the possessed result, finding yourself in a suffering environment. Here, by taking refuge, depending on Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, you purify the negative karma you have created with those holy objects. By generating bodhicitta, depending on sentient beings, you purify the negative karma you have created with them.

Then, the power of feeling regret for the negative actions [*nam pa sün jin pä tob*] purifies the result similar to the cause in experience.

The power that I translate as “the remedy of always enjoying,” which in Tibetan is *nyen po kun tu chö pä tob*—I think the meaning might be that by purifying negative karma, you get to enjoy happiness all the time, but I'm not completely sure—this is the remedy to the ripening aspect result, rebirth in the lower realms.

Finally, the power of determining not to commit those negative actions

again [*nye pa lä lar dog pä tob*] is the remedy for the suffering result similar to the cause where you continuously create those negative karmas again and again, which, as I explained, is much more terrifying, much worse than the suffering of hell itself.

The reason I'm going into all this in detail is so that you can understand, feel the kindness of sentient beings and therefore cherish them more than you do.

Through just one practice—reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas' names or doing the Vajrasattva meditation with the four remedial powers—you can avoid having to experience incredible unbearable suffering; you can purify so much negative karma. For example, one of today's negative karmas, such as gossiping—through these practices you can either stop its four suffering results from arising altogether, or if you can't stop them completely, at least you can lighten or shorten their effect. Instead of having to undergo hundreds of thousands of lifetimes of inconceivable suffering for eons in the lower realms, perhaps you can experience the result in this life as some kind of trouble, such as illness or *lung* [wind disease].

It's a strange thing about *lung*. I don't think I've ever heard Theravādins talk about it, but as soon as you encounter Tibetan Buddhism, you come to know about *lung*. First, you're introduced to Tibetan Buddhism, second, to *lung*—that very famous *lung!* I'm also not sure that Zen practitioners talk about *lung*; so far I haven't heard them do so. Anyway, after doing those purifying practices, instead of causing you to experience eons of suffering in the lower realms, your negative karma can manifest in this life as *lung*.

Frequently, Dharma practitioners who live their lives with a good heart, dedicated to others—or even those who haven't met Buddhism but have good hearts, strong compassion and loving kindness and dedicate their lives to others—purify much negative karma. Through their dedicated attitude and the service they offer others, they purify so much.

Sometimes you will find that meditators who practice strongly, who lead pure lives of renunciation, experience many sicknesses and problems, one after another. Of course, whether these experiences become a problem to them or not depends on how they think. Something that appears as a problem to others might not be a problem for them. It depends on how they look at the situation. Cancer or other serious illnesses can be taken as a very positive sign, because it means that the person will not have to expe-

rience many hundreds of thousands of lifetimes of heavy suffering results in the lower realms for incredible lengths of time from just one negative karma. That karma manifests as an illness in this life and finishes in that way. In such cases, it's a very positive, very good thing that happened.

Such heavy karmas can also finish simply by manifesting as other people criticizing you. The teachings talk about this as being one of the benefits of bodhicitta. Due to the power of bodhicitta, the good heart, instead of having to experience heavy suffering in either the human realm or the lower realms for incredible lengths of time, certain heavy negative karmas can get purified by manifesting as people criticizing or blaming you in this life. They finish as simply as that. Or they manifest as other experiences in this life such as migraine headaches, toothaches, nightmares, fearful dreams—things like that can finish heavy negative karmas that would otherwise have to be experienced as unbearable sufferings for great lengths of time.

Therefore, the teachings advise us that when problems like this arise, we should see them as positive and recognize them as signs of the power of our practice—that they are the manifestations of negative karma that is finishing much more lightly than it could have—and see them as positive.

Even if by practicing the remedy of vowing not to commit negative actions again—the antidote to the result similar to the cause of creating the same negative karmas again and again—with Vajrasattva or the Thirty-five Buddhas, you could avoid having to experience the four suffering results of just one negative karma, that would still be incredible peace. You would stop the constant suffering that arises from continuously creating the result similar to the cause, which brings suffering without end. You wouldn't have to go through it again. The absence of that karma and suffering is peace—peace forever. By purifying these negative karmas you stop having to experience the suffering result that happens again and again. So the everlasting peace and happiness that you experience in all your future lives from purifying these negative karmas comes from Vajrasattva or the Thirty-five Buddhas.

PURIFICATION COMES FROM SENTIENT BEINGS

How does it come about that Vajrasattva's mantra has such power; that reciting even the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas has such power? It

happens due to sentient beings. Just as crops come from a field, these purifying abilities come from sentient beings. The Thirty-five Buddhas became enlightened by depending on sentient beings. How did they become enlightened? By depending on sentient beings. Similarly, Vajrasattva came about because of sentient beings, through the existence of suffering sentient beings.

So far I've been talking about just one negative karma, but by practicing Vajrasattva or the Thirty-five Buddhas, by reciting their names and doing prostrations, we can purify all the countless negative karmas created today, this week, this month, this year, this life; with Vajrasattva or the Thirty-five Buddhas we can purify all our past lives' negative karmas.

To get an appreciation for this, first we should understand how terrifying all the results of just one negative karma are. How much suffering it brings from life to life, and how unbelievable it is to be able to purify all that with Vajrasattva or the Thirty-five Buddhas; how much unbelievable peace and happiness it brings. We should also understand what an emergency it is that we purify all this; that we should purify it without even a second's delay. Whether the negative karma be gossiping or ill will or sexual misconduct or telling lies or whatever, it is urgent to purify it without delaying even a moment. That's just one, but through these practices we can purify all the negative karma we have created not only in this life but in all previous lives as well.

That we have the opportunity to do all this purification with Vajrasattva or the Thirty-five Buddhas is due to the kindness of all sentient beings—those around us now, at home or wherever we are, and all the rest of the sentient beings. Vajrasattva and the Thirty-five Buddhas became enlightened through the kindness of each sentient being. That's one thing. That's how each of us has received this opportunity to purify ourselves.

Lama Atisha explained that the Thirty-five Buddhas' names are so powerful because in the past, when they were bodhisattvas, they made many dedication prayers to be able to benefit sentient beings by purifying their negative karma. One of them made specific dedications to be able to purify this kind of negative karma, another made specific dedications to be able to purify that kind of negative karma, and so forth. As bodhisattvas, they made many prayers to be able to benefit sentient beings, including us, who are reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas' names right now. They made prayers

that when they became buddhas, sentient beings would be able to purify those various specific negative karmas by reciting their names.

A buddha has many good qualities, such as the ten powers, one of which is the power of prayer. So because a buddha has achieved the power of prayer, whatever prayers were made in the past are actualized. Therefore, when we recite the 'Thirty-five Buddhas' names, they have the power to purify all those negative karmas. How does it happen that these Buddhas names have all that power, that by reciting their names we can purify so much negative karma? Because originally, with bodhicitta, they made many prayers, generated the great intention to benefit sentient beings in this way. That will, that intention, has power. Then, when they became buddhas, they achieved the quality of possessing the ten powers, one of which is the power of prayer, and that's what gives power to their names. Now, when we recite their names, it affects our minds. That's how it works. The reason their names have so much power is because it came from their bodhicitta.

However, their bodhicitta was generated in dependence upon sentient beings—each and every sentient being. Therefore, by reciting each buddha's name, we can purify all these different negative karmas that we always engage in; the negative karma that we create in this life and have created in our previous lives. That we can purify as much as we want, that we have the opportunity to do this, is basically due to sentient beings, the kindness of each sentient being. So like that, the evolution goes down to the root, sentient beings. It comes from there.

As I've mentioned before, if you generate compassion for one sentient being, whether it's an insect or a human, you achieve enlightenment from that sentient being. The stronger the compassion for that sentient being you can generate, the quicker you reach enlightenment. No matter how much Highest Yoga Tantra you practice, how much you meditate on the generation stage, the completion stage, if you don't have compassion, if you don't generate compassion for that sentient being, that insect or that human, you cannot attain enlightenment. And the stronger your compassion, the quicker you get enlightened. That's why sentient beings are so precious—because you can derive so much from them. Each sentient being is extremely precious to your life.

All the good qualities of Sangha—those of the bodhisattvas, such as the six paramitas, bodhicitta; those of the arhats, their psychic powers; the

realizations of the dakas and dakinis, the wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness; the qualities of the Dharma protectors, their ability to accomplish the four actions and so forth—all this is a result of the kindness of sentient beings. All this is achieved by depending on the kindness of sentient beings.

All the good qualities of Dharma—all the benefits of renunciation, bodhicitta, emptiness, the ten bhumis, the five paths, the qualities of the path, from guru devotion up to the goal, enlightenment—derive from sentient beings, depend on the kindness of sentient beings.

And all the good qualities of Buddha—the state of omniscient mind, complete compassion, perfect power, the skies of good qualities of the Buddha's holy body, speech and mind—are achieved in dependence upon the kindness of sentient beings. It comes from sentient beings; every single sentient being. By depending on the kindness of each and every one.

THE POWER OF COMPASSION

For example, a story about one of the Vajrayogini lineage lamas, the monk Getsul Tsimbulwa, illustrates the power of compassion. In West Bengal there's a place called Odi. It's near Buxa, where the refugee monks from Sera, Ganden and Drepung monasteries who wanted to continue their studies lived for eight or nine years after fleeing Tibet. I lived there for about eight years. Not continuously, but on and off. There's a season that people from Bombay go to Odi on pilgrimage; thousands of them. There are many caves in the rocky mountains there and it can be quite dangerous; you have to hold on to chains as you walk along. You hear sounds or experience other signs, depending on how pure your mind is.

So, Getsul Tsimbulwa's guru, the great yogi Ngagpa Chöpawa, who was a layman, was on his way to Odi to practice the final stage of tantra that you do just before you get enlightened. It is called "entering the deeds of tantra," where I think that from ordinary people's point of view you appear to be crazy. Not crazy, but looking crazy. So, you do that before becoming enlightened—entering the deeds of tantra. He came to a river, and on the bank was a woman whose whole body was covered with leprosy sores, with pus oozing out everywhere. She asked him to carry her on his back to the other side of the river, but he ignored her and went on his way.

A bit later, his disciple Getsul Tsimbulwa came by, and as soon as he

saw this poor woman—ravaged by leprosy, pus everywhere, something that most people would be too scared to go near, let alone touch—he felt unbearable compassion for her, and without any thought of how dirty she was, immediately picked her up, put her on his back and started across the river. However, when he reached the middle of the river, suddenly he saw her as the female deity Dorje Pagmo, Vajrayogini, who then took him to her pure land in his ordinary body, without his first having to die.

If you are born in the Vajrayogini pure land, it is definite, one hundred percent certain, that you will become enlightened in that lifetime. If you don't get enlightened as a human, the quickest way to do so is to go to a pure land such as that of Heruka or Vajrayogini. So, she wasn't an ordinary being, but because of his impure karma, Getsul Tsimbulwa saw her as an ordinary sentient being; sick, covered by leprosy sores. Nevertheless, filled with unbearable compassion, with no thought of dirtiness, he sacrificed his life to carry her across the river, and during that short time, his negative, impure karma was completely purified. Because of that compassion and his sacrificing his life for that living being, in the short time it took him to carry her half-way across the river, the negative karma that projected her in an ordinary appearance instead of in her true nature as Vajrayogini, that blocked him from seeing her as an enlightened being, was completely purified.

Therefore, in the middle of the river, because of his unbearable compassion for her, the negative karma that projected the impure view was purified. Since there was no longer any impure view, the impure appearance of a sick woman disappeared and he was able to go to Vajrayogini's pure land and get enlightened there. The teacher, Ngagpa Chöpawa, the yogi, didn't do that, but his disciple did.

That shows how precious sentient beings are, in that you can derive infinite benefit from them and achieve every single happiness, and the stronger the compassion you can generate, the more quickly do you gain realizations and attain enlightenment.

Similarly, even though Maitreya Buddha generated bodhicitta much earlier than Guru Shakyamuni Buddha did, because Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's compassion and bodhicitta were stronger, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha became enlightened before Maitreya Buddha. What happened was, in a previous life they were members of the same family. One day, they were at Namo Buddha, in Nepal, when they came across a family

of five tigers, a mother and her cubs, who were starving to death. They continued on their journey home, but because of the unbearable compassion Guru Shakyamuni Buddha felt for the tigers, he came back later and sacrificed his body so that they could live. He and Maitreya Buddha were both bodhisattvas at the time, and Maitreya Buddha also felt compassion, but didn't give up his life for the tigers. But because his bodhicitta was stronger, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha did, and as a result he became enlightened before Maitreya Buddha.

Therefore, it seems that in our lives, of all the billions of different Dharma practices that we could do, of all the many different forms of practice that there are, the most important is that of compassion for sentient beings.

THE BEST THING IN LIFE

As I said at the beginning of this talk, the best thing you can do with your life is to cherish sentient beings. Every day, whatever your circumstances, whether you are happy or unhappy, up or down, any time anywhere, cherish sentient beings. It can happen that when you are unhappy, you give sentient beings up, and only when you are happy do you think of others. Well, it can also happen that when you are happy you give them up too, but anyway, no matter whether you're happy or unhappy, whatever circumstances you find yourself in, keep as your only goal in life the welfare of sentient beings. Continuously, every day, all the time, always think how precious they are, how they are most precious. Even Buddha, Dharma and Sangha come from sentient beings—the Thirty-five Buddhas, Vajrasattva. Therefore, sentient beings are the most precious thing in your life.

If you live your life with this attitude, even if you don't do three year retreats or study Dharma extensively, you will have happiness now and in the future. With this attitude, your future will always be good, the best. Living your life with this attitude, think that every sentient being, every person, you meet is most precious—at home, at work, at your Dharma center, feel that every person you see is the most precious one in your life. In this way you will not only experience happiness now but will also experience the best possible future, and at the time of death will feel no regrets—only happiness and joy. Even though your life might have started with suffering, it will end with joy.

With the thought of cherishing others, serving them comes naturally, without difficulty. You will serve others happily, voluntarily, enjoyably. With this thought, serving others will become the best, most enjoyable thing you can do in your life. In that way, even though you might be doing exactly the same things that you were doing before, even though your job or your actions haven't changed, because your attitude is different, everything you do brings you happiness, fulfillment and joy. Before, when you did things with ego, self-centered mind, you didn't enjoy life and encountered many problems. The same job, the same work—in a meditation center or in a city office—but there were always problems with other people, dissatisfaction with your work, a lot of unhappiness. But now, with this change of attitude, thinking that everyone is the most precious thing in your life, serving them comes naturally—not as a burden but as a joy. Serving others becomes enjoyment, not a job. You are giving something to others, so you feel happiness, satisfaction, fulfillment and joy.

Actually, like last week, I brought the book that I wanted to teach from, but again I got distracted. What I've been saying was supposed to be the motivation for the teaching, but somehow I got distracted and the motivation became the whole thing! Anyway, I'll stop here.

DEDICATION

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, which appear to be real, from there, but which are empty, may the I, which appears to be real but which is empty, achieve Vajrasattva's enlightenment, which appears to be real but is empty, and lead all sentient beings, who appear to be real but are totally empty, to that enlightenment, which appears to be real but is empty, by myself, alone, which appears to be real but is also totally empty, non-existent from there.”

The difference between this non-existence and ordinary non-existence is the “from there, from its own side.”

Tonight's session starts at nine o'clock! I'm joking.

Sunday, February 28

AFTERNOON: MEDICINE BUDDHA PUJA

[This teaching was given prior to Rinpoche's conducting a jang wa ceremony at the Memorial Shrine on the FPMT property at Soquel. It was attended by Vajrasattva retreat Sangha but not the lay students.]

JANG WA

First we are going to do a Medicine Buddha puja. There are long and middle-length versions of this—we are going to do the middle-length version. After that, we will do the actual *jang wa*, the purification of the family members who have passed away, which involves liberating them. You can do this practice with many different deities, aspects of buddha, but here today we are going to do it with the Medicine Buddha.

If there are actually ashes, hair or bone of the deceased person, parts of the dead person's body, the purification is done with the female enlightened being, the deity Vajrayogini. Again there are different versions of the Vajrayogini sadhana—long and short. Here, we'll do the short one. In that way, later, when the ashes have been purified and consecrated, buddha's wisdom having been invoked into the hair, bone or whatever there is, those ashes become the same as holy objects—statues of the buddha, stupas and so forth; they become objects of respect.

THE BENEFITS OF BLESSED ASHES

Traditionally what's done is that you take the blessed ashes up a very high mountain and cast them into the air. In that way, the blessed ashes bless the air, and whoever that air then touches—people, animals, insects—gets liberated. Those beings get liberated because the air has been blessed by the ashes. Liberated from what? Liberated from having to reincarnate in

the suffering realms—the hell, hungry ghost and animal realms. They get liberated because their minds get purified; their negative karma—the negative imprints left on their minds by past negative actions, actions done with negative thoughts—is purified. The negative karma they have created and collected on their minds is what causes them to reincarnate in the suffering realms. Therefore, by purifying their negative karma, purifying their mind, they get liberated from the lower realms and receive good rebirths. Depending on their karma and on the person who does the puja—that person’s qualities and the karma of the person who passed away—depending on both, they can be born instead in a pure land or receive a higher rebirth, such as a human, or a worldly god in the deva realm.

That’s one of the ways in which the consecrated ashes are used. Another way of using the ashes after they have been purified, consecrated and blessed is to put them into an ocean or a river. Because the ashes have been purified and blessed, putting them in the ocean blesses the entire ocean and that water then blesses or purifies all the beings who live in the ocean; purifies their minds, their negative karma. Thus, all those beings living in the water get liberated from the lower realms; they don’t reincarnate in the hell, hungry ghost or animal realms. It causes them to receive good rebirths. Also, anybody who touches the water, including human beings, gets purified as well.

A third way the blessed ashes can be used, made beneficial for the person who passed away, another very practical method, is to sponsor or make stupas or statues of the buddha out of them. Usually in Tibet, Nepal and India, after the ashes have been purified, blessed, they make statues of, for example, Mitukpa. You can also make Medicine Buddha statues. Mitukpa, the Immoveable Buddha, is in the same aspect as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, but blue in color and holding a vajra in his left hand, which is in the mudra of concentration, like Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s. Mitukpa is a very, very powerful buddha, so making statues of him is extremely helpful to purify the person who passed away, to purify that person’s negative karma and for that person to have a good rebirth. Also, the family members who sponsor the making of that statue collect inconceivable merit as well. You can also make stupas from those ashes.

The last time we did a celebration here was at the opening of this temple, when the large Medicine Buddha thangka was brought here and we made offerings to that holy object.

I would like to repeat again the benefits of making holy objects, as explained by the Buddha. In his teachings, the Buddha explained infinite, unbelievable benefits of making holy objects, but here I'll give just the essence of what he said.

THE BENEFITS OF JANG WA

First of all, however, *jang wa* is a Tibetan term that means purification. The teachings given by the Buddha himself are divided into two types—sutra and tantra. The *jang wa* purification practice is from the tantras.

Usually, if somebody dies with a non-virtuous thought, with a negative thought at the time of death—with anger, ignorance or desire, attachment clinging to this life—if the person's very last thought in this life is non-devotion to guru, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha; not compassion for other living beings; not wisdom meditating on the ultimate nature, emptiness; not the detached, pure mind of renunciation of the circling suffering realm, *samsara*; if there's no pure mind, no virtuous thought, after death that person gets reborn in the intermediate state of the hell realm, the intermediate state of the hungry ghost realm or the intermediate state of the animal realm. If a person dies with a non-virtuous thought, with a negative thought, that person reincarnates in the lower realms, in the suffering realms. The person doesn't reincarnate in the higher realms—the deva or human realms.

But if this purification practice of *jang wa* that was taught by Buddha in the tantras is done, it is said in the teachings that even if the person died with a non-virtuous thought, an impure mind, a negative thought, and has already reincarnated in the intermediate state on his way to the hell, hungry ghost or animal realms, that person can still change his rebirth; he doesn't have to reincarnate in the hell, hungry ghost or animal realms. That person's mind can still be directed towards the higher realms. The person's rebirth can change. Instead of being born in the lower realms, the person can reincarnate in the human or deva realms or even in a pure land, depending on the person's karma and the qualities of the person who performs the puja. It is a very powerful, practical method of helping family members or friends who have passed away—deceased people whom you want to help avoid heavy sufferings and have an easy life, a good rebirth, a better life. Doing *jang wa* for those people has that practical benefit.

THE BENEFITS OF MAKING HOLY OBJECTS

As I mentioned, family members who sponsor the making of a statue or stupa using the deceased person's ashes, hair, bone or whatever has great benefit. When King Sogyal asked Lord Buddha about the benefits of making holy objects, he explained that equal to that number of atoms that the statue or stupa contains, according to its size, as many millions or billions of atoms it contains, for that many lifetimes the person who sponsored or made that holy object will be born as a king in the "deva human" realm, where the enjoyments are millions of times greater than the most developed human wealth. Then, of course, if in all those coming future lives as a king that person meets the Dharma, the spiritual path, the Buddhadharmā, he or she can use all that wealth and power to benefit many other sentient beings.

The next benefit is that as many atoms the stupa or statue has, that many causes to achieve perfect concentration, meditation, shamatha, calm abiding are created. In order to achieve perfect concentration, you have to achieve the nine levels of meditative stabilization. Only then can you achieve perfect concentration, meditation. Otherwise, you can't really develop perfect meditation free from attachment-scattering and sinking, the two main obstacles that interfere with your realizing perfect concentration. After achieving these nine levels and thus perfect concentration, you experience extremely refined rapturous ecstasy, bliss of body and mind. Then, after that, you achieve fully characterized shamatha, calm abiding—that level of meditation. Then, on the basis of that, you realize the ultimate nature of the I, the aggregates—the association of body and mind, the base on which I is labeled, the base of the self, the me—you realize the ultimate nature of the base, the aggregates; the very nature of all phenomena—emptiness.

Without realizing emptiness, you cannot be liberated; there's no way to escape, to be totally liberated, forever, from the whole entire round of samsaric suffering—the suffering of death, the suffering of rebirth, the suffering of old age, the suffering of sickness and all the other problems we experience between death and rebirth. You cannot be free from all the sufferings of the human and deva realms—the sura and asura realms, the realms of those worldly gods—or of the three lower realms—the hell, hungry ghost and animal realms. Why? Because all these sufferings come

from karma, are caused by karma. Karma is motivated by delusion. All delusions, wrong concepts, the hallucinating mind, come from the root, ignorance—the unknowing mind.

WHERE ARE YOU?

If you look for the I, if you look for the self, where is it? You cannot find the I from the ends of your hair down to the tips of your toes. You cannot find the I, the self. Where is the me? Where is the I? You cannot find it anywhere from the ends of your hair down to the tips of your toes. Nowhere can you find your I. Even if you look for it, you cannot find it. The real I that you always believe to be there, that you always hold on to; believing that there really exists such a real I as it appears to you, that there is a real I in your body, that always walks, sits, sleeps, works and so forth; comes, goes, does all the activities. Actually, if you look for it, try to discover where that real I that appears to you, that you constantly hold on to, is located, you cannot find it anywhere from the ends of your hairs down to the tips of your toes.

Your body is not the I; your mind is not the I. Even the association of your body and mind is not the I; together, even the collection of body and mind is not this real I. Therefore, nothing is the real I. None of this is the real I, and you cannot find any such real I. None of these are the real I. Neither body nor mind, nor even the collection of them together is the real I. If you look for it, you cannot find it anywhere from the ends of your hair down to the tips of your toes. You cannot find it on this base—the association of body and mind. You cannot find the real I in which you believe, which appears to you and which you always hold on to, that you cherish as the most important thing there is—“I’m the *most* important of all living beings; I’m more important than all the buddhas and bodhisattvas and all other living beings.”

If you look for this real I that you hold on to in everyday life—every minute, every second—you cannot find it. It is not *there*; it exists nowhere, neither on the base—the association of body and mind—nor anywhere else. This real I, or, in Western psychological terminology, this emotional I, doesn’t exist anywhere, neither on the base—the association of body and mind—nor anywhere else. Since it cannot be found anywhere, it is totally non-existent. When you look for it, you cannot find it anywhere.

But, because the base—the aggregates, the association of body and mind—exists, the I exists. There is a body, there is a mind and there is an association of this body and mind—these things exist. Because of their existence, the mind that sees these aggregates—the base, the association of body and mind—invents the label “I,” the merely imputed I. This is the I that exists; the self that exists is this one, dependent on the base, the association of body and mind, and on the mind that merely imputes the I. That exists, that I exists; the merely imputed I exists.

The merely imputed I that exists is not only *like* a hallucination, it *is* a hallucination. Again, because of the aggregates, the mind merely imputes the I; the I exists by way of being merely imputed. But this merely imputed I that exists cannot be found on its base, the association of body and mind; you cannot find even this merely labeled I, which normally exists, on the base, the association of body and mind. However, the merely imputed I exists—it exists in the world, in this temple, right now. You, your self or the I, the merely imputed one, exists now; it exists in this world, in America, in this temple now. It exists in this Memorial Shrine. The merely labeled I is in this temple now, but it is not, you cannot find it, on this collection of body and mind. You cannot find the I, the merely labeled I there.

Besides not being able to find the emotional I, the real I, you can't find even the merely labeled I on the aggregates. You can find the merely labeled I in this temple; it's in this temple right now—on the cushion, where the aggregates are sitting. The body is sitting on the cushion—the merely labeled I there or not? Yes, it is on the cushion; yes, it is on the chair—but is it on the base, the collection of body and mind? No, you cannot find it *there*—on there, there is no merely labeled I. Where you find the aggregates, the collection of body and mind, there you find the I, the merely labeled I—but there is no merely labeled I on the collection of body and mind, the base. There's a huge difference—like that between earth and sky—between the merely labeled I and the I that appears to us, the I in which we normally believe.

WHAT IS IGNORANCE?

What is ignorance? The point I'm trying to make, to introduce here, is what is ignorance, the root of all delusions, the root of all karma, the root of all suffering? I'm trying to give you an idea of what this ignorance is.

Think how a movie camera imprints a negative film with images of people, mountains, houses and so forth and then later, when the film is developed with chemicals, what the camera has imprinted on the film appears on photographic paper or can be projected on a movie screen. Like that, while there is no I on the base, the association of body and mind, past ignorance—the concept of the inherently existent I, the concept of the real I, the I that exists from its own side, as not merely labeled by the mind—past ignorance—the wrong concept that apprehends the I, aggregates, all phenomena, subject, action, object, everything, as inherently existent, as real, as existing from their own side—has left negative imprints on our mental continuum. Then, these negative imprints left on our mind by past ignorance project the hallucination of inherent existence. The moment our mind merely imputes the I, merely imputes the body, merely imputes the mind, merely imputes this and that, these negative imprints left by the past ignorance project the hallucination of inherent existence on to that merely labeled I, that merely labeled body, that merely labeled mind, that merely labeled this and that.

But, right after our mind merely labels the I, it doesn't appear *back* to us as merely labeled by the mind. Even though the I, the self, is merely labeled by the mind, when it appears back to us, it does not appear as merely labeled by mind. It appears as if it exists from its own side, as if it has nothing to do with our mind, as if it never came from our mind. It appears as something *totally* existent from its own side. There are many wrong views there. However, the I merely labeled by our mind doesn't appear back to us as merely labeled by the mind. It appears back to us as *not* merely labeled by the mind. That's a hallucination. That is projected by the negative imprint left on our mental continuum by past ignorance, the concept of the inherently existent I, inherently existent aggregates and so forth. That inherently existent I, the I that appears to us as not merely labeled by mind, is a projection of the negative imprint left on our mental continuum by past ignorance, the wrong concept of holding the I as inherently existent.

When the merely labeled I, the I that is merely labeled by our mind, appears back to us, it doesn't appear as merely labeled by our mind—it appears back to us as not merely labeled by our mind. Then, we immediately allow our mind to believe that that appearance is correct, that that view is one hundred per cent true. We allow our mind to believe that the

I that appears to us as not merely labeled by the mind is something *real*, that it exists from *there*. We let our mind believe, hold, apprehend, that that view of the I, the way the I appears, is true. We let our mind hold on to this I that doesn't exist, this real I (real in the sense of existing from its own side) that is not *there*.

This concept that holds on to the I that doesn't exist, the real I that exists nowhere, is what is called ignorance, and this is the way in which we create our own ignorance. Nobody else creates our ignorance; we create it for ourselves. We create our own ignorance, the root of all suffering. We create our own suffering. That's why Lord Buddha explained that we are our own worst enemies, but similarly, we are our own guides, our own liberators.

THE ANTIDOTE TO IGNORANCE

The antidote to this ignorance, the method of eradicating this root of all suffering, is the wisdom realizing the emptiness of the object of ignorance, the wisdom realizing that the object that ignorance holds on to is totally non-existent. This realization, this wisdom realizing emptiness, is the only thing that can directly cut the root of all the suffering, ignorance. Only through this wisdom can we be completely liberated from the entire round of suffering and its cause—karma and delusion.

Thus, as I was saying before, on the basis of shamatha, you realize emptiness, you achieve great insight. You do analysis on emptiness on the basis of shamatha, which was derived from rapturous ecstasy, through that concentration. That's what is called great insight. That leads to wisdom, to the third path, the path of right-seeing. That is the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, the wisdom that actually ceases the delusions. Developing the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness is what actually ceases the imprints, the defilements, the delusions. That is how you are able to achieve total liberation from all suffering and its causes and achieve ultimate happiness.

There are five paths to nirvana, liberation from samsara—the paths of merit, conjunction, right-seeing, meditation and no more learning. During the second path you need to have the realization of the unification of shamatha and great insight. That leads to the third, the path of right-seeing. From there you start to cease the delusions, and on the path of meditation, you can cease whatever delusions are left over; you completely cease all delusions. Then you achieve the fifth path, no more learning. This

is according to the Hinayana path; this is the Lesser Vehicle path. These are the five Lesser Vehicle paths to liberation.

There are also five Mahayana paths, which lead to enlightenment. They have the same names. There are the Mahayana paths of merit and conjunction, where again you need the realization of the unification of great insight and shamatha. This also leads to the Mahayana path of right-seeing and to the Mahayana paths of meditation and no more learning—enlightenment. Here, with the thought of bodhicitta, method, you are able to cease even the subtle defilements and thus to achieve full enlightenment.

Therefore, as many atoms a statue or stupa has, by making or sponsoring that holy object—the bigger the better—you collect that many causes of perfect concentration.

MORE BENEFITS OF MAKING HOLY OBJECTS

The next benefit is that, as many atoms as a statue or stupa has, that many causes to achieve the arya path are created by the person who makes or sponsors that holy object. As I just mentioned, there are five [Hinayana] paths to achieve liberation from samsara and there are five [Mahayana] paths to achieve enlightenment for the sake of sentient beings. The arya path means the third, fourth and fifth paths—the right-seeing path and the paths of meditation and no more learning. All these are arya paths, and the person who makes or sponsors a statue or stupa creates as many causes to achieve the arya path as there are atoms in that holy object; collects that quantity of merit to achieve the path that actually ceases defilements.

The final benefit is enlightenment. As many atoms as a statue or stupa has, that many causes of enlightenment are created by the person who sponsors or makes that holy object. The benefit of attaining enlightenment is that after you attain it, you liberate and enlighten numberless other sentient beings from *all* their oceans of samsaric suffering and their cause. You liberate everyone, all suffering beings, from all their suffering and its cause and bring them to enlightenment.

Making or sponsoring holy objects has all these unbelievable benefits. Therefore, if you dedicate all the merits of making holy objects to the person who died, that person also gets the incredible benefit of receiving a good rebirth. This is, therefore, a very practical way to benefit the family members and the person who passed away.

THE BENEFITS OF THE MEDICINE BUDDHA
MANTRA

Now I would like to mention the benefits of the Medicine Buddha mantra so that you can understand the benefits of the Medicine Buddha practice.

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha asked his attendant Kungawo [Ananda], “Do you have any doubts about the Buddha’s explanation of the benefits of reciting the Medicine Buddha’s name and mantra?” Kungawo replied, “I have no doubts whatsoever about what the Buddha explained regarding the power, qualities and benefits of reciting the name and mantra of the Medicine Buddha. The Buddha has inconceivable qualities, therefore, I have no doubts.”

The Buddha also said, “When even animals hear the Medicine Buddha’s name, they don’t get reborn in the hell, hungry ghost or animal realms.”

If we recite the Medicine Buddha’s name and mantra, we receive the benefit of all the prayers that the Medicine Buddha made for us in the past—prayers for all happiness, all good things, the success of our Dharma practice, realizations, whatever; all happiness, temporary and ultimate. We receive whatever the Medicine Buddha prayed for us sentient beings to receive.

Not only that. Whatever prayers we ourselves make are actualized. Simply by our reciting the Medicine Buddha’s name and mantra, our prayers become successful. Why? How does this happen? In the past, when the Medicine Buddha was a bodhisattva, with bodhicitta, with unbearable compassion for us sentient beings, with compassion that encompasses all sentient beings, he made countless prayers for the benefit of us sentient beings. He made prayers to pacify our many problems; prayers for us to achieve all temporary and ultimate happiness. The Medicine Buddha made many, many prayers for the welfare of sentient beings in the time of the five degenerations. That time has come; that is our time. Therefore, all the prayers that the Medicine Buddha made in the past will now be answered.

When the Medicine Buddha achieved enlightenment, he gained the many qualities of a buddha, such as the eighteen unmixed Dharmas, the four fearlessness and the ten powers. One of the ten powers is the power of prayer, which is a quality possessed only by a buddha. With a buddha’s

power of prayer, whatever prayers were made in the past are actualized, come true. All prayers made in the past succeed. Therefore, by reciting the name and the mantra of the Medicine Buddha, we receive the benefits of whatever prayers the Medicine Buddha made in the past, and whatever we pray for becomes successful as well.

If we recite the Medicine Buddha's name and mantra, we will constantly be protected by the Medicine Buddha and the protectors in his entourage. His entourage will always protect us, and if we are practicing healing, giving people medical treatment, the medicine goddesses will always help us make the right diagnosis—correctly identify the patient's symptoms—and give the right treatment.

Therefore, if we do a Medicine Buddha puja before doing jang wa for a deceased person, the jang wa becomes very successful, very powerful.

Once in Taiwan there was a person who was in a coma. He wasn't necessarily a Buddhist, but Geshe Lama Konchog sent a Medicine Buddha picture to be put above his pillow, next to his bed. Geshe-la also did a Medicine Buddha puja that night. After the Medicine Buddha picture was put next to this person's bed and the puja was done, he awoke from his coma.

There's another story about someone else who became very sick with some heavy disease and found he could not move his body, could not get up. He was alone in the house, his medicine was in the bathroom, and he was unable to get up off his bed to fetch it. He was lying there thinking how to get his medicine from the bathroom when he suddenly remembered the Medicine Buddha statue that was on the table next to his bed, next to his pillow. When he turned his head to look at the medicine Buddha statue, he saw that it was holding the medicine that had been in the bathroom. His medicine was in the Medicine Buddha's hand. Since the statue was right there next to his pillow, he was able to reach and take his medicine.

Sometime later, the day that this person was going to die, he was able to put his palms together at his heart. He was not particularly Buddhist or a Dharma student or anything like that, but as he was actually passing away, he put his palms together at his heart and died very peacefully. Even though he was not especially Buddhist and didn't do strong prayers or anything else like that in his life, at the time of death, he was guided by the Medicine Buddha.

It also seems that recently I heard another story . . . I don't remember . . . something to do with somebody else recovering from a coma through the Medicine Buddha.

There is a whole sutra describing the unbelievable benefits of the Medicine Buddha. I think they read it frequently in Chinese temples. However, I'm just very briefly giving you the essence, to arouse your trust in and devotion to the Medicine Buddha, to encourage you to do the practice—the meditation and recitation of the name and mantra of the Medicine Buddha—every day.

The Medicine Buddha practice is such an unbelievably easy way to be liberated from suffering; such an easy way to go to the pure land; such an easy way to fulfill all your wishes, to have realizations on the path to enlightenment. Praying to and relying on the Medicine Buddha, which is a very blessed, very powerful practice in such degenerate times, has all these benefits. The Medicine Buddha is a very precious deity to pray to. It is guaranteed that if you recite his name and mantra every day, you will never again get reborn in the lower realms, in the hell, hungry ghost or animal realms. Besides your succeeding in whatever you wish, your negative karma gets purified as well. Therefore, it is a great loss if you don't get to recite it every day.

Now we're going to rush through the puja like an Indian express train!

There are two types of purification of the ashes that we have to do, and then there are also the [deceased people's] names written there, so it might be difficult for everyone to follow what's going on. But you don't need to waste your time. You can sit there and do your prayers for as long as you want to stay. Those who want to read the text, do the puja together, can do that. Otherwise you can chant mantras, do prayers, as you like. It may take some time, so there's no obligation to wait until the end. You can leave whenever you like.

MOTIVATION

“The kind mother sentient beings, who are the source of all my past, present and future happiness, are the most precious thing in my life. I find it

so unbearable that they have to suffer in the hell realms, where suffering for even one second is like suffering for many eons. Their suffering is so unbearable for me that I must enlighten them, liberate them from suffering, bring them to enlightenment as quickly as possible. Therefore, I must achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“Each of the numberless hungry ghosts suffering the sufferings of the preta realm is the source of all my past, present and future happiness and is so precious in my life. Their suffering in the hungry ghost realm for even one second is like suffering for eons. Their suffering is so unbearable for my mind. Therefore, I must liberate them from the suffering of the hungry ghost realm and samsaric suffering in general and bring them to enlightenment as quickly as possible. For their sake, I must achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“There are numberless animals, each of whom is the source of all my past, present and future happiness. They are so precious in my life. Their experiencing the sufferings of the animal realm, where suffering for even one second is like suffering for eons, is so unbearable for my mind. I must liberate them from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment as quickly as possible. Therefore, I must achieve enlightenment for them as quickly as possible.

“Numberless human beings, who are the source of all my past, present and future happiness, are so precious, the most kind and precious thing in my life. Their suffering in samsara, experiencing all the human suffering, for even one second is like suffering for eons. Their suffering for eons is so unbearable for my mind. Therefore, I must liberate them from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment as quickly as possible. For that, I must achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“Each of the numberless suras and asuras is the source of all my past, present and future happiness. They are so kind. Their suffering in samsara for even one second is like they are suffering for eons. It is so unbearable for my mind. I must liberate them from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment as quickly as possible. Therefore, I must achieve enlightenment for them as quickly as possible.

“Each of the numberless intermediate state beings is the source of all my past, present and future happiness. Their suffering in samsara, experiencing the suffering of the intermediate state realm, for even a second

is like they are suffering for eons. It is so unbearable for my mind. I must liberate them as quickly as possible from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment. Therefore, I must achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“For all these purposes I am going to do the Medicine Buddha puja—prostration, offering, requesting and so forth. I am going to do the graduated practices of the Medicine Buddha puja.

“Also, the previous generations of my family who have passed away and all the deceased people whose names are written here, including the main ones, whose ashes are here, whose names are written there, are the principals, and then all the rest of the others who have passed away—numberless beings born and suffering in the hell realm, born and suffering in the hungry ghost realm, born and suffering in the animal realm—to liberate them as quickly as possible, I’m going to do this Medicine Buddha puja—for everyone, all those people whose names are here and then all the rest.”

[Puja starts.]

DEDICATION

This puja is also for all those who are still living; the rest of your family who are still alive, so dedicate the Medicine Buddha puja to their long life and health and, most importantly, their having a meaningful life by actualizing the lamrim, the steps of the path to enlightenment—especially bodhicitta, the good heart, the ultimate good heart—and being able to make their life most beneficial for other sentient beings—which actually means most beneficial for themselves as well.

Also dedicate for your family members and all the students and benefactors of this organization, including those who built this temple, who sponsored this temple, who gave the money to build this temple, and to Venerable Paul and all the organizers of the temple, who built it for the benefit of many sentient beings, both living and dead.

Dedicate to those who have sacrificed their lives and borne much hardship offering service to others and the teachings of the Buddha through this organization.

“May every one of those living beings who rely upon me, for whom I

promised to pray and whose names were given to me have long lives and good health, may all their wishes succeed immediately according to the holy Dharma and, most importantly, may they be able to actualize the lamrim path in this very lifetime.

“May the business of the husband of the benefactor of our Taichung Center succeed immediately and be free from all obstacles and difficulties. May all the businesses they have be even more successful than they wish and may all the wealth that they receive be most meaningful, most beneficial for all sentient beings and the teaching of the Buddha.

“May the business of the benefactor who sponsors our translator training center in Dharamsala, which has been having difficulties recently, become most successful and may the wealth he receives be most beneficial for sentient beings and the teachings of the Buddha.

“May all our meditation centers be able to spread the teaching of Lama Tsongkhapa in the minds of all sentient beings.” Dedicate for our centers to receive whatever they need to be successful.

Also dedicate for the social service centers, all those various projects, the schools and so forth, to be most beneficial, successful, and to receive all the needs for that to happen.

“May all the projects of this organization, including all the projects at Land of Medicine Buddha—the 100,000 Medicine Buddhas temple and the 100,000 stupas project—and all the hospices, succeed immediately by receiving all they need to do so.

“May the 500-foot Maitreya Buddha statue succeed, be completed as quickly as possible, by receiving all the needs.”

Also dedicate for the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Buddha of Compassion, and for all other holy beings, all our virtuous friends, to have stable lives and for all their holy wishes to succeed immediately.

Dedicate for Lama Ösel Rinpoche to have a long life, to be able to complete his studies and, like Lama Tsongkhapa, to be able to benefit sentient beings like the sky, through showing the same qualities that Lama Tsongkhapa possessed.

Dedicate this Medicine Buddha puja to all those people who have cancer and AIDS, those very heavy diseases for which there is no cure, to those who are comatose, to those who are suffering greatly from illness.

Dedicate this Medicine Buddha puja to all those who have life obsta-

cles, those who are dying today—there are many people dying in this world, even today, even now—dedicate this Medicine Buddha puja to all of them.

And to all those people who do good things for others, who serve others, dedicate this Medicine Buddha puja to their success.

[Puja continues.]

REJOICING

Rejoice in your own past, present and future merits. Without merit, good karma, we can't achieve any happiness, any success in business, in Dharma practice, in anything. We can't have any happiness, can't achieve any happiness without merit—including the happiness of enlightenment and realizations. Merit is so precious; merit is so precious. Think, "I have created numberless merits in the past, numberless merits in the present time and will create numberless merits in the future—how wonderful it is! How happy I am!" You can think one way or the other. Like this, rejoice in your own merits of the three times, feeling happiness again and again by thinking of the merits, the numberless merits—how wonderful they are. Think this again and again, how wonderful it is. Feel happiness in your heart.

By rejoicing in your own past, present and future merits, your skies of merits of the three times are increased—all your merit is doubled. In this way, the Medicine Buddha puja becomes very, very powerful, and then when we dedicate all these merits to others, it becomes really very effective for both yourself and others.

[Puja continues.]

Remember all the offerings down there outside the LMB gumpa, those inside the gumpa, the offerings made here at the temple, all the water bowls—thinking of them as nectar and offering them to the Medicine Buddha—all the lights . . . you can also offer the almost three hundred water, *nectar* offerings and the just under four thousand light offerings at the Aptos house. When we make all those offerings to the Medicine Buddha, meditate that the Medicine Buddha is inseparable from your guru, your virtuous friend, as well as His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Rely upon the Medicine Buddha with all your heart. Think that whatever prayers you have made in the past, “May I and all sentient beings receive immediately whatever I have prayed for. May it succeed immediately.” Then, if there is anybody for whom you would like to pray, think of that person, or if there is any particular project whose success you want, pray also for that.

[Puja continues.]

Now rejoice in others’ merits, the merits of all sentient beings, including the bodhisattvas and buddhas. They have collected vast merit in the past and present and will collect vast merit in the future, and through this they have received much happiness. Then sentient beings receive much happiness from them, including ultimate happiness. Bodhisattvas use all their merits to complete the path and to serve us sentient beings, to benefit us sentient beings. Rejoice in all these merits of the three times, thinking, “How wonderful it is!”—think again and again, “How wonderful it is!” Each time we rejoice like this, “How wonderful it is!” feeling happiness at others’ merits, we again collect skies of merits, each time.

[Puja continues.]

Dedicate for the Buddha of Compassion, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, to have a stable life and for his and all other holy beings’ holy wishes to succeed immediately.

Tuesday, March 2 (A)

MORNING: FIRST SESSION (DAY OF MIRACLES)

EIGHT MAHAYANA PRECEPTS

The explanation of the benefits of taking the Mahayana Reviving and Purifying Vow, or the Eight Mahayana Precepts, has two divisions: the shortcomings of degenerating the vows and the benefits of protecting the vows. The second division, the actual explanation of the benefits of protecting the vows, also has two divisions: the individual benefits of protecting the eight precepts and the elaborate general benefits of protecting the eight precepts. The explanation of the specific benefits of each precept was given before [see Chapter 4, Monday, February 8]. Today I will be explaining the general benefits of protecting the vows.

GENERAL BENEFITS OF THE EIGHT MAHAYANA PRECEPTS

1. The first benefit of protecting the vows is that, like the earth, it becomes the basis of all virtues.
2. The second benefit is that it enables one to abandon the eight states which have no freedom to practice Dharma and to receive the freedoms and riches.
3. The third benefit of keeping the precepts is that it closes the door of the suffering transmigratory beings and allows one to achieve a deva or human body.
4. The fourth benefit is that one becomes endowed with all good qualities.
5. The fifth benefit of protecting the vows is that it is superior to the practice of charity.
6. The sixth benefit is that it is superior to making offerings to the buddhas.

7. The seventh benefit of protecting the vows is that one is reborn as a close disciple of Maitreya Buddha.

8. The eighth benefit is that in all future lifetimes one will achieve deva or human bodies and will become a foe destroyer, or arhat. The Tibetan term for arhat is *dra chom pa*, which means “one who has destroyed the enemy.” The enemy here is the obscurations. There are two types of obscurations: the disturbing-thought obscurations, the gross defilements (*nyön drib*), which mainly interfere with the achievement of liberation from samsara for oneself, and the subtle obscurations (*she drib*), which mainly interfere with the achievement of full enlightenment. Therefore, the term *dra chom pa*, or arhat, can refer to one who has destroyed either level of obscuration. When used alone it generally refers to the one who has destroyed just the gross defilements, the disturbing-thought obscurations. The final benefit is that one will achieve peerless full enlightenment. Here the term *dra chom pa*, the one who has destroyed the enemy, is referring to the being who has become a peerless buddha—someone who, besides having destroyed the disturbing-thought obscurations, has destroyed even the subtle obscurations, the obscurations to the fully knowing mind. It is these obscurations to knowledge that interfere with the achievement of full enlightenment for the sake of sentient beings.

We shall now discuss the eight general benefits of protecting the precepts in more detail.

1. Protecting the vows is the basis of virtue

Just as the earth, the ground, is the basis for all sentient beings, as well as for all enjoyments such as trees, plants and crops, morality is the basis for all virtue. It is in dependence upon the cause of having protected moral-ity that one achieves the state of a deva or a human, particularly a human body that has the eight freedoms and ten richnesses. Having such a perfect human body, one then meets a holy virtuous friend and is able to enjoy the three practices of listening, reflecting and meditating. One is then able to collect the two types of merit and achieve the perfect bodies

of a buddha. Such a perfect body enables us to live in the four Mahayana Dharma wheels. And as Lama Tsongkhapa emphasizes in *The Hymns of the Experience of the Path to Enlightenment*, unless we have such a perfect body with the eight ripening qualities, we can't really make any significant progress in achieving realizations of the path to enlightenment.

Achieving a perfect body also includes birth in a pure land of buddha, especially in one of the pure lands where you can become enlightened, such as Shambhala or the pure lands of Heruka or Vajrayogini. According to my root virtuous friend, His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche, you can also become enlightened in the Amitabha pure land. According to Denma Lochö Rinpoche and Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche, however, you cannot practice tantra in the Amitabha pure land, so you have to be born back into a human world where the tantric teachings exist, such as into the Southern Continent, where we have been born. As a beginner in the practice of tantra, you need a body that is composed of three substances received from the father (marrow, sperm and bone) and three received from the mother (flesh, skin and blood). You need such a body to practice tantra in order to achieve enlightenment in that life. We are talking here especially in relation to the practice of the completion stage. Therefore, you need to reincarnate back into a human world where the teachings of Highest Yoga Tantra exist. According to His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche, in Amitabha pure land you can also practice tantra and become enlightened.

2. One abandons the eight states without freedom and achieves the freedoms and richnesses

Protecting the vows enables one to abandon the eight states, or circumstances, that have no freedom to practice Dharma and to receive the eight freedoms and ten richnesses. Why is this? Because the cause of these eighteen qualities, the eight freedoms and ten richnesses, is protecting morality.

3. One closes the door of suffering rebirths and achieves a deva or human body

Protecting the morality of the eight limbs, the Reviving and Purifying Ordination, closes the door to the rebirth of a suffering transmigratory being and causes rebirth in a deva or human body.

There is the story related to this. In the past there was a world called Adorned with Jewels, and in that world was a tathagata called Sangye Legtong, who turned the Dharma wheel and inspired all the people to practice the morality of the eight limbs, the Reviving and Purifying Ordination. In that way, Sangye Legtong led some people to the states of devas and humans; some to arhatship as solitary realizers or hearers; some on the path of the bodhisattva; and others to the state of peerless enlightenment.

At that time, a wheel-turning king called Sojong Pagpa (Reviving and Purifying Transcendent One) took the Eight Mahayana Precepts from this Buddha, Sangye Legtong. After taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts, King Sojong Pagpa flew up high in the sky. (Wheel-turning kings can fly in the sky, though I am not sure whether or not they need a vehicle to do this. It is said that they fly around Mount Meru and the continents.) He then made a law that the human beings of the four continents should take the Eight Mahayana Precepts on the special dates.

The “special dates” are the eighth, fifteenth and thirtieth of the Tibetan calendar. Maitreya Buddha’s teachings also mention the fourteenth as a special date. It seems generally that people can create more merit on these days and that any negative karma created then is heavier. But I haven’t heard a particular explanation as to why these days are regarded as special. I have yet to hear a satisfying explanation about this.

When the human beings of the four continents protect the eight limbs, the Reviving and Purifying Ordination, they close the door to reincarnation in the lower realms—in the hell, hungry ghost or animal realms—and open the door to higher rebirths. Like a main road that allows many people to come through, taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts allows so many people to achieve higher rebirths. It is also explained that many of the human beings of the four continents who die will be able to be reborn as human beings again and as desire realm gods in the realms of the Four Great Kings, the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods, the Strifeless, the Joyful, the Delighting in Emanation and the Mastery over Transformations. There are deva realms belonging to the desire realm, form realm and formless realm. Here we are talking about the deva realms of the desire realm.

Also, in the bodhisattva scriptures, Buddha explains, “Innumerable eons ago, the tathagata, Sangye Jigtob (Buddha Glorious Powerful One), came in the world and led many sentient beings to take the ordination of the eight limbs, or the Eight Mahayana Precepts. Some of those people

became bodhisattvas; some became pratyekabuddhas; some achieved the stages of continual entrance [stream enterer], returning [once returner] and non-returning, and arhatship; some achieved the Dharma eye without dust (I'm not sure what this means); and at the very least, they achieved the state of a deva or human being. They then became enlightened." It is explained in the teachings of the Buddha that all those beings became enlightened and then, like Buddha, passed away in the sorrowless state.

Previously, after the teaching of the Buddha had existed for an inconceivable number of years, the teaching was about to degenerate, when a Dharma king came into that world. A Dharma king is one who acts in accordance with the Dharma; he lives his life and makes the policies to guide his people in accordance with the Dharma. When this Dharma king was checking through the Buddha's teachings, he saw the benefits of taking the eight limbs, the Reviving and Purifying Ordination. He then collected together all the gelongs and brahmins. (The term *gelong* means virtue beggar, with virtue referring to nirvana, or liberation. Some translators mistakenly relate the term to the begging of food because they only translate *long* (beggar) and leave out the most important thing, that which is begged for, *ge* (virtue). Gelong—beggar of virtue or beggar of liberation—is a very rich name. The term *getsul* has a similar meaning—abiding in the path to liberation.)

Anyway, the Dharma king then said to all the gelongs and brahmins he had gathered, "Does anyone understand the method of living in the eight limbs, which was taught by Buddha? You should learn the ceremony, then give it to me. And if you don't find it, I will punish you."

Everybody gathered together and asked each other, "Do you know anything about this method of taking the eight precepts?" No one seemed to know even the name of the practice. However, scared of being punished by the king, they scattered in all directions to look for it. They looked in bedrooms, they looked in toilets, but they couldn't find it anywhere.

Finally one old woman said, "When I was a little girl my father practiced the morality of the eight limbs, the Reviving and Purifying Ordination. Inside a pillar at our home, there is a sutra with the method of the eight limbs of reviving and purifying as taught by Buddha." When they looked at the pillar in the old woman's house, they found inside it a hole covered by a square piece of wood. Hidden inside, they found a small text containing the method of the eight limbs and its benefits.

All the gelongs and brahmins brought this text to the king. With prostrations they offered it to him. The king was extremely pleased and gave a huge offering to the gelongs and brahmins. He also gave a great many things to the old woman.

The king and his entourage then made a law that the vow of the eight limbs should be practiced on the special days. All the people then protected the eight limbs of reviving and purifying on the special days. Because these human beings protected morality in this way, the population of the deva realms increased—I guess the deva realms became like Calcutta or Chicago! All the devas were very happy.

In the country ruled by that religious king the rains always came at the right time when needed for the crops and did not come when there was no need. Also, all contagious diseases, wars and fighting were pacified. The people living in that world also closed the door to rebirth in the lower realms. As soon as they died they were born in the deva realm the Strifeless (Tabtrel), which is free of fighting, or Ganden, the Joyful Realm. In this way, they received infinite benefit.

4. One is endowed with all good qualities

The sutra *Living in Pure Morality* says, “One who lives in morality meets the buddha when he descends.” Living in pure morality creates the cause to meet buddha when he descends into the world. “Living in morality is the best of all ornaments. Living in morality is applying the best perfume; it gives a natural fragrance. Living in morality is the cooling water that eliminates the suffering of heat. Living in morality brings praise from the whole world.”

I’m not sure of the precise meaning of the next sentence. It could be “Living in morality pleases the holy beings” or “Living in morality makes the transmigratory being holy.” I am not quite sure.

Like this, infinite benefits are explained.

5. Protecting vows is superior to the practice of charity

Living in morality collects more merit than making charity. Why does living in these vows bring greater good fortune, greater merit, than making charity? It is said that a person who keeps the Eight Mahayana Precepts for

just one day collects far greater merit than someone who makes charity to others day and night for hundreds of years. This is a point that encourages us to take the vows. Even though making charity is regarded in the world as something very generous and very good, in terms of creating merit, living in the morality of the Reviving and Purifying Ordination for even one day creates far greater merit.

There is a reference here to Lobpon Ignyen, or Vasubandhu, the great pandit who wrote the *Abhidharmakosha*. There are six great Indian pandits, who wrote the basic scriptures that are commentaries to the teachings of the Buddha. Many Tibetan lamas later wrote commentaries to these basic scriptures. Lobpon Ignyen said, “The fortune of a person who protects morality for one day is more exalted than that of a person who with devotion makes charity for one hundred years.”

6. Protecting vows is superior to making offerings to the buddhas

The *King of Concentration Sutra* explains, “The merit from making offerings of all the possessions of humans and devas, for eons equal in number to the sand grains of the Ganges River, to buddhas equal in number to the sand grains of the River Ganges, cannot be compared to the merit from protecting the morality of the eight limbs for one day during the time when the holy Dharma is degenerating.” Since the River Ganges is so long and wide, the number of sand grains in it is unbelievable. Yet the merit from having made offering to an unbelievable number of buddhas for an unbelievable number of eons cannot be compared to the merit from keeping the Eight Mahayana Precepts for one day. The merit of living in these vows for one day when the Buddha’s teachings have degenerated, which is our current time, is hundreds, thousands, millions, billions, trillions of times greater than having made all the human and deva offerings to that many Buddhas for that many eons.

7. One will be reborn as a close disciple of Maitreya Buddha

If you listen with devotion to Dharma teachings during the period when the teachings of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha exist and if you protect the morality of the eight limbs, you will be born as a close disciple of Maitreya Buddha. Maitreya Buddha himself said this.

8. One will achieve the body of a deva or human, then become an arhat

Maitreya Buddha also said, “In all lifetimes one will achieve the supreme body of a deva or a human, and one will gradually become an arhat.”

As I mentioned before, arhat, or foe destroyer, can refer to someone who has destroyed the disturbing-thought obscurations or to someone who has also destroyed the subtle defilements, a buddha.

MOTIVATION FOR TAKING THE PRECEPTS

“At this time, I am free from all obstacles and have every opportunity to practice Dharma. It is not sufficient that I simply avoid being born in the lower realms and take rebirth in a deva or human realm. Even my achieving liberation from samsara is not sufficient. I must achieve enlightenment in order to liberate the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless humans, the numberless asuras and the numberless suras—the source of all my past, present and future happiness—and bring them to full enlightenment. Therefore, I am going to take the Eight Mahayana Precepts.”

THE DEFINITION OF SUNRISE

As Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo and various other teachers explain, sunrise refers to the very beginning of the day, when a whitish color first appears in the east. Even though the rest of the sky is dark, that white color in the east signals the dawn.

Another way of defining sunrise is to say that it is when it starts to be light in the place where you are. The time of sunrise depends on whether you define sunrise in relation to the world as a whole or to the place where you are. The way you define sunrise makes a difference in terms of when you can eat on the following morning. You should act in accordance with your original intention.

PRAYER OF THE PRECEPTS

When you say “. . . in order to eliminate famine, in order to eliminate sickness . . .,” think that you are taking the vows so that no sentient being

needs to experience famine or sickness. Remember all the sick people in hospitals and in their homes, all the people dying from cancer, AIDS and other sicknesses. Also think of the people who are dying in wars and of the people who are doing the killing. Think that you are taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts in order to stop all harm to other sentient beings.

Usually when a lama gives the Eight Mahayana Precepts, at the end of the third repetition of the prayer for taking the precepts, the lama says, “*Tap yin no*” and the disciples reply, “*Leg so.*” Other ceremonies have this written at the end, but it doesn’t matter.

Make a strong determination that you have received pure precepts in the presence of the lama that you visualized as Shakyamuni Buddha and of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas gathered like a cloud around the lama.

THE DEFINITION OF NOON

In defining noon you can follow either according to 12 o’clock on a clock or according to noon by the sun. There is still a tradition of judging time by the shadow cast by the sun when getsul and gelong ordinations are given. A gelong takes a four-inch piece of stick outside, plants it in the ground, then measures the shadow. An inch is *kang pa*, in Tibetan. They then come back and inform the rest of the Sangha and the people taking the vows of the specific time the vows were taken. The place where the vows were received and from which abbot are also mentioned. This practice is still done, but these days, when there is no sunlight because the ordination is being done at night or the day is overcast and there is no shadow, the time by the clock—which minute of which hour—is also mentioned. But if the day is clear, the stick is always used.

HISTORY OF TAKING PRECEPTS WITHIN THE FPMT

I don’t remember whether or not we took the Eight Mahayana Precepts during the very first Kopan course, which went for five or seven days, but we did take them during the second course and certainly from the time of the third course. The tradition started during the second week of the third course. Around that time I also used to fast after lunch, without having

taken the Eight Mahayana Precepts. I fasted for quite a long time while I was in Lawudo and at Kopan.

The thought just came to me that taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts, now a common practice within the FPMT organization, started at Kopan in those early times. So many people who attended the Kopan courses have had the opportunity to collect this extensive merit, the cause to achieve so much happiness, not only in this life but in all the coming future lives up to enlightenment. They have had the opportunity to receive so much happiness and so much benefit, as we have just listed. All the people from that time up to now who have done courses and taken the Eight Mahayana Precepts within the organization, at Kopan or at any of the other centers, have received unbelievable benefit. Without talking about other practices, just the practice of the Eight Mahayana Precepts started from Kopan and has now spread to be practiced in centers in various parts of the world.

Even this practice alone has been of unbelievable benefit to those people and to the people who are still coming to attend courses at the centers. Starting from the early times at Kopan, so many people have received and will receive unbelievable benefit, up to enlightenment—and after enlightenment the benefit of liberating all sentient beings. The thought of this just came to my mind. Taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts is an unbelievably worthwhile thing to do. Of course, it takes time for people to understand the reasons for doing the practice. The first two weeks of the one-month course provides the basis for understanding the reasons for doing the practice, and the final two weeks are spent doing the actual practice, the essential practice of protecting karma by living in the vows, which has all these infinite benefits.

This all happened due to the kindness of the gurus. I think it was His Holiness Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche who first inspired both taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts and doing *nyung nä*, when he explained the importance of these two practices. Due to that inspiration received from the gurus, the courses were organized to include the Eight Mahayana Precepts and the practice became common. That many people have had the opportunity of doing this practice is a cause for rejoicing. It is the most worthwhile thing to do in your life, for yourself and for other sentient beings, and the best gift you can give to other sentient beings.

Talking about this has reminded me of something that happened at Chenrezig Institute a long time ago. I'm not sure whether the person

concerned is still involved with the center or even with the Dharma. At that time, one-month courses, similar to the Kopan courses, were given at Chenrezig Institute, with the Eight Mahayana Precepts being taken during the last two weeks. If I was teaching, the whole course would be a suffering course—a course on suffering and a suffering course. The course would be on the subject of suffering and it would be a suffering course because people would get angry because they couldn't understand what I was saying and also suffer in many other ways during that time. Then everyone would take the Eight Mahayana Precepts during the last two weeks.

At the end of the course, this particular student said, “During the first two weeks you beat people with the lower realms, during the last two weeks you beat them with the ordination, and at the end, you ask them for money!” Since Chenrezig Institute had no other source of income, the money for building and improving the facilities had to come from the people who did the courses, so at the end of each course, someone would introduce the center activities and ask for donations. When I mentioned rejoicing in the fact that the practice of the Eight Mahayana Precepts had started at Kopan, the thought of what this student said just came into my mind.

DEDICATION

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I, the members of my family, all the students and benefactors of this organization, as well as all other sentient beings, be able to complete the paramita of morality by keeping our morality purely and without pride.

“May bodhicitta be actualized without even a second's delay within my mind and the minds of all sentient beings. May that which has been generated increase.”

The news has come over the internet that His Holiness the Dalai Lama has taken the aspect of having some health problems. The doctors are still checking, but it seems to be pneumonia or something like that. Appointments have been cancelled for the past few days, but I'm not sure if the losar teachings will be cancelled. So, dedicate the merits for His Holiness's health.

While I was in Taiwan recently, I heard that the Tibetan Government had requested a prediction from a protector, and the protector's advice was that this year many millions of OM MANI PADME HUMS, the Most Secret Hayagriva mantra and the Padmasambhava mantra should be recited. I'm not sure whether the mantra of Miyöwa [Achala], a deity for eliminating obstacles, is also to be recited. From time to time news comes from Dharamsala that every Tibetan should recite a certain number of mantras. A representative in each Tibetan settlement collects the number of mantras people have recited and notifies Dharamsala of the total number. Just before I left Taiwan a representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Taiwan came to the center with some sheets of information on the latest advice from the protector. I think that this year there are some obstacles for His Holiness.

Therefore, dedicate the merit from all the practices done during the Vajrasattva retreat, including the Eight Mahayana Precepts, to His Holiness's immediately showing the aspect of returning to good health. "May His Holiness have a stable life and may all his holy wishes be accomplished immediately."

The wishes and prayers of one bodhisattva include the happiness of all us sentient beings, so when we pray for a bodhisattva's wishes to be fulfilled, our prayer includes the achievement of all our own happiness and that of all sentient beings. Praying for the wishes of a bodhisattva such as His Holiness to be accomplished is the same as praying for the happiness of all sentient beings to be achieved.

"May all obstacles and cause of displeasure be ceased. May the political leaders in mainland China develop unbelievable devotion to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and do exactly what His Holiness wishes, not only in relation to the freedom of Tibet but in relation to everything." If this happened, millions of people in mainland China would have so much peace and happiness. If there is complete freedom, the Dharma could be strongly established in Tibet, and also spread to mainland China, where after all their suffering, many millions of people are now hungry for peace and happiness, hungry for Dharma. Dedicate the merit in this way.

"Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may all the father and mother sentient beings have happiness; may the three lower realms be empty for-

ever; may all the bodhisattvas' prayers be accomplished immediately; and may I be able to cause all this by myself alone.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I able to offer extensive benefit to all sentient beings as Lama Tsongkhapa did, by having within me the same qualities that Lama Tsongkhapa had, from now on, from this second, in all my future lifetimes.”

Give all the merits from having taken the precepts, as well as all the past, present and future merits, and all the resultant happiness, up to enlightenment, to all sentient beings—to every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal, every human being, every asura, every sura and every intermediate state being. You can also offer the merits to the arhats and to the bodhisattvas for them to actualize the rest of the path to enlightenment. Think that they receive everything they need and that it causes them to actualize the path to enlightenment, to actualize method and wisdom. Think that they cease all their defilements and achieve enlightenment.

By doing this, we have collected numberless merits: “Due to these numberless merits, may all the sufferings that sentient beings experience ripen upon me, and may all my happiness ripen upon all other sentient beings.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings—which are projected as real by my own mind, by my own ignorance—may the I—which is also projected as real by my mind, by my ignorance—achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment—which is also projected as real by my mind, by my ignorance—and lead all sentient beings—who are also projected as real by my mind, by my ignorance—to that enlightenment—which is also projected as real by my mind, by my ignorance—by myself alone—which is also projected as real by my own mind, by my ignorance, because of the negative imprint left on the mind.

“As Manjughosha and Samantabhadra realize, and as the three time buddhas and bodhisattvas dedicate their merits, I dedicate my merits in that way to enlighten all sentient beings.”

Tuesday, March 2 (B)

EVENING SESSION: LIBERATING ANIMALS

ANIMAL LIBERATION

I will explain how we usually do the practice of liberating animals so that if, in the future, you want to save the lives of animals, you will know how to do it in the most effective way—not just for yourself or for somebody else who is sick or has life obstacles to have a long life, but for the practice to be really beneficial for the animals. [See Appendix 3 for the actual practice and additional instructions.]

Amitabha Buddhist Center in Singapore and Cham Tse Ling Center in Hong Kong have been saving the lives of animals for many years. One Cham Tse Ling student takes responsibility for arranging everything related to liberating the animals. The centers in Taiwan also do this practice quite often. For quite a number of years, whenever I have visited the Taiwanese centers, there has always been an animal liberation. Saving the lives of animals is a very common practice among Chinese Buddhists and happens often at Chinese monasteries and temples.

In Hong Kong a hundred people or more—students from the center as well as other people—will go to a reservoir quite a few miles out of the city, do all the practices set up for liberating animals, then return to the city for lunch in a restaurant. First the animals have a party, then the people have a party! Because there were quite a lot of new people this last time I was there, I tried to talk a little about reincarnation and then bodhicitta. I tried to introduce how the animals had been our mother and kind to us, so that all the people would get a strong feeling that there was no barrier between them and the animals. I wanted everyone to feel that the animals were very precious and kind to them, rather than just seeing them as beings with a lower rebirth and quite separate from them. I wanted the people to feel in their hearts that the animals were as precious as their own lives and to develop a strong thought to help them, to free them from their suffering.

I wanted them somehow to generate some thought of loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta, the thought to achieve enlightenment for them. So, all of this takes some time, and of course people get very hungry. When I did this recently in Hong Kong, some of the very new people couldn't understand and couldn't bear it, so they left.

One time there were some fishermen at the same place we were liberating the animals. I thought that if we paid money to the fishermen not to catch fish for that one day, we would save the lives of the fish that they would have caught. Of course, the fish wouldn't have blessed water poured on them to purify their negative karma or be taken to circumambulate the holy objects [which is what is done in the formal practice], but at least the fish that would otherwise have been caught would have a chance to have longer lives. Of course, there is no guarantee of this, as even if they don't get caught by humans for food, they are surrounded in the water by enemies that want to eat them. Generally speaking, however, some of the fish might have longer lives if they are not caught that day by fishermen.

The students in Hong Kong try to do this by buying a whole boat load of huge fish and big lobsters. There are many of one type of fish with a hard, strong tail by which you can hold them. Once when we did an animal liberation for Geshe Lama Konchog's long life, there were many thousands of these fish in the boat. I had the idea to set up the altar in a small boat and then have the big boat with all the fish inside it go around the small one, but it seems it was too difficult to arrange. Anyway, it didn't happen.

The time before that, we set up an altar with Buddha's relics on the large boat. I normally carry quite a lot of relics with me, many more than the basic ones I have brought here tonight. I don't put them on an altar against a wall, because you cannot circumambulate them there. I put them on a small table in the center of my room so that, if you remember, you can circumambulate them when you come into and go out of the room. Or you can sometimes circumambulate the relics while you are chanting your commitments or mantras rather than sitting down to do them. In that way, you create many causes of enlightenment with your body. You accomplish incredible purification and accumulate unbelievable merit. If there are ten thousand holy objects on the table, each time you circumambulate you use your body to create ten thousand causes of enlightenment, as well as ten thousand causes of liberation from samsara, good rebirth,

and all other types of happiness. If you circumambulate while you are reciting the prayers and mantras of your commitments, you not only get your prayers done but also create unbelievable merit with your body.

Anyway, we set up the altar on the boat, and everybody carried the various animals, including turtles, around the altar, and then released them into the water as soon as possible. This turtle is a very humble one. [Rinpoche is looking at the turtle lamp on his table.] It is a very enlightening turtle. It illuminates all sentient beings; it eliminates the darkness of all sentient beings!

During this recent visit, however, we had many types of animals to release, including frogs and birds, so everybody carried the animals in their containers around the altar with all the Buddha's relics. Because there were many animals and it might be difficult for some of them to survive for a long time, the general idea was that as soon as people arrived they should take the animals around the altar twenty or thirty times or as many times as possible. It is good to set up the altar with as many tsa tsas and stupas as possible. The centers in Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan have many stupas because they are made in a factory in Taiwan. In Singapore, the students set up a table with many small stupas on it, then use that as the altar to circumambulate.

Quite a number of years ago I described how to set up the altar for an animal liberation. The idea is to have five levels, one on top of another, with a large table as the bottom level. On the very top there should be a statue of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, a lamrim or *Prajnaparamita* text and a stupa, as normally advised in lamrim teachings for setting up an altar. Place as many tsa tsas and statues as possible on the other levels. You can use pictures of buddhas if you don't have tsa tsas or statues. On the bottom level set up sets of eight offerings, with flowers in vases on the corners. You arrange the offerings to the guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha for the benefit of the animals; it's like a puja for the animals. This gives you the idea of how to set up the altar. This is how you can arrange an altar at the beach or near the water where you are going to liberate the animals.

Liberating animals is sometimes combined with a picnic. First you liberate the animals, then you have a picnic. It happens like this in Hong Kong. Parents often bring their children along, and it's a very good thing for the children to do because they are trying to do something to benefit the animals. People also bring their friends. It is a way of involving other

people in doing something to generate some compassion and to collect merit. It's a social gathering, but liberating the animals enables everyone to sincerely do an action from their heart for others.

The animals are carried around the altar as many times as possible at the very beginning, before the chanting of the prayers and mantras, in case some of the animals die. Some of the fish might die because they are piled up on top of each other and cannot breathe. If the circumambulations are done immediately, even if some of the animals die during the explanation or prayers, they have already purified negative karma and created many causes of enlightenment, liberation from samsara and good rebirth. One circumambulation of holy objects can create the cause to receive hundreds or thousands of good rebirths. This is because karma is expandable—more expandable than external phenomena. One small seed can produce a large tree with tens of thousands of branches, flowers and seeds, but karma increases even more than this.

Therefore, if the circumambulations have been done, you don't need to feel much regret if some of the animals die while you are reciting the mantras, blessing the water or doing the prayers.

After all the prayers are finished, everybody chants the mantras, then the water is passed around and everybody blesses it. After all the different mantras have been recited and the water blessed with them, you sprinkle the blessed water over the birds and other animals. In Hong Kong and Taiwan, there are usually huge sacks of small shell-fish, and buckets of blessed water are poured over the sacks to purify all of them. The blessed water is sprinkled into the containers holding the fish. Of course, the water then touches the bodies of the fish and purifies their negative karma. Once, in Taiwan, the animals were brought in huge trucks. There is a man who voluntarily helps anyone who wants to liberate animals. He brings a special truck, which has tanks of water, oxygen for the fish to breathe and all the necessary equipment. That makes it possible to liberate large fish.

At the end, when all the prayers and mantras are finished, you again take the animals round the altar, and then liberate them. One of the best ways to benefit the animals, to liberate them, is to bless water with powerful mantras, then purify the animals by sprinkling or pouring the water on them. These mantras have a lot of power, even if you don't have any realization of bodhicitta, emptiness and so forth. Buddha explained the power

and benefit of these mantras. You recite the mantras with strong faith and think that you have purified all the negative karmas of these animals. This is a very practical way of helping to liberate the animals. How? By purifying their negative karmas. What do you liberate them from? From the sufferings of the lower realms. If they purify their negative karmas, they won't have to reincarnate again and again in the lower realms.

THE BENEFITS OF CIRCUMAMBULATIONS

Another good way to liberate the animals is by helping them circumambulate holy objects. There is a story about a pig that circumambulated a stupa—it might have been Boudhanath Stupa in Nepal, but I'm not sure. Once, a dog was chasing a pig, and as the pig was running away, it circumambulated the stupa. The pig did not have any kind of virtuous motivation. It had no idea that the stupa was a holy object and that it could be purified and liberated by circumambulating it. The pig had never registered for a meditation course! Because of the kindness of the dog that chased it, the pig did one circumambulation of the stupa, and after the pig died, it was born in the higher realm of Tushita. This is why carrying the animals in circumambulations of holy objects is a practical way to help them.

SHRIJATA'S TALE

And those of you who have heard the lamrim teachings many times will have heard the story of Shrijata, who only began to practice Dharma after he was eighty years old but became an arhat in that life. When he was eighty years old, Shrijata was living at home with his family, but all the children made fun of him. Every day they would tease him. One day the old man got completely fed up with their teasing and thought, "Oh, it would be so peaceful to leave home and go live in the monastery."

So Shrijata left home and went to the nearby monastery, the abbot of which was Shariputra, one of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's heart disciples. When Shariputra, an arhat who excelled in wisdom, checked whether or not the old man had the karma to become a monk, he could not find any. Shariputra told the old man, "Normally in a monastery you study or if you cannot study, you serve the other monks by cleaning and so forth. If

you became a monk you could neither study nor work because you are too old.” Shariputra refused to ordain the old man as a monk.

Shrijata man got terribly upset about this. He laid his head on the threshold of the monastery and cried. He then went to a nearby park and again cried and cried. At that time Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was in India. Buddha’s holy mind sees all sentient beings all the time, so whenever a sentient being’s karma ripens so that they are receptive to guidance from Buddha, he immediately appears to them in whatever form fits their mind and guides them. This is a particular quality of Buddha; this is how Buddha works for sentient beings. When a sentient being’s karma is ripe to receive help, Buddha does not delay for even one second.

Buddha immediately appeared in front of Shrijata and asked him what was wrong. The old man explained how the abbot of the monastery hadn’t accepted that he become a monk. Buddha then said, “Because I have completed the two types of merit, the merit of wisdom and the merit of method, I can see that you have the karma to become a monk.” Because Buddha had completed the two types of merits, which means he had purified the two obscurations, Buddha had omniscient mind and could see all the subtle karmas. In other words, the old man’s karma to become a monk was a subtle karma that only a Buddha could see. Buddha explained that an arhat could not see this subtle karma because he had not finished the work of collecting the two types of merits so had not achieved omniscient mind.

Buddha explained to Shrijata that he had created the karma an inconceivable length of time ago when he was a fly and there was some cow dung around a stupa. One explanation is that the cow dung was floating on some water; the fly landed on the cow dung and did a circumambulation when the water went around the stupa. The other explanation is that the fly followed the smell of cow dung lying around a stupa and thus had the good fortune to complete a circumambulation. The fly had no idea that the stupa was a holy object or that circumambulating it would become a cause of enlightenment. The fly had no intention of doing a circumambulation. It was acting totally out of attachment to the smell of the cow dung. Its motivation was completely non-virtuous. Due to the power of the object, however, the circumambulation became virtue. Buddha explained that that small virtue of circumambulating the stupa created the cause for Shrijata to become a monk.

When Buddha checked to see who had a karmic connection with the old man and could look after him, it turned out to be Maudgalyayana, an arhat who excelled in psychic powers. Of Buddha's two heart disciples, Shariputra excelled in wisdom and Maudgalyayana in psychic powers. Buddha then offered the old man to his disciple, Maudgalyayana, who was the abbot of a monastery.

After Shrijata became a monk, the young monks in the monastery also teased him. Every day they would make fun of the old man. One day he again got completely fed up with their teasing and ran away from the monastery. He decided that he would jump into the river. At that time Maudgalyayana went looking for the old man. When he couldn't find him in the monastery, he used his psychic powers to check Shrijata's whereabouts and discovered that the old man had just jumped into the river. Using his psychic powers, Maudgalyayana immediately appeared there and dragged the old man from the river. Shrijata was shocked, because he hadn't explained to his teacher what he was going to do. He could not speak for a while. In complete shock, he just stood there with his mouth open.

When Shrijata explained everything to Maudgalyayana, Maudgalyayana said, "The reason you ran away from the monastery and jumped into the river is that you lack renunciation of samsara." Maudgalyayana asked the old man to hold onto a corner of his robes and then flew up into the sky with him.

They flew on and on until they came to a huge mountain of bones in the ocean. After they landed on the mountain, the old man asked his teacher, "Whose bones are these?" Maudgalyayana replied, "Oh, these are the bones from your past life." The old man had previously been born as the largest animal in the ocean, as a whale. As soon as Shrijata heard his teacher say this, he generated renunciation of samsara. He realized that samsara is suffering in nature and that nothing is definite in samsara. His hair stood up on end and he generated renunciation of samsara.

He then entered the path and became an arya being in that life. Even though he began to practice Dharma only after he was eighty years old, he was able to achieve the arya path, overcome the cycle of death and rebirth and completely free himself from the sufferings of samsara. An arhat achieves total liberation from all suffering and its cause, including the seeds of delusion. He abides in that state for a number of eons until buddha sees that it is the right time to persuade his mind to enter the

Mahayana path. Buddha then sends light beams from his hand and recites a certain verse to the arhat. The arhat then enters the Mahayana path, and by actualizing the arya Mahayana path gradually ceases the subtle defilements. When all the subtle defilements are totally ceased, he completes the path and becomes enlightened; he can then enlighten numberless other sentient beings.

This old man's ability to enlighten numberless sentient beings came about through his being enlightened, which came about through his entering the Mahayana path, which came about through his becoming an arhat after entering the path to liberation, which came about through his becoming a monk. And he was able to become a monk because of the very subtle karma he created as a fly. With no idea that a stupa was a holy object that could purify the mind, just with attachment, this fly followed the smell of cow dung around a stupa and incidentally completed a circumambulation. Everything started from that small good karma. Everything—all the realizations of the five paths to liberation and of the Mahayana path and enlightenment—started from that tiny good karma created by the fly. This shows the power of holy objects such as statues, stupas and scriptures in bringing realizations. They are very beneficial in purifying the mind and in bringing all happiness, up to enlightenment.

THE POWER OF THE OBJECT

Therefore, if you carry a container with a hundred worms around a stupa or another holy object, each time you go around you are giving enlightenment to one hundred animals. You are giving the greatest gift to those one hundred animals. If there are one thousand worms in this small packet, each time you take them around you are giving enlightenment to one thousand mother sentient beings. You are giving enlightenment to one thousand of your mother sentient beings. You are also giving them liberation from samsara; you are ending their samsaric suffering, the continuity of which has no beginning. The most terrifying aspect of samsaric suffering is that it has no beginning—you are giving liberation from this beginningless samsara to one thousand of your mother sentient beings. You are also giving them good rebirths; you are giving good rebirths for hundreds or thousands of lifetimes to one thousand of your mother sentient beings.

I mentioned before that if there are one thousand tsa tsas or pictures

of buddha on the altar, each time you take the animals around the altar you are giving one thousand causes of enlightenment to each one of those mother sentient beings. In the same way, if there are one thousand pictures or statues of buddha or stupas, you are giving one thousand causes of liberation from samsara to each of those mother sentient beings. The same applies to good rebirths in future lives. It is good to purify the animals with blessed water, but it is also very good to bring them to circumambulate holy objects. You do not just liberate them from the lower realms, but bring them to enlightenment, by enabling them to create the cause of enlightenment. It's really fantastic.

I once stayed in Big Sur, that very famous place in America, which to some Westerners, and perhaps some Easterners as well, is like a pure land. Ants were coming into the kitchen to eat food. The idea came to me at that time to make worthwhile their coming into the house, so I told the people staying there to collect the ants and put them in a plastic bag. We then held three tsa tsas in one hand and moved the plastic bag with the ants around the tsa tsas, so that they performed circumambulations. After doing this a few times, we put them outside with some food. By doing this, you make the ants' coming into your house worthwhile for them. They purify negative karma and create many causes of enlightenment, liberation and good rebirths in future lives. Many human beings on this earth, no matter how long they live, never have any opportunity to see a statue of buddha or a stupa; they don't even have the karma to see a holy object of buddha, let alone create the cause of enlightenment by circumambulating or doing prostrations to such an object. Even if they live for a hundred years, they have no karma to collect merit through the power of holy objects.

WORMS AND CRICKETS

We have here tonight hundreds of worms and crickets. The worms come from a sewer, from a fragrant blissful sewer into which all the toilet water runs. These worms and crickets were also human beings, just like us, before, but because they didn't practice Dharma, their delusions and negative karmas caused their consciousness to migrate to their present suffering body. It looks as if there is no connection between us and them, between our body and life and their body and life. There seems to be as little connection as there is between us and the rocks and trees around us. However,

we have also collected so many times the negative karma—through sexual misconduct, for example—to be born in dirty places. That these worms have been born in a sewer or septic tank is the result of attachment. Worms are also born in the feces of the gut as a result of attachment. This is specifically mentioned in the texts. It is also mentioned that attachment to sex causes rebirth in the womb.

We have also created similar karma to these crickets numberless times in our past lives. It is just that at the moment, our good karma has ripened and we have this human body, while they have the body of a cricket; we are humans and they are animals. But we cannot be sure about our next life. At any time we could be like them. After our breath stops, at any time we could be reborn as one of those tiny worms that live in a sewer. If we had to live in a sewer, in a septic tank, we couldn't stand it for even one minute. We might talk about our body being that of a tiny worm like this, but we don't talk about being in such a dirty place. It is similar with the crickets. We could be born like this at any time because we have created the same negative karmas numberless times and have not purified them.

Therefore, we can understand our need of Vajrasattva practice and how extremely fortunate we are to have allowed ourselves to do Vajrasattva practice in this life and at this time.

A MOTHER'S KINDNESS

All these hundreds and hundreds of worms and crickets, all other sentient beings in the lower realms and all sentient beings elsewhere have been our own mother numberless times, just as our present life mother has been our mother numberless times. Our present mother gave us this precious human body, which allows us to practice Dharma, Buddha's unmistakable path to happiness, to liberation and to enlightenment. This precious human body gives us all these opportunities. This is not the first time that our present life mother has been kind in giving us a precious human body with which to practice Dharma. She has been kind in this way numberless times during beginningless rebirths.

In the same way, all these worms and crickets, all other sentient beings in the lower realms and all sentient beings elsewhere have also been our mother numberless times. (When I say "these worms and crickets," specifically concentrate on the hundreds of tiny worms and crickets that are

there in this bag.) And besides having been our own mother, numberless times they have been kind in giving us a precious human body, which allows us to practice Dharma.

Think, “I could never finish repaying this first kindness of the mother in giving me numberless times a human body with which to practice Dharma. Even if I were to sacrifice my life over and over, equal in number to the atoms of this earth, for my present mother, for each of these worms and crickets and for each of the other sentient beings, I could never finish repaying their kindness.

“My present life’s mother was also kind in saving my life from danger hundreds of times every day. If she had not looked after me when I was a baby or hired someone else to look after me, I wouldn’t have lasted five minutes. As a baby, I knew nothing. I had a human body but I was no different from a worm. Within five minutes of being left alone my life would have been in danger. I would have fallen down or swallowed something harmful or been attacked by animals. So many things could have endangered my life. My present mother was kind in protecting my life from hundreds of dangers every day, and she has done the same thing numberless times during my beginningless rebirths. In the same way, these worms and crickets, all other sentient beings in the lower realms and all other sentient beings elsewhere have also been my mother and protected my life from hundreds of dangers every day.

“Even if I were to sacrifice my life over and over, equal in number to the atoms of this earth, for my present mother, for each of these worms and crickets, for each of the other sentient beings in the lower realms and for each of the other sentient beings, I could never finish repaying even their kindness in protecting me from dangers to my life.

“If all the medicines my present life’s mother gave me during beginningless rebirths when I was sick were piled up, they would fill the whole sky; there wouldn’t be any empty space left. And if all the clothing my present mother gave me in this and past lives to protect my body from heat and cold was collected together, there wouldn’t be any space left. Each of the worms and crickets here, each of the other beings in the three lower realms and each of the other sentient beings have also given me clothing to protect me from suffering. If all the clothing that each of these beings has given me during beginningless rebirths was collected together, there wouldn’t be any empty space left. My present life’s mother has also given

me food. Not only in this life but during beginningless rebirths, she has been my mother and fed me with milk from her breast. If just the milk that my present life's mother has fed me in past lives was collected together, it would fill the whole sky; there wouldn't be any empty space left. Numberless times in my past lives she has given me food and drink. And each of these worms and crickets has done the same thing. Numberless times they have protected me from hunger and thirst by giving me food and drink. If all that food and drink were collected, there wouldn't be any space left.

"I can never finish repaying this kindness. Even if I were to sacrifice my own life over and over, equal in number to the atoms of this earth, for my present mother, for each of these worms and crickets, for each of the other sentient beings in the lower realms and for each of the other sentient beings, I could never finish repaying even their kindness in giving me food and drink.

"My present life mother also gave me an education and taught me the ways of the world. She gave me the opportunity to learn to read and write, which is why I can now read Dharma books. This is not the first time she gave me an education for the sake of my own happiness; she has done this numberless times during beginningless past lives. And it is the same with all these worms and the crickets, the other beings of the lower realms and all other sentient beings. Every one of them has been kind to me in giving me an education numberless times in past lives.

"Even if I were to sacrifice my life again and again, equal in number to the atoms of this earth, to repay this kindness, I could never finish repaying it.

"My present life mother has also borne many hardships to ensure my well-being and happiness. Starting with the nine months I was in her womb, my mother has borne so many hardships. She then had to go through great pain when I was born, and endured many hardships after that. Day and night, she had to bear so many hardships to take care of me. Because of my crying, she could not even have one good night's sleep.

"For my happiness and well-being, she also created much negative karma through generating discriminating thoughts of anger and attachment, and as a result she will have to experience much suffering. Because of me, she was obliged to generate all these delusions, which caused her to engage in much negative karma, because of which she will again have

to experience all those sufferings. She has borne many hardships for me numberless times in my past lives. In the same way, these worms and crickets, all other beings in the lower realms and all other sentient beings elsewhere have also borne many hardships for me, for my happiness, numberless times. They have all suffered greatly for my happiness. When they were my parents, they totally sacrificed their lives for me, cherishing me more than their own life. They worked hard for many years to earn the money they needed to take care of me, to give me food and everything else I needed. All these sentient beings suffered greatly for me, and I allowed them to suffer like this.

“Even if I were to sacrifice my life again and again, equal in number to the atoms of this earth, for each of these sentient beings, including my present life’s mother and each of these worms and crickets, I could never finish repaying their kindness in bearing hardships for my happiness and well-being. I could never finish repaying them for this kindness.

“At this time, I have received a perfect human body and have met the Buddhadharmā. I know enough Dharma to understand what is right and to be practiced and what is wrong and to be abandoned. I have met the leader of the blind, the virtuous friend. Therefore, if I want to repay their kindness, I have every opportunity to do so. Because they want happiness and do not want suffering, they need to be liberated from all their suffering and its causes, karma and delusion. Therefore, the best way to repay their kindness is to liberate them from all their suffering and its causes. At this time, I have the opportunity to repay their kindness in this way.

“Sentient beings lack a leader of the blind, a virtuous friend, and are completely possessed by the Mara of the delusions—ignorance, anger and attachment. They are tormented by the three types of sickness, or suffering, of samsara—the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering. It’s as if every movement they make is a step towards the lower realms. It’s as if every action of their body, speech and mind is non-virtuous. Because their mind is completely controlled by delusions, such as attachment and so forth, every action they do becomes a cause to be born in the lower realms. They are like a blind person whose every step is leading them towards a cliff.

“It is now my turn to repay their kindness. To do that I need to practice Dharma—to listen to, reflect and meditate on the path to enlightenment. How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were to have happiness,

including enlightenment, and the causes of happiness. I must cause them to have happiness and its cause.” Think of your present life’s mother, of these worms and crickets, of all other beings in the lower realms and of all the rest of the sentient beings.

“How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were to be free from all suffering and its causes. I will free them from all their suffering and its causes.” Think of your present life’s mother, of all these worms and crickets, who have been your mother and been most kind, of all the other beings in the lower realms; and of all other sentient beings elsewhere.

“And I must do all this work of freeing them from all their suffering and bringing them all happiness, including enlightenment, by myself *alone*. I must do it by myself alone.” Again, think of your present life’s mother, of all these worms and crickets, of all the other beings in the lower realms and of all other sentient beings elsewhere.

“At the moment, I cannot even guide myself, let alone others. Who can guide them? Who has all the qualities and power necessary to guide sentient beings perfectly? Only the omniscient one, only buddha. The only one who can work perfectly for sentient beings, liberating them from all their suffering and bringing them to enlightenment, is buddha. Therefore, first I myself must achieve full enlightenment.”

We can use this general motivation for both the animal liberation and the light offering. Think, “For the same reason, to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, I am also going to make the light offering.”

SPECIFIC MOTIVATION FOR ANIMAL LIBERATION AND LIGHT OFFERING

We will now make some specific motivations for doing these practices of liberating animals and offering lights.

“We are liberating these animals and offerings these lights for the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Buddha of Compassion. May His Holiness immediately show the aspect of being healed from pneumonia and show the aspect of perfect health.

“May the lives of all the other virtuous friends be stable and may all their holy wishes be accomplished immediately.

“May Lama Ösel Rinpoche also have a stable life and be healthy. Like

Lama Tsongkhapa, may he bring benefit as extensive as the sky to all sentient beings, by having the same qualities that Lama Tsongkhapa had.

“May all the holy beings from the different traditions who came to benefit other sentient beings also have stable lives, and may all their holy wishes be accomplished immediately.

“May all the members of the Sangha have stable lives. May all their wishes to practice Dharma be accomplished immediately. May they be able to listen, reflect and meditate; may they be able to live in pure morality; and may they complete the scriptural understanding and actualization of the path in this life.

“In particular, may the FPMT Sangha have long lives and receive all the support and other conditions necessary for them to practice Dharma. May they always have a happy, courageous mind that is inspired to live in pure vows. May they always be free from loneliness and any other emotional thoughts that torture the mind. May they regard their vows not as a prison but as a source of enjoyment. May they enjoy achieving enlightenment, liberation from samsara and good rebirths in their future lives. May they enjoy living in their vows and studying the Dharma.

“May all the benefactors who financially support the teachings of the Buddha, the Sangha and Dharma facilities, have long lives. May all their wishes to offer service to other sentient beings, to the teachings of the Buddha and to the Sangha be accomplished immediately. In particular, may all the benefactors of the FPMT be healthy and have long lives. May all their wishes for success in business and so forth be accomplished immediately in accordance with the holy Dharma.

“May all the students in this organization, especially those who sacrifice their lives and bear many hardships in offering service to others and to the teachings of Buddha through this organization, be healthy and have long lives. May all their wishes that accord with the holy Dharma be accomplished immediately.

“Most importantly, may these practices of liberating animals and making light offerings enable us to actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment in this very lifetime.

“Also, may the specific wishes of those who are offering the lights be actualized, especially the wishes of the students from Mexico, who initiated this light offering. May the retreat center in Mexico be wish-fulfilling for all sentient beings. By receiving all the necessary support, may the retreat

center be able to immediately pacify the sufferings of body and mind of all sentient beings and spread the complete teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa in the minds of all sentient beings. In this way may it become most beneficial for all sentient beings. May the retreat center be able to spread the Dharma, particularly Lama Tsongkhapa's teaching, in the minds of all the students who come to that center and in the minds of all the Mexican sentient beings and be able to liberate numberless sentient beings.

"In the same way, may all the projects here at Land of Medicine Buddha and at all the other centers around here be accomplished immediately. May all the rest of the FPMT projects be accomplished immediately by receiving all the necessary support. May the 500-foot Maitreya Buddha statue be completed immediately by receiving all the necessary support. May all the meditation centers be most beneficial for all sentient beings, spreading the complete teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa in the minds of all sentient beings, by receiving all the necessary support.

"May all these projects, centers and statues cause loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta to be generated in the minds of all sentient beings. Because of that, may no sentient being experience war, famine, earthquake, dangers from fire or water or anything else undesirable. May all these projects, centers and statues cause all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

"May the liberation of these animals and the offering of all these lights prevent the occurrence of a third world war, with the killing of many millions of people." Dedicate also for this.

"May all countries be guided by religious leaders, by Dharma leaders. In this way, may everyone live their life with loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta. May people think only of benefiting and never of harming each other. May everyone enjoy the perfect happiness of Dharma."

It is for these reasons that we are liberating animals and offering lights.

MEANS OF PROLONGING LIFE

Liberating animals is one method for curing sickness, especially cancer. One should save the lives of a hundred animals (or as many as possible) every week or, if that is not possible, every month. If you have cancer, this is extremely important, because it is one way of prolonging your life. Causing others to have longer lives affects your own life; it prolongs your life.

Another way to cure cancer is through reciting the mantras of specific deities with which you have a karmic connection. This is like taking specific medicines to kill germs. Certain deities have manifested to protect sentient beings from the harms of nagas—beings who can become conditions for sicknesses, including cancer. Harm from nagas—*nyen* in Tibetan—is one condition in the development of cancer. In other words, besides the cause of cancer, karma, there are harmful beings that can become conditions for cancer. There is an association between cancer and harm from nagas. The Vajrapani-Hayagriva-Garuda deity, for example, specifically manifests to protect sentient beings from naga harm, as well as harmful spirits such as landlords [*shi dag*] and so forth. The reason why meditating on these particular deities or reciting their mantras is able to heal cancer, even terminal cancer, is that the sickness is associated with harm from nagas. This is why these particular aspects are able to be effective.

Pujas and many other practices can be done to prolong life, but liberating animals and serving other sentient beings are especially effective. Helping sick people by giving them food, drink, clothing, shelter or medicine is also a cause of long life. One way of prolonging life is by creating good karma, which is the cause of long life. Another way is by reciting the mantras of the particular deities that protect against naga harm and so forth.

I have personal experience of about six people who completely recovered from cancer through practicing meditation. Every one of them had terminal cancer and had been told by their doctors that they had only two or three months to live.

My very first experience was with a Canadian woman called Ann, a very successful fashion consultant. She made a thousand dollars an hour selling her ideas to people in the fashion business. When I was in Australia many years ago, I received a message from Karuna about Ann, and I advised her to recite Vajrapani mantras and to liberate animals. I didn't send any blessed pills or anything like that. I simply advised her to visualize Vajrapani above her crown and nectar beams being emitted by Vajrapani to purify her, and to liberate a hundred animals or the number of animals equal to her years of age. Basically, she did just these two practices and after some time completely recovered from the cancer.

Ann was in the hospital when she received my message, and the doctors advised her to stay there. However, she said, "I want to go. I have to

do these things.” After two or three months, I think, when she returned to the hospital for a checkup, the doctors could not find any sign of the cancer. They were very surprised. This was the first time they had seen anyone cured of cancer by meditation. The doctors said that they wanted to write a book about her case, but she replied, “No, you don’t need to write a book. I will write the book.”

Many TV reporters wanted to interview her, but she didn’t know how to explain how meditation could cure cancer. At that time she had not actually met the Dharma; she had just started to take an interest and hang around a Dharma center because of a friend. Anyway, that’s all that she did, and so far, after many years, the cancer has not come back. She was the first person in my experience to completely recover from cancer through meditation.

She came to Kopan to thank me for giving her the rest of her life. When she came to see me, I made a deal with her. I told her to go to Bodhgaya to take the Kalachakra initiation from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I’m not sure whether that happened, but later, in Delhi, she did introduce His Holiness when His Holiness gave a teaching there.

Think that you are liberating these animals and offering these lights for all those people who have passed away to have good rebirths and to achieve enlightenment. And for those people who have cancer or another sickness to be healed and to have long and meaningful lives. The purpose of having a long life is to have a meaningful life, a life that is beneficial for others.

LIGHT OFFERING CEREMONY

First we take refuge [*La ma sang gyä la ma chö . . . x3*]. Next, we generate bodhicitta, the altruistic mind to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings [*Dag dang zhän dön . . . x3*]. [See also Appendix 2 and Chapter 28, Wednesday, February 24.]

Now we purify the place. We bless the place by visualizing it as a pure land of buddha, as an offering to the buddhas and bodhisattvas that we will invoke [*Tham chä du ni . . .*].

Now, we bless the offerings. This mantra has the power to bless not only all the offerings here—all the lights, the water, the flowers—inside and outside, but offerings in other places. Also bless all the water offerings,

which appear as nectar to the buddhas, inside and outside the FPMT Memorial Shrine. Also bless all the offerings in the house where I'm staying. There are nearly 300 water bowls there and more than 4,000 lights, as well as flower offerings—think that they are all multiplied. Also bless all the light and water offerings at Kopan Monastery. Also bless the many hundreds of offerings in the gompa in the Taipei center in Taiwan, as well as those in the Taichung and Kaohsiung centers. We will bless them all together then offer them [*Lha dang mi yi . . .*].

While you are reciting the mantra, play all the musical instruments that you have, including gongs, and think that you are offering music to the buddhas. In this way, you create the cause of enlightenment [OM NAMO BHAGAVATE . . . x3]. There is no pop music!

This mantra has the power to cause each of the numberless buddhas in all ten directions to receive clouds of offerings. The next prayer, *The Words of Truth*, causes the buddhas to actually receive the numberless offerings that you have visualized. Visualize that each buddha in the ten directions and each being in the *Guru Puja* merit field receives skies of light and nectar offerings [*Kön chog sum gyi den pa dang . . .*].

Visualize the *Guru Puja* merit field and do the invocation [*Ma lü sem chän . . .*].

Since you have done the *Guru Puja* this morning, you have already done the seven-limb practice. There are usually a series of prayers to be done when you liberate animals—the four immeasurables, the seven-limb practice, mandala offering, lamrim prayer and recitation of the various mantras. Some animals, such as frogs and pigeons can hear, but I'm not sure whether fish can hear. It might be difficult for some animals to hear the prayers and mantras, but the recitation plants the seed of enlightenment in the minds of those that can, so there is an added advantage for them. Because it takes a long time to recite them, I will omit those prayers this time.

Now we will just do the meditation of making the extensive offerings. [Rinpoche paused for meditation after each of these offerings.]

Think of all the lights and water offerings here, inside and outside the gompa and of those at the FPMT Memorial Shrine, the Aptos house, and all the other places that I mentioned. Now think that we share all these offerings with all sentient beings. We give all these offerings to each hell being, each hungry ghost, each animal, each human being, each asura,

each sura and each intermediate state being. We give them all to all sentient beings.

We then make offering to the Guru-Triple Gem together with the sentient beings or on their behalf. In this way, every sentient being collects the merit. If there were one million light and water offerings here, every sentient being would get one million causes of enlightenment. If we make the offering on their behalf, every sentient being gets that merit. That is incredible! Because of a shortage of merit, people have a lot of difficulties in their lives—they can't find jobs to support themselves, their business fails or they can't pay their debts. They even reach the point of wanting to commit suicide by jumping off a bridge or a building. Think, "I'm going to make all these offerings on behalf of all sentient beings." You can also think that you are making the offerings to achieve enlightenment yourself in order to enlighten all sentient beings.

First offer all these offerings here. Don't think that you are offering water. Always think that you are offering nectar. Think how all these water offerings appear to the buddhas as pure nectar. Offer all the nectar and lights here in the Land of Medicine Buddha gomba, at the FPMT Memorial Shrine, at the Aptos house and at all the other places. With your palms together in prostration, offer all the lights and nectar to the *Guru Puja* merit field, meditating that the essence of each being in the merit field is your root virtuous friend. Your offerings generate infinite bliss in the mind of each of these holy beings. Offer not just once but many times—ten or eleven or twenty-one times or whatever.

Next, offer all these offerings to all the holy objects here in the gomba and elsewhere at LMB, meditating that their essence is the root virtuous friend. Each time you make offerings, infinite bliss is generated within them. First prostrate by putting your palms together, then make the offerings as many times as possible.

Next we offer all the offerings here at Land of Medicine Buddha, at the Aptos house, at Kopan and in all the centers in Taiwan to all the holy objects in India. First prostrate to them, meditating that each of these holy objects is your own root virtuous friend, then make offerings as many times as possible. Offer all the lights here inside and outside the gomba.

Next, with the guru yoga mind, we offer all these offerings to every single holy object in Tibet. First prostrate by putting your palms together. Think especially of the most precious Guru Shakyamuni Buddha statue

blessed by Buddha himself in the Lhasa Temple. Also think of the large stupa that we built recently at Sera Monastery in Tibet.

With your palms together, prostrate and offer all these offerings to all the holy objects in Nepal, including the most precious stupa at Swayambhunath. Swayambhunath Stupa contains a crystal stupa that is a manifestation of the dharmakaya. It is not man-made but spontaneously appeared from the ocean. It was brought from mainland China as predicted by Buddha. Also prostrate and make offerings to Boudhanath Stupa. Due to the family who built Boudhanath Stupa, the Buddhadharma was able to spread in Tibet and was preserved there for many years. Because of this, many beings became enlightened through actualizing the Mahayana path, and now Buddhism has spread throughout the whole world. Many thousands of people outside Tibet, even in the West, have been able to find meaning, satisfaction and peace in their lives. All these opportunities to follow the path to enlightenment have come from Boudhanath Stupa. Think of all the other holy objects in Nepal, and with guru yoga mind, prostrate and make offerings to them.

By putting your palms together in this simple prostration, you immediately achieve eight benefits, as I mentioned the other day [Chapter 31, Saturday, February 27].

1. You achieve a perfect human body in your next life.
2. You are surrounded by perfect helpers so that all your wishes to practice Dharma and to benefit others are fulfilled.
3. You are able to live in pure morality.
4. You are able to have devotion. Thus, you can achieve realizations of the path to enlightenment. (Both devotion and morality are extremely important foundations for achieving realizations.)
5. You have the courage to teach and so forth in public.
6. You are born as a human being or a deva in your next life.
7. You are able to develop the wisdom that directly perceives emptiness and thus achieve the arya path. This is what ceases all the defilements, the disturbing-thought obscurations and the subtle obscurations. It is only by achieving the arya path that you can overcome completely all the sufferings of samsara, including rebirth, old age, sickness and death.
8. After this, you then achieve the eighth benefit, enlightenment.

Another sutra mentions ten benefits of putting the palms together to a statue or even a picture of buddha, a stupa or a text [see light offering practice, Chapter 20, Wednesday, February 17].

Therefore, it is extremely important to prostrate even when we are making offerings. According to the number of holy objects in that country, by simply putting our hands together we create that many causes of enlightenment, that many causes of liberation and that many causes of good rebirth in our next life. The powerful merit we create also takes care of everything—health, wealth, success, long life—in this life, by the way. It takes care of this life; becomes the solution for the problems of this life.

With the guru yoga mind, now prostrate and make offerings to all the holy objects in other Buddhist countries and in the rest of the world.

Now prostrate and make offerings to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Buddha of Compassion. Those who have a Dharma connection should also prostrate and make offerings to Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche and Denma Lochö Rinpoche. Prostrate and make offerings to any other virtuous friend that you have in India. Think that they generate bliss within their holy minds.

Do the same with any virtuous friend that you have in Nepal. Prostrate to His Holiness Chobgye Trichen Rinpoche, Trulshig Rinpoche and any other virtuous friend with whom you have a connection, then make offerings.

Those who have a Dharma connection with Ribur Rinpoche or Geshe Sopa Rinpoche should also prostrate and make offerings to them.

Now, with the guru yoga mind, prostrate to all the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in the ten directions and make all these offerings to them.

By meditating that their essence is the root virtuous friend, prostrate to all the holy objects in the ten directions, to all the statues, stupas and scriptures of buddha. Then make offerings to them as many times as possible.

Next, to develop compassion, prostrate and make offerings to the Thousand-arm Buddha of Compassion; to have success, prostrate and make offerings to the seven Medicine Buddhas; and to be able to offer infinite benefit to all sentient beings, prostrate and make offerings to Kshitigarbha. Visualizing these deities as His Holiness the Dalai Lama, make offerings to them as many times as possible.

We have collected skies of merit many times. By generating the motivation of bodhicitta, we collected skies of merit. By making offerings to

all the buddhas in the ten directions and to the merit field during the blessing of the offerings, we collected skies of merit. We collected skies of merit each time we made offerings to the merit field; to the holy objects in each country; to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in the ten directions; to all the statues, stupas and scriptures; to all the virtuous friends. And by offering to the Thousand-arm Buddha of Compassion and the seven Medicine Buddhas, we collected the same merit as if we had made offerings to all the buddhas.

We have collected infinite merit over and over again by making the offerings in this way. Now give all the infinite merit we have just collected, as well as all the other merit we have collected today and all our past, present and future merit, to all sentient beings. Make charity of all this merit and all the happiness, including enlightenment, that results from this merit to all sentient beings.

Give this merit and its results, including enlightenment, specifically to every single hell being, to every single hungry ghost, to every single animal, to every single human being, to every single asura, to every single sura and to every single intermediate state being.

Offer the merit and its results also to all the arhats and bodhisattvas so that they can complete the path to enlightenment. Also offer the merit to all the gurus, as a condition to help them benefit others.

RINPOCHE'S OFFERINGS ON SPECIAL DAYS

For about the past five years, I have made offerings to the monasteries. My plan was to make offerings on every special day of Buddha. There are actually seven of these special days, but the birth, enlightenment and passing away in the sorrowless state are combined on one day. On those special days of Buddha and on solar and lunar eclipses, I make offerings mainly to the monasteries of my gurus, the teachers with whom I have a Dharma connection. During this period [the first two weeks of losar], I'm not sure exactly when the offerings are being made, since the first fifteen days of the Tibetan year are special days. Some offerings will definitely have been made today, the fifteenth [day of the first Tibetan month]. The three major monasteries of Sera, Ganden and Drepung each has two, three or four thousands of monks, and each of these monks receives a tea, bread and money offering at morning puja.

There is also a public fund, to which many people have made donations, to make food offerings to the monks of Sera Je College (not to the whole of Sera Monastery, just to Sera Je). Lunch is offered every day to the more than two thousand Sera Je monks. This offering of one meal has been happening for some time. Although donations have been made by many people, most of the money basically came from one or two major Taiwanese benefactors.

On every special day, a meal, tea and money are offered to the monks of Trulshig Rinpoche's monastery [in Nepal]. The two Tantric Colleges do *Drug chu ma* and Kalarupa pujas and receive tea and money offerings. And there is Kopan Monastery, of course. During this period the monks and nuns receive a food and money offering on at least one day. In the past they received offerings on a few days, but I'm not sure whether this practice has been continued. Tea, bread and money offerings are also given to the monks of His Holiness Chogye Trichen Rinpoche's monastery and His Holiness Sakya Trizin's two monasteries. I have taken initiations from His Holiness Sakya Trizin. Different monasteries are requested to do different pujas. The Sakya monasteries are generally asked to do Hevajra or Vajrayogini self-initiations and the Gelug monasteries are mostly requested to do Medicine Buddha puja. I think one or two of the monasteries might do the Sixteen Arhats puja.

Also, for the past five years, the monks at Nalanda Monastery receive a food offering on auspicious days. I think they have ice cream—and maybe chocolate!

On every special day of Buddha, Marcel and I together offer whitewash, saffron, a decorated canopy and the umbrella on top to the Boudhanath Stupa. We also offer flowers in each direction. This has been happening for the past few years.

I have also started to make offerings to a small stupa at the back of the main Swayambhunath Stupa. It is said to have been the first stupa at Swayambhunath. The large stupa happened because people made many prayers at this small stupa.

There is also the Mönlam festival in Nepal. For the past two years it has happened at Kopan, but this year Lama Lhundrup didn't accept to hold it there, so it will happen at the Gelug monastery in Boudha. It is attended by more than two thousand monks, as well as nuns, and they are given lunch, tea throughout the whole day and a money offering. The money offering

might be one hundred rupees or ten rupees for each monk or nun—it's not the same each time. The monks are requested to dedicate for the FPMT centers and students and for those people who are sick or who have died and for whom I have been asked to pray. Many Medicine Buddha pujas are done, as they might help bring about the success of the various centers and projects. This is in addition to the pujas the monasteries already do for the Maitreya Project. Even though all these pujas are also dedicated towards the success of the Maitreya Project, separate pujas for the success of the Maitreya Project are also done in various monasteries.

The reason I'm telling you all this is that these are also your merits. You can also dedicate all these merits to having realizations and to achieving enlightenment. At the times that these pujas are being done in all these monasteries, you can also dedicate all these merits.

I make these offerings to the monks in the monasteries of my gurus because it creates much more merit. If, by thinking of the guru, you offer a cup of tea, a glass of water or even a candy to one of the pores of your guru, you collect more merit than if you had made offerings to all the numberless past, present and future buddhas and to all the statues, stupas and scriptures in the ten directions. This applies to making offerings to your guru's family (wife, husband or children), friends, neighbors, or even animals (cat, dog or horse). The merit of making offerings to all the numberless past, present and future buddhas is small when compared to the merit of offering even a glass of water to one of the guru's pores with thought of the guru. The monks in these monasteries have the same gurus. Even Kopan has three hundred monks and there are many thousands of monks in the other monasteries, all of whom have His Holiness the Dalai Lama as their guru and many of whom are also disciples of my other gurus.

I'm just telling you this so that you know how to collect extensive merit. Let's say that there is a monastery with a thousand monks and all of those monks are disciples of one of your gurus—His Holiness the Dalai Lama, for example. Even if you have only one rupee, if you offer that rupee to all those monks by thinking of your guru, as I mentioned before, in dependence upon each monk, you collect more merit than having made offerings to all the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and all the statues, stupas and scriptures in the ten directions. Even if what you have to offer is just one teabag, but you offer that teabag with thought of your guru to a monastery with a thousand monks who are disciples of your guru, you

collect unbelievable merit. (Of course, there is also more merit because you are offering to ordained people.) You don't have to make a huge offering. Even if you offer only one rupee, you can still collect unbelievable merit.

So far, these offerings haven't been publicized, but I thought to do so in the future as other people might want to participate in making these extensive offerings. The offerings to all these monasteries can then happen every year. People who want to participate will later be given the opportunity to collect merit through making continuous offerings. My idea is to set up funds so that these offerings can be continued forever, or as long as the monasteries exist. [See *Mandala* magazine, May-June, 1999.]

DEDICATION

Thinking that all these merits are also yours, now dedicate the merits.

We collected numberless merits by dedicating all the merits to all sentient beings. Now dedicate these merits in the following way: "May any suffering sentient beings have ripen upon me. May any happiness and merit I have ripen upon all sentient beings." (By dedicating like this, we also collect numberless merits.)

"Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may all the father and mother sentient beings have happiness, may the three lower realms be empty forever, may all the bodhisattvas' prayers be accomplished immediately and may I be able to cause all this by myself alone.

"Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may the Buddha of Compassion, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and all other virtuous friends have stable lives, and may all their holy wishes be accomplished immediately.

"Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I be able to offer benefit as extensive as the sky to all sentient beings, as Lama Tsongkhapa did, by having the same qualities within me that Lama Tsongkhapa had, from now on in all my future lifetimes.

"Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings—which exist, but are totally non-existent from their own side—may I—who exist, but am totally non-existent from my own side—achieve Vajrasattva's enlightenment—which

exists, but is totally non-existent from its own side—and lead all sentient beings—who exist, but are totally non-existent from their own side—to that enlightenment—which exists, but is totally non-existent from its own side—by myself alone—who also exists, but is totally non-existent from its own side.”

Dedicate for all those people whose names were mentioned before. Dedicate also for all those whose names I have received and for whom I have promised to pray, for those who rely upon me and for those who have died.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may all those people whose names were read out or have been given to me and who have died, as well as the numberless beings who have died and been born in the lower realms, immediately be liberated from all those sufferings and reincarnate in a pure land where they can become enlightened or receive a perfect human body in all their future lifetimes and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible by meeting a Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, whenever I hear that somebody is sick, may just my hearing of it cause that sentient being to be healed immediately. Whenever I hear that somebody has died, may just my hearing of it cause that sentient being not to be reborn in the lower realms, or if born there, immediately be liberated from the lower realms and achieve enlightenment quickly, through being born in a pure land or through receiving a perfect human body and meeting a Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings. If that sentient being has been born human but has no opportunity to practice Dharma, may they receive a perfect human body.”

Dedicate for all the sick people whose names were mentioned before. “May they immediately be healed of their cancer or other sicknesses. May they be free from whatever problem they have and make the rest of their life most beneficial by actualizing the steps of the path to enlightenment, especially bodhicitta, in this very lifetime.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, may all the requests made by the people who offered these lights be accomplished immediately.

“May I, the members of my family, all the students and benefactors of

this organization and all other sentient beings meet only perfectly qualified Mahayana gurus in all our lifetimes. From our side may we be able to see them only as enlightened beings and do only actions that are most pleasing to the holy mind of the virtuous friend. May we be able to immediately fulfill all their holy wishes.

“Whatever kind of life I experience—happy or suffering, healthy or unhealthy, gain or loss, rich or poor, living or even dying, even rebirth in a hell realm—may all these experiences and every action I do from now on be most beneficial for all sentient beings, causing them to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. May whatever happens in my life be most beneficial for all sentient beings. Even if I receive criticism from people, may it be most beneficial for sentient beings. Even if I receive praise from others, may it be most beneficial for sentient beings. If I am healthy or even if I have a sickness such as cancer, may it be most beneficial for all sentient beings.”

As I mentioned before, also dedicate for the success of all the centers and projects, especially the building of the Maitreya statue. “May all the students and benefactors have long lives and good health and may all their wishes be accomplished immediately in accordance with the holy Dharma. May they actualize the lamrim path in this very lifetime.

“May the general teachings of Buddha, and also the teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa, spread in all directions and flourish, and may I be able to cause this by myself alone.”

We will read the dedication prayer for the light offerings one time. [“These actually arranged and mentally created light offerings”]

Recite the multiplying mantras to multiply each merit 100,000 times. [Recitation of multiplying mantras.]

Now recite the Buddha’s name that actualizes all the prayers that we have done and also multiplies each merit 100,000 times.

“Due to the blessings of the eminent buddhas and bodhisattvas, due to unbetraying dependent arising, and due to my special attitude, may all my pure prayers be accomplished immediately.”

CREATING MERIT FOR THE ANIMALS

We can now do some circumambulations with the worms and crickets. If it is okay to keep them overnight, they can also be taken on more cir-

cumambulations tomorrow. We will take them around the outside of the building instead of inside the gumpa because we then circumambulate the many thangkas and statues in the gumpa. We will also include the prayer wheel in the circumambulation. This is much better, because the animals then get to circumambulate many more holy objects.

We will do this just three times, because you have to do one more session. Then, if it is okay to keep the animals overnight, anybody who would like to take them on more circumambulations can do so in the break-times tomorrow. They can stay here until tomorrow afternoon or evening. I don't know how long they can stay here, but the more circumambulations they do the better. In this way they get a lot of benefit and you get a lot of benefit. You all get the benefit together.

Thank you so much, thank you very much.

We will chant mantras as we go around.

RINPOCHE'S HOLY RELICS

This is a relic of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. His Holiness the Dalai Lama gave it to us to put in the Maitreya Buddha statue. All together I have eight, but I've got only three or four here. As you go around, you can pray.

This is a relic of Lama Atisha. If you have heard a lamrim teaching from the very beginning, you will know the life story of Lama Atisha, and why Lama Atisha is so important to us. After there was some corruption of the Buddhadharma in Tibet, people were confused as to how one person could practice sutra and tantra to achieve enlightenment. There were a lot of misunderstandings, especially about tantric practice. People thought that if they practiced sutra they could not practice tantra and vice versa.

The Dharma king of Tibet, Lha Lama Yeshe Ö, wanted to invite Lama Atisha to spread the Dharma and make the Buddhism in Tibet pure, so he went to look for gold. Near Nepal an irreligious king captured Lha Lama Yeshe Ö and put him in prison. The king's nephew, Jangchub Ö, then offered the irreligious king all the gold that Lha Lama Yeshe Ö had collected and requested him to free Lha Lama Yeshe Ö. However, the irreligious king refused the gold, saying that when the gold was piled up he was still lacking gold equal to the size of the Dharma king's head.

When Jangchub Ö told his uncle, who was still in prison, what had happened, Lha Lama Yeshe Ö said, "Don't give even one handful of gold

to this irreligious king. Send all of the gold to India. Offer it to Lama Atisha and invite Lama Atisha to Tibet to spread the Dharma. I will sacrifice my life and die in prison. I will give up my life so that Lama Atisha can be invited to Tibet to spread the Dharma.”

The king then died in prison. All the gold was sent to India with a group of translators, who invited Lama Atisha to Tibet. When Lama Atisha came to Tibet, he met King Jangchub Ö, who explained all the problems to Lama Atisha. Lama Atisha then wrote *Lamp of the Path to Enlightenment*, which integrates all the teachings of Buddha, both Mahayana sutra and Mahayana tantra, as a graduated practice that one person can follow to achieve enlightenment. From that time the confusion was completely eliminated and the Buddhism in Tibet became pure.

What is called “lamrim” started from when Lama Atisha wrote *Lamp of the Path to Enlightenment*, and this teaching has also spread to other parts of the world, including the West. By integrating the entire teaching of Buddha into one person’s practice to achieve enlightenment, the lamrim gives everyone the opportunity of meditating on and experiencing the path to enlightenment. We, as well as many other people in the West, have this incredible opportunity because of Lama Atisha’s kindness. These are Lama Atisha’s relics, given to me by His Holiness Sakya Jigdrol [Dagchen] Rinpoche, who lives in Seattle. He said that he received these relics from the Sakya storehouse of relics in Tibet. When you circumambulate, you can look at the relics and pray.

This is a statue of Maitreya Buddha, given to me by Denma Lochö Rinpoche. It is many hundreds of years old and is one of the holy objects from a Tibetan monastery. I have another very old and very beautiful Maitreya statue, a tsa tsa with mantras around it, but I didn’t bring it here. The tsa tsa was made by Tsawa Khenpo, for whom Lama Tsongkhapa wrote *The Three Principles of the Path*. His monastery was built four years before Ganden Monastery, which is Lama Tsongkhapa’s monastery. This lama built a Maitreya Buddha statue that was several stories high, and the Maitreya tsa tsa came out of that large statue. I’m telling you the story of the Maitreya tsa tsa, but it’s not here; it’s at the Aptos house!

This small stupa was given by Lama Atisha to Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo, the great translator.

Inside here are the relics of three past Buddhas. I received them from Doctor Wangdu, His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s doctor, in Dharamsala,

and he got them from the Tibetan government storehouse of relics. They are many thousands of years old. Many relics of Buddha and of the ancient yogis are kept in the Tibetan government storehouse.

There is also a relic of the past Buddha's tooth. A monk brought three pieces of Buddha's tooth from Tibet. They came from Gyalwa Ensapa, a disciple of one of Lama Tsongkhapa's direct disciples, who became enlightened within one lifetime, like Milarepa. His holy body was gilded, but the Chinese communists destroyed it. All the relics were thrown away, but one family secretly took the relic of Buddha's tooth. They kept it and would burn and crush it to use as medicine when anyone in the family was sick. A monk brought three pieces from Tibet. He offered one to Chobgye Trichen Rinpoche, and Rinpoche put it in the crown of the three-story Maitreya Buddha statue that Rinpoche had built in Boudhanath. He was going to offer another relic to His Holiness Sakya Trizin.

There are also relics of Lama Atisha and many precious relics of ancient yogis from inside the famous statue of Shakyamuni Buddha in Lhasa.

This Tara statue belonged to the Lawudo Lama, who is said to be my past life. It is the devotional object that he always carried with him, and this is why the face and hands are worn away.

That's the end of my advertisement . . .

HOW TO CIRCUMAMBULATE

Before you circumambulate, first generate the motivation. Think that you are leading all sentient beings in the circumambulations. Visualize that beams emitted by the holy objects purify you and all the sentient beings. Then think that you all receive all good qualities.

When you do circumambulations, you can dedicate the first circumambulation to all sentient beings, but especially the hell beings. When you finish the circumambulation, think that you have purified all sentient beings and give all the merit to them. They all become enlightened, especially the hell beings. Dedicate the second round to all sentient beings, but especially the pretas. When you have finished the circumambulation, dedicate all the merits to all sentient beings, but especially to the pretas. They all become enlightened. Do the same for all the animals, humans, asuras, suras and intermediate state beings.

You can then circumambulate for your gurus, dedicating for them to

have long lives and for all their wishes to be fulfilled. You can do another circumambulation and dedicate it for the teachings to exist a long time. In this way you can dedicate nine circumambulations, the first seven being for the beings in the six realms plus those in the intermediate state, the eighth being for the gurus and the ninth for the teachings. This is just one idea of how you can make circumambulation very effective, very beneficial.

When we circumambulate, our mouth should be reciting holy prayers or powerful mantras and our mind should be feeling devotion. As well as prostration of body, there are prostration of speech (praising Buddha) and prostration of mind (generating devotion). In a similar way, there are circumambulations of body, speech, and mind. While your body is walking around the holy objects, your speech is reciting praises or mantras and your mind is feeling devotion.

Generate the motivation for the circumambulations by thinking, “The purpose of my life is to free all sentient beings from all their sufferings and bring them to enlightenment; therefore, I must achieve enlightenment. It is for this reason, for the benefit of all sentient beings, that I am going to do these circumambulations. Each circumambulation is for every single sentient being.”

[Then everybody followed Rinpoche on several circumambulations of the gomba and prayer wheel.]

Thursday, March 4

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

PLAYING CYMBALS

[Rinpoche arrives just in time for Palden Lhamo puja.] I couldn't stand not playing the cymbals!

My style of playing cymbals doesn't follow any particular tradition. It's just my own tradition. Ven. Michel plays according to the tradition of Shekar Monastery in Tibet, a branch of Sera Me Monastery. (Sera Monastery has two main colleges, Sera Me and Sera Je.) I don't know what the situation is now, but before, when Tibet was independent, Shekar Monastery had about five hundred monks. In Tsang, on the way to Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, it is situated on a very high rocky mountain, which is supposed to be Tara. The monastery is supposed to be situated on Tara's chest.

I went to Tibet on pilgrimage twice in the 1980s, but I don't remember seeing Shekar Monastery at that time. I remember it, however, from the very first time I went to Tibet, when I was a small child. I went with my two alphabet teachers (both of whom were my uncles), a nun and a Tibetan man. When you looked up at the monastery from down below, you thought, how could anyone possibly get up there? The monastery was situated high up on a very high rocky mountain. From below, you had to go round the mountain and then climb up on a road that had been made by putting big logs through the rocks. Grass had grown from the rocks to cover the road. But once you reached the place, you found that the monastery was very clean and neat, with many young monks. This is the impression I had many years ago when I saw it. Apart from that first impression, I don't remember very much. I remember going up there and how clean and neat it was inside, but that's all. For the rest, I think I might have fallen asleep.

Each Gelug monastery usually has a debating college, and they mainly

study the five major sutra texts—Vinaya; Pramanavarttika; Madhyamaka, which is about the two truths; Abhisamayalamkara, which is about the five paths to enlightenment; and Abhidharmakosha. There is also a tantric college for the study of rituals. Every day they do many pujas, some of which are wrathful pujas, and they also do religious dance, perform mandalas, and other things. The *umdze*, or leader of the pujas, of Shekar Monastery, now lives in Thamo Nunnery, a Gelugpa nunnery down below Lawudo in Solu Khumbu. He leads the protector pujas and the nuns lead the Vajrayogini self-initiations.

Many years ago the *umdze* came down to Kathmandu, so I asked Tubten Pende to learn the way his monastery played the cymbals and to use that style for the Mahakala practice at Nalanda. That was the idea. My own way of playing the cymbals just came from ego

[Rinpoche plays the cymbals.]

I hope Palden Lhamo is not disturbed—I made a lot of noise.

MAITREYA PRAYERS

These are very good translations of the prayers. I don't know who did it, probably somebody from Madison. Geshe Sopa Rinpoche translated one of the prayers to Maitreya Buddha at Amitabha Buddhist Centre the last time Geshe-la was in Singapore, but I'm not sure whether this is the same translation. Geshe-la did not translate *Prayer for a Statue of Maitreya* but another short prayer, *Prayer for Spontaneous Bliss*. *Prayer for a Statue of Maitreya* is a dedication for the sentient beings who build an eminent statue of Maitreya Buddha, Loving One, or who create the necessary conditions for building such a statue to enjoy the Buddhadharma at the holy feet of Maitreya Buddha.

The translation of *Prayer to be Reborn in the Land of Bliss*, which is a prayer to be born in the blissful field, has been done extremely well. I didn't check it carefully, but it appears to be a good translation. I thought it would be good to alternate the reciting of *King of Prayers* with *Prayer to be Reborn in the Land of Bliss*. These prayers have different presentations, different tastes, and this can be very helpful for the mind. Reciting these prayers is especially helpful for those who don't know how to dedicate because they contain all the important things that we should request to happen. You can recite *Prayer to be Reborn in the Land of Bliss* and there

is another short Maitreya Buddha prayer that can also be done. [See the *FPMT Prayer Book* for all these prayers.]

SPREADING THE DHARMA IN RUSSIA AND MONGOLIA

There is a dedication for a Russian student, Andrey, who translated for Alex Berzin when he went a few times to Russia to teach Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism. I think he is also the one who translated *Transforming Problems* into Russian. Andrey invited me to Russia quite a number of years ago, but so far I haven't made it. I last saw him during Geshe Sopa's two-month course last year.

After the last time we talked, Andrey went back to set up a retreat center in Russia. People in Russia and Mongolia like very much to do retreat; they think retreat is the best thing to do in life. People in Russia and Mongolia think that doing retreat is the best Dharma. In addition to a center in the city, we discussed having a retreat center. There was a plan for me to go to Russia this year, but after Andrey returned, the whole Russian economy collapsed, and he said that now was not a good time to come. That was his view.

There is another Dharma group in Russia, led by Trinley, a Tibetan monk. Trinley is the only Tibetan who came to the West as a lay person, spent a few years translating in the West, and then became a monk. Normally it's the other way around. He is the only Tibetan who spent a few years in the West and was then inspired to become a monk. He translated for a few years at Dorje Chang Institute and Mahamudra Centre in New Zealand, then went back to Dharamsala to become an ascetic monk. Trinley was the translator at Dorje Chang Institute after Lama Chödak, who became more famous in New Zealand than the geshe for whom he translated. The translator became more famous than the teacher!

After becoming a monk, Trinley continued to translate in New Zealand for two or three years. Once he told me that his main meditation was practicing the antidotes to the delusions. In his daily life, whenever delusions arose or there was a danger of their arising, he would apply their opponents. He would use the lamrim meditations to stop the arising of delusions.

On returning to Dharamsala, Trinley became an ascetic and lived for five years on the mountain. His Holiness then sent him to Russia to teach

Dharma. I think His Holiness sent him to Russia because he is a very simple monk who isn't interested in material comfort and is very dedicated to helping others. I think that the simple style of life in Russia would suit Trinley.

Trinley has been teaching the lamrim to a Dharma group in Russia, and this group has been inviting me to Russia for the past three years. They have sent letters to me a few times, and recently, when the whole group came to Germany when His Holiness the Dalai Lama was teaching there, because they are eager, they again invited me to come to Russia. They also asked if the group could be part of FPMT. Trinley took some initiations from me when I was at Mahamudra Centre.

I have been thinking how to help Russia and Mongolia with their economic problems. My idea is to spread as much as possible the practices of reciting *manis* and of taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts. During the teachings people could be invited to recite OM MANI PADME HUM as much as possible to develop their compassion and to take the Eight Mahayana Precepts and thus practice pure morality. This would affect the country so that the economy could be developed.

Anyone, young or old, can immediately do these practices, so the practices can spread from this.

I've been thinking about starting a monastery in Mongolia. Establishing a pure monastery with young, new monks might help the country. A youth group in Mongolia and two monasteries have invited me to Mongolia. The youth group wrote to say that one million Mongolians have converted to the Christian religion because so many Christian priests have come there. The priests have built hospitals and schools, and many people in Mongolia have become Christians. When I read this, I felt responsible to help Mongolia. The Christian religion is needed in the world for the many people who have the karma to be guided from suffering to happiness only through that means. The Christian explanation of God as the creator is the only explanation that suits some people. However, even though Christianity is good, it doesn't teach the complete path to liberation or to enlightenment. Besides not having the complete path of tantra, Christianity does not have complete teachings on renunciation, bodhicitta or emptiness. And since Mongolia is a Buddhist country and has always been a Buddhist country, I felt responsible to help.

My plan is to go to mainland China and then to Mongolia after Geshe

Sopa Rinpoche's teachings this summer. There have been two lamrim groups in mainland China, one in Chengdu and the other in Nanjing, for the past few years, and they have been very anxiously awaiting a visit. So I plan to visit them, then Mongolia and perhaps make a short visit to Russia.

I would like to start a city center in Mongolia where Dharma could be taught in English. Young people in Mongolia are very keen to learn English, so if they are taught Dharma in English they can learn Dharma and English together. They get what they want, which is to learn English, and we get what we want, which is for them to learn Dharma. That's the deal! The Western monks and nuns could also teach Dharma to the old people in the city.

Since there is a lot of interest in retreat, I was also thinking to organize the recitation of one hundred million OM MANI PADME HUMS once every year in Mongolia. People could gather together and recite the mantras in a retreat. This might be financially difficult for people, so I am thinking to set up a fund to make it easy for people to come every year to recite one hundred million manis. I am hoping to establish similar annual group retreats in perhaps ten different countries. It is a very common practice in Tibet and Nepal, especially in very high mountains. In Tsum, where Geshe Lama Konchog came from, they do this practice every year. When Geshe Lama Konchog lived there, the local people did such retreats many times. People would come from all the surrounding villages; everyone would bring whatever food they could and pool it together. During the retreat, everyone would take the Eight Mahayana Precepts then recite manis.

The guru of Dodrub Rinpoche, a reincarnate lama whose past life was Tsechu Rinpoche, brought incredible benefit to Nepal. He was the head of the Buddhists in Nepal. This lama made statues in Tibet, then he came to Nepal, where he lived in Helambu and Tsum and spread extensively the practice of Chenrezig, especially recitation of the mantra OM MANI PADME HUM. In those early times, Dodrub Rinpoche's guru made it the law in various areas of Nepal that people were not to kill animals. This lama did so much to spread the nyung nä practice and the recitation of the mantra of the Buddha of Compassion and brought incredible benefit to Nepal. Even though it is not the law of Nepal, there is still a law that prohibits the killing of animals in mountain areas such as Solu Khumbu and Tsum. If the Nepalese officials hear that some Sherpas have gone into

the forest to hunt animals, they search for those people and punish them. Some years ago I heard of some Nepalese who were captured and punished by the officials for killing animals.

The great lamas of the past established very good moral law in these mountain areas, but I think the country has now become much more degenerate. It is not like it was before. It seems that more and more Sherpas are killing animals and selling the meat as a business. The Sherpas don't usually kill the animals themselves but hire Tibetans to do it. There are certain Tibetans who spend their whole life working as butchers. The Sherpas hire these people to do the killing, but it is the same as doing the killing themselves. More and more people are now engaging in this business.

We once tried to recite one hundred million manis at Lawudo. Many Western students and some local Sherpas participated. We recited a lot of mantras but didn't reach the total, so I asked everyone to continue reciting the mantras at home.

I would like to organize a group recitation of one hundred million manis every year in about ten different places, including Mongolia. We would need funding to make it easy for people to come and do the practice, otherwise, it might be difficult for them to spare that much time. By doing such a retreat, many people will be liberated, saved from the lower realms. We usually liberate animals, but organizing a retreat like this would help to liberate human beings from the lower realms and samsara. It's a way to bring them to enlightenment. Taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts and reciting manis are such simple practices, but they bring benefit as extensive as the sky. They result in skies of benefit but are very simple to practice.

Perhaps we can pray for the success of this idea of organizing such retreats in ten different countries. I thought one retreat could happen at Chenrezig Institute in Australia, but I am not sure. It might be difficult. People could recite the mantras individually, but it might not be so easy for them to recite the mantras in a group for a long time.

In Tsum, at the end of the recitation of the one hundred million manis, Geshe Lama Konchog used to arrange a celebration with religious dances, and people would come from all over to attend the celebration.

Anyway, this is just some news!

What I was actually going to mention is that Andrey has been very, very sick. He has been translating Dharma texts into Russian and is planning

to translate *Lamrim Chenmo*. I don't know of how much benefit I can be there, but he's very keen for me to come to Russia to do something. However, he has been very sick and is going to have a heart operation. I'm not sure of the date of the operation, but he has asked me to pray for him. If my divination is correct, there is no danger to his life, and the operation will be successful.

Please dedicate the merits you have created today to Andrey and to all the other people whose names were mentioned before. May they immediately recover and then fulfill the purpose of being healthy, which is to make their life beneficial at least for themselves and at best for others, by actualizing the realizations of the lamrim, especially bodhicitta.

People put unbelievable effort into being healthy; they will try billions of things, every single thing they can think of, to be healthy. But when, after all that effort, they become healthy, what do they then do with their lives? What is the purpose of putting all that effort into trying billions of methods to become healthy? The purpose is not clear. When they think of the purpose of life, they are confused.

We, however, are unbelievably fortunate because we have met Dharma and because after meeting the Dharma, we have generated devotion to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and have practiced loving kindness and compassion for others. Therefore, even if we only have one hour left to live, there is so much that we can do. And the best thing to do if we have only an hour, or just a few minutes, to live, is *tong len* practice, the practice of taking and giving. This is the best way to die, the best way to end our life, and the best way to go to a pure land. Even if you have only one minute left, you can do the bodhicitta practice of *tong len*. There are many other practices you can do, but the best one is bodhicitta.

Without talking about days, weeks, months or years of life, there is so much that we can do even if we have just one hour left to live—or even one minute. Compared to other people, we are extremely fortunate, because we have met the Dharma. The healthier we are and the longer we live the better it is, because our life always has meaning. Since we have devotion to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, every single second of our life is worthwhile.

If these people whose names have been mentioned don't have the karma to recover, may they be born in a pure land where they can become enlightened or receive a perfect human body in all their future lifetimes and

achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible by meeting perfectly qualified Mahayana gurus and the Mahayana teachings.

DEDICATION

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may those sick people whose names have just been mentioned and all other sentient beings who are sick or likely to become sick immediately be liberated from all their sicknesses, and may sentient beings never ever experience sickness at all.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may just my hearing that any sentient being is sick cause that sentient being to recover immediately. May just my hearing that any sentient being has died cause that sentient being never to be reborn in the lower realms; and if they are already in the lower realms, may it cause them to immediately be liberated from the lower realms and reincarnate in a pure land where they can become enlightened, or to receive a perfect human rebirth in all their future lifetimes and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible through meeting perfectly qualified Mahayana gurus and the Mahayana teachings.

“May those who are living or who have died, including the students and benefactors of this organization, who sacrifice their lives in the service of others through this organization, and all the rest of sentient beings, have Lama Tsongkhapa as our direct guru in all our future lifetimes. May we never be separated from the unmistakable path that is highly admired by the buddhas. May we all actualize as quickly as possible within our minds the complete path—the three principal paths and the two stages of Highest Yoga Tantra—as Lama Tsongkhapa did.”

Good night.

Saturday, March 6

WEEKEND TEACHING

Good afternoon, good evening!

[Please motivate as follows:] “As quickly as possible, I must achieve full enlightenment in order to liberate my mother sentient beings, who equal the sky, from the oceans of samsaric suffering that they are experiencing, and bring them to the peerless happiness of full enlightenment. Therefore I am going to listen to the holy Dharma.”

So please listen well by clarifying the purest motivation in your minds and listen to the teaching correctly, according to the traditional practices prescribed by the lamas of our lineage.

THE PURPOSE OF BEING HUMAN

As I mentioned in an earlier talk, you should know the meaning of your life, the reason you are alive, the purpose of having taken this precious human body at this time, especially this perfect human rebirth, which has eight freedoms and ten richnesses—you should know this, not just intellectually but deeply, so that you transform your attitude accordingly and live your life in harmony with that purpose. What is that? It is living your life for the benefit of others.

Therefore, compassion is the most important meditation, or practice, you can do. Even though the Buddha’s teachings talk about billions of different meditations, or practices, that you could spend your life doing, this is the most important—benefiting others; living your life with an attitude of compassion for others. This is the real purpose of life, the meaning of life.

If even you have only an hour to live, a minute to live, the purpose of life is still to live for the benefit of others, with a good heart, with compassion

for others. Even if you have only a minute to live, only a minute of this precious human body left, the most important thing you can practice is compassion; nothing else.

The same thing would be true were you to have a hundred years to live, a thousand years to live, even an eon to live. To fulfill your life's purpose, you would still have to live with compassion for others, for the benefit of others.

If you are enjoying a happy life, experiencing pleasure, in order for your life not to be empty, to be beneficial, useful, for others, you should practice compassion, live your life for the benefit of others. If your life is unhappy, if you are experiencing relationship problems, if you have cancer or AIDS, if you are depressed, if your life is uncomfortable, even if you are encountering so many hundreds and hundreds of problems—health, relationship, job-related problems—that it seems as if you are drowning in a quagmire of problems, you should also practice compassion for others. If you can practice compassion at times like this, you will still be making your life meaningful, beneficial for others, useful for others, and therefore—by benefiting others—you will be constantly making your life beneficial for yourself. Cherishing others is the best way of cherishing yourself.

Cherishing others means that you don't harm others, and not harming others is not harming yourself. Even in terms of protection, this is the best way to protect your life. Similarly, when you cause others to be happy, you bring happiness to yourself. The karma created by making others happy causes you to experience happiness too; that's the kind of karma that results in happiness. Even if you don't want happiness, once you have created its cause, that's what results.

If you plant a seed in the ground and all the right conditions are present, such as perfect soil, water, and heat—everything is together and there are no obstacles—then no matter how much you pray for the plant not to grow, it will grow. It will definitely grow because the seed planted in the ground has met all the conditions necessary for growth; the cause and conditions have met. Since it is a dependent arising, it is inevitable that that flower or fruit will grow, no matter how much you pray for it not to.

Similarly, if you lead your everyday life with compassion, bringing as much happiness to others as you possibly can, the natural result will be for you yourself to experience happiness, both now and in the future—there's

the immediate effect of peace of mind in this life and the long-term effect of happiness in all your future lives. All this is the definite result of bringing happiness and benefit to others.

Therefore, there is much to be gained by cherishing others, taking care of other living beings as you do yourself. Whether they are insects or humans, they are living beings just like you—wanting happiness; not wanting suffering. Just as you need the help of others to eliminate problems, so do they. Just as your happiness depends on others, so does theirs. Not only humans, but also insects need your help. Their freedom from problems depends on you; their happiness depends on you.

Why is cherishing others, taking care of others as you do yourself, not harming but benefiting them, the best way of looking after yourself, taking care of yourself? Because it is through having a good heart, cherishing others, benefiting others, that all your own wishes get fulfilled.

In general, in the world, when others see a person who has a compassionate, loving nature, who is good-hearted, they get good vibrations, a positive feeling from that person. Even when strangers meet that person on the road, in airplanes, in offices or shops, just the sight of that person makes them happy, smile, want to talk. Because of your good heart, good vibrations, positive feeling, you make others happy. Even their facial expressions change to reflect their happy minds. Even if you aren't experiencing any problems, others keep offering you help.

When you have a good heart towards others, all your wishes for your own happiness get fulfilled by the way. Even though your motivation, like that of a bodhisattva, is only the happiness of others and you have not a single expectation of happiness for yourself, even if everything you do, twenty-four hours a day, is exclusively dedicated to the happiness of others with not a thought for your own, you yourself will experience all happiness.

Because of their realization of bodhicitta, the attitude of those holy beings, the bodhisattvas, is such that they totally renounce themselves for others; they have no thought for their own happiness but instead spend every moment seeking the happiness of others. So what happens? With bodhicitta, they are able to develop the ultimate wisdom realizing the very nature of the I—the self and the aggregates, the association of body and mind that is the base that is labeled I—and all other phenomena. Because of their bodhicitta and the ultimate wisdom they develop, they are able

to eradicate all errors of mind, the cause of all suffering—both the gross defilements, the delusions of ignorance, attachment and aversion, and the subtle defilements, which are in the nature of imprints left on the mental continuum by the delusions.

This, then, is the special feature of bodhicitta, because with its support, you can develop not only the wisdom realizing emptiness but can also stop the subtle defilements and thus become fully awakened, attaining the state of omniscience, the fully enlightened mind, knowing directly and without a single mistake, not only the gross karma but also every single subtle karma of each of the numberless sentient beings; seeing all their different characteristics, wishes and levels of intelligence; knowing every single method that suits the minds of all these different sentient beings at different times; and revealing the appropriate method that suits the mind of each individual sentient being at different times in order to guide that being from happiness to happiness, all the way up to enlightenment.

Thus, bodhicitta allows your wisdom to function such that it can overcome even the subtle defilements, making your mind fully enlightened. In this way, bodhicitta allows you to become a fully qualified guide, a perfectly enlightened being, and therefore to liberate numberless other sentient beings from samsara, the ocean of suffering, and bring them into the peerless happiness of full enlightenment.

So from where does this achievement of all those infinite enlightened qualities arise? Even the bodhisattvas on the ten levels (*bhūmis*) have incredible, inconceivable qualities. Just a first level bodhisattva is able to meditate in hundreds of different concentrations, go to hundreds of different pure lands, reveal hundreds of different teachings to sentient beings. I don't recall exactly, but there are about eleven different things of which they can do hundreds. Then a second level bodhisattva can do a thousand different concentrations, go to a thousand pure lands, reveal a thousand different teachings to sentient beings, and so forth. Like this, as they progress higher and higher through the levels, they achieve more and more inconceivable qualities with which they can benefit other sentient beings. I don't remember the terms for the ninth and tenth levels, but the bodhisattvas there possess inconceivable numbers of such qualities.

All these incredible qualities of the bodhisattva path, all the infinite qualities of the buddha's holy body, holy speech and holy mind, come from the root, renunciation of ego and the thought that seeks the happiness of

oneself alone, and generation of the good heart, the thought that seeks the happiness of only other sentient beings. All those qualities come from this. All the infinite good qualities of the Buddha, of the Dharma, the bodhisattvas' path, and of the Sangha, those arya and even ordinary bodhisattvas, come from the incredibly precious thought, the wish-fulfilling bodhicitta—renunciation of the ego and the self-centered mind and the development of cherishing only others. They all come from this.

Those who can do this realize the best possible achievement. They renounce the self, they renounce the I, but they gain the best achievement, the greatest success. Not only do they find liberation forever from the cycle of death and rebirth and all the problems it brings, such as rebirth, old age, sickness, emotional problems and all other difficulties of life we experience, but they also attain everlasting liberation, everlasting freedom, everlasting happiness for themselves, and are able to bring skies of happiness to numberless other sentient beings. All this comes from the root, bodhicitta, that most precious holy mind, renouncing I, cherishing others.

We can understand how this is true from reading texts that tell the stories of Buddha's previous lives and the lives of other bodhisattvas, but we can also understand how a good heart is wish-fulfilling for your happiness from simple examples from the ordinary lives of common people in the world—how those whose minds are more compassionate in nature, who are good hearted, have much easier lives.

For example, if you are experiencing serious health problems, like cancer and so forth, but you have a good heart, your mind will be happy and peaceful because your main concern is not for yourself but for others; your concern is for other sentient beings. Therefore, your mind is peaceful. Even if you are dying, your mind is not disturbed because your concern is for others, not yourself. Even at the end of your life, at the very end of your human life, your experience of death is a happy one because your attitude is one of concern for others, not for I, not the self-cherishing, self-centered mind.

Even though things don't work out for you, you encounter many obstacles, your life is going wrong, none of this bothers you, your mind is undisturbed, always happy and peaceful, because the first priority in your life is the happiness of others. What concerns you most is others, not yourself. That's your goal. This attitude brings so much peace and happiness into your daily life, gives you so much satisfaction. Even if other people are

causing you problems, hassling you, it doesn't bother your mind; your mind remains peaceful and happy.

In particular, with a good heart, compassion for others, whenever a problem arises, you experience it for others, on behalf of other sentient beings. If you experience happiness, you experience it for others. If you enjoy a luxury life, comfort, you dedicate it to others. And if you experience a problem, you experience it for others—for others to be free of problems and to have all happiness up to enlightenment, complete perfect peace and bliss. Wishing others to have all happiness, you experience problems on their behalf.

That gives you incredible satisfaction and fulfillment, but not only that. If you have that attitude, no matter how many problems you experience, when you encounter each one you feel like you have discovered a precious treasure. You see it as an incredible opportunity to dedicate yourself to others; a great chance to experience the sufferings of others, like bodhisattvas do, like Buddha did, like Jesus Christ did; to take upon yourself the suffering of others.

Even though others might find that problem unbearable, for you, who has this attitude, it's not a big bother, you don't find it particularly difficult, you're pretty easy about it—because of your good heart, that pure attitude of life. This makes your entire life very easy, very happy. Your heart is not hollow, not empty, but overflowing with fulfillment, brimming with joy. In this way, even should you encounter many problems, you live your life with joy. You enjoy your problems; you even enjoy your death. No matter what happens, you enjoy it with bodhicitta, the thought that cherishes others. What ordinary people might find undesirable, the person with the good heart, the attitude of cherishing others, finds desirable because that person can make problems beneficial for other sentient beings. The person with a good heart, a compassionate mind, the thought of cherishing others, the bodhicitta attitude, makes the problem useful, beneficial for others. In this way, this person's experience of problems becomes a cause for the happiness of all sentient beings—not just temporary happiness but that of the highest, full enlightenment. Bodhicitta makes the person's experience of problems a cause for the happiness of all living beings. How? By transforming problems into the path to enlightenment.

MORE ABOUT GEN JAMPA WANGDU

Remember the story I told the other night about Gen Jampa Wangdu, one of the most senior Tibetan meditators in India, who meditated around Dharamsala and Dalhousie and was guided by the ascetic lama, Dewo Gyüpe Rinpoche? After completing all his philosophical sutra studies and then completing the study of tantra, passing all his examinations and becoming a lharampa geshe, a geshe of the highest rank, Gen Jampa Wangdu went into solitude up in the mountains to actualize the path that he had been studying in the monastery from the time of his youth for so many years. He was a highly attained yogi and bodhisattva who had accomplished the highest tantra path, which has five stages— isolation of body, isolation of speech, isolation of mind, clear light and illusory body, and unification. So he had reached the highest levels of tantra and attained the illusory body.

After the first Dharma Celebration [Enlightened Experience Celebration], many of our Sangha members took teachings from him on how to do the “pill” retreat—“Taking the Essence” [*chu len*], a method of being able to retreat in very isolated places, far from everything, where food and drink are hard to find. Instead of living on ordinary food, you live on special blessed pills, which gives you more time for your meditation practice and makes your mind clear and is an easy way to achieve the perfect concentration of shamatha. Gen Jampa Wangdu was one of my gurus and I took the lineage of the *chu len* teaching from him.

Once I was in Dharamsala, staying at Geshe Rabten Rinpoche’s house, which was below the house of His Holiness Ling Rinpoche, the senior tutor of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Geshe Rabten Rinpoche was my first teacher of philosophical texts, the debating text, *du ra*; he was the one who started me off on those. These lamas’ houses were near our center, Tushita. One night Gen Jampa Wangdu came back late after teachings and found that his house had been burgled by a thief. Of course, there was hardly anything worth stealing, but he found that the thief had taken his clock. That was it! But he was so happy that the thief had gotten himself a clock; he was so happy!

SERKONG DORJE CHANG

There's a similar story about the Serkong Dorje Chang who lived in Nepal—the incarnation of the Serkong Dorje Chang who lived in Tibet and was also a lharampa geshe. A lharampa geshe is like the most highly qualified professor, a great scholar, but in this case not merely a scholar of words but also in experience of the path. Later he became one of the few lamas to be officially recognized by His Holiness the Thirteenth Dalai Lama to have attained high enough levels of the tantric path to be allowed to practice with a wisdom mother consort. The incarnation who lived in Nepal passed away some years ago and has been reborn and is now studying at Ganden Monastery in south India.

Normally my mind is full of doubt and superstition, but every time I would go to see him I would have no doubt that when I was in his presence, I was in the presence of Yamantaka. Not a single hesitation that Serkong Dorje Chang was Yamantaka, an enlightened being, the most wrathful aspect of Manjushri, the buddha of wisdom. I was always one hundred percent certain that he was Yamantaka.

Serkong Dorje Chang was exactly the same as those ancient Indian yogis like Tilopa and Naropa, the forerunners of the lineage continued by Marpa and Milarepa, but living in the present time. Actually, one day, he himself told a monk that he was the embodiment of Marpa. That would happen, sometimes. On a good day—I don't mean weather-wise—when the time was right, Rinpoche would say many interesting things. At the end of the monks' annual summer retreat, *yar nā*, as part of the traditional vinaya practice, the monks from his monastery would go for *gag ye*, release from the retreat. Usually it would be a picnic, where Rinpoche would tell the monks many interesting stories.

Sometimes Rinpoche and some monks would go to do pujas at benefactors' houses in Kathmandu. When it was over they would return to their monastery on Swayambhunath mountain, which tourists call the “monkey temple” because there are so many monkeys on it. One of his monks was from our college, Sera Je. He was an assistant umdze, assistant leader of prayers—usually there are a few other monks who support the chant leader; he was one of those. So one day when they were all walking back to the monastery, Serkong Dorje Chang said to this monk, “In reality, I'm actually Marpa.”

Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche, who lived in Dharamsala and was one of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's gurus—he gave His Holiness a commentary on Atisha's *Lamp on the Path to Enlightenment* and some other teachings as well—is also one of my gurus and has been exceptionally kind to me. Even though from my side I am very lazy and lacking in ability, from Rinpoche's side he would always teach me anything I asked for. He always looked after me, guided me and was really so very kind.

Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche's father was the Serkong Dorje Chang who lived in Tibet—the one who after becoming a lharampa geshe attained the highest levels of tantra and practiced with a wisdom mother consort. Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche was his son, and later, when Serkong Dorje Chang was reborn, Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche became his teacher, the teacher of his father's incarnation. Serkong Dorje Chang also told the Sera Je monk that Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche was Marpa's son, Dharma Dodé, and another incarnate lama, Tsechog Ling Rinpoche, was Milarepa. So Serkong Dorje Chang said, "In reality, we are like this."

His Holiness Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche always used to say, "Oh, Serkong Dorje Chang—those ancient yogis were something like that." He wouldn't say many words, didn't tell any stories, but would just kind of label, like that. Once Serkong Dorje Chang was traveling to Bodhgaya—perhaps on pilgrimage or for teachings from His Holiness the Dalai Lama—and his monks' robes, the required yellow ones, were left in a taxi in Patna. Later, when his attendant told Rinpoche that they had been lost, stolen, he said, "Oh, that's very good," meaning that he was happy that the thieves might get some use out of them, that it was worthwhile that they'd been stolen.

Even though I never received any initiations or oral transmissions of texts from beginning to end from Serkong Dorje Chang, I regard him as one of my gurus. Basically, that's what he is. When Lama Yeshe and I arrived in Nepal, we stayed outside Kathmandu at the Gelug monastery at Boudhanath, near the precious great stupa. It was the only Gelug monastery at Boudha, and at that time might have been the only Tibetan monastery with monks. We stayed upstairs there for about a year. Every year during the fourth Tibetan month, at Saka Dawa, they would do nyung nä. The year we were there it was sponsored by a benefactor who had a connection with another lama from Swayambhunath, Drubtob Rinpoche, not Serkong Dorje Chang. According to his devotion, the

benefactor wanted Drubtob Rinpoche to give the ordination of the eight Mahayana precepts. But the Gelug monks weren't so interested in him. They wanted Serkong Dorje Chang because Drubtob Rinpoche practiced the Most Secret Hayagriva deity that our Sera Je College practices and they didn't—they thought it was a Nyingma deity or something like that. So for this kind of reason there was some conflict.

The monks prevailed, and Serkong Dorje Chang was invited to give the ordination of the eight Mahayana precepts in the early morning. So Rinpoche came in carrying the precepts text, opened it, and said, "If your guru tells you to lick fresh, hot kaka, get down on the ground immediately and lick it!" Then with his tongue outstretched and making a slurping sound, he imitated a dog licking up excrement. "That's how to practice Dharma," he said. Then he left. That was his motivation for taking the precepts. But he didn't actually give them—he just gave that advice and left. It was like an atomic explosion—a very powerful teaching. It really moved the mind. Just on the basis of that instruction, I took him as a guru. That's all he taught that morning. But he's someone who knows everything; a great yogi, as Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche said.

Serkong Dorje Chang would often circumambulate the precious stupa at Swayambhunath, the main, original holy object in Kathmandu. To people who didn't know who he was or the qualities he embodied, he would appear as a very simple monk. They'd think he knew nothing—a simple monk, mala in hand, circumambulating the stupa. That's how he appeared to ordinary people. He might have appeared like he knew nothing, but in reality, he knew everything.

Sometimes he'd be circumambulating with all the other people and if the time was right, if it was their lucky day, he'd suddenly turn to a complete stranger and say, "You don't have much longer to live," or "You're going to die in a month"; "Better do prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas." Something like that. Rinpoche would make predictions and advise the people what to do. But if the time wasn't right, if it was not the day of your good fortune, even if you asked him something directly, he would say, "Oh, I know nothing. I'm completely ignorant."

I first heard about Serkong Dorje Chang when I was in Buxa—stories about his suddenly disappearing and reappearing somewhere else and his attendants having to go look for him; many stories like that. Therefore, soon after we arrived in Nepal we went very anxiously to Swayambhunath

to meet him. He was staying at a benefactor's house because he didn't have his own monastery at that time and had been kicked out of the monastery where he was staying due to some political problem. It was a Nepalese house and he was staying upstairs. When we arrived, this very simple monk came down the steps and we asked him, "Where's Serkong Dorje Chang?" He told us to wait and went back inside the house through another door, not the one he'd come out of. Then we went upstairs to Rinpoche's room, and the simple monk we'd seen downstairs was sitting on the bed. It was Serkong Dorje Chang.

Our first Western disciple, who had already been ordained a nun, Princess Zina Rachevsky—she was descended from Russian nobility—was with us at the time. Serkong Dorje Chang had a big pile of texts next to his bed, so she just blurted out, "Please read us something from those." Normally you don't ask like that! In fact, usually when we took her to see high lamas we'd help her prepare the Dharma questions she was going to ask. Anyway, that's what she said, and Serkong Dorje Chang replied, "No, no, no. I know nothing, I know nothing." But then Rinpoche gave some unbelievably profound teachings. I can't remember what they were! I didn't make it! But unbelievably profound; really deep. All I can remember is the essence, which was, "If your guru is sitting there on the floor, you must think that it is Guru Shakyamuni Buddha who is sitting there." I can't remember the exact words, which were much more than that, but that was the essence of Rinpoche's advice to her.

One of Rinpoche's supporters was a Tibetan from Amdo. He was the monastery's biggest benefactor. Every year he would invite Rinpoche and his monks to his house to recite the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* 100,000 times and they would stay there for however many weeks it took to do that. Serkong Dorje Chang would be there for the duration. This major benefactor built all the monks' rooms at the monastery; something significant like that. One day he came to the monastery to see Rinpoche and Rinpoche said, "And who are you?" pretending not to know him. Then Rinpoche's attendant explained who he was, but Rinpoche still didn't show any signs of recognition. This man was a big businessman and used to sell buddha statues in order to support his family. He must have done something really negative just before coming to see Rinpoche, so perhaps as a sign of that obscurity, Rinpoche manifested the aspect of not knowing who he was. There's no way he could have forgotten him.

The monastery used to have this really big pot for making tea and food for all the monks. One day it was stolen, but when the monks told Rinpoche about it, he said, “Invite the thieves here and offer them a *khatag* to thank them for taking it.” But I’m not sure that the monastery followed through on that!

Once the bodhisattva Togme Zangpo, author of *The Thirty-seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*, was invited to a monastery to give teachings or attend a puja, and received many offerings. Soon after leaving the monastery he and his party were held up by robbers, who tied them up and stole all the offerings. I don’t know if they beat them as well, but they certainly took everything. Before they could leave, the bodhisattva Togme Zangpo asked them to wait so that he could dedicate to them everything they had taken. Of course, they’d already taken everything physically, but he insisted on making prayers for their well-being. Then he advised them to avoid going near the monastery when they left, otherwise the monks would see that they’d stolen the offerings and would beat them up!

THE HEALING POWER OF COMPASSION

The conclusion of all this is as I mentioned before. Compassion for other sentient beings is the best method, the best antidote for eliminating life obstacles; the best puja to eliminate obstacles to the success of both your Dharma practice, your gaining realizations, and your worldly work, such as your business affairs.

Once in Tibet there was a very wealthy family whose daughter was possessed by spirits. She’d gone completely wild and crazy. They invited many local lay lamas who normally did pujas and prayers for people in that area, but nothing helped. One day a simple monk came by begging for alms, so they invited him upstairs to see if he could do anything for their daughter. Maybe the monk was a geshe, I don’t know, but anyway, he tried the tantric ritual of the *geg tor*—giving a *torma* to the interferers, like when we offer those three tormas at the beginning of initiations. But while he was reciting the mantra NAMO SARVA TATHAGATA BEU MEGA . . . SOHA, lifting up the torma offering it to the interferers, she was just imitating his actions and reciting the same mantra back. So he realized that this wasn’t helping! Then he stopped performing the ritual and instead wrapped his *zen* [monk’s shawl] around his head and meditated on compassion—for

the suffering of the spirit and the suffering of the girl. At that point, the spirit spoke to him through the girl's body, saying, "Please let me go. I will leave her," and she was released. The girl who had been completely wild and crazy through spirit possession was finally freed by compassion. That was the only thing that could heal her. This is just one example of how compassion is one of the best, most powerful ways of eliminating obstacles.

The remedy of compassion is also the best medicine for healing sickness, the best antidote to disease. There are many stories of people who have recovered from illness by doing the compassionate practice of *tong len*, where by taking others' suffering onto yourself you cure your own disease. There was one student in Singapore who had AIDS. His first guru was a very high lama who lived in Dharamsala, Rato Rinpoche, who himself had taken the aspect of having Parkinson's disease. Through the lady who translates at the Tibetan Library for Geshe Sonam Rinchen [Ruth Sonam], Rinpoche dictated the *tong len* practice for this student—taking other sentient beings suffering onto himself and giving his own happiness, merit, body and so forth to others—and had her send it to him in Singapore.

He practiced for four days and then went to the hospital for a check-up, where they could find no trace of AIDS. When I heard about this I thought he must have done many hours of meditation during those four days, so I asked him how much he'd done. "Five minutes a day," he said. Five minutes a day! So what happened? While he was meditating, he felt unbearable compassion for all the other people who were suffering from sickness, especially AIDS, and felt no concern whatsoever for his own problems. He felt unbelievable compassion; he could not bear the suffering of AIDS that others were experiencing. During those five minutes tears of compassion poured down his cheeks. So even though he practiced for only five minutes a day, he practiced very, very strongly. The compassion he generated was very strong, and that strong compassion for only five minutes a day for four days, that special *bodhicitta* practice of taking other sentient beings' suffering onto himself and giving them his own happiness and merit and so forth, was enough to overcome his AIDS.

How does compassion heal illness? How does it work? Sicknesses come from negative karma—non-virtuous actions, actions done with attachment, with an impure mind—and compassion, *bodhicitta*, the altruistic

mind cherishing others and seeking enlightenment, is the most powerful purifier of negative karma, such as that which causes illness.

As Shantideva said in the chapter on the benefits of bodhicitta in *Bodhicaryavatara, Entering the Bodhisattvas' Holy Deeds*—and I'll translate this a little loosely so that the meaning of the verse becomes clear—“By relying on a hero you can free yourself from great danger.” [Chapter 1, verse 13.] It means that if, for example, you are going to be executed or there's some other danger to your life, sometimes the only way you can free yourself is by taking refuge in a very powerful person. The danger we face is the practically inexhaustible, powerful, negative karma, as heavy as a mountain, that we have created in this life and collected throughout our hundreds of thousands, in fact beginningless, previous lives. The hero who can save us from this is bodhicitta, the practice of which can purify these mountains of powerful, heavy negative karma in a moment. By relying on the heroic mind of bodhicitta, the attitude that renounces the I and cherishes others, we can purify all this heavy negative karma in the time it takes to snap our fingers.

Shantideva continues, “So, why don't conscientious beings rely on this?” In other words, he's saying, if you're a careful person, why don't you practice bodhicitta? Bodhicitta has such incredible purifying power; if you're intelligent, careful, conscientious, mindful, why don't you practice bodhicitta? Compassion is such a powerful, positive mind that when the man from Singapore generated it so strongly, he purified so much negative karma that he purified the karma that caused him to have AIDS. Because compassion purifies negative karma, after four days he was free of AIDS. That's just one example.

Therefore, compassion is not only the best puja, like in the story of the girl possessed by a spirit, not only the best method of eliminating life obstacles, but also the best, sublime medicine for healing sickness. What is the best way of overcoming cancer and all other illnesses through meditation, with your own mind? It is by developing compassion, by generating compassion for the suffering of others.

Whenever you experience pain in your eye or anywhere else, as soon as it starts, the immediate cure is the practice of the special bodhicitta meditation, taking other sentient beings' suffering on yourself and giving them all your happiness, merit, body and possessions. With compassion take their suffering on yourself and with loving kindness give your happi-

ness, merit, body, possessions and so forth to others. As soon as the pain starts, however painful it is, the immediate cure, the immediate antidote, the best, most powerful method of dealing with it is *tong len*, taking and giving, the special practice of *bodhicitta*. Even though normally I am very lazy about practicing Dharma, through the kindness of pain I am reminded to practice.

This meditation is so powerful that even before you start the actual practice, the moment you start preparing your mind to take on the suffering of others, the pain stops. This shows that even the slightest thought of exchanging yourself for others, just thinking of taking on the suffering of others, just preparing your mind to do that, is powerful enough to stop the pain. Therefore, if one day you go to the doctor and suddenly he says, “Oh, you have cancer,” or something like that, or you begin to have pain, what I recommend you do is immediately start meditating on *bodhicitta*. That’s the immediate medicine you should take.

Remember the story I told before about the great yogi Ngagpa Chöpa^{wa} when he was going to Odi to practice the final stages of tantra? [See Chapter 31, Saturday, February 27.] On the road by the river he saw an awful-looking dirty woman whose body was covered with leprosy sores with pus oozing out. She asked him to carry her to the other side of the river, but he ignored her and just kept going. A bit later, his disciple, the monk Getsul Tsimbulwa, came by and she asked if he would carry her across. As soon as he saw her he felt unbearable compassion and without the slightest hesitation put her on his back and started across the river. Right in the middle, the diseased woman’s appearance changed completely into the enlightened being, the female deity Dorje Pagmo, Vajrayogini, who took him to her pure land, where you are certain to become enlightened.

How did it happen that at first she appeared ordinary, disease-ridden, untouchable, and moments later in the pure aspect of the deity? At first, the monk’s mind was obscured by negative karma, so because of that impure mind he could see her only as an ordinary suffering woman and not as the enlightened being that she was. But because he felt such unbearable compassion for her suffering and completely gave himself up to offer her service, all his heavy negative karma was purified right there in the middle of the river. Then his view of the woman changed completely and he saw her as an enlightened being. His view became totally pure, and she took him to the pure land, where he himself became enlightened. Thus,

you can see how powerful compassion is for purifying negative karma, purifying the mind.

I think I'll stop here. There's no reason to continue now. Perhaps we can continue tomorrow, if tomorrow exists. Anyway, I'll continue the above subject tomorrow, but now, in conclusion, I want to talk about the purpose of doing this retreat.

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS RETREAT?

We are doing this retreat in order to develop compassion. The purpose of doing this retreat is to make our lives more beneficial, more useful for others. How? By developing the good heart. The main reason for doing the Vajrasattva retreat is to develop compassion, to realize bodhicitta, the root of the path to enlightenment, the door of the Mahayana path to enlightenment.

Even if we are reciting one mala of OM MANI PADME HUM, it is for bodhicitta, to realize bodhicitta, to develop compassion. That's what we're reciting for. Whatever other practice we do—prostrations, making offerings to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha or to statues, stupas and scriptures or making holy objects ourselves—we're doing it to develop compassion, to realize bodhicitta, to be able to benefit other sentient beings. It's all for that; that's all it's for.

Whatever practice we do—taking refuge, reciting the refuge prayer—the point of all our practice is for that. Even if we do the minimum practice of reciting one mala of OM MANI PADME HUM or we do a three-year retreat or study Dharma philosophy for many years, it is all to develop compassion, to gain realizations, especially that of bodhicitta. Therefore, every single thing we do is for us to stop harming others and to benefit them. The main goal of our practice is that. If we don't stop harming others, we can't benefit them.

If you do lots of retreats, lots of sadhanas, recite many mantras, but then in daily life somebody criticizes or bothers you in some other way and you immediately retaliate, try to harm them back, it shows that real practice is not happening. There may be lots of recitations, lots of prayers, but when it comes to dealing with other beings, the real practice, the actual practice—whose purpose is the development of patience, tolerance,

compassion and loving kindness—is missing. That means you did not fulfill the purpose of all the prayers and sadhanas, or even that one mala of OM MANI PADME HUM, that you did. The whole, entire purpose of those practices is to help you in your daily life when you are with other sentient beings—to not harm but benefit them. How? By developing in your mind loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta; to develop patience, tolerance and the rest.

Therefore, especially when you are driving your car and somebody cuts you off, swerves in front of you or doesn't follow the law, when another driver honks his horn or gets angry at you, it is good to think, "If I get angry or upset, what's the point of all the practice I've been doing? If I can't practice patience, why have I recited all these mantras? What's been the purpose of my having met the Buddhadharma? What have all my retreats and prayers been for?" It's very useful to think like this. If you haven't changed your own mind, your practice has had no meaning. If you think about it deeply, this is how you'll feel.

If you think, "If I don't practice patience, why am I doing all this? What for? What have I been doing all these years? What's been the purpose of reciting even one mala of OM MANI PADME HUM?" it will help calm your mind, especially on such occasions. Then, when you're able to remember that all your practices are mainly to protect your mind in everyday life, to subdue your mind so that you don't harm but only benefit others—when you can reflect in this way and practice tolerance in a situation where normally you'd get angry—when in place of anger you can arouse strong compassion for others, that's a day for great celebration. The day you can feel compassion instead of anger is truly your birthday—your great birthday for liberation, for enlightenment, for benefiting and not harming other sentient beings; a day for great celebration. Such moments are very important occasions as far as your enlightenment is concerned; very precious opportunities to meet the challenge of practicing Dharma. Very precious opportunities.

Similarly, if somebody abuses you or does something else that normally you would find hard to deal with, couldn't stand, would make you angry and upset, and you are able to overcome your delusion of anger, you have won, you have defeated your enemy. From the point of view of ordinary people in the mundane world, you *should* get angry; you have a right to get angry. Anger is regarded as positive. In the same way, they regard being

selfish as the right way to be, something you *must* do. However, the only selfishness you should allow yourself is the selfishness of caring for other sentient beings, of benefiting other sentient beings. *That* is the right way to be; that is good selfishness. Being selfish for yourself opens the door to all problems; being selfish for others, caring for others, opens the door to all happiness.

Also, if you have compassion, a good heart, even if you have no external wealth, your life is rich; you are a really wealthy person. No matter how much external wealth you have, if your heart is empty of goodness, if you do not have a warm heart, if there's no compassion for others, you're poor; inner poverty makes you a real beggar.

Therefore, whether you are ordained or lay, doing lots of retreat or none, finding lots of time to study Dharma or none, the most important way to live your life is with compassion. Living with compassion is the very essence of life, the best life to lead, the most important thing you can do. Even if you are able to study Dharma your entire life—all the scriptures, sutra, tantra, everything—if your heart is empty, like an empty container, empty of good qualities, your whole life is empty. Even though you might have a vast intellectual understanding of Buddhism and can explain or recite the entire canon of the Buddha's sutras and tantras, if there's no compassion in your heart, your life is empty of meaning.

Even if you do one retreat after another, live in a cave without coming out or seeing other people for fifty, sixty, seventy years, even if you spend your entire life in retreat, if your heart is empty of the satisfaction that comes from cutting the thought of the eight worldly dharmas, empty of compassion for others, your life is not meaningful. Even if you put yourself in a cave without windows or doors and chant mantras for fifty or a hundred years, if your heart is empty of compassion for others, your life has no meaning.

For example, if when you do prostrations your attitude is that you are prostrating for others, if in your heart you feel that you are making the prostrations for the hell beings, for the hungry ghosts, for the animals, for other humans, for the suras and asuras, if you feel in your heart that you're prostrating for others, even if it's only three prostrations, you feel so happy, so satisfied, that it's so worthwhile. Even though you do only three prostrations, at least they're for others. In your mind there's no tension; you feel free. In your heart, you enjoy them; your attitude is

relaxed, peaceful and happy. But if your attitude is that you are doing these prostrations for yourself—for *you* not to be reborn in hell, that is not so enjoyable. If you compare it with the other attitude—even three prostrations for others—you are not really happy. There's a big difference in the nature of your mental attitude; you are not as happy and relaxed as when you prostrate for others.

There's also a great difference from the aspect of motivation. When you dedicate each prostration to others, with each one you collect merit, good karma, like the limitless sky. When the attitude in your heart is, "I'm doing this for me not to be born in hell, for me not to suffer in the lower realms," your purpose is very limited, mean. Your purpose—for yourself not to be born in the lower realms—is so tiny, so limited, and so the benefits of the prostrations you do are correspondingly tiny, limited.

Therefore, there's a big difference between those two attitudes. Even though your motivation is still Dharma—because you are working for the happiness of your next life—the difference is huge. In other words, when you recite one Vajrasattva mantra or one mala of OM MANI PADME HUM, you should feel in your heart that it is all for the benefit of other sentient beings. The purpose behind it is that. In that way, when, with bodhicitta in your heart, you feel that each Vajrasattva mantra is for others, each one becomes 100,000 Vajrasattva mantras. If each mantra you recite is done just for yourself to achieve the everlasting happiness of liberation from samsara or to have better future lives, happiness in future lives for yourself alone, it does not bring skies of merit. You lose out on that. Because you fail to generate bodhicitta motivation, you miss out on each mantra's becoming 100,000. Even though your recitation becomes a Dharma action because your motivation is virtuous—thinking of yourself not suffering in the lower realms, working for the happiness of your future lives—no matter how many Vajrasattva or OM MANI PADME HUM mantras you recite, when you compare their benefits to those you would have gained had you recited the mantras with bodhicitta, they are still kind of meaningless, wasted.

The purpose of emphasizing bodhicitta motivation at the beginning of every session, repeating it again and again, is to remind you to generate bodhicitta so that you don't waste the Vajrasattva mantras you recite. It's extremely important. Not only does it benefit newcomers to the retreat by showing them how to do the meditation, constant repetition also helps the

people who have been here from the beginning understand how important bodhicitta motivation is and to remember to generate it every session.

Of course, at this point my mind has degenerated completely, but in the past, if I found that I had recited one mala of mantras without bodhicitta, I would feel that I had wasted that whole mala and would repeat it with the proper motivation.

When you have a compassionate attitude, you have peace and happiness in your life right now. No matter with whom you find yourself, you are happy and comfortable. When you have compassion for others, you are happy to be with any sentient being. Even if you live alone, you are happy. There is happiness and comfort now, and this attitude has the best future. Not only that, but you also die in the best way. If you die with compassion, your mind will be happy and peaceful and you'll die with no regret or guilt. The best way of dying is with compassion for others. Also, if you want to be reborn in a pure land, dying with compassion is the best way of making it happen. If you die with compassion, not only will your death be peaceful and happy, but you will also receive good rebirths in all your coming future lives, liberation from samsara and full enlightenment—all the infinite good qualities of the buddha's holy body, speech and mind will be yours, and you will be able to enlighten numberless sentient beings.

With compassion, both your present and your future are happy.

DEDICATION

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may the source of all happiness and success for myself and all other sentient beings, the precious bodhicitta—cherishing others, who are the source of all my happiness, and renouncing the I, which is the source of all my problems and suffering—be generated within my mind and the minds of my family members, all the students and benefactors in this organization and all other sentient beings, and may the bodhicitta that has already been generated increase, *Jang chub sem chog* . . .

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may the father-mother sentient beings have happiness, may the three lower realms be empty forever, may

all bodhisattvas' prayers succeed immediately and may I be able to cause all this by myself alone.

“Due to the past, present and future merits collected by myself, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings—which appear to me as independent, inherently existent, real, appearing from there, but which buddhas and bodhisattvas realize are totally non-existent; which I apprehend in my daily life as really true but which buddhas and bodhisattvas realize are totally non-existent, which I believe to be one hundred percent true, real, existing from there but which buddhas and bodhisattvas realize to be totally non-existent, totally empty—may the I—which appears to my mind to be inherently existent, a real one existing from there, which I apprehend, totally believe to be really existent but which buddhas and bodhisattvas realize is totally non-existent—achieve Vajrasattva's or Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment—which appears to me to inherently exist, as something real, existing from there; which I believe to be really true, but which is perceived, realized by the buddhas and bodhisattvas as totally, *totally* non-existent—and lead all sentient beings—who again appear to be inherently existent, real ones existing from there; which I believe to be really true, but are realized by buddhas and bodhisattvas to be totally non-existent, totally empty of existing from there—to that enlightenment—which appears to me to be inherently existent, as something real existing from there but is realized by buddhas and bodhisattvas to be totally non-existent—by myself alone—which appears to me to be an inherently existent self, existing from its own side; which I really believe to be true, but which buddhas and bodhisattvas realize to be totally empty, as it is, in fact, totally non-existent in reality.”

Finally, dedicate to actualize Lama Tsongkhapa's complete path in your own mind, and in the minds of your family members, all the students and benefactors in this organization, especially those who sacrifice their lives and bear much hardship offering service to other sentient beings and the teaching of Buddha through this organization, and for the Buddha's teachings in general and Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings in particular, which are the only medicine that can heal the sufferings of all sentient beings, to spread and flourish in all directions and to make all this to happen by yourself, alone.

Sunday, March 7

WEEKEND TEACHING

[Please motivate as follows:] “As quickly as possible, I must achieve full enlightenment in order to liberate living beings, who equal the limitless sky, every single one of whom is the source of all my past, present and future happiness, every single comfort and all temporary and ultimate happiness. Therefore, I’m going to listen to the profound holy Dharma.”

So please listen well by clarifying the purest motivation in your minds, that of bodhicitta, and listen to the teaching correctly, according to the traditional practices prescribed by the lineage lamas of the path to enlightenment.

THE BENEFITS OF BODHICITTA

The sutra *Do de pal wo che*, which contains teachings on bodhicitta, says, “The holy, altruistic mind of enlightenment, that purest of attitudes, is a treasury of merits.”

In the *Bodhicaryavatara*, it says, “How can one measure the merits one collects by generating the precious thought that is the cause of all happiness of all transmigratory beings and the medicine that cures the suffering of all sentient beings?” [Chapter 1, verse 26.]

From where does every single happiness, both temporary and ultimate, of every single sentient being come? From bodhicitta. What is the one medicine for every suffering that sentient beings experience? That, too, is bodhicitta. Therefore, there’s no limit to the benefits of bodhicitta; there’s no way to realize how much merit you can collect with it. You can’t say it’s this much; it’s immeasurable. The merits you can collect with bodhicitta are numberless. That is the straight translation—“How can the merits collected by generating the precious thought that is the cause of the happiness

of all transmigrator beings and the medicine for the suffering of all sentient beings be measured?”

With the mind of bodhicitta, each breath in and each breath out become a cause for the happiness of all sentient beings. With this purest of attitudes, bodhicitta, every breath you take benefits each sentient being and with each breath, with every action, you create skies of merit.

Therefore, if you want to accumulate the conditions necessary for attaining realizations on the path to enlightenment, you should put all your effort into developing your own precious mind of bodhicitta.

When you think of fulfilling your wishes, it's not suffering you want. Normally, you don't wish for suffering. What you wish for is happiness. Of course, the happiness most of us wish for is actually suffering. What we usually think of as happiness is not pure happiness. However, as far as what we wish for is concerned, from the side of the wish, what we are looking for is happiness, not suffering. However, every single happiness—from that of full enlightenment, through liberation from samsara and the happiness of future lives, down to even the happiness of this life—depends on merit, on good karma. Without good karma, nothing works. Without good karma, the cause of happiness, you can't enjoy the slightest happiness. Without merit, there's no comfort; everything depends on the merit we have. Realizations of the path, temporary happiness, even the work of this life, such as success in business—every single thing depends on merit. Practicing bodhicitta, meditating on bodhicitta, is the best way to collect extensive merit.

Also, the merit you collect with bodhicitta is inexhaustible, unceasing. It doesn't stop until you reach enlightenment, and even after you reach enlightenment it continues. You continuously experience the result; your mind in the state of peerless happiness. Not only that. As a result of the merits you collect with bodhicitta, you liberate numberless other sentient beings and bring them to full enlightenment. Without discriminating, you bring sentient beings equaling the sky, every single one, to the full enlightenment of buddhahood.

The teaching says that the merits collected without bodhicitta are like a “water tree.” I think that means a banana tree—the fruit comes, you use it once and the tree no longer bears fruit. In other words, if merit is created without bodhicitta, you experience the result once and it's finished. Merit

collected with bodhicitta is completely different—you enjoy it all the time, lifetime after lifetime, and even after you achieve enlightenment, you keep enjoying it. Such merit is inexhaustible.

That's why bodhicitta is something you should put all your daily life's effort, everything you do, into. Whether you are happy or unhappy, whether you encounter problems or are problem-free, whatever your circumstances, favorable or unfavorable, whatever conditions you find yourself in, you must put every single effort into this, into living your life with the attitude of bodhicitta.

Now, when you do the Vajrasattva sadhana or other practices, even though they begin with bodhicitta motivation, when you come to the mantra recitation, *again*, just before you begin to recite the mantra—as I've already mentioned a few times during some of the sessions—dedicate very precisely by thinking, “Each mantra I recite is for every hell being, each mantra is for every hungry ghost, each mantra is for every animal, each mantra is for every human, each mantra is for every sura, asura, intermediate state being.”

Even though you begin the practice with bodhicitta motivation, make sure that when you come to the actual recitation of the mantra, it is directed more to the benefit of others than yourself. Make sure that instead of feeling in your heart that it is “I, me” for whom you are reciting the mantra, you feel that you are doing it for others. Make sure very precisely that each mantra you recite is for others, not yourself. Instead of filling your heart with “I,” fill your heart with others. Begin your mantra recitation like that; during the session, recite the mantra with as much bodhicitta as you can generate; and every now and then, check your motivation to make sure that your attitude is that of more concern for others than yourself. If it's not, fix it up.

If you want to be a lucky person, if you want good luck in your life, bodhicitta is the best way to create the good luck you desire. If you want to be lucky, put your efforts into practicing bodhicitta all the time. If you are a good-hearted person, you are truly the lucky one, because gradually, all your wishes get fulfilled—your wishes for your own welfare and your wishes for the welfare of others. You can stop all your defilements, your mental stains and errors, and accomplish all realizations, enabling you to liberate others from suffering and do perfect work for other sentient

beings. Your good heart allows you to accomplish your own aims and those of others. That's the definition of a really lucky person—one who has compassion for others, loving kindness, bodhicitta.

It also says in the *Bodhicaryavatara*, “Since merely thinking of benefiting others transcends making offerings to all the buddhas, what need is there to say how extraordinary it is to actually attempt to bring happiness to every single sentient being without exception?” [Chapter 1, verse 27.]

Here, Shantideva is saying that even thinking of benefiting others is much higher, more special, much greater and more extraordinary than making offerings to all the buddhas. Therefore, if you go beyond this extremely beneficial thought and actually *try* to bring happiness to all sentient beings without exception, actually *work* for their happiness, what need is there to say how extraordinarily beneficial *this* is, how far it surpasses making offerings to all buddhas?

Also, in his commentary to Maitreya Buddha's teachings, *Do de gyän* [Skt: *Mahayanasutralamkara*], Arya Asanga says that benefiting one sentient being is more meaningful than making offerings to buddhas and bodhisattvas equaling in number the atoms of the world. How can it be that benefiting one sentient being is more meaningful than making offerings to not just one buddha, but to buddhas equaling in number the atoms of the world?

This is incredible advice, similar to that of Shantideva when he was talking about the benefits of bodhicitta, how extraordinary it is merely to think of benefiting others. For example, when we generate bodhicitta motivation, the thought of achieving enlightenment for sentient beings, the thought of benefiting sentient beings, even this mere thought, just this wish, is greater than making offerings to all the buddhas.

HELPING OTHERS IS AN OFFERING TO THE BUDDHAS

I mentioned a few days ago that when we help sentient beings, we can also think of it as an offering to the buddhas. This is a very useful way to think. There are many ways in which we can help sentient beings. I'm not just talking about the dogs and cats we keep—and whether we're keeping them is for their happiness or ours is also a question—but also insects. Actually, perhaps we should also keep insects as pets—mosquitoes, spi-

ders . . . especially the ones you don't like! Anyway, whatever sentient being you benefit—domestic animals, insects, hell beings, pretas, people—and whichever way you help them—for example, giving someone a Dharma talk to help solve that person's depression or other mental problems, giving medicine for illness, giving food or money to a beggar—sincerely trying to help either physically or mentally, you can always combine two things: making charity to the sentient being and an offering to all the buddhas.

If, for example, you give food or money to a beggar, you're giving immediate help to that sentient being, but at the same time it becomes the best kind of offering to the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions. Why? Because what the buddhas and bodhisattvas cherish all the time is sentient beings; nobody else. They are constantly working for sentient beings, cherishing only sentient beings. Therefore, when you help sentient beings you are helping the numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas. That's the reality.

Even if you don't think that your helping a sentient being is an offering to the buddhas and bodhisattvas, in fact, it becomes the best kind of offering you can make, the most pleasing offering possible. As I mentioned the other day, even if you don't directly help the parents, when you help their children you make the parents happy, because what they cherish most in their lives, what they hold most dear in their hearts, is their children. Therefore, they always think of and cherish their children. Similarly, if you harm the child, you harm the parents. In the same way, therefore, if you harm sentient beings, you harm the buddhas and bodhisattvas. It displeases them greatly.

A child is like its parents' life, or heart. That's how the buddhas and bodhisattvas cherish sentient beings. Therefore, if you do good things for sentient beings, if you benefit them, offer service to them, you are not only offering service to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, but the very best kind of service.

Thinking in this way helps you practice tolerance, patience; to not get angry at other sentient beings, to not arouse ill-will, to avoid hurting or harming them. It is very helpful. Causing pain to a sentient being is like causing pain to the buddhas and bodhisattvas. That's not to say they experience pain in the same way as we suffering sentient beings do, but it is certainly displeasing.

Therefore, when you offer service to a child, an old person, when you

give things to others, for example, when you make charity to a beggar or even throw a party for others, offer them food and drink, remember that you are also making an offering to the buddhas and bodhisattvas. If you are aware of this, if when you give to the sentient being you also intentionally think you are making an offering to the buddhas and bodhisattvas, it combines two things. Sentient beings derive benefit from whatever you give them and you collect merit by making an offering to the buddhas and bodhisattvas with your intentional thought. If, at such times, you consciously think, “By helping this sentient being I am also making an offering to the buddhas and bodhisattvas,” if you remember that what you are doing with this sentient being also affects the buddhas and bodhisattvas, that doing something good pleases them, two things get done and you collect much more merit than you would have by simply making an offering, thinking of only the Buddha.

When you make charity, whether it’s an offering to monks, monasteries or refugees, homeless people or the sick, at that time also remember that you are making offerings to the buddhas and bodhisattvas. You are giving to sentient beings but offering to the buddhas and bodhisattvas. In this way you collect far more merit, an unbelievable amount.

The sutra *Do de pal wo che* says, “The holy, purest thought of enlightenment is a treasury of merit (or fortune). From this come the buddhas of the three times.”

This means that numberless past, numberless present and numberless future buddhas have all come from bodhicitta, that holy, most pure thought of enlightenment. The text goes on, “From this [bodhicitta] comes the happiness of all the world’s transmigrators.” The Tibetan phrase here is *di lä jig ten dro wa kun gyi de wa jung*. *Di lä* means “from this.” The next term, *jig ten*, requires a little more explanation.

THE MEANING OF JIG TEN

The sense is “change,” but to make it more clear we should say, “changeable aggregates.” We also have the term *jig* in one of the six root delusions, the one called five wrong views, *ta wa nga ta ta min nga*. One of those is *jig tsog la ta wa*, the view of the changeable aggregates. Here, *jig* is the same, meaning change. *Ta wa* itself simply means view, but the implication here

is wrong view, so together it becomes something like changeable wrong view. *Jig tsog wa* means changeable collection. What is that changeable collection? It is the five aggregates.

How does ignorance, the root of samsara, arise? How does that ignorance, which is the wrong view of the *jig tsog la* happen?

First, we have the *mig kyen*, or objective condition. The mind looks at the aggregates, which are impermanent and therefore changeable in nature, and labels them “I.” The thought thinks of the transitory aggregates and makes up the label “I,” the merely imputed I. But this I, which is merely imputed by that thought, doesn’t appear back to the mind as merely imputed. At that moment, you are not aware that the I is merely imputed by the mind.

Right after the I has been merely imputed by the mind, the negative imprints left on the consciousness by past ignorance, the concept of inherent existence, immediately *project* that the merely imputed I is inherently existent. Right after your mind merely imputes the I, just like imprints left on a film in a camera, the imprints left on the mental continuum by past ignorance—not just any ignorance, but the ignorance of inherent existence—immediately *project* the hallucination of inherently existence onto that merely imputed I. Buddhas cannot see this inherent existence; bodhisattvas who realize emptiness can’t see it; and when you analyze, even you can’t find it. Because it doesn’t exist. What those buddhas and bodhisattvas see is a *non*-inherently existent I. That’s what they see.

However, with us, as soon as our thought merely labels I, in the very next moment, that merely imputed I appears back to the same continuity of thought as not merely labeled by mind, as existing from its own side. The very next moment of mind apprehends, “Oh, that’s true, that’s a real I there.” So, that real I appearing as true, seeing that real I appearing from there as true, is the wrong view, *ta wa*.

Now you can understand the meaning of *jig tsog la ta wa* a little better. *Jig tsog* means changeable collection, in other words, the aggregates; *ta wa* means view. When the same continuity of the thought that merely imputed the I, in the next thought moment, *believes*, apprehends, that what is appearing to it is true, is something real from its own side, then at that time the *jig tsog la ta wa*, the wrong view, happened. This wrong view is established on the aggregates, which are changeable by nature—like a table-cloth covering a table.

You can see the evolution, but since the wrong view is of the I, why does the term contain the aggregates, *jig tsog*—the changeable collections (*tsog* means collection), the changeable aggregates? Why are they mentioned here, what's the connection? Well, by understanding the evolution of the wrong view, you can see why. By thinking of the aggregates, your mind labels I. First you think of the *base*, then you apply the label. The cause, or reason, for the mind applying a label has to come before the label; the reason, or cause, of the label has to come before the label. They don't come together; the cause comes first. So, why is the particular label I chosen? Because first the base is identified, then the appropriate label applied.

It's the same with any phenomenon. By looking at the base, thinking of the base, seeing the base, hearing, touching the base, smelling, tasting the base, the mind that experiences the base—hearing, smelling, tasting, whatever—creates the label, this or that. Depending on the base, the thought makes up the label, and that's how all phenomena exist, happen.

Abbreviating *jig tsog la ta wa*, the view of the changeable aggregates, we say *jig ta*. *Jig* means change and *ta* means view, but although literally it comes to changeable, or transitory, view, that's not what it means. It is not the view that is changeable or transitory; the view is of the I. Change refers to the aggregates; the view is to do with the I.

Why am I describing ignorance here? Why, along with the wrong view, are the aggregates brought up? If you think of the evolution, you can understand. But now I should finish the quotation, whatever it is!

“From this, the happiness of all transmigratory beings . . .”—the term here is *jig ten dro wa*, so perhaps it should be translated as “transmigratory beings dependent on change,” since *jig ten* means dependent on change. It means that the I, the being, exists by depending on the aggregates. That's what the “change” refers to. It means aggregates, which are transitory in nature, *jig ten*. It really depends on the context. Actually, *jig ten* is a general term that means both the world and its inhabitants. Not only the place but also the living beings that live there. It depends on the context. Usually it means suffering beings, *jig ten*; samsaric beings, *jig ten lä de pa* and *jig ten pa*—“beyond those beings who are dependent on change” and “those beings who are dependent on change,” respectively. In this context, *jig ten pa* means samsaric beings, “those who are dependent on change,” and *jig ten lä de pa* means “those who have gone beyond samsara and are not suffering beings dependent on the aggregates,” which are changeable in

nature, suffering in nature, that is, samsara. So *jig ten lä de pa* means those who are beyond *jig ten*. Here, ten means dependent on something; those who are dependent on change, which means the aggregates, transitory in nature, but also suffering in nature—that means samsara. Thus, *jig ten pa* means beings who are dependent on change, which means the aggregates. The aggregates are changeable in nature, suffering—that’s samsara. The aggregates are samsara.

“From this, the happiness of all the transmigratory beings dependent on change . . .”—*jig ten dro wa*, dependent on change. That describes the aggregates, samsara. Beings who are dependent on the aggregates, which are changeable and suffering in nature—that’s samsara, the continuity of which circles from one life to the next. Beings who are dependent on that are called samsaric beings, circlers.

The next line says, “From this, *all* good things, all goodness praised by the victorious ones comes” or “From this, one receives *all* the goodness praised by the victorious ones.” It can be translated either way. From bodhicitta, there is no doubt that you can become a buddha, one who is the victor over, who has conquered, defeated, destroyed, not only the delusions but even the subtle negative imprints of delusion. So, “From this, there is no doubt that you can become the principal victorious one”—amongst holy beings, the principal one, buddha, the most perfect of beings.

The next line: “With this, the defilements of all the *jig ten* will cease.” Here, the *jig ten* can mean all worldly beings. You can say, “All the defilements of worldly beings will cease,” but to my mind—I don’t know how it sounds to others—worldly has the connotation of “not being free from worldly concern, attachment clinging to this life.” Such beings are worldly beings, those who have not renounced attachment to this life. To me, “worldly being” has more this meaning than “samsaric being.” But here, worldly being means samsaric being. The Tibetan is *di ni jig ten kun gyi drib pa se par gyur*: “With this (bodhicitta), the defilements of all the *jig ten* will cease” is the word-for-word translation—the meaning is the defilements of all samsaric beings or, you can say, the defilements of all the beings dependent on change, which means the aggregates, as we discussed above. All these defilements will cease.

On the other hand, I’m not sure what *jig ten* refers to, because even *arya* beings, like arhats and higher bodhisattvas, and buddhas as well, exist by depending on aggregates. Even beings who are free from samsara but still

have the subtle defilements—like arhats and higher bodhisattvas—exist in dependence upon aggregates. Not aggregates that are suffering in nature but those that are changeable in nature. Those who are free from samsara, arhats, don't experience suffering, but they do depend upon changeable aggregates, *jig ten*. So I'm not sure how widely the term *jig ten* extends. Usually it means just samsaric beings, but perhaps it can also cover those who still have subtle defilements—arhats and higher bodhisattvas.

THE BENEFITS OF YOUR OWN BODHICITTA

While this quotation from *Do de pal wo che* explains the incredible benefits of bodhicitta in general, you can also use it to think of the extensive benefits that come from your own bodhicitta. Thus, your own holy mind of bodhicitta is the treasury of all merit. Of course, you can't relate the buddhas of the three times to your own bodhicitta, but they all do come from bodhicitta in general. Like numberless past, present and future buddhas arose from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's bodhicitta—not *all*, but numberless—you can relate to it like that. The happiness of numberless transmigrators dependent on change comes from *your* bodhicitta.

The happiness of all migratory beings comes from bodhicitta in general, but with *your* bodhicitta, you can still bring much happiness—the happiness of this life, of future lives, of liberation from samsara and enlightenment—to numberless sentient beings. Your bodhicitta can cause numberless hell beings, numberless hungry ghosts, numberless animals, numberless humans, numberless suras, numberless asuras and numberless intermediate state beings to experience all happiness up to enlightenment. All that comes from *your* bodhicitta, is caused by *your* bodhicitta.

You can even think very specifically. For example, your, one person's, bodhicitta causes numberless ants to experience all temporary and ultimate happiness up to enlightenment. Think how many ants you can find at just one spot, how many thousands there are in a nest under a rock. There are so many more in a field or on a mountain. There's no question how many more there are in one country. Like that, if you expand from one spot and think how many ants there are in this world, this universe, numberless universes, you can realize how many there are and how your bodhicitta brings them all happiness up to enlightenment. How your, one person's, bodhicitta brings *all* happiness to numberless other insects,

numberless fish in the water, numberless shellfish on the rocks, on the piles supporting piers, in this world, in this universe, in numberless universes. If you think by elaborating in this way—the numbers of shellfish, for instance, are unbelievable, countless, and your bodhicitta, the bodhicitta of one person, you, can bring all happiness to all of them—it's incredible.

Think of other sentient beings one by one. The worms in the ground—your bodhicitta brings all happiness to numberless worms. Caterpillars, those hairy ones that walk in such long, well-disciplined straight lines—uncountable, numberless caterpillars in just one spot, let alone this universe, numberless universes—your bodhicitta brings every happiness to them all. Or on the beach there are so many tiny crabs—you can see them when the tide goes out. They make all these little holes in the sand, and when they come out looking for food, the seagulls try to eat them. Think how many there must be in this universe, in numberless universes. The bodhicitta of you, one person, can bring them every happiness up to enlightenment. Think how unbelievable that is.

Even without thinking about the numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, humans and so forth but merely thinking about the different kinds of animal and how each type is numberless, it is incredible that your, one person's, bodhicitta can cause them to experience all happiness up to enlightenment and, as it says here, "With this (bodhicitta), the defilements of all those dependent on change (*jig ten*, all the samsaric beings) will cease." The bodhicitta of you, one person, can eradicate the defilements of each of the numberless animals, of whom even each type is numberless. Your bodhicitta can eradicate not only their suffering but also their two types of defilement. It's unbelievable. There are so many different kinds of animal, and even in this world, each one is numberless. When you think how many there must be in numberless universes and what one person's realization of bodhicitta, the good heart, can do, how much it can benefit others, it's really unbelievable.

Think how many flies there must be. Even on one cow-pat, there are thousands upon thousands of tiny flies keeping themselves busy, and that's just on the ground. In the air there are so many more. You don't notice them when the sun's not shining, but when it's out you can see these huge clouds of flies in the air; uncountable numbers of tiny flies. From these few examples from the animal realm, just these few kinds of insect, you can understand how many suffering sentient beings there are.

I'm just talking about one spot on the ground, but you should think of this world, then of numberless universes—how many unimaginable numbers of sentient being are suffering. Therefore, if you, one person, has bodhicitta, it can stop all their defilements, both types, and all their suffering. That's incredible.

THE ONLY SOLUTION TO SUFFERING

There are many animals, such as snakes, tigers, leopards and so forth, whose only food is other animals. They don't eat plants; they don't live on potatoes or carrots; they don't grow vegetables. All they eat is other sentient beings. Snakes eat mice, frogs and so forth. There are many sentient beings whose only food is other sentient beings, who, due to karma, depend on killing others for their very survival. If you keep such animals as pets, you have to feed them other sentient beings. For them, not eating others is suffering, since they can't survive in any other way, and killing others is also suffering, since by harming others they create negative karma. Tigers in zoos, for example, have to be fed goats. Anyway, there are many sentient beings like this.

A while back in Singapore, where we frequently liberate many animals—frogs, fish and so forth—we bought five snakes from a restaurant in order to liberate them. When we opened the sack they were in they couldn't crawl away immediately because they'd been sedated. It was as if they were drunk or on drugs! The thought came, if we release them, they'll eat mice, but if we hadn't freed them, they'd have become the restaurant's evening special. Either way, it's a problem. What we have to do is to free them from samsara. That's the only solution—free them from delusion and karma. Until that happens, either mode of existence in samsara—killing others or not killing others—is a problem. The only solution is to free them from samsara.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DHARMA CENTER

Therefore, we ourselves should practice Dharma as much as possible, and, if we can, spread Dharma and help other people understand it. If we can help those sentient beings who have precious human bodies understand the teachings and get them to practice Dharma as much as possible, we

can effect that solution right away, right now. You can't explain Dharma to snakes; you can't teach them to meditate! You can't start a meditation center for snakes, for mice, for tigers. You can't establish a retreat center for mosquitoes, organize retreats for mosquitoes! There's no way they can understand Dharma. Not even cats or dogs can understand it.

It is important for you to practice Dharma as much as possible yourself, to actualize the path, and to help other people, those sentient beings who have human bodies, understand Dharma; to get others to practice Dharma. Actually, it is unbelievably urgent; it's an emergency. The only sentient beings you can really help to understand Dharma, the path to liberation and enlightenment, are other human beings. In this way, they can avoid being reborn in the lower realms, as hell beings, hungry ghosts or animals. They don't have to be reborn as mosquitoes. They can be saved from rebirth as snakes, tigers or other harmful animals. You can liberate people from rebirth in the lower realms, where you're in danger if you try to survive and in danger if you don't.

Who can you help right now? Human beings. The only way you can help animals is by taking them around holy objects or purifying them with blessed water. You can give them a little help, but there's no way that you can make them understand and practice Dharma right now. It's only human beings you can help right now.

Therefore, you should make every effort to help human beings purify their past negative karma and protect their present karma by living in vows, by abstaining from negative karma. In this way, they can liberate themselves from being reborn in the lower realms as those harmful animals we've been talking about. Not just that, but also to free themselves from samsara and bring themselves to full enlightenment.

It is essential that you practice Dharma yourself as much as you possibly can. And here we see how very important the Dharma center is; how it plays a very important role in saving, liberating, rescuing human beings from reincarnating back into the lower realms. The Dharma center is an emergency rescue operation, like when police go in with all that noise—sirens blaring, red and blue lights flashing, helicopters whirling—to rescue people in distress! Like that, the meditation center plays a very important role in the emergency rescue of people, human beings, using the seat belt and life jacket of the lamrim—meditation on refuge and karma immediately saves you from falling into the lower realms again. Then, on the basis of

that, the center helps bring people to liberation from samsara and enlightenment. The meditation center, the Dharma organization, plays a very important role in this. This is the way to empty the lower realms, to ensure through the Dharma that no more harmful sentient beings get born—doing sincere work with pure motivation solely for the benefit of others.

NUMBERLESS BEINGS DEPEND ON YOU

In that way, your bodhicitta is unbelievable. It's unbelievable how much benefit you can bring to numberless sentient beings in *each* realm. Therefore, now, you can see how crucial it is—how the happiness of numberless sentient beings depends on you, how it's in your hands. That means it depends on how much you practice bodhicitta, how much effort you exert trying to realize bodhicitta. It is crucial, *most urgent*, that you realize bodhicitta, train your mind in *this*.

Thus, the practice of bodhicitta becomes very important in your daily life. In all activities, under any circumstances—when you are happy, when you're experiencing problems—at all times, never separate from bodhicitta. Never stop wishing that all sentient beings be happy. Never lose your determination for sentient beings equaling the extent of space to have all happiness and to be free from all suffering and, in this way, to lead them all to enlightenment.

If you live your life with this attitude constantly in mind, then, if you have taken the bodhisattva vow, you are able to protect it, by the way. Even though there are many different vows enumerated, if you live your life with this attitude, you take care of all those different vows. This attitude encompasses all those vows. If you never separate from bodhicitta in all your activities, each merit you create contains the three types of bodhisattva morality and the other paramitas as well.

I think we'll stop here.

DEDICATION

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may bodhicitta, the source of

all the happiness and success of myself and all other sentient beings be generated in my own mind and in the minds of all sentient beings without even one second's delay; and may that which has been generated increase.

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

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, from now on, may I offer extensive benefit like the sky to all sentient beings as Lama Tsongkhapa did by having within me the same qualities that Lama Tsongkhapa had in all my future lifetimes.

“Due to the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings—which appear to be real merits, existing from there, from their own side, as projected by my hallucinating mind's ignorance, but are in reality empty of that—may I—which is projected by my hallucinating mind's ignorance as a real *me*, a real self existing from there, appearing from there, but which is empty of that, empty of the hallucination of a real I appearing from there—achieve Vajrasattva's enlightenment”—or that of your own deity—“which appears to be a real enlightenment as projected by my hallucinating mind's ignorance but which is in fact empty of a real enlightenment appearing from there—and lead all sentient beings—which appear to me as real ones from there but which are a hallucination, a projection of my ignorance, which means that all the sentient beings are empty of being real sentient beings appearing from there—to that enlightenment—which appears to me to be a real one from there but which is a hallucination projected by my ignorance, which means that that enlightenment is empty of being a real one appearing from there—by myself alone—who also appears to my mind as a real one appearing from there but which is a hallucination projected by my ignorance, which means that this me, this I, is totally empty of a real one appearing from there.”

Finally, dedicate for Lama Tsongkhapa's complete path to be actualized within your mind and within the minds of your family members and all students and benefactors of this organization; to spread and flourish in all

TEACHINGS FROM THE VAJRASATTVA RETREAT

directions; and to be able to cause these teachings to be actualized in the minds of all sentient beings by yourself alone.

Next session?

Friday, March 12

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

BENEFITS OF LONG LIFE PUJA AND INITIATION

[During Ven. Ingrid Nordzin's request to Rinpoche to accept a long life puja and to grant a long life initiation on April 30, she asked Rinpoche to remain until samsara is empty.]

Until samsara is empty? Samsara has been empty all the time. So it's already finished!

I'm sorry, but I've been asleep for the past few days. I just woke up today!

From the very beginning of the Vajrasattva retreat, I had planned to give a long life initiation near the end of the retreat, not because I have the qualities necessary to do this, but because of the deity's blessings and your concentration and faith. From that side there can be some benefit. The reason that I thought doing it would be worthwhile is because we are trying to practice Dharma. The practice of Dharma involves two things—not harming others and, on the basis of that, benefiting others. How does it happen? Through subduing our own mind. This makes it worthwhile to have a long life. Even someone reciting OM MANI PADME HUM every day is reason enough to give a long life initiation and to have a long life. It makes it worth doing.

For example, when Khunu Lama Tenzin Gyaltsen Rinpoche did a long life meditation during a teaching, Rinpoche would pray for the long life of even those who simply recite OM MANI PADME HUM. Rinpoche was a great bodhisattva, a great pandit like the pandits of ancient times such as Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti, and a great scholar as well. Besides all that, Rinpoche was a great yogi, a great practitioner of tantra, whose holy

mind was well-trained in the Six Yogas of Naropa and other practices of the completion stage of Highest Yoga Tantra.

Anyway, a long life puja is a long life party. We'll have a party, because it's also a long life party for every one of you. It is not that by having a long life I can bring much benefit to others. However, as mentioned in the benefits of the seven-limb practice, the limb of requesting the guru to have stable life is a particular means to purify the negative karma of having disturbed the guru's holy mind. It is a means to purify heavy negative karma collected in this and past lives in relation to the guru through disturbing the holy mind and so forth. Each one of the seven limbs is a remedy for particular delusions and negative karmas.

Because we have a Dharma connection, not because of any power or realizations from the side of my mind, offering a long life puja is a very powerful means to purify those heavy negative karmas and to collect extensive merit. The benefit comes from our Dharma connection. Purifying your negative karma also helps you, the disciple, to have a long life. This is why I am saying that it is also a long life party for every one of you. During the long life puja everybody will have to do a Sherpa dance—or a yak dance!

VAJRASATTVA RETREAT AS A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

I have already mentioned that if it is difficult for you to complete the mantras during this period, you can complete the number at home. If you want to continue the recitation at home, you can then finish the minimum requirement of 100,000 mantras.

Of course, it's best to have both a high number and high quality of mantras; but if you can't have both, then it's best to have high quality, because the main aim is to purify negative karma. If great purification is done, even if you recite very few mantras, you have achieved the purpose of the retreat.

Even though I myself haven't come to every session, I feel quite satisfied with this way of doing the Vajrasattva retreat. You have tried very hard to make the retreat as perfect as possible, to have perfect confession and purification. Because you have put your main effort into ensuring the quality of the retreat, I feel that this Vajrasattva retreat has been very good

and very satisfying. And this applies even to those people who could not complete the number of mantras during the three-month period.

As I mentioned some time ago [see Chapter 7, Tuesday, February 9], you have also learned many other practices during this period of the Vajrasattva retreat. You have learned not only how to do the Vajrasattva meditation, but also how to do many other practices, such as *Guru Puja* and so forth, so that they become powerful and effective.

This retreat has also been part of your Dharma education. You have gained experience yourself and you will also be able to teach others how to do retreat and the various other practices. This is very important. We always have a shortage of experienced people. We need so many spiritual coordinators at the centers. The number of centers is increasing all the time, and every center needs someone to guide people in the various retreats and practices. This retreat has also become part of your education, so that if you would like to help in one of the centers, you now know how to guide various practices. This is very, very important.

Some years ago, at one of the CPMT meetings, the center directors' meetings, I remember that Kabir Saxena brought up the issue that Sangha should learn more about how to lead prayers and how to guide various practices. However, this applies to everyone, not just to Sangha. Everyone needs to learn this for their own practice and so that they can help other people, whether individuals or groups, at the centers. This retreat has had many other benefits, in terms of learning and experiencing practices. From time to time there have been explanations of various practices that might prove necessary or beneficial in your life.

One point is that it is helpful for you to learn more about various practices—guiding lamrim meditations is the main one, of course. The other point is that it helps you to help others, to benefit others. You can help others to purify their negative karma and to collect merit, so that they can have realizations of the path to enlightenment.

We always have a shortage of spiritual coordinators at the centers, of people who can give advice on how to do retreats and various practices. The more such people we have, the more productive and beneficial to sentient beings we can make the centers. Even if there is a geshe at the center, we still need a spiritual coordinator or some other person who can lead meditations and practices and who can be consulted by the students. We still need that.

CONDUCT DURING RETREAT SESSIONS

If people are simply reciting mantras and not concentrating, others making a noise during the sessions doesn't matter. [Sudden noise in the background.] That's an example of what I'm talking about. However, in the case of someone who is concentrating single-pointedly, you might disturb their concentration if you make a noise. It is regarded as a great vice to disturb someone's single-pointed concentration. I saw a story about this in a text. During a puja with a group of other monks, one monk was meditating on Heruka. I think he had realizations of the generation stage and had generated himself as Heruka and established the entire mandala. It wasn't like my visualizing the mandala, where everything in the visualization is just words. With the monk's stable, single-pointed concentration, the mandala was actually appearing to his mind. Another monk then disturbed his meditation. The monk who disturbed the concentration then had to do 100,000 tsog offerings to purify that negative karma. It is a heavy negative karma to disturb the meditation of anyone with such incredible concentration. Anyway, I'm not sure how many people here have that kind of concentration

It's a different matter if it's a noise that you can't control—a sudden sneeze, for example. Generally, however, you should cherish the other people who are meditating with you and try to be careful. This is what you should do not only during retreat but even normally in case the people around you are concentrating. If no one is concentrating, there's no problem. But you should try to reduce the sounds you make as much as possible in case someone is concentrating, especially if the person might have single-pointed concentration, as in the example I mentioned. You can't stop every noise, but try your best to cut down the noise you make. Cherish the other people who are meditating.

Another point is that if you make a noise, other people might get angry with you and create negative karma. On the same cushion where we are supposed to achieve enlightenment we might then achieve the hell realms. We are sitting on the cushion to achieve good rebirth, liberation and enlightenment, but there is then a danger that sitting on the cushion, we will achieve the opposite, the lower realms. We sit on the cushion to achieve inner peace but instead generate anger and other disturbing atti-

tudes. If the noise you make doesn't bother other people, it's a different matter.

I might have created many, many negative karmas, because I always call Roger while he is meditating. I will have to do millions and millions and millions of tsog offerings! There is not enough life left to do all the tsog offerings I need to!

As far as drinking—or eating noodles or pizza—during a retreat session, drinking and eating are normally not done while you are reciting mantras.

When His Holiness Zong Rinpoche was giving Yamantaka retreat instructions to the young monks of Ganden Shartse Monastery, Rinpoche mentioned the case of Tepo Tulku, a very high lama of Ganden Shartse, whose incarnation lives in Los Angeles. (Ganden Monastery has two divisions, Shartse and Jangtse.) His Holiness Zong Rinpoche mentioned that Tepo Tulku Rinpoche used to drink during sessions, though I'm not sure whether he drank during mantra recitation. I guess that Tepo Rinpoche drank very thick butter tea. His Holiness Zong Rinpoche did not say that this was negative, but simply mentioned it as a particular case.

If you have a health problem and it would be difficult for you to complete the session unless you drink, it's a different matter. Otherwise, if you have no need to drink, it is better not to drink during mantra recitation. You will have fewer distractions if you do not drink during the recitation.

I might have drunk something during one of the sessions of a recent retreat, but in the other retreats I have never drunk anything during sessions, and especially not during the mantra recitation. But if you need to drink for health reasons, so that you can continue the session and the retreat, it's a different case.

However, remember that it's important to have an attitude of cherishing the other people who are meditating.

I think that's all for tonight. If there is anything else, maybe it will come in your dreams

DEDICATION

When you do the dedications, you can visualize the seven Medicine Buddhas and make strong request to them from the bottom of your heart.

Dedications are also prayers of request; the only difference is that you dedicate the merit to actualize your wishes. In the past when they were bodhisattvas, the Medicine Buddhas, besides making prayers for sentient beings, specially motivated to be able to accomplish the prayers of sentient beings. This is why it's good to visualize the Medicine Buddhas when we are making requests even during dedications. Think of the seven Medicine Buddhas and then make the dedications for this and that to happen.

Visualize the seven Medicine Buddhas, then dedicate, "Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings and due to the merits of the three times of the people who have passed away whose names were mentioned, may those who have passed away, if they are in the lower realms, immediately be liberated from the lower realms and from the intermediate state. May they be reborn in a pure land of buddha where they can become enlightened or receive only a perfect human body in all their lives and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible by meeting perfectly qualified Mahayana gurus and the Mahayana teachings."

This dedication includes all those who have passed away who rely upon me, whose names were given to me and for whom I promised to pray, as well as all other human beings who have passed away. We can dedicate for everyone.

"And for those who are sick, whose names were mentioned in the request, may the rest of their life be most beneficial. May their life be made most meaningful through being able to actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment, especially bodhicitta, in this life as quickly as possible.

"May all the wishes of all the benefactors whose names were mentioned be accomplished immediately in accordance with the holy Dharma. May they be able to actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment, especially bodhicitta, in this very lifetime."

SANGHA FOOD OFFERING

Since there are quite a number of monks and nuns here at the Vajrasattva retreat and many people have helped to sponsor the Sangha to do the retreat, I would like to mention in this context that it would be good, after the meal is finished, for all the Sangha to do together the prayer that is

normally done as a group in Tibetan monasteries. Monks and nuns who follow the vinaya well and do the daily practices as Buddha advised make charity to the pretas every day. I don't know, however, whether Chinese monasteries have this tradition of making charity to the pretas after eating food.

I don't remember the details of the story of how this practiced started, but it seems that during the time of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha there was a female preta called Togmapo, who had five hundred children [*trog ma bu nga gya*]. Many families lost their children because Togmapo used to steal many human babies to feed her own children. To stop her from doing this, Buddha hid some of her children, which caused her great worry and suffering. Buddha said to her, "From now on, don't take other people's children. If you vow not to do this any more, my followers will give you food." This is why good practitioners normally make offerings to the pretas.

I remember many years ago at Kopan Monastery when we used to eat with Geshe Jampa Gyatso, now the resident teacher at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, not a lunch went by where Geshe-la didn't make charity to the pretas. I don't remember what happened at dinner, but at lunch he would do this every time. It seems that in Italy he still does this practice every day. Lama Lhundrup, during the years he fasted after lunch, would also do this practice every day.

To do the practice of making charity to the pretas, at the end of the meal, you take the last food on your plate, usually rice or bread, and squeeze it in your right hand so that you leave an imprint of your fingers. You then recite the mantra OM UCCHISHTA PANDI ASHIBHYA SVAHA, snap your fingers, then throw the food onto the table to make charity to the pretas. As you throw the food down, you meditate that you are making charity to the pretas, that you are feeding Nö Jin Togmapo Nga Gya (Harm-giver Togmapo and her five hundred children). It is similar to making water charity to the pretas.

I myself haven't done this practice much. I have done it with the Thamo nuns during nyung näs at Lawudo. Even on the fasting day, when there is nothing to eat, the nuns still make charity to the pretas. They make a torma and put it on the altar. At noon, the usual meal time, they pass the torma around, and each nun takes a piece, squeezes it in her hand and makes charity. Only on those occasions, because the group does, then you have to do it. Unfortunately, I haven't done the practice much. Only

occasionally, when a group of Sangha are doing it, it reminds me to do the practice.

If possible, seal your action of making charity to the pretas with emptiness. You yourself are empty, the action of giving is empty and what you give is empty. Everything is empty. And snapping your fingers is to remind you of this emptiness. When you snap your fingers, the sound occurs in dependence upon many causes and conditions coming together. The snapping of your fingers shows emptiness, as does the sound of a bell. The sound of the bell during pujas is to be understood as showing that everything is empty. With that meditation on emptiness and with a bodhicitta motivation, you make charity of food to the pretas. The benefit of the mantra is that it allows the pretas to find the food that is offered.

You then recite seven times, “I prostrate to the Bhagavan, the Tathagata, the arhat, the fully accomplished Buddha, Precious King of Light, Very Clear Fire Light.” Reciting this specific Buddha’s name seven times purifies any pollution you might receive by eating food that has been offered with devotion to the Sangha. If somebody offers something without devotion, I don’t think it carries pollution. This is according to Geshe Rabten Rinpoche.

One time in Dharamsala, Geshe-la brought up this subject and analyzed the meaning of receiving pollution. There is one kind of pollution known as “pollution of the guru,” but it doesn’t mean pollution of the guru’s mind. For example, some meditators in Dharamsala think that receiving money from His Holiness the Dalai Lama brings quite heavy pollution, but it is not that the pollution is coming from His Holiness’s mind. It’s different from the way we normally talk about receiving pollution through contact with someone who has broken their vows or samaya. The pollution referred to here has mainly to do with the practitioner.

Geshe Rabten Rinpoche asked the question, “What is the definition of pollution?”; then answered it himself. Geshe-la concluded that anything offered with devotion carries pollution [because of the responsibility that then falls upon the recipient], but that anything given without faith, such as a friend giving you money, may not carry any pollution.

The point is that pollution is regarded as a great obstacle to realizations. There are many stories to illustrate this. I don’t remember the story well, but one famous lama, perhaps Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen, who composed the *Guru Puja*, didn’t achieve realizations because of the many

offerings he received. After he stopped taking offerings, however, his mind became clearer, and he was able to receive realizations.

Basically, pollution is poison when it comes to realizations. It can also cause you to reincarnate in the lower realms. Like poisonous food harms the body, this kind of pollution from people offering things with devotion to the Sangha harms the mind.

Therefore, while you are eating and drinking, if you can maintain the constant visualization of yourself as the deity and make offerings to the deity, what you eat and drink won't bring pollution. As I mentioned at another time, you should eat and drink with the pure appearance of yourself as the guru-deity and the divine pride of being the guru-deity. In this way, you can enjoy the things offered to you with devotion without their polluting you. Not only will you not receive pollution, but instead of receiving harm, you will collect extensive merit and purify yourself. You will transform the poison into medicine. Using enjoyments with this meditation of making offerings to yourself visualized as the guru-deity becomes a means of achieving enlightenment quickly. Therefore, this is one solution to the problem of pollution. You can do this meditation if you have received a great initiation of either one of the lower tantras or of Highest Yoga Tantra. You have to have received a great initiation, not just a short blessing of the holy body, holy speech and holy mind.

If you haven't received a great initiation, visualize Buddha at your heart and offer your food and drink to him. This might also save you from the danger of pollution obscuring your mind and degenerating your realizations or making it difficult to achieve realizations.

The other thing you can do is recite the name of this buddha seven times, which purifies mountains of pollution, because when he was a bodhisattva, this buddha specifically motivated to be able to purify pollution in order to bring sentient beings to enlightenment.

Then recite the following mantra three times: NAMA SAMANTA PRABHA RAJAYA / TATHAGATAYA / ARHATE SAMYAK SAMBUDDHAYA / NAMO MANJUSHRIYE / KUMARA BHUTAYA BODHISATTVAYA / MAHA SATTVAYA / MAHA KARUNIKAYA / TADYATHA / OM NIRALAMBHA NIRABHASE JAYA JAYE LAMBHE MAHA MATE DAKSHI DAKSHENAM MEPARISHVADHA SVAHA. I can't give you the oral transmission of this mantra because I don't remember whether or not I myself have ever received it.

Then dedicate the merit. "Due to the merits of the three times collected

by me, my benefactors and all other sentient beings, may those who offered me food achieve bliss. May all those who offered me service, respect and offerings achieve bliss.” Here, “bliss” (or *nye wa shi pä de wa*, in Tibetan) means the ultimate happiness of liberation, which is gained through pacifying, or ceasing, karma and delusions, the cause of suffering.

“May all those who make me unhappy, lift up weapons against me, beat me or even kill me, quickly achieve the peerless happiness of full enlightenment.” It is very good to pray for the quick enlightenment of those who harm you, which includes anyone who abuses you in any way.

There are also other dedications for the benefactors and for the naga kings in the prayer that is usually recited.

These prayers are normally recited in Sangha communities after meals. It is very good to recite them. Geshe Jampa Tegchog established this practice at Nalanda Monastery, where Vietnamese families would offer lunch to the monks from time to time. I did not eat in the kitchen every day when I was there, but I was there once or twice when it happened. I remember that the monks did prayers before and after the meal. The prayers done after the meal were those normally recited in Tibetan monasteries that Geshe-la had taught the monks. These prayers are good for the benefactors and good for the Sangha who pray for them. It is very good to make offering prayers before the meal, which collects a lot of merit, and to dedicate all the merits by saying this prayer immediately after the meal.

If possible, you should also recite the *Heart Sutra*. This is what Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche does. After lunch, Rinpoche recites the prayer that I have just mentioned, one mala of OM MANI PADME HUM and then the *Heart Sutra*. Because of the meditation on emptiness, it brings incredibly powerful purification and is therefore very good for the benefactors. Reciting the *Heart Sutra* is very powerful for the benefactors, pacifying any obstacles they might have to their success in business or other activities. It’s a very powerful way to pacify your own obstacles and those of others. However, this is what Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche does.

Before the meal you can offer the food according to either sutra or tantra. As part of the sutra offering, you can recite Nagarjuna’s prayer,

Seeing this food as medicine,
We eat it without attachment or hatred,
Not to become fat, not out of pride,
Not to look strong, only to sustain the body.

Basically, the only reason for eating the food is to sustain your body so that you can practice Dharma.

After the sutra offering, Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche does the tantra offering, like that. After all this, Rinpoche does a short practice that is related to offering tsog. I think Rinpoche wrote this prayer, which I have translated into English, in his past life. At the very end, Rinpoche does this prayer, in which you visualize yourself as the deity with your guru in your heart and use the food as a tsog offering.

If the food is offered here in the gompa before lunch, it would be very good if all the monks and nuns at the retreat could do this practice together in the dining room after lunch.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SANGHA

Becoming Sangha, an ordained person, means that your life is to be used for practice, nothing else. There is nothing other than Dharma practice in your life. Once you are ordained there are no two ways to think; your mind can only go one way. You're on the freeway—you can only go in one direction. You cannot have one foot in samsara and the other in nirvana. Specifically, it means that your attitude and lifestyle point only toward liberation. Everything you do is directed toward liberation, nothing else. This is what it means to be ordained, to be Sangha; this is the bottom line of being ordained. Your attitude and everything else in your life are in harmony with the attainment of liberation. Therefore, it means that you have to do more practice. Being ordained means you have to do more practice, be more committed to doing practice.

So, one thing I wanted to mention was this community practice at lunchtime. There was another thing I wanted to mention, but it's getting late. We're going overnight; we're going without sleep. This is extra Vajrasattva, extra purification. It's double Vajrasattva!

BENEFITS OF GROUP RETREAT

If you compare the benefits of doing a Vajrasattva retreat alone to those of doing it in a group with other people, it is more powerful to do a group Vajrasattva retreat.

Another example that I have seen mentioned in various teachings is

that it is more powerful for a group of people to build a stupa than for one person to build a stupa. Yet another example is related to the reciting of sutras, whether it is the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*, specific sutras for purification or other sutras. Monks in the monasteries are requested to recite sutras for various purposes—for healing, for purification, for the removal of business problems, for people who have died and so forth. For example, it sometimes comes out that the Prajnaparamita text should be recited as a means for success in business. It is mentioned in the teachings that reciting a sutra together with all the other monks in a community is much more powerful than reciting a sutra alone. One other example is mentioned, but I can't remember it.

Therefore, doing a group retreat is more powerful than doing a retreat alone. Your reciting Vajrasattva mantras together with many people is more powerful than reciting them alone. I remember that the disciplinarian [Tib: *ge ko*] at Kopan Monastery recently told the Kopan monks during a puja how powerful it was to do prayers together. I hadn't seen a textual reference for the power of group practice until I recently saw it mentioned in a commentary to the *Bodhicaryavatara*. The lama who wrote the commentary explained this point and used many sutra texts, the teachings of Buddha, as references. I had heard this point previously but until then I hadn't seen any textual references to prove it.

Therefore, we should rejoice in the fact that reciting prayers and practicing with others gives our own practice more power.

I think that's it for tonight. If I remember something else after an hour or two, perhaps around two or three o'clock, we'll ring the gong—the large gong!

DEDICATION

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may all the requests contained in the *Prayer to be Reborn in the Land of Bliss* be actualized precisely in accordance with the prayer, for me, my family, all the students and benefactors of this organization, all the benefactors of the Sangha whose names were mentioned, all the sick people, those who have died, and all other sentient beings. May all the requests contained in this prayer be actualized

immediately for me and all other sentient beings.” If we are unsure about how to pray, praying like this covers everything.

“May I actualize in this life the complete teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa, the unification of sutra and tantra, and spread them in the minds of all sentient beings. May these teachings flourish forever.”

Reciting the multiplying mantras multiplies each merit that we have collected today 100,000 times. Reciting the next buddha’s name not only increases all the merits 100,000 times but causes all the prayers we have made to be actualized. This is its specific benefit.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings—due to the blessings of the eminent buddhas and bodhisattvas, due to unbetraying dependent arising and due to my special attitude, may all my pure prayers be accomplished immediately.”

Good night and good morning!

Saturday, March 13

WEEKEND TEACHING

THE NECESSITY OF COMPASSION

In previous discourses I've been talking about the necessity of having a good heart and the urgency of developing the realization of compassion within you, the one person's mind. I mentioned, for example, how compassion is the best remedy to any kind of obstacle. If you encounter obstacles in your Dharma practice, in actualizing the realizations of the path to enlightenment, compassion is the most important activity in which you can engage.

The greatest success you can have is the development of your mind in the path to not just liberation from samsara but to full enlightenment, the great liberation, at which time you can liberate numberless other beings from all the sufferings of samsara and their cause, karma and delusion, and bring them to the peerless happiness of full enlightenment. Developing compassion is the best way of overcoming obstacles to that.

Compassion is also the best remedy to life obstacles, the best puja for eliminating the danger of an untimely death—where you still have the karma to live, but some heavy negative karma has suddenly brought hindrances to your life's continuing. Compassion is the best way of overcoming obstacles to your life.

As I also mentioned the other day, compassion is the best way of eliminating other obstacles, such as those to success in your work or in business. It is also the best medicine when you are sick. With compassion, your positive way of thinking, the healthiest of minds, you can heal yourself, you can become your own doctor, the best psychologist. Amongst positive minds, the most positive, the most powerful is compassion. Even if you are sick, you can heal yourself with compassion.

Like the Chinese student I told you about—the one who had AIDS and cured himself by generating unbelievable strong compassion doing

the meditation of taking onto himself the suffering of others, especially that of AIDS; taking suffering onto and destroying his ego, the source of all problems.

THE EVOLUTION OF HARM

It is your ego that brings and obliges you to experience all your problems. It's your ego that has tortured you all the time, not only from when you were born into this life but from beginningless rebirths, in all your past samsaric lives. From beginningless samsaric rebirths up until now, it is your ego that has been torturing you, has brought all undesirable things, has made others criticize you. The main cause of all this has been your own ego.

It is also your own ego that causes others to abuse you. Why? Because either earlier in this life or in a previous life, your ego—your self-centered mind—attachment, anger and other emotional disturbing thoughts arose and caused you to create non-virtuous actions, to harm others. Because of that motivation, caused mainly by your ego, your self-centered mind, these actions became negative karma. Having harmed others, the result similar to the cause comes back on you now. You have to experience the result, such as others abusing you, back on yourself in this life.

You must relate such experiences to yourself. You established a connection with a certain sentient being by harming that being in the past, therefore, in this life, that sentient being's present incarnation responds to you in a similar way. There's a reason for that sentient being treating you badly with abuse or harming you in some other way—it's a causative phenomenon.

The Tibetan term *ngo po* means a phenomenon that has the ability to bring its own result; something that occurs as a result of causes and conditions, that is able to function. Therefore, the way the other person treats you is not a permanent phenomenon. It is *ngo po*, an impermanent phenomenon, which functions, which brings its own result. Therefore, since it is *ngo po*, an impermanent phenomenon, it depends on, happens as a result of, causes and conditions. The cause has to exist before the result it brings; that cause is karma, how you treated that person, that sentient being, in the past.

The cause—which existed before this situation happened, this undesir-

able experience that hurt your mind, that you do not like—is your own inner factor, the mind. The cause is your delusions and the intention, the karma, which is not positive karma but negative. Your delusions and karma, your ignorance, anger and attachment, arise due to your own self-centered mind.

As the great bodhisattva Shantideva said in his *Entering the Bodhisattva's Holy Deeds*, “My karma compels me to receive this harm. After all, wasn't it I that caused other sentient beings to get lost from the human realm and fall into the pit of hell?” [Chapter 6, verse 47.]

Here he's talking about the evolution—how first you create karma with another sentient being by treating that being badly, with self-centered mind, delusion, anger and attachment—and then because of that harm, in this life, you receive harm back from that person, that sentient being you treated badly in the past. By harming you, that sentient being creates the karma to be reborn in the hell realms. Instead of being born human, getting another good rebirth, that sentient being gets lost in the pit of hell, doesn't get born human again. Instead, that sentient being falls into hell, gets lost from the human realm.

This is what happens to the person who gives you harm, who mistreats you, abuses you. This is the situation of sentient beings who treat you badly. Therefore, they are never objects of retaliation; you should never, ever get angry back at them. They are *only* objects of compassion. Instead of harming, you should help them. Instead of getting angry, you should feel compassion. It is your responsibility to save those beings from falling into the lower realms, to protect them from negative thoughts and negative karma. By understanding their situation, by looking at their position, you have no choice. They can be only objects of compassion. Instead of harming, you must help them. Your only concern should be how to help the person who is treating you badly, creating negative karma with you.

As I said before, trace back the evolution of this situation. Why is this happening? It is happening because in the past, you created similar negative karma with that being; you gave harm to that person in the past. That's what is now causing, obliging, that person to harm you in return. You put him into this situation of having to treat you badly. If you hadn't harmed him in the past, there'd be not one single reason for him to treat you badly in this life. No reason at all. If there's no reason, no cause, it doesn't happen. Because this experience is a causative phenomenon, it has

a preceding reason, a cause. That cause is why it happens. It's the same thing, no matter what we experience. A happy life, a miserable life, whatever effect we experience in daily life, it all comes from somewhere, it has a reason. Everything has a reason for its existence and the reason exists before the event. Before we experience an effect, its cause has to exist. That cause is the karma we have created in the past.

Therefore, when you check back, how you treated that sentient being badly in the past, how you gave harm, you can see how everything started from there. That's why the great bodhisattva Shantideva said, "My karma compels me to receive this harm. After all, wasn't it I that caused other sentient beings to get lost from the human realm and fall into the pit of hell?"

RESPONDING TO HARM WITH COMPASSION: LETTING OTHERS WIN

It can be extremely effective to recall Shantideva's advice, as contained in this quotation, in your daily life. Whenever you encounter a problem—somebody criticizes you, treats you badly, gets angry at you, abuses you—whatever happens, this quotation enables you to practice tolerance, to control your anger, to keep your mind in a state of peace and happiness through not letting anger arise.

Not only that. In particular, this quotation allows you to feel compassion for that person, which is extremely important. You use the problem to develop compassion instead of using that person to generate anger and other negative emotional thoughts, which destroy you, your peace and happiness, your good personality, your well-being, your healthy mind and your healthy body. By destroying your healthy mind you destroy your healthy body. Besides all this, getting angry also harms your realizations, your development of the good heart, bodhicitta, the altruistic mind wanting to achieve enlightenment for the sake of sentient beings, the altruistic mind renouncing I, cherishing numberless other living beings, who, like yourself, want happiness and do not want suffering.

Numberless other beings also want happiness and do not want suffering—you are just one, they are numberless. Therefore, there is no limit to the importance of other sentient beings or to how important it is for you to bring them happiness and stop their suffering. You yourself are just one. Even if you attain liberation from samsara, everlasting happiness, it

is nothing to get excited about—you are just one. Even if you are reborn in hell, you are just one. Even when you compare yourself to one other person, one other sentient being, who is more important? Just one on one. Whether it's an insect or another human being, an elephant or an ant—you and that other sentient being—who is more important?

All your past, present and future happiness—temporary happiness, ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara, the peerless happiness of full enlightenment, everything, the happiness of all your beginningless past lives, all you present happiness, all your future happiness including that of enlightenment—comes from your good karma, your positive intention. Where does your good karma come from? That is the action of buddha.

Buddha has two types of action. One works within the minds of us sentient beings—all virtuous thoughts are buddha's actions working within us. The other kind of buddha's action is that possessed only by buddha's holy mind. There are these two types of action of buddha. That means all good karma, the cause of all your past, present and future happiness, comes from buddha. Buddha comes from bodhisattva, bodhisattva comes from bodhicitta, bodhicitta comes from great compassion and great compassion is generated in dependence on the existence of the suffering sentient beings.

How is great compassion, the cause of bodhicitta, generated? By focusing on all sentient beings without exception, without discrimination, without omitting even one sentient being. Great compassion covers the numberless obscured, suffering sentient beings—sentient beings whose minds are obscured and suffering, sentient beings equaling the limitless sky. Great compassion covers the object, all sentient beings, without exception, omitting not even one. Not only does great compassion wish them all to be free of all defilements; it also wishes you to cause them to be free from all defilements and suffering yourself. That's great compassion, the cause of bodhicitta.

That means the root cause of all your past, present and future happiness, every single comfort, all realizations up to full enlightenment, is all sentient beings. They're the root from which all your happiness comes—the numberless obscured, suffering sentient beings. They are the field of all your happiness, the field from which you receive all your enjoyments. Sentient beings are like the crops, the means of living, all your food, that you receive from the fields you cultivate. Sentient beings are the field, the

root, of all your past, present and future happiness, every single comfort, all your realizations and enlightenment.

Therefore, now, you and that one sentient being—not numberless, just one—that sentient being is the source of all your past, present and future happiness, of every single comfort, of all your enjoyment. It is due to the kindness of that sentient being that you survive each day, every minute, every second; that you are human, that you have this perfect human body with which you can fulfill any of the three great purposes and gain whatever happiness you wish, that gives you unbelievable freedom. All this comes through the kindness of each sentient being, which means also that sentient being—the one giving you harm.

Therefore, that person, that one sentient being, is more precious than skies filled with millions of dollars, skies full of ice-cream and chocolate! If you don't think money is precious, you can visualize chocolate or ice-cream! Or maybe, if you like antiques, broken things, old bones, you can visualize skies full of those things—broken furniture, old bones! Visualize skies full of old bones or broken antiques and then one sentient being, then ask yourself which is more precious? Or, skies full of wish-granting jewels and compare the value of those with the value of this one sentient being. Which is more precious? You can't generate compassion on wish-granting jewels; you can't develop bodhicitta from wish-granting jewels.

First of all, without bodhicitta, without compassion, without loving kindness, you cannot cease all mental errors. Even if you have realized the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, ultimate nature, have attained the arya path, if you don't have compassion, great compassion, loving kindness, bodhicitta, it's impossible to cease all mental errors. In order to eradicate all defilements, you have to eliminate the subtle ones, but if you have realized only the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, even if you have achieved the arya path, it's impossible. It is only if you have realized great compassion, loving kindness, bodhicitta, that your mind can be liberated, that you can completely cease all mental errors, complete the qualities of cessation and realization and liberate numberless other sentient beings from all the unbearable, unimaginable sufferings of samsara—the general sufferings of samsara and the specific sufferings of each of the six realms—and bring them to full enlightenment.

What I'm saying is that if you practice great compassion, loving kindness, bodhicitta, on *this* sentient being, this one sentient being, you can

gain all these other benefits—you can complete all the qualities of cessation and realization, which I just mentioned, and enlighten numberless other sentient beings. Without depending on the obscured, suffering sentient beings, even if you possess skies of wish-granting jewels, you cannot generate compassion, loving kindness, bodhicitta; you cannot achieve this realization. You can't generate these realizations on jewels. But on *this* sentient being, you can achieve all those realizations, you can meditate, you can realize all those other infinite benefits.

On the other hand, if you do not cherish this one insect or this one person giving you harm, if you do not practice compassion on this one sentient being, there's no enlightenment, no Mahayana realization. No way. No way to develop those perfect qualities with which you can enlighten all sentient beings; no way. But if you do cherish this one sentient being, you can have them all. If you practice compassion on this sentient being, if you cherish this sentient being, this one person or insect, whoever it is, you can gain all those infinite benefits. Therefore, skies of wish-granting jewels mean nothing. They are valueless when compared with the preciousness of one sentient being, whether it's an insect or a human. The benefits you can get from one sentient being are beyond compare with those you get from a wish-granting jewel. When you compare the benefits you get from a wish-granting jewel with those you get from a tiny insect or a human being, they are nothing, they get lost.

Therefore, if the most precious thing in your life is this one sentient being, there's no question how precious numberless sentient beings are. This one sentient being is the most precious thing in your life, the source of all your past, present and future happiness, while cherishing your I is the door to all problems and suffering, everything undesirable, all obstacles. In other words, where do all obstacles, problems, undesirable things and suffering come from? From the I. Therefore, your I is an object to be renounced forever, and, for all the reasons already explained, other sentient beings are an object to be cherished forever.

Once in Tibet there was a monastery whose monks were very critical of the Kadampa Geshe Langri Tangpa. One day he went to this monastery especially to make offerings to the monks who criticized him. To practice taking the loss upon oneself and giving the victory to others, he offered them tea. I don't think it was coffee or even Indian chai! He offered them Tibetan chai, butter tea. The reason he went there to practice taking the

loss on himself and giving the victory to others was that, just as all suffering comes from the I and all happiness comes from others, so too does all loss come from the I and all gain come from others. In other words, our self-cherishing thought always tries to give the victory to ourselves and the loss to others.

Because of this big mistake, this mistaken attitude, the self-centered mind—always giving the loss to others and taking the victory oneself—we are still not liberated from the ocean of samsaric suffering. Because of this mistaken thought, we're not free from all suffering. Ask yourself, "Even though numberless other sentient beings, including Guru Shakyamuni Buddha himself, have already become enlightened, why haven't I? Before Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, numberless sentient beings got enlightened; after Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, numberless sentient beings got enlightened. Why not me? Why am I still suffering? Forget about enlightenment, why am I not even liberated from samsara? Why? Why am I still here?" It is because of this mistaken thought, the self-centered mind—always giving victory to yourself and the loss to others.

Therefore, if you want profit, not loss, you have to change your attitude. If you want the victory of completing the qualities of cessation and realizations and the victory of being able to cause all happiness for all sentient beings, if you want all this benefit, all this victory, it can happen only if you change your self-centered mind, the attitude that always tries to give loss to others and victory to yourself.

As I often say, and it's such a simple thing, but in your daily life, the moment you start to cherish another sentient being, be it an insect or another human being, the very second you change your attitude, change the object that you cherish from your I to the other—that insect, that person—you find peace and happiness in your heart. As long as you're cherishing yourself, your I, you experience tension and unhappiness; there's no rest or relaxation in your mind, no inner peace. You cannot get satisfaction, and especially, there's no fulfillment in your heart. In daily life, your attitude has a huge effect on your mental continuum. Do this simple test: suddenly change your mind and cherish someone else, think of others, then switch back and cherish your I. You can see what a great difference there is in the effect these two attitudes have on your mind. One is happy and peaceful, the other is not.

Therefore, we can understand how precious sentient beings are and how

they are the source of all our happiness and good things not only through the explanations of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and Shantideva and those other great bodhisattvas, but through our own daily experiences. Whenever you think of others instead of cherishing your I, there's light in your life; whenever you cherish your I, there's depression and darkness in your life; no happiness, no smiles.

CHERISHING ALL SENTIENT BEINGS

That's why, as I mentioned the other day, in our lives, whenever we encounter any sentient being—animal, insect, human, whatever—we should always keep in mind, “This is the most precious, most important being in my life. I am here to serve this being.” Although I mentioned this before, after all the explanations above, I just wanted to reemphasize this conclusion, especially in case there's anybody here who feeds animals with other animals, who has a pet that lives on other animals, to which you have to feed live animals—like lizards to whom you have to give insects.

Not long ago, in Singapore, I met a feng-shui consultant who has done feng-shui for many important people, such as the president of China, the prime minister of Singapore and so forth. I went to his home, which is in a kind of secure place in Singapore; I don't know exactly what that area is. Anyway, when you enter the door, there's a big fish-tank, about as long as this side-table [the table alongside Rinpoche's throne, about a meter long] but very narrow. In it there's a really big fish—a very expensive, extremely expensive fish! I don't remember what kind. Lillian Too told me, but I forget. I think at one time she might have had one of these herself. Because the tank is not that long, when the big fish swims it has to turn frequently, but because the tank is also very narrow, the fish has some difficulty bending its body; it seems quite uncomfortable. But the worst thing is that the big fish lives on small ones, many of which are fed to it every day.

The feng-shui man and his wife seemed to be good-hearted people, but due to ignorance, lack of Dharma wisdom—I mean, generally, there are many good-hearted people, many of whom lack Dharma wisdom—they fed many small fish to the big one so that it would survive. The man told me that if the big fish died, his business would collapse. All I could do was recite a few mantras and try to blow on the water. I couldn't tell him then

and there that feeding all those small fish to the big one, hundreds of them, every day, was actually harming him and his family. I really didn't feel at all comfortable, but I couldn't say straight out, "Don't do that." I tried to approach the subject indirectly by hinting. I don't remember exactly what I said—"Can't he eat any other food?" Something like that.

Anyway, this conversation happened just as we were leaving. He said, "Our view is that we give him life, he gives us life, and we then give that life to others." In other words, he does feng-shui for other people. "We give him life, he gives us life, we give life to others" is all well and good, but he never asks the question, "What about the lives of those small fish?" Somehow he never thinks of the small ones, the lives of those hundreds of little fish.

Anyway, animals who live on other animals in the wild—in forests, under water, whatever their habitat—create the negative karma of killing every day, but if you keep them as pets, the extra thing is that you get involved. By feeding them live animals, you too create the negative karma of killing. You think you're benefiting them, but that's an extremely limited outlook. You are not thinking of worms or insects that get eaten. We're all the same. All beings—worms, insects, pets, people—are looking for happiness all the time. Just as we people cherish our bodies above all else, so too does every insect cherish its body more than anything. It's the same.

In the forest, wherever they live, those animals' karma compels them to kill. The only way they can stay alive is by eating other animals, other living beings. When you keep them as pets, the extra factor is your involvement. You put yourself in the position of creating a negative karma that you didn't have to—and a very heavy negative karma, at that. Killing even one insect is very heavy karma. If killing even one insect is so heavy, what about those many live worms, live insects that you feed your pet every day? Doing that is very unwise. You want to benefit your pet, so you harm many other living beings. Harming many to benefit one is not a wise thing to do; this is not a wise way to think. Your concept of benefit is very limited. Therefore, you must abandon such activity. It is totally unnecessary. We have enough difficulties and problems in our lives already. Why create the cause for more? Even though we've been born human, we still experience much suffering. We don't need to create the cause for any more, especially in such a totally unnecessary way.

Anyway, I meant to write this feng-shui man about his fish. I thought maybe it's easier to tell him in writing, to communicate from a distance. But I didn't do it right away, and then after some time, somehow, I forgot. Last time I was in Hong Kong he was there too. I tried to meet him, but I didn't get a chance to do so.

However, the richest living being is Buddha. Buddha is the wealthiest of all living beings. Buddha's enjoyments are like the sky. But all that wealth, enjoyment and success came from not harming others, from refraining from giving them harm. It didn't come from keeping a big fish in a little tank and feeding it many small ones. Anyway, the richest person in the world is the one who needs nothing, who wants nothing. Like it says in the short version of *Calling the Guru from Afar*, "Please bless me to generate the thought of no need in my mind." The richest person in the world is the one who is totally detached.

And as far as friends are concerned, the best friend you can have in your life is your own good heart, compassion. That friend will never cheat you, never betray you. The most stable friend you can have, the friend who will help and support you, is stable compassion, a stable good heart. And what brings you all good fortune and luck; what fulfills your wishes? That, too, is your good heart, compassion.

NEVER ABANDON BODHICITTA

As the great bodhisattva Shantideva said in *Bodhicaryavatara*, "Whoever wants to put a stop to hundreds of samsaric sufferings, benefit all sentient beings without exception (I'm not sure about this line), and enjoy hundreds of happinesses should never abandon bodhicitta." [Chapter 1, verse 8.]

Here, when Shantideva says "hundreds," he doesn't mean literally hundreds. It's a way of saying many—like the title of the guru yoga practice *Ganden Lha Gyema (Hundreds of Deities of the Land of Joy)* doesn't mean just hundreds, but many, many. If you want to stop all the many sufferings of samsara, enjoy all happiness—samsaric happiness and ultimate happiness, happiness beyond samsara—benefit all sentient beings (that's the line I'm not sure about) and enjoy all success, you should never ever give up bodhicitta.

What he's emphasizing is that since what you want is happiness and

what you do not want is suffering, then every day, wherever you are, whoever you're with, whatever your circumstances, your life situation, you must never abandon bodhicitta. No matter how depressed you are, how many problems you have, even if you're dying, never ever give up bodhicitta, always practice bodhicitta, because it's the best thing. If you live with bodhicitta, you are making the best use of your life. Practice bodhicitta if you're sick, if you're dying, if you're experiencing relationship problems. No matter what happens to you, practice compassion, bodhicitta. That's the best way to live, to be sick, to die. Experiencing problems with bodhicitta makes your problems useful, most meaningful for all sentient beings.

As Shantideva also says in the *Bodhicaryavatara*, “Like the best alchemy creates gold, it transforms this impure body we have taken into the price-less holy body of the victorious one. Therefore, keep that which is called bodhicitta most stable.” [Chapter 1, verse 10.]

In other words, in your daily life, make every possible effort to keep your mind in this attitude; make your bodhicitta most stable. Or, if you have the realization of bodhicitta, do everything you can not to lose it. It can also be read that way.

THE KARMIC RESULTS OF KILLING

Now perhaps I'll read a few lines from Shantideva's teaching, *Lab du* [Skt: *Shikhsasamuccaya*].

“On the harms of the path of the ten non-virtues, *The Holy Dharma Mindfulness* explains the very heavy ripening-aspect result. Here I'm going to explain just a little of that, the ripening-aspect result of killing, taking the lives of others.

“Extremely happily, the bird known as ‘running on fire,’ which never gets burned, even when it sits in flames, pecks open the heads of the sentient beings in hell and drinks their blood.”

This means that due to the karma of killing, you are born in the hell realm, you have that karmic appearance—this is the appearance to your obscured mind of your negative karma, negative intention. At the moment, due to our past good karma, the practice of morality, we have the appearance of this human body with the sense enjoyments that we wish.

Having this human body, these enjoyments, wealth, everything, all these appearances are produced by past good karma—basically, the practice of morality, and charity as well. Now we have the precious human body and all the sense objects that we see around us. This present appearance, today, at this hour, this minute, what we see, what we have, all this comfort and enjoyment, is the product of our past good karma.

It's the same for the hell beings, except that their karma is totally opposite from ours. Theirs is the product of negative karma; the appearance they have is only suffering, terrifying suffering—the appearance of the evil mind, the negative mind.

This perfect, precious human body and all the sense enjoyments we have at the moment are produced by the positive mind. We're enjoying all this, we've been enjoying it up until now, but we can't be sure when this appearance will finish. It can just stop at any time. It can change at any moment and in its place arise the appearance of hell. The appearances that this text is describing, the results of the ten non-virtuous actions, can happen to us even today. Those appearances, which are produced by negative karma, the impure mind, which have nothing attractive about them and are only most terrifying and unbearable, could arise for us right now. Such appearances, the hell realms, can manifest to us at any time, even today.

Therefore, it's the karma of the sentient beings suffering in hell to see those terrifying birds and experience the great suffering of having the birds peck open their heads with their sharp beaks and drink their blood.

Then, there's another bird called "running over the skull," which pecks at the brain, which bursts into flames and burns the sentient being severely. The bird then sucks up the brain fluid. Another bird called "eating the tongue flesh" appears according to the hell being's karma, pulls out the being's tongue and eats it. Due to karma, the tongue re-grows and the bird pulls it out and eats it again, over and over.

There are also other birds such as the one called "extracting teeth" and another that brings up the hell being's internal organs—stomach, liver, intestines and so forth—through its throat and eats them. Other birds like to eat the hell beings' vertebrae, sex organs and lungs, while there's another that bores holes in the body, and while the hell being is screaming in pain and terror, sucks the marrow from its bones.

Then there's the bird called "eye of the needle," which has a long, fine

beak that pierces the hell being's body and drinks its blood, and other birds that eat bones, skin, fat, spreading it with their claws, and muscle. Another bird called "mixed hair" pulls the hair out by the roots and eats it.

Near the edge of the lowest, most unbearable hot hell there's a bird called *cha dab zbig*, whose body is three hundred thousand *pag tse* [Skt: *yojana*] in size. I don't remember one hundred percent, you should check, but there are two ways of defining *pag tse*, one according to the *Abhidharmakosha* and the other according to the Kalachakra tantra. According to the *Abhidharmakosha* method, twenty-four inches equal one cubit; four cubits equal one bow-span; five hundred bow-spans equal one "range of hearing" (*gyang tag*); and eight "ranges of hearing" equal one *pag tse*. [See *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, Wisdom Publications, volume 2, page 38, note 518, where it also states that a *yojana* is "generally held by Buddhists to be four thousand arm-spans, i.e., about eight thousand yards."]

As a karmic result of killing, all these hell realm birds together devour you for hundreds of thousands of years. Of course, these are not human years; these are hell realm years, which are much, much longer. Hell years are equal to millions, trillions, zillions of human years; they're unbelievably longer. All these birds eat you, then you die, and immediately, you are reborn in the same realm and get eaten all over again. This happens over and over again. It goes on and on like this until eventually that karma is exhausted, but no sooner are you free from that than you are surrounded by another type of suffering.

After that, you find yourself in a place where there are high cliffs. You run towards them looking for refuge, protection, someone to help you, but then suddenly, due to your karma, eleven huge circles of fire surround you and friendless, without guide, surrounded by enemies, you are caught in a karmic noose and find yourself in an isolated place with multitudes of other hell beings, where you again experience much suffering.

Trying to escape, you run towards a cliff called *nam trog rab lhun*. *Trog* means landslide, a place on a mountain where there are no trees, just rocks, sand and rubble, where it's very easy to fall down. The hell being runs towards those cliffs, falls down, and his legs and everything melt. When he lifts them up they grow again, but his skin is extremely thin and tender, like that covering a healing wound—whatever touches it, even a tiny hair, causes pain. Hell beings' skin is very, very thin, extremely thin,

and due to karma their suffering is unbelievably heavy. The hell beings are completely disturbed by all these terrors. Their limbs all melt and they fall three hundred *pag tse* down the cliffs called *nam trog*, get tormented by a karmic wind and then again get eaten by different kinds of bird, such as *gan ga*, *kha ta*, eagles and owls. All these are the hell being's karmic appearance; they exist due to karma.

ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN

If you want an example similar to this in the human realm, think about a person who's driving along in his car when all of a sudden somebody shoots him. We've all heard of things like this. You're just walking along and suddenly, out of nowhere, someone attacks you. It's the same thing—a projection of your past karma. These things happen because of past negative karma. A particular negative karma ripens and at that moment you have the appearance of someone known or unknown to you suddenly harming you. I mean, whenever your karma ripens [finger snap], you experience that event, then and there. In this world, it happens like that all the time.

Even though this hasn't happened to us yet . . . well, maybe it has! Not that long ago, at our center in Bodhgaya, someone was shot, but not killed. An Israeli soldier. I don't know how long he'd been in the army, but he never took any bullets while serving. Then he came to Root Institute, put his rucksack in the office, went out to the gate and got shot by a bandit. After all those injury-free years in the Israeli army, he comes to India, to the holy place of Bodhgaya, where one would never expect something like that to happen, and he gets shot. Something similar happened a month later to a French lady called Beatrice. She got shot in the leg just inside the Root Institute gate. It looks like those bandits planned quite well. They never shot people in the head, which would send them to another realm, but just in the leg. It seems they had some kind of rule or agreement not to shoot people in the heart or brain, which is obviously more dangerous.

When I talk about this happening in Bodhgaya I don't mean it only happens there. In the West, this kind of thing happens all the time. You read in the paper or see on TV that people shoot and kill each other every day. The people involved don't necessarily have to know each other, either. Strangers kill each other all the time.

It's the same thing as in the hell realms—it's karma. Whenever a particular past karma ripens, manifests, suddenly you have this karmic vision of somebody shooting you, of your receiving that harm. Whenever the karma ripens, at that moment, anything can happen.

For example, I heard about something that happened in France some years ago. A woman discovered that her husband was having an affair and tried to commit suicide by jumping out her apartment window. It so happened that just as she jumped her husband was entering the front door of the building, which was right below. She landed on her husband, who was killed as a result, and instead of dying, as she intended, she survived. You see how the karma is. According to her wish, she was supposed to die, not him, but according to karma, it happened the other way round.

There's another story showing what happens when the karma to die ripens suddenly, this one from Malaysia, or maybe Indonesia. A zoo elephant was badly constipated, so its keeper gave it a powerful laxative, but nothing happened. So the keeper went behind the elephant and started poking around, when all of a sudden the elephant released an avalanche of kaka, which knocked the keeper to the ground. As he fell, he hit his head on the ground and lost consciousness. The rest of the kaka buried him and he died of suffocation! So that's how his life ended. When the karma ripens, anything can happen.

For example, say there's a big tree in the middle of the road. Normally, you never think that this tree will fall over and kill you. But if in the past you have created the karma for that to happen, it's just a matter of time. It will happen as if somebody had purposely arranged it or the tree had a mind of its own. However, what arranges for that tree to fall onto your car and kill you is your past karma. Nobody else arranges it, not God or anybody else. It's arranged by your past karma. If you have created the karma to die under the big tree that you never suspected would ever fall down, when that karma ripens, the tree will fall and kill you.

Anything can change. Even huge pieces of iron, which look so solid that it seems impossible they could ever bend, will bend if a person's karma to experience suffering with that iron as a condition ripens. Due to the power of karma, when it ripens, things change; anything can happen. When the karma ripens, huge mountains that once looked so stable can disintegrate completely—during an earthquake, for instance.

Anyway, this bit about the hells is almost finished, then we can take

a break—a break from the hell realm or a break from the human realm! I'm joking.

MORE HELLISH KARMA OF KILLING

We were talking about the cliff called *nam trog rab lhun*. According to your karmic appearance, all these birds come to eat you, then your body is lifted up and again falls down another precipice, and so the suffering goes on for hundreds of thousands of years.

The lamrim teachings contain basically similar descriptions of the hells, but here in *Lab du*, Shantideva goes into a little more specific detail than usual.

After a long time experiencing that kind of suffering, the hell being becomes free from that but is immediately surrounded by a new kind of hell suffering, a very sharp wheel that spins around the being's body, slicing it to pieces. At the hub of the wheel is a vajra emitting flames, which burn his body. The being is surrounded by a thousand such wheels, and gets cut to pieces and completely burned in that way.

Then, in another kind of suffering, the being is skewered from his heel to the top of his head and spit-roasted over a fire, while every cell in his body is devoured by worms, causing intense pain in every atom. The monk Bob, who works as a nurse in a hospital, said there was once a patient there who complained of severe pain in every cell of her body, so there's some similarity there.

After that, due to heavy negative karma, the being's body revives, but is fleshier and covered with very thin, tender skin. It then gets eaten all over again causing even more pain than before. So each time this happens, more and more flesh builds up so that getting eaten is increasingly painful. Shantideva explained that these experiences are karmic results of killing, taking the lives of others.

So, I'll stop here.

A DAILY PRACTICE TO STOP THE SUFFERING

The conclusion, however, is that we must do two things. One is to purify the negative karma already created by doing practices such as the Vajrasattva that we're doing here. That purifies the negative actions we've done

every day of our lives, especially the ten non-virtues, and also the negativities that we've been creating since beginningless time in our infinite previous lives. That's one solution, but that alone is not enough. We also have to change our minds and our actions and abstain from creating further negativities. If we don't, there'll be no end to our having to purify. If we don't change our minds and our actions, if we don't stop creating negative karma, there will always be more negativity to purify. Therefore, to avoid experiencing suffering, especially that of the lower realms as well as that of the human and deva realms, to avoid experiencing the results of negative karma, one solution is to engage in powerful purification practices, such as Vajrasattva meditation, confession before the Thirty-five Buddhas and the many and varied other purification practices.

Let me explain how to apply these in everyday life. The moment you get up, generate bodhicitta motivation. Determine to make the best use of your life by making it beneficial for other sentient beings. In other words, make the strong determination to live your life with bodhicitta all the time. Start by rejoicing that you are still alive, that you didn't die during the night but were born again today as a human being with the opportunity to practice Dharma, to achieve any of the three great meanings—the happiness of future lives, liberation from samsara and full enlightenment. In each second, you can create the cause of any happiness you wish from those three great purposes.

Therefore, make the strong determination that from now on, especially in this life, especially during this day, you will never separate from bodhicitta, not even for a minute or a second, and you will never allow yourself to fall under the influence of the self-cherishing thought. "I will never allow myself to be controlled by the self-cherishing thought." If you don't make this strong determination, you won't be able to practice bodhicitta, compassion for others. "I will not allow myself to be controlled by the self-cherishing thought, especially in this life, especially today, not for a minute or even a second." Make that kind of strong determination.

Briefly, without expanding but just mentioning the essence, this should be your attitude towards life, as explained in the five powers of a lifetime's practice, or a lifetime's practice integrated into the five powers. [See *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, pp. 612–16 and *Advice From a Spiritual Friend*, Wisdom Publications, 1996 edition pp. 111–12. The five powers are the power of the white seed, the power of familiarity, the power of

determination, the power of repudiation and the power of prayer.] Even if you don't know many prayers, many different practices, if you can practice these five powers, you are doing the most important practice you can. Even if you aren't familiar with many Dharma teachings or texts—if you haven't studied, haven't had time to learn—if you know what the five powers are and live your life in their practice, you make your life incredibly free; you give yourself so much freedom, peace and happiness. In this way you can achieve enlightenment quickly. That's the greatest advantage, the greatest benefit.

After generating that morning motivation, do prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas.

Every night, before going to bed, do Vajrasattva practice, reciting one mala, a half mala, or at least twenty-one repetitions of the long mantra. If you can combine these with prostrations, it will be very, very powerful; two powerful practices combined. You will collect extensive merit and purify those unbelievably heavy negative karmas. You can do your Vajrasattva recitation with prostrations or just sitting. It depends on if you have the opportunity to do prostrations and on how you feel. You can decide.

However, if you can begin your evening Vajrasattva practice with prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas, just going straight through, not repeating each name over and over with each prostration, that will be very powerful, because reciting each buddha's name even once purifies many thousands of eons of negative karma—many different negative karmas collected over thousands of eons. It is unbelievably powerful.

For example, if you recite the first name, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's, it has the power to purify 80,000 eons of negative karma. Similarly, each of the Thirty-five Buddhas' names is extremely precious—like an atomic bomb, when it comes to purifying negative karma. Each buddha's name is so precious; much more precious than skies of wish-granting jewels. Each buddha's name is much more precious than skies full of millions of dollars. Whether you do your Vajrasattva recitation sitting or with prostrations, either way is very, very good.

In the mornings, therefore, generate bodhicitta motivation and do prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas. I'm not going to explain bodhicitta motivation today or the meditation you do at the end of the session. We don't have time now, but you can read how to do it elsewhere in this book or listen to some of the tapes [from the retreat]. However, I will explain

the meditation that you do with prostrations so that you'll be able to give yourself the opportunity of collecting more merit. The more meditation skills you have—such as when you do prostrations—the more extensive merit you create, the sooner you gain realizations, and the closer you and all sentient beings come to enlightenment. If you have the skills, you can collect extensive skies of merit with each prostration.

THE MEANING OF THE PROSTRATION MANTRA

First, to multiply the effect of each prostration one thousand times, recite the mantra OM NAMO MANJUSHRIYE / NAMAH SUSHRIYE / NAMAH UTTAMA SHRIYE SVAHA. His Holiness Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche once explained the meaning of this mantra to me, but I've kind of forgotten.

NAMO means prostration and MANJUSHRIYE is Manjughosha, so this is paying homage, or prostrating, to Manjushri. The Tibetan translation is *Jam pel yang la chag tsel lo*.

So, OM—it seems that almost every mantra begins with OM, for example, the mantra (TADYATHA) OM MUNÉ MUNÉ MAHAMUNAYÉ SVAHA starts with OM and, like the above one, ends in SVAHA. Many other mantras end in HUM.

Manjushri, in Tibetan, is Jampelyang. *Jam* means soft, pacified. *Pel* (Skt: *shri*) means glorious, or soft. What His Holiness Tsenshab Rinpoche explained was that *jam*, soft, means Manjushri's holy mind is soft, gentle. How has it become soft? By his having ceased the disturbing thoughts, the delusions, the disturbing thought obscurations (*nyon drib*, in Tibetan). That is the meaning of soft.

What is the meaning of *pel, shri*? It means that Manjushri's holy mind is free from even the subtle defilements, *she drib*, which we can abbreviate as “knowledge obscurations”—the defilements that interfere with the mind's fully and directly seeing all existence, all phenomena. Those subtle defilements are called knowledge obscurations, *she drib*. What are they? They are subtle negative imprints that have been left on the mental continuum by the concept of inherent existence.

Until we become enlightened, we sentient beings constantly experience the appearance of inherent existence—except for when we become arya beings and are absorbed in single-pointed concentration on emptiness. During such times of meditative equipoise on emptiness, like water

poured into water, our dualistic view is temporarily stopped. Stopped, but not forever. During meditation we don't have the dualistic view, but when we arise from meditation, it's there again—the appearance of inherent existence, which is the projection of the subtle negative imprints. Those imprints, along with the hallucinated appearance of inherent existence, are the subtle defilements, the *she drib*, the knowledge obscurations. *Pel*—Jam *pel yang*—means that Manjushri's holy mind is free of even these subtle defilements, and therefore of all mental errors, all defilements of mind. That also means that he has completed all the qualities of realization—when you complete the qualities of cessation, you automatically complete the qualities of realization.

Then comes NAMAH SUSHRIYE. NAMAH again means prostration. Then SUSHRIYE, *leg pä pel*—glorious goodness. Then NAMAH UTTAMA SHRIYE SVAHA—*chog gyi pel*—glorious supreme sublimity. I think that's the literal word for word translation from the Sanskrit. I don't remember if His Holiness Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche explained the meaning of all that, but later I also saw a text that had the translation of this mantra. I didn't see the meaning of it explained there either, but my assumption is that, like many other mantras, it contains within it the whole path to enlightenment.

For example, the mantras OM MANI PADME HUM and OM MUNÉ MUNÉ MAHAMUNAYÉ SVAHA contain the entire lamrim—the lower path, middle path and higher path. The whole lamrim is encompassed by the MUNÉ MUNÉ MAHAMUNAYÉ; the Lesser Vehicle, the Mahayana Paramitayana, the Mahayana Tantra is all there. It's usually the same—OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA as well—basically, most mantras are like that. They contain the whole package, the entire path to enlightenment.

So SUSHRIYE, glorious goodness, might contain the Lesser Vehicle path and UTTAMA SHRIYE SVAHA, glorious supreme sublimity, the Mahayana path. It's my guess that this contains the whole path to enlightenment—the basis, the four noble truths, and then the Mahayana path—but I haven't seen this explained in any commentaries.

Of course, just Manjushri's name itself contains everything—how to achieve true cessation and the rest of the path to enlightenment. The two truths, the paths of method and wisdom, the results to be achieved, dharmakaya and rupakaya. Everything is contained in there, just like any mantra.

Finally, there's the OM. OM is what you achieve by actualizing the meaning of these mantras. Your impure body, speech and mind are purified and you achieve the vajra holy body, vajra holy speech and vajra holy mind. These are signified by the three sounds A-O-MA; OM is the integration of these three sounds. That is what is to be achieved by actualizing the meaning signified by SUSHRIYE NAMAH UTTAMA SHRIYE.

HOW TO DO PROSTRATIONS TO THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS AND THE SEVEN MEDICINE BUDDHAS

When you recite the Thirty-five Buddhas' names, it would be extremely good if you could do three sets as a daily practice. That means you'd be doing 115 or more prostrations each time. Also, if you have room, you should always do full-length prostrations. You create unbelievably extensive merit if you do. Cover as much ground with your body as you possibly can; when you go down, make your body as long as you can.

Do three prostrations with the mantra OM NAMO MANJUSHRIYE . . . and then, in English or Tibetan, recite the refuge formula. If it's Tibetan, make prostrations while reciting *La ma la kyab su chi o* as many times as you can during one prostration. Then, when your forehead touches the ground, change to *Sang gyä la kyab su chi o*, and keep reciting that until, on your next prostration, your forehead touches the ground again. Then change to *Chö la kyab su chi o* and keep prostrating through *Ge düm la kyab su chi o*.

Then, when you next touch the ground with your forehead, change to *Tön pa chom dün dä de zhin sheg pa* . . . Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's name. If you have memorized it, you should recite it as fast as you can. It's unbelievable—each time you say it you purify 80,000 eons of negative karma. That's why you should memorize all of the Thirty-five Buddhas' names. The more times you can recite each one, the better.

When you do business, you try to maximize your profits. You try to get as many dollars as you can from each transaction. It's the same here, except that with reciting the buddhas' names, the profits are so much greater. Reciting just one buddha's name is much more profitable than billions of dollars of business profit. Reciting the name of just one of the Thirty-five Buddhas, not all thirty-five, purifies many thousands of eons of negative karma. The merit you collect in this way is much more profitable than billions of dollars. Receiving a billion dollars or reciting one buddha's

name just once—which is more profitable? There’s no comparison. Those billions of dollars are worth nothing compared to that. No amount of money has the power to purify many eons of negative karma or to generate extensive merit, but reciting the buddhas’ names does.

After your forehead touches the ground, change to the next buddha’s name and recite that as fast and as many times as you can. Keep going through all their names until you have recited all thirty-five. I recite the last one three times. Why? Not because other people do but because the thirty-fifth buddha’s name, *De zhin shog pa . . . wang gyi gyäl po*, purifies any negative karma and broken samayas collected with gurus, which are the heaviest negative karmas of all. Therefore, I think it’s necessary to recite the last buddha’s name three times.

Then there are the seven Medicine Buddhas. If you can add those, all your prayers—for special realizations from your Dharma practice, for good things to happen to you, for the benefit of others—will be successful. All your prayers will be successful, and you will also receive the beneficial effects of all the prayers that the seven Medicine Buddhas made in the past. Therefore, it’s very important and very good to recite the names of the Medicine Buddhas. You also recite each name as many times as possible during each prostration. However, you only need to recite the seven Medicine Buddhas’ names once each session—after the first repetition of the Thirty-five Buddhas. You don’t need to do them the second or third time.

In the first set, recite the Thirty-five Buddhas and the seven Medicine Buddhas, then go back to the refuge for the second time. After the second set of Thirty-five Buddhas, start back at refuge again, like that. Three sets. If you can make this your regular practice it would be extremely, unbelievably good. If three sets are not possible, then two. If not two, then one. And remember, with each prostration, recite that buddha’s name as many times as you can, over and over, rather than reciting it slowly, just once. Each day that you recite the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas, each day that you recite just one buddha’s name, makes your life so much different, like the difference between earth and sky. Your mind carries much less negative karma, and that which it does carry is much lighter. Your life will be much more successful, especially in attaining realizations, and you will be able to benefit others much more in both this life and future lives.

I think I’ll stop here today.

The reason I bring up all these issues is not so much for the people doing retreat but more for those who don't get the chance to retreat and those who I don't get to meet very often. Not that I have much to offer, but I want to give those people I meet only rarely in teachings some understanding of how to practice, something to make their daily lives most profitable, something practical. That's the main reason. It's not only for the people here doing retreat. I never seem to have time to give individual people instructions for practice—sometimes it's possible, but not all the time. Therefore, on an occasion such as this, one of those rare opportunities where we meet during a teaching, I'm offering you something that I hope might be helpful, beneficial.

Those of you who don't know these things, especially those of you who don't practice, need to hear and learn them so that you can make your life better, more useful and as beneficial as possible for both yourselves and sentient beings equaling the sky. So that you can make this life, and especially your future lives, easier and more successful, benefit more sentient beings, gain more realizations, and gradually achieve enlightenment. That's the reason I bring all this up.

DEDICATION

“Due to all the present, past and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may bodhicitta, the source of all happiness and success for me and all other sentient beings be actualized within my mind and in the minds of my family members, all the students and benefactors of this organization, especially those who sacrifice their lives serving others and the teaching of the Buddha through this organization, and all other sentient beings without even one second's delay. May the bodhicitta that has been generated increase.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may His Holiness the Dalai Lama have a stable life and may the obstacle to His Holiness's health that has been taken, the pneumonia, according to the karma of us sentient beings, be pacified immediately, and may all his holy wishes succeed immediately as well as those of all other virtuous friends and all other holy beings who live their lives for the benefit of sentient beings.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, bud-

dhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I be able to offer extensive benefit like the sky to all sentient beings as Lama Tsongkhapa did, by having within me the same qualities that Lama Tsongkhapa had, from now on, in all my future lifetimes.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all sentient beings—which appear to my hallucinated mind as something real, something real existing from there, but which in reality are totally non-existent, totally empty—may the I—which appears to be a real I appearing to my hallucinating mind from there, but which, *that* one, is in reality totally non-existent—achieve my own deity’s enlightenment, or Vajrasattva’s enlightenment, or Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, whatever—which appears to my hallucinating mind as something real from there, from its own side, which is according to the point of view of my ignorance and is the view of my hallucinating mind, my ignorance, and which is in reality totally non-existent—and lead all sentient beings—who also appear to me to be real ones from there, which is according to the point of view of my ignorance, my belief, and also the appearance to my hallucinating mind, that which is totally non-existent—to that enlightenment—which also appears real from there, which is the point of view of my ignorance, what it believes, what it apprehends, the hallucination that appears to my hallucinating mind and which is totally non-existent”—that doesn’t mean enlightenment itself but something extra on the enlightenment, the real one that appears from there, that extra thing, that not-merely-labeled enlightened, but that enlightenment that appears to you as something more than merely labeled, something extra, so that one is totally non-existent—“by myself alone—who also appears to be real, from there, according to the point of view of my ignorance, my hallucinating mind.” That real I appearing *from there* is what’s totally non-existent.

When you meditate like this, it’s not just thinking that they don’t exist. You should really *see* very intensively that they don’t exist from their own side. There should be a very strong, intensive perception that they are *totally*, absolutely non-existent—non-existent from their own side—something that either makes you feel so unbelievably happy that you rejoice or causes deep fear to arise within your heart. If you have either of these two experiences, the way you have been meditating is correct. As a beginning experience, you should feel either incredible joy or deep fear. If you do, your experience is correct.

Finally, dedicate to actualize Lama Tsongkhapa's teaching, which unifies sutra and tantra, in your own mind, for it to spread in the minds of the students and benefactors of this organization, especially those who sacrifice their lives serving others and the teaching of the Buddha through this organization, and in the minds of all sentient beings, for this teaching to flourish forever in this world, and to cause all this to happen by yourself, alone.

Tuesday, March 16

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

PALDEN LHAMO TEA OFFERING

There is a general tea offering prayer, which includes many other protectors and deities, but this one is specifically for Palden Lhamo and her entourage. Since the copy of this translation, which is used by International Office, where the tea offering is done every day, is available, we will just do it.

MITUKPA PRACTICE

We need a method of becoming enlightened without having to meditate! We need a method so that by meditating one night, we become enlightened that night or by meditating one day, we become enlightened that day! Anyway, I'm joking.

I thought to give the *lung*, the oral transmission, of the Mitukpa mantra, as recitation of this mantra came out very beneficial for Tenzin Jangchub's mother, who died recently. According to my Mickey Mouse divination, my monkey divination, a few practices came out as specifically beneficial for her, to save her from the lower realms. They included making a statue or tsa tsas or a *mani* prayer wheel. It came out extremely beneficial to make a prayer wheel, and even if a prayer wheel can't be sponsored completely, some money could be donated on her behalf towards the building of a prayer wheel. Another practice that came out very beneficial is recitation of the mantra of Mitukpa, the Immovable Buddha. Since there are quite a number of us here in the retreat, if each person recites one mala of this mantra once a day, many thousands of mantras can be recited in a short time. It is a very powerful and effective way to help her. So, I thought to give the oral transmission before we recite the mantras.

Mitukpa is very powerful in degenerate times for purifying negative

karma, particularly the negative karma of having broken vows, such as the Eight Mahayana Precepts, lay vows or the vows of nuns and monks. Even if you believe in karma and reincarnation and do not generate heresy, if you break or degenerate your vows you create the cause to be born in the animal realm as a naga.

There are many stories in the teachings about how many of the nagas during Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's time had been monks and nuns during Buddha Kashyapa's time, but had been unable to keep their vows. Because they had broken their vows, they were born as nagas. The Mitukpa practice of making nectar charity to the nagas is very beneficial in purifying the nagas and liberating them from their suffering. While pouring the water, you visualize Mitukpa, the Immovable Buddha. Mitukpa is the same as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha in appearance except that Mitukpa is blue and holds a vajra in his left hand, which is in the mudra of concentration. Nectar flows from Mitukpa's holy body, from either the heart or the hand, to purify all the nagas and liberate them from all their sufferings. It is very effective for the nagas.

There is also a very special practice called the hundred tormas offerings (Tib: *tor ma gya tsa*). There are brief, medium-length and elaborate ways of doing this practice. To do the practice you make small pills with *tsampa*, butter, milk and other very clean substances. The pills include the six special substances (Tib: *sang drug*) that are normally used in Tibetan medicine and incense. This practice is part of the thought transformation commitment of making offering to the Triple Gem and making charity to the beings of the six realms, as is offering water charity to the different types of pretas.

SUFFERINGS OF PRETAS

Generally, among pretas, those with flames coming from the mouth have more suffering than other types of preta. Due to karma, some pretas are born with two or three knots in their neck. Their neck is so tiny that they cannot swallow things. They experience many obstacles. In the first place, they cannot find even a spoonful of food or a drop of water for hundreds or thousands of years. When they finally see some food or drink in the distance, karmic guardians stop them from going there, so they are unable to get it.

The texts also mention that due to karma, the stomachs of the pretas are as big as mountains. I think we find this hard to believe because it's not something that we can see for ourselves. There is no preta country in Africa, India or somewhere that can be advertised on TV or that we can fly or drive to as tourists to take pictures or videos. However, we can find similar examples if we look at some general human shapes. Among human beings, there are different types of bodies, and some have big bellies. There are human beings with all kinds of bodies, so you cannot say that such a thing as a preta body could not exist.

Even in terms of human beings, we see that there are all kinds of shapes. There are even human beings with two heads. There is a book called *Believe It or Not*, which has actual photographs of people who have been born with unbelievable bodies. Some have very long penises, huge stomachs, another being attached to their stomach or three legs. There are all kinds of things shown in this book. It is easier to see such people in the East because they are exposed on the streets. In the West, such people are kept together in one place where no one can see them. In some ways, because you never see such people on the streets in the West, you might think that people with strange bodies are born only in India. You might think that such things never happen in the West, where everything is neat and perfect—that there is no bad karma in the West; there is only bad karma in Nepal and India, where people believe in it. You might believe that only those who believe in negative karma experience negative karma; that those who don't believe in negative karma never experience negative karma; that for them, everything is perfect.

When we think of just the way some human beings are born, it is unbelievable. We couldn't even imagine such bodies. There are people who are born with the face of a dog; they have hairy faces and look just like Lhasa apsos. Basically, these are all karmic results of immoral actions. They can also be the result of having disrespected holy objects, but basically they are the result of having broken vows, or precepts. That is the real cause. In the West, such bodies are said to be the result of some physical condition, such as imperfections in the father's sperm or the mother's egg. This is blamed as the sole source. However, even though it is true that such a body has something to do with defects in the sperm or egg, the actual cause of that imperfect sperm or egg is negative karma from immoral actions.

There is specific proof of reincarnation in *Pramanavarttika*, but I have

forgotten the key points of the logic. The physical body is the cooperative cause of the mind and the mind is the cooperative cause of the body. Of course, you have to consider the two causes of such a body. One is the physical evolution of the body from the sperm and egg, but the other cause is the mental factor of karma, or intention, which is what causes the physical evolution.

However, based on this explanation, one becomes the cooperative cause, but of course, the main cause of even the mind that entered the fertilized egg is the previous mind in that same continuum. There is a specific explanation related to the consciousness and the body, but unfortunately I have forgotten the key points.

People might be born with the face of a dog because of the past negative karma of having sex with dogs out of the negative motivation of attachment or self-centeredness. I have yet to see anyone with the head of an elephant or a crocodile.

Anyway, all these strange bodies that we see pictured in books such as *Believe It or Not* are the result of immoral actions. They are all creations of attachment, produced by attachment. And, whether we believe it or not, such things have happened. All those unusual births are the result of strong desire.

But to return to the pretas, where this story started . . .

The pretas have stomachs like mountains, necks as thin as a hair from a horse's tail, tiny limbs and skin that is as dry as tinder. When their limbs rub together, sparks are produced. Because their bodies are like that, even if pretas see food in the distance, it is very difficult for them to reach it. Similar to the way that a very old person finds it difficult to walk, a preta has great difficulty in moving its body. Even if there are no karmic guardians preventing them from going there, pretas still find it extremely difficult to reach the place where they see food. And even if they finally manage to reach that place, the food suddenly disappears or is transformed into something undesirable. After undergoing unbelievable hardships to come all the way to where in the distance they have seen food or clear blue water, they arrive to find that the food or water has either disappeared or is full of pus, blood, hair or garbage. There is nothing there that they can eat or drink.

Then, even when they are at last able to find some water or food, they can take only a drop of it because their mouths are like the eye of a needle. It is very difficult for them to swallow any food at all, and even when they

do manage to swallow something, it has no effect because their stomach is as big as a mountain and flames inside it burn up the food.

Besides suffering so much hunger and thirst, pretas also experience so much pain. This is why in regard to the practice of giving, making water charity to the pretas collects much more merit than making charity of other substances to other sentient beings. In fact, by making water charity to one preta, you collect much more merit than by having made charity to all the rest of the sentient beings. And by making water charity to one of those pretas with flames coming from the mouth, you collect more merit than you would by making charity to all the rest of the numberless pretas, because this particular preta experiences much more suffering than the other pretas.

Such pretas are perhaps not seen here, but they can be seen at certain places in India—in Buxa, for example. I lived for eight years in Buxa, the concentration camp where Prime Minister Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi were imprisoned during the time of the British. The buildings weren't changed at all, but because Tibetan monks lived there, the prison became a monastery. When we were debating outside at night, we would often see flames moving in the forest. I think this also happens at certain places in the West. Once when I was traveling at night through the forest with a group of people, we saw a light through the trees, but it wasn't the light of a fire. We thought there might be somebody there, but when we took a few steps towards the light, it moved further away. There was nobody there. The light just went further and further into the forest. It is very common to see flames moving at night in forests. It is also possible to see these pretas in deserts and in other barren or desolate places. Pretas with flames coming from the mouth have much more suffering than other pretas.

However, the pretas with two or three knots in their necks have even more suffering. Even if a drop of water enters their mouths it cannot go any further because their throats are occluded by the knots. Making one drop of water charity to a preta with knots collects more merit than does making charity to all the numberless pretas with flames coming from the mouth. There is a mantra that allows these pretas with knots to see and find water. You visualize yourself as Chenrezig with nectar coming from your hand. The nectar liberates the pretas from the suffering of the lower realms, purifies their negative karma and they then get a good rebirth. You can also do this practice with the other types of preta. The nectar

cools their suffering of heat, then purifies them of their negative karma and delusions. Due to their negative karma, pretas find even moonlight, which human beings find cooling, very hot. The nectar cools the pretas, like a cooling rain after a heat wave.

WATER CHARITY TO THE PRETAS

Buddha also explained a special practice for pretas called “Yeshe Karda.” (I think there is no point in translating this name as it might sound funny in English. It’s better to leave it in Tibetan!)[See Chapter 48, Tuesday, April 27 and Appendix 4.] Having a swimming pool is a great advantage for this practice, but you can do it at a pond, a river or an ocean, which is especially suitable because it is the largest body of water. To do the practice, you take water from the swimming pool, pond, river or ocean, recite the name mantra of Yeshe Karda seven times [OM JNANA AVALOKITE SAMANTA PARANA RAMI BAWA SAMAYA MAHA MANI DURU DURU HRIH DAYA JALANI SOHA], then pour the water back. You do this whole process seven times. After pouring the water back, meditate that the whole ocean appears as uncontaminated nectar to all the numberless pretas that are seen by the omniscient mind. All the pretas fully enjoy the nectar and by drinking it are liberated from all their sufferings and defilements and they all become the Buddha of Compassion.

The practice is very simple, but it has unbelievable benefit for the pretas. Of course, you also collect unbelievable merit, but it is of incredible benefit to the numberless pretas. This mantra enables the pretas to see the whole ocean as nectar; otherwise, they cannot even see the ocean. We can see the ocean, but pretas cannot see it. This mantra allows them not only to see the ocean but to see the whole ocean as nectar and to drink from it, thus purifying their negative karma and enabling them to receive a good rebirth. This is unbelievable. It is extremely good to benefit the pretas in this way, to liberate them from suffering and enable them to have a good rebirth. This Yeshe Karda practice was given by Buddha.

If you don’t do this practice, especially if you go to the water quite often, it is a great pity. I mean, without talking about the merit you collect for yourself, you bring unbelievable benefit to the pretas, those sentient beings who have been experiencing the suffering of hunger and thirst for hundreds or thousands of years. We talk about the suffering of people in Africa

and other parts of the world, but it is nothing compared to the suffering of the hungry ghosts, who are unable to find food or water for thousands of years. The suffering of people in this world is great bliss when compared to the suffering of the pretas. And even though they can't find food or water, due to their karma, the pretas don't die but live for hundreds of thousands of years. Therefore, it is a great pity if you don't do this practice, especially if you live near or go quite often to the water.

THE HUNDRED TORMA OFFERING PRACTICE
(*TOR MA GYA TSA*)

Anyway, I was explaining the purpose of giving the oral transmission of the Mitukpa mantra and had reached the point of talking about the one hundred torma offerings. This practice is contained in the verse in *Lama Chöpa*, the *Guru Puja*, where it says, "Whatever conditions I meet, please grant me blessings to be able to make this life of freedom and leisure highly meaningful with the skillful means of living in the practice of the four actions and immediately use it for meditation by applying the samayas and advice of thought transformation." [Verse 98.]

Whether we are happy or unhappy, whether we meet favorable or unfavorable conditions, whether we meet a friend or an enemy, whether we receive praise or criticism, we should immediately use the situation for meditation, which means that we should apply the practices of thought transformation. Various practices are explained, and by doing these practices we then make our human rebirth useful.

The offering of a hundred tormas is one of the four actions, which are collecting merit; purifying negativities; giving tormas to interfering spirits, such as *don* and *geg*; and making offerings to the Dharma protectors. If your mind is brave and well-trained in the thought transformation practices, you give tormas to the interfering spirits and request them to cause obstacles to you. In this way you are able to train in thought transformation and to complete the thought transformation practice, just as Olympic champions train and challenge many people before they become champions. The main aim is to complete the practice of thought transformation so that you can achieve enlightenment and then enlighten other sentient beings.

If your mind is not brave or strong enough to practice in this way,

you give the tormas to the interfering beings and ask them not to cause obstacles to your practice. If your mind is strong, however, you give the tormas as a present to the interfering spirits and ask them to harm you. Giving tormas to the protectors, whether worldly protectors or protectors who are beyond samsara, has the same purpose. This practice of offering tormas to the interferers includes making charity to pretas and nagas. At the end of the practice, you also give them teachings. The whole practice is unique and very beautiful.

THE BENEFITS OF THE MITUKPA MANTRA

As to the benefits of the Mitukpa mantra, anybody who hears it does not go to the lower realms. If you recite the Mitukpa mantra 100,000 times, then blow on water, sand or mustard seeds and sprinkle that blessed substance on the body of a person or animal that has died, if that being has been born in one of the lower realms, it will immediately be liberated from the lower realms. Even though the consciousness has separated from the body and is somewhere else completely, because of its past connection with that body, the consciousness is still affected. Because of that connection, the consciousness is purified by throwing the blessed substance on the dead body or any part of that body, even the hair. All that is needed is for the blessed substance to touch the body. Just by that, the being's consciousness is purified, liberated from the lower realms and reborn in one of the higher realms.

It can purify even someone with very heavy karma, even someone who has created the five uninterrupted negative karmas (killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing an arhat, intentionally wounding a Buddha or causing disunity among the Sangha). It can purify even someone who has created the very heavy negative karma of having abandoned the holy Dharma, through criticizing the holy Dharma, such as the Hinayana, Mahayana sutra or Mahayana tantra teachings, criticizing the four traditions of Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism, or disrespecting the holy Dharma scriptures. Pabongka Dechen Nyungpo also explains in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* that throwing Dharma texts with missing pages in the garbage is also considered to be avoiding the holy Dharma. It is regarded as very heavy negative karma, as is criticizing buddhas and other arya beings.

However, even all these heavy negative karmas can be purified by reciting the Mitukpa mantra at the time of death. If it purifies the heavy negative karmas of the person for whom it is recited, there is no doubt that the Mitukpa mantra purifies the negative karmas of the person who actually recites it. Even blessing water or sand with the Mitukpa mantra and sprinkling it on the body of someone who has created all these heavy negative karmas can purify those negative karmas and save the person from the lower realms.

Simply *seeing* this mantra can purify all the negative karmas. If you show a dying person the Mitukpa mantra written on a piece of paper, it can purify all their negative karma. If simply seeing this mantra can do that, what need is there to mention the unbelievable benefits that come from reciting the Mitukpa mantra?

Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche mentioned that the people in Amdo have a custom of touching the body of a dying or dead person with a piece of paper on which powerful mantras for purification, such as the mantras of the deities Mitukpa, Kunrig, Namgyälma, Stainless Beam and Stainless Pinnacle, have been written. The dying person's body is touched or rubbed with a piece of paper on which these powerful purification mantras have been written. The main point is that by touching the body, the mantras purify all the negative karmas and help that being to have a good rebirth.

Rinpoche also said that in Amdo, lay people prepare for their death by taking a great initiation of Kunrig. I am not sure whether Kunrig belongs to Charya Tantra or Anuttara Tantra. Kunrig is a white deity with three faces and holds a Dharmachakra. In Amdo, it is customary to prepare for death by taking a Kunrig initiation so that all the negative karma created in that life is completely purified. Thinking that they have purified everything, the people feel relaxed and comfortable; if death comes, they are not worried because they are ready to die. This is why the people in Amdo take the great initiation of Kunrig.

Because Amitabha Buddhist Centre in Singapore offered great service to fulfill Ribur Rinpoche's holy wishes, Rinpoche advised ABC to request the Mitukpa initiation from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. His Holiness accepted their request and gave the Mitukpa initiation in Bodhgaya and right after that His Holiness gave it again in Dharamsala. I don't think it had been given before then. I think from His Holiness's side he gave

it in Bodhgaya especially for the old Tibetans and again in Dharamsala because more Tibetans are there at the time of the Tibetan New Year.

WHAT TO DO WHEN EATING MEAT

At that time, His Holiness explained that in the past, when he ate meat, he would keep all the bones, then recite the Mitukpa mantra and blow on the bones. This kind of practice is unbelievably good to do, especially if you eat meat. If you eat meat, you *must* do something for the animal who has died. Otherwise, it is very sad, because that animal cherished its body as much as you cherish your body. The body you are eating was cherished greatly by that animal; that animal cherished its body more than any other being's body. Just as you protect your body, that animal protected its body. Therefore, if you don't at least pray for that animal, it is very sad, and you are very selfish.

It is terrible if you eat meat with a distracted mind and total attachment to your own happiness. You must at least recite a few mantras. If you don't know the Mitukpa mantra or any of the other powerful mantras, you must at least recite OM MANI PADME HUM or the Medicine Buddha mantra. If you cannot recite one mala, recite half a mala, twenty-one or seven manis or Medicine Buddha mantras. Recite the mantras with strong compassion, blow on the meat before you eat it, and make a strong dedication for that animal to immediately be liberated from the lower realms and to receive a good rebirth—a perfect human body or rebirth in a pure land.

You can recite the name of a particular buddha, but I don't remember it. I think that this Buddha probably motivated specifically to purify the negative karma from eating meat. There is also a mantra, OM AH BIRA KHE CHARA HUM, that is normally recited when meat is eaten. If you recite this mantra seven times, the negative karma of that sentient being is purified and they are reborn in one of the higher realms—in the deva realm, the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods, I think. This is mentioned in a Manjughosha root tantric text. All these mantras—OM AH BIRA KHE CHARA HUM, OM MANI PADME HUM or the Medicine Buddha mantra—have the same benefit. His Holiness, however, mentioned particularly the Mitukpa mantra. If you are not a vegetarian, if you do eat meat, reciting these mantras is unbelievably beneficial for the sentient being whose body you are eating. Otherwise, your eating the meat can become heavy negative

karma and you are no different from a tiger or any other carnivore that lives on other animals. Even though you are not eating live animals, if you eat meat only with attachment and do not do anything to benefit the animal you are eating, you are not that different from a tiger.

There are other powerful deity mantras, such as Stainless Beam, but maybe I will mention them at another time. These are the main mantras that are used when somebody has died and jang wa is being done for them [see Chapter 32, Sunday, February 28]. These mantras are recited and used to bless mustard seeds, water or sand, which you then throw over the dead body. Or by writing the name of the dead person on a piece of paper, you hook their consciousness; you visualize that the person is there and then purify them with the substances blessed with these mantras.

TRANSMISSION OF THE MITUKPA MANTRA

Think, “No matter what, I must achieve enlightenment in order to liberate all sentient beings from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment. I must liberate the numberless hell beings from all their suffering, the numberless hungry ghosts from all their suffering, the numberless animals from all their suffering, the numberless humans from all their suffering, the numberless asuras and suras from all their suffering and the numberless intermediate state beings from all their suffering and bring them all to enlightenment. Therefore, I *must* achieve enlightenment. For this reason, I am going to take the oral transmission of the Mitukpa mantra.”

[The oral transmission is given:] OM KAMKANI KAMKANI / ROCHANI ROCHANI / TROTANI TROTANI / TRASANI TRASANI PRATIHANA PRATIHANA / SARVA KARMA PARAM PARA NI ME SARVA SATTVA NANCHA SVAHA.

If you add NAMO RATNA TRAYAYA NAMO BHAGAVATE AKSHOBHYA TATHAGATAYA ARHATEYA SAMYAK SAMBUDDHAYA to the OM KAMKANI KAMKANI . . . it becomes the Guhyasamaja root mantra, or something like that. If you simply recite OM KAMKANI KAMKANI . . . it's the Mitukpa mantra.

THE BENEFITS OF THE NAGA KING'S MANTRA

I would also like to give the oral transmission of another mantra, that of the Naga King, one of the Thirty-five Buddhas. Reciting the name of the Naga King, *De zhin shog pa lu wang gyi gyäl po*, [Skt: *Naga raja*] has many benefits. If you recite it twenty-one times, it has the power to purify even the heavy negative karma that definitely bring their results in this life. Also, you don't receive harm from nagas and landlords [*shi dag*] through diseases such as leprosy, arthritis or cancer. I haven't heard Tibetan doctors link AIDS to nagas, but they normally explain that cancer is related to harm from nagas. Cancer is called *nyen* in Tibetan, which indicates that some other being becomes a condition for that sickness. I think that coma is also definitely connected to harm from spirits. I'm not sure exactly which type of being is involved, but in the past, the divinations of high lamas have usually indicated that Medicine Buddha practice should be done for someone in a coma.

Reciting the name of the Naga King also purifies the negative karma of having broken or degenerated vows of morality. Also, you are protected from receiving harm from lightning, sickness or thieves. It also increases your wealth. If you recite this buddha's name 100,000 times, you can be healed of leprosy; the negative karma that results in your contracting leprosy will be completely purified.

Cancer is definitely related to nagas, and the proof of this is that practicing deities that protect sentient beings from naga harm, such as Vajrapani-Hayagriva-Garuda, can cure cancer. This particular deity provides protection from more than naga harm, however. Vajrapani acts against the spirits of the upper reaches of space, which cause epilepsy and other diseases. Hayagriva, the deity adorned with a horse's head, protects sentient beings from naga harm and the spirit called *tsen gyel don* in Tibetan. And the Garuda on top protects sentient beings from naga and landlord harm.

Of course, the main function of Vajrapani-Hayagriva-Garuda is to liberate sentient beings by pacifying their delusions of ignorance, anger and attachment, from where they receive all their problems, sicknesses and spirit harm. The basic aim of the practice of this deity is to purify, cease, these defilements. This is why people who have practiced the meditation-recitation of Vajrapani or Vajrapani-Hayagriva-Garuda have been able to

heal themselves of cancer. This and the fact that other deities that protect sentient beings from naga harm have helped to cure cancer prove that there is a relationship between nagas and cancer.

I would like to suggest that if their mind is open to the idea, people with AIDS recite the name of this buddha, the Naga King, Lu wang gyi gyäl po. It is not that I have had the experience of someone reciting this name mantra and healing themselves of AIDS, but according to my divination it would be beneficial to recite this mantra. If someone with AIDS has an open mind and would like to do some meditation practice, they can be given a picture of this Buddha and recite this Buddha's name and mantra.

I will give the oral transmission of this mantra, because I have received it from both His Holiness Serkong Rinpoche and Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche when they gave the sets of hundreds of initiations [*Rinjung Gyatsa* etc.].

The mantra is TAYATHA OM TATHAGATA BHAGAVAN NAGA RANDZE SHORA ADHISHTHANA ADHISHTITE SOHA.

I don't remember whether I have received the oral transmission of this next mantra, OM CHITTA HUM PHE SOHA, OM SHRI MATI ASHU SOHA. If you recite this mantra and the mantra of the Naga King every day, you won't receive harm from the spirits of the upper realms, so you won't get a stroke. Some people have the karma to recover fully from a stroke, but most people don't recover and hospitals can offer them little more than physiotherapy. This practice gives more possibility of recovery. Anyway, if you recite these two mantras every day, you won't get a stroke. Once you have a stroke, it is difficult to recover from it. It seems that most people either die soon afterwards or have to live with disability for many years.

There is also another buddha whose particular function is to help to prevent strokes. The mantra of this Buddha is SANGYE OTZY TIN GYI GYALPO DRIME MEPÄ DÄWE TOMA (LA CHAG TSÄL LO). If you recite this mantra twenty-one times, you will not be harmed by lightning—lightning strikes are not simply related to the power of the elements; other beings are also involved—or by strokes. Even though such things are not explained in clinical medicine, other beings, harmful beings, are involved in the causation of strokes. Due to the person's karma, those beings cause these particular sicknesses. If you recite this buddha's name twenty-one times, you won't receive such harms. Even if you don't recite all these different mantras, it could be that you are protected by reciting just one of them.

There are also many different practices that can be done by lamas or

other practitioners for someone who has already had a stroke—purification with blessed water, for example. If the person who has already had a stroke can recite OM TUMBURI TUMBURI SUKSHU MEME SHIKSHI SOHA seven times each day, they will be protected from further strokes. Recovery from subsequent strokes is very difficult, but if you are able to recite this mantra seven times every day after the initial stroke, you will never get another stroke. Not only does this practice protect you from further strokes, but it also makes it easy for you to recover from the first stroke.

When Lama showed the aspect of paralysis, I rang His Holiness Zong Rinpoche, who was in Switzerland at that time. Rinpoche advised that Lama recite this mantra seven times every day. We recited it around Lama and Lama also recited it, and Lama recovered very quickly from the paralysis. Every day he got better and better. Lama showed the aspect of complete recovery from the stroke. I had forgotten that for two or three years I had been carrying a text with the details of various methods for healing strokes and many other sicknesses. At the time that Lama showed the aspect of paralysis I didn't remember that I had this text. It was only when I got the message from His Holiness Zong Rinpoche about reciting this mantra that I remembered that I had been carrying the text for the past few years. Anyway, that's my story

MITUKPA MEDITATION

We will recite the Mitukpa mantra twenty-one times together, and then stop there for tonight.

Visualize Buddha Mitukpa either in front of you or above your crown, and think that nectar comes from Buddha Mitukpa to purify Maria, the person who has died, as well as all other sentient beings, including you. The nectar mainly purifies Maria, but it also purifies all other beings who have passed away and all the sentient beings in the six realms. Or you can visualize Buddha Mitukpa on your crown and Maria, surrounded by all sentient beings, in your heart on a lotus and moon disc and then purify everyone.

As you recite the mantra, make a strong request for all the negative karmas and defilements of Maria and of you and all other sentient beings to be purified immediately.

After the recitation, think that all the negative karmas and defilements collected by Maria during beginningless rebirths have been completely purified, as have all those of other sentient beings, including yourself. All the negative karmas and defilements come out of the body in the form of dirty black liquid as the body is washed by the strong white nectar-beams emitted by Buddha Mitukpa.

If you have received a Mitukpa initiation or a Highest Yoga Tantra initiation, it might be OK to visualize that Mitukpa absorbs within you and you become Mitukpa. You then enlighten all other sentient beings in the aspect of Mitukpa. Everybody becomes Mitukpa—all hell beings become Mitukpa, all hungry ghosts become Mitukpa, all animals become Mitukpa, all humans (including Maria) become Mitukpa and all asuras and suras become Mitukpa. Then rejoice, “How wonderful it is that I have brought all sentient beings to Mitukpa’s enlightenment.”

DEDICATION

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, which are empty, may the I, who is empty, achieve Victorious Buddha Mitukpa’s enlightenment, which is also empty, and lead all sentient beings, who are also empty, to that enlightenment, which is also empty, by myself alone, who is also empty.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, *Gang ri ra wä . . .*

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I able to bring benefit as extensive as the sky to all sentient beings as Lama Tsongkhapa did, by having within me the same qualities that Lama Tsongkhapa had, from now on in all my future lifetimes.”

We can abbreviate the *King of Prayers* as follows: “Whatever dedications the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three times have most admired, and as Samantabhadra and Manjughosha have realized, I also dedicate in that way. May I follow the prayers and deeds of the bodhisattvas Manjughosha and Samantabhadra.”

[Recitation of multiplying mantras and subsequent prayer]

We will condense the prayer for the flourishing of Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings, *Lo sang gyäl tän ma*, as follows: "Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may the complete teaching of Lama Tsongkhapa be actualized in this very lifetime, without even a second's delay, within my mind and within the minds of all the students and benefactors, especially those who sacrifice their lives to serve others and the teachings of the Buddha through this organization.

"May I be able to cause all sentient beings to meet Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings and to completely actualize them in their minds. May the general teachings of Buddha and especially the teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa flourish and spread in all directions. Also, by receiving whatever support is needed, may all the centers be able to spread the teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa in the minds of all sentient beings. May all the projects of this organization succeed immediately by receiving all the support they need. May the 500-foot Maitreya Buddha statue be completed immediately by receiving all the support that is needed.

"May all these centers, stupas, statues and other projects cause loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta to be generated in the minds of all sentient beings. Due to that, may no sentient being ever experience war, famine, sickness, earthquake, danger from fire or water, or any other undesirable thing. In particular, may a third world war, with all the dangers of torture and the use of nuclear weapons, not occur. May everyone be free from the danger of this; may no one ever have to experience such things.

"May all these centers, stupas, statues and other projects cause all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment in the quickest way possible."

Sorry, again tonight it became blah, blah, blah

Saturday, April 10

WEEKEND TEACHING

[Rinpoche's first discourse after returning from India.]

Good afternoon. Sorry, I disappeared for a long time! However, I think you've been having the best, most meaningful time; an excellent, most productive time, making your life as meaningful as possible.

THERE'S NOTHING BETTER THAN PURIFICATION

You see, what we're doing here, even if the Third World War that people talk about were happening, other than Vajrasattva practice, what else could you do? Even if the Third World War had broken out, there'd be no other way to spend your life than practicing Vajrasattva to purify yourself and benefit others. When you practice Vajrasattva you also purify others. Even in the face of nuclear danger, there's nothing better to do than practicing purification. The immediate thing to do is to practice purification . . . purifying not good karma but the other kind!

Even if you discover you have cancer—you go to a hospital for a checkup and the doctor diagnoses cancer—there's nothing else to do but practice purification, to purify your mind of the causes of suffering rebirths, the negative karma that causes your consciousness to migrate into the lower realms. Even if you find out that you are terminally ill with cancer, AIDS or any other life-threatening disease, the immediate solution is to purify as much negative karma as you can, to ensure that your next rebirth will be a good one, so that in your next life you can continue to practice Dharma, to actualize the path to enlightenment.

When some people find out that they have cancer or AIDS, they go on vacation to some pure land like Goa, Tahiti or Rio de Janeiro—which I used to call Rio Degenerated, but I haven't been there for a while!—

anyway, to some place that Westerners consider to be pure lands! But that doesn't help. That doesn't solve your problem; that doesn't heal your sickness or purify your negative karma. It just distracts your mind from the problem. Similarly, drinking alcohol or taking other substances to suppress your fear, to not feel afraid, works for only a short time and is simply cheating yourself. Not only does getting intoxicated not solve your problem but it also leads to additional life problems. Therefore, even if you are going to die tomorrow, tonight, this hour, there's nothing else to do but purify your mind.

Besides benefiting yourself, to be successful in benefiting others, to have no obstacles for that, you also need to purify your mind. To free numberless sentient beings, the source of all your past, present and future happiness, including not only temporary happiness but also ultimate happiness—liberation from samsara and the great liberation of full enlightenment—to bring these numberless sentient beings to full enlightenment by yourself alone, you need to actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment. What interferes with your doing that is your negative karma, your defilements. Therefore, purification is very important; a key point in your practice. Even to liberate yourself forever from the oceans of samsaric suffering, the continuity of which has no beginning, you need to actualize the path that ceases the defilements, the cause of all suffering—karma and delusion, including the seed of delusion. Even for your own liberation from samsara, purification is the essential practice.

Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo advised that, out of meditation on that path and collecting merit and practicing purification, it is more important to spend time collecting merit and practicing purification than meditating. Here, meditating means meditating on the path. Of course, practicing purification and collecting merit all involves meditation, but the specific meditation Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo was referring to was meditation on the path.

As we know from our own experience, we've tried a lot to meditate on the lamrim, starting from guru devotion, the perfect human rebirth and so forth, spending time on that, but not much has happened in our minds. Even though we've spent much time meditating on the lamrim, there's been no real change in our hearts. The words on which we've been meditating remain just words and haven't connected with our hearts. There's a gap between our hearts and the words we've been repeating or reciting

during meditation. Sometimes, instead of getting transformed, our minds have even gotten worse.

You might have heard this example used by Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo. A rock might have been immersed under water for a long time, but it still remains very hard and solid. Similarly, our minds have been around Dharma for a long time, we've been reading and listening to teachings for ages, but nothing has happened; there's been no change in our minds. We have no realizations and our egos are just as big as they were before we met the Dharma, if not bigger! Perhaps our egos have become even more professional, more sophisticated, better qualified than they ever were! Anyway, I'm joking. However, if you've been meditating on the lamrim for a long time and feel no benefit, your mistake is that you have not practiced enough purification or collected enough merit.

Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo also said in his lamrim teachings that even if you have been doing many preliminary practices [of purification and collecting merit] along with your lamrim meditation, if there's been no change in your mind, you need to examine your guru devotion. There might be something wrong in your practice of that. You have to analyze what might have gone wrong in your guru devotion and fix any mistakes that you find by confessing past errors and correcting your future practice. If you fail to do this, you'll continue to collect the heaviest of negative karmas, the greatest obstacles to realization and the development of your mind in the spiritual path, the path to enlightenment. If you are unaware of this and continue to do mainly preliminary practices and lamrim meditation, not much will happen in your mind. What you are doing is good, but it won't transform your mind, won't bring you realizations.

Even in this case, therefore, purification is required. You have to recognize your mistakes and confess them, refrain from making them in future, and do whatever else should be done. In *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo said that of all the things you do in your life, the practice of purifying negativities and collecting merit is more important than meditation. This is what we are doing here, what's happening now.

Also, for old students who knew Lama Yeshe, who was kinder than the buddhas of the three times, doing Vajrasattva practice is the best offering we can make to Lama. He wrote these teachings on the Vajrasattva practice and tsog offering, put together the sadhanas and so forth, so our doing

one of Lama's favorite practices would please him a lot and is repaying his kindness. Whether you're a direct or indirect disciple, it's the same.

[Rinpoche spends some time looking through a text.]

I can't find my favorite subject. I think it's hiding! I can't find it, so we'd better do something else.

But before we do, since there are some people who want to take refuge and precepts next week, it would be good if first you could hear some preliminary teachings so that you will have a deeper understanding of the subject. In that way, the reasons for your taking refuge and precepts will be clearer and deeper.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Is there is a question? Maybe half a question?

Ven. Marcel: Rinpoche, in the confession verse in *Lama Chöpa* [Verse 38] we vow never to commit *any* negative action again, but when we do the Vajrasattva practice, we promise never to do again only those that we can avoid and don't promise to do more than we actually can. This seems a little contradictory. Please could Rinpoche explain?

Rinpoche: No, I cannot explain! Impossible! Actually, yes, I did want to say something on this point. Even though it's quite correct to say, "I will abstain from, I will not commit, any negativities as much as I possibly can," it's very general and sounds to me like a pretty weak promise. I think it's stronger to say, "I will abstain from the gross negativities from now on, and those that are more difficult to avoid, I will abstain from for . . ." and here you commit to a certain period of time—a few seconds, a minute, an hour, one day; whatever you can. This commitment is stronger. You are taking more responsibility than you do when you make the general promise, "I will do my best." That seems weak.

Even though you recite the words of *Lama Chöpa* together as a group—and not just *Lama Chöpa*; there are many other similar prayers—in your heart you should think what I've just explained. Verbally, you do the prayers as written in the text, but the merit field will understand what you mean. I think they'll have enough sympathy for you! Here at the retreat,

when we do the general confession and the Thirty-five Buddhas, and at the end of the Vajrasattva sessions, as it's guided meditation, we specifically mention the stronger promise as I've described in order to make our negative karma as light as possible and to not cheat the merit field. But when you do prayers in a group and the text does not specifically emphasize the promise in that way, you can think it in your heart.

Nick Ribush: Rinpoche, I have two questions. The first is, at the beginning of the long Vajrasattva sadhana, we set up the visualization with the PAM, lotus, vajra, HUM, radiant light and Vajrasattva, and then make offerings to Heruka Vajrasattva, starting with OM KHANDAROHI . . . and OM SVABHAVA . . . and everything becoming empty. Does that mean the visualization disappears?

Rinpoche: No, it means your ego disappears! Anyway, here the focus is the emptiness of the offerings, which appear to you as ordinary. This has two meanings. One is the emptiness of inherent existence. The other is the emptiness of the offerings that you believe are there, but are not there on the base; the offerings that appear to you, that your mind believes are there—the water, food, music and other offerings—but in reality are not there, cannot be found on their base. So that is purified. Meditate that those inherently existent offerings—which are not there but appear to your hallucinating mind as though they were, which your hallucinating mind believes are there—are totally non-existent, as they *are* totally nonexistent; not space, but empty like space. So at that time the ordinary appearance of the offerings is purified in emptiness. The offerings—the food, water and so forth—which appear inherently existent or ordinary, which appear to you *not* in the way they appear to the buddhas, which is in the nature of greatest bliss, are purified in emptiness. Focus mainly on the emptiness of the offerings, but if you can extend your mind to think of the emptiness of all existence, that's even better.

Doing this, you should not have any confusion with your visualization of Vajrasattva, because you are supposed to visualize the deity as inseparable method and wisdom. That's the correct way to meditate on the deity. It's not only when you practice deity yoga, when you visualize yourself as the deity, that you generate the transcendental wisdom of non-dual clarity and profundity, the mind of inseparable method and wisdom, which is what makes deity yoga “vajra.” When you practice method, you create

the cause to attain the enlightened holy body, rupakaya; when you practice wisdom, you create the cause to attain the enlightened holy wisdom, dharmakaya. Therefore, when you practice method and wisdom together by meditating on the deity as the inseparability of these two, you continuously create the cause to attain the two enlightened holy bodies.

Jon [Rinpoche asking Jon Landaw], can you say “unified”—“the mind that is unified method and wisdom”? Yes? I used to say that for a long time, until a few years ago, when I did some work here at LMB with “mandala” Michael. I was helping check his English translation of the Heruka body mandala sadhana. He had translated the words in the same order as they appear in Tibetan, which is opposite to the order in which you say them in English. Usually when you translate Tibetan into English you reverse the order of the words. It’s OK, but his was a slightly more difficult way of making a translation. So we had finished the prayer of request to the lineage lamas and were just about up to the yoga of the three purifications, and I wanted to say “unified” for the mind that is unified of method and wisdom, but he indicated that that meant two things become one and I shouldn’t use that word. Since then my mind has been quite discouraged about saying unified! Up till then I was very proud of that translation! Anyway, I think that this point is something to analyze.

You can also instantly generate yourself as the mandala deity out of emptiness, but what I was going to say was that even when you visualize the deity in front of you, you have to visualize it with wisdom that is inseparable from method and wisdom. For example, at the beginning of the *Guru Puja*, after generating refuge and bodhicitta, the refuge merit field absorbs into you, and then out of emptiness, you generate yourself as the deity that you are actually going to achieve in the future—for instance, Yamantaka. At that time, you *are* the deity. The way you’re supposed to meditate, or feel, is that the resultant deity that you will achieve in the future has actually happened now, and your mind is in the state of non-dual bliss and wisdom. The deity that you visualize in front of you is a manifestation of your mind, which is dharmakaya.

While you are focusing on the deity’s holy body, at the same time, that wisdom understands, recognizes, that it has no nature, that it doesn’t have inherent existence. At the moment, when things appear, our ignorance holds them to be inherently existent, as if that’s the actual nature of phenomena, as if that’s the way they exist. While your wisdom focuses on the

holy body of the deity in front of you, it also understands that it has no nature, no inherent existence. The focus on the holy body is method and the understanding that it has no inherent existence, no nature, is wisdom. In the lower tantras, the term for the method of focus on the deity's holy body is "clarity" and the term for the wisdom of simultaneous understanding that it has no inherent existence is "profundity"—the non-dual wisdom of profundity and clarity. In highest yoga tantra, the [experience of this is called] great bliss.

What I'm saying is that you should think that everything is empty. The more phenomena that you can think are empty, the better. Therefore, if you're thinking that everything is empty, when you think of the aspect of Vajrasattva, you don't have to go through it all again. Otherwise you'll never get to the mantra recitation; you'll just be repeating, "This is empty, that is empty" and will never get to start your retreat!

When you visualize Vajrasattva by degrees, build up the steps of the visualization, every single aspect has meaning. Does Lama explain all these things in his commentary? [Student: No, Rinpoche.] Basically, every single thing in the visualization signifies Vajrasattva's qualities. The lotus, the sun and moon disks, everything else—all those things express Vajrasattva's qualities. And when you invoke wisdom, initiate Vajrasattva and so forth, you don't do all that because Vajrasattva's missing something. There are no blessings or qualities missing in Vajrasattva. It's not like Vajrasattva is empty before you invoke wisdom; that Vajrasattva has no mind and you have to invoke mind from somewhere else. The invocation of wisdom, the initiation—these are not for Vajrasattva but are done to dispel our wrong thoughts, our ordinary concepts, such as, "Oh, it's just me visualizing this; this is just my own visualization." You see? Not much faith.

When you do the visualization invoking wisdom, you feel better; you have more faith. This is done according to the psychology of us ordinary beings; to generate more faith, to make it more powerful. Similarly, there's no need to initiate or purify Vajrasattva, just as when in the *Jorchö* practice we offer a bath to the merit field, there's no dirt to wash off. As it says in that prayer, "Buddha's holy body has no stains, but in order to purify the stains of us sentient beings, I am going to offer this bath to the buddhas." It's like that. When we do the visualization initiating Vajrasattva, purifying all stains, and the initiating nectar overflows and becomes Akshobhya, Vajrasattva has no stains to purify; it's to purify our own.

Anyway, even if you meditate that everything is empty, you can still do instant visualization, as I described.

THE MEANING OF THE OM SVABHAVA . . . MANTRA

With respect to the mantra OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA SHUDDHO HAM, the first part indicates selflessness of the aggregates and the second, selflessness of the person. The first shows that the aggregates, which are the base to be labeled I, are also empty. The second shows the I, the self, is empty. That's one interpretation. In general, SVABHAVA means "nature" and SHUDDHO means "pure," so together they mean pure nature. SARVA means "all" and DHARMA means "existence" ["existent phenomena"].

The general meaning is that all objects are empty. All objects of mind—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, I, aggregates, all objects perceived—are empty; they don't have inherent existence, even though they appear to our hallucinating minds as inherently existent. From the very beginning, they have never been inherently existent—that is the nature of all phenomena and that is pure. It's pure because they have never been inherently existent, even though they appear as inherently existent to our hallucinating minds, as if they're covered by inherent existence, like a floor is covered by a carpet or a table by a tablecloth.

Neither the object that is perceived, nor the mind—the cognition, *she pa*—that perceives it, has inherent existence. Neil, how do you translate that mind, *she pa*? Knower? Knowing phenomenon? [Ven. Neil: Knower.] What about the person whose mind that is? Is that also knower? Both the mind and the person are knower? In Tibetan, they're different. *She pa* is the mind that has the function of knowing, and the person whose mind it is is called *she pa po*, the one who knows.

Anyway, both the objects perceived and the cognition, or mind, that perceives them, that has the function of knowing, exist by being merely labeled by the mind. Therefore, they have no inherent existence whatsoever—not the slightest atom of it—even though all these merely labeled phenomena, the objects, and the mind, the knower that has the function of knowing, appear to have inherent existence. So that appearance and the belief in it block us from seeing that the way all these phenomena really exist is in mere name; not only the appearance but also the belief,

or apprehension, that it's true, prevent us from seeing the way in which phenomena exist—in mere name.

However, . . . SVABHAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA SHUDDHO . . . shows that all objects perceived by the mind are empty, that their nature is pure, empty of inherent existence. The meaning of pure here is unstained by inherent existence. Not only are these objects of the mind pure in nature, but the subject, the mind that perceives, is also SVABHAVA SHUDDHO—pure in nature. Even though our mind and all other phenomena appear to our mind as if they exist from their own side, they're totally empty of that mode of existence, therefore, they're pure. The whole of existence is empty.

After that, the way you meditate on O-HAM depends on the level of tantra that you're practicing. For example, Kriya or Highest Yoga Tantra. If you're meditating according to Highest Yoga Tantra, it's similar to dharmakaya meditation. I'm just mentioning this so that those who understand will get the idea. It doesn't mean you have to go through the absorptions. Then, the very last thing you think is O-HAM, "This is me." After you have created a pure base, you label it. Normally we apply our labels to impure bases, on these samsaric aggregates. Our mind labels "I" on the impure base of our samsaric aggregates. Here, however, you first create a pure base, then you label it I, and similarly, when you visualize the deity, you do the same thing.

After meditating that the object is empty, meditate that the subject, the mind that knows, is also empty. The object is empty; the mind that knows the object is also empty. SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA—the whole of existence is empty. The non-dual wisdom seeing the object, emptiness, that's the very basic, fundamental meditation contained in the mantra OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA SHUDDHO O-HAM. With the support of bodhicitta, that realization of emptiness ceases not only the gross but also the subtle defilements. Then your ordinary body, speech and mind are transformed into the vajra holy body, vajra holy speech and vajra holy mind, which the three sounds A-AU-MA, OM, signify. OM is the integration of the three sounds A, AU and MA. That's the goal; that's what we achieve by completely realizing the meaning contained in the mantra OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA SHUDDHO HAM. By meditating on that, you achieve that which is contained in OM.

What was your second question?

Nick: Rinpoche, when my ignorant mind apprehends that object that has the function of standing on the table and emitting light, I label it “table lamp,” and then a real table lamp appears from that side. So that’s how the table lamp appears. How does the base exist? The base itself?

Rinpoche: The base of the lamp? That’s exactly the same. As the lamp is labeled, the base is also labeled. If the lamp that you see is merely labeled, in the same way, the base is also labeled. That cannot be different from the lamp. Do you mean the label “lamp” comes from your mind but the base comes from the shop—the base is bought in a shop? The label “lamp” is applied by your very kind mind, which helps to have light on this table? I’m joking! So, we’ll stop here.

DEDICATION

“Due to the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may bodhicitta—the altruistic mind determined to reach enlightenment for sentient beings, which cherishes others, from which all success and other desirable things come, by letting go the I, from which all unhappiness and problems arise—be generated in my mind and in the minds of all my family members, all the students and benefactors of this organization and all other sentient beings without even a second’s delay, and may that which has already been generated increase.”

It’s not that this mind, bodhicitta, has nothing to cherish. “. . . by letting go the I” doesn’t mean there’s nothing left. Cherish others; that’s the best thing to do. By letting go your I, you get all happiness; by letting go your I, you free yourself from all obstacles and achieve all happiness up to enlightenment.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings—which, while they exist, are totally non-existent from their own side—may the I—which, while it exists, is totally empty, non-existent, from its own side—achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s or Vajrasattva’s enlightenment—which, while it exists, is totally non-existent from its own side—and lead all sentient beings—which, while they exist, are totally non-existent from their own side—to that enlightenment—which, while it exists, is totally non-existent from its own side—by myself alone—which, while it exists, is totally non-existent, totally empty, from its own side.

SATURDAY, APRIL 10

“May the complete teaching of Lama Tsongkhapa, the unification of sutra and tantra, be completely actualized within my own mind, the minds of my family members and the minds of all the students and benefactors of this organization, especially those who sacrifice their lives serving others through this organization, in this very lifetime, without even a second’s delay, spread in the minds of all sentient beings and flourish in all directions.”

I thought at this point to mention a little bit about the Gelugpa meeting in New Delhi from which I’ve just returned . . . I’m saying, “I thought”—I *thought* to mention—but perhaps another time. Right now it’s dinner time—time for bliss in the stomach!

Sunday, April 11

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

[Rinpoche arrives late, just in time for tsog; people were expecting him hours earlier for teachings.]

I missed the teaching! I fell asleep and missed the teaching! But I couldn't stand the thought of not eating the tsog!

[Vajrasattva tsog: just before the “Praise in Eight Lines”:]

THE BENEFITS OF RECITING THE “PRAISE IN EIGHT LINES”

The English translation calls this next part the “Eight-legged Praise.” Did I mention this before? [Student: No, Rinpoche.] The “Eight-legged Praise.” Does anyone have eight legs! [Student: Spiders.] So, “Praise to the Eight Legs”! I'm joking. The Tibetan is *Kang gyä tö pa*. *Kang* here means lines—eight lines: “The Praise of Eight Lines,” not legs, *kang*. I mean, *kang pa* means leg, but this *kang* does not. I think, *tsig kang*, eight lines—what it's saying is the praise that has eight lines. Something like that. Lines. In Tibetan, *kang gyä*. The praises to the father and the mother.

I don't remember them individually, but about five benefits of doing this practice have been explained. It is regarded as very important for achieving success. The deity Heruka also stated, “I myself and the messenger yoginis will abide in the heart of the person who recites this praise and cause that person to generate the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness,” which is the special feature of highest yoga tantra that enables a practitioner to attain enlightenment within one brief lifetime of the degenerate age. Heruka and the messenger yoginis will abide in your heart and cause you to generate, experience and develop the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness.

There are three more lines explaining the benefits of doing this practice regularly, but I don't remember them at the moment. When you do this practice, when you recite this praise, all the dakas and dakinis, numberless of whom dwell in the twenty-four holy places, enter your body and bless your drops, winds and chakras. That's what happens when you recite it, so this is a very, very precious practice.

As Lama Tsongkhapa explained, and I often quote, what happens next is, in order to experience the profound, simultaneously-born wisdom of the completion stage within yourself, you need to concentrate on the vajra body. You need to precisely concentrate on the vajra body. For that, the chakras and drops need to be blessed by the dakas and dakinis.

The quickest way to completely cease the dualistic view—not only the gross defilements but also the subtle ones, the subtle negative imprints of the disturbing-thought obscurations, the simultaneously-born ignorance, the concept of the inherently-existent I and so forth—and arrest the continuity of the gross mind, the impure wind-mind—because the gross wind-mind doesn't go to enlightenment; only the extremely subtle mind (of the gross, subtle and extremely subtle mind and the gross, subtle and extremely subtle body, it is only the extremely subtle ones that do this) goes to enlightenment, and since the continuity of the gross mind does not go to enlightenment, it has to be stopped, ceased, or, in the case of Highest Yoga Tantra, abandoned—is to actualize the right tool, the right weapon, the right remedy. The main method for accomplishing the cessation of the dualistic view, therefore, is the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness.

Therefore, the answer to the question of how quickly you are going to achieve enlightenment is that it depends on how quickly you can actualize the experience of simultaneously-born wisdom and great bliss. That depends on concentrating on the central channel of the vajra body. That in turn depends on meditating on *tum mo* and so forth in the central channel and being able to draw the winds into it; to bring the winds in from the 72,000 nadis, or psychic channels, and have them dwell and absorb, go through the twenty-five absorptions. Then, when the gross mind stops, becomes invisible, the subtle mind appears, bringing the experience of the clear light vision. The experience of this wisdom is like an atomic bomb in the way it destroys your obstacles, the defilements, ceases the hallucination and quickly carries you to enlightenment.

However, everything, all success, depends on the dakas and dakinis entering your body and blessing your winds, chakras and drops. There are many practices in which you invoke the dakas and dakinis—the body mandala practice; when you invoke them from the holy places of Heruka or Vajrayogini when you practice the Heruka father tantra or practice Vajrayogini; or here, in this tsog offering practice, where you recite this “Praise in Eight Lines.”

I remember Lama Yeshe using it for healing. In Solu Khumbu, the old mothers would meet us on the road and say, “Oh, I have back pain . . .,” this and that—they wanted some blessing. So holding his mala in his hand, Lama would hit them on the back while reciting this praise. That’s something that definitely helps. I didn’t realize at the time how precious this prayer was and how it brings great blessings into your heart.

Whenever you recite this “Praise in Eight Legs,” visualize your guru, in the aspect of the deity Heruka Father-Mother, in the heart of the deity that you have visualized externally, and first of all, confess any negative actions you have done. Confess all non-virtuous actions, like you do during the Vajrasattva practice. When you practice the power of regret, as I mentioned earlier in the retreat, confess in general, every non-virtuous action ever done. Then more specifically, confess from the heart the ten non-virtuous actions done since beginningless rebirths; all vows broken since beginningless rebirths—pratimoksha, bodhicitta and tantric vows; and the heavier negative karmas, or obstacles, created with the guru, such as broken samayas and so forth. Visualize your root guru in the aspect of Heruka in the heart of the deity you have visualized and confess. Then visualize that your guru happily accepts your confession. From your heart, confess all negative karma, especially that created with the guru as object—whatever samayas with the guru that you have transgressed, and degenerated samayas since beginningless rebirths—and visualize that your guru, Heruka Father-Mother, happily accepts.

After that, request, “May I be able to actualize the path to enlightenment in this very lifetime without even a second’s delay. Whenever my death comes, may I be born in the pure land of Heruka Father-Mother. If I cannot be reborn there, may all my rebirths in samsara become most beneficial for all living beings.”

At this point, you can also pray to your heart guru with any other important requests that you or others might have and for the success of the

Maitreya project to fulfill all the guru's holy wishes. Finally, visualize that your heart guru, Heruka Father-Mother, happily accepts your request.

Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo regarded this as a very powerful puja. He praised it very highly. It's very powerful. If you do this mother tantra praise well, it's the equivalent of one big puja.

If you cannot chant the prayer together, after saying the praise to the Father, before the praise to the Mother, make all your requests, as I mentioned, then do the praise to the mother. Heruka taught five benefits of doing this "Praise in Eight Lines," but I don't remember the exact quotation.

MANTRA RECITATION DURING VAJRASATTVA TSOG

One more thing about the Vajrasattva tsog offering puja is how you recite the Vajrasattva mantra after each stanza. You can do it while you are offering music at the end of each stanza, but if possible, you should recite it after the music stops. Just ring your bell and chant the mantra, OM VAJRASATTVA But if you're pressed for time, you can just recite the mantra while you are offering the music. Ideally, however, when the music stops, everybody should chant the mantra together while playing their bells. That's very good.

Also during that time, I don't know if Lama explained this visualization in his commentary, but visualize the *Guru Puja* merit field and meditate that every single atom of the holy body of each guru in the merit field is Vajrasattva. You can think like that. On every single atom of each member of the *Guru Puja* merit field is Vajrasattva; they are all Guru Vajrasattva. That means Vajrasattva is everything. Each atom of each holy body in the merit field is Guru Vajrasattva; all that is the merit field; that is everything.

The materials we're offering as tsog are purified in emptiness and then generated as tsog. One meaning of the word *tsog* is the assembly, or gathering, of dakas and dakinis . . . enjoying a feast of human corpses! Mountains of human bodies! I'm joking! Anyway, by gathering, the dakas and dakinis enjoy bliss and wisdom. Then, tsog could also mean collection, which means the combination of method and wisdom, or bliss and voidness, combined together. Method and wisdom together. Tsog is the experience of your mind being inseparable from method and wisdom. That's the actual meaning of tsog, and that's also the understanding you should

have regarding the external tsog. That is the essence of the external tsog, and that is the experience you should have when you take, or eat, the tsog. In actuality, it's your mind, your wisdom, that is inseparable from method and wisdom, the transcendental wisdom mind of bliss and voidness. The real meaning of tsog in this case is, then, collection, the second meaning.

After you finish each verse, nectar beams emanate from the merit field and all the Vajrasattvas, enter your body-mind and the body-minds of all other sentient beings and purify all defilements. As the essence of the merit field is the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness, and that is also the essence of the nectar, you can also think that you are experiencing this. Then you can think that all your defilements have been purified and that you have generated all realizations, in particular, those that were mentioned in the stanza just finished. That realization and all other realizations, from guru devotion up to enlightenment, are generated within your mind and the minds of all sentient beings. You can do this meditation during the Vajrasattva tsog offering.

“SONG TO THE SPRING QUEEN”

Finally, when you recite the “Song to the Spring Queen”—that has very secret, extremely secret meanings, as you can see from the words in the stanzas—at that time your mind is in meditation, in the experience of the essence of the highest path of tantra. Your mind is in the experience of that which allows you to achieve enlightenment in one short lifetime of the age of degeneration—the unification of method and wisdom—non-dual with emptiness and enjoying that. Then you make strong, heartfelt requests to the dakas and dakinis. Their particular function is to respond to your requests. Why do we visualize dakas and dakinis in the merit field? Well, we visualize protectors—they have their own particular function, so we ask their help. The dakas and dakinis come before the protectors, and they too all have their particular jobs to do. I don't know where their office is! Maybe in Los Angeles! Anyway, it doesn't matter Make strong requests to the dakas and dakinis. It's their job to grant blessings.

This is the essential meditation to do during this practice. Basically, it's to request the dakas and dakinis to grant the blessing of the realization, or experience, of clear light. This allows you to quickly cease all defilements, gross and subtle; to cease the gross mind and to achieve enlightenment,

the unification of holy body with holy mind, in this very lifetime, this one short lifetime of the degenerate age. You both request that and meditate on it. Even if you don't have the actual experience, visualization of the experience serves to prepare your mind for the actual experience.

These have been a few words about what to do while reciting these prayers so that we can make our lives more productive, more beneficial for sentient beings.

Now it's finished. There is now no more!

DEDICATION

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings—which are totally empty from their own side—may the I—which is totally empty from its own side—achieve Guru Vajrasattva's enlightenment—which is also empty from its own side—and lead all sentient beings—who are also empty from their own side—to that enlightenment—which is also empty from its own side—by myself alone, who is also empty from its own side.”

Recite the buddhas' names to increase the merits. [Recitation of the multiplying mantras.]

These buddhas' names increase each merit 100,000 times and also help to actualize all the prayers that you have done.

“Due to the blessings of the eminent buddhas and bodhisattvas, unbetraying dependent arising and my special attitude, may all my pure prayers succeed immediately.”

So, good night.

Friday, April 16

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

I came back! [Rinpoche had been at the morning puja.]

PALDEN LHAMO PRACTICE

Since you already blessed the inner offering this morning you don't need to do it again; you can start the puja from after that part. Of course, it can be blessed again and again, but I'm just saying that since you have blessed it already, you can start from blessing the libation or tea offering. The blessing I'm doing here is just for my own inner offering! [Rinpoche blesses his inner offering.]

Now to make some noise! [Rinpoche plays the cymbals for a long time; then the Palden Lhamo offering is performed.]

HOW TO MAKE PRECISE DEDICATION

Now let's do a more precise dedication together, praying together, from the heart.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may any of my immediate family members and the previous generations who have passed away” . . . so whatever I mention, you should also think. In this way the dedication is done together—when everybody does it together, it becomes very powerful. As I mentioned the other day, if you compare doing prayers alone and doing prayers together, doing them together in a group is more powerful. This is mentioned in a thought transformation commentary by one of the Kadampa geshe—I don't remember exactly, perhaps Konchog Gyaltzen in a commentary on the *Seven-point Thought Transformation*—where I think he quoted a sutra text. As I mentioned that time, if you compare

doing Vajrasattva retreat alone, reciting the mantra alone, with reciting the mantra with others, reciting it together is more powerful. We apply what the text says about doing prayers together to the group Vajrasattva retreat that we are doing together here.

Therefore, if we dedicate together, it is very powerful. If you all think of the meaning while I say the words, it becomes more than just a prayer asking for something: “Please give me this and that.” When we pray by dedicating the merits—not just those we have collected today but all the past, present and future merits of ourselves and others—buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of the sentient beings—heaping them up and dedicating together—it becomes extremely powerful.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of the sentient beings, may any of my immediate family members and the previous generations who have passed away; the deceased people whose names were read out just before—including any people whose names were given to me or for whom I have promised to pray; people who rely upon me, including those who have passed away; and the numberless sentient beings, who are suffering unimaginably in the lower realms, immediately get liberated from the lower realms—the hell, hungry ghost and animal realms—and reincarnate in a pure land where they can become enlightened, or achieve enlightenment quickly by receiving perfect human bodies in all their future lifetimes and meeting perfectly qualified Mahayana gurus and the Mahayana teachings.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of the sentient beings, just by hearing that somebody is sick, may I cause that sentient being to recover immediately, and just by hearing that somebody has died, may I cause that sentient being never ever to be reborn in the lower realms, or if already born there, to immediately reincarnate in a pure land where that being can become enlightened, or if reborn human but with no opportunity to practice Dharma, to achieve a perfect human body, meet a Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings, and quickly attain enlightenment.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of the sentient beings, may I, my family members, all the students and benefactors of this organization—especially those who sacrifice their lives offering service for others and the teaching of the Buddha through this organization—and all those who rely upon

me—for whom I promised to pray or whose name has been given to me—all have long lives, and may all our wishes succeed immediately according to the holy Dharma.”

We specify this because whatever is according to the holy Dharma becomes good karma. If all our wishes succeed according to the holy Dharma, nothing becomes the cause of suffering, nothing becomes non-virtue, nothing becomes the cause of the lower realms, nothing becomes the cause of suffering. That’s why that word is very important. Just general success could include non-virtuous actions and therefore we’d be praying for negative karma to succeed. There could be that possibility. Therefore, to avoid that possibility, we pray for our wishes to succeed, but to succeed according to the holy Dharma. So, for example, we pray for a person’s business to succeed, but to become Dharma, not non-virtuous business.

The most important thing in life is to actualize the very essence of life—the ultimate, real meaning of life—to actualize the path to enlightenment, which is the best way to benefit other sentient beings. Of course, the real meaning of life is to benefit others, but what is the best way to do that? That is to develop the path to enlightenment in your own mind. In this way your body, speech and mind, which normally harm others, will never harm others and will become only beneficial—the cause of happiness for all sentient beings. The only way that that can happen is for you to develop the path to enlightenment in your mind. Otherwise, from life to life, you will directly or indirectly harm other sentient beings, with ego, with ignorance, anger, attachment and so forth.

Therefore, the best way to benefit others—to actualize the very essence of life, the real meaning of life—is to actualize the path to enlightenment in this very life. In this very life, and even *that* without a second’s delay—to complete all the realizations of the path to enlightenment, from guru devotion up to enlightenment, especially bodhicitta, which is the one thing that makes your life most beneficial for all living beings and which makes it possible for you to achieve enlightenment and thus to be able to enlighten all sentient beings by yourself. Therefore, it is especially bodhicitta that you should actualize in this very lifetime, on this body, and even *that* without even a second’s delay.

Also dedicate that all our meditation centers, including Land of Medicine Buddha, and all our social services—schools, hospices, the leprosy project and so forth—can offer service to and become most beneficial

for all sentient beings, immediately pacify their sufferings of body and mind, and cause them to actualize the path to enlightenment. “May all our meditation centers be able to spread the complete teaching of Lama Tsongkhapa—the stainless teaching that unifies sutra and tantra—in the minds of all sentient beings by receiving everything they need. And may all our projects succeed, including Rockin’ for Freedom and all the other projects at LMB.”

Some members from our Singapore center, Amitabha Buddhist Centre, have come here to meet during the retreat. The fund-raising director, the secretary and the public relations person have come all the way from Singapore to discuss how many sentient beings to enlighten! How many sentient beings Amitabha Buddhist Centre should liberate—and how many they should *not!* I’m joking! Their project is to build a new temple and many holy objects—as usual! Anyway, they have been working very hard for the past two or three years, raising funds in order to purchase land. Now they have the land but there have been many difficulties, many obstacles to building the temple.

Therefore, please, everyone dedicate your own merits of the three times, as well as those collected by buddhas, bodhisattvas and the rest of the sentient beings, for the organizers and members of Amitabha Buddhist Centre to have harmonious minds, to work together in unity, and to have harmonious thoughts so that all their projects—the temple, the holy objects and everything else—will be accomplished immediately, and for the center to be most beneficial for all sentient beings, especially in spreading the complete teaching of Lama Tsongkhapa in the minds of all sentient beings.

And as I normally mention, “May whoever comes to the center—not only human beings but even spirits and insects who come onto the center’s land—from that moment on, never ever be reborn in the lower realms, never ever go back to lower realms again, and just by being on the center’s land, may all their negative karma be purified immediately, and just by being there, may they find unshakable faith in refuge and karma and be able to actualize bodhicitta. Just by coming onto that land, may they be able to transform their minds from ego and self-cherishing into bodhicitta, cherishing others, and without hardship or obstacle, be able to achieve the complete path to enlightenment.”

Similarly, here at Land of Medicine Buddha and at all the rest of our

meditation centers, schools, hospices, the leprosy project, the destitute home—however, all those different social service activities that offer service to others—dedicate for the same thing to happen.

Also dedicate all those merits for all the rest of the projects in this organization to succeed immediately by receiving everything they need and for the 500-foot Maitreya Buddha statue to be completed as quickly as possible by receiving everything required.

“May this statue and all our other projects and centers cause loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta to be generated in the minds of all sentient beings, and due to that, may no sentient being ever again experience earthquakes, wars, famines, disease, dangers of fire and wind—all these frightening things, tornadoes, cyclones and so forth—or any other undesirable thing.”

For example, these past few years, America has experienced many weather problems, which have caused billions of dollars of damage. Every year it seems that another one happens. Suddenly people have to evacuate their homes, move to another place and so forth. “Therefore, may all our centers, projects, statues and so forth”—the conclusion is this—“cause all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.”

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DEDICATION AND PRAYER

When we make prayers, when we dedicate, we are using our merit to make these results happen. That’s dedication; there’s something to dedicate. Making these wishes without having something to dedicate is praying; that’s a prayer. Saying, “Due to this, may (something) happen,” is dedication. However, even when we dedicate, we can visualize the Medicine Buddha and use him as an object of prayer. In that way it becomes more powerful, more effective. It becomes more than dedication—by relying on the Buddha, on the Triple Gem for success, it also becomes prayer.

RELY ON DEITIES, NOT PEOPLE

It is said in many of the Kadampa geshe’s teachings that if you rely on people, you get into trouble, into much confusion. Therefore, if success is what you are looking for, rely on deities. In Tibetan, it says *lha*, which is also the word for worldly devas, so it might sound as if we’re being told

to rely on those. But you have to understand from the context what it's talking about. In certain contexts the Tibetan word *lha* can mean just worldly gods, but it can also mean deities. Therefore, you have to understand the meaning behind it by looking at the context.

For example, when Lama Tsongkhapa rebuilt the Maitreya statue in Lhasa or started *Monlam Chenmo*—the great Lhasa prayer festival, which runs for the first fifteen days of the Tibetan New Year to commemorate the special days when Guru Shakyamuni Buddha performed many miracles to subdue those different sentient beings' minds, to liberate them—he relied on the deity Dzambhala. Any merit that you create on those days is multiplied one hundred million times. Therefore, to benefit, to liberate many sentient beings, to bring them to enlightenment, Lama Tsongkhapa established the great prayer festival, so that many people—both Sangha and lay—could collect extensive merit. One of the particular things the monks do, for example, is conduct examinations on what they have learned during their thirty or forty years of study—the texts they have memorized, the meaning of what they have studied and so forth. They offer examinations, pray for other sentient beings and debate on the five major sutra texts they have studied.

Also, in the mornings, the Ganden Tripa reads the previous life stories of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha to the monks; the life stories of Buddha's past lives, when he was a bodhisattva. How for three countless great eons he sacrificed his life for other sentient beings, practicing the ten paramitas. How for three countless great eons he made charity of himself; how he practiced morality and so forth for three countless great eons. How he sacrificed his life for three countless great eons for the sake of other sentient beings, following the path to enlightenment, and then achieved enlightenment and revealed the teachings, the path, to us sentient beings. For that purpose—in order to reveal the path, to reveal the teachings to us sentient beings, to liberate us from the oceans of samsaric suffering, the continuity of which has no beginning, and to bring us to enlightenment—Guru Shakyamuni Buddha sacrificed his life and bore many hardships to follow the path for three countless great eons. He did all this for the benefit of *us* sentient beings. Buddha's life story shows us how to practice Dharma, how to follow the path; it contains that. It inspires us to follow Buddha's example.

The festival also gives lay people the chance to make offerings to the Sangha on those days. They come from all over Tibet and make many offerings to holy objects and to the Sangha—tea offerings, food offerings, money offerings and so forth. So Lama Tsongkhapa put many things together for sentient beings to collect extensive merit on those days.

The point I'm making is that when Lama Tsongkhapa wanted to build a temple or something and had no money with which to build it, instead of relying on people, he would rely on the deity and make tormas offerings to Dzambhala. Then everything would come—just by making torma offerings to Dzambhala, whatever was needed would just come from all directions. Of course, Lama Tsongkhapa himself was Dzambhala; there's no question about that! He was the Compassionate Buddha, so there's no question that he was also Dzambhala, but what the Kadampa geshees were saying was that to have all success without confusion, trust the deity, rely on the deity—which means the Triple Gem. If you rely only on people, you get involved in many things, much negative karma.

DEDICATION

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of the sentient beings, from now on, whatever I do, whatever life I experience—ups and downs, health or illness, wealth or poverty, gain or loss, praise or criticism, good reputation or bad—whatever happens—life or death or even rebirth in hell—the most important thing is that that experience be beneficial for other sentient beings.”

If your life experiences, your actions, are beneficial for other sentient beings, they become meaningful. Those experiences becoming meaningful fulfill the purpose of your life. When your experiences become beneficial for others you are achieving the purpose of your life. Otherwise, no matter for how many eons you lead a healthy life without any sickness, no matter how much power, wealth and so forth you have, your life is empty, meaningless. Therefore, even if your life turns out to be plagued by one sickness after another—migraine headaches or anything else—if those sicknesses help you develop compassion for other sentient beings by experiencing them for others, you can purify all your past negative karma and collect extensive merit; all the time that you are sick, you

are bringing yourself closer to enlightenment. In this way, your experiencing life problems becomes most beneficial. Having problems in your life makes it meaningful, productive. Your mind becomes more spiritual, more Dharma. It becomes quicker and easier for you to achieve enlightenment. You become closer to enlightening all sentient beings.

Therefore, dedicate the merits of the three times for whatever you do, whatever life you experience from now on, to be most beneficial for all sentient beings, to cause all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

Also dedicate, “May Lama Tsongkhapa’s teaching, which unifies sutra and tantra, spread and flourish in all directions, and may I myself be able to make this happen.

“Due to the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of the sentient beings, which are totally non-existent from their own side”—they exist, but they are totally non-existent from their own side. They exist, but it’s like they don’t exist. When you see the very nature of that, you see that they exist, but it’s like they don’t. They are not totally non-existent, but it’s like they don’t exist. The way things exist is extremely subtle. When you look at the very nature of phenomena, such as merits, it’s like they don’t exist—“may I—who also appears to the hallucinating mind as not merely labeled by the mind, as inherently existent, but in reality, that way of appearing is totally false, totally non-existent—achieve Vajrasattva’s enlightenment, by thinking of the very meaning of the guru, the absolute guru—which appears to my hallucinating mind as not merely labeled by the mind, as something real from there, but which in reality is totally non-existent—and lead all sentient beings—who appear to my hallucinating mind as not merely labeled by the mind, but who in reality are totally non-existent—to that enlightenment—which appears to my hallucinating mind as not merely labeled by the mind, as something real appearing from there but which in reality is *totally* non-existent, empty—by myself alone—who again appears as not merely labeled by the mind, as something real, appearing as a real me, a real I from there, which is a total hallucination, which is totally non-existent.”

Then recite the buddhas’ and bodhisattvas’ name mantras that multiply each merit 100,000 times and also make all prayers to be actualized, to succeed.

FRIDAY, APRIL 16

“Due to the blessings of the eminent buddhas and bodhisattvas, due to unbetraying dependent arising and due to my special attitude, may all my pure prayers be accomplished immediately.”

Saturday, April 17

WEEKEND TEACHING

Good afternoon, everybody. Somehow, it seems as if you've been waiting for eons!

MOTIVATION

Think, “No matter what, I must achieve enlightenment in order to free the numberless other sentient beings, who are the source of all my past, present and future happiness, including enlightenment; who are the source of all my comfort, every single comfort, happiness, and all desirable things; who are the most precious thing in my life; who are just like me, wanting only happiness and not wanting suffering. But, even though all they want is happiness, they are totally devoid of happiness. Hell beings, hungry ghosts and animals are devoid of even temporary happiness. Devas and human beings, who at least have the opportunity of experiencing temporary happiness, are still devoid of ultimate happiness, everlasting happiness—the cessation of all suffering and its causes in their entirety; even those sentient beings who have the opportunity of experiencing temporary happiness are still devoid of ultimate happiness. And even those who are free from samsara are devoid of the great liberation, the peerless happiness of full enlightenment. However, what sentient beings want is happiness but they are devoid of happiness. What they do not want is suffering, but they constantly experience pervasive compounding suffering and on top of that, the suffering of change and the suffering of pain.

“To free those numberless sentient beings from all this suffering and bring them from happiness to happiness to full enlightenment is the ultimate goal of my life, the real purpose of my being alive, why I have been born human at this time, why I have taken, or received, this precious human body at this time. To succeed in this, I need to achieve full

enlightenment—cessation of all mistakes of the mind, all gross and subtle defilements, and the completion of all realizations. For that, I need to actualize the graduated path to enlightenment, which ceases all defilements, all the mistakes that are on my mental continuum. Therefore, I am going to listen to the holy Dharma.”

Please listen to the teaching well, with the purest motivation of bodhicitta and the proper conduct for listening to teachings.

BUDDHA’S INTENT

Why did Guru Shakyamuni Buddha descend to this earth? Why did the Buddha come onto this earth, into this world? The main purpose was to reveal the Dharma, to guide us sentient beings—to guide sentient beings including you, including yourself. To guide you, Buddha descended to this world.

Buddha came into this world for you. For you, Buddha collected merits for three countless great eons. It is said in the texts that even under one tree, Buddha sacrificed his body to other sentient beings numberless times. For three countless great eons Buddha sacrificed his life, his body, his limbs, to other sentient beings so that he could complete the two types of merit—the merit of wisdom and the merit of method—and achieve enlightenment for you, for yourself.

For three countless great eons, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha also practiced morality; he also practiced morality for that great length of time, for three countless great eons. He also practiced patience, perseverance and so forth for three countless great eons for you; to achieve enlightenment for you; in order to reveal this Dharma that we are studying now, that we have been studying so far, that we have been listening to, hearing. For this purpose. So, as much Buddhadharmas as we have learned, for this to happen, Buddha bore much hardship, for many lifetimes over three countless great eons; bore so much hardship to achieve enlightenment in order to reveal the whole path to us, to you, and bring you to enlightenment. To bring each of us to enlightenment.

HOW DOES BUDDHA GUIDE?

The very foundation of the entire Buddhadharmā, the very foundation of all Buddha's advice, Buddha's teaching, is the Four Noble Truths. As Maitreya Buddha mentioned in *Do de gyän*, the sicknesses are to be known; the cause of the sicknesses to be abandoned; comfort, or happiness, to be achieved; and the medicine to be taken. Like that, suffering is to be known; the cause of suffering, which is called *kun jung*, all arising—the delusion and karma from where all suffering arises—to be abandoned, removed; cessation to be achieved; and the path to be actualized.

Therefore, liberation, the whole thing, taking the opportunity to achieve liberation, starts by knowing suffering. It's not only that we have buddha nature within us—we have to take the opportunity, by using our buddha nature to achieve, to actually experience, liberation. That comes from the determination to be free, liberated from suffering. For that, you need to know suffering. Knowing suffering, the suffering of samsara, makes you seek the cause from which it comes. Thus arises the wish to abandon, or remove, it. Then you come to know cessation, that which is to be achieved, ultimate happiness. Also, from knowing suffering, both the wish to achieve liberation from samsara and the wish to follow the path derive. Everything starts, comes, from knowing suffering, the First Noble Truth.

However, as Buddha mentioned, the way Buddha liberates sentient beings is not by washing away their sufferings with water, by eliminating their suffering by hand or by transplanting his own realizations into others. Sentient beings get liberated by Buddha's revealing the truth, by revealing the ultimate nature. By his revealing the truth, the ultimate nature, we sentient beings get liberated. That is to be realized. The truth is like an atomic bomb in eliminating our sufferings of samsara.

A MEDITATION ON EMPTINESS

Let's concentrate for a few moments on what I'm saying. [Silence.] We believe, "I am here, in this building." We believe, "I am in America, Soquel, Land of Medicine Buddha, Land of Medicine Buddha, Land of Medicine Buddha! I'm in this gompā, I'm in Vajrasattva retreat, I'm on this cushion, I'm in pain! I'm tired! I'm sleepy! I'm exhausted from a long

day! What is he talking about? What is he mumbling about?” Anyway, thinking like that.

We think there’s a real one, a real I, a real me, here doing Vajrasattva retreat, or listening to teachings. Here, sitting on this chair, or on this cushion—a real me listening to teachings. Now, I is your label; me, I. You point to your body and label it I: “I am going out.” You don’t pick up a book and point to it and say, “I am going out!” No. You point to your body and apply the label, “I am going out.”

And as your mind does the activity of thinking, you label, “I am thinking.” As your mind meditates, “I am meditating.” By first thinking what kind of activity your mind is doing—for example, it’s wandering—you say, “I am wandering. I am not meditating.” “Are you meditating now?” “No.” You check the mind, then you say, “I am wandering,” or, if it is meditating, being transformed into virtue by analytical or fixed meditation, you say, “I am meditating”; you call, or label, it, “I am meditating.”

In exactly the same way as in this example, when you say “I,” instead of pointing here [at your chest], point at this table; label I on this table. So now, you have labeled I on the table, but where is that I on the table? You cannot find I on the table. Even though you label I on the table, you cannot find it anywhere, on any corner of the table, inside the table, above the table—you cannot find I anywhere. Not only that, but this corner of the table is not I, this other corner is not I—no part of the table is I. Even all the parts of the table together are not I.

So now, like this, it’s *exactly* the same, *exactly the same*, even though our mind constantly labels I on this association of body and mind [Rinpoche pointing to his chest], constantly, twenty-four hours a day, labels I on this association of body and mind, *exactly* as in the example where your mind labels I on the table—even if you label I on the table, you cannot find I on the table—the table is not I, nor is I on the table, inside the table, or anywhere else; you cannot find I on any part of the table, and even the whole thing is not I—in the same way, I cannot be found anywhere on the association of body and mind. If you look for your I, you cannot find it, from the ends of your hair to the tip your toes—your little toes, your big toes—nowhere can it be found. You cannot find your I anywhere. It is neither inside your nose nor on the tip of your nose! I’m joking!

Anyway, I is nowhere to be found, not even inside your body. Normally you believe I to be inside, but even if that’s what you normally believe,

apprehend—that there’s a real I inside the body, there’s a real me inside the body—if you look for it, you cannot find it. When you start to analyze, it cannot be found. Where is it exactly? Look for it. Where is it exactly, inside the body? Where is it exactly, inside the chest—the part of the body where we normally believe the I to reside? It’s somewhere there, within the body. We don’t think that the I is outside—we think that it’s inside, inside the chest. But if you try to identify exactly where the I is located, it cannot be found. There is no particular location. You can’t find it. If you look for the I, you cannot find it or its particular location.

I heard that Japanese people point to their nose when they say “I,” but I don’t know whether at that time they actually believe, or feel, the I to be there, inside their nose. I’m not sure about that, but I don’t think so. That may just be their habit, how the majority of people in that society behave. I haven’t actually seen people doing that, but that’s what I heard—Japanese people point to their nose when they say “I.” I, here [nose]. Does anybody know about Japanese people doing this? Anyway, they don’t point to their tongues!

Even though you normally believe that the I is there, somewhere inside your body, inside your chest, if you really check inside where it is, its exact location, you cannot find it.

Say you are doing the meditation where you travel up and down through the channels of your body, meditating on the *chakras*. When you think that you are in your navel chakra, at the beginning it looks as if you are in the navel chakra, that there is a real I in the navel chakra. At the beginning it appears like that. But then you think, “What is this I that I feel? The I in my navel chakra? That there’s a real I in my navel chakra? What is this I?” and analyze that I. Analyze the I that you feel at that particular spot, at that location in your body. What is that I?

If you think, “What is this I that is traveling, going up and down through the channels, dwelling in the navel chakra?” it’s nothing other than that which is merely labeled by the mind. When you look at the real I that appears at that particular spot, in that chakra, even that real I is not there. When you analyze, “What is that I abiding there?” when you meditate like that, you find that it is nothing other than what has been merely labeled by the mind.

When you think that the nature of the I is dependent arising, suble dependent arising, the real I that appeared to you at the beginning

and that you apprehend, disappears. It immediately becomes empty. It becomes empty, as it is empty in reality. If that real I that appeared to you were true—that you believed at the beginning to really be there—if that were true—according to the way in which it appears, the way in which you believe—if that were true, then even after analysis it should still be there. Even after your analysis of its dependent arising, it should remain. You should be able to find it. But it is not there.

Even when you meditate on the chakras, a real I seems to *exist*, but there is *no* real I existing in this body the way it appears to exist, the way you apprehend, or believe, it to exist. That I is not there, neither on the body nor inside the body. The body is not I; nor is the mind. Even the association of body and mind is not I; these aggregates are not I.

Without going through the Madhyamaka or lamrim analyses of emptiness—for example, if the aggregates are I, then what happens, what illogical consequences arise? If the body is I, what illogical consequences arise? If the mind is I, what illogical consequences rise?—without going through all those detailed analyses, what I have just mentioned gives you an idea of how the aggregates are not I. From that, you can understand, or get the idea of, the rest.

Even this association of body and mind is not I. As the texts state, the aggregates—this association of body and mind—are what is received. They are what is received, and I is the receiver. I received these aggregates this time; I is the receiver. I is the subject who *receives* these aggregates, who has received, or taken, them. The I is the receiver. Can you say “taker,” that I is the taker? Like take-away food! I is to be taken away, like take-away food! I is to be taken away. Anyway, I’m joking . . . well, there is a way in which this can be true.

In Tibetan, we say *nye wa lang cha lem pa ko*. *Nye wa lang cha*: what is to be taken, the aggregates. The aggregates are what is to be taken, and I is the taker, who takes them. I is the subject and the aggregates are the object, what is to be taken. I is the taker of the aggregates. *Nye wa lang cha*, and *lem pa ko*; *lang cha* is what is taken and *lem pa ko* is the taker. So, there are two. The I created the cause of these aggregates; the continuity of this I created the cause of these aggregates, this *samsara*. Then this I has received, or taken, these aggregates. So the aggregates are what is to be taken and I is the taker. Subject and object. Therefore, they are not one. Therefore, the aggregates are not I, cannot be I, the subject. Because

aggregates are what is to be taken—the object. I is the taker of that object. So they cannot be one.

Similarly, an ax and the tree it cuts cannot be one. One is the object, the other is the subject, so they cannot be one. The cutter—the ax—and what is to be cut—the wood—cannot be one. The wood that is to be cut is not the cutter, the ax.

In that way, there's one reason. The other reason is similar. [We say] “*My* aggregates, *my* aggregates, *my* aggregates.” Even from the common, language point of view, “*my* aggregates” shows that the aggregates are the possession, and *my*, or I, is the possessor. “*My* aggregates, *my* mind, *my* body.” Even normal language shows that these two are completely different; two completely different phenomena. They are not one. They are totally different phenomena. “*My* aggregates, *my* body, *my* mind” shows that they are possessions, and from that it follows that *my*, I, is the possessor. Again, through that reason, you can see that there's no way in which the possession, that which is possessed, can be the possessor, I. There is no way. The two are totally different phenomena. They don't exist separately, but they exist differently.

Perhaps another thing to mention is this. The aggregates, the association of the body and mind, is the base to be labeled, and I is the label to be applied—what the base is to be labeled with. Again in Tibetan, I is *dag chö*, the label to be applied, and the aggregates are *dag zhi*, what is labeled, the base to be labeled. The aggregates are the base to be labeled, and I is the label, what is labeled on the base. Thus again here, one is the base, the other is the label. Two totally different phenomena; two totally different phenomena. They don't exist separately, but they exist differently.

If they did exist separately, it would help a lot if you were a criminal! It would help a lot. Because then you could say, “It wasn't me that did it; it was the body. I didn't do it”! Or you could say, “This mind did it, not me”! You could have many arguments! In court! You could argue in court, “I didn't do it—the body did it; the mind did it.” If what you did was criminal or something for which you'd get punished, you could say, “The body did it; the mind did it. I didn't do it.” But if it was a situation where you had something to *gain*, then you could say, “I did it”!

Say your body did something that normally brings millions of dollars, but nobody saw it. If your I had no relation to your aggregates, you could say, “I did it”! Since doing the action that brings millions of dollars didn't

depend on the body or the mind doing it, you could take the credit, “I did it. I should get the money”! You could argue like that. If there were something good to gain, something that you like or want to acquire, you could say, “I did it.” But if what you’d done were criminal or subject to punishment, you could say, “It wasn’t me”!

Anyway, I’m saying that if the I existed separately from the aggregates, it could be very helpful. You could do that. Maybe you could still argue, “I didn’t do it because I cannot find the I anywhere. I cannot see the I, so how could I have done it?” I’m joking!

What I’m trying to say is that since the aggregates are the base to be labeled and I is what is labeled on them—the aggregates are the base and I is the label—they are two totally different phenomena. Therefore, they are not one; the aggregates are not I.

Similarly, the mind is not I. It’s the same—you can use all those reasons that I mentioned regarding the aggregates, with the mind, to understand that the mind is not I. Your mind is not you. *My* mind, *your* mind—that shows it is not you. *Your* mind is not you; *my* mind is not me.

If something that the I possessed had to be I, were the I, then everything you possessed would be you. Your car would be you. Your kaka would be you!

It’s *exactly* the same with the table, as I mentioned before. You can find the I nowhere on these aggregates. Neither are the aggregates the I. *Exactly* the same. Even though you label I on the table, you cannot find I on the table. The table is not I. *Exactly* as you cannot find your I on the table even though your mind labels the table I, *exactly* like that, even though your mind labels I on the aggregates, you cannot find I anywhere on the aggregates. Neither that, nor are the aggregates I.

When you get a feeling that the aggregates are not I, when you cannot find I on the aggregates, this understanding makes very clear what is the base and what is the label; you are able to differentiate. *Now* you are able to differentiate between the base and the label. After this analysis, you are able to differentiate what is the base and what is the label I. Before, it was unclear to your mind; these two things were unclear. His Holiness the Dalai Lama would say those two are mixed up, as if the table were mixed into the base, as if the table were inside the base.

His Holiness Ling Rinpoche used to say that the definition of the object to be refuted is the appearance of the base and the label as undifferentiable.

For your mind, in your view, the base and the label—for example, the base to be labeled “table” and the label “table” itself—are undifferentiable. His Holiness Ling Rinpoche explained during a commentary on the *Seven-point Thought Transformation* at Drepung Monastery many years ago that this is the object to be refuted.

You are unable to differentiate between the label and the base. Your mind is very confused. Your mind is in a state of confusion. What appears to your view is that these two—the base, the aggregates, and the label, I, are undifferentiable. *Now*, through this analysis, you can see clearly that they—the label, I, and the base, the aggregates—are two totally different phenomena.

Now, even if you have one hundred percent understanding, or recognition, that the base, the aggregates, is not I, that the I exists nowhere, I would not call that having realized emptiness. In other words, you understand through the four-point analysis, the analysis of the four vital points, that if the I is inherently existent, it should exist either as oneness with the aggregates or as completely separate from them; it has to be pervaded by being either oneness with the aggregates or existing separately from the aggregates. But simply understanding that the inherently existent I is neither oneness with the aggregates nor does it exist separately from them—having a clear idea that the aggregates are not one with the I but also don't exist separately from the I—this awareness alone, the ability to distinguish between label and base, is not the realization of emptiness. Even if you had this awareness—the ability to distinguish label from base—even if the difference between the base and the label had become clear for your mind, still I would not say that you had realized emptiness.

When you realize emptiness—not just that there is no I, not just the feeling that there is no I—you should feel something *very intensive*. It should be *very* much more than that. Your understanding should be something very intensive. Not just the feeling that there is no I. The feeling should be something very *deep*; the feeling “there is no I” should be very *intensive*, very deep. You should feel as you would if you'd had a vision that you had received a million dollars, that somebody had put a million dollars into your hands, and you had totally, one hundred percent believed that you actually had all that money—and then suddenly realized it was just a hallucination! It's gone! Like that, suddenly you realize that it's not there, it has totally gone.

What you have believed, were one hundred percent convinced of, and so strongly clung to, grasped at, is suddenly, totally non-existent. There's nothing to grab onto, nothing to hold onto. Suddenly, it's totally non-existent. Nothing of what you have been holding onto, cherishing as if it really exists, is truly *there*. Nothing of what, so far, you have never had any doubt about, have been grasping at continuously, holding onto like a cat grabbing a mouse—all its claws clutching tightly together—nothing of that I exists. Suddenly, that about which you have never had any doubt since beginningless rebirths—even since this morning or since you were born into this life—suddenly, it doesn't go anywhere. Suddenly, there's nothing there. Maybe it's gone to the beach! Or to the mountains! To a retreat center! Anyway, it doesn't go anywhere.

Just there! Suddenly! You realize there is nothing there. Suddenly, it is not there. You realize that it's totally non-existent. Totally non-existent. There's nothing to hold onto. It's lost. Totally lost. Just right there—where it was—totally lost. Not that it's gone somewhere, but right there, it has become totally lost. There's nothing to hold onto. You feel something very intensive—not space, but empty, like space. During that time, there's no dual view, there's no “this is I and that is emptiness”; no “here is the subject, perceiver, realizer and there is the object, emptiness.” It's not dual; non-dual. At that time, the view that should appear should be non-dual, not “this I is meditating on emptiness, seeing emptiness. Oh, that is emptiness.”

Instead, there should be a very intensive understanding, seeing very intensively that the I is empty. It's not just thinking that there's no I; it's not just that. It's not like, after searching for the table, the labeled table, the general table—not the inherently existent table but the general table, the labeled table—looking to see if any part of the table is the table—it's not that—or if perhaps the whole collection of parts together is the table—it's not that either—and only after all that, then thinking that the table does not exist. It's not that kind of experience. Nor is it like analyzing the body to find if the I is inside the body or on the aggregates, or understanding that the aggregates together are also not the I, then, after all that analysis, at the end, coming to the conclusion that there's no I. Because you cannot find it, thinking that there is no I. It's not just that.

The right way of perceiving that the I is empty is an extremely deep, intensive experience, but there are basically two kinds of experience you

can have. You can feel incredible, that you have discovered the most precious thing, such as a wish-granting jewel. Or like a person who has been looking for or waiting to meet a dear friend for many, many years—praying, wishing, to meet that person for many years—and then, after all these many years, suddenly meeting that friend. Or like you’ve been waiting to get a billion dollars for a long time and then suddenly you get the money. In other words, when you see emptiness, you feel unbelievable joy; incredible joy that makes you cry.

The second kind of experience is one of unbelievable fear, incredible fear. Not just any kind of fear. Not just the fear of being attacked by somebody; not that kind of fear. It’s a very deep fear; something deep inside your heart, in the very depths of your heart. A very deep fear. The other fear is not fear of *losing* the I—something is going to happen to this I, but it’s not losing the I. The ordinary is fear that this real I is going to receive some harm, but here, something that you’ve believed in—not only from birth but from beginningless rebirths up until now—something that you’ve believed in one hundred percent, only *now*, only *now* you realize that it’s not there. Only *now* you realize that it’s totally non-existent. This can cause an incredibly deep fear to arise.

As I often say, even when you recite the *Heart Sutra*, when you say the words, “No ear, no nose, no tongue . . . no ice cream! No coffee, no chocolate, no cigarettes, no drinks . . .!”—if fear comes into your heart when you say “no this, no that,” if fear arises, that’s a good sign. Fear arising means your recitation of the *Heart Sutra*, *The Essence of Wisdom*, is hitting, or touching, the root of samsara, hurting it. Your recitation of the *Heart Sutra* has touched the root of samsara, ignorance; has hit it. Your recitation of the *Heart Sutra*, your way of thinking when you recite *The Essence of Wisdom*, is fitting—like an arrow or a bomb. As an arrow hits its target, as a bomb or a torpedo hits its target, the enemy at which you aimed, like that, your recitation of the *Heart Sutra*, those teachings on emptiness, your way of thinking, your meditation, has hit its target, the object of ignorance, the inherently existent I—the I that is apprehended by simultaneously-born ignorance. You have hit the target you’re supposed to hit. The target that you are supposed to hit with the arrow or bomb of your recitation of the words of the *Heart Sutra* and thinking on their meaning is the object to be refuted, the inherently existent I. Fear in your heart means that you have hit the target.

The texts explain that it is highly intelligent practitioners who have the experience of incredible, blissful joy, tears running down their cheeks, and feel as if they'd found an unbelievably precious jewel, and less intelligent practitioners who feel fear when they realize emptiness. At that time, you should not try to escape from this fear—trying to do so is your greatest obstacle to realizing emptiness. Instead, you must realize that this is the one time, the one opportunity, to realize emptiness—the only wisdom that can directly cut the delusions, the root of samsara, the gross and subtle defilements, bringing liberation from samsara and full enlightenment. Knowing this, you must go through the fear; you must complete your experience. Go through the fear like crossing a river. Otherwise, if you block your own progress the one time that you have the opportunity of realizing emptiness, if you run away from that, like running away from teachings, from meditation courses, especially my meditation courses—of course, those are good to run away from!—if you run from the fear that arises when you realize emptiness, that is no good at all.

However, you never have to worry about the I ceasing, because the I never ceases. The I that is the label never ceases. The I never stops, never ceases. Why is there always continuity of the I, the label? Why is there always continuity of the self? Because there is always continuity of consciousness. Even after enlightenment, the consciousness continues forever. Even though the body might change—one body stops, another body is taken—the continuity of consciousness is always there, even after enlightenment. Therefore, the continuity of the I never ceases. It always exists because the base, the continuity of consciousness, always exists. Therefore, thinking, “I’m going to cease, I’m going to become non-existent” is totally wrong.

When that feeling arises, the appearance of losing or having totally lost your I, you shouldn't be worried that that appearance means you're falling into nihilism. Because of that appearance, you should not be worried that you are falling into nihilism—just as you should not be worried that the I is becoming non-existent. There are two things—one is the fear of falling into nihilism; the other is the worry, “I am becoming non-existent.” You should not be scared of those things. If you do get scared, you'll block yourself from realizing emptiness; this one opportunity to realize emptiness will have arisen and you'll have blocked it yourself.

A very clear commentary on the Mahamudra by Ketsang Jamyang

(I'm not hundred percent sure that's his name), which is regarded as a very effective teaching, explains why this appearance of the self becoming non-existent happens. It happens because it *has* to happen. Furthermore, it is a sign that there is no inherent existence on the I, the merely labeled I. There is no inherent existence on that I, and the experience of its becoming non-existent shows, proves, that. When you have this experience, you see the Middle Way, the Madhyamaka, view. You see the Middle Way, devoid of the two extremes of nihilism and eternalism.

I would say that realizing that the object of ignorance—the concept of the inherently existent I—is empty, realizing the emptiness that is the negation of the object to be refuted, is the first step towards liberation. I'm not saying that by that alone you have entered—of the five paths to liberation—the path of merit. I'm not saying that. But it's like you've taken a step towards liberation, because that wisdom is the main thing that directly ceases the defilements.

Just to conclude now—before we all go to sleep!—as I mentioned before, how when you label I on the table, it's not there—in *exactly* the same way, when the mind labels I on these aggregates, it's not there either. The aggregates are not the I; the I is not there. I exists, but it's not there. The I that is labeled by your mind exists, but it's not there. Even *that* is not there. Even that. Besides the real I that you believe to reside in the heart, inside your body, not being there, even the I merely labeled by your mind, which does exist, is not there either. I'm not saying it's not *here* [in this room], I'm saying it's not *there* [on your aggregates].

So now, the I that is merely labeled by the mind exists. That is here, that exists, but even that cannot be found on these aggregates, on the base of the aggregates. It doesn't exist on these aggregates. The merely labeled I exists because the base, the aggregates, exists. In the same way, the base, the aggregates, which are merely imputed, exists, but it doesn't exist *on* the gathering of the five aggregates; it doesn't exist there. The merely labeled aggregates exist, but they don't exist on the collection of the five aggregates. They don't exist there; they cannot be found there. So that's clear. The merely labeled aggregates cannot be found on the collection of the five. They don't exist there.

In exactly the same way, for each aggregate—for example, the aggregate of form, the general aggregate of form—it's exactly same. The same logic applies. The merely labeled aggregate exists but it doesn't exist on that base.

Empty. It doesn't exist there; it's not there, not existent on this base. The aggregate of form does not exist on the collection of the limbs, either in all their parts or on the whole collection together. So there's no question about the inherently existent, real aggregate: it doesn't exist anywhere. The *real* one appearing from there—the aggregate, the general aggregate of form—exists nowhere. Similarly, if you go to the parts of the limbs, to the arms, head, legs, stomach, and so forth, all those merely labeled ones exist, but they don't exist on their own bases. Even the merely labeled head cannot be found on the collection of its parts, the brain and everything else. If you look for head, it cannot be found there.

Like that, it's the same for the arms, the legs, the main body—everything down to the atoms—that which is merely labeled exists, but it doesn't exist on its own base. Even the merely labeled atom exists, but it doesn't exist, cannot be found, *on* the collection of the particles of the atom. And it's the same for even the particles of the atom—they can't be found on their own base either.

Thus, everything from the I down to the particles of the atoms, or, from the general aggregate of form down to the particles of atoms, which appears as something real, is not *there*. It's totally empty; every single thing is totally empty. What appears to your view, your hallucinating mind, seems to be something real, from there—but it's not there. Starting from the real I down to the real particles of the atoms, what appears is not there; it's totally empty—not space, but like space; totally empty, non-existent.

That was form. How about the aggregate of feeling, that which is labeled on the thought, the mental factor that experiences pleasure, indifference and suffering? It's the same with the aggregate of feeling—the merely labeled aggregate of feeling exists, but cannot be found on its base. It's also the same with the aggregate of cognition, which discriminates phenomena as bad or good, as this and that, as friend and enemy, fat and skinny, long and short, and so forth. The merely labeled aggregate of cognition exists—because its base exists—but it doesn't exist on that base. So that's the same. Then, if you analyze the pleasant feeling, the suffering feeling, the indifference, you cannot find those feelings on their base. Similarly with the aggregate of cognition—you can do the same analysis, but neither can cognition be found on its base, even though merely labeled cognition exists.

It's also the same thing with the aggregate of compounded phenomena. It's also labeled, merely imputed, because its base exists. Subtracting

feeling and cognition from the fifty-one mental factors, the rest are called the aggregate of compounded phenomena, labeled that, but that aggregate cannot be found on that base.

Finally, it's the same with the aggregate of consciousness. Merely labeled consciousness exists, but it cannot be found on its base, like a carpet on the floor. The merely labeled consciousness doesn't exist like that. The mind, which knows phenomena, which does the function of continuing from one life to the next, perceiving merely the essence of the object, that knowing phenomenon, *she pa*, because that mind exists, your mind labels it *nam she*, consciousness. But using the same analysis I mentioned before, neither that consciousness nor the split seconds of consciousness can be found on their respective bases.

Therefore, starting from the I down to the split seconds of consciousness, each aggregate—form, feeling, cognition, compounded phenomena and consciousness, down to the split seconds of consciousness—everything that appears to our mind, to our view, as real, as something real existing from there, is totally non-existent. Normally, after making all this analysis, you should meditate on this emptiness; let your mind dwell in it for a while. Looking at everything as empty, let your mind stay in that state of emptiness for as long as possible. That's extremely good, very effective.

So that's reality; that's how things are. This is reality, so let's place our minds in this state for a while. Concentrate for a little bit on this conclusion that the whole thing is totally empty. Everything—from the I down to, and including, the particles of the atoms and the split seconds of consciousness—is totally empty from its own side.

[Long meditation.]

The final thing is that it's totally non-existent—from its own side. It's totally non-existent, but non-existent from its own side. So the second part of that expression makes the way of thinking or the experience correct—seeing it as not just empty, non-existent, but empty, non-existent, from its own side.

Like this, the nature of everything else in existence—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, hell, enlightenment, samsara, nirvana, happiness, suffering, life's gains and losses, virtue, non-virtue, everything—is totally empty, non-existent. But, non-existent from its own side.

So, while things are empty—everything is totally empty from its own side—they exist. They exist in mere name, by being merely labeled by the mind—which also exists in mere name. Things exist as merely labeled by the mind, which itself also exists in mere name. Everything is unified with emptiness and dependent arising, as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha realized and Lama Tsongkhapa praised highly. Lama Tsongkhapa himself also actualized this emptiness—which is unified with dependent arising, subtle dependent arising—this right view, this wisdom, which is the *only* one that can cut the one particular root of samsara: the ignorance, the hallucinating mind that—while there's no I on these aggregates, including the inherently existent I—through negative imprints left on the mental continuum, projects on to these aggregates the appearance of an inherently existent I and then believes it to be true; the ignorance that believes this inherently existent I is true, that it really exists.

This particular root of samsara—the ignorance that apprehends the I, which is merely labeled by the mind, as existing from its own side, as *not* merely labeled by the mind—can be cut *only* by this specific wisdom, *only* by this right view, this wisdom, this right view. Only by generating that can you be totally liberated from samsara, from the entire ocean of sufferings of samsara, which are divided into three—suffering of pain, suffering of change and pervasive, compounded suffering. Within samsara, there are the specific sufferings of each realm and the general sufferings of samsara, such as the six, the four and the three.

The specific sufferings of the six realms include those of the eight hot hells, the eight cold hell sufferings and the six or four neighborhood sufferings. The sufferings of the hungry ghosts—the heavy suffering of hunger and thirst, and on top of that the suffering of heat, cold and exhaustion. The animal sufferings—extreme stupidity, being eaten by one another, being tortured, heat and cold. Human beings' eight types of sufferings—the sufferings of rebirth, old age, sicknesses and death; the inability to find desirable objects; even if found, the inability to find satisfaction in them; and on top of that, the fear and worry of separating from them; and finally, the five types of sufferings of the aggregates. The sufferings of the sura and asura realms include the heaviest sufferings of the devas—the five signs of impending death, always fighting with and getting controlled by other, more powerful, devas and getting banished.

It is *only* with *this* wisdom, this particular right view, the Prasangika

view, that you can be totally liberated from the oceans of samsaric suffering—all the specific sufferings of each samsaric realm, and the three, four and six general sufferings of samsara. By ceasing the cause—delusion and karma—you can achieve the sorrowless state of total liberation from samsara, and only with this wisdom, the Prasangika view, can you also eradicate the subtle defilements, achieve full enlightenment and be able to do perfect work for all sentient beings, leading them to enlightenment as well.

I'd better stop here, otherwise we won't finish until tomorrow morning!

To escape from this hallucination, to be liberated from this hallucinating mind, we take refuge and keep precepts. Refuge is the very foundation of the Buddhadharmā, the gate through which we enter the Dharma path. We take refuge and vows to make certain that we practice, to make sure that we devote ourselves to actually practicing Dharma. That is the fundamental reason for taking refuge and vows. In order to liberate others from the hallucinating mind, ignorance, first we ourselves have to be liberated from the hallucination, from the hallucinating mind, from all these sufferings that we have been caught in since time without beginning, for beginningless lifetimes. Thus, refuge and precepts are the basic means, the very foundation of the path, for liberating both ourselves and others from the hallucination, from the hallucinating mind, from all suffering, and gaining the ultimate happiness of the highest, full enlightenment.

DEDICATION

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by myself, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may bodhicitta, the loving kindness compassionate thought—letting go of the I and cherishing other sentient beings, who are the source of all happiness and success for myself and all other sentient beings—be generated in my mind and in the minds of all sentient beings, without even a second's delay, and may that which has been generated increase.”

Dedicate for all virtuous friends to have stable lives until samsara ends and for all their holy wishes to succeed immediately.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by myself, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings—which are totally

non-existent from their own side—may the I—which is also totally non-existent from its own side—achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s or Vajrasattva’s enlightenment—which is also totally non-existent from its own side—and lead all sentient beings—who are also totally non-existent from their own side—to that enlightenment—which is also totally non-existent from its own side—by myself alone—which is also totally non-existent from its own side.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, from now on, in all my future lifetimes, may I be able to offer extensive benefit to all sentient beings and the teachings of Buddha just like Lama Tsongkhapa did, by having the same qualities within me that Lama Tsongkhapa had.

“I dedicate all my merits in the way greatly admired by the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three times and realized by Samantabhadra and Manjushri.”

Sunday, April 18

WEEKEND TEACHING

Good afternoon.

REINCARNATION

When we die, when the day of our death comes, what can help?

If there were no reincarnation or karma, no continuity of consciousness after this life, even if there were only one life, I still think it would be very necessary to benefit others and avoid giving them harm. Even if there were just one life, no reincarnation or karma, it would still be necessary not to harm others but to benefit them. Why? Because, just as you want happiness and don't want suffering, just as you want to be loved by others and don't want to be harmed by them, in exactly the same way, all others also want, need, to be loved by you; others want help from you. Just as you don't want harm from others, others don't want harm from you. Therefore, even in the case of one life—as far as your own happiness and that of all other living beings, including animals and insects, not just humans, is concerned—the practice of the good heart is still the most important thing you can do in your life. It becomes the most important thing in life for your own happiness and success and—because others need happiness and don't want suffering and, therefore, want you to help them and not harm them—your practice of the good heart is also the most important thing for the happiness and success of others.

Even in the case of one life—no karma, no reincarnation—you still can't just do anything you want; you can't just live a wild life. Even if you don't accept reincarnation or karma, you still can't just live a wild life. You can't live like a tiger, harming any being you want—whatever thought comes, just harming another simply for your own benefit. If it's something to eat—eating it; if it's something to attack—attacking it—without

any concern for those other beings, those other animals, like zebras, who are attacked by tigers, those very pitiful zebras. They have nothing with which they can harm others. Zebras, or deer . . . well, deer have horns, but they can't inflict much pain with those . . . anyway, I'm joking. So, those animals—deer or others that don't have much ability to harm, to attack others or to defend themselves—get eaten by tigers. Whenever the tigers need food they just go there and kill and eat the others with not a single concern for *their* happiness, for those other animals' happiness. Not a single concern for anything except their own happiness, their own needs. There's not a thought for the needs of others. You can't live like that, even should you believe there's just one life, even in the case that you believe the philosophy, religion, doctrine or idea that there's just one life and no karma or reincarnation.

But here, now, we are talking from the point of view that reincarnation and karma do exist; that the consciousness will continue after this life.

What is the explanation, for example, that some children do not feel close to their own parents? The child was born to those parents but doesn't feel close to them and feels close to somebody outside the family instead. The child doesn't feel close to its own parents or family, tradition or culture, but feels very close to some other culture; feels some familiarity, or closeness, to some other, outside people; naturally, feels very close.

For example, you might have had the experience of feeling very close to someone from the moment you meet that person. From the very beginning, just by seeing that person, you feel very close. Of course, it also works the other way—just by seeing a particular person for the first time in your life, you get angry. It's not that you remember this person giving you harm earlier in your life—some years ago, some months ago, or when you were a child—treating you badly or something. It's not like that. It has nothing to do with this life, but at first sight, you immediately hate that person. There are many experiences like this in life. Without the basis of, without depending on, reincarnation and karma, there's no way to explain the occurrence of these things. Without depending on life experience, on reincarnation and karma—the philosophy that is experiential, not just idealistic or intellectual, that is based on life experience, whether you remember it or not, which has been your experience even though you don't remember it—there is no other explanation at all for this kind of experience.

Perhaps on seeing a certain type of animal or person, you get very scared. There is no obvious reason for this, you can't explain why it happens, but just naturally you get so scared—just by seeing that kind of animal or person. What this shows is that a strong impression or impact was left on your mind when in a previous life you were killed by that type of animal or person, for example, a policeman. A strong imprint was left on your mind, there was a shock, so in this life, when you meet or see that type of animal or person, naturally you get very scared. You don't know why you feel scared, you just do.

Even in one family, children born from the same parents can think totally differently from their parents or each other. From the time they are children, the way they think is like they're from a totally foreign culture. Just like Buddha explained in his teachings, without being taught by anybody, from the time they are very young, some children feel much compassion for other beings. When they see others suffering, having problems, they feel much compassion. Also, certain practices that are done in Buddhism are done intuitively by that person, that child, even though it was born into a totally different culture or family philosophy. Similarly, a child can be born into a Buddhist family but possess a mentality that is totally different from the rest of its family. The child's interests are totally opposite from those of the Buddhist family into which it was born. The child dislikes Dharma, has no interest in it; dislikes the Buddhist practices that the rest of the family do; has no interest in those practices; hates them. That kind of mentality.

However, people's remembering their past lives is not an exclusively Tibetan phenomenon. Reincarnation is not found only in Tibetan culture—"reincarnation occurs only in the blood of Tibetans"! These days, everybody talks about reincarnation and karma. It has become quite common in the West. Even people doing business, talking about business, mention karma, bring up the word "karma." Even business people who don't practice Dharma mention the words karma and reincarnation while they are doing business.

Two or three years ago, I was at San Francisco Airport and overheard some flight attendants using the word "reincarnation" in conversation as they walked through the terminal. They weren't particularly talking about reincarnation, just using the word. Nowadays in the West, it has become quite fashionable to talk about karma and reincarnation.

Not that many years ago, people tended to think that reincarnation was only in the Tibetan blood. However, it's not like that; it is not just something that concerns only Tibetan people. In the West, the Middle-East and many other parts of the world, there are many children who remember previous lives. One American professor did a lot of research on this. He traveled to many countries and did research in villages where there were children who could remember past lives. He gave or sent me his thick book, which talks about the children he found in many different parts of the world who remembered past lives [Prof. Ian Stevenson, *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*]. There are also old people who can remember past lives. Not only that, there are also people who can see into the future—not just their own futures but those of others, too.

This kind of education or knowledge is becoming more and more common in Western society, where it was once unknown or was something you didn't talk about. It is now becoming more known in society, becoming the subject of study, experimentation and experience.

However, the conclusion is that there's not one single logical proof that there is no reincarnation or karma. Furthermore, it is no one's experience or realization, nobody has realized, that there is no reincarnation or karma. All that has happened is that people have just assumed, or simply made up the philosophy, religion or idea, that there is no reincarnation or karma. However, there is nobody who has experienced or realized that there is no reincarnation or karma, while those who have experienced or realized the existence of reincarnation and karma are numberless. There are numberless beings who have seen that there is a consciousness and that this consciousness continues after this life. You may not have seen this yourself, but there are others who do possess advanced knowledge of inner phenomena.

For example, normally, when we don't know something, we learn it from others. We don't learn from others things we know. Normally we learn from others things we don't know. That shows that our knowledge is limited, that our mind is incomplete in knowledge. Our mind is so limited, unbelievably limited. There is so much that is unknown. There is so much in life of which we are not aware, that we don't know; there are vast numbers of existent phenomena of which we know nothing.

Only when your mind becomes omniscient, only when you have purified your obscurations by practicing the spiritual path, by practicing

Dharma, only when your mental defilements have been purified, ceased, removed, and your mind has become omniscient, do you no longer need to learn. Only then does learning stop. Only then is your learning complete and you have nothing more to learn.

Therefore, unless you practice Dharma, actualize the spiritual path that ceases all defilements, there will be no end to learning; you will never be able to complete your learning. There will always be things about which you are not aware, that you don't know, even things to do with your own life. To understand everything about even your own life, every subtle karma, just a little spiritual realization is not enough.

WHAT HELPS YOU AT THE TIME OF DEATH?

The consciousness continues after this life, and where it goes next, where the consciousness migrates to, where it is reborn, depends on karma. There are only two possible migrations—the body of the suffering migrator and the body of the happy migrator. Until we are free from this suffering realm, these circling aggregates, these circling, defiled, or contaminated, aggregates caused by karma and delusion, there are only two places to which the consciousness can go. Until we are free from all this, the consciousness can reincarnate in only one of two places—the lower realms—the hell, hungry ghost and animal realms—or the upper realms—the human, sura and asura realms.

Where you go depends on a cause, which is karma. If you have collected more powerful virtuous karma in this life, your consciousness will reincarnate in the body of the happy migrator. If the non-virtuous karma that you have collected in this life is greater and more powerful, your consciousness will migrate to the lower realms, will take rebirth in the body of a suffering migrator.

Normally I like to compare the power of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha with that of rocket science to see which is of more help at the time of death. The day you die, all your knowledge about rockets—how to make one that can go to the moon, for instance—can't protect you, can't help you, can't stop your consciousness transmigrating to the hell, hungry ghost or animal realms. All that scientific knowledge can't prevent you from going to the lower realms. All that knowledge can do nothing to stop an unfavorable rebirth. Even though you might have spent your whole life studying

rocket science, it can do nothing to help you at the time of death. I'm not saying that studying is bad, but as far as what benefits you at the time of death, what helps you and what doesn't, the power of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is far greater than all that scientific knowledge.

At the time of death, if you can remember just one mantra, if you can die with the thought of even one mantra—OM MANI PADME HUM, TAD-YATHA OM MUNÉ MUNÉ MAHAMUNAYÉ SVAHA or something—or the thought of a Dharma text—a prayer or sadhana that you've been reciting or the *Heart Sutra*, *The Essence of Wisdom*, which talks about the ultimate nature of the I, the very nature of all phenomena, or the *King of Prayers*—you won't get reborn in the lower realms. If you die remembering one of your sadhanas or prayers, you won't get reborn in the lower realms. There are many stories where even somebody who had already been reborn in a hell realm suddenly, because of the strong imprint, remembered a daily prayer or text that they used to recite in their human life—the *Diamond Sutra*, for example—and was immediately liberated from that hell realm, reincarnating in the upper realms as a deva or a human. Just remembering a text that you used to recite during your human life can have this benefit.

There are many stories like this. At the most critical time of life, when you are about to go to either the happy world or the suffering, unfortunate world, the lower realms, remembering even a mantra can prevent your being reborn in the lower realms. At that time, reciting a mantra or simply remembering a text—just the words, not even the Dharma path—can prevent you from being reborn in the lower realms. It's so powerful. Therefore, there's no question that if you remember the path, the real Dharma—such as detachment from samsara, renunciation of samsara, the ultimate good heart, bodhicitta, and emptiness, the right view—if you're able to meditate on the ultimate reality of the I and phenomena, if you can actually meditate, transform your mind into Dharma, you will not be reborn in the lower realms. Therefore, if you compare the usefulness at the time of death of all that scientific knowledge with that of just remembering a Dharma text, you'll see there's a huge difference. In all that scientific knowledge, there is nothing you can use to protect yourself at the time of death, but here, just remembering a text can prevent you from being reborn in the lower realms.

Even if you can remember an ordained person at the time of death—not

necessarily somebody with high realizations but just an ordinary ordained person in whom you have faith and devotion—you don't get reborn in the lower realms. Your rebirth in the lower realms is stopped if you die thinking of an ordained person in whom you have faith. Now, again, compare all that sophisticated knowledge—how to fly rockets to the moon and so forth—with the power of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha—compare what helps at the time of death and what doesn't. By simply remembering one ordained Sangha, you go to the happy world, you take the body of the happy migrator. Therefore, there's no question that when you die, if you remember Buddha, there'll be an even better result.

Of course, at the time of death—at that very important time, that important day, that important hour—the virtuous thoughts of the person who has lived with a good heart, benefiting others with tolerance, patience, compassion and loving kindness help a great deal. On that day, at that very important time, at that crucial moment of life, the merit collected by benefiting others helps a lot. All those thoughts and actions are Dharma. However, here I'm talking about *anything* that can help at the time of death.

You don't even have to take refuge in all three—Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. At that very important hour, that crucial minute, even if you take refuge in just one, your life, your rebirth, your future life, will be taken care of. That's how powerful Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are. If you rely on them, that's how they guide you. If you compare the benefits of that to scientific knowledge—rockets and all those things—what can and cannot benefit you at the time of death . . . actually, I'm not so sure about rockets, but I am very impressed with dishwashing machines! Rockets I'm not so sure about, but I am very impressed with dishwashers, microwave ovens and vacuum cleaners—*very* impressed! Not sure about rockets! Anyway, dishwashers don't harm others—you can't use them to harm others!

THE BENEFITS OF TAKING REFUGE

There are eight main benefits of having refuge in your mind.

1. *You become a Buddhist.* The lamrim teachings explain that by having refuge in your mind, you enter the Buddhadharma, you become an inner being.

2. *Refuge is the basis for all vows.* By having refuge in your mind, you can receive the pratimoksha vows, the morality that is the basis of achieving perfect concentration, shamatha. That, in turn, allows you to realize great insight. Like a fish swimming through water without disturbing it, on the basis of having realized shamatha, calm abiding, having developed perfect concentration by completing the nine levels on the basis of this shamatha, by analyzing emptiness you can derive rapturous ecstasy, this great bliss, the extremely refined rapturous ecstasy. You are able to achieve this great insight. Then, by achieving this, you can develop the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness. This wisdom eradicates your defilements; this wisdom is what directly ceases your defilements and brings you to complete liberation from the whole of samsara.

To achieve total liberation from samsara, you have to proceed along the five paths—the paths of merit, conjunction, right seeing, meditation and no more learning. By actualizing the third, the path of right seeing, your wisdom directly perceiving emptiness ceases one hundred and twelve defilements, disturbing-thought obscurations. Then, by actualizing the path of meditation, your wisdom directly perceiving emptiness ceases sixteen disturbing-thought obscurations. Finally, by eradicating even the seed of delusion, you achieve total liberation on your mental continuum.

Therefore, even to achieve ultimate, everlasting happiness, total liberation from the whole entire suffering realm, samsara, the very basic thing you need is to take precepts, vows; the practice of morality. Without refuge, you have no basis for that. Refuge is the basis for the pratimoksha vows.

However, the purpose of your life is not just to achieve happiness for yourself, not just to solve your own problems. The purpose of your life is to free sentient beings as limitless as the infinite sky from all suffering and to bring them from happiness to happiness to full enlightenment; to bring them the highest, peerless happiness. The purpose of your life, of being alive, of having this precious human body, is to cause all this happiness.

To offer such perfect service to other sentient beings, including bringing them to enlightenment, first you yourself have to become enlightened. That depends on your actualizing the Mahayana path. The very foundation of that, what makes it possible for you to achieve enlightenment, is living in the bodhisattva vows. Again, without refuge, you have no basis on which to take the bodhisattva vow. That means you cannot become fully enlightened, fully awake. Without refuge you cannot achieve full enlightenment, the total cessation of all defilements and the completion of all realizations. If you don't achieve that, you cannot offer perfect service to other sentient beings, you cannot bring all happiness to all sentient beings, including that of full enlightenment.

One reason that you should benefit others is that by doing so you fulfill the meaning of your life, your reason for living. Otherwise, your life has no purpose. This is one of the reasons why you have to think of the welfare of others, why you need to develop your mind in the path to enlightenment, why you need to learn so many things—to fulfill the purpose of your life by benefiting others. However, to take bodhisattva vows, you need the basis of refuge.

Another reason to benefit sentient beings is that they are suffering unimaginably. But the longer it takes you to purify your mind and complete the two types of merit, to complete the realizations of the path to enlightenment, the longer those sentient beings who have a connection with you and depend on you for their liberation from suffering and enlightenment have to suffer, have to wait for their liberation and enlightenment.

What makes it possible for you to become enlightened more quickly is your achieving the quick path to enlightenment. On the basis of the lamrim, the three principal paths—the detached mind, the determination to be free from samsara, bodhicitta and right view—you need to practice tantra. In order to practice tantra, you need to take tantric vows. This enables you to achieve enlightenment quickly. Again, the basis of taking tantric vows is refuge. Refuge is a very important foundation.

3. *You purify negative karma.* Also, when you have refuge in your mind, by the way, all actions in your daily life—day and night; eating, sleeping, walking, sitting—serve to purify much of the negative karma you have accumulated since beginningless rebirths. By the way, just by having refuge in your mind, much of the negative karma in your mental continuum gets purified. Because you have refuge in your mind, many of your daily actions become Dharma. That's how your eating, sitting, walking—all your daily life activities—allow you to purify much negative karma and collect inconceivable merit all the time.

4. *You create much merit.* Because you have refuge in your mind, you do many specific practices to purify your mind and collect extensive merit. Many practices get done. It happens. For example, practices where you recite different buddhas' names, like the Thirty-five Buddhas or Vajrasattva—you recite those powerful buddhas' names and mantras to purify your mind. And you make offerings to holy objects and so forth. Many of those practices are done because you have refuge in your mind, and as a result, you immediately collect extensive merit. For example, as you know, one of the general refuge precepts is always to first offer from your heart to the Triple Gem any food and drink before you eat or drink it. Once you have made that offering, you then partake of the food and drink as a blessing, to benefit others.

With refuge in your mind, each time you meditate and visualize buddha, each time you think of buddha, you plant the seed of enlightenment. Every time you think of buddha, that thought brings you closer to enlightenment. Every thought of buddha prepares you for that most dangerous time, death, by making it easier for you to remember buddha. Remembering buddha at the time of death gives you incredible freedom to stop the heavy sufferings that you would otherwise have to experience for many eons in the lower realms.

However, each time that you eat and drink, if first you visualize or meditate on buddha and offer your food and drink to

buddha, you collect much merit. Therefore, even if you don't have any realizations or any good heart, any compassion or loving kindness for others, just the action of offering your food and drink to buddha immediately becomes the cause of your enlightenment. You collect inconceivable merit. The minute you make an offering to buddha, you collect an inconceivable number of merits—as many as there are atoms in a huge mountain.

Whether it's a piece of candy, a biscuit or whatever, by the way, since at the beginning you always make offerings because you have refuge in your mind, as many times as you eat and drink in a day, you collect inconceivable merit each time. Therefore, there's no question that by doing other practices, such as circumambulation, prostration, making offerings and other meditation practices related to buddha, you collect even more.

5. *You cannot be harmed by people or spirits.* Another advantage of having refuge in your mind is that you don't get harmed by other humans or spirits. There is a sutra in which Lord Buddha talked about the incredible qualities of the bodhisattva Kshitigarbha—his unbelievable activities and how Kshitigarbha benefited infinite sentient beings. This sutra has two sections. The first part talks about how ordained people create much heavy negative karma by breaking vows, while the second talks about how one should not criticize the Sangha because doing so creates extremely heavy negative karma. If you criticize, put down or give a bad reputation to any monk or nun, even one who breaks vows and makes a lot of other mistakes, you create incredibly heavy negative karma. The second part of this sutra talks a lot about that. It also talks a lot about how you should respect even those monks and nuns who don't keep their vows purely, because those Sangha can still be of great benefit to sentient beings.

This sutra also explains the way they used to punish people back then. These days, people are executed by getting shot or hung. In ancient India, they used to take criminals from their home at night and put them in a cemetery! Those cemeteries

were inhabited by vicious spirits that ate people, so the next day you wouldn't find a trace of that person left. That was the old way of punishing people. The text mentions one person who pinned a small piece of a monk's yellow robe to his shirt—just small piece, not the complete robe. When the spirits at the cemetery saw that he was wearing a piece of the monks' yellow robe for protection, they respected it, didn't harm him, and just went away. Nothing happened. The next day, the person was able to leave the cemetery and go home. There are many stories about how Sangha robes are a powerful protection and prevent spirits from harming people. Not being harmed even by vicious spirits is a result of taking refuge in the Sangha's robes.

6. *You will not fall into the lower realms.*

7. *All your wishes get fulfilled.* How does this happen? As I mentioned before, by having refuge in your mind, you always create good karma; every day you create much good karma. That itself becomes the cause of your success, for all your wishes for happiness to succeed. Not only that, but also as before, with refuge in your mind, by purifying much negative karma, the cause of the problems and danger, you create merit, the cause of success.

For example, many people from the Chinese, Western and Tibetan communities have been cured by praying to the Triple Gem, relying on Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, praying to the Compassionate Buddha. People who doctors have been unable to cure, who doctors have said will die after a month or two, after a few days, people for whom nothing can be done, by praying to Buddha, to Kuan Yin, the Compassionate Buddha, have had miraculous things happen to them. Diseases have been completely cured; people have recovered from terminal illness; incredible life dangers have been averted. There are many stories like this.

In even my own experience, about six people with terminal cancer have recovered by praying to Buddha. Through meditation and mantra recitation, most of them recovered completely, even though doctors had told them that they had only two or

three months to live. Their recovery was due to their praying to Buddha.

8. *You are able to achieve enlightenment quickly.*

WHAT IS SAMBARA?

The main reason for taking refuge is to be totally liberated from samsara forever. What is samsara? The contaminated, or defiled, aggregates that we have now—this association of body and mind—is caused by karma and delusion. Until we stop the continuous circling of these aggregates from one life to another—the joining again and again, the circling again and again, the continuous circling of these defiled aggregates caused by delusion and karma that are suffering in nature—we will continuously experience suffering without a second's break. These aggregates circle to the next life, then to the next, then to the one after that—this continuity of contaminated aggregates circling from one life to the next under the control of delusion and karma is samsara.

Until you break this circle of samsara, you will have no break from suffering. No holiday; not even a second's break. From time without beginning, from beginningless time up to now, you have been experiencing pervasive compounded suffering because your aggregates, which were created by karma and delusion, have always been under the control of karma and delusion. That's why your aggregates are suffering in nature. As a result, your mind always experiences suffering—depression, loneliness, all these emotional torments. You are constantly tortured by your emotional thoughts—attachment, anger, jealousy and so forth, all those delusions that arise from the three poisonous minds or are part of them. These are all sufferings of mind.

Then there are the sufferings of the body. Even simply pressing certain parts of your body with your fingers can immediately bring pain. And if you lie down, walk or sit just a little carelessly, not quite right, again, you immediately feel pain. This is how the body is suffering in nature. It's the same with the mind. Even though there is no unhappiness right at this moment, if in the next moment you hear some unpleasant words or see something unpleasant, your mind immediately becomes unhappy. This is how your body and mind are suffering in nature, how these aggregates

are suffering in nature. Thus, these aggregates are the container of all of this life's problems. Not only that—they are also the foundation of all the coming lives' problems. This life's aggregates also become the foundation for the problems of future lives.

Furthermore, these contaminated aggregates that are pervaded by suffering are also the seed of disturbing thoughts. Therefore, when in your daily life you encounter objects—beautiful objects, ugly objects, indifferent objects—since you do not meditate, do not practice Dharma, your life has no protection. You have no protection in your life; your mind has no protection. As you do not meditate, do not practice Dharma at that time, emotional thoughts arise because their seed is there—ignorance, anger and attachment. Emotional thoughts arise and motivate karma, which plants a seed on the mental continuum, on the mere I, on the sixth consciousness, the consciousness of mind. Then, from this seed comes the sprout—the samsaric aggregates of future lives. That's how they get actualized. This present life's aggregates compound the future samsara by creating karma with delusion.

From beginningless rebirths up until now, you have been experiencing pervasive compounding suffering; from time without beginning up to now. And on the basis of that, you have been experiencing the suffering of pain and the suffering of change, which is temporary samsaric pleasure—pleasure that does not last, doesn't increase, doesn't continue and which is only suffering in nature.

Why does temporary samsaric pleasure not last? Why do sense pleasures not last, why do they not increase? If these pleasures were not suffering in nature, they should increase; they would increase. If they were not suffering in nature, the pleasure would continue and you could develop it hour by hour, day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year. So, how old are you now? How many years is it since you were born? For example, I'm fifty-three, so by now my sense pleasures should be unbelievable! But they're not!

Anyway, the reason they don't last is because they are suffering in nature. That's the reason. There are basically three feelings. The first is the suffering of pain—mental pain, physical pain, depression (when you are depressed, there's pain). There's also the pain of attachment, the pain of anger, the pain of jealousy, heat and cold, hunger and thirst, all the aches and pains of the body, migraine headaches—anyway, all this. Then there's

also the suffering of rebirth, old age, sickness, the inability to find desirable objects, or if found you're unable to get satisfaction from them. There's the pain you experience when you feel something's missing, when you are not completely happy. Even if you get what you want—a friend or a billion dollars—in your heart, you still feel that something's missing; there's pain in not being fully satisfied. Those feelings are the suffering of pain.

Then there's the feeling you get when one suffering, one problem, has stopped and another suffering has started, but is not yet noticeable. One suffering has stopped and another has already started, but it is not noticeable. That feeling is called pleasure. Your mind labels that feeling "pleasure" and it then appears as pleasure. In reality, that feeling is only suffering, but because at that moment your mind does not recognize it as suffering, your mind labels it pleasure and it appears as pleasure; it appears as pleasure to your hallucinating mind. It appears to you as pleasure.

If you look at it with wisdom, you see it only as suffering, not pleasure, but if you look at this feeling with a hallucinating mind, you see it as pleasure. According to the view of the hallucinating mind—when your mind does not analyze, does not meditate, does not look at the nature of this feeling, which is only suffering—this feeling appears as pleasure. But in the view of wisdom, you see this feeling as only suffering. In the view of your wisdom, the mind that analyzes, that meditates, you see it only as suffering. When your mind is not hallucinating, you see this as suffering, but when your mind is hallucinating, this feeling appears as pleasure. It is a hallucination. This is the suffering of change.

For example, say you go to Las Vegas and make a hundred dollars profit, but are not satisfied with that and want a thousand. You put your winnings back and play again. Then, even if you get the thousand, you are not happy with that, not satisfied with that. You want more. You put your winnings back again to get more. So now let's jump ahead! You've won a million! You've won a million dollars in Las Vegas. But after getting a million dollars, you are still not happy, still not satisfied. So you play again, hoping to get more than a million. Then you get a billion dollars but it still doesn't make you happy; you are still not satisfied. So you play again.

I'm talking here on the basis of your winning continuously, making a growing profit, but of course, many people lose thousands, hundreds of thousands of dollars gambling like this. Here I'm talking on the basis of your continually making money.

Once we were traveling by car and stopped in Reno. It was about one or two o'clock in the morning and we had stopped for tea, to have chai. There was this machine that you put money into, so out of curiosity I put in a quarter and two came back! Then, because my mind was not happy with two, I played again! Then nothing happened! So anyway, it's like that!

What I was saying before is, if you analyze, it is only suffering; that whole thing is suffering. As I often give as an example, out of hunger, you start to eat food, and the suffering of hunger stops. Eating food has stopped the hunger, but at that very moment, with the first spoonful of food, the discomfort of being too full has started. From the very beginning, the discomfort of too much food in your stomach has begun, but at first it is not noticeable, and we label it pleasure, comfort. However, by continuing to eat, the discomfort becomes more and more gross, until it becomes noticeable and you label it unpleasant. What you had labeled pleasure, comfort, does not increase, doesn't last, because that feeling is actually suffering. One suffering stops, another suffering begins. But at the start, it is small, very small, unnoticeable, so we label it pleasure and it appears as pleasure. But actually it is only suffering. This is called the suffering of change. We have to understand why it doesn't last. The logic is that it doesn't last because the nature of that pleasure is suffering.

From beginningless samsaric lifetimes up to now, on the basis of this samsara, the pervasive compounding suffering, we have continuously been experiencing the suffering of pain and the suffering of change. Even the indifferent feelings that we have been experiencing have also been suffering. The indifferent feelings that our bodies, these aggregates, have experienced, have actually been suffering.

Until we are free from this samsara, until we cut the continuity of the circle of this samsara, we will continuously be tormented by these three types of suffering. In this samsara, there is no new pleasure left that we haven't already experienced. There is nothing new that we have never before experienced in previous lives. Whether it is samsaric pleasure or the suffering of pain, there's nothing new. Even if it's a suffering of pain, even if it's a problem, it's nothing new, it's not the first time we've experienced it.

For example, say you meet a friend, somebody in your life, but after some time you start to experience problems, relationship problems. You don't get loved, you feel left out, there's separation from your friend . . . All this

might appear as if it's happening for the first time, but it's not the first time. This problem, with this person, with this sentient being, has happened numberless times in your past lives. Even the relationship problems that you experience in this life—after meeting this person then there's separation, all this—it's not the first time. You have experienced this problem numberless times over your beginningless samsaric lifetimes—whatever problem you experience, nothing is new, nothing is new. Whether it is samsaric pleasure, suffering of change, or the suffering of pain, nothing is new.

Until you are liberated from samsara, wherever you live, wherever you go, it is a place of suffering. Whatever enjoyment you have—all these enjoyments of samsara—whatever enjoyment of samsara you have, sense pleasure, it's all suffering. And whoever you accompany, any friend, is a friend of suffering. Until you are free from samsara, it is like this. This is the nature of samsara.

THIS IS YOUR BEST CHANCE TO BE FREE

Now, this is the one time that you have received not only a precious human body but a *perfect* human body, with which you can achieve any great meaning. If you wish, you can achieve the happiness of future lives. You can achieve ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara. And you can even achieve the highest happiness of full enlightenment. Also, every second, even each moment, you can achieve these great meanings of life. Whatever you wish, you can achieve with this perfect human body.

This is the time that you have all the opportunities, every opportunity, to liberate yourself from the whole entire circle of suffering, the vast oceans of samsaric suffering. You can liberate yourself from the hell, hungry ghost and animal realm sufferings, the oceans of each realm's unimaginable suffering; from the unimaginable sufferings and problems that human beings experience; from all the problems that the devas—suras and asuras—experience; and from all the general sufferings of samsara. *This* is the time. Having such an incredible opportunity to make yourself totally free, to completely cease all the sufferings of samsara, whose continuity has no beginning, is virtually just this once. This is your only opportunity to make yourself totally free, to cease completely the entire suffering of samsara, all the beginningless sufferings of body and mind,

to make it impossible to experience them again, to never reincarnate again in samsara—it is essentially just this once, only this time.

This is the time that not only do you have buddha nature and the ability to achieve all happiness, cease all suffering and achieve liberation for yourself, but you also have the ability to liberate numberless other sentient beings, who are suffering in samsara just as you are. You can liberate all sentient beings and bring them to full enlightenment. For that purpose, you have to achieve enlightenment yourself. You have buddha nature, with which you can do all this, and besides that, you have this perfect human body, which enables you to use your buddha nature to achieve all these things, to take all these opportunities, to achieve all this success for yourself and others.

This is the time to do your *best*. This life—this body, this precious, perfect human body—is the time to do your best, to not cheat yourself. If you do not make the most of this time when you have every opportunity to achieve all success for yourself and for other sentient beings, if you do not take maximum advantage, if you cheat yourself again in this life—like you have been cheating yourself since beginningless rebirths—if you cheat yourself again in the one life that gives you every opportunity to practice Dharma, if you don't get to practice, there is no greater loss than this.

THE KARMIC RESULTS OF KILLING

Perhaps now I'll read a page of this text from where I left off last time . . . well, last time I couldn't find it! However, previously I was reading from Shantideva's teaching, *Lab du*. I'm not sure, but in English this title could be translated as *Condensed Advice*. I read the results of the negative karma of killing, the suffering in the hell realms as explained by Shantideva. In the lamrim teachings, the hell sufferings are not presented in this particular way, although they do give a general explanation.

The ripening aspect result of the complete negative karma of killing is usually to be reborn in the lower realms and to experience all those unimaginable sufferings. Then there are the three suffering results, the three problems that you experience in the human realm. One of these is the possessed result—a very dirty place, a very unhealthy environment that contains many things that harm your life. Medicines do not have much power; food does not have much nutritional value; protein degen-

erates due to negative karma. Food and crops do not have much protein and may even become the cause of disease. The food you eat becomes the cause of disease. You are unable to digest food. Many people have gastric or digestive problems—that's the result of killing; the result of the past negative karma of killing.

Thus, you can see how doing Vajrasattva practice promotes healing, purifying the negative karma that causes gastric problems. Of course, that's not the only thing it purifies. Retreat purifies much more than the cause of gastric problems, but they are included. Anyway, food becomes harmful, the cause of sickness. Like diabetes—you can't eat this, you can't eat that, you can't eat this, you can't eat that! Like my precious sickness, my diabetes!

Then, experiencing the result similar to the cause, you experience shortness of life. For example, you die right after conception in your mother's womb. It includes that. You are there for a few minutes, then you die. Shortness of life—whether you kill yourself or whether others kill you, or whether you die by disease, you have a short life, you're unable to have a long life. Finally, there's creating the result similar to the cause, doing the action of killing again because of past karma, habit.

THE KARMIC RESULTS OF STEALING

Next it explains the ripening aspect result of taking things that have not been given; stealing. Whoever commits the extreme action of this vice—this is talking about the hell suffering result of stealing—hallucinates that there are big piles of wealth—jewels, clothing, food, grain and many other possessions There's a term, *nor*, used here. It has two meanings. One is possession, but it could also mean animals, possessed animals. You see huge piles of valuable possessions, but it's a hallucination, like, it says, the ring of fire you see when you light a stick of incense and twirl it around in a circle. It looks like there's a circle of fire, but actually there's not. It looks like there's an actual circle of fire, but there's not. It's a hallucination or transformation, like a city of spirits, a city of ghosts; like a mirage.

The person seeing this is totally overwhelmed by attachment, by ignorance, by karma, and thinks, "This is mine." Then, due to karma, sparks of fire, like from burning animal dung, extremely hot, hit the person's body. I think that's what it means, but I'm not one hundred percent sure. Then

the person runs towards the hallucinated huge piles of possessions and is grabbed by yamas, which appear as human but have been created by the person's karma. Then they bring the person into a crater, like a volcano, erupting with blazing weapons, which chop the person's limbs to pieces. Here the term *yän lag* means legs and arms, and *nye lag* means the parts of the limbs [forearm, upper arm, thigh, lower leg and so forth.] These are cut into pieces and burned until all that is left is bone.

But even though this happens, your attachment, which has been with you since beginningless past lives, still doesn't decrease. Here it might sound as if it is finished by that hell suffering of stealing, but it's not. This is a very short explanation, but of course, this suffering is extremely unbearable.

THE KARMIC RESULTS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Next is being under the control of sexual misconduct, desire. Whoever creates this negative karma—it seems this explanation continues from the previous one—even after you are free from the dangers of all those weapons, again, sparks of red hot cow dung hit your body. Then you go to another place that is the production of your karma, the hell being's karma, called "Seeing the wrong way." Then, it says, by being in that place, you "lose your memory, and see the activities done by . . ."—it says "women" here, but it can be *vice versa*, like in the *Bodhicaryavatara*, where it talks about the shortcomings of the body. When the shortcomings of the body are mentioned, it talks about women's bodies because the teaching was given mainly to men. When women do this meditation, they have to think about the shortcomings of the men's bodies. It's similar here; you have to think *vice versa*.

Due to karma, the hell being sees women doing things similar to what that being used to see in its previous life. Due to karma, the being has that vision in the hell realm. Since that being's mind has been habituated to such activities since beginningless samsara, the fire of attachment arises. Attachment to those activities has been there, the being's mind has been habituated to those, since beginningless samsara, so it arises again and the hell being runs towards those women. Then, due to the hell being's karma, yamas, whose nature is iron—in the movies, they show people made of iron, with long nails; they look like human beings but they're

made of iron, have long nails and are very frightening—grab that being and eat its body completely. Starting from the mouth, its lips, they eat the body completely, leaving not even a scrap the size of mustard seed. Then again, due to karma, the being gets born again, the body reappears, and the hell being is again eaten. In this way, the being experiences unimaginably heavy suffering. But still the attachment does not change. Even after such heavy suffering, whenever that being sees more women, he runs towards them.

Then, it says, due to hell being's karma, women whose nature is iron, vajra iron, with violent fire blazing from their bodies, grab the hell being and crush its body into grains of sand. Then, because that karma has not yet finished, the suffering of hell due to sexual misconduct has not yet finished, again the body comes back. (There are some more stanzas here, but I think I'll leave it there.) However, when women meditate on this, where it says "women" in this text, they have to think "men."

So the next one is . . . maybe I'll stop here . . . the next one is for next time!

MORE ON THE KARMA OF STEALING

The ripening aspect result of the complete negative karma of stealing is to be reborn in the lower realms and to experience all those unimaginable sufferings just mentioned. The possessed result, when you are born as a human being, is that you get born or have to live in a place where there is much drought, no water, no rain, great danger of earthquakes and floods, and scarcity of food, no crops . . . and no corpse! Actually, no crops and many corpses!

For example, there have been many years of suffering in Africa in those areas where there has been no water for such a long time, no rain for such a long time. Even when other countries try to help—like once they brought water by airplane to that country, but by the time the airplane arrived at the airport, the water had become extremely contaminated, unusable, unfit to give to the people—the people in that country don't have the karma to receive clean water. So even though other people try to bring water, by the time it arrives there it has become undrinkable. When you don't have the karma or if you have created the negative karma to experience these suffering results by stealing, this kind of thing happens—even

when outside people try to help, to bring things, the suffering people are unable to receive it.

That means the people, from their own side, need to purify their negative karma; they need to do Vajrasattva retreat. All African people—those who live in those areas where there is so much drought—need to do Vajrasattva retreat. They need to purify their negative karma, to change their minds from delusion, from negative thoughts, and to transform their actions into virtue, to practice morality—abstain from stealing and so forth. Until they do that—until they purify their past negative karma and practice Dharma, from their own side create the cause of success, the cause to have food, rain, crops and all these things by making charity and abstaining from stealing—their situation will not change.

That was the possessed result. Then there's experiencing the result similar to the cause. Here you're always losing things. Other people steal or confiscate your belongings, take them by force, or else you lose them. Even if you have enjoyments, you have to share them with others, you don't own them completely yourself—even what little you have, you have to share with others. You have this kind of difficulty and have to live in poverty. The main experience of the result similar to the cause, stealing, is poverty.

Creating the result similar to the cause means again engaging in the same negative karma, stealing. As I normally mention, the most terrifying result of negative karma is not hell. The most terrifying result is this one—creating the result similar to the cause. This is far more terrifying than hell, because you again engage in the same negative karma, stealing. Then, that complete action has four suffering results. One of these, of course, is creating result similar to the cause, stealing yet again. Once more, that produces the four suffering results. In this way, it goes on and on without end. That makes the suffering of samsara endless. The suffering result of the one action, the one negative karma of stealing, goes on and on and on without end. As long as you don't change, as long as you don't purify the negative karma, as long as you don't change your mind, your attitude and actions and live in the vow, in the precept to abstain from stealing, as long as this doesn't happen, the suffering result of the one negative karma of stealing doesn't stop; it goes on and on without end.

Therefore, creating the result similar to the cause is much more terrifying than the hell realm. You experience the hell realm once and it's

finished, but creating negative karma again produces suffering results without end.

Now, here I'm using just one example, one negative karma—how an action like stealing creates unending suffering, unending experiences of suffering results; how it goes on and on and on. Therefore, you can now see what it means to take a vow, what it means to live in precepts. Now you can see the importance of that. By understanding how the suffering result of just one negative karma, one act of stealing, goes on and on, you can see how extremely important it is to live in the vow, the precept, to abstain from negative karma, such as stealing.

Even if you cannot take, cannot live in, the vows, the morality, of all the ten virtuous actions, in the ten precepts, even if you cannot live in the five lay precepts, abstaining from those five negative karmas, if you can live in at least one vow, such as abstaining from stealing, you can see, there's no question, that if you live in that vow until you die, it brings peace and happiness in all your future lifetimes.

Even if one day you stop yourself from stealing once—you are in danger of creating the negative karma of stealing but you resist—the benefit is that you don't have to experience again and again in future lives the four suffering results of stealing. That doesn't happen. Having stopped this one negative karma of stealing, all those four suffering results that would have gone on and on from that one negative karma of stealing don't happen; they're completely stopped. Therefore, by having stopped that one negative karma of stealing, you have peace and happiness in all the future lifetimes—peace and happiness in the sense of not having created that negative karma, thus, the absence of all those sufferings.

In this way, you can see that living in the vow, in the precept, even if it is just one, it's unbelievable; it's the source of peace and happiness in all the coming future lives. It's unbelievable. It's the main cause of happiness, the main protection for your life in all coming future lives; the main protection. Living in one vow in this life protects you from suffering in all future lives and is the main cause of happiness.

MORE ON THE KARMA OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

The ripening aspect result of the complete negative karma of sexual misconduct is to be reborn in the lower realms and to experience all those

unimaginable sufferings just mentioned. And even when you are born in the human realm, you have to experience the three types of suffering result. The possessed result is that you have to live in an unhealthy, dirty, filthy, muddy environment. Wherever you walk there's mud and kaka, excrement, filth, dirty smells; it's a very unhygienic, very unhealthy place. Many people have to live their entire lives like this. Sometimes even we have to pass through such dirty places. On that day, at that hour, we are experiencing the possessed result of past sexual misconduct—being in a very filthy place.

Experiencing the result similar to the cause here is explained in *Sa chu pä do*, *The Ten Bhumis Sutra*, where it talks about two results similar to the cause. One is that your companion's mind, the other person's mind—your husband or wife or whatever the other person with whom you live is—is not harmonious with your mind, is against your mind. Therefore, there are relationship problems. That's one thing. The other is that the minds of the people who surround you are not harmonious with yours. Therefore, they don't help fulfill your wishes; their mind is not harmonious with yours. Experiencing these problems is experiencing the result similar to the cause of the past negative karma of sexual misconduct.

Having heard this teaching, whenever we have any of these experiences in life, we have to remember, or recognize, that they are the result of the past negative karma of sexual misconduct. This means that if you don't want to experience such problems, from now on you should abide in the vow of abstaining from sexual misconduct. Basically it means that if the person who has a husband or wife, the “owner,” doesn't like these problems, that person should live in the vow of abstaining from sexual misconduct.

The experience of creating the result similar to the cause means engaging in sexual misconduct again. Once more, that complete action produces four suffering results, and so it goes, on and on, like that.

THE BENEFITS OF KEEPING PRECEPTS

Actions opposite to these vows harm other sentient beings directly or indirectly and create negative karma. For example, from the time you take the vow not to kill, numberless other sentient beings don't receive the harm of being killed by you. From the day, the hour, the minute you take the vow,

numberless of other sentient beings don't receive that harm, being killed, from you. The absence of that harm is peace and happiness, which they receive from you. You have to understand in this way how your living in the vow not to kill becomes the source of peace and happiness for all other living beings, including insects and human beings.

The more vows you take, the more precepts you take, that much less harm numberless other sentient beings receive from you. Just from that, they receive that much more peace and happiness from you. You should see, understand, it this way. The precepts you take and live in are the best contribution you can make to world peace. From today, the more precepts you take, the more vows you live in, the greater your contribution to world peace—to not only the peace and happiness of this world's sentient beings, but to the peace and happiness of all sentient beings. If you think long term, from life to life, you also benefit sentient beings living in other worlds. And because, on the basis of the vows, you develop your mind on the path to enlightenment, you can see how you benefit all sentient beings even more.

The greater the number of vows you have taken, the more merit you create. For example, if you have taken one precept, by living in that one vow, you collect merit *all* the time, from the time you took it until you die. Every moment for the rest of your life, while you are sleeping, eating, walking—all the time—by living in even that one vow, you collect good karma continuously. If you have taken five vows, the five lay vows, it means that *all* the time you are creating five good karmas, merit, all the time. As many hours as you sleep—eight hours, ten, twelve—even while you're asleep, you are continuously collecting merit, creating those five good karmas all the time—eating, walking, no matter what you're doing. In other words, it makes your life meaningful all the time.

If you are living in the eight vows, then, like that, you are creating eight good karmas, merit, all the time. Similarly, if you are keeping the thirty-six vows of the novice or the two hundred and fifty-three vows of a fully ordained monk, you collect thirty-six or two hundred and fifty-three merits all the time, day and night; all the time, even while you're asleep. Similarly, if you're a fully ordained nun, three hundred and sixty-four. [Ven. Munsel: Three hundred and forty-eight.] Three hundred and forty-eight? There may be different ways of counting. [Ven. Munsel: That's the *Danagupta* tradition, three hundred and forty-eight.] Anyway, whatever

it is, three hundred and forty-eight merits or three hundred and sixty-four—all the time, day and night, you collect that much merit.

The other thing is that, as I often say, even if the person living in the ordination, living in the vows, doesn't do any other practices—preliminary practices and so forth—but just lives in the vows that were taken—does nothing else but eat, sleep and make kaka and pipi—does no practice other than living in the vows, while externally, from ordinary people's point of view, it might look like that person is doing nothing, is lazy, does nothing, as long as the person is living purely in the vows, that person is benefiting the world a great deal. Even if the person doesn't do any practice other than living in the vows, that person is benefiting the world greatly, bringing much peace and happiness into the world, into the environment, and contributing so much to the prosperity of that country, helping the crops to grow well and rain to fall at the right time. The person living in the vows helps the prosperity in that area, in that country, very much. It affects the environment, as it is explained in teachings on the benefits of the eight Mahayana precepts.

The story of the four harmonious brothers, those four animals [elephant, monkey, rabbit and bird], also illustrates this. Actually, one was an embodiment of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and the others were various disciples of the Buddha. They all lived in the forest, practiced the five precepts and spread that practice to others. The monkey spread living in the vows to other monkeys, the rabbit got other rabbits to practice keeping the five lay vows, and so forth. Each one decided to spread the practice of keeping precepts to others and to respect each other. Due to that, the economy of the entire country changed completely. Food became plentiful, there was no scarcity of food, the rains came at the right time and everything became so rich.

The king thought he had done it, his ministers thought they had done it, and there were many arguments about who was responsible for this good fortune. One of the ministers suggested, "Maybe we should ask the clairvoyant sage how this has come about." The sage told them, "None of you did it. It's a result of what those four brother animals who live in the forest have done. They live in the precepts and respect each other—those who are younger respect those who are older—and that's why the country has developed." Therefore, a nunnery or a monastery can bring great prosperity and benefit to a country and to the world.

Not only that, but by living in the vows you have taken, whether they be lay vows or those of monastic ordination, every day, whenever you collect good karma by making charity, by benefiting other sentient beings, by making offerings to the Triple Gem or however you create merit, the merit you create is greatly increased—hundreds of thousands of times. And if you are living in the bodhisattva vows, your merit is increased that much more—millions of times. And especially if you are living in the tantric vows, the merit you create is increased much, much more than that. The higher the ordination you keep, the more the general good karma you create in your daily life is increased. It is mentioned in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* and *Bodhicaryavatara* that by taking bodhisattva vows you collect infinite merit like the infinite sky—every second, you collect merit like that. On top of that, if you keep tantric vows, you create that much more merit.

So tonight, I think I'll stop here.

THE REFUGE AND PRECEPTS CEREMONIES

However, what is refuge? It is the understanding fear, the useful fear, the beneficial fear of the sufferings of samsara in general and the suffering of the lower realms in particular. That's one cause of refuge. The other cause of refuge is faith in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha by knowing their qualities—their power to liberate, to save one from the suffering of samsara, including its cause. Having faith that the Triple Gem has the power to do this. Having these two causes in your mind and relying on Buddha, Dharma and Sangha with all your heart is what taking refuge means. Those causes could already be there in your mind, so here, taking refuge means taking the refuge *vow* in a ceremony; taking the refuge vow from a lama.

Now, if you have compassion for others, if your purpose of taking refuge also includes compassion for other sentient beings, if you are taking refuge for the benefit of other sentient beings, you are taking refuge the Mahayana way. If you have compassion for others, you are taking refuge not only for yourself but also for others. That becomes the Mahayana way of taking refuge. The previous way was the Hinayana way of taking refuge. Taking refuge, relying on Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, with the

third cause of compassion for others in your mind is the Mahayana way of taking refuge.

First I'll give refuge and then the five precepts. Monks and nuns, who live in higher ordination vows, don't need to repeat the prayer and shouldn't think, "I am taking that vow." It is said that if you take lower vows while living in higher ones, you lose your higher vows.

Those who are taking refuge should first make three prostrations to the Shakyamuni Buddha statue, thinking that it's the actual living Buddha. After that, make three prostrations to the lama giving refuge. Then kneel down, like you do when you're taking the eight Mahayana precepts, and put your palms together at your heart. If you can't kneel, just sit comfortably.

Then please repeat the ceremony prayer.

[Prayer in Tibetan.] "I, whose name is such and such, until I die, am going to take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha" is what it means.

Then ask the lama to grant the vow. [Prayer.]

In your heart, think of the meaning of Buddha—one whose mind is totally pure, having ceased all the mistakes of mind, gross and subtle, and having gained all the qualities; and rely upon Buddha a billion times more than you rely upon external doctors; even though they can cure sicknesses, it is only temporary, but here, Buddha liberates you from all suffering, all defilements. [Prayer.]

Now rely upon Dharma. It says, "I go for refuge to Dharma, the sublime cessation of attachment." The reason why attachment is specifically brought up is because even though ignorance is the root, attachment is the main delusion that ties you to samsara all the time. Therefore, when we take refuge in Dharma, it says, "I go for refuge to the supreme Dharma, the cessation of attachment." However, rely on Dharma, the true path and the true cessation of suffering, a billion times more than you rely on medicine. Even though medicine can cure, can stop problems, they're only sicknesses, they're only temporary, but Dharma ceases all suffering and its cause. [Prayer.]

Next, take refuge in Sangha, the sublime ones, the sublime beings who have attained the true path and the true cessation of suffering. That's the absolute Sangha—taking refuge in the absolute Sangha. Also take refuge

in conventional Sangha—four fully ordained monks living in pure vows but not having realization of the absolute Dharma. That’s the conventional Sangha. The absolute Sangha is anyone, lay or ordained, who has the realization of absolute Dharma. That’s the absolute Sangha. Take refuge in both conventional and absolute Sangha, relying on them a billion times more than you rely on a nurse. The Sangha guides you from samsara, guides you to liberation, helps you to free yourself from samsara. [Prayer.]

Next, as I mentioned before all the benefits of taking vows, here, by taking refuge in Dharma, what you are supposed to abandon is harming others. Therefore, as I normally say, even if you cannot take other vows, at least it’s good to abandon intentional killing. Of course, if you cannot take a vow to abandon killing but are able to take one or more of the other five lay vows—like not telling lies or not drinking alcohol or any of the others—whichever you can manage, you can take. If you cannot take the vow to not kill, if that’s difficult, you can take other vows, which you can try to practice.

If you are taking one vow—not just the refuge vow but one of the *upasika* [or *upasaka*] [lay] vows—you should say, “I am taking this one upasika vow.” If you are taking two precepts, two lay vows, say, “I am taking these two upasika vows.” If you are taking all five, “I am taking the five upasika vows.” In your mind, you should think like that.

I am going to give the complete upasika [or upasaka] ordination, all five vows, but each one of you should think in your own heart how many vows you are taking—one upasika vow, two vows, three vows, four vows, five vows. It would take too much time to do the ceremony for each individual, so I’m going to do it this way. [Prayer.]

At the end of the third repetition, without letting your mind wander, you must generate the thought, “I have received one upasika vow, two vows, three vows, four . . .” according to the number of vows you have taken.

This is based on the refuge vow. Not only have you received the refuge vow but on top of that you have also received the upasika vow. If you have taken only refuge, if you have not taken any other vows, then you have received only the refuge vow and none of the five upasika precepts.

Buddha is so kind to us sentient beings. Even if you cannot take all five precepts, you can still take the refuge vow. By taking the refuge vow, you

still receive the refuge precepts. Therefore, in everyday life, by the way, you are able to create a great deal of merit and purify your mind. That's how Buddha guides us to enlightenment—by giving us the opportunity to take the refuge vow and live in the refuge precepts.

Now I have become your *lob pon*, one who leads disciples on the path to liberation. [Prayer.]

Next, if you have taken any of the five lay vows, say, “As previous arhats abstained from these actions, changed their minds and their actions, changed their attitude and their actions, lived in these precepts and liberated themselves from samsara, similarly, I am going to take such and such vows.” Make that determination, thinking of all the benefits that I explained before.

Please repeat this, and in your heart think, “With great happiness, I am taking these vows for world peace—not only for the peace of this world but also for the peace and happiness of all sentient beings. These vows are my contribution, what I myself am offering, to not only the sentient beings in this world, but to all sentient beings. I am offering them this many vows.” So, feel much happiness that you can make yourself useful to all sentient beings in such a practical way—by refraining from giving them this number of harms. [Prayer.]

Feel great happiness for not only having taken the refuge vow, but that by having taken whatever number of lay vows you have, from now on, your merit will increase continuously, day and night. Whatever merit you create each day will be multiplied that much more. In this way, you make your life practical, beneficial for other sentient beings. With this understanding, seeing the benefits or importance of this, the value of the vows you have taken, you enjoy your life. Practicing Dharma in this way is the best way to enjoy your life.

Finally, please do three prostrations to thank the lama for giving refuge and precepts.

DEDICATION

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I and all sentient beings

be able to complete the paramita of morality by keeping it purely and without pride.

“May bodhicitta, the source of all happiness and success for myself and all other sentient beings, be generated within my own mind and in the minds of all sentient beings without even a second’s delay. May that which has already been generated increase.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I be able to benefit all sentient beings like the sky, as Lama Tsongkhapa did, by having the same qualities within me that Lama Tsongkhapa had, from now on, in all future lifetimes.

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

“Since these opportunities happened due to the kindness of the Buddha of Compassion, His Holiness Dalai Lama, and also that of Lama Yeshe, may Lama Ösel Rinpoche have a stable life and be able to benefit sentient beings like the sky, as Lama Tsongkhapa did, by showing the same qualities that Lama Tsongkhapa had.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, which are empty from their own side, may the I, who is also empty from its own side, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, which is also empty from its own side, and lead all sentient beings, who are also empty, to that enlightenment, which is empty, by myself alone, who is also empty.

“As the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three times praised greatly the best way of dedicating merits, and as Samantabhadra and Manjushri realized, I dedicate all my merits in the same way.”

Finally, pray to meet and actualize Lama Tsongkhapa’s entire stainless teaching, which unifies sutra and tantra, within your own mind, and for it to spread in the minds of all sentient beings and to flourish without degeneration.

Saturday, April 24

WEEKEND TEACHING

Good evening, or good night! [It's almost 9:00 p.m.] Tonight we'll do the teachings in our dreams! A dream teaching in a dream retreat!

EMPTINESS

Somebody who has realized emptiness . . . this might sound as if I have realized emptiness, but I am not saying that. A few years ago, one of the times when Lama Ösel was at Kopan Monastery, he came into my room, lay on the bed, kind of rolling around, playing, and said, "If I tell people that I'm not enlightened, they will think I am, and that's not correct, but if I tell them that I am enlightened, that wouldn't be correct either." I thought Lama Ösel's thinking was very smart!

Anyway, an unenlightened sentient being who has realized emptiness still has the appearance of inherent existence but has no belief, no apprehension, that it is true. The understanding or recognition that the meditator has is that what is appearing to his or her view is false. The awareness is that this is a hallucination. Those who, like myself, haven't trained their minds, have not realized how things are empty, haven't developed the wisdom realizing emptiness, are unable to see sense objects—subject, I, action and object—as a dream or an illusion. Instead, such people totally believe sense objects to be real; they totally believe that everything they see is real. Not only do they live in the world of hallucination, in the world of their own hallucinated minds, but on top of that, they believe that world to be real. Not only do they have the hallucinated appearance but they also have complete belief that it is true. This becomes the basis upon which all emotional thoughts arise.

Those who haven't actualized emptiness, have not developed their minds to see things as a dream, as an illusion, who do not meditate on or

practice awareness of the illusion that they have, who do not recognize it as an illusion or meditate on the emptiness of the subject, I, action, object and all other sense objects, all of which appears to them as not merely labeled by the mind . . . here, when I use the words “not merely labeled by the mind” to introduce the object to be refuted instead of saying “inherently existent,” when I try to present it by saying “appearing not merely labeled by the mind,” I am trying to express the extremely subtle object to be refuted according to the highest division of the fourth of the four schools of Buddhist philosophy, the Prasangika Madhyamaka.

I don’t remember all the Sanskrit names, but in Tibetan, the first of the four schools is *Je drag ma ba* [Vaibhashika]; the second, *Do de pa* [Sautrantika]; the third, *Sem tsam pa*, the mind only school [Cittamatra]; and the fourth, Madhyamaka [*Uma pa*], which has two divisions, Svatantrika [*Rang gyu ba*] and Prasangika [*Tel gyu ba*].

Therefore, I say “that which appears not merely labeled by the mind” to express that *extremely* subtle object to be refuted according to the Prasangika school’s view. By realizing that *extremely* subtle one is empty, by realizing, recognizing, that it is a hallucination, that it is false, that it doesn’t exist, that it is totally empty, *only then*, only when that happens, do you realize emptiness, the unmistaken emptiness that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha realized, the wisdom that liberated him from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and their cause, delusion and karma, and enabled him to liberate numberless other beings; the wisdom that Nagarjuna, Lama Tsongkhapa, Milarepa and many others realized as well. If you read Milarepa’s life story you will find a section that talks about the two truths, and you can understand from that. There’s a short paragraph that talks about the two truths. Actually, I’m not sure which of the two Milarepa texts it is, his hundred thousand songs or his life story; but whichever it is, his presentation is *exactly* the same as Lama Tsongkhapa’s.

After you go through the object to be refuted, the object of ignorance, the root of samsara, according to the view of each of the four schools of Buddhist philosophy, if you omit the extremely subtle one explained by the second of the Madhyamaka schools, the Prasangika, then even if you have realized emptiness according to the point of view of the previous schools, you still can’t cut the root of samsara. It can *help* to eventually cut the root of samsara, but it doesn’t actually *directly* cut the root of samsara. That very particular root of samsara, that very particular ignorance, can be cut only

by realizing the extremely subtle Prasangika view, the extremely subtle object to be refuted, the hallucination that appears as not merely labeled by mind—not just “not labeled by the mind” but “not *merely* labeled by the mind.” That one.

The way things appear to exist to us is as slightly more than what is merely labeled by mind. Therefore, as I was going to say before, twenty-four hours a day, those of us who haven’t realized emptiness allow our hallucinating mind to believe that all these appearances, which appear as not merely labeled by the mind, are real, not false; are the truth. The appearances are false but we believe them to be true. Twenty-four hours a day, we let our mind make everything concrete, inherently existent; we constantly let our mind turn all these appearances, all these phenomena, into something concrete, inherently existent. Like this, constantly, twenty-four hours a day, we are creating ignorance, the root of samsara. In this way, twenty-four hours a day, we are making our mind become the root of samsara, ignorance, by letting it hold, apprehend, that the way things appear, as not merely labeled by mind, is true. Constantly we are making our mind the root of samsara, developing that particular ignorance that is the root of all the other delusions, disturbing obscuring thoughts, and karma, and all the sufferings of samsara.

Is the subject, I, action, object—all phenomena—appearing to us as not merely labeled by the mind in the mind or outside?

Student: Together.

Rinpoche: Made from LMB! Together; made from LMB!

Student: Made from space.

Rinpoche: Things appearing as not merely labeled by mind, does that exist outside or inside? Does it exist outside the mind or in the mind?

Answer: Not separate from the mind.

Rinpoche: Not separate from mind. I see. So it’s one with the mind? It’s one with the mind? So it’s mind? It’s mind? So if it is mind, then it has to be either the fifty-one mental factors or the consciousness. The appearance to the mind has to be one of those—consciousness or the fifty-one mental factors—what does Neil think?

[Ven. Neil doesn't answer.]

Rinpoche: Mahakala? [Referring to Ven. Michel.] It's outside or in the mind? I, action, object, things appearing not merely labeled by mind—anyway, the inherently existent appearance—is it in the mind or outside the mind?

Ven. Michel: In the mind.

Rinpoche: In the mind. Bertrand?

Ven. Bertrand: It looks to be in the mind, even if it's a hallucination.

Rinpoche: It looks to be in the mind?

Ven. Bertrand: Dependent on the mind . . .

Rinpoche: Dependant on the mind. Marcel?

Ven. Marcel: Created by mind.

Rinpoche: But is it outside or inside?

Ven. Marcel: Inside . . .

Ven. Michel: It appears to be outside . . .

Rinpoche: So . . . is hell outside or in the mind?

Student: It appears to be outside but it's inseparable from the mind.

Rinpoche: It is inseparable from the mind but it is not in the mind? It is inseparable but it is not in the mind. It is neither outside nor inside? Is hell neither outside nor inside?

Ven. Michel: [Inaudible.]

Rinpoche: So it doesn't exist? So hell doesn't exist?

Ven. Michel: It is only a point of view that you see things separate, inside and outside. There is always duality, seeing outside and inside. When we don't see, when we see a subject and object we see inside and outside, in the way there is a dualistic view, so we bring inside and outside, it doesn't exist on its own side, but we . . .

Rinpoche: So nothing exists inside or outside?

Ven. Michel: In its own way, in the way that it appears as being inside

and outside, not. If we, I mean, the way we designate, we could say it's a convention, conventionally could be inside and outside, just merely to designate . . .

Rinpoche: So conventionally, is it outside or inside?

Ven. Michel: [Inaudible.]

Rinpoche: So does hell exist outside the mind or inside the mind?

Ven. Michel: Inside the mind.

Rinpoche: Hell is in the mind?

Ven. Michel: Yes, either outside, if we are not in hell . . .

Rinpoche: I think that feels better! When you are not a hell being it is outside, but when you are born in hell, it is in the mind! That makes it feel much better! So, when you have diarrhea, is that in your mind or outside!

Nick: On your legs.

Rinpoche: Your having diarrhea, is that in the mind or outside?

Ven. Michel: Both . . .

Rinpoche: Both?

Ven. Michel: [Inaudible.]

Rinpoche: I think he could be a good political leader! Maybe he should become president of France! So, when you experience hell, that is in the mind, but when you have diarrhea, that can be also outside! Because you can see that very clearly, so it *has* to be a little bit outside more than just in the mind—because we can't see hell very clearly at the moment but we can see the diarrhea much more clearly, we have more feeling of the diarrhea. I'm joking! When you have pain in your toes, is that in the mind? Is that in the mind or outside? When you have pain in the toes?

Answer: In the mind

Rinpoche: So your toes are in the mind, your leg is in the mind?

Answer: You feel . . .

Rinpoche: No, your leg is in your mind?

Answer: You feel through the mind . . .

Rinpoche: Your leg exists in your mind?

Ven. Michel: It exists also in some way . . .

Rinpoche: Some part outside!

Ven. Michel: [Inaudible.]

Rinpoche: What?

Ven. Michel: The difference between Madhyamaka Prasangika and Cittamatra—the mind only view would be only in the mind.

Rinpoche: Only in the mind?

Ven. Michel: The Prasangika view would be . . .

Rinpoche: . . . half and half! So why in the Prasangika's view . . . did you say some part of the leg is in the mind?

Ven. Michel: The pain . . .

Rinpoche: Some part of the leg is in the mind? Half the leg is in the mind? That sounds like birth, a baby coming from the mother's womb—half inside, half outside!

Ven. Michel: The solid aspect is outside; the feeling is in the mind.

Rinpoche: [Just laughs!]

Ven. Kunsang: [Not clear.] . . . pain is the thought . . . from the side of the toes there's no pain. It is only flesh and bone; there is no pain from the side of the toes. The pain is coming from the mind. From the side of the toes it's only flesh and bone, so there is no pain from the side of the toes. The toes don't say, "I have pain, I have pain."

Brian Flynn: On the conventional level it exists half and half. There's an object on the outside and then there's a mental projection. But ultimately it all comes from the mind. Karma is created in the past . . . our whole universe . . .

Rinpoche: So you mean there is a leg there, a leg exists there, and there's an additional leg projected from the mind? There are two legs; a leg on a leg! What did you say . . . from the side of the leg there is no pain?

Ven. Kunsang: Yes.

Rinpoche: Why from the side of the leg is there no pain?

Ven. Kunsang: Because it is only flesh and bone, and I don't think flesh and bone have pain.

Rinpoche: Flesh and bone; when you have pain in your toes, in your leg, at that time is your leg not in the nature of pain? At that time, is your leg not in the nature of suffering, pain?

Ven. Kunsang: From the side of the leg there is no pain. From my mind, I would label pain; the pain is here. Sometimes they say that when carpenters cut their finger they don't feel pain until they realize that they have cut it.

Rinpoche: . . . if they don't see that their finger is cut . . . ?

Ven. Kunsang: . . . they don't feel pain. But when they see it, then they realize, then the pain comes. So pain comes from the mind.

Rinpoche: Does a higher bodhisattva whose limb has been cut have pain?

Ven. Kunsang: They say there is no pain.

Rinpoche: But he can see his limb has been cut. You said that if you see it's cut, you have pain. But here is somebody who sees it is cut but doesn't experience pain.

Ven. Kunsang: Because at that point you are liberated from grasping at self. At that time, those arya bodhisattvas have direct perception of emptiness; they are free from grasping at the self.

Rinpoche: They are free from what?

Ven. Kunsang: They are free from grasping at the self. [Inaudible.] Therefore there is no pain—because there is no grasping at the self.

Rinpoche: Grasping at what?

Ven. Kunsang: Self-existing inherently . . .

Ven. Chantal: Self.

Rinpoche: There is no grasping at what?

Ven. Chantal: Self.

Ven. Kunsang: Towards the finger, “This is my arm,” or the self, existing by itself.

Rinpoche: It is mentioned in the *Lamrim Chenmo*—I don’t remember which page, but last year, when we were taking teachings from Geshe Sopa Rinpoche on the great insight, it mentioned—that even arya beings have grasping at inherently existent appearances, but it didn’t explain what kind. I asked Geshe Sopa Rinpoche if it was the very subtle one. I thought it impossible that having had direct perception, great insight, that they would have the normal thought grasping at inherently existent appearances. Therefore, perhaps it was the extremely subtle one. It was not clarified there, simply mentioned. Different authors may explain the teachings differently; but that’s what the *Lamrim Chenmo* mentioned.

Anyway, the conclusion is that you may have felt better when you talked about hell, but afterwards, when it came to diarrhea, it was not so pleasant and became more concrete! I’m joking.

A very good meditation for practicing mindfulness in daily life is to think how the subject, your own I, and objects, for example, other people, appear to you as not merely labeled by mind. Everything appears to you as not merely labeled by mind. The bright lights in this gompā, all the pictures, appear as something not merely labeled by mind. The pillars, the roof beams, everything appears to be not merely labeled by mind, appears like that, as something real, there. However, all these six sense objects that appear to be real, that appear as something real, from there, something real from there, outside, as if a real object is there, outside—all these are not outside; are not there, are not outside but are just concepts. Not there; just concepts.

Therefore, it could be said that they’re in the mind. Another way of saying it is that they’re just in the mind. If you don’t close your eyes, if you look at what appears to your sense of eye—or to your sense of ear, sense of

nose, sense of tongue, all sense objects—it all appears as something real, outside. But actually, it is not there. It's mere concept; it's just in the mind.

For example, while we are sitting here, we can meditate that all these things that appear around us are not really there—they are just in the mind. That blue light there, for instance, that real blue light that is not merely labeled by the mind is merely my concept, it's just in my mind. It is not there. So, subject, object, everything that appears as not merely labeled by mind is just my concept, merely in the mind.

It is a very good meditation, a very powerful meditation, to just keep your mind in that state, to practice mindfulness like that. You see it like this and meditate, practice mindfulness, in that way. Or, while you are walking, meditate that the inherently existent road, the real road that is not merely labeled by your mind, or the real sky that is not merely labeled by your mind, or the real redwoods, those very tall trees, the whole thing, cars, houses, whatever appears to you as not merely labeled by your mind—all these things are just mere concept. This means, another way of expressing it is, that they are all simply in your mind—not there. While you are walking, if you can walk with this continual awareness, it is very good, very powerful.

This is a very good meditation, but I am asking whether the conventional truth is also in the mind or not. Is the friend outside or in the mind?

Student: In the mind.

Rinpoche: In the mind. I see. And the enemy?

Ven. Michel: The base is outside. The way we designate it is inside.

Rinpoche: So the base is not designated by the mind? The base is inherently existent but the label is not inherently existent.

Ven. Michel: There is a base, but we cannot . . . I mean, there is not really a name for the base.

Rinpoche: There is no name for the base?

Ven. Michel: I mean, friend, enemy or stranger, there is a base but not really in the way we think, something on its own . . .

Rinpoche: There is a base from its own side?

Ven. Michel: No. There is a base, but not on its own side. After we label that enemy, friend or stranger, we put the label on, like, it would be on its own side, but it is not, because we could have, we have choice.

Rinpoche: Oh, I see. So you are saying it is labeled from its own side? What?

Ven. Michel: No, it's not, because we have a choice to label it differently. That's because it's not, it proves why it's not on its own side.

Rinpoche: Oh! That's *great!* This time he answered like Nagarjuna! That's right. So friend, enemy is in the mind? Friend, enemy is in the mind?

Ven. Michel: Yes.

Brian: Isn't it both? As soon as I designate it in my mind, it appears outside: "I'm going to visit with my friend, he's over there."

Rinpoche: So if it appears outside, it is outside?

Brian: It appears outside, but it is inseparable from the mind. But in the mind nothing exists by itself, because the mind . . .

Rinpoche: So that means if anything appears outside, it exists outside? Does it mean that?

Brian: It's not, it's not completely inside the mind, either, is it?

Rinpoche: What you are saying means if things appear outside to your mind, then they exist outside.

Brian: Not truly, it doesn't truly exist outside the mind, it only appears that way. It appears to exist outside the mind.

Rinpoche: I see. It appears to exist outside the mind, but it doesn't exist outside the mind?

Brian: But it's inseparable from mind.

Rinpoche: So it's mind?

Brian: It's not entirely . . .

Rinpoche: So it's mind?

Brian: It's not entirely inside the mind.

Rinpoche: It's inseparable from my mind?

Brian: The mind doesn't truly exist either; the mind is also empty.

Rinpoche: What do you understand by inseparable?

Brian: We can't take, you can't take Lama Zopa away from the mind. There is no Lama Zopa outside the mind.

Rinpoche: Are your clothes and yourself separable or inseparable?

Brian: My clothes? I can take my clothes off, and then I will be in a naked state.

Rinpoche: So now, are you and your clothes separable or inseparable?

Brian: Me and my clothes are inseparable, but still I can take them off.

Rinpoche: I see! Your clothes and you are not separate now, as long as your clothes and you are not separated.

Brian: Just like you cannot take me outside of the universe. We are inseparable. There is no Brian that exists outside the planet earth.

Rinpoche: What is the opposite of separation, what is the opposite of separate?

Brian: Opposite of separate? Unification.

Rinpoche: So you and your clothes are oneness?

Brian: Yes.

Rinpoche: You and your clothes are oneness? You and your clothes are unified?

Brian: We are inseparable, inseparability.

Rinpoche: Are you and the kaka in your stomach inseparable?

Brian: Yes. Me and my kaka, we're like this [Brian clasps hands].

Rinpoche: Just one more question, since you have put in so much effort. Are you and the kaka in your stomach unified?

Brian: Me and my kaka, my kaka and I . . .

Rinpoche: If that's the case, you become kaka, because you are unified with kaka. You become kaka.

Anyway, what I was saying before, in the case of enemy or friend, these labels are based on a perception of inherent existence, on the concept, or belief, of a real enemy or a real friend. Therefore, you can also think that it's not there, it's in the mind, you can meditate, practice awareness, that it is not outside. This is very useful.

Now, going back to what I was saying before, it is very effective, if you can practice this awareness when you are in danger of engaging in negative karma, creating the cause of samsara, particularly the cause of the lower realms.

The way that attachment arises, first there is the foundation of that very huge hallucination, the appearance of inherent existence. By seeing the base to be labeled "body"—the base that also came from your own mind—your mind makes up the label "body." The label "body" is merely imputed by your mind. You create the concept of "body" and, believing in that, due to negative imprints left on your mind, your mental continuum, by past ignorance, the concept of inherent existence, your mind projects the hallucination that there is a body on that base.

Whether you project an ugly body or a beautiful body, it's the same thing. It is merely imputed by your mind. Due to your own concepts, your own reasons—"this is good," "this is bad," "this is beautiful," "this is ugly"—your mind projects that there's a real ugly body or a real beautiful body on that base. Perhaps what you regard as beautiful in the West, a slim body, is regarded as ugly in the East. Or in some countries, where goiters are rare, someone with a goiter is regarded as ugly, whereas in places where many people have goiters, someone who doesn't have one is thought to be ugly. Or in the West, someone with big muscles is considered to be beautiful, whereas in the East, in Tibet, that person would be regarded as ugly. Therefore, due to your individual interpretation of what is beautiful and ugly or your society's beliefs that you have grown up with, you project an ugly or beautiful body there.

However, there's the projection of inherent existence. After your mind merely imputes, makes up the label, there's the hallucination that there's something real there on the base. That's the biggest hallucination. That

is the foundation. Then, on top of that false appearance comes the belief that the beautiful body projected there is true. Ignorance apprehends that it is true, and due to that, attachment arises, grasping at, clinging to, that object. The mind arises believing that that object is worth clinging to and the nature that mind of attachment is such that you find it very painful and difficult to separate from that object that is so worthy of clinging to.

Therefore you can say that all of this—the object of ignorance, the object of attachment—is in the mind. None of what is projected is there. It is all based on hallucination. What you're clinging to is a hallucination on top of a hallucination. Different hallucinating thoughts arise in relation to this object.

It is similar with anger in that it, too, arises on the basis of this same foundation of the biggest hallucination, the appearance of inherent existence. An inherently existent object is projected on the base and then your mind interprets its function, what it does to you. If you interpret the actions of another person's body, speech or mind as being harmful to you, you get angry. Anger, the thought wishing to give harm, arises. You dislike that object and the thought of harming it arises. Your whole manner changes. Nothing pleasant manifests in your behavior. Your speech and body language are the opposite of what would make the other person happy; the way you think about the other person, the way you look at him, the way you speak—everything is unpleasant. Even if normally you're quite a nice person, anger changes all that. Even if you're adorned with beautiful ornaments and attractively made up, even if you have a lovely body, when you're angry, everything about you becomes unpleasant. Your anger destroys it all. Your beautiful form becomes kind of terrifying.

The conclusion, of course, is that it is all nonsense. If you analyze the way your mind has created all this, you can see for yourself it's nonsense. The object to which you are attached is just your own mental projection. The person at whom you're angry is your own mental projection. It is all based on this big hallucination, the inherently existent object that doesn't exist at all, that is totally empty. Through this analysis, you can see that there is no value in these projections, that the whole thing is totally nonsensical. If you compare the object that you grasp at as beautiful to another that is more beautiful, the first appears ugly, and when you compare the second beautiful object to one that is even more beautiful, the second then

appears ugly. What Venerable Michel said is correct—this proves that they don't exist from their own side.

I have brought up this topic of mental fabrications, one on top of the other, so that you can see how we make our samsara endless, how we continually bind ourselves to samsara, and to show how actualizing the lamrim path, realizing the lamrim meditations, especially—of the three principal paths—the meditation on emptiness is extremely important as the means of liberating yourself from the prison of samsara.

So, going back to what I was talking about at the beginning, someone who has realized emptiness, whose mind is well trained in that, sees things as an illusion, like a dream. Sometimes, people like us are able to recognize a dream as a dream; occasionally, we can recognize a dream as a dream. Some people can probably do it any time, every night—whenever they dream they can recognize their dream as a dream. This probably has something to do with practice. They might have trained their mind in tantric practice in past lives, for example.

When you recognize a dream as a dream, whatever happens in that dream doesn't affect your mind. Whether it's separation from a friend, a relationship problem, if you have the awareness that this is just a dream, whatever happens in it doesn't affect you. What other people do to you—praise, criticize—doesn't affect your mind, doesn't make your mind go up and down. You know it's just a dream. Relationship problems, business difficulties, gain or loss, lost friends or lost wealth, failed business, family members died—whatever happens in the dream doesn't affect your mind because you are aware, you understand, that this is just a dream; all that is happening is not true.

A person who has a deep understanding that there is no I has a similar experience while awake, when not sleeping, not dreaming. Whatever is happening around that person who has a very deep understanding that there's no I—and when I use this term “no I,” I am not using it in the nihilistic sense—even though there may be the appearance of inherent existence—because the person is still a sentient being and the only sentient beings who don't have this appearance are high arya beings in equipoise meditation—because of that very deep understanding that there is no I, it all appears as if it were a dream. Even though the person is not sleeping.

As far as these things affecting the person's mind—not just the sub-

ject, I, but also sense objects, gain, loss, relationship problems, meeting, separation, whatever is going on—there's a huge difference in the way the person reacts compared to others who don't have that deep understanding. Even though there's the appearance of all these things really happening, the person has one hundred percent understanding that no such things exist, including the I. So, even though it's daytime, in the view of that person it all looks like a dream. These things are happening—gain, loss, whatever—but because of the person's strong intensive understanding that there's no I, no objects, none of these actions—there's no affect to the mind and the person recognizes it all as a dream.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama was once interviewed on television by Larry King. Larry asked His Holiness, "Do you have anger, attachment?" His Holiness replied that although on the surface of his mind there might be some activity, like waves on the ocean, deep down in his mind, nothing happens. I guess Larry was referring to issues about Tibet and so forth, so I think His Holiness meant thoughts come and go like waves, but inside, there's no disturbance. I think that kind of experience is based on seeing that everything is like an illusion, like a dream—seeing everything is empty.

I'm not saying that this is His Holiness's only realization but that what His Holiness described is based on his realization of emptiness. It doesn't mean there's no compassion for other beings. It doesn't mean that. It's just that when people criticize or are against His Holiness, at such times, nothing happens; it doesn't disturb his mind.

I think the life of the person who has that realization must become very interesting. When other people talk very excitedly about this and that, because of the person's very intensive understanding of emptiness, the understanding that things are empty, he or she gets the feeling that they are talking about something that doesn't exist, something that is not real.

For us, however, the extra thing is that, on top of the hallucinated appearance, we believe that everything is real, everything is true; we make everything solid. That then becomes the main issue, the basic, fundamental problem; the fundamental problem of our life. Not only does our mind project the hallucination, but we also believe it to be real. In this way, we make our mind weak and the object becomes a more powerful influence to our mind, the object overpowers our mind. The other way, the mind becomes more powerful, but our way, believing our projection to be real,

whatever happens in life—praise, criticism, separation, meeting, relationship problems, gain, loss—becomes overwhelming, overpowers our mind, overpowers our life. Our mind is too sensitive. The other way, our mind overwhelms the object and nothing can bother our mind.

Anyway, this is just talking blah, blah, blah . . . Actually, I meant to continue from where I left off the other day, I meant to continue that subject. That was the idea, but because I mentioned doing the teachings in our dreams, the rest just happened! So anyway, whatever it is, it's finished! I'll stop there.

DEDICATION

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may bodhicitta—cherishing others, letting go of oneself, letting go of the I—which is the source of all the happiness and success of me and all other sentient beings, be generated within my own mind and in the minds of all sentient beings without even a second's delay. May that which has already been generated increase.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may all the father-mother sentient beings have happiness, may the three lower realms be empty forever, may all bodhisattvas' prayers succeed immediately and may I be able to cause all this to happen by myself alone.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I be able to offer infinite benefit like the sky to all sentient beings like Lama Tsongkhapa did by having within me the same qualities that Lama Tsongkhapa had, from now on, in all my future lifetimes.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, which are totally non-existent from their own side, may the I, which is also totally non-existent from its own side, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment, which is also totally non-existent from its own side, and lead all sentient beings, who are totally non-existent from their own side, to that enlightenment, which is totally non-existent from its own side, by myself alone, who is also totally non-existent from its own side.”

Finally, dedicate to actualize Lama Tsongkhapa's complete teaching

SATURDAY, APRIL 24

within your own mind and for it to spread in the minds of all the sentient beings and to flourish forever.

Good night. Next session? [It's after 11:00 p.m.]

Sunday, April 25

WEEKEND TEACHING

Tonight I will continue where I left off . . .

Think, “No matter what, I must achieve full enlightenment in order to liberate the numberless sentient beings, who are the source of all my past, present and future happiness, from the vast oceans of samsaric suffering, and bring them to full enlightenment. Therefore, I am going to listen to the holy Dharma.”

Please listen to the teachings well by generating at least this abbreviated bodhicitta motivation as well as the proper conduct for listening to teachings according to the traditional practices of the lineage lamas.

[Rinpoche looks through his book . . .] I hope I can find it this time!

This section describes in particular the hell realm suffering results of each of the ten non-virtuous actions. We have already done the hell sufferings of killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. Today, we’ll look at the results of telling lies.

REBIRTH INTO THE HOT HELLS

Those who have read *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* and other lam-rim teachings will remember that at the time of death, there’s a process through which you reincarnate in the hell realm. [p. 365 ff.]. Here it mainly mentions the process of being reborn in the lower realms from just before the time of death.

At the time of death, the person who is going to be born in the hot hell realm feels very cold. That’s not due to the climate or any other external factors—it’s not that generally the country is very cold or that the person doesn’t have enough to wear or enough bedding. It’s not a question of

that. Of course, even those things are determined by karma, but here, the specific thing is that no matter how many blankets the person is covered with, it doesn't help. Due to karma, the person feels extremely cold. Due to heavy karma, the person craves strongly for heat and then dies with that craving. Like falling asleep, dreaming and then waking up, similarly, the person dies with that strong craving for heat and then goes to the intermediate stage—like dreaming after falling asleep. Then, after the intermediate state, due to past karma, suddenly a vision, a karmic appearance—an appearance of impure karma, an appearance of the impure mind, the disturbing, obscuring thought—manifests. Suddenly you find yourself in a world in which the whole ground is made of iron that is oneness with fire, depending on which of the different hot hells you are reborn into.

As explained here, those appearances, which are the product of your own impure mind, manifest, including the karmic guardians, who torture you. Whenever I see those big earth-moving machines, it always reminds me of the hell realm. Of course, in our world there's electricity, gasoline and a person who drives the machine, but in the hell realms, everything works by your karma. Like an earth-moving machine driver, your karma makes mountains move and crush you. In the hell realms, it's your karma, your mind, that does all these things.

THE NEIGHBORING [SURROUNDING] HELLS

There are eight major hot hells and each one has four neighboring hells (sometimes six neighboring hells are enumerated). After you have finished experiencing one of the eight major hot hell sufferings—for example, the first one, the Hell of Continual Resurrection—after that unbelievable length of time, you then have to be born in those neighboring hell realms.

There are four of these [*Liberation*, pp. 373–74]. One of them is the Plain of Swords. The whole ground is completely covered with swords. There is nowhere you can step without cutting your feet. Each time you put your foot down it gets cut and each time you lift it up it recovers. But then you have to step down again and it gets cut once more. This goes on for inconceivable lengths of time.

Finally, when that karma has finished, you have to experience another neighboring hell, the Forest of Trees with Leaves Like Swords, which cut your body to pieces.

Then you have to experience the Putrid Swamp, which is like being in a septic tank, drowning in sewage filled with worms. It's extremely filthy, dirty, and you drown in that for incredible, inconceivable lengths of time. Not only that, but the worms have very long, needle-like beaks like a humming bird's with which they pierce your body and eat your flesh. You have to suffer like that for inconceivable lengths of time.

The next one you have to experience is called the Uncrossable Torrent, which is filled with liquid that is oneness with fire and unbelievably hot. Being here is like drowning in mud that is oneness with fire. When an earthly volcano erupts, liquid fire comes out; liquid that is oneness with fire runs down the mountain. I usually say that that's a good example of this neighboring hell realm. In Tibetan it's called *chu lung rab me*. It's unbelievably, extremely hot; oneness with fire. The closest example of that is lava that comes from an erupting volcano, which comes down and melts even rocks, which normally other fires can't melt. But this fire, the liquid lava oneness with fire, can melt rocks. I thought it was very interesting that this is similar to what's described in the hell realm, except the one in the hell realm would be unbelievably more hot than the lava of our human world.

Then you come to a tree where you have the vision that your loved ones are at the top of the tree, calling you. You try to go to them, but as you climb up the tree, the branches, which are like swords pointing downwards, cut your body to shreds. Also, karmic copper dogs come and tear at your feet, legs and so forth and birds like eagles, which are also your karmic appearance, pluck out your eye balls with their beaks. While you are climbing up, these terrifying things happen. Then, when you finally reach the top, you again hear your beloved calling you, but now from the bottom of the tree. When you try to climb down to them, the sword-like branches reverse direction, turning upwards, and again cut your body to shreds. In this way you again have to suffer greatly.

There is nobody there making the branches of the trees go up and down. All these things happen due to your karma. Your karma and your delusions do all these things to you, produce all these terrifying appearances that cause you to suffer so much. It's your karmic appearance, the appearance of your delusions, your disturbing, obscuring thoughts.

FOUR THINGS THAT DETERMINE KARMIC WEIGHT

In *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo says that if you commit any of the ten non-virtuous actions strongly, you will be reborn in hell [p. 452]. Heavy non-virtuous actions result in rebirth in hell. For example, if you insult somebody with very heavy anger, with strong anger, that's a heavy non-virtuous action and causes you to be reborn in the hell realms. What makes it heavy is your attitude, the strong anger. So this is just one of the examples that Pabongka mentions [see also p. 455 ff.].

1. Your non-virtuous actions also become heavy if you are ordained, due to the power of the person living in the vow. The higher the vows in which you live, the more powerful a subject you become. Therefore, when you create negative karma, that negative karma is much heavier. Of course, when you create good karma, the merit is unbelievable. The higher the vows in which you live, the greater the profit, the merit, of your daily life's positive actions. But when you engage in negative karma, that negative karma becomes very heavy. For example, if a fully ordained monk or a fully ordained nun engages in negative karma, it becomes very heavy. This is the power of the subject, the person living in the vows.

2. It also depends on the object with whom you create negative karma. This is the power of the object. For example, if you get angry at or harm a bodhisattva, it's unbelievably heavy; very, very heavy. This also applies to your parents in this life. If you engage in negative karma with your parents, if you insult them or do any other negative actions, it's very heavy because the object is powerful. Similarly, buddhas are also powerful objects, and your gurus are the most powerful of all. When you do good actions with your gurus, like offering even the slightest respect, you collect the most extensive merit, but even the smallest disrespect creates very heavy negative karma.

The most powerful object is the virtuous friend from whom you received your Dharma connection. With the recognition of yourself as disciple and the teacher as guru, the moment you take even the oral transmission of a mantra or a verse of teaching, that person becomes the most powerful object in your life. Even if from that person's side he is not buddha or even a bodhisattva, is just an ordinary being, the moment that that connection has been established, that person becomes the most powerful object in your life, more powerful than all the buddhas. Therefore, if the object is

powerful, non-virtuous actions created in relation to that object become very heavy and result in rebirth in hell.

3. Doing a negative action again and again, engaging in a certain negative karma again and again, doing it so many times, again and again, makes it very heavy. That's another way in which non-virtuous actions become heavy and result in rebirth in hell.

4. The way an action is done also influences its weight. The way harm is given to other sentient beings, such as torturing animals in a terrible way, a very heavy way, or torturing human beings in a very heavy way, can also make it a very heavy karma. The manner in which negative karma is created—killing or torturing in a very sadistic way—also determines how heavy the karma becomes.

In a commentary on the *Seven-point Thought Transformation* by Kadampa Geshe Kunchog Gyaltzen—or perhaps it was Geshe Chekawa; I'm not one hundred percent sure, it might have been Chekawa—it seems that I have seen in that commentary that committing one of the ten non-virtuous actions can cause you to be reborn in all eight hot hell realms. Committing one of the ten non-virtues can make you reincarnate in all eight hot hell realms. I will check again, but it seems that's what I read. In other words, it can become unbelievably heavy.

THE COLD HELLS

The hot hells are like that. Now the cold hells. At the time of death, the process is that, even if the weather where you are is extremely cold, if you're in a very cold place, due to your karma, if you are going to be born in the cold hell realms, you feel unbelievably hot and experience incredible craving for cold, to be cool; you have much craving for the pleasure of feeling cool. Then, with that craving, you die, and then—like after going to sleep, you dream—the intermediate stage happens, and then—like waking from a dream—the karmic appearance of the cold hell manifests.

As Pabongka mentions in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* [pp. 374–76], your body is completely immobilized on ice-cold ground or in an ice mountain, as if your shoes were nailed to the ground. Your body is completely caught. It is completely dark, even on the very first level of the cold hells, and there is unbelievable, unimaginable suffering of cold,

with incredibly cold winds blowing. Relating to us, imagine that your naked body were completely buried in and surrounded by ice such that you couldn't move, and on top of that, it was completely dark and there was an extremely, unbelievably cold wind and snow blowing over you, like in a raging blizzard. In the cold hells, it is unbelievably cold—billions of times colder than anything we could experience in the human world. No matter how cold it is in the human world, in those countries that are supposed to be extremely cold, with ice, freezing winds, and so forth, this unbelievably heaviest cold for humans is great pleasure compared to the cold suffering of the hell realms. The worst cold suffering that humans can experience is nothing compared to that of the cold hells; it's great pleasure.

It is said in the teachings that when beings in the hot hells experience human fire, it feels cool. For example, when we feel very hot, when a cool breeze blows on us we feel comfortable; we experience the pleasure of feeling cool. No matter how heavy human fire may be for human beings, it feels cool when it touches hot hell beings because their suffering in the hot hells is so unbelievably heavy.

As I normally mention, the fire at the end of time, at the end of the world, is said to be something like sixty or seventy times hotter than the heat energy of all the fires of the present human world put together, and one tiny spark of fire from the hell hot hell realm is said to be seven times hotter than the fire at the end of time. Even a tiny spark of fire from the hot hell realm is that hot.

Anyway, the process by which you get reborn in the cold hell realm, what happens just before you die, is as I've just described.

[The eight cold hells are: The Hell of Blisters; the Hell of Burst Blisters; Achu; Gihu; Teeth Clenched, where it's so cold you can't part your teeth; Cracking Like an Upali Flower, where it's so cold that your body turns blue and cracks into many pieces; Cracking Like a Lotus Flower; and Great Cracking Like a Lotus Flower.]

When *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* describes the duration of the cold hell beings' lives, how long they have to suffer—they have a fixed length of life—it refers to a standard of measurement from ancient Magadha, the area in which present-day Bodhgaya is located. Even now, Magadha University is there. In Tibetan, the word is *kal*—I'm not one hundred percent sure, but I think it's equivalent to one big sack of grain

that one person can carry. Eighty of those big sacks of grain are one *pang*. In Tibet, we had huge long wooden boxes that were used to store grain. If you were to fill one of those boxes with eighty big sacks of grain and once every hundred years remove just one grain from there, the length of time that it would take to completely empty the box is the length of life of the beings in the very first cold hell, the Hell of Blisters. The length of life in the next cold hell, the Hell of Burst Blisters, is twenty times longer. The suffering is that much heavier. Then, the length of life in the third one, Achu, is again twenty times longer than that of the second. And so it goes on, with the duration of life in each cold hell being twenty times longer than that in the level before.

REBIRTH AS A PRETA

The sign that you are going to be reborn as a hungry ghost is that at the time of death you start to hate food; you have strong aversion to food and want to be in a place where there is none. You have a strong craving for that. Some of us have had the experience of being sick with hepatitis or something where we have no appetite at all and even the thought of food nauseates us. If you are going to be reborn a preta, at the time of death you have a very strong dislike for food and a strong craving to be in a place where there is none, where you can't even see food. You die with that craving. Again, like a person falling asleep and starting to dream, you die and experience the intermediate stage. Then, like waking up, after the intermediate stage, the appearance of the hungry ghost realm is actualized.

Here, you experience inability to find even one spoonful of food or one drop of water, even a sign of water, for hundreds or thousands of years. It also mentions even ten thousand years as the length of time it takes to find any food.

REBIRTH AS AN ANIMAL

In terms of being reborn as an animal, I guess it might be similar, I don't know exactly, but when you die, if you are going to be born animal, then just before death, it seems that some people have a vision of some particular animal, like a beautiful bird, and perhaps get attached to that. A craving

mind arises and then after the intermediate stage, the karmic appearance of the animal realm manifests. You reincarnate as an animal—a bird or whatever. It seems that at the time of death, even before reincarnating, before taking the body of the animal, you have this appearance of a certain kind of animal and feel very attached to that body. While still in the human realm with your human body, just before death you somehow get a karmic appearance of a certain animal body and your mind gets attached to having such a body. It seems that at the time of death, some people do get visions of animals. If you think of what happens when a person is going to born in the hot or cold hells or as a hungry ghost, the process of being reborn as an animal seems to be similar to that.

This means a person who is going to be reborn as an animal after having this big, tall human body—say someone who is going to be reborn as a butterfly—has a vision of and great attachment to a butterfly body; the karmic appearance of a butterfly body, with its beautiful colored wings and so forth. Similarly, perhaps, with a spider body, seeing spiders as so beautiful and thinking how wonderful it would be to be like that! Or a tick! Well, there has to be something going on if a person is going to be reborn as a spider or a scorpion—or as a slug, a yellow slug in the rain, where there is a lot of fog. It has happened many times that after having this huge human body, you have become a yellow slug. Anyway, by thinking of the process by which you get reborn in the hot and cold hells, how the nearest attachment, the nearest delusion, makes you reincarnate there, or as a hungry ghost, there has to be a similar reason for your being reborn as an animal.

HOW TO AVOID LOWER REBIRTHS

But I don't think that it's necessarily only at the time of death that this craving and grasping affects your rebirth. During life as well, similar craving and grasping for warmth, for cold, for other sense pleasures, can also become a contribution, a donation, to the suffering of the lower realms. Therefore, you can see how important your motivation is, not only when you meditate, not only at that time, but twenty-four hours a day. Your pure motivation becomes very important. You can see how essential it is that your attitude of life be Dharma. That becomes your most important refuge. Your Dharma attitude becomes your greatest protection from the

sufferings of samsara, especially those of the lower realms—those many eons of unimaginable suffering.

Therefore, having renunciation in your mind twenty-four hours a day, having the attitude of renunciation, the detached mind, becomes most essential. Actually, each of the three principal paths—renunciation, bodhicitta and right view—becomes very important, extremely important. But if your mind cannot develop all three, if you do not have right view, try to develop bodhicitta. If not bodhicitta, then at least renunciation—realizing how sense pleasures, samsaric pleasures, are suffering in nature and with that awareness, keeping your mind in a detached, or free, state. Thus, trying to keep your mind in the lamrim twenty-four hours a day becomes the most important issue, the most important practice in your life.

THE KARMIC RESULTS OF TELLING LIES

What happens to the person who has created the negative karma of telling lies is that you get captured by yamas in the form of human beings, who open your mouth and pull your tongue out five hundred *pag tse* [more than 2,000 miles; see p. 390 for details of these measurements]. Being under the control of the karma of having lied, yamas in the shape of human beings, stretch your tongue out five hundred *pag tse* and force you to lick the red hot burning iron ground. They make you lick the oneness-with-iron, extremely hot, blazing iron ground.

Then, thousands of yamas carrying blazing red hot plows that are oneness with the fire—due to your karma, created by your own karma—attach the plows to a very powerful elephant, which is also a creation of your own karma, and plow your tongue, just like farmers in Nepal and India plow their fields with animals like buffalo or cows. Then, pus, blood and worms come out of your tongue. I am not exactly sure what it means, but here the text says “like the deva’s eye”—however, your tongue becomes extremely sensitive, extremely tender, like a young baby’s—I think that’s probably the idea—so the hell being cries, screams, but there’s nobody there who can help you. No matter how much you scream, how much you cry, there’s nobody there to stop your suffering, to come to your aid. All you can do is experience such unbelievable, heavy suffering as the yamas plow your tongue with that blazing plow that is oneness with fire and drawn by that powerful elephant for hundreds of thousands of

years—which are years according to hell beings' time, not human years. Hundreds of thousands of hell years is an unbelievable length of time.

After that, I'm not sure, but it seems that your tongue goes back into your mouth when that karma has finished. Then, unbelievably, heavily disturbed and with incredible fear, you run away wherever you can. But again you get caught in the sparks of fire—like dry animal dung but oneness with fire, red hot inside. Due to karma, you get completely buried in this and severely burned and suffer greatly, having no guide, no refuge. Then, due to your delusion and karma, human-looking yamas carrying swords, hammers and so forth come and, from your brain down to your feet, completely chop you into pieces and then grind you into powder.

THE KARMIC RESULTS OF SLANDER

The negative karma of slandering is similar to that of telling lies, except that your tongue is drawn out three hundred pag tse. Then the yamas, who have no compassion, hold your tongue down and split it. Generally, the hell suffering karma of slandering is the same as that of telling lies. Then wolves, which are your karmic appearance, your karmic creation, come from all directions and eat your tongue. This experience is very heavy. You try to scream, but because you have no tongue, when you scream there is no sound.

The next one is the karmic result of insulting, speaking harshly, but I think I'll stop here.

LIFE IN HELL

Just to go over the names of the eight major hot hells: The Hell of Continual Resurrection, the Black Line Hell, the Assemble and be Crushed Hell, the Hell of Lamentation, the Hell of Great Lamentation, the Hotter Hell, the Even Hotter Hell and the Hell Without Respite, which is the heaviest hot hell suffering, the heaviest suffering in samsara [as translated in *Liberation*].

It is helpful to understand the length of life of beings in the first hot hell, the Hell of Continual Resurrection, then you can get an idea of the

rest [*Liberation*, p. 372]. Suddenly, your karmic appearance of this hell realm, Continual Resurrection, manifests; you are born there. Then, due to karma, whenever you and the other beings there see each other, you all become enemies. Whatever you pick up becomes a weapon and you all attack and kill each other. You get killed many hundred times a day with all these weapons, which cut and pierce your body. You fall unconscious, which is called dying. Then, due to karma, you hear a voice from the sky, “May you be alive again.” Then you come back to life and again, other beings cut and pierce your body with all these weapons. So it goes, on and on, many, many times each day, hundreds of times a day, until your karma to experience that hell realm has finished.

The length of life of beings in the first hell, the Hell of Continual Resurrection, is [according to *Liberation*] 1.62 European billion human years. [In trying to come up with this number in English, there was a long, confusing (for us) discussion between Rinpoche and the students. The terms mentioned in this discussion are among the following: *bum*, 100,000; *sa ya*, 1,000,000; *je wa*, 10,000,000; *dung chur*, 100,000,000; *ter bum*, 1,000,000,000, US billion; *ter bum chen po*, 10 billion; *trag trig*, 100 billion; *trag trig chen po*, European billion. Adding *chen po* (great) multiplies each number by ten. With thanks to Dr. Martin Willson for this information.] In the next, the Black Line Hell, the length of life is double the first one. And so it goes on like that.

It is said in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* that if you get angry at a bodhisattva, for as many seconds as your anger at that bodhisattva lasts, that many eons you will have to suffer in hell. Also, it is specifically mentioned in *Bodhicaryavatara* that if you get angry at a bodhisattva, all the merits you have collected by having practiced charity and morality for one thousand eons get destroyed in just one second. That shows how much harm anger can do to your merit.

The main thing I am trying to say here is that—since for as many seconds of anger you feel towards a bodhisattva, that many eons you will have to suffer in the hell realms—then for as many seconds of anger you feel towards a guru, a virtuous friend, of course, the amount of time you will have to suffer in hell will be much, much greater, because your guru is the most powerful object. The number of eons you will have to suffer in hell is inconceivable.

REBIRTH IN HELL THROUGH BREAKING PRECEPTS

Also, if you break one of your root tantric vows, then for the number of seconds that pass from that time until you take the vow again, that many eons you will have to be born in the lowest hot hell, the heaviest one, Hell Without Respite, the state of unbearable suffering, where the length of life is an intermediate eon.

As far as receiving tantric root falls is concerned, the second one, being careless in regard to your vows, is easily broken. The vows can be pratimoksha, bodhisattva or tantric vows, or even your refuge vow. If you have the attitude, “Oh! It doesn’t matter,” towards any of these and then go ahead and engage in the action that breaks the vow, if your mind does not care about that vow, then by that, you receive the root fall with the consequences just mentioned.

Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo said that a fully ordained monk who is careless about one of the faults concerning how he’s supposed to wear his *shem-thab* [the monk’s lower garment], again, thinking, “Oh, it doesn’t matter,” can in that way very easily break this second root vow of tantra. It’s not even a root pratimoksha vow, like one of the four defeats; it’s nothing like that. It’s not even a remainder or one of those other branches, vices, downfalls. Just feeling careless—no Dharma reason, no special reason, nothing highly beneficial—just being careless and engaging in that, you very easily break a tantric root vow—because the second root vow is not to be careless with any of your vows, precepts.

It is also mentioned in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* that if a fully ordained monk breaks one of the one hundred and twelve faults, he gets reborn in the first hell, the Hell of Continual Resurrection. If he breaks one of the thirty [expiation with forfeiture], he gets reborn in the Black Line Hell. If he breaks one of the four actions to be confessed, he gets reborn in the Assemble and be Crushed Hell. If he breaks one of the thirteen remainders, he gets reborn in the Hotter Hell. And if he breaks one of the four defeats, he gets reborn in the lowest hot hell realm, the Hell Without Respite.

Of course, as I mentioned before, the higher the vows in which you live, the greater the profit. It is incredible, you make the greatest profit, collect the most extensive merit all the time. Whenever you create good karma, you create the most extensive merit—two hundred and fifty three

merits for fully ordained monks and three hundred and sixty four for fully ordained nuns. By living in the vows, you collect that much merit all the time, and besides that, whenever you create merit in your everyday life, it increases that much more.

Conversely, if you engage in negative karma, it also becomes that much heavier. Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo said, “If a person living in ordination doesn’t care about broken vows and just leaves them be, the negative karma is much heavier than that created by a non-ordained lay person’s killing one hundred men and one hundred horses” . . . anyway, animals. If an ordained person breaks vows and carelessly leaves them be without confessing or purifying, thinking it doesn’t matter, the negative karma is heavier than if one non-ordained lay person kills a hundred men and a hundred horses.

If you reflect on these things, analyze them, you can see how purification practices such as the Vajrasattva meditation and the *The Practice of Prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas*—reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas’ names with prostrations—are of the utmost need, are unbelievably important. You can see that doing these practices and guarding your vows by knowing what they are is billions of times more important than going to the emergency room. If suddenly you have a heart attack or something, you immediately call an ambulance and rush to hospital. Doing these practices and guarding your vows by knowing what they are is billions of times more important than that. Even if you die from a heart attack, if you have not created any negative karma, you won’t get reborn in the lower realms. A heart attack alone can’t take you to the lower realms. But if you have negative karma on your mental continuum, if you have broken your vows, even if you have a natural death—no car accident, you’re not shot, nothing like that—you still get reborn in the lower realms.

Therefore, we should rejoice—actually, I don’t have much to rejoice about because I didn’t come for the Vajrasattva retreat—but you should rejoice. Those who have done 100,000 mantras should rejoice and feel great happiness that that much purification practice was done, that you took this opportunity, and those who didn’t finish should also rejoice for the thousands or tens of thousands that were completed. You should feel great happiness and should continue to practice purification in your everyday life and to protect the three levels of vows as much as you possibly can.

Pabongka also mentioned both in his commentary on the Six Session Yoga and in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* that breaking even one of the forty-six branch bodhisattva vows—not one of the root vows, just one of the branches—the negative karma is 100,000 times heavier than breaking a pratimoksha root vow. And breaking one of the branch vows of tantra, one of the eight *bom po*, the eight heavy negativities—again, not talking about the root tantric falls, just the branches—for example, if you have taken a highest tantra initiation, if whenever you eat and drink you take it without blessing, then as many times as you drink, as many times as you eat, you receive that many *bom po*, heavy negativities—it is 100,000 times heavier than breaking a bodhisattva root vow. Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo mentioned that in both teachings.

Therefore, by doing the Vajrasattva practice at this time, many negativities of that kind have been purified; unbelievable numbers of such past negativities have been purified. By doing both the Vajrasattva practice and the Thirty-five Buddhas, rainfalls of tantric vices get purified by just one mala of the Vajrasattva mantra. It depends on how you recite it. Twenty-one repetitions or just one mantra, depending on how it is re-cited, can purify all four defeats received by a fully ordained monk or nun. If it is recited perfectly, it can purify all that. Similarly, by reciting OM MANI PADME HUM correctly just once, a fully ordained person who has received all four defeats can purify them completely.

Therefore, one thing is to rejoice; the other is to continue to practice. That's the conclusion.

I thought to talk about the preta sufferings and some people have asked me to explain the Dzambhala practice for becoming a billionaire . . . no, a zillionaire!—Dzambhala practice and making charity of water to the hungry ghosts. So maybe not today. For today, maybe that's enough. Perhaps tomorrow we can talk about those other practices.

DEDICATION

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may the numberless sentient beings who have been born in the lower realms and are suffering unimaginably right now, including my own family's previous generations who

have passed away, those people whose names I have received, those for whom I have promised to pray, those who rely upon me and those deceased people whose names were mentioned in the dedication all immediately get liberated from all their sufferings in the lower realms and reincarnate in a pure land where they can become enlightened or achieve enlightenment quickly by receiving a perfect human body in all future lifetimes by meeting a perfectly qualified Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, whenever I hear that somebody is sick, just by hearing this, may I be able to cause that sentient being to recover from that illness immediately; just by hearing that another sentient being has died may I be able to cause that sentient being never ever to be reborn in the lower realms or if born there already, may that being be liberated from all those sufferings of the lower realms immediately and reincarnate in a pure land where that being can get enlightened; and may those who have been born in the human world but have no opportunity to practice Dharma achieve a perfect human body immediately and, by meeting a perfectly qualified Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings, quickly achieve enlightenment.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, particularly today, and the merits of the three times collected by buddhas, bodhisattvas and all the rest of the sentient beings, may I, my family members and all the students and benefactors in this organization—especially those who sacrifice their lives serving other sentient beings and the teaching of the Buddha through this organization—have long and healthy lives and may all our wishes succeed immediately according to the holy Dharma.

“Most importantly, may we be able to actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment, especially bodhicitta, in this very lifetime, without even a second’s delay.

“May all those who are sick, whose names were mentioned, immediately get healed, recover from their sicknesses; may the treatment they’re having be most effective.”

As I mentioned the other day, when you do dedications—usually dedications are also requests—you can also visualize the seven Medicine Buddhas. In that way it becomes more powerful. You are not only doing a dedication but you are also making a request. If, when you dedicate, you visualize the Thousand-arm Compassionate Buddha, the seven Medicine

Buddhas and Kshitigarbha—at least the seven Medicine Buddhas—your dedication becomes more powerful and therefore more likely to succeed.

“Due to the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may the operation that Ann [Bill Kane’s cousin] is to undergo be most effective, give her no harm and may she immediately recover from her sickness. May all other people who are sick—not only those whose names were mentioned in the dedication—be healed immediately, have long and most meaningful lives—not empty long lives but meaningful long lives—by meeting Dharma, developing loving kindness and compassion and actualizing bodhicitta in their minds in this very lifetime.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may all the businesses of Ellen, who wishes to sponsor *Mandala* magazine, succeed immediately so that she can do that, and may the rest of her life be most meaningful through her actualizing all the realizations of the lamrim. Also, may our Taichung Center benefactors’ airline business be most successful as they wish and may their wealth be most meaningful for all sentient beings and the teachings, and may their lives be most meaningful through their actualization of the lamrim realizations, especially bodhicitta. May all Fay’s wishes succeed immediately and may she be able to overcome all problems, actualize the lamrim realizations in her mind and be able to spread Dharma of Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings in the minds of all sentient beings. May all the work of our great benefactor be most successful as she wishes, be most beneficial for all sentient beings and the teaching of Buddha and may the rest of her life be most beneficial through her actualizing the realizations of the path to enlightenment, especially bodhicitta. Like that, may all others who support this organization and who rely [on Rinpoche] also have great success, may all their wishes succeed and may all their actions become only Dharma.

“May all virtuous friends, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama, have stable lives and may all their holy wishes succeed immediately. May Lama Ösel Rinpoche be able to show the qualities of Lama Tsongkhapa and benefit all sentient beings like the sky by actualizing the path and being learned, and with the three qualities of being learned, strict and good hearted, like Lama Tsongkhapa, show these qualities and benefit sentient beings infinitely by explaining Dharma, writing and debating.”

THE PANCHEN LAMA

With respect to Panchen Rinpoche, who was mentioned in the dedication [amongst the names that were read out], the second time I went to Tibet for pilgrimage—when there were seventy-four of us—we took some teachings from Panchen Rinpoche on the prayer to be born in Shambhala and the oral transmission of the Shambhala prayer and a few mantras. Also prayers to be born in America! I'm joking. At the beginning, these teachings were meant to be just for the group. I was not actually planning to take them myself; I was not planning to make a Dharma connection with Rinpoche. I requested teachings just for the group. The reason I didn't want to begin a Dharma connection was because I was concerned that if in the future there were political problems between His Holiness and Panchen Rinpoche, I didn't want to have a problem with the different views.

Then we started making a mandala offering, and while it was going on I was thinking. Just before the mandala offering finished, I decided to make a Dharma connection. Just before *IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAYAMI*, just before you collapse your fingers, I thought, "Well, if I look at those two lamas as one person, as one being, there'll be no problem with different views." So just before *IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAYAMI* I decided to make a Dharma connection. Before that, I was worried about getting into difficulties because of different views. Actually, this was the second time I had done this; it happened to me once before.

Anyway, I'm glad that I made a Dharma connection—he's an unbelievable lama. I had seen Panchen Rinpoche when I was very small, when my two alphabet teachers took me to Tibet. Most people have only one alphabet teacher, but because I was very naughty and kept running away, I had two. Finally, with the second one, I learned to read. We stayed at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery for seven days, and one day we got in line with all the other people at Dechen Potrang—like His Holiness has the Norbulinka summer palace in Lhasa, Panchen Rinpoche has Dechen Potrang in Shigatse—but I didn't get to see much. Like many high lamas, Panchen Rinpoche had a very long stick, with some cloth or something at the tip, and the blessing was given through his putting the stick on people's heads. I didn't really get to see much, I didn't have a clear visualization. It was

all over very quickly. You just wait in line and those very tall monks with the huge shoulder pads push you along and through.

Also, some years ago in Nepal, there was a meeting of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, an organization that functions in different countries, and the Chinese communist government brought the Panchen Lama to Kathmandu. At that time, Panchen Rinpoche spoke just a few words in Tibetan and then in Chinese. He said something like, “May the teaching of the Buddha always spread and flourish in all directions.” He stood up and said that. I felt that the Tibetan people were so lucky, so fortunate to have such incredible lamas like that; unbelievable. Panchen Rinpoche was very dynamic, very powerful. Straightforward and totally dedicated to other beings.

Anyway, the second time we went to Tibet, after the teachings, Panchen Rinpoche called me back and explained that he had a project, which was to build in Shigatse a very large Kalachakra mandala that you can enter and walk around in. I don’t know what happened to it. Rinpoche asked if I could raise funds for this Kalachakra mandala, so I said that if there were some brochures or something, I would try, but I didn’t get any. I asked Panchen Rinpoche for a statue or some relics to put in the 500-foot Maitreya statue in Bodhgaya, and he was going to give me a very precious Yamantaka statue but somehow there was some obstacle to my getting that and instead I received some pieces of the robes of five or six of the previous Panchen Lamas and some small Buddha statues to put into the Maitreya statue.

When I was in Australia in 1989, I had a dream in which Panchen Rinpoche’s holy body was very tall, and he had his robes on—*dong ka* and everything—but was not wearing his zen. He was very tall and I was very small, even in the dream! Panchen Rinpoche was holding my hand and we were walking down the street. I didn’t know that Panchen Rinpoche had just passed away that day, but when I found out, I thought that the dream might mean that I had the karma to meet his incarnation. I thought it might signify that.

When I heard the news that the communists had taken Panchen Rinpoche’s incarnation away, I was very, very concerned, so with my crazy mind, I wrote to His Holiness saying that in Dharamsala there were many protectors and perhaps they could protect the Panchen Lama’s incarnation, but I don’t remember what happened.

FINAL DEDICATION

Therefore, dedicate for Panchen Rinpoche's incarnation to have a long, stable life, for all his holy wishes to succeed immediately as his past life intended, for there to be no obstacles to his health and for his wishes to benefit other sentient beings to be immediately fulfilled.

Also dedicate for all of our meditation centers to be able to spread the complete teaching of Lama Tsongkhapa in the minds of all sentient beings by receiving everything they need, and for all the projects in this organization, including those at Land of Medicine Buddha and the FPMT-sponsored Kalachakra initiation in Mexico City to succeed. (I haven't requested this or mentioned it to His Holiness yet, but I thought it would be very beneficial.) Also dedicate for the very beautiful Serlingpa Retreat Center outside Mexico City and all of Rocio's and her husband's other projects, including the stupa they want to build and all their other wishes to benefit others, to succeed immediately, and for them and their family to have long, healthy and most meaningful lives.

Also dedicate for the 500-foot Maitreya statue to succeed immediately by receiving everything required, for all the organizers and staff of the project to be harmonious all the time, for their minds to be united and for them able to be able to do the project without interruption.

Also dedicate for all the FPMT centers and projects, including the statue, to cause all sentient beings to generate bodhicitta in their minds and for not even one sentient being to ever experience war, famine, disease, earthquake, danger from fire or water or any other undesirable thing.

In short, may the Maitreya Buddha statue and all our other centers and projects in the organization cause all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“Due to the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, from now on, whatever I do, whatever experiences life brings me—ups and downs, health or sickness, praise or criticism, good reputation or bad, good times or difficulties, problems, including in my Dharma practice, life or death, even suffering in hell—the most important thing is for all these things to become most beneficial for all sentient beings. Therefore, from now on, may all my actions and whatever I experience in life be only most beneficial for all sentient beings and cause them to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

TEACHINGS FROM THE VAJRASATTVA RETREAT

“May I be able to completely actualize Lama Tsongkhapa’s teaching, which unifies sutra and tantra, within my mind and spread these teachings in the minds of all sentient beings. Thus, may Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings flourish forever.”

Tuesday, April 27

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Good evening. Is there one question?

Ven. Marcel: Rinpoche, if sentient beings are infinite, if infinite buddhas' minds can see all sentient beings, if buddha cannot see the beginning of sentient beings' lives, I wonder how buddha can see infinite sentient beings if their numbers are limitless?

Rinpoche: Buddha doesn't have any defilements. There are no defilements to block a buddha's seeing infinite sentient beings.

Ven. Marcel: So "infinite" means not just a great number? I'm just wondering exactly what the definition of infinite is. Does it mean there are always more or is it actually such a large number that it can't be counted? I think sometimes people use the word "infinite" because the number is too big to count.

Rinpoche: I would say that yes, there are infinite sentient beings. It is not just a word; in reality, there are numberless sentient beings. But that doesn't mean that their lives have to have a beginning.

Ven. Marcel: Rinpoche, we also had some discussion about the expandability of karma. This example in the scriptures that if you kill an insect and it's not confessed, then after fifteen days it becomes the same weight as having killed a human being . . .

Rinpoche: . . . you get the same heavy karma as if you had killed a human being. Even though you haven't killed a human being, the negative karma from having killed that tiny insect increases until after fifteen days it has become the same as if you had killed a human being.

Ven. Marcel: If somebody kills an insect in the very beginning of his life when he's very young, and he kills a human being when he's very old, then the karma of having killed the insect will be stronger at that time?

Rinpoche: Yes, I would think so. According to what Pabongka Rinpoche says, it has to be like that. The negative karma of killing an insect as a child and not purifying it could end up being much heavier than killing a human being when you were eighty years old. But it also depends on what kind of human being you killed. If it was a holy being that you killed, for example, the karma would be heavier. However, I think the karma of having killed one insect as a child and not purified it would be much heavier than that of killing an ordinary human being later, as an adult.

Ven. Neil: The question was also, Rinpoche, if for example, one kills another human being, the karma is to be reborn in hell. It seems that one has created the karma to take one rebirth in hell, which will last for millions or billions of years, and then on top of that, as the days, years, lifetimes go by and this karma is not purified, the karmic result is expanding more and more. Then, for example, if this karma ripens after three billion years, one will have to experience an inconceivable number of rebirths in hell, each of which will last millions or billions of years. All from killing one insect. Or does the expandable result mean that one ends up getting just one hell rebirth from that single, unpurified action?

Rinpoche: The expandability of karma means that you do experience the result of a particular karma many times, but this doesn't include then creating the result similar to the cause, one of the four suffering results of a complete karma—then creating the same negative karma again. The expandability of karma refers just to the direct results of one negative karma. In dependence upon how heavy the karma is, you then experience the suffering that results from that negative karma many times in one life or in many lifetimes. In his *Letter to a King*, Nagarjuna says, "If you cheat one sentient being, as a result you will be cheated in one thousand lifetimes." This is because karma is expandable.

Similarly, as you may remember from *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* or other lamrim texts, if somebody criticizes a monk by saying to him disrespectfully, "You're jumping around like a monkey," it creates the cause to be born as a monkey for five hundred lifetimes.

Thus, karma is expandable, but this doesn't include consideration of

creating the result similar to the cause, which means that each complete negative karma again produces four suffering results, one of which is creating the result similar to the cause, so that the process is endless. Unless you purify the negative karma, you experience the karmic results endlessly.

TAKING MEDICINE FOR INTESTINAL INFECTION

Ven. Marcel: Rinpoche, there's a question about whether viruses and bacteria are considered sentient beings? And can we then take antibiotics?

Rinpoche: This question has been asked many times! I cannot say with certainty that they are sentient beings. However, we can discuss the question in relation not only to bacteria but to bigger sentient beings, worms. Many of the young Kopan monks get intestinal worms, and Lama Yeshe used to get everybody to take worm medicine.

Later, during a question and answer session in one of the early courses at Manjushri Institute—I think it might have been a course led by Venerable Marcel—someone asked whether it was permissible to take worm medicine. At that time Geshe Jampa Tegchok was teaching the philosophical part of the course and Geshe Kelsang was teaching lamrim. Geshe Jampa Tegchok, who was the abbot of Nalanda Monastery for many years, is now the abbot of Sera Je Monastery, which has more than two thousand five hundred monks.

In response to this question, Geshe Jampa Tegchok said, “You are not permitted to kill worms. Buddhism has never permitted killing.” Some people then got upset with Geshe-la's answer and brought up the fact that Lama Yeshe had permitted the taking of worm medicine. Some confusion arose during this question and answer session.

The lamas used to eat together, and at lunchtime Geshe-la brought up what had happened during the discussion. I don't think Lama Yeshe was there at that time. Geshe-la said that he was going to have to talk differently the next time he did a question and answer session. He was going to make an adjustment. Geshe-la said he was going to tell the people that according to Buddhism you can't take worm medicine, but that according to the general world situation you can take medicine for worms. He was planning to say this in the question and answer session.

So far, I myself haven't ever taken any medicine for worms. It seems to me that the worms disappear after some time even without taking

medicine. I think they die. I think that perhaps you have the karma to have worms for a short time but not the karma to have them all the time. When that karma has finished, I think that the worms just leave the body. Maybe they just say goodbye! I remember taking worm medicine when I was in Buxa, because a doctor checked and gave it to me, but I don't remember taking any since I first returned to Nepal from India. My personal experience is that even though there are worms, they disappear after a while, even without worm medicine. I am just telling you of my own experience.

Basically, I think it depends on the capacity of each individual. You have to see that your life will definitely be more beneficial for other sentient beings if you kill the worms. The bottom line is that you have to try as much possible to make even that action of killing become virtue. Even if you have to take the medicine and end their lives, at the very least you have to make your action become virtue. And as much as possible, you have to make your action beneficial for the sentient beings that are going to be killed.

I cannot make a generalization that it is okay to kill. I cannot say that. However, I would like to say that if it has to be done, at the very least you must attempt to ensure that your action becomes virtue, Dharma, and that it is as beneficial as possible for the sentient beings you are killing. If you have to do it, do it in this way. You have to do something for those beings, for their happiness, for their good rebirth or whatever.

Perhaps each time you take worm medicine you should make food or money offerings to the monasteries where there are thousands of monks. Perhaps you should build a stupa, a very large one—one stupa for each worm! Perhaps you should sponsor as many stupas as the number of worms that you kill! I am joking a little here, but you need to do something. I mean, killing is involved and you need to ensure that your mind is not completely selfish when you do it. Those worms are also sentient beings. I am not sure about bacteria, but worms are sentient beings. Therefore, they all want happiness.

I think I mentioned earlier in the retreat [Chapter 34, Tuesday, March 2] that one of the texts mentions that attachment to sex causes you to be reborn an intestinal worm. I don't remember which text it was (I should have written down its name), but it is an authentic source. Perhaps it is one of the thought transformation teachings of the Kadampa geshe.

Anyway, it is not the kind of text written by an ordinary person that we come across nowadays.

These worms are just like you in having no freedom to choose their rebirth. Without choice, they are born there in the kaka in the gut. They do not plan to be born there. They are also like you in wanting happiness and not wanting to suffer. Therefore, if you make the decision to take worm medicine, you have got to do something for them. You should at least do some strong practice to purify their negative karma and to pray for them to have a good rebirth as a human being, to meet the Dharma and so forth, as Nagarjuna says in the food offering practice. The sutra way of offering food involves motivating to take the food not to become fat, not out of arrogance, not to look beautiful, but just to sustain the body to practice Dharma. The tantra way of offering food involves reciting quite a number of mantras and making offerings to the gurus and to the deities, but we have yet to translate that part. Many monks practice the tantric food offering, then do Nagarjuna's prayer to also offer the food in the sutra way.

At the very end, after offering in both ways, many practitioners do another prayer that says, "At the moment I satisfy the worms by giving them food. Due to this, in future lives may I draw them to me as disciples and reveal Dharma to them." This means that in future lives, when the worms have become human beings, they will become your disciples and by revealing Dharma to them, you will lead them to enlightenment.

I would suggest that you do some practice like this. Since killing is involved, you have to make your life really beneficial for other sentient beings. Because those sentient beings have to die for you, you have to make your life worthwhile. You have to have a compassionate attitude. You can't simply ignore them or think, "Oh, they're causing disease," and kill them out of anger. You cannot omit the practice of compassion. I can't make a generalization about what should be done, but I would say that if you do become involved in killing the worms, there should be compassion in your motivation, which means that killing them will enable you to make your life more beneficial, more worthwhile. There is then some purpose in their dying, especially if you use their death to develop your good heart, your bodhicitta. If you have to engage in killing the worms, this is the best way to do it.

BENEFITING INSECTS KILLED BY YOUR CAR

When Roger bought the red van, which now has all the ten direction buddhas around it, he was very excited. I think he thought he had accomplished something really great. He bought it one evening and came to tell me right away. He was very happy about it and curious as to what I would say. I didn't go out to see the car immediately, but not because Roger was so excited about it. I saw it late the next morning. For one or two days I tried to think, "This car belongs to sentient beings," but that didn't last long.

We then drove all the way from John and Elaine Jackson's house in California to Geshe Sopa's place in Wisconsin. On the way there were some sections with no insects, but in other parts, especially where there were cows and fields, a lot of insects died on the car. So many insects died when they flew in front of the car. I don't know whether the number of insects also had something to do with the time of year it was. Many insects were dying and we didn't seem to have much choice about killing them. I was telling the others in the car, "We are creating many, many causes to be born in the Gathering and Crushing Hell." The Gathering and Crushing Hell is the third of the hot hells, where you are crushed between huge mountains shaped like the heads of the animals or human beings you have killed. You are crushed between the mountains, your blood gushes out like a waterfall, then you revive and are crushed all over again. This goes on and on for an inconceivable length of time, until the karma is exhausted. I said, "I think we are creating many causes to be in that hell realm."

We stopped somewhere and did many light offerings and prayers dedicated to all the insects that had died on the road. Later on, when I asked if there was anything we could do to stop killing the insects, someone mentioned putting a special plastic screen on the front of the van. It is supposed to give some protection to the insects but I don't think it helps that much.

Anyway, now the van is covered with mantras. A shop that makes decals used a computer to make all the mantras and the pictures of the Thirty-five Buddhas, Lama Tsongkhapa, Maitreya Buddha, White Tara and so forth. The person who made them put a lot of time and effort into it, especially into the Tibetan writing because he was not familiar with it. You start off with a black sheet, then like carving a rock, you have to cut

away the excess until just the shapes of the letters are left. It is unbelievably time consuming.

The person who did the work became very, very interested in the project. Even though they are not Buddhists, both he and his wife said that this time their work had been very meaningful. I don't think they have read anything on Buddhism. Once they might have attended a talk given by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, which could have been the start of their interest in Buddhism. I visited their shop once or twice and they told me this on one of my visits. I was very happy to hear how they felt. You have to have some merit even to appreciate that the work is worthwhile; if you don't have merit, you won't recognize its worth. Anyway, I was happy to hear that they realized that this time, the work they were doing was meaningful.

They wanted to make a very large decal of White Tara to keep in the office where they worked. It would make their shop very meaningful, because everybody who came there would see this picture of buddha and thus plant seeds of liberation and enlightenment. This picture of buddha would purify the defilements of anyone who saw it there, including the people who worked in that office every day. Seeing a picture of buddha would make coming into the shop very worthwhile for other sentient beings.

THE FIVE POWERFUL MANTRAS

The idea was to have the five powerful mantras used in the practice of jang wa on the van. [See Appendix 5.] The tantric practice of jang wa is used when somebody has died, and even if the person is in the intermediate state on the way to the lower realms, you can still do jang wa and change the direction of the person's reincarnation. You can cause the person to reincarnate in a pure land or in a deva or human realm. Jang wa is a skillful tantric practice of purification, due to the power of mantra, the power of concentration and the power of Buddha's words of the truth.

These five mantras have unbelievable power. If you recite these mantras, blow on sand and then sprinkle the sand on someone's grave or cremation site, you can affect that person's consciousness, no matter where they have been reborn. You do not even have to touch the dead body. Simply sprinkling the blessed sand on the grave or cremation site can purify that

person's negative karma and bring them a good rebirth. These mantras have unbelievable power to purify negative karma.

Within the practice of *jang wa* there are different means of purification, but recitation of these mantras is one of the main ones. You use the mantras to bless mustard seeds. Through meditation you hook the people who have died and then you throw the blessed mustard seeds over them to purify them. Finally, you do *powa* to transfer their consciousness to a pure land. After that, if you don't have ashes or parts of the body, you burn the photograph of the dead person or the pieces of paper with the dead person's name written on it while meditating on emptiness. You recite the *Heart Sutra* from where it says either “. . . no form, no feeling . . .” or “Form is emptiness, emptiness is form . . .”

I think I have already mentioned these mantras at various times in the past—for example, the mantra of Mitukpa, the Immovable Buddha, which you often see on *tsa tsas*. If a dying person sees the Mitukpa mantra, they won't be reborn in the lower realms because seeing this mantra purifies their mind, their negative karma.

All of these mantras have incredible power. Simply touching these mantras to the body of a dying or dead person purifies their negative karma, and they are not reborn in the lower realms. Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche explained that the people in Amdo have these mantras written or printed on paper and they rub the paper on the body of anyone who is dying or has died to purify that person's negative karma.

The Namgyälma mantra, another of these powerful mantras, has unbelievable benefits. I mentioned them already when I was talking about the mantra on the bell at the Kshitigarbha statue, so I am not going to repeat them again. Remember, I mentioned that if the Namgyälma mantra is on a mountain, the negative karmas of all the insects or people who walk on that mountain are purified. If the mantra is on a banner, the negative karmas of the insects or people who are touched by the shadow of the banner are purified, and they are liberated from the lower realms. It is also mentioned that if you have the Namgyälma mantra in your house, the house becomes purified and blessed, and the same applies to your car. It is very good to have the Namgyälma mantra in your car, because any insects or people who touch the car will be purified. The mantras of Namgyälma and Stainless Pinnacle are extremely powerful ones for purification.

If you recite the mantra of the deity Stainless Beam seventy-three times

after somebody has died, that person will definitely be liberated from the lower realms and be able to reincarnate in the higher realms, the realms of the happy migratory beings. If you recite the heart mantra, which is half the length of the root mantra, eighteen thousand times, and then build a stupa, all your wishes will be fulfilled. I thought to put this information in *Mandala* magazine, because stupas are now being built in many places. If the people building the stupa recite this mantra eighteen thousand times before they build the stupa, it is very powerful; all their wishes will be fulfilled. Buddha himself explained this in the Kangyur, the many hundreds of volumes of sutra teachings, although I don't remember in which volume. There is a section that talks about the infinite benefits of making a stupa. Buddha also explains the benefits of all the mantras that I have just mentioned, as well as those of the other mantras that go into a stupa. Putting the mantras into a stupa makes the stupa unbelievably powerful in benefiting sentient beings. It is just amazing! It doesn't apply just to big stupas; you can use them even in small ones.

If a group of people is building a stupa, everybody in the group should recite this mantra before they start building. This would be extremely powerful and so good. I started to recite them one day but my laziness didn't allow me to do more than a few hundred.

Another of the mantras is the Wish-granting Wheel mantra. I have read of the unbelievable benefits of reciting the mantra, but I have yet to see a picture of this deity. The mantra is very short: OM PADMO USHNISHA VIMALE HUM PHAT. If you recite this mantra seven times every day, you will be born in a pure land when you die. And if you recite it and bless incense, whether stick or powder, by blowing on it, people are healed by smelling the burning incense. Here the healing comes through purifying the other sentient beings' negative karma, through purifying their mind, which is the most important healing. Purifying the mind then helps to heal any sickness. If you recite this mantra and then blow on your clothes, wearing the clothes brings healing; wearing the clothes brings purification. And if the cloth is made of silk, wool, or the skin of an animal, reciting this mantra also helps that animal, no matter where it has been reborn, by purifying that animal's negative karma.

The other deity is Kunrig, which is white in color with three faces. Kunrig is not a Highest Yoga Tantra deity; I think it belongs to either Yoga Tantra or Charya Tantra class. Kunrig is known as "the King of the Deities

for purifying the lower realms.” Even if someone has already been born in the lower realms, if you do Kunrig practice or puja, they will be liberated from the lower realms. There is a story that when a deva died and was reborn in one of the hell realms, King Indra didn’t know what to do, so he asked Buddha for help. Buddha then manifested as this deity Kunrig and granted the practice of the Kunrig jang wa. The deva was then liberated from the lower realms. The practice of jang wa was originally done with Kunrig, then later the pandits, those great holy beings, used various deities to do jang wa. Both Kunrig and Mitukpa are used in jang wa practice.

I think I have now mentioned the five powerful deities, although the five might have become six!

On the van we have the mantra of Stainless Beam, but the mantra of Stainless Pinnacle might not be there. I’m not sure. There is also the Medicine Buddha mantra, which has incredible benefit, as well as OM MANI PADME HUM. There is also a very short mantra which when seen purifies 100,000 eons of negative karma.

A quotation from either a sutra or tantra—I’m not sure which—mentions that one of the benefits of the Wish-granting Wheel mantra is that by walking underneath it, you purify one thousand eons of negative karma. That’s why this mantra is normally put above doorways. Quite a number of years ago in Malaysia I wrote out this mantra and asked somebody to make many copies of it. Then later, in Taiwan, many, many small red cards were printed with a copy of the Wish-granting Wheel mantra and a picture of Lama Atisha’s stupa. Many were given out to people so that they could put one above the doorway to each room. In this way anybody who passed through the doorway would be purified. It is said that Lama Atisha’s stupa protects from pollution—not so much external pollution as mental pollution. It stops pollution from negative karma and degenerated samaya vows from affecting the minds of those living in the house.

Anyway, my idea in putting all those mantras on the van is to purify all the insects that come on the van. Also, any water or dust that comes off the van will have touched the mantras and will then go down on the ground to touch insects and worms, which will be purified and liberated. After touching the mantras, it becomes holy water or holy dust. Even human beings who see the mantras get purified. The point of the mantras is to benefit other sentient beings as much as possible.

BLESSING THE FEET

Anyway, I thought to take this opportunity to mention the blessing of the feet. I think that the Nalanda prayer book contains the various mantras for blessing the speech, blessing the mala and blessing the feet, blessing the toes. I think that some people do this practice every day. It is very good to bless your feet, especially if you are walking in the bush or trekking or doing work that requires you to walk over the ground. Recite the mantra OM KRECHA RAGHANA HUM HRI SVAHA seven times, then blow or spit on the soles of your shoes. It says to blow on your feet, but I would say that it is better to blow on the soles of your shoes because it is your shoes that directly touch the insects. It might help to blow on your feet, but I think it is better to blow on the soles of your shoes. It is especially good to do this if you have to walk through fields of grass, where there are so many insects. It is unbearable to walk through grass fields because you step on so many insects; as you walk you can see so many insects jumping around to try to escape. This is why it is very good to recite this mantra. When I remember, I do this practice when from time to time I have to walk across fields with many insects. It might look a little funny to other people, but we should try to take the opportunity to recite the mantra and then spit on the soles of our shoes. Cover the whole sole with spit. This is in case you step on any insects, because it means that you can benefit them by causing them to be born in the higher realms.

I think this practice comes from the tantric root text *Jam pal tsa gyü*, but I'm not absolutely sure.

You can do the same practice with the tires of your car. Recite the mantra then spit on the tire surface that will touch the ground. You can spit all the way around on the surface that will touch any insects and worms. By doing this, even if you unknowingly kill insects, you will still benefit them by purifying them and helping them to have a good rebirth. Such mantras have infinite benefits. Perhaps the benefits can be explained or translated at some later date.

I haven't really checked the benefits of the mantras for blessing the speech in the source texts. Understanding the benefits would give more faith in the practice and inspire us to use the mantras. Knowing which sutra or tantra text is the source of the practice would also give us more

faith. The sources are mentioned in the Tibetan prayer, and it would be good if that information was added to the translation.

SUFFERINGS OF THE PRETAS

Before talking about the water practice in relation to pretas and to Dzambhala, before you learn how to become a billionaire, I thought to mention a little about the sufferings of the pretas. Before learning how to become a billionaire, you first have to have the suffering of the pretas!

I will read what Pabongka Rinpoche has explained in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* [p. 380], where he gives some details about the great suffering of the pretas.

The general sufferings of preta beings are listed as six: extreme heat, extreme cold, hunger and thirst (their heaviest sufferings), exhaustion and fear (which is fear of being stopped from getting food and water by karmic guardians).

Also, even if a preta sees some food, it is difficult for them to get it because they have to compete for it with many hundreds or thousands of other pretas. When, after many hundreds or thousands of years, a preta finally sees a tiny bit of food or a drop of water, they have to fight a crowd of hundreds or thousands of other pretas for it. You will have an idea of what it is like if you have ever given food or money to the beggars in Bodhgaya in India. Like the beggars in Bodhgaya, thousands of pretas crowd around so that any food is difficult to get. This also causes fear.

The place where the pretas, the hungry ghosts, live is simply unimaginable. There are no grass, trees or water—nothing! There are absolutely none of these things. It is said in the lamrim that the whole ground is like a red-hot copper pot, because it has been burnt by the sun. It is extremely hot. Without considering any of the other sufferings, just think of this one suffering. The ground in the preta realm is nothing like that around here, where we live, where everything is green and there are grass and many trees. The ground there is scorched by the sun and extremely hot to the touch, and the pretas have to live their whole life in such a place. The thought of even this one suffering is unbearable. When we feel hot we can use fans or air conditioners or drink iced water. We can always have ice in everything: ice in our tea, ice in our coffee, ice-cream. We can have ice in every drink. To think of living in the place where the pretas live is

unimaginable. Just thinking of it is so terrifying that you have to purify the negative karma to be born in the preta realm that you have created during beginningless past lives. It is so terrifying to have any karma to be born in the preta realm that you have to purify it immediately.

The bodies of pretas are unbalanced, because their limbs are not of the same size. Their heads are big, with hair that sticks out in all directions, like tufts of grass. Their faces are covered with wrinkles. Just thinking of their wrinkles should make us feel the need to purify. Since we don't want to have a single wrinkle on our face, we need to purify any karma we have to be born as a preta. Because we don't want even a tiny wrinkle on our face, especially on our nose, we need to purify immediately all such karma we have created not only since our birth in this life but during beginningless rebirths.

Pretas also have very tiny necks. I think it is explained in *Lamrim Chenmo* that a preta's neck is as thin as a hair from a horse's tail. Anyway, it is extremely thin and cannot support the large head. The stomach is as huge as a mountain and the limbs are like bamboo stalks. The Tibetan term *jang ma* refers to the fine slivers of bamboo that are bound together to make brooms. The limbs are so thin that they can barely support the body. Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo says that pretas have a hundred times more difficulty standing up and walking than very old people in the human world. Pretas also have an uneven number of limbs.

Because pretas are unable to find a drink for many years, their bodies have no moisture, not even any blood or lymph. They are like a dry log wrapped tightly with very dry red leather. Their muscles and veins are all dry, so they're wrapped in very dry skin. When they move about and their limbs touch each other, there is a sound like two dry sticks or two rocks hitting each other. Sparks also fly out.

Pretas receive no food or drink for hundreds or thousands of years, therefore, they suffer extreme hunger and thirst. Because they still live in the hope of finding food and drink, they have no choice but to go to look for it. But their bodies are so weak and pitiful that when they do go to look for food, they are easily exhausted.

While looking for food, whenever they see the yamas they get so frightened that they feel as if their whole body will disintegrate. They feel incredible fear. In the heat of summer, even the moon feels hot to the pretas; due to their karma even moonlight burns them. And in the cold of winter

even sunlight makes the pretas feel cold. Usually the sun warms and the moon cools, but for pretas, due to their karma, it is the opposite. In this way, they suffer incredibly from heat and cold.

These are the six general sufferings of pretas. We will now consider the particular sufferings of individual types of preta beings.

PRETAS WITH OUTER OBSCURATIONS

Pretas with external obscurations see water, trees laden with fruit and so forth in the distance, but when, after battling exhaustion and other great hardships, they finally reach that place, the water or food has disappeared. There is nothing there. After overcoming all their exhaustion, their fear of meeting yamas on the way and other incredible hardships, they reach their destination only to find that the food they saw has become non-existent.

Pabongka Rinpoche also says that when some pretas reach the food, they find armed guards protecting it, not allowing them to get any. I guess the guards are like those police who carry all kinds of weapons when controlling crowds. On top of all their already unbelievable suffering of hunger and thirst, at that time the pretas experience inconceivable suffering from despair and physical exhaustion.

PRETAS WITH INNER OBSCURATIONS

Pretas with inner obscurations are sometimes able to find food, but even when, after undergoing many hardships, they do find some, they cannot eat it because their mouths are as tiny as the eye of a needle. Even if a little food does go into their mouths, they cannot swallow it because they have knots in their necks. It is extremely difficult for any food to reach the stomach. Some pretas have a goiter in their necks and have to drink the pus that oozes from it.

PRETAS WITH FOOD AND DRINK OBSCURATIONS

When some pretas with food obscurations eat food, it transforms into a flaming iron ball that is one with fire. For some, the food transforms into the husks of grain, pus or their own flesh. Even when they manage to find

some food, when they actually start to eat it, the food turns into these things. I guess the karma suddenly changes.

Many years ago, I visited a home in Spain for the severely disabled. I was with Piero, an old student from Italy, who was a monk at that time and traveling with me as my secretary, and Merry Colony, who was a nun. I think I probably said that I wanted to see the home. In the past, I sometimes used to go to see old people's homes or homes for the disabled. It is very helpful for the mind. It inspires you to practice Dharma—for a short time, anyway! Seeing how some human beings suffer, how they don't have even a human body with complete senses and organs let alone a perfect human body with which to practice Dharma (let alone mentioning Mahayana tantra), can inspire you to practice Dharma.

I think the home was in Barcelona, and was run by Catholic nuns. At that time, Carmen and her husband Alberto were the directors of Nagarjuna Center in Barcelona, and Carmen had previously worked as a nurse in that home. It is only through such a connection that you are allowed to visit the home. Carmen made the appointment for our visit.

In one room, there were teenage girls tied into frames with four wheels, because they couldn't walk, and their arms were covered with leather so that they wouldn't bite their own flesh. There were a few of them just moving back and forth on these wheels. I just remembered this when I mentioned the pretas that eat their own body. You might not believe such pretas exist, but since there are even human beings who do this, why should there be any doubt about pretas?

Anyway, since I brought up this story, I'll mention a little more. Right at the beginning, before we visited the children, the head nun warned me that some of the children might try to scratch my skin because it is not white. Since the children have no idea about people who are not white, they might scratch black skin to see if the black color comes off. In one section of that home, one child actually did that to me.

The whole place is really amazing because most of the adults and children there have no hope of getting better. They will simply spend their whole life living in that home with other people taking care of them. I think they might have cleaned the home before we arrived; it was very clean. We saw one little girl who was horribly disfigured. I don't remember the details clearly, but I think that her eyes were tiny and it seemed as if

her nose and mouth were missing. One of the nurses lifted her up and kissed her and generally showed her affection. I mean, this little girl was the opposite of beautiful. I think the staff try to show the children that they are not frightened of their disfigurements, that they don't regard them as ugly or dirty or bad. This little girl said goodbye to us. Piero was totally freaked out when he saw this little girl's face.

When we came down to see the head nun after our visit, she told us that they never ask anybody for help; they ask only God. She said that God gave them all the help they needed. She said that even when people come with money they don't accept it. This is what she said, but I am not sure about that. I told her, "What you are doing and what Buddha says we should do, to cherish and to serve others, are the same. Here you are putting it into practice." I then gave a donation of ten dollars or a hundred dollars. It might have been ten dollars, I think, as it couldn't have been a hundred dollars. I made a prayer, and I told her that the money was to help the home to benefit the children. Anyway, that piece of news is now finished.

It is really great that the nuns are able to take care of those children for whom there is no hope at all. No matter how many years they live, the nuns just take care of them every day.

When some pretas eat and drink, even if the food somehow passes through their neck, when it reaches their stomach it turns into molten iron. The Tibetan term *tog* refers to a type of hard metal, but I don't know the exact translation. I think the huge cauldrons in which soup was cooked for thousands of monks in Tibet were made out of *tog*. When many thousands of monks from Sera, Ganden, Drepung and other monasteries would gather for Mönlam, huge containers made of *tog*, perhaps a kind of iron, would be used for the soup. Instead of quenching the preta's thirst and stopping their hunger, anything eaten turns into hot liquid iron when it reaches their stomach. Instead of benefiting them, the food gives them immense additional suffering. And even if the food reaches the stomach and doesn't turn into molten iron, it can never satisfy the preta because their stomach is so big; the food can never fill their stomach.

Another type of preta has flames of hunger coming from its mouth. The Tibetan term for this preta is *de me*. *De* is hungry ghost and *me* is fire, so it could be translated as "flame ghost." In Buxa and certain other parts of India, you often see these pretas at nighttime in the forest. We saw many

flames in the forest from the place where we used to debate. I think these pretas might also be in remote deserts, where it is very hot, the ground is copper-colored and nothing grows. This is my guess, anyway.

The preta with the worst suffering of all is the *drul geg*. Pabongka Rinpoche tells the story of Ananda, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's attendant, seeing such a preta when he was outside engaged in his daily activities. He met a female preta with three knots in her neck, and she had five terrifying sounds coming from her mouth. It says here that the three knots cause these pretas unbelievable suffering, that there is no limit to their suffering.

Next comes a quotation about the sufferings of preta beings from Nagarjuna's *Letter*, followed by one from Chandragomin's *Letter to a Disciple* and another from the Seventh Dalai Lama, Kelsang Gyatso.

Pabongka then says that we can't be sure that by this time next year we won't be born as one of those preta beings. The causes for rebirth as a preta are miserliness with your possessions, great covetousness and having such strong attachment to your own possessions that you have to keep checking them again and again. I can see that I myself have created some causes to be born as a preta through being heavily attached to things and looking at them again and again.

Another cause of rebirth as a hungry ghost is interfering in other people's attempts to make charity. Perhaps someone is practicing generosity and you interfere, saying such things as, "Oh! You are giving too much" or "They don't need it." Other causes are stealing others' wealth and taking away things that belong to the Sangha. Pabongka gives an example of this second one at the beginning of his explanation of refuge. If someone wants to offer even a slice of butter to the Sangha—butter is a common offering because it is used to make Tibetan tea—and has already dedicated it to the Sangha and you say, "Oh, that is too much. The Sangha don't need it," you are taking away things that belong to the Sangha, because the person has already dedicated it. Also, when money offerings are given to the Sangha by a benefactor, if you take extra for yourself, you are taking what has not been given.

You have to understand that the disciples to whom Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo gave the teachings contained in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* were mainly monks. Of course, there might also have been many lay people listening, but you have to understand that the presentation was given in terms of monks living in monasteries. Even though the examples

often refer to Sangha, you can still relate them to similar situations outside of a monastery. It can easily happen that when someone has already given something to someone else, you tell them that the other person doesn't need it. Such instances don't occur only in monasteries.

If Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo had been teaching in the West, his presentation would also have been related to Western people and the Western lifestyle. Since he taught mainly monks who lived in monasteries, his presentation was mainly related to their life. Once you understand that the basic points on karma are similar, you can also relate them to the lay life. There are many similar situations in lay life.

Another cause of rebirth as a preta is to call someone a preta. In the West you would not do this, but you might call them a ghost. In Tibetan, insulting someone by calling them a preta easily happens. Insulting a member of the Sangha by calling them a preta causes rebirth as a preta for five hundred lifetimes.

Pabongka Rinpoche then says that when pretas with three knots are able to receive a drop of water, it is because in the past those pretas were not miserly in giving water to other sentient beings. You dedicate the drop of water with the powerful mantra given by Buddha, OM DZALA MIDAM SARVA PRETA BYA SVAHA. Because of the power of the mantra and because of their past karma of being generous with water, those pretas, who have the heaviest of preta sufferings, are able to receive one drop of water. They have the karma to get just one drop of water but are unable to enjoy more than this.

Next comes the story of Lobpön Sangye Yeshe, a yogi who used his psychic powers to go to the preta realm. There he met an extremely pitiful female preta with five hundred children. She gave Sangye Yeshe a message for her husband, who had gone looking for food in the human world. She said, "Twelve years have passed since my husband went to look for food, and during this time I have had five hundred children. I am experiencing incredible hardship and suffering, as I have not had even one drop of water during this whole time. O master, please tell my husband to return quickly with whatever food he has found in the human world."

The yogi then said, "There are so many pretas there, so how will I know which one is your husband?" She replied, "Oh, he has particular characteristic. He is blind in one eye and has only one arm and one leg. And even the arm and leg he has are not healthy."

When the yogi went to the human world to check among the pretas, he saw one that exactly fitted her description, so he passed her message to him. The husband said, “What she says is true.” In other words, he really wished that he could have returned as quickly as possible; he could not bear the fact that his search had taken so long. He continued, “I have looked for food for twelve years and I have found only this.” In his hand he was holding a very small piece of dried phlegm. “I haven’t found any other food other than this, so I regard this as extremely precious.”

The preta was able to find this small piece of phlegm because one *bhikshu*, one fully ordained monk, who was living in his vowed morality had spat the phlegm on the ground and recited a mantra to dedicate it to the pretas. A crowd of pretas then fought for the phlegm and the husband won. He told the yogi this story. The phlegm had dried out completely, and the preta kept it as his prized possession.

Pabongka says that if we are not careful with our lives, we cannot be sure that a time won’t come when we have to lunch on dried phlegm.

Another story concerns Uttara, a novice monk. Twenty-five years after his mother had died, Uttara met a terrifying preta. He was so frightened that he started to run away. The preta then said, “Don’t run away!” Uttara asked, “Who are you?” The preta replied, “My only son, I am your loving mother. I have been born here among the pretas, who have no food or drink. Since my death twenty-five years ago, I have never seen any water. Forget about seeing food—I haven’t even seen a damp mark on the ground.”

When I read about the sufferings of the pretas, I feel happy that I have been trying to do a little water charity to the pretas. I can rejoice by thinking, “Oh, this little bit of water charity that I have been doing must be really good for the pretas since they are suffering unbelievably. It must be very beneficial for them because it is fulfilling their immediate needs.” However, making water charity to the pretas and reciting these mantras are done not just to enable them to find water and to alleviate their hunger and thirst. The very important benefit that this water charity has is that not only does it stop their hunger and thirst, but it also liberates them from their all their preta suffering—some of the mantras and visualizations have the power to purify their negative karma and thus liberate them from the suffering of the preta realm and cause them to achieve a higher rebirth. That is the real benefit; that is what they really need.

Pabongka Dechen Nyimpgo says that in terms of merit gained, you collect greater merit from making charity to one preta than from making charity to three galaxies of sentient beings. (There are different ways of counting this, but I don't remember at the moment. I have heard the explanation quite a few times, but I still don't remember it!) And making charity to one preta with flames coming from the mouth collects far greater merit than making charity to all the other general pretas. This is because this particular type of preta has much more suffering than the general pretas. Then, giving just one drop of water to a preta with three knots collects far greater merit than making charity to the pretas with flames coming from the mouth. In terms of material charity to sentient beings, giving one drop of water to this type of preta collects unbelievable merit—the most merit of all.

Of course, the main point is not how much merit you collect. The main reason for doing this practice is because the pretas need it. Since numberless pretas are experiencing unbelievable suffering, they need this charity of food and drink.

WATER CHARITY TO THE PRETAS

First I will explain how to make water charity to the pretas, which is part of the practice of the one hundred tormas offerings. After that, I will talk about offering water to Dzambhala [see Appendix 4].

First, of course, you have to generate a motivation of bodhicitta. Think, “Every single hell being is the source of all my past, present and future happiness, including enlightenment. Every single preta being is the source of all my past, present and future happiness, including enlightenment. Every single animal is the source of all my past, present and future happiness, including enlightenment. Every single human being is the source of all my past, present and future happiness, including enlightenment. And it is the same with every single asura, sura and intermediate state being. Every single one of them is the source of all my past, present and future happiness, including enlightenment.”

Bring every single one of them into your heart by thinking of their kindness and of how precious they are.

After that, think, “I must take the total responsibility for all of them upon myself. I must free all the hell beings from the three types of suffer-

ing; I must free all the hungry ghosts from the three types of suffering. I must free all the animals from the three types of suffering. I must also free all the human beings, asuras, suras and intermediate state beings from the three types of suffering. I must free all sentient beings from the three types of suffering of samsara, as well as their causes, and bring them to enlightenment. Therefore, I myself must achieve enlightenment. For this reason, I am going to make water charity to the pretas.” (Or if you are doing Dzambhala practice, say, “For this reason, I am going to do the water offering to Dzambhala.”)

It isn't that you have to make the offering to Dzambhala before you can make water charity to the pretas, but the water carries more blessings if you first offer it to Dzambhala and then give that same water to the pretas. The practice then becomes more powerful and effective for the pretas. This is what Ribur Rinpoche said. Previously I didn't do Dzambhala practice; I just made water charity to the pretas. Somehow I happened to talk with Ribur Rinpoche about the water charity to the pretas, and Rinpoche then advised me that it would be better to do the Dzambhala practice first. That is how I started the Dzambhala practice. Before that I didn't do the Dzambhala practice. I did the water charity to the pretas because I read about some of its unbelievable benefits and because they really need it. The practice is not just about our collecting merit; the pretas actually need our help. I mean, when you think of their suffering, there is no choice; you have to do the practice.

If you wish, you can generate the motivation, do the Dzambhala practice first, and then make charity to the pretas with that water.

Actually, all these practices have already been translated into Chinese by the Chinese translator from Shanghai, who is translating Geshe Sopa's lamrim commentary into Chinese. It will also be published in English, and will be the largest lamrim commentary in English in the world. The root text, Lama Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* is also being translated into Chinese in a style that will be easy for the general public to understand. There is an existing translation, but it is written in classical Chinese, which is very difficult for ordinary people to understand. We are sponsoring this project. Geshe Sopa's commentary represents more than twenty years of teaching. I think that Geshe-la started this commentary the very first time that he visited the United States, in the mid-1970s. I think it was around that time that Geshe-la founded Deer Park Center in Madison,

Wisconsin. Before that, he was just teaching at the university. There was no actual center and very few disciples. People would be introduced to Buddhism at Kopan then go to America to learn from Geshe Sopa, so the center was formed.

You already have an English translation of the Dzambhala practice [see Appendix 4], so I will read the oral transmission of it in Tibetan. I received the oral transmission of the Dzambhala practice and of the practice of making water charity to the pretas, which is just a small part of the practice of the one hundred tormas offerings, from His Holiness Ling Rinpoche. There is a complete text of this in Dharamsala. I will give the oral transmission of this practice, along with the Dzambhala.

So think, “No matter what, I must achieve enlightenment in order to enlighten all sentient beings. Therefore, I am going to take the oral transmissions of the Dzambhala practice and the practice of making water charity to the pretas.” [Rinpoche gives the oral transmissions in Tibetan.]

It would take a lot of time to translate all the prayers, and in any case they have already been translated, so I’m not going to do it again. I will just explain the meditations.

When I do the practice, I usually visualize myself as the Thousand-arm Buddha of Compassion with nectar flowing from the hand. But I guess that you can also think that you are the Buddha of Compassion with one face and two arms and seated in the vajra posture as visualized in the very beginning of the nyung nä practice, when you have to generate yourself as the Buddha of Compassion before you bless the action vase and the offerings. This aspect of the Buddha of Compassion is similar to that of White Tara; the only difference is that there are no eyes in the hands or the feet. Otherwise, I think the position is the same. Alternatively, you can visualize the Buddha of Compassion in the resting posture, the posture of royal ease. This aspect also has one face and two arms and is seated on a moon disc. The right hand rests on the right knee in the mudra of granting sublime realizations and the left is stretched out behind on the moon disc. You can visualize whichever aspect you like.

You visualize that nectar comes from the palm of the hand, but physically, you pour water from a jug, kettle or watering can. A watering can with a long spout is very good for Dzambhala practice and for making water charity to the pretas since it allows you to pour the water in a very

fine stream, which is the preferred way of offering it. If you don't have time, you can offer the water more quickly in a thicker stream.

For the water charity to the pretas, the container from which you pour should have a lid. You cannot use just any container that is around. It should be covered because pretas get very anxious when they see an empty container or a container that is only partly filled. Therefore, any container you use should be covered unless it is full and there should not be empty containers around when you do the practice. It is also good to do the practice in a clean place. This is advised for the one hundred torma offerings. Some pretas cannot come to dirty places. Also, there shouldn't be any sparkling lights where you are doing the practice as these lights will make the pretas run away.

The torma charity or the water charity can generally be done at any time of the day, though some specify that it should be done in the morning when the sun rises and others that it should be done at night. Different lamas give different advice. According to Lama Atisha, since pretas always need food and drink, the practice can be done at any time.

However, the torma charity to the pretas should be done before eating a meal, and this advice might also apply to the water charity. After you have eaten a meal, the pretas become scared because your body then becomes powerful and radiant. Another thing is that you should not smell of onion, garlic or other black foods. If the pretas smell these foods on your breath, hands or body, some of them will run away and won't get the torma or water that you are trying to give them. Therefore, it is good to do the practice in the morning before having a meal. If you have eaten, wash your hands before doing the practice.

Pretas are also so pitiful that they become frightened if they see the eyes of humans. For them, a human face is like the face of a lion, something very haughty and intimidating. When my alphabet teachers did this practice every morning, they would wear a piece of animal skin with a fringe that covered their eyes. Ribur Rinpoche explained that when Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo did this practice he would wear very long black threads that completely covered his face. You can make something with black threads that at least cover your eyes.

When I stopped at Bangkok Airport on one of my recent trips from India or Nepal, I found some yellow hats and bought a small one for Brian

and one big one. I wrote various mantras on the hat, including OM MANI PADME HUM, the Wish-granting Wheel mantra, which purifies one thousand eons of negative karma each time you go underneath it, and another mantra which when seen purifies 100,000 eons of negative karma. The hat was covered with mantras. I then had somebody sew black thread around the brim of the hat. The last time that I went to see Ribur Rinpoche in Washington, I thought I left the hat there. I didn't have one to use so I started to use the small one that I gave Brian, which also has mantras all over it. At that time the hat that I bought for Brian became useful. The big hat was later found in one of the suitcases.

When you pour the water, hold your left hand against your breast in the mudra of granting refuge and snap your fingers as you recite OM AH HRIH HUM, the mantra for the general pretas, over and over again. Think that you are the Buddha of Compassion and that your body is the size of a mountain. Pour the water from the container into the receptacle from the Dzambhala practice. Think that nectar flows from your hand and relieves the suffering of the numberless pretas. The nectar instantly cools their suffering of heat and they feel incredible peace and pleasure. Not only that, but it also goes into their mouth, purifies their negative karma and defilements, and brings them satisfaction. The nectar not quenches their thirst but also purifies their minds.

Then recite OM MANI PADME HUM as you make charity to the pretas with flames coming from the mouth. Again, do three things simultaneously: recite the mantra, snap your fingers and allow the water to drip from the container into the receptacle.

To make charity to the pretas with three knots, recite OM DZALA MIDAM SARVA PRETA BYA SVAHA. *Dzala* actually means flame, but in the text it says that this mantra is for the pretas with three knots. As you recite the mantra, snap your fingers and at the same time give one drop of water—do these three things together. In the previous two offerings [to the pretas in general and to those with flames coming from the mouth] you poured the water into the receptacle from the Dzambhala practice; here you allow the water to drip outside the receptacle into the body of water or onto plants or the ground. Recite the mantra, snap your fingers and drip the water many times to make water charity to the pretas with three knots.

Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo says here that if you recite this very blessed mantra OM DZALA MIDAM SARVA PRETA BYA SVAHA, snap your fingers and

offer one drop of water outside of the receptacle, the knots in the preta's throat are instantly released and the drop of water goes into their stomach giving them great pleasure and satisfaction. It has this great benefit.

As I have already said, I am not going to translate the prayers because I have already translated them.

WATER CHARITY TO THE INTERMEDIATE STATE BEINGS

The next practice is called Yeshe Karda. *Yeshe* means transcendental wisdom; *kar* means star and *da* can mean either shooting or arrow. You visualize yourself as Chenrezig and visualize the deity Yeshe Karda on your right hand. Yeshe Karda has a green-blue holy body; her right hand is in the mudra of granting sublime realizations and her left is in the mudra of concentration.

Nectar flows down from the palm of Yeshe Karda's hand as well as from the rest of her body. The nectar flows over all the sentient beings, but in particular over the pitiful intermediate state beings; they are all fully satisfied by the nectar. Hold the water in a container in your right hand and, snapping the fingers of your left hand, recite the mantra OM JNANA AVALOKITE SAMANTA PARANA RAMI BAWA SAMAYA MAHA MANI DURU DURU HRIH DAYA JALANI SOHA seven times and pour the water. Then recite the dedication, "By making this water charity to all the samsaric intermediate state transmigratory beings, may they be liberated from all fear and suffering and go to a pure land."

It is extremely good to do this practice when you are at the beach or near a river, lake or even a swimming pool.

The other mantras I recite are not mentioned in the practice; I have added them to make the practice more powerful. The first time, along with the OM JNANA AVALOKITE . . . mantra, you can recite OM MANI PADME HUM as many times as possible times, blow on the water, then pour it back into the ocean, river or other body of water. The text doesn't say to blow on the water, but I think it would be better if you did. Meditate that all the water appears as uncontaminated nectar to all the pretas that are seen by buddha's omniscient mind. Think that all the pretas drink the nectar and are fully satisfied by it. Also, they are completely liberated from all their suffering, negative karma and defilements and all become enlightened

in the aspect of the Buddha of Compassion. Visualize all of them as the Thousand-arm Buddha of Compassion.

Reciting this mantra (OM JNANA AVALOKITE . . .) and pouring the blessed water back into the ocean has the power to enable all the pretas to actually see the water and drink it. The special benefit here is that not only are they relieved of all their preta sufferings, but also that their mind is purified and they achieve a higher rebirth. This is a very important benefit that the pretas receive when this practice is done. This is a practice for all pretas. When you go to the beach, you must take the opportunity of doing this practice, because the ocean is the largest body of water. Due to the power of the mantra given by Buddha, the preta beings are able to see the whole ocean as nectar and to drink it; they are then able to be liberated.

Then take another container of water and again recite the mantra OM JNANA AVALOKITE . . . seven times. You can support the container with your left hand and hold the handle with your right. Then recite the Medicine Buddha mantra a few times and blow on the water. Do the same meditation and pour the water back.

Take another container of water, recite the mantra OM JNANA AVALOKITE . . . seven times, then recite the Namgyälma mantra a few times, blow on the water, then pour the water back.

For the fourth round, repeat the same process but recite the Mitukpa mantra. For the fifth round, recite the Kunrig mantra—Kunrig is the king of the deities for purifying the lower realms. For the sixth round, recite the Wish-granting Wheel mantra, OM PADMO USHNISHA VIMALE HUM PHAT. For the seventh, recite the Stainless Pinnacle mantra. You can also recite the Stainless Beam mantra.

Each time you take some water, recite the mantra OM JNANA AVALOKITE . . . seven times, recite in turn a few of each of the other seven or eight extra mantras, blow on the water to bless it, pour the water back and meditate that the whole ocean appears as nectar to all the pretas.

I have added these extra mantras because if you bless the water with these powerful mantras and pour it back into the ocean, the whole ocean is then blessed and all the billions and billions of sentient beings that live in the ocean are purified. The water purifies all their negative karma, and even that of the people who play in the water. If we recite these mantras and throw the water back into the ocean, the negative karma of any sen-

tient being touched by that water will be purified. Reciting those extra mantras has this unbelievable benefit; it has the power to bless the water and to purify all those sentient beings. And incidentally, you purify your own negative karma. If you see some water when you are traveling, if you have time to stop and do this practice, it is extremely good. And if you have a swimming pool, you can do this practice in your pool.

WATER CHARITY TO THE NAGAS

After the Yeshe Karda practice, the text next mentions visualizing Mitukpa to purify the nagas. Visualize that nectar flows down from Mitukpa's right hand to all the sentient beings of the six realms, especially the nagas. Again, while reciting the Mitukpa mantra seven times, pour the water and snap your fingers. All the sentient beings of the six realms, including yourself—and especially the nagas, who are suffering so much—are purified. As I mentioned before, the main cause of rebirth in the animal realm as a naga is taking vows and then degenerating them. The particular function of Mitukpa is to purify the negative karma of broken vows—pratimoksha as well as all others. Mitukpa practice is very powerful for that. Therefore, because rebirth as a naga is the result of having broken vows, Mitukpa practice is especially beneficial for nagas.

Finally, dedicate the merit as already translated there in the practice.

When you finish the water offering to the pretas, think that all the pretas have been totally purified of all their defilements and become the Buddha of Compassion. Here, you can think that all the nagas and the rest of the sentient beings of the six realms are purified of all their defilements and become Mitukpa. My feeling is that reciting the Mitukpa mantra at the beach has particularly great benefit because of all the nagas there.

Making water charity to the pretas is actually a cause of wealth. As mentioned in the Madhyamaka, "From morality one receives a good rebirth and from charity one receives wealth." Making charity to other sentient beings is a cause of wealth. Because of the nature of the karma, making charity becomes the cause of your success in this life and in all the coming future lives. You are able to fulfill your wishes and receive whatever you need for both your Dharma practice and to benefit others.

WATER OFFERING TO DZAMBHALA

Did I mention before how Chenrezig, the Buddha of Compassion, came to manifest as Dzambhala? No? What happened was that one day, when Lama Atisha was traveling in India—I'm not sure where, perhaps where Buddha cut his hair or around Bodhgaya; anyway, some place associated with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha—he saw a man dying of starvation on a sandy river bed. Lama Atisha felt such unbearable compassion for the man that he wanted to cut some flesh from his own body to help the man to survive. The man, refusing his offer, said, "I don't want to eat the flesh of a monk." Lama Atisha replied, "I understand. In particular, you should not eat the flesh of an arya being." Lama Atisha was an arya being, one who has realization of true path, of the path of seeing and the path of meditation.

Lama Atisha was disappointed that the man wouldn't accept his offer. He lay down on the sand and suddenly a very bright light appeared. When Lama Atisha looked up, he saw the Thousand-arm Buddha of Compassion, who said, "Don't worry. I have a method to relieve the poverty of sentient beings." The Buddha of Compassion then manifested as Dzambhala and taught various practice for alleviating the poverty of sentient beings.

Thus, Dzambhala is the Buddha of Compassion, not some ordinary, worldly, wealth-granting god. The Buddha of Compassion manifested as Dzambhala to grant wealth, to relieve the poverty of sentient beings. The practices of the Dzambhala wealth vase, tormas offering to Dzambhala, water offering to Dzambhala and recitation of the Dzambhala mantra came from Chenrezig as methods to relieve poverty.

There is a white Dzambhala, a yellow Dzambhala, a black Dzambhala and a red Dzambhala. Also an Australian Dzambhala, an American Dzambhala, a LMB Dzambhala, a Californian Dzambhala!

White Dzambhala rides a dragon and has four dakinis around him. Recite the prayer, then pour water on the head of Dzambhala while snapping your fingers and reciting the mantra OM PĀDMA KRODHA ARYA JAMBHALA HRIHDAYA HUM PHAT. Ribur Rinpoche explained the reason for pouring the water on Dzambhala's head—there might be more details in the text, but all I remember is that at the time Devadatta threw rocks at the Buddha, the Buddha was surrounded by Dzambhalas. The rocks hit the white and yellow Dzambhalas on the head and the black Dzambhala on

the stomach, wounding them there. Therefore, we offer water on Dzambhala's head, and in return, Dzambhala gives prosperity, wealth. In the text, the poetic term *nyäl dro'i gyun po* is used for "water."

However, Dzambhala is the Buddha of Compassion and this is the story. I think that Buddha probably manifested in this way to help sentient beings by giving them this method to practice water offering to Dzambhala. It is not possible for the Buddha of Compassion, an enlightened being, to experience suffering. Anyway, this is why you offer the water on Dzambhala's head or stomach.

As in the general practice of offering, if you visualize Dzambhala as inseparable from the guru, you accumulate more merit when making the offering. You can also think that your offering fills Dzambhala's holy mind with bliss as extensive as the sky and inspires him to immediately help to fulfill all your needs.

Ribur Rinpoche gave me one very nice small statue of Black Dzambhala, which came from Tibet. When Rinpoche gave it to me, he said to the statue, "Now you go to him, now you go to him . . ." I also have one small Yellow Dzambhala statue that was maybe bought in Dharamsala. It was given to some Tibetans in Dharamsala to be painted gold, but now even the eyes are covered with gold. You can't see the eyes clearly because of the gold. Just recently, a White Dzambhala on a dragon came from Nepal. I ordered it from Rajesh, who is the best painter of gold and who has now started to make statues. He made the statue very nicely, except that he made Dzambhala's face wrathful, like Palden Lhamo's or Mahakala's. Dzambhala's face should be fat with round eyes like Namtöse [Vaishravana], the protector of morality.

Think that Dzambhala is totally inspired to bring immediate success to whatever projects you have, as well as to relieve all other sentient beings from poverty immediately by giving them everything they need.

I usually try to think that Dzambhala is totally inspired to immediately bring about the success of the Maitreya Project, the building of the 500-foot statue of Maitreya Buddha, by giving everything that is needed to actualize the statue. I also think that Dzambhala is inspired to immediately give everything that is needed to bring extensive benefit to the teachings and to sentient beings. However, you can think like this in relation to whatever projects you have in mind. First think of your main project, then after that think that Dzambhala is inspired to immediately bring

extensive benefit to the teachings of the Buddha and to sentient beings, which covers everything, through giving everything that is needed. I have been telling people that these two small statues of Dzambhala have the responsibility of building the 500-foot Maitreya Buddha statue. They are very small but their job is huge.

Next comes water offering to Yellow Dzambhala. There is a prayer to recite that requests the granting of realizations; this has already been translated, so you can read it in the text. You then recite the mantra, OM JAMBHALA JALANDRAYE SVAHA.

At the end you recite a verse of prostration and request. It says, “Sentient beings are tormented by the fire of the actions of miserliness, so together with all other sentient beings, I go for refuge to you from life to life. With the flowing nectar rain of jewel treasure, please pacify the suffering of poverty of sentient beings.”

After you have finished the practice, you sprinkle the water in each of the four directions and in the center [Rinpoche uses ring finger as in sprinkling the inner offering]. Think that the poverty in the minds of all sentient beings has been pacified. Then take a little bit of water at the end as a blessing. Then say, JAMBHALA SIDDHI PHALA HO.

Make charity to the pretas with the rest of the water. Ribur Rinpoche said that to do this is very powerful and has more blessings.

DEDICATION

At the end, dedicate first of all for bodhicitta, as usual. Then dedicate specifically for the long lives of the virtuous friends and for the immediate accomplishment of all their holy wishes. “Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I be able to obtain immediately everything needed to fulfill the holy wishes of all my virtuous friends.

“Due to this merit, may I be able to actualize immediately everything that is needed by the Sangha to complete their Dharma practice, both realizations and scriptural understanding, and to preserve and spread the Dharma.

“May I also be able to actualize immediately everything that is needed by those sentient beings who are experiencing material poverty, as well as everything that is needed by those who are experiencing poverty of

Dharma.” (You should do this specific dedication, because your purpose in doing the Dzambhala practice is to help others and to serve the teachings of Buddha.)

After that, do any of the dedications in *A Daily Meditation Practice*, but the main ones I would choose are: “Due to all the merits of the three times, may anyone who sees me, touches me, remembers me . . .” and “From now on, may whatever kind of life I experience, even rebirth in the lower realms, be most beneficial for all sentient beings, causing them all to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.” You don’t have to do all the dedications in the booklet; choose any one of them you like.

Or you can do the dedication that I often use, in which you request for this and that to happen just through your being in this universe, world, country, area or place. Dedicate for everyone to have perfect happiness; to find solutions to all their problems, including the various sicknesses; to never ever be reborn in the lower realms; and to achieve all the realizations of the path, especially bodhicitta.

Another very important dedication is, “Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, from now on in all my future lifetimes, may I be able to offer benefit as extensive as the sky to all sentient beings as the Buddha of Compassion does by having the same qualities within me as the Buddha of Compassion has.”

After that, recite *ge wa di* . . . and seal the dedication with emptiness.

At the very end, it is extremely important to dedicate for the flourishing of Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings. Always do this dedication at the end of every practice session. Dedicate to actualize the complete teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa, the unification of sutra and tantra, within your own mind in this very life; in the minds of all the students and benefactors of this organization, especially those who sacrifice their lives offering service to others and the teachings through this organization; and in the minds of all other sentient beings. You can do this dedication for the spreading and flourishing of Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings in the minds of all sentient beings elaborately or briefly. You should do this dedication for the flourishing of Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings at the end of any practice because if the teachings exist for a long time, sentient beings will have the opportunity of achieving happiness. Without the teachings of buddha, sentient beings have no chance of achieving happiness.

Ven. Chantal: Rinpoche, I have a question. Rinpoche said that Yeshe Karda is blue-green, but the translation says that Yeshe Karda is “extremely red in color,” so it is very confusing.

Rinpoche: Oh, I see. Yes, there is *great* confusion! Unbelievable confusion! The confusion is so big that it doesn’t fit in Paris—I’m joking.

Pabongka’s commentary says that Yeshe Karda is blue-green, but the prayer says that Yeshe Karda is extremely red. Maybe the deity has different colors. I think you can visualize whichever color you like, whichever color suits you more.

The water charity to the pretas and the Dzambhala water offering are now finished. Tomorrow, if there is time, we might go through the nine attitudes from the guru devotion section of Lama Tsongkhapa’s *Lamrim Chenmo*. The prayer that I translated is not from there, but from a text by Shabkar Tsogdrug Rangdrol, whose main guru was the abbot of Reting. I don’t remember this abbot’s name, but he composed many texts, including a commentary to *Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. However, the nine attitudes are also explained in Lama Tsongkhapa’s lamrim.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may all the father and mother sentient beings have happiness; may the three lower realms be empty forever; may all the bodhisattvas’ prayers be accomplished immediately; and may I be able to cause all this by myself alone.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, which are totally empty from their own side, may the I, who is also totally empty from its own side, achieve Vajrasattva’s enlightenment, which is also totally empty from its own side, and lead all sentient beings, who are also totally empty from their own side, to that enlightenment, which is also totally empty from its own side, by myself alone, who is also totally empty from its own side.”

[Multiplying mantras etc.]

Then dedicate for the flourishing of Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings.
Good night.

Friday, April 30 (A)

LONG LIFE PUJA FOR LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

Good morning, everyone.

THIS IS FOR ALL OF US

Today we're doing a long life puja, but it's a long life puja for every one of us. What does it mean that this is everyone's long life puja? We do this puja together. We all begin by taking strong refuge in the Guru-Triple Gem and we also do the rest of the practice together. In this way, we purify our minds and collect extensive merit. Therefore, any life obstacles there are, which arise from non-virtuous actions, get purified. That's how reciting the prayers contained in this puja becomes a long life puja for every one of us. Without your long life, even if I lived long, I could not benefit others!

Not only that, but this *Guru Puja* contains the most secret, highest tantric subjects. This practice was done by all those ancient yogis, such as Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa, Milarepa, and Lama Tsongkhapa as well. Just like Milarepa, who became enlightened in one brief lifetime of the degenerate age, who became enlightened in the same life in which he began to practice tantra, similarly, many of Lama Tsongkhapa's disciples achieved full enlightenment in the same way. All those great yogis who achieved enlightenment in one brief lifetime of the degenerate age were able to do so mainly through their practice of guru yoga. They meditated on, or practiced, guru yoga, which is what enabled them to reach enlightenment quickly, in one brief lifetime of the degenerate age.

Even if we don't know the subject—the commentary, or the meaning behind the subject matter of this puja—we are still extremely fortunate even to have the opportunity of reciting the words. We are extremely fortunate even to be able to hear the words of this most precious teaching of the quickest path to enlightenment.

So, my advertisement has now finished! Thank you very much.

[Puja begins.]

[Rice is distributed to Rinpoche and the Sangha.] Buddha has inconceivable qualities, Dharma has inconceivable qualities, Sangha has inconceivable qualities. The result of having devotion to those who have these inconceivable qualities is also inconceivable. Through the merit of offering this most delicious Tibetan rice, may we all be born in the pure land.

[Puja continues.]

THANK YOU SO MUCH

I would like to thank Venerable Marcel very, very much for taking the time to lead this Vajrasattva retreat while he was also extremely busy with the Maitreya Project. It came out in the observations that it would be very beneficial for him to lead the Vajrasattva retreat, so he kindly took the time to do this—leading every session every day, showing great patience and everything. Therefore, I would like to thank Venerable Marcel very much for leading the Vajrasattva retreat. All the various practices that I recommended were done extremely well, were of good quality.

[Rinpoche offers something to Marcel, everyone claps.] That's a gold coin to build a 500-foot Maitreya Buddha statue!

Next, I would like to thank very much, from the bottom of my heart, the director of the FPMT International Office, Sharon, for her total dedication, devotion and sincerity. Since she offered herself to the organization to benefit sentient beings and the teaching of the Buddha, I would like to thank her very much for having done the job of director and request her to remain on the board of directors.

I would also like to thank the mother of Land of Medicine Buddha, Venerable Namdag, from the bottom of my heart for being a loving mother to everyone, taking responsibility for everything at LMB, bearing many hardships and showing great tolerance through it all. In particular, I would

like to thank her for taking responsibility for organizing the Vajrasattva retreat.

After we made the decision to conduct this Vajrasattva retreat, we still weren't sure where to hold it. So the director, Venerable Namdag, and Land of Medicine Buddha took responsibility for organizing it here at Land of Medicine Buddha. So thanks are due to her for her dedication—her service to me and the organization—in general, and for running LMB in particular. And especially for taking responsibility for this retreat.

All the merit that we had the opportunity of collecting every day is due to that. For example, each time we generate the motivation of bodhicitta, we collect merit like the sky. In just one *Guru Puja* there are so many practices through which we collect merit. With each offering we make, we collect inconceivable merit. When we do the practice of rejoicing, when we rejoice in our own merits of the three times and in the merits collected by others, we collect merit like the sky. By doing all these practices, by planting the seed of the path to enlightenment on the basis of guru devotion, we collect inconceivable merit and bring ourselves nearer to enlightenment and nearer to enlightening all sentient beings. With each prostration, we collect inconceivable merit. With each recitation of each of the Thirty-five Buddhas' names, we purify many thousands of eons of negative karma, negativity collected not only in this life but from beginningless rebirths.

And especially doing Vajrasattva practice. As many Vajrasattva mantras as we have recited, that much negative karma have we purified. There's a huge difference between how we are now, after three months or however many days of Vajrasattva retreat have been done, and how we were before we started the retreat. It has made a huge difference—much of the negative karma created in this and previous lives won't have to be experienced at all, and much of the rest has been made much lighter. The more Vajrasattva we have been able to do, that much lighter has our karma become—inconceivable eons of suffering in the lower realms have become shorter and lighter or totally eliminated. Also, we have greatly decreased the amount of time we will have to experience samsaric suffering, which is like a bottomless ocean. And each day, in every session, we have collected inconceivable merit.

All this is due to Venerable Marcel and especially the organizer, Venerable Namdag, and all her helpers—the cook, Karen, and the rest of the

TEACHINGS FROM THE VAJRASATTVA RETREAT

staff here, all these young dakas and dakinis who serve every day with much tolerance, love and compassion. I would like to thank you all very, very much.

VAJRASATTVA RETREAT

This retreat has been a great learning experience for the future by showing how such retreats should be set up. Although out of laziness I didn't manage to retreat continuously for the three months or even get to all the sessions, I can see that the quality of practice at this Vajrasattva retreat has been very good. The powerful practices we did in the mornings—prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas and the *Guru Puja*—were extremely important. Such practices are the root of developing the mind in the path to enlightenment. Beginning the day with guru devotion by practicing something like the *Guru Puja* is really unbelievable; it's fantastic. The quality of this Vajrasattva retreat was really very good, especially with all those additional practices. Therefore, I am extremely happy with what happened.

My wish, however, is to hold a Vajrasattva retreat like this every three years or so. I think it would be incredibly beneficial. It's not possible to do it every year, but we could manage every three years or so, in different countries around the world. Sometimes it can be done in Taiwan; it can be done in different parts of the world. It's extremely beneficial.

HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA

I didn't get to write a letter to His Holiness the Dalai Lama yet. I wanted you all to hear this letter offering the merits of your practice to His Holiness. What I would like to do is to send His Holiness a letter from Land of Medicine Buddha offering him the merits of all the mantras we have recited. [See Appendix 6.]

As I mentioned in the first talk, we can tally all the mantras counted by those who completed 100,000 and the totals of the people who didn't finish that many and offer His Holiness the merits of all these mantras together with the merits of all the other practices we've done during this time—Vajrasattva practice, prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas, *Guru Puja* and so forth. We can dedicate all this merit for His Holiness, the

Buddha of Compassion, to have a stable life and for all his holy wishes to succeed immediately, particularly the cause of Tibet. We can dedicate all this merit to the quickest possible success of His Holiness's wishes for the freedom and independence of Tibet. We can then make the request, "Due to these merits, may Your Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Buddha of Compassion, guide us unceasingly in all future lifetimes, from now until our enlightenment. May all our actions become only most pleasing to your holy mind."

I planned to write a short letter like this. I did mention at the very beginning of the retreat that you can dedicate the merits from your heart in this way. It's not just for the letter. Anyway, all that we have been able to do has come about solely through the kindness of the Buddha of Compassion, His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

THANKS AGAIN

As I just mentioned, all the merit we have collected and all the negative karma we have purified is through the kindness of the organizers, so I would like to thank everybody again.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who did the entire three-month Vajrasattva retreat or part of it. I would like to thank you very, very much, from the bottom of my heart. Your helping each other has been very beneficial. Coming here to practice together, to inspire each other, has been very beneficial.

THE BENEFITS OF THIS RETREAT

Some of the retreat people I met expressed the wish to do this retreat again and were hoping another would be organized. This is an extremely good sign. However, by doing this retreat, whether you did the whole three months or just part of it, as much as you did, you have made your future lives that much easier—you have made it much easier to achieve realizations and have decreased the obstacles you will have to overcome. Many obstacles—negative karma created in relation to your gurus, other holy objects and sentient beings—have been purified during this retreat. You won't encounter these in future lives.

Therefore, rejoice and enjoy your life with the inspiration that you've

gained during this retreat and especially with bodhicitta, the thought of benefiting others.

Before, you may not have had that much feeling for Dharma, but now, after participating in the retreat, there's more of a Dharma feeling in your heart. Your heart has become more Dharma than before. That's a sign of having purified obscurations. You feel more compassion for others—that's one of the best signs of purification; more devotion to the Triple Gem, more devotion to the guru, more faith in karma than before—those are the best signs of purification. Those are in addition to the signs explained in the texts—this dream, that dream, the other dream, all those dreams. Dreams of eating ice cream, drinking milk-shakes . . . anyway, I'm joking!

I think that's all. I don't want to mumble any more!

But I must also thank the co-director here, Angela, who has been the Dzambhala of Land of Medicine Buddha! And Kendall, the Spiritual Program Coordinator, too. And the rest of the staff. [Rinpoche gives each one a blessing; much applause.]

[Puja continues.]

DEDICATION

“Due to all the past, present and future merit collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings—which is totally non-existent (we put in all this effort to collect merit and it's totally non-existent!), totally non-existent from its own side—may the I—which is also totally non-existent from its own side—achieve the absolute guru, Guru Vajrasattva's enlightenment—which is also totally non-existent from its own side—and lead all sentient beings—who are also totally non-existent from their own side—to that enlightenment—which is also totally non-existent from its own side—by myself alone—who is also totally non-existent from its own side.”

Then, finally, “May Lama Tsongkhapa's stainless teachings of unified sutra and tantra be actualized within my own mind and within the minds of everyone else here—all these Dharma friends who practice together and support each other in collecting merit—and within the minds of all the

FRIDAY, APRIL 30

students and benefactors of this organization—especially those who sacrifice their lives serving others and the teaching of the Buddha through this organization, including the organizers and staff here at Land of Medicine Buddha. May Lama Tsongkhapa’s stainless teaching of unified sutra and tantra be completely actualized in this very lifetime within us all, spread in the minds of all sentient beings, and may this teaching flourish forever.”

I would also like to thank very much all those who participated today, who attended the long life puja, especially Venerable Tarchin from Taiwan. Many of his students came from Taiwan today especially for this long life puja and made offerings to Nalanda Monastery and to individual monks and nuns. I would like to thank you all very much. Venerable Tarchin also wants to offer Nalanda Monastery at least \$3,000 a year to help the Sangha. After he finishes building his large temple in Taiwan, he wants to support the Western Sangha at Nalanda.

I would like today’s money offerings to be divided into three parts—one for the Sangha Fund, one for the Vajrapani prayer wheel and the other for the large prayer wheel at the Aptos house.

Thank you very much.

Friday, April 30 (B)

EVENING: AMITABHA INITIATION

This is the American style of giving teachings! [Rinpoche is sitting in an armchair.]

This Amitabha initiation, or blessing to achieve Amitabha Buddha's pure land, that we are going to do today is also combined with a long life initiation, or blessing—it's for both having a long life and achieving the blissful pure field of Amitabha Buddha.

THE LINEAGE OF THIS INITIATION

I received the lineage of this initiation from one of the heads of the Sakya sect, His Holiness Chogye Trichen Rinpoche, who is a guru of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, from whom His Holiness received in particular the Sakya *lam dre* teachings, and I think also the Dorje Purba initiation and some other teachings. But particularly the lam dre teachings, the main practice of the Sakya tradition. His Holiness Chogye Trichen Rinpoche is also one of the main gurus of His Holiness Sakya Trizin, who is the head of the Sakya sect. I went to Boston from Vajrapani Institute especially to request and receive this initiation to achieve the pure land of Amitabha. Rinpoche gave this initiation sitting in a chair, because when Rinpoche received this initiation from the head of the Nyingma sect, His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche, His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche himself gave the initiation sitting in a chair.

There are probably also some auspicious reasons for this, perhaps similar reasons to those for Maitreya Buddha's being seated—showing that he's about to get up, about to descend into this world. Whether it is exactly the same reason or not, there is some auspicious reason for this particular initiation being given in this way.

I think this chair is also giving teachings! [Rinpoche's chair is making

creaking noises when he moves.] The chair is giving teachings on emptiness—it's saying, "No form, no sound, no smell, no taste, no tangible objects, no enlightenment, no hell . . .!" Anyway, I'm joking!

THE PURPOSE OF THIS INITIATION

The purpose of this, then, is to be born in a pure land. What is the importance of that? First of all, the purpose of life is not to create suffering. The purpose of life is to achieve happiness. Anyway, that is our wish. Our wish is not to experience suffering; what we wish for is happiness.

The actual, real happiness that we should look for, that we should achieve, is liberation, the total cessation of the whole entire cycle of suffering—death, rebirth, old age and sickness; not finding desirable objects; then even after finding them, being worried and afraid of losing them; and not deriving satisfaction from the desirable objects we acquire. These are the problems, or sufferings, experienced particularly by human beings; problems experienced by the human body and mind.

Then there are all the sufferings not only of the human realm but also those of other sentient beings, such as the suras and asuras, the worldly gods, who suffer as desire realm gods, form realm gods and formless realm gods.

THE SUFFERING OF THE FORM AND FORMLESS GODS

The form and formless realm gods, those samsaric beings, even though they do not experience the suffering of change, they do experience pervasive compounding suffering—their aggregates are the production of their past karma and delusion and the contaminated seed of disturbing thoughts. Therefore, when the karma to be in, for example, the four formless realms—infinite sky, infinite consciousness, nothingness and the tip of samsara—when their karma to be at the tip of samsara finishes, again they must reincarnate in the desire realm. Even after reaching the highest realm in samsara, because they still have negative karma created in the past to be born in the lower realms, they have to reincarnate in samsara again, even in the lower realms. Again they have to circle from one of the six realms to the other—through the hell, hungry ghost, animal, sura, asura

and human realms. They have to reincarnate in these realms again and again, continuously circling through them, experiencing unimaginable suffering.

Even though the aggregates of the formless realm beings are contaminated, they don't have the suffering of pain, sickness, heat and cold; all these things that we do. They don't have to go through old age and sickness; the kinds of problem we experience in the desire realm. They don't have the suffering of pain or the suffering of change—sense pleasure derived from external objects, which are exclusively suffering in nature, but which appear to us as pleasure. Because they appear to us as pleasure, we get attached to them. In this way, we cheat ourselves. Attachment to sense pleasure becomes the cause of our reincarnating back into samsara once more and experiencing the same old suffering, again and again; the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering. Our aggregates are not only produced by an impure cause, karma and delusion, but also by the contaminated seed of disturbing thoughts. As long as that is not ceased, we have to reincarnate again in samsara—even after achieving rebirth in the highest realm in samsara.

WHAT GODS MUST DO TO GAIN LIBERATION

To be liberated from samsara, those long-life gods have to realize total renunciation of samsara. They have to actualize not only total detachment from the desire realm, which they already have, but also total detachment from the form realm. The formless realm beings, at the fourth level—the tip of the samsara, the highest realm of samsara—have total detachment from even the formless realm: infinite sky, infinite consciousness and nothingness. But they do not have total detachment from samsara, because there is no higher realm, than the one they're in, to compare it to. Thus, it is impossible for them to analyze that the tip of samsara has more gross suffering than the next highest realm and that the next highest realm has more peace and happiness than does the tip of samsara. They can't meditate on the better quality of the next highest realm because there is no next highest realm above the tip of the samsara. That is as high as you can go; the ultimate realm in samsara.

Therefore, even though gods at the tip of samsara have total detachment

from and complete renunciation of the entire desire realm, they are not detached from their own realm. They completely renounce the sense pleasures of the human realm and even those of the worldly gods in the desire realm. They even renounce, for example, the pleasures of the Gods of the Thirty-three, which is one of the sura desire realms where the gods have billions of times greater pleasures than human beings enjoy and whose abode is much more beautiful and has infinitely better enjoyments than those of any human being, even those who live in the most developed countries. The formless samsaric beings at the fourth level, the tip of the samsara, who have total detachment from even the pleasures of the desire realm devas, which are billions of times better than those of humans, also have total detachment from the lower formless realms—infinite sky, infinite consciousness and nothingness—but they do not have total detachment from the tip of samsara, their own realm.

To be liberated from samsara, those long-life gods not only need to have total renunciation of, total detachment from, the whole entire samsara, including their own realm, the tip of samsara, but they also need the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness. In order not to reincarnate in samsara again, they have to realize the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness.

It is said in the teachings that when their karma to be in the formless realm has finished, when they see that they have to reincarnate again in samsara, in the desire realm, in the lower realms and so forth, at that time—because they have achieved that realm through meditation and believed that they'd achieved liberation—heresy arises within them. They start to think, “Maybe it's not true; maybe there's no such thing as liberation.” Naturally, that heresy—believing that liberation is not possible—causes them to be reborn in the lower realms.

The conclusion is that even at the tip of samsara, the beings in that realm, who do not experience the suffering of pain or the suffering of change, are not free from pervasive, compounding suffering.

THE HAPPINESS WE SEEK SHOULD TRANSCEND ALL SUFFERING

Therefore, the real happiness that we should look for, what we should really achieve, is the happiness that is not suffering—ultimate happiness, total

cessation of pervasive, compounding suffering. Not just the cessation of the suffering of pain but also cessation of the suffering of change—the feelings that appear to be pleasure but in reality, when we analyze them, are found to be only suffering in nature. When we analyze those feelings we realize that they're actually suffering and that if we continue to do the action, instead of the pleasure getting better and better, it not only gets less and less but at the same time the suffering builds up more and more until it becomes overt suffering of pain. If we continue to do the action, the less and less we experience pleasure and the more and more we experience the suffering of pain.

Our mind labels the feelings we experience at the beginning as “pleasure” because a heavy suffering has just stopped; an unpleasant feeling has stopped because we have stopped doing the action that compounded it. For example, if we've been sitting for a long time and stand up, the discomfort that was compounded by the sitting stops because the action of sitting has stopped. The action that compounded the discomfort, pain, tiredness and so forth—the sitting—has stopped, therefore the discomfort stops. But at the same time, the action of standing immediately begins to compound the discomfort of standing. Although it is compounded immediately, it is very subtle—so tiny, so small, that we don't notice it at first. But even though we don't notice it at the beginning, the discomfort of standing has already begun. It begins the very moment we stand up. The action of standing immediately starts to create the discomfort of standing, but it is so small that it's unnoticeable. However, our mind labels that feeling “pleasure” and it appears to us as pleasure.

Then the emotional mind arises, the mind that exaggerates this feeling into pleasure. As I described one night, how delusions arise on the basis of ignorance; how our ignorance fabricates, or projects, inherent existence and we see an inherently existent object, similarly, our mind exaggerates the pleasure and clings to it with attachment; our mind clings with attachment to a feeling that is pain in nature but is very difficult to separate from. That clinging mind of attachment is not a peaceful mind. It disturbs and obscures our mental continuum. The effect of attachment on us is that we have no inner peace, no satisfaction and no tranquility. The effect is that we get disturbance, a lack of peace. The function of attachment, what it does to our mind, is to disturb and obscure our mental continuum.

ATTACHMENT IMPEDES WISDOM

This obscuration interferes with our being able to see the very nature of phenomena; their ultimate nature, the very nature of the I. It obscures us from seeing what the I is. Attachment obscures us from seeing the ultimate nature of the self that we think and talk about twenty-four hours a day—"I, I, I"; from seeing what the very nature of the I really is. Attachment prevents us from seeing the ultimate nature of our I.

As long as we don't realize the very nature of the I and the very nature of our mind, due to that hallucination, the ignorance of not knowing those natures, we continuously, forever, have to die and get reborn, die and get reborn, die and get reborn, and constantly experience old age, sickness and all the other human sufferings as well. We have to go through the same problems again and again in the human world by repeatedly being reborn in the human world, as well as having to go through the same old sufferings in the other five samsaric realms—the hell, hungry ghost, animal, sura and asura realms.

THE SUFFERING OF THE AGGREGATES

These aggregates, this association of body and mind, are pervasive, compounding suffering not only because they are produced by an impure cause; not only because they come from, have been created by, the impure cause of ignorance—not knowing what the I is, not knowing the ultimate nature of the I, not knowing the very nature of the mind; ignorance from which delusions such as desire arise—but also because they were created by delusion and karma.

This samsara, the association of our body and mind, is the container of all our life's problems because it was created by delusion and karma. Therefore, whenever our aggregates meet unfavorable conditions, we experience the suffering of pain. When our aggregates meet certain conditions, we experience suffering. In particular, when we meet the condition of an unfavorable object, we experience the suffering of pain—mental anguish, worry, fear, physical discomfort and so forth.

If our aggregates, the association of our body and mind, had not been created by karma and delusion, there would be no reason at all for our

having to experience, for example, fear. Why would we have fear? There'd be no reason. Why would we worry, why would we feel afraid, why would we experience unhappiness—why? There would be no cause for it. Why would we get sick? As I've mentioned before, even when we sit down, if we are not careful we can easily induce pain and discomfort, and the longer we sit, the more and more discomfort we feel. Even when we lie down, it's the same. The longer we lie down, the more unpleasant it becomes.

Even when we pinch our skin between our fingers, we feel pain and discomfort. With just that little bit of pressure we feel pain. Even that shows, proves, that there is reincarnation, that there are past lives. What put these present aggregates, this association of body and mind, together. What is the cause? What put our consciousness and this body together?

This association of body and mind is a result; it is a causative phenomenon. It is a result. Therefore, before the result—this association of body and mind, these aggregates, this samsara—manifested in our mother's womb, the cause must have existed. A cause has to exist before its result. Cause and result cannot exist together. There has to be a cause before a result; they cannot co-exist. That's not possible. The pre-existent cause in question is delusion and karma. Therefore, the pain we feel when we pinch our skin comes with our aggregates. We were born with that nature, which is pain, because it came from its cause—delusion and karma—which existed before this result.

Now, not only are these aggregates the container of all this life's problems, but they also become the foundation for future lives' problems, future lives' suffering. Not only are these aggregates pervaded by suffering but they also bear the contaminated seed of disturbing thoughts. Therefore, these aggregates compound the future samsara. The continuation of these aggregates circles to the next life, and that continuation of samsara, those aggregates, circles to the life after that, and then to the next and the next, and so it goes on, without end. We then experience all the sufferings of each of the six realms. If we do not completely break their continuity, we will continue taking samsaric aggregates without end and will continue drowning in the vast oceans of human suffering again and again, not to mention those of all the other realms as well.

Thus, there'll be no end to cancer, no end to chemotherapy, no end to surgery, no end to going to hospital, no end to taking medicine, no end

to spending vast sums of money checking the body, no end to x-rays. All these operations and other treatments will never finish, never end. There'll be no end to having jobs, having to work to make money.

Until you break the continuity of this samsara, these defiled aggregates—this continuity that circles from one life to another—there'll be no end to hard work. Again we'll have to educate ourselves all the way up from kindergarten, through school, college and university and try to find a job. There'll be no end to all this. We'll go on and on and on without end. It'll be incredibly boring! It'll go on and on. There'll be no end to marriage, no end to fighting! No end to divorce! No end to seeing psychologists; no end to having mental problems and seeing psychiatrists. No end to life difficulties. No end to going to meditation courses—billions and billions of courses; no end. This course, that course, the other course; courses for this, courses for that—no end. Courses for the body, courses for the mind, courses for the nose! Courses for the ears! Anyway, I'm joking!

REAL HAPPINESS IS THE CESSATION OF PERVASIVE COMPOUNDING SUFFERING

Therefore, the real happiness that we should seek is the total cessation of all this suffering, especially pervasive compounding suffering. We should seek the cessation of the continuation of these aggregates, of their circling; we should seek to be totally free from samsara.

Pervasive, compounding suffering is like a thorn bush that has been fastened to our naked body so that we have to carry it wherever we go. Whether we go to the mountains or the city, East or West, to the moon or underground, wherever we go, we are constantly in pain. Our very nature is pain and suffering because of this thorn bush chained to our naked body. Being in samsara is just like this. There's not a second's peace; no real happiness. It's like a blazing log of wood that is oneness with fire has been chained to our body. Until we break the chain, we will never be free from this burning log that is oneness with fire. We constantly experience problems, but wherever in the world we go in search of peace and satisfaction, it is the same. The suffering of samsara never stops; problems never stop.

If we can totally free ourselves from pervasive, compounding suffering, we will be totally free from the suffering of pain and the suffering of change. If we are not totally free from pervasive, compounding suffering,

any freedom from the suffering of pain we experience is only temporary. Even freedom from the suffering of change, the temporary samsaric pleasures whose nature is only suffering, is also temporary. We will continue to experience it again and again.

HOW TO ACHIEVE ULTIMATE HAPPINESS

Therefore, the happiness we need to achieve is everlasting, ultimate happiness, and once we have achieved it, it is impossible for this happiness to degenerate, for us to ever experience suffering again. It is impossible because there is no cause, no reason. There is no imprint, no seed of the delusion, that causes delusions to arise and motivate karma, which then causes us to experience suffering. Once we remove the seed of delusion, it is impossible for us to ever experience suffering again.

To achieve this great result takes just a one time effort, a one time practice. Unlike samsaric work, we don't have to do it again and again; again and again and again without end. It's not like that. Dharma practice brings liberation with a one time effort. Work to experience samsaric pleasure—temporary sense pleasure through form, sound, smell, taste and touch—has no end. We have to do it again and again. Once more, the pleasure finishes; once more we have to do the work. Again the pleasure finishes, again we do the work. There is no way to finish this kind of work, no way to complete it—never. It certainly hasn't happened so far—from beginningless rebirths up to now. And from now on, there'll be no end to it either; no way to complete this work.

But all this is talking about just our own ultimate happiness, our own liberation. It is even more important to achieve the ultimate happiness of full enlightenment, the great liberation—total cessation of even the subtle, negative imprints of delusion; ignorance, the unknowing mind.

Although the I is merely imputed by the mind, although there is no I in this body, although there is no I, no self, no me in this body, no I can be found in this body, although the body is not the I, the mind is not the I, even the association of body and mind is not the I, I exists nowhere on this association of body and mind, although nothing is the I, although there is no I on *this*, ignorance believes, apprehends that there *is* an I on these aggregates, on this association of body and mind, in this body—that there is an I here somewhere.

When we do not make this analysis in our daily lives, we feel that while there may not be an I in our head, in our stomach, but there is one somewhere inside the body, somewhere here [Rinpoche points to his chest]. We feel that there is a real I there.

While there is no such I there—when we do make the analysis, our wisdom cannot find it; the view of our wisdom is that there is no I there—the view of our wrong mind, wrong concept, ignorance, is that there *is* an I there, which is a total hallucination. While the I is merely labeled by the mind, our ignorance believes that this I merely labeled by the mind exists from its own side; that it is *not* merely labeled by mind.

Full enlightenment is the total cessation of this simultaneously born ignorance—the extremely subtle negative imprints left on our mental continuum, the complete quality of cessation—and the complete quality of realization.

Achieving this—and through it liberating numberless sentient beings from all their samsaric suffering and its cause, delusion and karma, and bringing them to the peerless happiness of full enlightenment—is the greatest happiness we can seek. It is the most important happiness as far as both we ourselves and especially all other sentient beings are concerned.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A GOOD HEART

Why should we help other sentient beings? Why should we benefit others; why should we think of others; why is it so important? The simple reason is that if you love others, others will love you. It's very simple to understand why it is so important to benefit others, to help others. Benefiting others, helping others, should be the main project, the main attitude, the main thing in your life. It should be your main education, your main project, the main way you live your life.

If possible, helping others should be the *only* thing in your life. There should be nothing else in your life—attitude and actions. If possible, there should be nothing else; only that.

However, the very simple reason is that if you have compassion, loving kindness for others, if you benefit others, if you help others, they will love you back; they will benefit you, they will help you. It is dependent arising. It works like that. As a result of your helping others, as a result of that action, you receive help from others.

As you plant a seed, so it produces the sprout, plant and fruit. Similarly, as you help others, benefit others, as a result of your good actions for others, you receive help from others, benefit from others. In this way, your wishes for happiness get fulfilled. Whatever wishes for happiness you have, they get fulfilled.

Thus, it has to come from you. Your mind, your good heart is the wish-fulfilling jewel. Amongst all material objects, the most valuable, the most priceless, is the wish-fulfilling jewel, but if this example doesn't work for you, think of money, which is the most common thing considered valuable these days. But even if you have a billion, trillion, zillion dollars that fill the whole sky, that money alone cannot fulfill all your wishes for happiness.

This is very simple to understand. In this world, there are many millionaires, billionaires—the richest people on earth—but there is still much suffering in their minds, in their lives; much dissatisfaction, much unhappiness in their hearts. All that money doesn't even bring happiness in their day to day lives, let alone the happiness of future lives, liberation from samsara and enlightenment. They get no real satisfaction from their money. Even though externally, materially, they might look successful, their lives are filled with misery, their hearts are filled with misery—depression, unhappiness. Empty hearts; empty lives. With money alone—even skies of dollars, untold billions of dollars—you cannot achieve ordinary happiness let alone the happiness of future lives, liberation and enlightenment. Wealth alone is not enough.

But from your good heart, your compassion, your loving kindness towards others, your thought of benefiting others, you can have it all. Your everyday life gives you great satisfaction, fulfillment. Your good heart—the thought of benefiting others, compassion and loving kindness—gives you much peace and happiness. Not only satisfaction, but fulfillment in your heart. This is infinitely more precious than skies full of billions of dollars or even wish-fulfilling jewels, which by praying to, all your wishes are granted and you can achieve whatever sense enjoyment or external object you like. No matter what material possessions are regarded as the most precious, their value is still nothing compared to that of the good heart—the thought of benefiting others, compassion and loving kindness.

As His Holiness the Dalai Lama often says, if you have a good heart, even if you have nothing to eat or drink other than water, you are still so happy. Even if externally you have nothing, if you have a good heart,

your mind is peaceful and happy. As His Holiness often mentions, even if externally you have nothing, no material possessions, even if you live by begging for whatever money or food you can get each day, there is much peace in your heart. Even if externally you have nothing, if you have a good heart, you enjoy much peace, happiness and satisfaction.

From your good heart, you achieve all the happiness of this life. More importantly, you receive all the happiness of future lives. If you have a good heart, you experience happiness when you die. The day your death comes, at that very important, very risky time, your mind is happy. Even at that time. Not only is your day-to-day mind happy, peaceful, fulfilled, but because of that, you enjoy good health. Because of your peaceful mind, your loving, compassionate thought, you are also more healthy physically. You have fewer heart attacks or other health problems; many sicknesses don't happen.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR LIFE

This is not just talking about past karma. If in your day to day life you don't take care of your mind, if you don't guard against anger, for example, you can easily get sick. It is very easy for people who are very impatient, very emotional, to have heart attacks. Similarly, other negative emotional thoughts, such as grasping desire, attachment, anger and jealousy, bring sickness. Recently there have been some scientific studies showing the ill effects of this kind of attitude; how these negative emotional thoughts damage the health.

Anyway, if these negative minds cause you to engage in unrighteous actions, many, many sicknesses can result. You get sick because you're not protecting your mind, not looking after your mind—which means not looking after your life. Not looking after your mind means not looking after your life, not taking care of your life. It's the same thing. Happiness and suffering come from the mind, therefore, taking care of your life, looking after yourself, means looking after your mind. In order to avoid problems, to have only peace and happiness, it has to be this way. To take care of yourself, to look after yourself to be happy, you have to look after your mind, take care of your mind. Essentially, that means you have to practice Dharma; do nothing other than Dharma.

The best way of taking care of yourself is by practicing Dharma. Any-

thing other than that creates negative karma. Taking care of your life, looking after yourself by any means other than Dharma creates negative karma. Anything outside of Dharma creates negative karma; anything other than good karma is negative karma. Creating negative karma is no way to take care of yourself. Not practicing Dharma is no way to love yourself, look after yourself, take care of yourself, take care of your mind. Practicing Dharma is the only way to do that.

The best way of taking care of your life, of looking after yourself, is to make sure you keep your mind in virtue, maintain a positive attitude, and the very best way of doing that is to keep your mind in bodhicitta, the thought of benefiting others. That is the very best.

Looking after yourself means looking after your own mind, keeping your mind in virtue, always positive, keeping it healthy, in non-ignorance, non-anger, non-attachment and non-ego; maintaining a healthy mind, a free mind, a detached mind. It means taking care of your mind by keeping it away from the painful emotion of desire. It means taking care of your mind by keeping it away from anger—keeping it in tolerance, patience, loving kindness; keeping it away from the emotional, painful mind of anger—that very dangerous, harmful mind that destroys your merit, the sole source of your happiness. Looking after yourself means keeping your mind in bodhicitta, the thought of benefiting others; keeping it away from the selfish mind.

Therefore, the real definition of looking after yourself, looking after your mind, taking care of your life is nothing other than practicing lamrim—keeping your mind in guru devotion and detachment, or renunciation—making your mind free, instead of bound and tortured by attachment; making your mind healthy—free from attachment clinging to this life, samsara, and endowed with bodhicitta and right view.

This is the essence. Through this, the door to all suffering is closed and the door to every happiness, including that of enlightenment, is opened. Not only is the door to moment to moment peace and happiness—everyday life peace and happiness, this life's peace and happiness—opened, but so is the door to all coming future lives' happiness, liberation from samsara and the highest enlightenment.

In this way, then, you are able to make your life meaningful. Practicing Dharma gives meaning to your life. Your life does not become meaningless. You don't need to commit suicide thinking life is hopeless and has

no meaning. Changing your attitude in this way, developing a positive mind, especially bodhicitta, makes your life the best—most meaningful and beneficial not only for yourself but for all sentient beings. It gives you a purpose for living.

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

The purpose of your life is to bring happiness, including the happiness of this life, to other sentient beings; to do whatever you can for others every day, even if it's small—giving a smile or a few kind words to make someone happy, to release someone from tension, depression or unhappiness; in everyday life, offering others whatever great or small happiness, comfort or benefit you can; taking every opportunity to bring the happiness of this life to others—is one aspect of the purpose of living for the happiness of others.

More important, however, is to bring others both the happiness of future lives in samsara and, eventually, the long-term, ultimate happiness of complete liberation from samsara; total liberation from all suffering and its cause.

And finally, even more important than that, the greatest purpose for living, is to bring numberless other sentient beings, or even just one sentient being, to the peerless happiness of full enlightenment—the total cessation of all mistakes of the mind and the complete accumulation of perfect qualities; to bring one sentient being to full enlightenment or, similarly, numberless sentient beings.

We need to think very broadly. Benefiting all other sentient beings is the meaning of our life. What's the meaning of life, what is the purpose of living? It is benefiting others in the four ways I just mentioned; offering others those four levels of benefit. There is no way to do this work of freeing others from all suffering and bringing them to full enlightenment perfectly, without the slightest mistake, other than by first becoming fully enlightened yourself. Your own mind needs to become omniscient—knowing directly, being able to read, all sentient beings' minds; knowing all sentient beings' different levels of mind, their individual karmas and all the various methods that suit them, that will bring them from happiness to happiness, to the peerless happiness of enlightenment.

First you must achieve full enlightenment yourself. To achieve full

enlightenment, you need to actualize the steps of the path that lead to that goal. Enlightenment doesn't just appear in your mental continuum without cause. You need to achieve the realizations of the path to enlightenment from the root, guru devotion.

ATTAINING ENLIGHTENMENT

In essence, to attain enlightenment without practicing tantra, the quick path to enlightenment, to actualize the five Mahayana paths to enlightenment—the paths of merit, conjunction, right-seeing, meditation and no more learning—you need to collect merit for three countless great eons and gradually advance through the ten bhumis. This takes three countless great eons.

The quick way to achieve enlightenment, to achieve enlightenment within one life, and not take that many eons to accumulate all that merit, is to practice tantra. By practicing Highest Yoga Tantra, you can complete accumulating the amount of merit that would otherwise take three countless great eons in a single brief lifetime of the degenerate time. By achieving the illusory body in particular, you can accomplish in one lifetime what would normally take three countless great eons of Paramitayana path practice.

However, if you can't become enlightened in this life, if in this life you are unable to actualize the clear light and illusory body—the paths that are the direct cause of the dharmakaya and rupakaya—if you are unable to have these realizations in this life, here, at last, comes the reason to be born in a pure land! Here comes the reason! Finally, the reason comes—the importance of being born in a pure land, why you should try.

BIRTH IN A PURE LAND

There are many buddha pure lands, which, of course, have pure enjoyments billions of times greater than even those of the worldly god realms; those deva realms. However, with many of those buddhas' pure realms, you can be still be reborn in the lower realms afterwards; it's not definite that you won't be.

But according to my root guru, His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche, and some other lamas, if you can be reborn in a pure land such as that of

Amitabha Buddha, you can practice tantra there and achieve enlightenment in that life. According to Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche and perhaps also Denma Lochö Rinpoche, according to some other lamas, there is no opportunity of practicing Highest Yoga Tantra and achieving enlightenment in the Amitabha pure land. To do so, you have to be reborn back in a human realm such as the one on this Southern Continent, where we now reside, where tantric teachings exist. You have to be reborn in such a human realm in order to complete the tantric path, to actualize the clear light and the illusory body, these completion stage accomplishments, and become enlightened there, in a human body.

However, I think it was Denma Lochö Rinpoche who said that if you are born in the pure land of Amitabha Buddha, it is definite that from that time on you will never again be reborn in the lower realms. Once you have been able to reincarnate in the pure land of Amitabha Buddha, rebirth in the lower realms is finished.

Here, in this teaching, in this initiation text I'm using, the lama who wrote it says that if you are born in the Amitabha pure land, you become enlightened there.

To be born in Tushita, the pure land of Maitreya Buddha and Lama Tsongkhapa, you need very pure morality. Only by living a life of exceptionally pure morality can you be born in a pure land such as Tushita. It is not easy to be born there. Also, there are other pure lands that require you to have realizations of emptiness or bodhicitta.

But Amitabha Buddha's pure land and others like it receive even ordinary beings who are very deluded, very obscured, who have no realizations. Such beings can very easily be born there. This is the special advantage of praying to Amitabha Buddha. This is why it is important to always remember Amitabha Buddha and pray to be born in his pure land.

In the past, before Amitabha Buddha became enlightened, while he was a bodhisattva, I think, I'm not a hundred per cent sure of the name, but the wheel-turning king called Rim of the Spokes, visualized the Amitabha pure land with all its incredible qualities, incredible enjoyments, incredible beauty, its wish-granting trees, this pure land where whatever you think comes to pass; where all your wishes get fulfilled. The king visualized this pure land, which has such incredible beauty, pure enjoyments, incredible qualities, and with bodhicitta made many prayers for ordinary beings, who have so much suffering, to easily be born there. He visualized

this, made these special prayers and dedicated with bodhicitta. From that bodhicitta, it has happened. This is one cause.

Then, of course, there's our merit—the principal cause—and our prayers and wishes to be in the pure land, to have all those pure enjoyments—the conditions—which are also very important.

How come it is so easy to be born in that pure land? One reason, one cause, is the strong prayers that the bodhisattva king made for us sentient beings. Therefore, if you can't develop the highest path, can't succeed in actualizing the path, in this life, go to this pure land, after which you can never again be reborn in the lower realms. It's impossible. For you, it's finished. Then, on top of that, develop your mind in the path to enlightenment. This is a very quick and easy way to achieve enlightenment, to be free from samsara. That's the essence of why it is important to be reborn in the pure land. That's the reason.

And that is the purpose of this initiation, of taking the blessings of Amitabha—to achieve his pure land. The other purpose is that this is also a long life initiation.

WHY HAVE A LONG LIFE?

The purpose of having a long human life is not so that you can create more negative karma, the cause of samsara, not so that you can create more negative karma with all the human skills—giving more harm to others, creating more negative karma, the cause of the samsara, the cause of the lower realms. It's not that.

The purpose of causing a long life by receiving the long life initiation here today is to have more time to practice Dharma. And of all the Dharma practices, the most important is that of benefiting others. That is the one to actualize. As I mentioned before, to bring those four levels of benefit and happiness to other sentient beings you must develop your mind in the path to enlightenment. That is the reason you need a long life.

WHY BENEFIT OTHERS?

As I started to mention before, not that you're hearing anything new, but it might be good for some people to hear why we need to help and benefit others. Why *do* we need to do this? Why do we have to do this in our

lives? As I mentioned before, if you love others, they will love you back, naturally. This is the nature of it. If you help others, they will help you, they will benefit you. That is the simple reason.

You want happiness, you don't want suffering; you want happiness for yourself, you don't want any suffering. How to ensure that? The question is, how to do that? The best thing you can do is to benefit others, cherish others, have loving kindness and compassion for others. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama often says, at least, if you are going to be selfish, if you are going to live a selfish life, the best thing is to be intelligently selfish. This has great meaning. What His Holiness means is that since you are looking for happiness—you want happiness, you don't want problems—you need to benefit others, help others, cherish others. To get what you want, you need compassion and loving kindness for others. That is the first reason.

Another reason is—normally I give this example—say there is a blind person who is in danger of falling over a cliff. You don't know this person. There's no history of this person's having helped you in the past, done something for you, given you presents or said nice things to you. There's nothing like that. Also, it's not this life's brother, this life's sister, this life's mother or father. It's not a relative; there's nothing like that either. It's a person completely unknown to you but someone suffering from blindness, who cannot see and is in danger of falling over a cliff. But you have eyes; you have arms and legs; you have everything you need to help that person. So if you don't, it's very cruel. If you have every opportunity to help that person, to rescue that person from falling onto the rocks far below, and don't, it's terribly selfish; extremely cruel and selfish.

Just like that, numberless sentient beings are suffering because they are under the control of delusion and karma, completely overwhelmed by delusion and karma, completely overwhelmed by suffering. Basically, they are suffering, so they need help. Helping them has nothing to do with receiving benefit yourself. Basically, others are suffering, they need help and you have every opportunity to help them.

This time, you have received a human body. Not just a human body but a perfect human body. You have met the Dharma and a virtuous friend, a leader of the blind, who explains the difference between right actions, which are to be practiced, and wrong actions, which are to be abandoned; a guide who shows the path. You also have the opportunity, according to how open your wisdom eye is, to know for yourself what is right, to be

practiced, and what is wrong, to be abandoned. What should be practiced is the path to happiness, liberation and enlightenment. You can develop your mind in the path to enlightenment; you can increase your capacity to benefit others. Even if you don't have much capacity to benefit others now, you can develop it further. You can develop your compassion, wisdom and power to benefit others. You have every opportunity.

But the other sentient beings are devoid of a leader of the blind, a virtuous friend. They are devoid of Dharma; they have no wisdom eye. Because of all that, as the teachings explain, they are totally overwhelmed by delusions, possessed by the maras, the delusions, and constantly attacked by sickness, the three types of suffering. At every moment, in every second, whatever they do creates negative karma. At every moment, in every second it's as if they're stumbling over the cliff to the lower realms. Every second is like that.

Therefore, for the basic reason that they are suffering and you have every opportunity of helping them, of freeing them from all their suffering and bringing them all happiness, especially at this time, you are responsible for benefiting others. This is your responsibility.

A third reason for why you need to benefit others, help others, work for others, is because your happiness depends on others. All your comfort, even that of having a good reputation, necessarily comes from others. Even receiving praise that makes you happy, gives you pleasure, depends on others, comes from others. All your happiness and comfort depends on others. Similarly, others' happiness and comfort depend on you. As your happiness comes from others, your success depends on others, so too does others' happiness and success depend on you. Therefore, for this reason, it is very important.

You are just one person. Even if all sentient beings were to criticize you, even if nobody loved you, if everybody were angry at you—the whole earth, even the mountains, rocks and flowers! Anyway, I'm joking—even if all human beings, animals and insects were angry at you, didn't love you, you are just one person. You are just one person—when you compare your importance with that of others, who are numberless, you are nothing. Even were you to achieve everlasting happiness, you'd be just one person. It's nothing.

And no matter how heavy your problems, they're nothing; they're just one person's problems. Your suffering is just one person's suffering. One

person's problems and suffering are nothing. Other suffering beings are numberless; others who need happiness are numberless. Numerically, others are the most precious; their need is the most important. For them to be free from suffering and to have happiness is of much greater importance because their number is much greater. When we elect the president or leader of a democratic country, the person who receives the most votes gets elected. By getting the majority's votes, that person is considered more important.

As it says in the *Guru Puja*—this is one quotation that I often recommend to meditate on in the morning when you generate motivation for your life, especially the motivation for that day's life—first thing in the morning, meditate on this verse [91] to transform your attitude from self-cherishing into bodhicitta.

“By seeing that the chronic disease of cherishing the I is the cause giving rise to all suffering and the undesirable suffering to be born . . .”—all the undesirable problems of this life and in the future lives to be born—“. . . blame it on the ego and harbor it . . .” Like you bear a grudge against somebody who gave you harm. Somebody harmed you in the past and you keep this grudge in your mind—how that person is so bad. Similarly, harbor a grudge against your ego and keep thinking how harmful it is, how bad, how dangerous. “Please grant me blessings to eliminate this great demon, cherishing the I.”

What it is saying here is that suffering is born from cherishing the I. From this cause, all suffering, all life's problems, are born, from day to day problems to obstacles to achieving enlightenment. All the undesirable things that happen to you come from your ego, your self-cherishing thought. When other people abuse you, don't love you, are angry at you, all these things, cherishing the I is the source of all that. Self-cherishing is the source of all suffering; it opens the door to suffering. Therefore, especially for this reason, the I is always to be abandoned and never to be cherished. If you cherish the I, it becomes the problem; you create problems in your own life. Cherishing the I is what creates problems and obstacles in your life. The I is to be discarded forever. Especially for this reason, the I is forever to be abandoned.

This is the key. If you let it go, happiness; you open the door to happiness. If you don't let it go, suffering; you open the door to suffering. If you cherish the I, you close the door to happiness and open the door to

suffering. If you let it go, you close the door to suffering and open the door to happiness—including day to day, moment to moment peace and happiness—in your mind, in your heart.

The next verse [92] says, “Please grant me blessings to be able to see that cherishing my mothers, the thought of leading them to happiness, is the door to infinite qualities and happiness.”

Happiness, as I mentioned before, is this very minute’s happiness, today’s happiness, this life’s happiness, future lives’ happiness, liberation from samsara and full enlightenment—all happiness. Not just your own happiness but the happiness of all sentient beings. This thought, your good heart—cherishing the mother sentient beings, thinking of leading them to happiness—is not only the door to all your good qualities, all your happiness, all your realizations from guru devotion up to enlightenment, but it is also the door to happiness for all other sentient beings. Therefore, we ask to be granted blessings to be able to see that this thought is the door to all happiness for ourselves and all other sentient beings. I just added that it’s also the source of happiness for all sentient beings, because from your bodhicitta, all sentient beings receive all happiness. That’s why.

The rest of this verse reads, “Even if all these transmigratory beings arise as my enemy, all turn against me, please grant me blessings to cherish them more than my life.”

Even if they all turn against me, become my enemy, numberless other beings, may I be able to cherish them more than my life. You are asking blessings for this.

I often mention that in the morning, when you get up, first thing, meditate on these two stanzas to change your attitude into bodhicitta—not just for today, not just for this life, but from now on until you achieve enlightenment, until you bring all sentient beings to enlightenment.

Therefore, now, the last thing, if you cherish this one insect or person, this one sentient being, if you have the thought of bringing them happiness, causing them happiness, you receive enlightenment. If, however, you renounce this one insect or person, whatever it is—a spider, a mouse, a rat—whatever that sentient being is, whatever that person is, if you don’t cherish that, you don’t receive enlightenment. It makes a huge difference, like that between sky and earth. Cherishing this one sentient being gives you enlightenment; not cherishing this one sentient being prevents your enlightenment.

Now who is more important, you or this other person? You or this other sentient being—who is more important? The other sentient being is much more important. Even one on one—you are one, the other is one—the other is most important, most precious. If you cherish the other, that one other being, all your wishes for happiness—including enlightenment, realizations, the happiness of all sentient beings—will happen. If you renounce the other being, don't cherish that being, none of these things happen. Therefore, this one sentient being is most precious, most kind; a jewel more precious than all the wish-fulfilling jewels put together, more precious than skies filled with billions of dollars.

When you think like this, when you think of the unbelievable benefit of cherishing even one sentient being, when you think that if you dedicate your life to even one sentient being, sacrifice your life for even one sentient being, it brings you to enlightenment, makes you achieve enlightenment very quickly . . .

. . . As I mentioned once before, when the great yogi Ngagpa Chöpawa was going to Odi to practice tantra—probably the final part of the practice—at the river crossing there was a woman totally covered by leprosy sores, with pus and blood oozing out. She asked the yogi, “Please take me across to the other side of the river.” The yogi didn't help her and left. Later, his disciple Getsul Tsimbulwa, a monk living in the thirty-six vows, came along and she asked him the same thing, “Please take me across to the other side of the river.” As soon as he saw this woman sitting there, completely covered with leprosy sores with pus oozing out, totally dark, just by seeing her, he felt unbearable compassion and immediately, without any hesitation, without thinking that he is a monk and she is a woman or that she's covered in disease, something untouchable, with none of this, he just picked her up, put her on his back and started across the river. Getsul Tsimbulwa, with his unbearable compassion, completely sacrificed himself to carry this woman.

However, when they reached the middle of the river, this woman suddenly became the deity Dorje Pagmo, the female buddha, Dorje Pagmo, and took this monk to the pure land Tarpa Kachö. If you are born in this pure land, you are one hundred per cent certain to become enlightened in that life. So, in the middle of the river, this woman, who was covered with leprosy, looking very ordinary, in much suffering, became the buddha, the

deity Dorje Pagmo, and took this monk to her pure land, and in that way, he became enlightened.

In this story, the teacher, the yogi, didn't help that woman but just passed by. However, his disciple, the monk, sacrificed his life to take care of her, to carry her across the river. Then, in *this* life, without first having to die, he was taken to her pure land in his ordinary body—in this life, not the next. He went to the pure land, not after death but in the body of this life, and became enlightened there. From the story, it seems that perhaps the disciple got enlightened before his teacher, the yogi.

Therefore, when we think of the benefits of cherishing one sentient being, sacrificing our life for one sentient being, they are like the infinite sky. The benefits are unbelievable; something to enjoy in life. The benefits of cherishing even one sentient being with bodhicitta are like the sky. Cherishing others, seeing that even one sentient being is much more precious than yourself, is the most precious thing in your life, is most kind, is an unbelievable way to enjoy your life.

I'm not telling you why we should help others, why we should benefit others, because this is something new that you haven't heard before. Those who have received lamrim teachings have heard this many times. I'm doing it to inspire or remind all those who already know these things and to inform those who don't but need to know. Why? Because this is the most important education of all. This is more important to know than anything else in life. This is the most important thing you will ever learn.

THE AMITABHA INITIATION

OK. So now to do a very quick initiation! Actually, the subject I planned to talk on today was the nine attitudes of guru devotion. That was my plan. That's why I brought my *Lamrim Chenmo* and another text that I translated. But somehow it has turned out this way, where I now don't have time to do this. So maybe another time! Maybe tomorrow morning, at three o'clock!

It says here in the text that it is very easy to be born in Amitabha's pure land. Whoever just hears the name of Amitabha Buddha and dedicates their merits to be born in his pure land can find themselves there. This is

due to the power of Amitabha's prayers, as I mentioned before. It also says that once you have been born there you will never return to samsara, will never again even hear any suffering. There is no suffering in the pure land of Amitabha Buddha, and in that perfect state of happiness you become enlightened there.

POWA

When the Nyingmapa lama Tulku Mikyö Dorje was very young, just over thirteen years of age, on Saka Dawa, the full moon of the fourth Tibetan month of the year, he saw Amitabha Buddha, as huge as a mountain, with the Buddha of Compassion, Chenrezig, on the right and Vajrapani on the left. He had a very glorious, magnificent vision—he actually saw them—and they granted him the initiation into the practice for achieving the pure land of Amitabha. It was daytime when he actually saw these three deities—Amitabha in the center, Chenrezig on the right and Vajrapani on the left—and received initiation into this practice to achieve Amitabha's pure land. Later, asleep at night, he again saw Amitabha Buddha with his entire entourage, who gave him the instructions and the prayers of request in a dream.

The special powa practice for transferring your consciousness to the pure land of Amitabha Buddha is said to be very successful. You achieve it by doing powa meditation, training your mind in the transference of your consciousness to the pure land. After one or two days of this—it doesn't take more than three days—signs will appear to indicate that you will be born in the pure land. If your visualization is clear, you develop a small swelling on the crown of your head, and a little fluid oozes out of it—such are the signs of success of your powa practice, your mind training in the transference of consciousness. That means that if you actually do it, your consciousness can be transferred, actually go, to the pure land.

The idea is that when the signs of death appear to you—certain dreams and also external signs . . . for example, there are other ways to check the length of life remaining by observing your pattern of breathing. I have noticed that sometimes at the beginning of the new Tibetan month, when the new moon starts, at dawn my breathing changes. Being able to interpret these changes is said to be a very reliable way of judging how many

more years you are going to live; when you will die. This is regarded as a very reliable way of finding out.

There are also different ways of checking through certain meditations, physical signs and dreams. However, if you try all these means and discover that your impending death is due to negative karma, you need to do various purification practices. If your death is due to a shortage of merit—you don't have the merit to live much longer—and your untimely death is about to happen, offer mandalas or create extensive merit by any other means you can: serving others, making holy objects and so forth; whatever collects the most extensive merit.

The quickest way of achieving enlightenment, of collecting the most extensive merit, is to actualize your guru's advice or offer service to your virtuous friend. This topic is always mentioned in the outlines of the guru devotion teachings, in both sutra and tantra. Doing things that please your guru's holy mind is the quickest way of achieving enlightenment and the quickest, most powerful way of purifying negative karma.

If your death is due to a shortage of life, to your life finishing, you need to do long life meditation and take long life initiations. There are many other practices, various means, for achieving a long life—liberating animals, saving their lives, helping sick people, serving them, giving food and clothing to those who don't have food and clothing; things like that. Also, making light offerings and so forth, doing vase breathing meditation, practicing the meditation called "Eating the sky as food"—there are many things you can do to have a long life.

If you try all these things but the signs still appear, that means that now you are definitely going to die—definite signs have happened, nothing you've done has helped, now you are definitely going to die. Before death actually happens, when you are certain to die but before you actually do, if there are six months or so between when the signs first appeared and the expected date of death, do powa. If you wait until death arrives to start practicing powa, you might be experiencing some heavy sickness and be unable to meditate at that time.

If you do powa for another, it is taught that you shouldn't do it before the breathing has stopped, while the person is still breathing. The right time to do powa is after the breath has stopped. I think that probably there would still be heat at the heart. However, it is possible there might

be other conditions where the consciousness is still there, but usually, even though the breath has stopped, heat remains at the heart for some time.

But I heard that a while back in Tibet, there were nine or ten people who were going to be executed by the Communist Chinese army. One lama asked the Chinese soldier who was going to shoot them to wait. Then the lama sat down and did powa for all those people. At that moment, all those people collapsed together. Before the Chinese soldier could shoot them, the lama who asked him to wait did powa meditation and all those people collapsed together. Whether he himself was one of them or not, I don't know, but they didn't need to be shot; they just all fell simultaneously. Thus, the soldier was saved from creating the bad karma of killing them and the people all went to the pure land. So, they were still breathing, when you wouldn't normally do powa for others, but I think this was a special case, since they were all about to be shot. Those stories are great.

It also says in the text that the merit of making charity of three galaxies filled with jewels is less than that you create by putting your palms together and generating just one second's devotion for Amitabha Buddha. If, on hearing Amitabha Buddha's name, even one second's devotion arises from deep within your heart, your life is directed towards enlightenment. That is the benefit.

[Initiation begins. Rinpoche's comments during it follow.]

HOLY INITIATION WATER

This water [being used at this point in the initiation] comes from a holy place of Padmasambhava in Nepal. One of the heads of the Nyingma sect, Trulshig Rinpoche, who is also one of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's gurus—I think His Holiness the Dalai Lama took an initiation from Rinpoche—goes there quite often to do retreat. There's a monastery there that was built by a man who was a *ngagpa*, a lay tantric practitioner, but later became a monk. I think he was the closest disciple of the previous Lawudo Lama, the lama who is regarded as my past life. He built this monastery at that Padmasambhava holy place, where Padmasambhava achieved the realization of immortality. He has invited me there many times but so far I haven't made it. Many other lamas go there to do retreat. His Holiness Sakya Trizin went there to do retreat before giving one great collection of

many hundreds of initiations. To not have any life obstacles from giving these initiations, he went there to do a long life retreat beforehand. It is a very powerful place.

There is some Padmasambhava special water there. If you drink it you get liberated from the lower realms. Drinking that water purifies negative karmas. Somebody gave me some water from that cave. The former Lawudo Lama's disciple used to send me a small bottle of this water from time to time, and I have the wish to go there, but as yet, I haven't seen this holy place. This water is very blessed water. It's one of the very holy things at that place. That's what's mixed in here; it's very precious. There's also some water from the Manjushri mountain in China mixed in.

[Initiation continues.]

RINPOCHE'S MOTHER'S INCARNATION

This is a prayer that my mother used to do. She didn't have many different prayers to do, but this was a prayer that she knew by heart. Then I taught her some additional prayers from the nyung nä practice. Mostly she recited OM MANI PADME HUM, as I think I mentioned once before. A year before she passed away she told me she used to recite 50,000 OM MANI PADME HUMS every day, but was no longer able to do that many. As I look back on it now, I think she probably had cancer by then. She had some pains in her back and could not eat food. At that time she said she could not do as many OM MANI PADME HUMS a day as she used to—50,000.

I think that is why her incarnation's mind is so clear. He can remember all the relatives, recognize all the relatives, all the family—he recognizes them immediately with no shyness. He immediately asks you to sit down and starts talking right away. But he is shy with outside people. The very first time he met the family he was not at all shy. He immediately spoke, invited them in and to please sit. He also remembers many things, especially her belongings. He can recognize everything she used to use in everyday life. He went looking for her things; searched until he found them in the kitchen or the rooms where they were kept.

One of the many stories is that my mother, like many other Sherpas in the old times in Solu Khumbu, used to consider plastic buttons to be very precious. The people in that area thought plastic buttons that you

found on clothes were very precious because you could not buy them in a shop. Spoons, needles, things like that—you could not buy them up there, they had to be brought in from far away. Some of the people wore spoons around their necks. Now Solu Khumbu is totally changed from how it was back then. Now there are so many Western things—sweet tea and coffee—coffee has become a very common thing. The people there now have many Western things. But she used to collect all the buttons from her own shirts and keep them in a bottle. Then, when the incarnation happened, my sister made a shirt with those buttons on it, and as soon as she put it on the incarnation's body, he said, "Oh! Those are my buttons." He could recognize them immediately because my mother used to save those very precious buttons in a bottle.

A very close family friend, a Sherpa called Ang Puwa, who lives in Kathmandu, went to see the incarnation with my brother Sangye, who lives near Boudhanath. The incarnation had been waiting a long time to meet him and my brother . . . it took a long time to get around to visiting the incarnation, so he always used to talk about coming down to Kathmandu. Once he said he'd like to put all the Lawudo animals—the dzos and the cows—onto a helicopter and fly down to see us. There was one dzo who in the past used to carry our luggage and the food we had to transport to Lawudo. I think Lama Yeshe might have ridden on it once. It had something wrong with its leg. The incarnation said to put that dzo and all the other animals into a helicopter. Then somebody told him that there was no place to keep animals at Kopan, so he said, "Oh! We can keep them at Sangye's place for some time there and feed them there."

One day, together with that Sherpa man who was my mother's very close friend, they went to see the incarnation in the village next to the hermitage at Lawudo. As soon as they had entered and sat down, the incarnation immediately said the other Sherpa's name—Ang Puwa. He immediately said, "Ang Puwa, please have . . ." whatever his mother was serving at the time, chang or tea or whatever it was. He was shocked that the incarnation could immediately recognize him, remember his name. So he grabbed the boy by the leg and cried; the Sherpa man cried.

There are many stories like this. I think his having such an incredibly clear memory is a partial benefit of having recited OM MANI PADME HUM so much in his previous life. Remembering past and future lives is a very

small benefit of reciting OM MANI PADME HUM. Out of the infinite benefits of reciting OM MANI PADME HUM, that is one of the smaller ones. Because she was a nun—she took her getsul ordination from His Holiness Ling Rinpoche—because of her morality, she was able to be reborn as a human being and meet the Dharma again. Many people ask whether the incarnation is a girl or a boy, because its previous life was female. People ask whether it's a boy or girl incarnation. The incarnation is a boy.

This was one of her prayers. She didn't know many other prayers. This was one of the ones she knew. She used to recite a whole set of prayers, like the Six-session Yoga. She would recite them once in the morning, another time in the afternoon, and again at night. There were not so many prayers, just a few pieces, so she used to recite them many times a day.

[Note: Tragically, Rinpoche's mother's incarnation, Ngawang Jigme, passed away in hospital in Kathmandu at 11 a.m., October 27, 1999, at the age of nine, after suffering a head injury in south India a few months earlier. For more information, go to the Web site: www.dharmatours.com/jigme.]

[Initiation concludes.]

Now the initiation has finished. One text says, "In the Western world there is a blissful realm where Amitabha Buddha abides. Whoever mentions his name, recites his name, holds his name, will be born there, and then when you die you will see Amitabha Buddha in the form of a monk."

I gave this initiation at LMB during Chiu-nan Lai's time here as director, but that time I sat on the other side of the gumpa, facing this way. I don't know how many years ago that was; maybe six or seven? This is not the first time I have given the Amitabha initiation here. That time I also sat on a chair.

It is said that it is best to continue doing the powa practice until you get signs. Then, if you cannot do any version of the daily practice—even the middle-length or short versions—at least you should say,

"I prostrate to the Savior, Infinite Life, Buddha Amitayus;
I prostrate to the Savior, Infinite Light, Buddha Amitabha,"

then recite the mantra of Amitabha Buddha, OM AMI DEWA HRI. One text I saw, maybe by Pabongka, said normally you recite OM AMI DEWA HRI, but another text I saw said to recite AMITOFU; something like that. But normally, after saying, “I prostrate to the Savior, Infinite Life, Buddha Amitayus; I prostrate to the Savior, Infinite Light, Buddha Amitabha,” recite one mala of OM AMI DEWA HRI, and when you have finished the mala, say, “May I born in the pure land; may I be born in that blissful field.”

What does it mean to be born in the Amitabha pure land? If you do this practice and remember Amitabha Buddha when you die, after death, when you reach the intermediate state, you will see Amitabha Buddha and be born in the Amitabha pure land. That’s what the text says. And as I mentioned before, it is such an easy way to be born in a pure land. Other pure lands are difficult to be born into. You need many qualities—pure morality, realizations and so forth. But this is the easiest. Very ordinary beings with many delusions can easily be born there, even if they have no attainments, no realizations. It is very easy for them to be born in this pure land. This, then, is the special advantage of praying to Amitabha, reciting his mantra and doing the meditation practice.

DEDICATION

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may all virtuous friends have stable lives and may all their holy wishes succeed immediately.

“May Lama Ösel Rinpoche, the incarnation of Lama Yeshe, who was inconceivably kinder than all the buddhas of the three times, have a stable life and be able to show the same aspect and qualities that Lama Tsongkhapa had and be able to offer infinite benefit to sentient beings through showing the practice and attainment of the whole path and explaining Dharma through writing and debate.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I be able to offer infinite benefit like the sky to all sentient beings as did Lama Tsongkhapa by having the same qualities within me in all future lifetimes, from now on.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings—which are totally non-existent

from their own side—may I—who is totally non-existent from its own side—achieve Buddha Amitabha’s enlightenment—which is also totally non-existent from its own side—and lead all sentient beings—who are also totally non-existent from their own side—to that enlightenment—which is also totally non-existent from its own side—by myself alone—who is also totally non-existent from its own side.

“I dedicate all the merits in the way that the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three times praised greatly and as Samantabhadra and Manjughosha realize.”

While I say the words of these prayers, visualize the Thousand-arm Compassionate Buddha, the seven Medicine Buddhas and Kshitigarbha and make the dedication—but also request them for success. Visualize them while I say the words and think at the same time. In this way, both dedication and requests get done.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me and the merits of the three times collected by buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may the previous generations of my family that have passed away, any member of my family who has passed away; those whose names were given, for whom I promised to pray; those who rely on me who have died; and the numberless other sentient beings who are suffering unimaginably in the hell and other lower realms immediately get liberated from those sufferings and reincarnate in the pure land, where they can be enlightened. Or, may they achieve enlightenment quickly by receiving a perfect human body and meeting a perfectly qualified Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, whenever I hear that somebody is sick, may just my hearing it cause that sentient being to be healed immediately; may just my hearing that some sentient being has died immediately cause that sentient being never to be reborn in the lower realms; and if that sentient being has already been reborn in the lower realms, may those merits cause that being to be liberated from the suffering realms immediately and reincarnate in a pure land where that being can become enlightened. Or if the sentient being has been born human but has no opportunity to practice Dharma, may that being achieve a perfect human body and attain enlightenment quickly by meeting a Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I, my family members, and all the students and benefactors in this organization, especially those who sacrifice their lives serving others through this organization and serving the Buddhadharma as well, including all the center directors, the LMB staff and everyone else here, may we all have long lives, be healthy, and, most importantly, may we be able to actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment, the path shown by Lama Tsongkhapa, in this very lifetime, without even a second’s delay.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may all our centers, including Land of Medicine Buddha, be able to spread the complete teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa in the minds of all sentient beings by receiving everything they need. May all the projects in this organization, including those here at Land of Medicine Buddha—the 100,000 statues of the Medicine Buddha Temple, the 100,000 stupa project, the hospice to help people who are dying—and other projects, such as finding good places for the Sangha, be actualized and succeed immediately by receiving everything they need. May the 500-foot Maitreya Buddha statue succeed, be completed quickly, by receiving everything needed for this to happen. May all our centers, projects and statues cause bodhicitta, loving kindness and compassion to arise in the minds of all sentient beings; due to this, may no sentient being ever again experience war, famine, disease, earthquake, danger from fire or water or any other undesirable thing and may all our centers, projects and statues cause all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, whatever action I do from now on with body, speech and mind, whatever I experience—being up or down, health or sickness, criticism or praise, even life or death, even rebirth in hell—may all these experiences and all my actions be most beneficial for all sentient beings and cause all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“May the teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa in particular and the Buddha’s teachings in general, flourish in all directions forever.”

GESHE NGAWANG DAKPA

I forgot to introduce Geshe Ngawang Dakpa before, during today's puja. I invited Geshe-la to teach in Taiwan about three years ago. Recently, according to divination, I requested Geshe-la to teach in America at the centers around here—Tse Chen Ling in San Francisco, Land of Medicine Buddha, Vajrapani Institute and Gyalwa Gyatso Center. Geshe-la has just arrived to take up this position.

Geshe-la is an extremely well qualified teacher. After leaving Tibet, he studied at the Buxa refugee camp for all the years the monks were there. He was in the same class as Lama Lhundrup and was top of the class. Geshe-la is not only expert in Dharma, but of all the monks at Sera, Ganden and Drepung, he is probably the most expert in astrology. He can produce calendars containing all the details about each day—the planets, what's bad, what's good, all these things. Not only can he make calendars but he also does black astrology, the branch of astrology that deals with life and what to do when somebody dies—the methods to be employed at that time, how to discover why the person died and what to do to prevent the rest of the family being harmed by that, how to stop a person dying at the wrong time, all the methods for a good rebirth and what buddha statues and thangkas to make for the person to take a good rebirth—all the details of things like that. Black astrology talks about matters of life and death.

Geshe-la has studied and is an expert in most aspects of Tibetan education—grammar, poetry, all these things. Therefore, he's an extremely good person to teach the basic program, all the philosophical subjects that are commentaries to the lamrim. You now have a great opportunity to learn all this. The idea is to start a four-year program in these subjects at our San Francisco center, Tse Chen Ling. I'm just telling you this to make you aware of the possibilities, these great opportunities to learn Buddhism more deeply and extensively.

And now we've really finished! Thank you so much.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

SHORT VAJRASATTVA MEDITATION PURIFICATION WITH THE FOUR OPPONENT POWERS

THE POWER OF DEPENDENCE (A): TAKING REFUGE

“I forever take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha,
I take refuge in all the three vehicles,
In the dakas and dakinis of secret mantra yoga
In the heroes and heroines, the gods and goddesses
And in the bodhisattvas of the ten bhūmis.
But most of all, I take refuge in my holy guru forever.” (3x)

THE POWER OF REGRET

First recall the definition of negative karma—any action that results in suffering, usually an action motivated by ignorance, attachment or aversion.

“Almost every action I do, twenty-four hours a day, is motivated by worldly concern, attachment to the comfort of this life. It is like this from birth to death in this life and has been like that from beginningless rebirths. Nearly every action I have ever created has been non-virtuous, the cause of suffering. Not only that, but continuously I have also been breaking my pratimoksha, bodhisattva and tantric vows. Worst of all, I have created the heaviest of negative karmas in relation to my virtuous friends—getting angry at them, arising heresy, having non-devotional thoughts towards them, harming their holy body and disobeying their advice. Having these negative imprints on my mental continuum is unbearable. It’s as if I’ve swallowed a lethal poison. I must practice the antidote right away and purify all this negative karma immediately, without a second’s delay.”

In this way, generate strong feelings of urgency and regret.

REMEMBERING IMPERMANENCE AND DEATH

“Many people my age or younger have died. It’s a miracle that I’m still alive and have this incredible opportunity to purify my negative karma.

Death is certain but its time is most uncertain. If I were to die right now, I would definitely be born in the lower realms. Because I could not practice Dharma there I would remain in the lower realms for countless eons. Therefore, how unbelievably fortunate I am to be able to purify my negative karma right now, without even a second's delay, by practicing the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation."

THE POWER OF DEPENDENCE (B):
GENERATING BODHICITTA

"But I am not practicing Vajrasattva purification for myself alone—the purpose of my life is to release all hell beings, pretas, animals, humans, asuras, suras and intermediate state beings from all their suffering and its causes and lead them to unsurpassed enlightenment. In order to do this I must first reach enlightenment myself. Therefore, I must purify all my negative karma immediately by practicing Vajrasattva meditation-recitation."

VISUALIZATION

"Above the crown of my head, seated upon a lotus and moon seat, are Vajrasattva father and mother. Their bodies are white; they each have one face and two arms. He holds a dorje and bell, she a curved knife and skull cup. They are embracing each other. The father is adorned with six mudras, the mother with five. He sits in the vajra posture, she in the lotus.

"Vajrasattva is my root guru, the holy mind of all the buddhas, the dharmakaya, who out of his unbearable compassion, which embraces me and all other sentient beings, appears in this form to purify me and all others."

In this way, your mind is transformed into guru devotion—the root of all blessings and realizations of the path to enlightenment.

"On a moon disk at Vajrasattva's heart stands a HUM encircled by a garland of the hundred syllable mantra. A powerful stream of white nectar flows from the HUM and mantra garland and I am cleansed of all sickness, spirit harm, negative karma and obscurations."

THE POWER OF THE REMEDY: MANTRA RECITATION

“OM VAJRASATTVA SAMAYA MANUPALAYA / VAJRASATTVA
TVENOPATISHTHA / DRIDHO ME BHAVA / SUTOSHYO ME BHAVA /
SUPOSHYO ME BHAVA / ANURAKTO ME BHAVA / SARVA SIDDHIM
ME PRAYACCHA / SARVA KARMA SU CHAME / CHITTAM SHRIYAM
KURU HUM / HA HA HA HA HO / BHAGAVAN SARVA TATHAGATA /
VAJRA MAME MUNCHA / VAJRA BHAVA MAHA SAMAYA SATTVA AH
HUM PHAT”

The meaning of the mantra: You, Vajrasattva, have generated the holy mind (bodhicitta) according to your pledge (samaya). Your holy mind is enriched with the simultaneous holy actions of releasing transmigratory beings from samsara (the circling, suffering aggregates). Whatever happens in my life—happiness or suffering, good or bad—with a pleased, holy mind, never give up but please guide me. Please stabilize all happiness, including the happiness of the upper realms, actualize all actions and sublime and common realizations, and please make the glory of the five wisdoms abide in my heart.

Recite the mantra seven or twenty-one times or as many times as possible, practicing the three techniques of downward cleansing, upward cleansing and instantaneous cleansing.¹

GENERATING FAITH IN HAVING BEEN PURIFIED

“From the crown of my head, Guru Vajrasattva says, ‘Son of the race,² your negativities, obscurations and broken and damaged pledges have been completely purified.’ ”

Generate strong faith that they have been completely purified just as Guru Vajrasattva has said.

THE POWER OF REFRAINING FROM CREATING
NEGATIVITIES AGAIN

“Before Guru Vajrasattva, I vow never again to commit those negative actions from which I can easily abstain and not to commit for a day, an

hour or at least a few seconds those negative actions from which I find it difficult to abstain.”

ABSORPTION

Guru Vajrasattva is extremely pleased with your pledge. Vajrasattva father and mother melt into light and dissolve into you. Your body, speech and mind become inseparably one with Guru Vajrasattva’s holy body, speech and mind.

DEDICATION

“In emptiness, there is no I, creator of negative karma; there is no action of creating negative karma; there is no negative karma created.”

Place your mind in that emptiness for a little while. Like that, look at all phenomena as empty—they do not exist from their own side. With this awareness of emptiness, dedicate the merits.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings (which appear to be real, from there, but which are empty), may the I (which appears to be real but which is empty) achieve Guru Vajrasattva’s enlightenment (which appears to be real but is empty) and lead all sentient beings (who appear to be real but are totally empty) to that enlightenment (which appears to be real but is empty) by myself alone (which appears to be real but is also totally empty, non-existent from there).

“May the precious bodhicitta, the source of all happiness and success for myself and all other sentient beings, be generated within my own mind and in the minds of all sentient beings without even a second’s delay; and may that which has been generated be increased.

“May I and all other sentient beings have Lama Tsongkhapa as our direct guru in all our lifetimes and never be separated from the pure path that is greatly praised by the conqueror buddhas for even a second, actualizing the complete path—the three principal paths and the two stages of Highest Yoga Tantra—the root of which is guru devotion, within our minds as quickly as possible.

“Just as the brave Manjushri and Samantabhadra realized things as

APPENDICES

they are, I dedicate all these virtues in the best way, that I may follow after them.

“Whatever dedication the victorious ones gone to bliss of the three times have admired as best, I shall also perfectly dedicate in the same way all these roots of virtue so that I may perform good works.”

Notes

1. See *Tantric Path of Purification*, pp. 58–60, for details of these three methods of purification.
2. This “son of the race” has nothing to do with gender but refers to a sentient being of a certain mental type, which in turn relates to the buddha family into which one has been initiated.

Colophon

This teaching was given by Lama Zopa Rinpoche during the Vajrasattva retreat and revised in New York in November, 1999. Edited by Nicholas Ribush.

APPENDIX 2

HOW TO MAKE LIGHT OFFERINGS TO ACCUMULATE THE MOST EXTENSIVE MERIT

This practice is available from FPMT Foundation Store (<https://shop.fpmt.org/>) in the book *Extensive Offering Practices*.

APPENDIX 3

LIBERATING ANIMALS
FROM THE DANGER OF DEATH

This practice and other information about animal liberation are available on the LYWA website (<https://www.lamayeshe.com/advice/benefiting-animals>), on the FPMT website (<https://fpmt.org/teachers/zopa/advice/#tab-advice-by-topic>) and from FPMT Foundation Store (<http://shop.fpmt.org>.)

APPENDIX 4

WATER OFFERING TO DZAMBHALA
AND WATER CHARITY TO THE PRETAS

These practices are available from FPMT Foundation Store (<https://shop.fpmt.org/>) in the book *Practices to Benefit Pretas, Nagas and Spirits*.

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APPENDIX 5

POWERFUL MANTRAS

The powerful mantras are available for download as a PDF file from FPMT website(www.fpmt.org). Included are:

- Chenrezig long and short mantra
- Namgyälma long and short mantra
- Milarepa's mantra
- Mantra of Kunrig
- Medicine Buddha mantra (short)
- Zung of the Exalted Completely Pure Stainless Light (Exalted Stainless Beam Totally Pure Light mantra)
- Stainless Pinnacle mantra
- Lotus Pinnacle of Amoghapasha (Wish-granting Wheel mantra)
- Mantra of Buddha Mitukpa

See Chapters 40 and 48 of *Teachings from the Vajrasattva Retreat* for more about the Mitukpa mantra and Chapter 48 for more about the others.

APPENDIX 6

LETTER TO HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA

29 May, 1999

Your Holiness,

Our precious teacher, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, has advised us that the mantras recited during the Vajrasattva retreat at Land of Medicine Buddha should be dedicated to the long life of Your Holiness.

Please, Your Holiness, Buddha of Compassion, have a stable life until samsara ends. We, the students of the FPMT, particularly the students who participated in the three-month Vajrasattva retreat from 1 February, 1999, to 30 April, 1999, at Land of Medicine Buddha in Soquel, Cali-

TEACHINGS FROM THE VAJRASATTVA RETREAT

fornia, will follow Your Holiness's wishes and advice about our Dharma practice and how to offer service to Tibet as much as possible.

We humbly request Your Holiness, Buddha of Compassion, to accept our offering of the 4,159,200 Vajrasattva mantras that were completed during the retreat and dedicated to the long life of Your Holiness. May our efforts be able to eliminate all the sufferings of body and mind of all sentient beings and spread the stainless teaching of Lama Tsongkhapa in the minds of all sentient beings. Just by coming to Land of Medicine Buddha, may sentient beings never ever be born in the three lower realms again and be free from all sickness, negative karma, obstacles and spirit harm and develop unchanging faith in refuge and karma, bodhi-citta and the rest of the path to enlightenment.

Please guide all the students of the FPMT, particularly the organizers of the Vajrasattva retreat as well as the dedicated practitioners who took part in the retreat, until enlightenment is achieved by doing only actions that please our virtuous friend, Your Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Your obedient and ever-loving student,
Ven. Tenzin Namdag
Director of Land of Medicine Buddha

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APPENDIX 7

RETREAT SCHEDULE

Begin	4:30 a.m. precepts days 5:00 a.m. other days Combined <i>Lama Chöpa/Jorchö puja</i>
Breakfast	7:00 to 8:00
First session	8:00 to 9:40 Vajrasattva session
Second session	10:00 to 11:15 Vajrasattva session
Lunch	11:15 to 12:00 p.m.
Break	12:00 to 3:00
Discussion group	3:00 to 4:00 on alternate days
Third session	4:00 to 6:00 or 3:00 to 4:40 on alternate days, Vajrasattva session
Fourth session	7:00 to 8:30 or 5:00 to 6:00 on alternate days, Vajrasattva session
Fifth session	7:00 to 8:30 on alternate days, Vajrasattva session
Concluding practices	8:30 to 9:00 protector practices, dedication prayers
Vajrasattva tsog	8:30 to 9:30 once a week

LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE

The Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive (LYWA) is the collected works of Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche, its spiritual director, who founded the Archive in 1996. The Lamas began teaching at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, in 1970 and since 1972 their teachings have been recorded and transcribed.

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

Archiving requires managing the collection of recordings of teachings and images of Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche and collecting recordings of Rinpoche's on-going teachings, talks, advice and so forth as he travels the world for the benefit of all. We organize transcription of the recordings and make transcripts available to the general public.

Dissemination involves making the Lamas' teachings available through various avenues including books for free distribution and sale, ebooks on a wide range of readers, lightly edited transcripts, a monthly e-letter, social media, DVDs and online video, articles in *Mandala* and other magazines and on our website.

The Archive was established with virtually no seed funding and has developed solely through the kindness of the many people all over the world who partner with us in this amazing and beneficial work. Our further development depends upon the generosity of those who see the benefit and necessity of this work, and we would be extremely grateful for your help. If you would like to make a contribution to help us with any of the above tasks or to sponsor books for free distribution, please contact us:

Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive
PO Box 636, Lincoln, MA 01773, USA
Telephone (781) 259-4466
info@LamaYeshe.com
www.LamaYeshe.com

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LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE MEMBERSHIP

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

SOCIAL MEDIA AND MONTHLY E-LETTER

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Google Plus and every day read gems from our online teachings, view amazing images and keep up to date with our latest offerings. Also, each month we send out a free e-letter containing our latest news and a previously unpublished teaching by Lama Yeshe or Lama Zopa Rinpoche. See our website to sign up.

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All Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive titles are available as ebooks from all major online bookstore vendors such as Amazon, Apple, and more. Our free titles are also available to read online or download in pdf format from our website.

In addition to the hundreds of hours of audio that can be listened to on our website and on our podcast, LYWA also offers a selection of our titles as audio books on Audible.com.

LYWA MULTIMEDIA TITLES

We also invite you to explore our growing collection of free multimedia titles presenting teachings by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche on a wide range of Dharma topics. These titles offer the teachings in all their multimedia aspects: edited original transcripts enhanced by images, audio and video from that teaching and supplemented by related informal teaching clips, advice and other relevant teaching materials from the Archive.

Explore the LYWA online store at www.LamaYeshe.com where you can find links to our print, ebook, audiobook and multimedia editions.

THE FOUNDATION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE MAHAYANA TRADITION

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

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

Twice a year, the Foundation publishes a wonderful news journal, *Mandala*, from its International Office in the United States of America. To subscribe, read online or view back issues, please go to www.fpmt.org/mandala/ or contact:

FPMT

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Telephone (503) 808-1588; Fax (503) 232-0557

info@fpmt.org

www.fpmt.org

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



WHAT TO DO WITH DHARMA TEACHINGS

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

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

DEDICATION

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

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

LAMA THUBTEN ZOPA RINPOCHE

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

VENERABLE AILSA CAMERON

Ailsa Cameron first met Buddhism at Tushita Meditation Centre in India in 1983 and has since been involved in various activities within the FPMT, primarily in relation to the archiving, transcribing and editing of the teachings of Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe. She has edited Lama Zopa Rinpoche's *Ultimate Healing* and co-edited his *Transforming Problems* and *The Door to Satisfaction* and Lama Yeshe's *The Bliss of Inner Fire* for Wisdom Publications, and several of Rinpoche's books for LYWA, including *Heart of the Path*, *Teachings from the Medicine Buddha Retreat*, *How Things Exist*, *Kadampa Teachings* and *Abiding in the Retreat*. After working originally in India and Nepal, she went to Hong Kong in 1989 to help organize the electronic version of the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive. Ordained as a nun by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1987, she has been a member of the Chenrezig Nuns' Community in Australia since 1990. She is currently a full-time editor with the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive.