

# LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

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TEACHINGS FROM THE 52ND  
KOPAN MEDITATION COURSE

*Lamrim Teachings from Kopan 2019*

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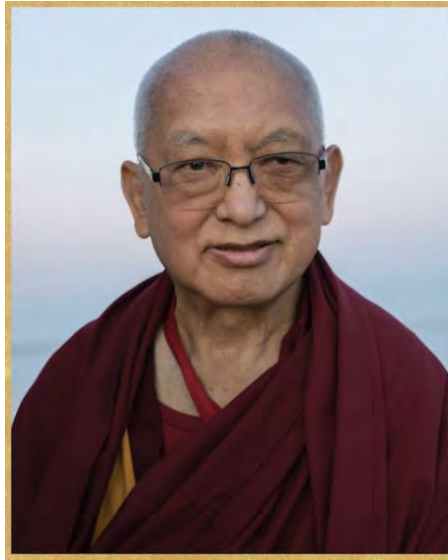
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# Teachings from the 52nd Kopan Meditation Course: Lamrim Teachings from Kopan 2019

Lama Zopa Rinpoche



## **Kopan Courses**

Series editor Gordon McDougall

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## Introduction



Between November 29 and December 13, 2019, Lama Zopa Rinpoche taught the students of the fifty-second Kopan course, the one-month intensive lamrim course given each year at Kopan Monastery, Kathmandu, the principal monastery of the FPMT. The course was held in the newly finished Chenrezig Gumpa and had a new record attendance of about two hundred and seventy people.

This was just before COVID19 hit and the world went into lockdown for two years, which Rinpoche used to give daily thought transformation teachings from Kopan, with the aid of an ever-increasing number of soft toys. Here, however, his main emphasis is on emptiness. Using the wonderful verse, “A star, a defective view, a butter lamp flame...” over several days he explores how the cause of all our problems stems from misreading reality. Rinpoche, a master at teaching emptiness, does so here in great depth and with great clarity.

These teachings were simultaneously transcribed and then edited by Ven. Joan Nicell and simultaneously checked for errors by Tania Duratovic, Laura Haughey and Ven. Tenzin Tsomo. They have been subsequently lightly edited by Gordon McDougall.

The archive number for these teachings is 2120. To access the teachings online go to [LamaYeshe.com](http://LamaYeshe.com) and search by teaching title or by entering the archive number using the [Search the Archive Database](#) link on the home page. A comprehensive [glossary](#) of the Buddhist terms in this book can also be found on the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive website.

There are links to video excerpts within the text. To access these stand-alone short videos, which focus on a specific topic, simply click on the relevant link within the text. You can also find a complete list of video extracts on the FPMT’s [Essential Extracts](#) webpage.

You can [find all of Rinpoche’s lectures from Kopan 2019 here](#), along with two discourses by Khadro-la, given during this course. To watch, listen to or read more teachings by Rinpoche, go to [Rinpoche Available Now](#) webpage on the FPMT website.

### ***About the LYWA Kopan eBook Project***

In 2024, LYWA is launching a new project which involves publication of a series of ebooks of Lama Zopa Rinpoche’s teachings from the Kopan meditation courses held annually at Kopan Monastery in Nepal since the early 1970s. All of Rinpoche’s teachings from the annual Kopan

courses will be converted into ebooks, including those already [published on our website](#) and those not yet published.

The Kopan courses began in April 1971 with a ten-day program attended by about a dozen people. From these early beginnings, the Kopan courses evolved to become an annual event with over two hundred attendees from all over the world. [Read more here about how the Kopan courses began.](#)

Kopan Monastery is the heart of the FPMT, the international organization founded by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche to preserve and spread Mahayana Buddhism worldwide. The Kopan meditation courses were life-changing for countless students, and this is where many students met the Lamas, received teachings and became Buddhist. For more information about attending the yearly lamrim courses at Kopan Monastery visit [KopanMonastery.com](#).

Visit our website at [LamaYeshe.com](#) to find more Kopan course transcripts and many other teachings, and to read about how to support our work. LYWA's Kopan ebook project is possible due to the generous support of donors like you. Your contribution plays a vital role in ensuring that these timeless teachings continue to inspire and transform lives for generations to come. Thank you!



## Lecture 1: November 29



### ***The Reason You Have Come to Kopan***

[Rinpoche and students recite *Prayers Before Teachings*]

The subject has been read so I'll chant this for meditation, one by one:

*Kar ma rab rib mar me dang*  
*Gyu ma ẓil pa chbu bur dang*  
*Mi lam log dang trin ta bur*  
*Dü j̄a chhö nam di tar ta*

[A star, a defective view, a butter lamp flame,  
An illusion, a dew drop, a water bubble,  
A dream, lightning, a cloud:  
See all causative phenomena like this.] [1]

[Prayers continue]

Everybody, good afternoon. So first I want to say that your coming to Kopan this time to learn meditation or to learn Buddhadharma is to learn about your life, your mind, to learn about yourself. That's basically what it is.

Without knowing, realizing, understanding ourselves, we have been hallucinating ourselves. We have been suffering, not only from this morning, not only from birth, we have been suffering from beginningless rebirths. We have been suffering from beginningless rebirths in samsara because of not knowing ourselves. That is the basic reason for learning about Buddhadharma. That's what it is. When we learn the lamrim, we come to know about ourselves more and more. There are different levels, and coming to learn more and more about ourselves is amazing.

This hasn't been taught to us in school—not in kindergarten, not in primary school, not in university. Some universities have Buddhism as a subject but the students just study the words; there is no meditation, not actualizing in their heart, not transformation of their mind. They don't learn how to stop suffering for themselves and for the world, transforming the mind into a positive one, one which produces happiness not only for this one world but for all the numberless universes. They don't learn how to bring happiness to all sentient beings, and not only temporary happiness, the happiness of this life, but the happiness of all future lives. *All future lives!*

Sorry, sorry. Sometimes I become crazy [and shout], but please understand. At certain times I become crazy. You have to know that! Then, I forget what I was talking about before.

There are numberless universes so there are numberless human beings, not only in this world. There are numberless universes with numberless human beings, numberless asuras and suras, numberless animals, numberless hungry ghosts, numberless hell beings. So, with Buddhism we can bring happiness to all the sentient beings, not only the happiness of this life, but also the happiness of future lives and not only that but also ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara, liberation from all the oceans of samsaric suffering totally forever. Not just for a few weeks or a month's holiday and then you have to go back to suffering. Not like that. And not only liberation but also peerless happiness, full enlightenment, the total cessation of the gross and subtle obscurations and the completion of all realizations. We can cause this not only for ourselves but for the numberless sentient beings, for everyone.

It's incredible what we can do with this perfect human rebirth that we have received just this one time, especially having met the Buddhадharma. We have this opportunity to practice, and we need to do it just one time. It's incredible that we have received this most precious human rebirth this time.

It is quite common to learn meditation, but you [coming to Kopan] to learn meditation and some Buddhадharma [is incredible]. And as I said, the basic thing is understanding yourself.

Some universities have Buddhism as a subject but it is studied as an Eastern subject, like Hinduism—just something to be learned about with nothing to practice. It's like just learning about the culture of some primitive country, like about primitive people living in the jungle, with houses built of grass or bamboo or whatever.

In Africa, there are people living in the jungle, eating live mice. A Western couple went to live in their culture with their children and the parents and the children had to eat the living mice like this. [Rinpoche opens his mouth to show putting a dangling mouse into it] I think it wasn't a rat but a mouse. Those people believed the Westerners were there to check on them and they didn't trust them for many years. Finally, the family not only learned about the culture but also joined in, I think.

However, your coming here at this time, it's like you are giving me a billion dollars! That's how important it is that you have come here to Nepal, a third world country. What do you call it? Third economic? Third world country. Since we came here, it has been developing slowly, but compared to the West it is a third world country. But in spite of that, you have come to Nepal, to Kopan Monastery. You have come to know the meaning of life, the purpose of life—the purpose of why you have taken a human body. That is so important, so important, so important.

So many people in the West—even famous people such as many famous actors—commit suicide. Besides normal people living in the cities, even many rich, famous people commit suicide. I don't know if it is every day in the city. That is basically due to not understanding the meaning of life, the purpose of life. There are big mistakes when people don't know the meaning of life. Not knowing the purpose of life, they have relationship problems and business problems, and they commit suicide. Failed in business or a relationship, they go to the top of a building and jump. Their mind is completely overtaken, like being pressed between mountains. Encountering problems, they can't stand it.

If we analyze it, no problem comes from outside. Problems are created by our mind. If we scientifically analyze, there is no external problem. The problem is created by our own mind, but these people don't know that and [so they think] the problem is only created from outside. So, many people commit suicide basically due to not knowing the purpose of life. By your coming here, you are learning about that. That is so important.

There are the three great meanings of life: lower, middle, and higher. I'm sure you have gone through that meditation. Not Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, what is the other country that America went to fight? [*Student:* Iraq.] Iraq. Many American soldiers went there to fight. It was unbelievable, the bombs and explosions. Those who did not get killed, who somehow had the

karma to stay alive, were able to go back to America. But, not knowing the purpose of life, their minds are totally crazy. What they have seen, what they have experienced, is unbelievable, so when they go back it seems life has no purpose. Their mind is very, what do you call the word? Robina, what do you call the state of their mind? [*Ven. Ailsa*: Post-traumatic stress.] [*Ven. Robina*: PTSD, post-traumatic stress.]

You can call it all the names. Every day, because they could not understand life's purpose, the meaning of life, every day twenty soldiers commit suicide. They can't understand life. Now, the America government uses mindfulness meditation for the army. That helps them calm down a bit. Do you understand?

There is someone, I don't know if he is here or not. I met him two or three years ago. He was not army; he was doing very important work, doing Special...? [*Ven. Roger*: Special Forces.] Special Forces. He saw that if you want to meditate or do retreat or what, if you want to meditate, then you should go to Nepal. On the internet he saw Lawudo. Lawudo is in the Himalayas, near Mount Everest.

I don't remember my past life, but many high lamas say that I'm the incarnation of Lawudo Lama. He was called Lama Yeshe. I think there is an old story that Padmasambhava, a great enlightened being, a powerful yogi, flew from another village from a cave in the mountain to the cave at Lawudo. He stayed a short time in this cave, which is why this cave is blessed. It is not just a hollow cave, it's a blessed cave, blessed by the great enlightened being Padmasambhava, who purified the land in Tibet allowing Buddhadharma to then be able to spread in Tibet. He purified the land in Tibet of all the spirits and those who harmed Tibet, hooking them, putting them under a pledge to protect the Buddhadharma and the practitioners instead of harming them. So, the Buddhadharma spread so much and was developed in Tibet.

Now it has spread in the West and all over the world. It is able to make people's life meaningful. [It gives them] the opportunity to be free from the oceans of samsaric sufferings, whose continuation has no beginning, and also to achieve peerless happiness, the total cessation of obscurations and completion of realizations. To gain that purpose of life and to be able to practice the path—to have the opportunity to achieve that—is due to the great yogi Padmasambhava. Including myself. That is how I met the Buddhadharma in this life. I don't know Buddhadharma, but with any tiny understanding I have, I am able to benefit the world as much as possible. This is due to Padmasambhava's kindness.

That also includes you here at Kopan. You have met the Buddhadharma. You have come here to meditate, to understand the meaning of life, to learn all the basic things—the four noble truths taught by the Buddha, which is the basis of Buddhism, that there is suffering, that there is the cause of suffering, and—in order to be free from suffering by learning the cause—that there is the true cessation of suffering, ultimate happiness. That makes you inquire about the path to achieve that, the truth of the path to cessation.

You have come here to know how to make yourself totally free forever from the oceans of samsaric sufferings: from the oceans of hell suffering, from the oceans of hungry ghost suffering, from the oceans of animal suffering, from the oceans of human being suffering, from the oceans of sura and asura suffering. There is the whole path to help you, like steps you gradually follow. Like learning to go upstairs along the steps, the whole path to nirvana is clearly explained.

There have been numberless sentient beings who have met the Buddhadharma, practiced the path and became free from samsara, achieving ultimate happiness, the freedom from samsara. Not only numberless in the past, but also now and in the future. There are also numberless who have achieved buddhahood. That you come to know all that and have this opportunity is due to Padmasambhava's kindness.

How many courses have we had at Kopan? Forty? [*Ven. Roger*: Fifty-two.] Fifty-two one-month courses, fifty-two. This one is fifty-two. That is by the kindness of Padmasambhava.

So, you have a great, great unbelievable opportunity to learn these things and attain ultimate happiness, and not only that, peerless happiness, enlightenment, so you can help not only the

people in this world but also all the sentient beings in the numberless universes by the kindness of Padmasambhava. That is incredible.

All this is by Guru Padmasambhava's kindness. That is the connection you have made. In the West, people spend so many years of their life studying six or seven ocean animals. What are they called? [*Student: Whales.*] [*Student: Dolphins.*] Whales. Dolphins. Six or seven dolphins, they spend many years every day going out in a boat to take pictures. Of course, they may have to report. I don't know to who. Or they spend many years studying one spider!

There are hundreds of species of ants. Do you remember? You told me you checked. One hundred eleven thousand types of ants in this world. But all this education about these spiders and dolphins, what can it do for our precious human life? How can it stop all the sufferings or cause all the happiness for ourselves and others. We have this precious human body with its brain which we can use for such an ordinary, small things like this, spending many years studying such subjects. And then, when we die, what help do we get from that? Do you understand?

When we die, what help will we get from that? Nothing to make our mind happy at that time, nothing. There is nothing good we can carry to our next life. Even concerning ourselves there is no benefit, so there is no benefit to the happiness of others.

But your coming here, this is studying about your life, what you can do with your life to bring happiness. First of all, there is freedom from death. How can you be free from rebirth so you can be free from old age, sicknesses and death? Freedom from makeup! Not like the makeup from a shop, but what do you call it? When you become old and they tie up all the skin that sags? Fixing the body, like what is his name, the actor? Michael Jackson went so many times to fix his face. In my view, he didn't look right. I don't know about other people's view, but in my view his face didn't look right. So, you are learning how to gain freedom from old age forever.

At least, by coming here and learning meditation and the Buddhadharma, when you die you can die without fear, unlike ordinary people who have a great fear of death. With the Buddhadharma, you might go to a buddha's pure land of the Buddha, feeling so happy, like meeting your parents after many years or going to some utterly pleasant country that everybody highly admires. I'm just using that as an example, how the mind can still be so unbelievable happy even when death comes, or at least to be without the worry of being reborn in the lower realms, as a hell being, a hungry ghost [or an animal]. Going to a pure land depends on how much you have developed your mind, whether you have bodhicitta. Then, at least you have no fear to be reborn in the lower realms, so you are not afraid of death.

So, your death is special compared to ordinary people's death. Even though they have many degrees from university, degrees in this and that, when death comes suddenly—something they have never thought about—when suddenly there is separation from their family and friends, separation from their enjoyments, from all their wealth, from their body, when they face death and have to think about the next life, karma, the lower realms, there is incredible fear, unbelievable fear. They have so much fear just facing that experience without thinking of the next life.

The next thing, even if you haven't met the Dharma, not knowing about reincarnation and karma, if you lived your life with a good heart, helping not only people but also animals and other beings, normally thinking of others first, regarding their happiness, if that is so, when death happens, there will be no fear; it won't bother you.

Many years ago, while I was doing a retreat in Adelaide, I was listening to one of my students on the radio. There were about six thousand people listening. I was curious to hear what he would talk about. Then his friend, who did the same work on the radio, said she had no fear of death because she knew where she was going. I wondered whether my student would ask her about it, because it's a very interesting subject, one you don't hear from normal people, but he didn't ask. He immediately moved on to talk about the lack of funeral places in the West.

What am I saying? I met a man in Lawudo who was involved in very high American Special Forces. He went there because it was advertised as a meditation center in Nepal. He was working

at Root Institute but he went to Lawudo, so I called him to the cave to talk. He didn't talk much, mainly staying quiet. When he came to the cave, I asked him how he found out about Lawudo, so he explained that even the US government uses mindfulness meditation for the army, to help them make the mind calmer. I later heard that when some businesspeople wanted to make a pipeline to take oil from Canada to America, he was in the group demonstrating with the American Indians.

About the cave, I heard that when my previous incarnation gave a long-life initiation, he put the vase you use to initiate people on a table to receive the nectar from the cave. In the middle of the roof of the cave is a rock of lava. Not lava, what is it called, where you stick something on a parcel to seal it? Wax, wax, yes. It looks like wax. He put wax. Even in dry weather, a drop comes into the vase, which is long-life nectar, and he used that to initiate people. The cave has that because Padmasambhava, the enlightened being, went there. The connection is that. But I didn't see it because my mind is so obscured.

So, I was praising your coming to Kopan at this time, learning about the Buddhadharma and about meditation, and not just any meditation, such as normal people do. You are basically studying your life. It is really incredible.

### ***The Three Great Meanings***

There are three great meanings. I'm sure that Robina taught them. You must have gone through the meditation on the three great meanings of life.

The first is attaining a higher rebirth, not being reborn in hell, as a hungry ghost or an animal but as a deva and human rebirth or in a pure land. By recognizing our actions of body, speech and mind, and understanding those that are the causes to be reborn in the lower realms, we stop that. What we have done already from beginningless rebirths we purify, so we don't get reborn in the lower realms and when we die we receive a higher rebirth, the body of happy transmigratory being. We protect our karma. Karma is Sanskrit for action. We protect our karma from creating nonvirtuous actions, unhealthy actions, disturbing ourselves and others, meaning not only people but also animals and insects, and we transform our actions into positive, healthy ones, virtuous ones.

Then, we abandon the ten nonvirtues and practice the ten virtues. Even for lay people, there are five unhealthy negative, nonvirtuous actions we abandon, transforming them into the five healthy, positive actions. As a lay person, we live in the five lay precepts, or if not that four, or three, or two, or one, or even just living in *upasika* [or *upasaka*] refuge alone.

There are precepts of taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. By taking refuge in the Buddha what we have to abandon is harming others. By taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, even if we don't take any of the five precepts, by taking refuge alone, that is unbelievable.

Then there are seven or eight general advices. We collect unbelievable merit, the cause of happiness, by even just doing prostrations to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha or even just making offering once of whatever we eat or drink, such as tea or water. This becomes the inconceivable cause of happiness. That, and in particular, relying on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is incredible.

Then higher than that, not only to be free from the lower realms but also to be free from samsara, from the sufferings of the suras, asuras and human beings, to achieve nirvana, ultimate happiness, everlasting happiness, through the higher training of wisdom—emptiness—that depends on the higher training of meditation—*shamatha*—that depends on the higher training of morality. So, basically, these are the three main paths. Then, we become free from the oceans of suffering of samsara by ceasing the cause of samsara, karma and delusion. Then, we achieve ultimate happiness, everlasting happiness, the true cessation of suffering through following the true path. This is the second meaning of life.



Then, with the third meaning of life, we abandon cherishing the I and generate bodhicitta, cherishing the numberless sentient beings of the hell realm, the numberless sentient beings of the hungry ghost realm, the numberless sentient beings of the animal realm, the numberless sentient beings of the human realm, the numberless sentient beings of sura and asura realms, and the numberless intermediate state beings. At present, we cherish ourselves and renounce others; we don't care about others like we do about ourselves. But then, instead of that, we cherish *all* sentient beings like we cherish ourselves at present. We let go of the I, where all suffering comes from, where all failure, all disliked things come from, and we cherish others, where all our happiness, success, all the good things—not only this life's temporary happiness but even nirvana and enlightenment—come from. All this comes from every sentient being, not only those who we love, not only our friends, but from every hell being, hungry ghost, animal, human being, sura and asura.

It is said by the Kadampa geshe [Leveling Out All Conceptions, which is attributed to Serlingpa]:

That called "I" is the root of negative karma;

It is a phenomenon to throw far away.

That called "others" is the originator of enlightenment;

It is a phenomenon to immediately cherish.

*Dag ni lä ngän tsa wa te*, "What is called I is to be renounced." *Gyang* is "to be thrown away far." *Gyang keyi kyur wäi chhö chig yin*, "It is a phenomenon to throw far away." *Zhän ni jang chhub jung khung te*. Then, "What is called others." *Chang te len päi chhö chig yin*, "immediately cherish," immediately, without the delay of a second, because that is where all the past, present and future happiness comes from. "Past" means from beginningless time. So, we cherish them immediately. From their experience, the Kadampa geshe, those who had realizations of the path to enlightenment, said this.

With bodhicitta, cherishing all sentient beings more than our life, we practice the Mahayana path of the six perfections. Then, our whole life, whatever action we do with our body, speech and mind is for every sentient being. Even if we just recite OM MANI PADME HUM once, we recite it for every sentient being, for *everybody*! Even if we talk, our talk is to benefit every sentient being. Even if we read a Dharma book, it is for every sentient being. Even if we make one step toward wherever we are going, it is for every sentient being. For example, if we are going around a monastery, around a stupa, every step is for every sentient being, for the benefit of every sentient being, to free them from samsaric suffering and to achieve every happiness.

We do this naturally without effort, because once we have a realization of bodhicitta, there is no need for effort. We need effort to transform our mind into bodhicitta. It is not easy to generate bodhicitta. For our actions to benefit sentient beings, we need so much effort, but once we have a realization of bodhicitta, every single action we do with body, speech and mind is naturally for every sentient being.

### ***We Are Here to Serve Others***

At present, everything we do is for this I, to get happiness for this I, which is not in our eyes, not in our ears, our nose, our toes or our heart. If we looked for it specifically, we wouldn't be able to find the I. Looking for it, analyzing it, this is inner science. Most of the time, Western science only checks outside phenomena, external things, but inner science is checking our life. Although we look for our I from the top of the head to the toes, there is no way to find it. When we don't look for it, it looks like there is a real I, "I must kill people; I must cheat them; I must do everything bad to get power for this I." We do whatever we can to get happiness for this I, to get power for this I, but when we look for it, we can't find it. We can't find this real I from the top of the head down to the toes. We can't find it in this room. We can't find it in this world. That shows this real I is nonexistent.

People run around their whole life with so much worry that this I is going to suffer. This real I is going to suffer, is going to have a bad reputation and so forth, "I will get hungry; I will get

sick; I will die.” This real I will suffer in this way. In the city, after they finish work, if people have a bit of time, they go juggling [jogging] around the city for hours. Or they cycle to not get cancer or diabetes. For this real I to not get cancer or diabetes, they spend so many hours when they get a little bit of time from their job. But if we look for the I, it is not there. If we look from the tip of the hairs down to the toes, we can’t find it anywhere. We can’t find this real I that we are worried about all the time, day and night. Afraid of getting diabetes, we take so much medicine and [incur] so much expense for this I. We go to a psychiatrist for this real I to not get problems. If somebody criticizes us, telling us we are bad, we immediately call the police and want to put them in prison.

Whatever bad things we do is to get happiness and power for this real I, not for the merely labelled I but for this real I. OK? We spend our whole life like this, going to university to get a degree, to get a job, to get money for this real I, which is not there, which we can’t find. If we meditate on it, we can’t find it. If we look for it, we can’t find it. If we examine it, although it looks like it is there, we can’t find it.

I think that is enough for this time.

This is the experience of our daily life. Not only the Buddha said this or the Kadampa geshe said this, it is also the experience of our daily life. For example, I will tell you, while we are walking in the street, when we think there is a real I, we not only believe it is real but we cherish it so much, “I want happiness; I don’t want suffering; I don’t want this problem.” Then, our face wrinkles—a very, very sad face, without a smile. We spend our whole time with that face. When we think we are the only one in the world suffering, it looks like that, but there are thousands of people suffering far worse than we are. But we still think that we are the only one suffering like this in the world.

But the moment we think “I’m here in the world to serve others,” suddenly we can smile. All these people going by car, in the restaurant, at the beach, we are here to serve all these people, all these animals. Suddenly, we have found happiness. Suddenly, we can smile.

We feel a connection with the surrounding people, those who are in the restaurants or shops. We even have a connection with the animals. So, we can smile at people and feel a connection with everybody. We are here to help others. Suddenly our mind is relaxed, happy. You understand? Right there, we find happiness, right there. If we change our mind into the thought to benefit others, happiness is right there!

I’m just giving you a simple example. Even if your family is so unhappy, think like that. With bodhicitta, everything we do is *only* for sentient beings, for the happiness of *all* sentient beings. That includes every ant, every mosquito. Whatever we do benefits everybody.

So, you have come to Kopan at this time to learn and practice that. You understand? That makes your life most meaningful, most happy. Whatever you are doing, even if you are sinking—not sinking down, singing songs!—even if you are playing tennis or football, whatever you are doing is for every sentient being. That is unbelievable. That is the happiest life.

Bodhicitta is the root of the path to enlightenment. It causes us to actualize the whole path to enlightenment. The six perfections are there, the five paths, the ten *bhumis* are there. Tantra is there. There are the four classes of tantra: Kriya Tantra, Charya Tantra, Yoga Tantra and Anuttara or Maha-anuttara Tantra, which has two stages, the generation stage and the completion stage. We are able to achieve all that. Every single thing we do becomes the cause of happiness of all sentient beings.

Every single thing done with bodhicitta becomes a cause of the happiness of all sentient beings. Every single thing we do with bodhicitta, every single action of body, speech and mind, becomes a cause of the happiness of all sentient beings. You should write that down. That is the highest meaning of life; that is the purpose of life.

For example, drinking tea. If we drink tea, not with attachment to this life, not with anger, ignorance or attachment, in particular clinging to this life, but make it an offering to the Buddha, to receive a god or human rebirth, that is the first meaningful life. It achieves the first meaningful

life. Then, offering the Buddha tea before we drink it to be free from samsara fulfills the second meaning or purpose of life. Then the third, offering it with bodhicitta, to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, by offering tea to the Buddha in that way and drinking it as a blessing for us to actualize the path—to be free from the cause of suffering, karma and delusions—that becomes the highest meaning of life. This is even just relating it to tea.

The best practice to do while we are drinking tea and making offering is to visualize the guru in our heart. Then, it becomes a cause of enlightenment. With that meditation, every sip of tea becomes a cause of enlightenment. However, if we don't have a guru, we can think of the Buddha in our heart and then offer it. We can do that. If possible, we visualize ourselves as a buddha.

Kyabje Denma Locho Rinpoche said we don't need an initiation to visualize ourselves as the Buddha. For the rest, like Medicine Buddha and the other deities, we need an initiation, but because Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is the founder of the present Buddhadharma, Rinpoche said we don't need an initiation.

One visualization is to visualize ourselves as the Buddha and then make the offering of the tea, seeing we and the Buddha are oneness. If we have a guru, then we, the Buddha and the guru become one. We make the offering like that. That is a most profound meditation, a very important meditation.

I think that's enough.

We make the offering remembering bodhicitta. As I explained, think, "The purpose of my life is not just to receive a god or human body in the next life; it is not even to achieve nirvana, to be liberated from samsara; it is to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, to free every sentient being from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment. For that reason, I must achieve enlightenment. Therefore, I make this tea offering." Then drinking tea becomes a cause of enlightenment.

OK.

[An announcement that tea is being served outside]

You are having ultimate tea!

[Tea break]

### ***Making Each Day Meaningful***

[Rinpoche begins the next part of the session with the recitation of the holy name and mantra of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha]

One question? Or half a question? Otherwise, I have to start.

*Student:* You are saying that the things we do every day, whatever action we do, is for all sentient beings. How do you create sincerity in this and how do you apply it every single day when we are not at Kopan and around Sangha? [Ven. Robina repeats the question]

*Rinpoche:* I think one thing is that in the morning, if you do what I put together [*How to Make My Lives Wish-Fulfilling: The Method to Transform a Suffering Life into Happiness (Including Enlightenment)*], which includes] this short lamrim: [*A Direct Meditation on the Graduated Path Containing All the Important Meanings* by Dorje Chang Lozang Jinpa]. It is unbelievably strong. It has such a good effect. I received the lineage from Geshe Senge Rinpoche who was abbot of Sera Je and Mey in Tibet, a Mongolian abbot. There is a verse from *Eight Verses* and verses from *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* I joined with that. If you do that every morning, that is incredible, the best.

You begin the day with dedications of your body, speech and mind. Everything is dedicated for sentient beings: for every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal—they are numberless in the numberless universes, that means every ant, every mosquito—every human being, every sura and asura being. You dedicate your body, possessions and merits, past, present and future. It is contained in that subject if you read well by thinking of the meaning, not just blah, blah, blah. Not like we do when people ask us to do pujas! If you think of the meaning, that is the best.

Then, you continue by practicing the awareness that everything belongs to sentient beings, everything is used by sentient beings. If there is that continuation, the awareness comes more and more. This is the way to train the mind.

Then, of course, there is the mind training in the lamrim meditation. Many people don't like to meditate on suffering. They can meditate on bodhicitta, compassion, loving kindness, emptiness, something like that, but they never want to think about their own suffering or the suffering of others. We can never get a realization of bodhicitta in that way, not even meditating for a thousand lifetimes, even for billions of lifetimes. Many people do like that, but they will never get realizations.

We have to first have the realization of guru devotion. From correctly following the virtuous friend, [we then follow] the graduated path of a lower capable being, how [the perfect human rebirth] is so useful but is difficult to find. Then, the nine-round death meditation, how death can come any time and how nothing helps at time of death—not the possessions, the surrounding people, the body—except the Dharma. Then, refuge and the suffering of the lower realms. That is the mind training of the lower capable being.

Then, the mind training of the middle capable being, the samsaric nature of suffering—the six and eight types of suffering of samsara, particularly the suffering of human, sura and asura realms. Then, the three levels of suffering: the suffering of pain, the suffering of change, pervasive compounding suffering. Then, after we have a realization of the renunciation of samsara, we train our mind mainly in bodhicitta. From that, we have realization of bodhicitta.

As I said, after we achieve the realization of bodhicitta, everything comes effortlessly, naturally. Now, everything we do is for this I, for the real I that is not there. At that time, with bodhicitta, everything is for sentient beings. Everything is the cause of happiness for sentient beings, so that they achieve enlightenment. OK?

We need to develop from down below. It is like laying foundations to go upstairs. However many stories the house has, we have to go up the steps [from the bottom].

The morning motivation is that one, bodhicitta. It is so important we do that mindfully. Then, we practice awareness every day, dedicating for sentient beings, using everything for sentient beings. Then, more and more mindfulness will come.

There is a book, *Bodhisattva Attitude*, showing us how we can do everything with bodhicitta. When we sit down, when we open the door, when we go out and when we come in, when we wash, this is what we think. Basically, everything is related to sentient beings. It is very good if we can do as much as we can. That is very good.

I'm thinking that maybe somebody can read parts of *Bodhisattva Attitude* in the course. In the past, Sarah used to read it, so maybe somebody can read it during the course to get the idea, so that everything we do we relate to bodhicitta. That is also very helpful.

What we need to do basically is practice the lamrim meditation from beginning to end, to gradually build up the realizations. Otherwise, many Westerners only want to think nice things, like emptiness and I don't know what exactly, maybe bodhicitta. But no suffering. If [there is no understanding of] suffering, there is no development within the mind.

But we need to do our best. We go shopping for sentient beings; we go for walks for sentient beings. Before we eat food, before we sleep, we dedicate for sentient beings. Remembering bodhicitta, we do everything for sentient beings. Then, we will remember more and more.

### ***The Three Great Meanings (Back to)***

I'll continue with the previous subject. By coming here, you come to know the three great meanings of human life: the lower, middle and great meaning of life.

Please understand this. There is a wish-granting jewel. I saw in a text on Tibetan medicine, a geshe explained that in the end the Buddha's relics go to the ocean and become wish-granting jewels. It is said that in the past universal kings or bodhisattvas, those who have great merit, find wish-granting jewels in the ocean. They bring them up and clean them in three ways and then

put them on top of the banner on the fifteenth day [of the lunar month]. Then, whatever people request, all the needs of this life, everything is materialized in the next second.

It's like what Sai Baba does. He gives ashes to most people but to some he gives watches or golden chains. He does like this, but not for all people. The family of a lady in Singapore or Malaysia, Mimi, was very close to Sai Baba. She arranged a meeting for us, on his birthday and something else. She invited monks from Sera, from the tantric college and from different *khangsens* [colleges] to do different pujas—the Tara puja, the Medicine Buddha puja—in front of Sai Baba. So, Sai Baba gave presents. To an elder monk, he did like this [Rinpoche presumably makes a magical hand gesture] and gave him a gold chain.

I'm using that as an example. By praying to a wish-granting jewel, everything we pray for—however many expensive cars, what are they called? Rolls Royces, helicopters, swimming pools—everything we want gets materialized in the next second, not only one thing, but filling the whole sky.

Compared to that, however, our human rebirth is much more precious. This is a very good business way of thinking. Even if we could fill the whole sky with wish-granting jewels, that alone could not purify the negative karma that causes us to be reborn in the lower realms; it could not cause us to be reborn as a god or human being. But with this human body, we can do that. That is very important. We can stop the unbelievable suffering and get a higher rebirth, the body of a happy transmigratory being.

Now, the second thing. Even if we own wish-granting jewels filling the whole sky, we could not be free from samsara. That won't free us from karma and delusions, the cause of samsara. But this body can do that. By practicing the Dharma, we can do that; we can become free from samsara and achieve nirvana, everlasting happiness.

The first one is to not be reborn in the lower realms and get a higher rebirth. We can achieve the body of a happy transmigratory being with a human body by practicing the Dharma. Not only diamonds but wish-granting jewels filling the whole sky cannot do that. Even if we owned that much, we couldn't achieve that, we couldn't achieve nirvana. But with a perfect human body we can achieve that. So, the perfect human rebirth is so precious.

Then thirdly, even if we owned skies of wish-granting jewels, it could neither free us from lower nirvana nor could we achieve full enlightenment, the total cessation of obscurations and the completion of all realizations. We couldn't achieve that with that alone, but with this perfect human body we can do that.

With this human body, we can achieve full enlightenment for sentient beings. Not only that, we can free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment. Freeing them from the oceans of samsaric sufferings is one thing, and then bringing them to full enlightenment by ourselves—wow, wow, wow! That is amazing! Drinking tea with bodhicitta causes us to do that.

Reciting TADYATHA OM MUNE MUNE MAHA MUNAYE SVAHA with bodhicitta does that. Especially with bodhicitta it does that. There are so many examples. When we do prostrations with bodhicitta, it does that. What we do during the course does that. So having a human body is so much more precious than the sky filled with wish-granting jewels. No question of dollars or diamonds; they are very small. You have to think about this.

We have to meditate on this; we have to feel how precious this is. Then, we don't waste our precious human life that we have received just this one time.

What makes life most meaningful and most beneficial is bodhicitta. That is the conclusion. As I already mentioned, what makes life most meaningful, most beneficial, not only to us but to every sentient being—to every insect, to every ant you see here, to every sentient being—is bodhicitta. Put effort into that. Our main goal should be to practice that.

There are so many practices, so many meditations, but don't miss bodhicitta. Write it down in your diarrhea book! Write it down to remind you. Then each time you see it, it reminds you what



is your main practice. If somebody asks you what your main practice is, you should say bodhicitta. Bodhicitta! What makes life most happy is bodhicitta.

### ***Having a Good Heart***

There are two wings in Buddhism. Both method and wisdom, bodhicitta and emptiness, are important, but without bodhicitta the highest we can achieve is only lower nirvana not enlightenment. With bodhicitta and emptiness, we can cease the subtle obscurations and then achieve enlightenment. So, they are like the two wings. Therefore, bodhicitta is what makes life most happy.

In the West, day and night people ask, “When I can be happy? When I can be happy?” Like Tibetans reciting OM MANI PADME HUM, OM MANI PADME HUM, Western people recite, “When I can be happy? When I can be happy? When I can be happy?” Because of so much clinging, so much cherishing the I, they encounter many problems. The self-cherishing thought brings so many problems. Then they face problems with people. Even if they stay alone, there are problems with dogs and birds making noise outside. Everything becomes a problem.

Therefore, what makes the happiest life is bodhicitta. You must know that. Everybody must know that. At least write it down! If we want to have happiness, what makes the happiest life is bodhicitta. That is what we should study and practice as much as possible. Practice bodhicitta!

Through lamrim, we are able to reach bodhicitta in this life. We must understand the goal, the direction we must take. If we want to not only be free from the oceans of samsaric sufferings but to achieve enlightenment to free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment, this is what we must do. “I’m this deity; I’m that deity,” “I’m a *dzogchen* practitioner; I’m a *dzogrim* practitioner.” Or stating some very high tantric meditation to impress people, making them think we are a very high realized being. [Instead, we must strive for bodhicitta.]

I have to mention this. We need a good heart. Even if we don’t believe in reincarnation and karma and so forth, we need to have a good heart in our everyday life, not only for people but for animals. If we see animals such as ants, we should never step on them. If we kill one, then for five hundred lifetimes we will be killed; we will get stepped on by other sentient beings. By killing that one time, karma has that effect; we get killed for five hundred lifetimes. That is just a simple example showing how we should be very careful to not harm even small things like that.

What was I saying? I’ve forgotten what I was talking about. We should not only not harm people but even animals. I forgot. What was before? What was I talking about before? [*Ven. Holly: Having a good heart.*]

Practice having a good heart as much as possible. That is most important in our life, even if we don’t believe in reincarnation and karma.

Even if we are very learned, knowing all the Buddha’s teachings, the Kangyur of more than a hundred volumes and the Tengyur, all the commentaries of the pandits of Nalanda—even if we know everything by heart, the most important thing is to practice a good heart. If we don’t practice a good heart, even if we are so learned, explaining this and that, we develop pride, we develop ego, attachment, grasping the I, the self-cherishing thought. And then, anger. If somebody does something a little bit negative toward us, saying we are not correct or something or criticizing our way of acting, we suddenly get angry. And then, when we die, because we haven’t practiced a good heart, we get reborn in the lower realms.

Whether we know just this much Dharma, [Rinpoche indicates with his hands] just a small [amount], practicing a good heart as much as possible with people and animals, trying to help wherever we can, making our life meaningful in the world, day and night being kind to everybody—animals, insects, human beings, everybody—that is the best. Then, we will succeed in all our wishes for happiness; all the good qualities, all the realizations come.

In the *Sutra of Chenrezig Purely Containing All Dharma* it says,

Do not follow many Dharmas.

Follow one Dharma.

What is that?

That is great compassion.

With great compassion, all the buddhas' qualities will come to you without effort.

If we want to achieve enlightenment quickly, we must practice the one Dharma, great compassion. The "one Dharma" is great compassion. If we practice great compassion, all the buddhas' qualities will come to us without effort.

Write it down! Write this down in your diarrhea book! It is so important, so important. You have to know what the most important practice in life is. You must know that. "With great compassion, all the buddhas' qualities will come to you without effort." You must write it down! Then you know what is the most important practice. If you practice that one, everything comes to you.

What time is it? I have to finish. I will tell you the next one and then I'll stop.

### ***Milarepa***

Milarepa was a lay person who achieved enlightenment in one brief lifetime of degenerate times. He was a lay person, not a monk. He didn't even have one rupee, one dollar. I don't know if Milarepa existed before or after dollars. My guess is he must have existed before dollars. Milarepa didn't have one Nepalese rupee, but he used his human life to practice Dharma. He used his life to follow his guru, Marpa. He meditated in the places his guru suggested, doing exactly what his guru advised, and he achieved enlightenment in one brief lifetime of degenerate times.

This is even though in his youth he followed his mother by learning black magic. When his father died, his uncle and aunt treated him so badly, so his mother got him to learn black magic. He dug a hole in the mountain and meditated there. Then, stones fell down from the mountains above where his uncle and aunt were having a wedding, with many people drinking and dancing upstairs and many animals downstairs, killing all the people and animals.

Then, the lama who taught him black magic said if he wanted to practice holy Dharma he should go to see Marpa. He went to see Marpa and although he had nothing to offer, he asked him to give him teachings and food. Marpa accepted and advised him to build a nine-story tower. I didn't see it. I didn't go that far [into Tibet] but you can still see it. His guru made him build it alone without any other porters. Then, after he built it, he had to tear it down and put stones back in the same place. Then, he had to build it again, and again tear it down and put stones back, and then do the same thing a third time. His guru wanted him to continue to bear hardships even more so he could achieve enlightenment even more quickly, but Marpa's wisdom mother pushed Marpa to give him initiations and teachings. Then Marpa, an enlightened being, manifested the mandala and gave him an initiation. Milarepa was then able to practice in mountains and achieve enlightenment, even though through black magic he had killed many people.

He achieved enlightenment in one brief lifetime of degenerate times by purifying negative karma. You have to know that even if we have done so many negative things, we can change and become a good person. We can become a holy being; we can become enlightened in that lifetime. In the world, people think if we are bad, we are bad all the time, but it's not like that. Milarepa was bad in his early life but in his later life he became enlightened. You must know that.

The government thinks that if people are bad in their early life they will always be bad, but that is the wrong way [of thinking]. It depends on whether the person changes their mind or not. Milarepa didn't have one rupee but he practiced the Dharma; he used his body to achieve enlightenment in one brief lifetime of degenerate times. Always correctly following his guru, he achieved enlightenment.

Therefore, we are unbelievably fortunate to have the opportunity at this time to learn and to practice the Dharma. Please understand, my main point is this is the one time that we are a human being, so we must do our best. We don't have a long life. Within a hundred years most of us will be dead. Do you understand?

We don't live long. Actually, death can happen at any time, tomorrow, tonight; it can happen at any time. So, with this perfect human rebirth that happens once, we have to do our best. We have to think what is best in our life and do that. We have to integrate that into the lamrim, into bodhicitta. That is all.

[Rinpoche and students offer mandala]

### ***Dedications***

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may bodhicitta, the source of all happiness including enlightenment for me and all sentient beings, be generated in the hearts of all sentient beings and be developed in the hearts of all sentient beings.”

Not only pray it is generated in your own heart but also the hearts of your whole family, your enemies, your friends and strangers. You are responsible to pray for them.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, which are merely labeled by the mind, may the I, who is merely labeled by the mind, achieve buddhahood, which is merely labeled by the mind, and lead all the sentient beings, who are merely labeled by the mind, to that buddhahood, which is merely labeled by the mind, by myself alone, who is also merely labeled by the mind.”

You must understand your suffering and that of others to generate compassion.

## Lecture 2: November 30



### *Seeing Things as a Hallucination*

A star, a defective view, a butter lamp flame,  
An illusion, a dewdrop, a water bubble,  
A dream, lightning, a cloud:  
See all causative phenomena like this. [2]

We have read the English. “A star” means looking at causative phenomena, which change due to causes and conditions. In particular, our body, possessions, family and so forth, the objects of attachment, hatred and ignorance, we need to use these as objects of meditation, looking at them as empty. It doesn’t mean nonexistent empty, like empty when we run out of money, with no money in the purse. Or we have no food in the stomach, so our stomach’s empty. It’s not empty like that. It’s not that kind of empty, not nonexistent. But while it exists, it is empty.

You have to understand this ultimate nature of emptiness and not just think it doesn’t exist. You can’t think what exists doesn’t exist, looking at it like that. That is nihilism. It is empty while it exists; that is its ultimate nature, emptiness. So, with *kar ma*, a star, the meditation on emptiness is like there is a star in daytime but the sun is so powerful, so bright, that it obscures the star, so we can’t see it. When the sun goes down and it becomes dark, then we see more and more stars.

Then, *rab rib*, which I translate as “defective view.” It could also be subtle dependent arising, how things—I, action, object—exist in mere name. It could be that; it depends on how you think. But here, if it is a defective view, it means everything—the I, action, object, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects—everything appears truly existing from its own side; everything appears real. It appears like that and we believe it is as it appears. We believe in that a hundred percent.

I’ll give an example. It’s like in a dream we get married to somebody we like and we have a hundred children. We are so happy. And then they die and we are so upset. In the dream, we are so upset and there are so many difficulties. One child is carried [away by water] and drowns. One is eaten by dogs or something like that. One is burned in the fire—there are different things. There are so many difficulties, and it is so sad. We have so many worries we get wrinkles and white hair. The body changes like that. The body is like when you act out a play, where you can

wear the costume of a king or a soldier's uniform. You change costumes many times when you act out a play.

Similarly, the body manifests how the mind is. If the mind is very healthy, the body looks very healthy. Like His Holiness. How old is His Holiness now? [*Student*: Eight-four.] Eighty-four, but he looks unbelievably good. He has no difficulty remembering things. Unbelievable. He can help millions and millions and millions of people in the world, bringing happiness and peace to young and old as well. It's a little bit like that. Depending on how the mind is, the nature of mind, the body appears like that. If the mind is so sad, "When I can be happy? When I can be happy? When I can be happy?" only concerned about the I, the body is also very squeezed. The face is squeezed; there's no smile. The body is a little bit like, what do you say? A costume? Like a costume in a play.

Whether the mind is happy or not shows through the body. When somebody is so worried their whole life, even if they are still very young, they already look very old. This is a manifestation of the state of the mind. Somebody else with a healthy mind, even if they are very old, they are still very young looking, very fresh looking. Do you understand?

Sorry, once I talk it goes on and on.

Like that dream I mentioned as an example, all the children die and we are so sad, with so many problems. We get gray hair and wrinkles. Then, we wake up and nothing happened. After all this, when we wake up, nothing has happened. All the people doing jobs in the house are still there. We had this dream about our whole life, but we wake up and nothing has happened.

Do you remember? I'm sure it's happened to you like that, that many times you've had a dream and woken up thinking, wooh, so worried, but then thinking "Oh, it is not true. It didn't happen."

So, all these things—the I, action, object—all the things appear real, appear as truly existent, and we believe them to be real, a hundred percent truly existent. That is what is explained in the scriptures, that they appear to exist from their own side, to exist by nature. That is what is explained in the text, but if we use our everyday language, we can say they appear as real. Everything appears real and we believe they are real.

When we realize emptiness—not nihilism emptiness but the ultimate nature of the phenomena—the I, action, object, enlightenment and hell, nirvana and samsara, happiness and problems, everything—when we realize the ultimate nature, it's like we woke up from a dream and nothing has happened. None of these problems have happened. It's like the example I gave, where in the dream we get married and have children and then all these problems happen, but when we wake up, it's not true. This is exactly the same.

So, *rab rib* is "defective view"; that's how I translate it. I don't know how others translate it.

We look at impermanent nature as like a dream, like an illusion. We are going to meditate on that. You do the meditation and I will chant; that will give you time to meditate. This is to center the attention that is now outside. Now, it is totally distracted with attachment. Our mind is like paper or leaves blown about by the wind, fully distracted by the hallucination. So, we bring it back to the reality, to what is the nature of the I, what is the nature of the object, what is the nature of enlightenment, what is the nature of hell, what is the nature of samsara, what is the nature of nirvana, what is the nature of happiness and problems. What is the real nature, the ultimate nature, emptiness—we bring it back to the reality, to thinking about the ultimate nature of things.

The next one is an *illusion* or a *hallucination*. We look at [the difference between] what appears to us and what we believe. The way things appear to us, the way we apprehend them is like an illusion; it is not true.

We'll just finish the prayer. [Rinpoche recites:]

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

An illusion, a dewdrop, a water bubble,



A dream, lightning, a cloud:  
See all causative phenomena like this.

### ***Emptiness and Dependent Arising***

The next one is to recite the *Heart Sutra*. Because this is the Buddha's teaching, even just to hear the words is most unbelievably fortunate. Even if we don't understand it, to be able to read it and hear it is unbelievable. There will be more, but I'll just mention an introduction just to know the importance.

It is said by Shantideva in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*,

[9:1ab] All these practices were taught

By the Mighty One for the sake of wisdom.

The Buddha realized that how the I, action, object—all phenomena—exist, how their ultimate nature is existing in mere name, merely labeled by the mind. This is dependent arising, not gross dependent arising but subtle dependent arising.

Because of that, everything is empty. That doesn't mean everything doesn't exist. As I said before, it is not that. While it exists in mere name, everything is empty at the same time. You have to understand that.

The Buddha revealed that to us sentient beings. Because of that, numberless sentient beings have already realized what the Buddha himself realized and then taught, and they have become liberated from samsara. And not only that, with bodhicitta, the ultimate good heart, he became free from not only the gross obscurations but also the subtle obscurations and achieved the state of omniscience for sentient beings.

By revealing subtle dependent arising, numberless sentient beings have already been liberated from samsara. The Buddha was able to liberate them from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to peerless happiness, the total cessation of obscurations and the completion of realizations. It has already happened for so many sentient beings, and it is happening now.

Even nowadays, so many come to know the ultimate nature of the I, action, object, phenomena, and develop the mind in ultimate wisdom. That is the ultimate wisdom that realizes the ultimate nature of phenomena. That is the real nature. That is ultimate wisdom.

By developing that, we gain a direct perception of emptiness. That ceases the karma and delusions that create samsara, that create suffering. By totally ceasing the seeds of delusion, we totally cease karma and delusions. From that, we cease true suffering and the true cause of suffering. By ceasing the true cause of suffering, we cease true suffering, and we are totally liberated from samsara.

In *In Praise of Dependent Origination* Lama Tsongkhapa said,

[2] Whatever degenerations there are in the world,

The root of all these is ignorance;

You taught that it is dependent origination,

The seeing of which will undo this ignorance.

However much suffering there is in samsara—you can say “in the world” or “in samsara”—the root of all that is *marigpa*, unseeing, unknowing, ignorance. “Unseeing.” The Tibetan may be the same, I'm not sure what it is in Sanskrit, but in Tibetan, *rigpa* is “seeing” and *marigpa* is “unseeing,” ignorance, the root of everything. By understanding this, we are able to cease ignorance, the root where *all* the suffering comes from, including what millions and millions of people suffer in the West, depression. All those things, anxiety and what else? [*Ven. Robina: Worrying about things.*] Worrying about things. We are able to cease all the things.

By seeing subtle dependent arising, we are able to cease all the sufferings. Therefore, the Buddha taught dependent arising.

Not just from this life but from beginningless lives, why are we ignorant? Why are we born with suffering? Why are we born with the suffering of birth, the suffering of old age, the suffering of sickness, the suffering of death, the suffering of dissatisfaction, of depression and all

that, the suffering of meeting undesirable objects, the suffering of being separated or not finding desirable objects? Why are we born with the suffering of the aggregates?

Why are we born with suffering? Why are we born with worry, with anxiety? We are born with suffering because our previous mind, the continuation of the mind before [the one of this life] wasn't liberated from suffering. It wasn't liberated from the cause of suffering, karma and delusion, so we didn't give ourselves freedom.

We didn't eliminate the root of all the suffering, ignorance, the unknowing mind. There are different kinds of suffering [ignorance?] but it is this particular one. From beginningless rebirths we have not been free from that; we have followed that and believed in that. It's like our enemy, the real enemy. We might think it is our friend, but although it has been cheating us our whole life, we have never realized it; we have never recognized it.

It is a little bit like that. Being under the control of ignorance, we have had to experience all the sufferings: the suffering of the hell realms, the suffering of the hungry ghosts, the suffering of the animals, the suffering of the human beings, the suffering of the sura and asura beings. We have been suffering like that from beginningless rebirths and it has still not ended.

### ***The Heart Sutra***

Now, we are human and experiencing the suffering of human beings, so it has still not ended. For sentient beings to end the oceans of samsaric sufferings—the oceans of hell beings' sufferings, of hungry ghosts' sufferings, of animals' sufferings, of human beings' sufferings suffering, of sura and asura beings' sufferings, whose continuation has no beginning—to liberate them from all these sufferings, they need to be liberated from the cause of suffering, karma and delusions. They need to be liberated from the root, ignorance. That is why the Buddha has taught emptiness.

It is not only to be free from the suffering of samsara but also to be free from lower nirvana and to achieve peerless happiness, total cessation of obscurations and completion of realizations, full enlightenment, and then to bring sentient beings to that. For that, the Buddha has taught the wisdom gone beyond, Prajnaparamita, all the teachings on emptiness. There are twelve volumes of texts where the Buddha taught elaborate teachings on emptiness. In more condensed form, there are four volumes, and then further condensed into one volume, the *Eight Thousand Stanzas*. Finally, all those teachings are in the much more condensed form of *Sherab Nyingpo*, the *Heart of Wisdom Sutra*.

After this, the wisdom gone beyond, the Prajnaparamita, is summarized in a few syllables:

[La ma] tön pa chom dän dä de zhin sheg pa dra chom pa yang dag par dzog päi sang gyä / rig pa dang zhab su dän pa / de war sheg pa / jig ten khyen pa / kye bu düi wäi kha lo gyur wa la na me pa / lha dang mi nam kyi tön pa / sang gyä chom dän dä päi gyäl wa sha kya thub pa la chhag tshäl lo / chhö do kyab su chhi o

[[Guru], Teacher, Bhagavan, Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly Complete Buddha, Perfect in Knowledge and Good Conduct, Sugata, Knower of the World, Supreme Guide of Beings to Be Subdued, Teacher of Gods and Humans; to you, Buddha Bhagavan, Glorious Conqueror Shakyamuni, I prostrate, make offerings, and go for refuge.] [3]

TADYATHA OM MUNE MUNE MAHA MUNAYE SVAHA

Then, there is the much more condensed one-syllable Prajnaparamita, AH. That is just one syllable—AH. In Sanskrit AH is a negating word. What this AH is saying is that the way the I appears to us as the real I, the way action appears to us as the real action, the way the object appears to us as the real object—the whole hell and enlightenment, samsara and nirvana, happiness and problems, all the phenomena of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, the senses—the way everything appears to our mind as real is a hallucination. The hallucinated mind sees it all as real. That is the hallucination.

This AH is negating all this, saying none of that exists at all. That is the correct emptiness, by negating the object to be refuted. The object to be refuted is the false object—the false I, the

false enlightenment, the false hell, the false samsara and nirvana, the false happiness and problems, the false everything. The AH negates everything. It proves that our concept that believes a hundred percent in everything being real is the wrong concept; it is ignorance.

It will come again but I'll just tell you that the meaning of ignorance is the unknowing mind. All the sufferings come from that. [To overcome all suffering], we must realize dependent arising, emptiness. We must realize the truth that negates that wrong concept; we must see that there is no such thing.

It is very interesting. The whole thing comes from our wrong concept, not somebody else's. Suffering comes from our wrong concept, our wrong way of thinking. This Prajnaparamita is the correct way of thinking, the ultimate nature, the way things exist. AH is regarded as a very important meditation. We need to meditate on the meaning of AH.

The *Heart Sutra*, the *Essence of Wisdom* directly reveals wisdom and indirectly reveals the method to achieve nirvana, the liberation from samsara. I often say before we recite the *Heart Sutra*, that we should not recite it just blah blah blah. If we pay attention, it leaves a positive imprint, but if we always just go blah blah blah, it's just like water bubbling on a hot fire, blub blub blub.

Think, "I have been suffering in the oceans of samsara from beginningless rebirths due to ignorance, *marigpa*, in one after the other of all the six realms. If I don't realize emptiness in this life, I will again have to experience the oceans of suffering of the six realms, endlessly. Not only has it been beginningless, but also unless I realize emptiness in this life while I have the opportunity to learn, I will have to suffer without end, again. Again!"

The Buddha's Prajnaparamita teachings, the *Heart Sutra*, the wisdom gone beyond, this contains the teachings to realize emptiness, to realize ultimate nature, emptiness, to cease the cause of suffering, ignorance, *marigpa*, the mind unseeing, the mind not knowing—it's the same.

Ceasing that and developing bodhicitta, we can achieve enlightenment. We can cease the gross defilements and we can cease subtle defilements with the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness. Then, we can achieve peerless happiness, the state of omniscience, in order to liberate the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to peerless happiness, enlightenment.

Thinking like that, reading or meditating on the *Heart Sutra* becomes the most important thing for our life—even right now! The most important solution is to realize emptiness, to meditate on it. To end our suffering of samsara and then to liberate the numberless sentient beings from samsara and bring them to enlightenment comes from this meditation on the *Heart Sutra*, meditating on it, paying attention to it, not just reciting the words. It is so important.

I'm just explaining the motivation. Now, you see how important this is. It's not just blah blah blah; it's not just to idly spend our time. After people retire, if they haven't met the Dharma and don't have a meditation practice or prayers to recite, what they do all day long is walk around the garden, the house, trying to find things to do, otherwise they feel lonely. They spend all day long in their small garden, letting the mind be distracted by the plants. I heard that. Spending their day like this, the time goes. [Reciting the *Heart Sutra*] is not just to make time, not blah blah blah.

It is important to pay attention, not just say it blah blah blah. Each time we do that, it is incredible preparation for the mind to realize emptiness. So much unbelievable preparation is done, getting closer and closer to realizing emptiness. Then, by developing the wisdom realizing emptiness, when we have a direct perception of emptiness, we cease the seed of karma and delusions. Then, we become liberated from the true suffering of samsara, from the oceans of suffering. This is just us, just this one samsaric being.

When we say the prayer, it's important to pay attention, to do it as a meditation. Meditation has analytical meditation and fixed meditation. There are these two things. With shamatha, that is mainly fixed meditation; there is not so much analytical, but all the other meditations we have are analytical. After analytical meditation, to get realizations we do that. We transform our mind into a correct mind, a path to achieve nirvana, to achieve enlightenment. We transform our mind from the wrong concept into a realization. So, paying attention is very, very important when we

do prayers. When we do our prayers without paying attention, when the mind is thinking of the beach or of traveling, of all sorts of things, when the mind is going around the world while we are doing prayers, it doesn't even leave a positive imprint. We have to pay attention. Then, it leaves a positive imprint. That's what I think.

Please start. The more you learn the lamrim, the deeper your understanding of the *Heart Sutra* will be. The more you learn about the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment, renunciation, bodhicitta and right view—in particular, the more you learn about right view—the more you will understand the *Heart Sutra*.

I just explained the motivation to think when you read the *Heart Sutra*. Then, every day you will find it most meaningful. You will see the utmost need to practice it.

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

*The Foundation of All Good Qualities*, please concentrate.

[Rinpoche and the students recite *The Foundation of All Good Qualities* and the short mandala]

### ***The Graduated Path of the Three Capable Beings***

Two points yesterday that I mentioned that I want to clarify, then I will continue. The question was about generating bodhicitta, how to have the attitude of bodhicitta in normal life. I said to generate bodhicitta we need first to have a realization of the graduated path of the lower capable being. The lamrim is divided into the graduated path of the lower capable being, the graduated path of the middle capable being and the graduated path of the higher capable being. Because bodhicitta is the graduated path of the higher capable being, we first need the realization of the graduated path of the lower capable being.

On the basis of realizing that the person we have taken teachings from is our guru and we are their disciple, from our side we see our guru as the numberless past, present and future buddhas and every single action is all the Buddha's holy actions. On the basis of that stable realization, we develop the renunciation of this life, starting from the perfect human rebirth, how the perfect human rebirth is highly meaningful, how with it we can achieve the three great meanings, how it is difficult to find again.

Even what we have found this time is in the nature of impermanence. We need to do the nine-round death meditation, seeing that there is death and that death can happen at any time, and because of that, we must practice Dharma. The solution is to practice Dharma and to practice Dharma *now* because death can happen now. At death, we have to leave everything, those around us—our family and friends—our enjoyments, our belongings, even our body. Nothing can benefit us at all. The only thing that can benefit us is Dharma. We must only practice Dharma.

We then meditate on the sufferings of the lower realms and to be free from that, to not be reborn in the lower realms, we need to take refuge in [one of the objects of refuge:] the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Then, not only that, to be free from the whole of samsara we need to take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Not only that, we need to become free from lower nirvana and achieve enlightenment.

We need to take refuge and to protect our karma, renouncing nonvirtue that produces suffering and practicing virtuous karma that produces every happiness, from the happiness this life, the happiness of future lives and ultimate happiness, everlasting happiness, peerless happiness. For all this, we need to realize the graduated path of the lower capable being, then the graduated path of the middle capable being, seeing how the whole of samsara is in the nature of suffering. As I mentioned, there are six types of sufferings, four types of suffering, three types of suffering. Seeing how we circle in samsara due to the twelve dependent-related limbs, we generate the renunciation of samsara. We see the nature of samsara is only suffering, so we don't want to be in samsara; we want to be liberated from samsara.

To achieve nirvana, the basic path is the three higher trainings: the higher training of morality, the higher training of concentration and the higher training of wisdom. That is the basic path to

achieve everlasting happiness, liberation from samsara. After that, there is the graduated path of the higher capable being. In regards of realizations, it is like that.

For example, I know people who have AIDS. Having gone through the disease themselves, when they get better they have so much compassion, so much concern for other people who have AIDS. Because they have gone through it, because they have had their own experience, they want to help people with AIDS.

At Chenrezig Institute there is a man, I don't know his name, a little bit of an old student. He goes to Chenrezig Institute and takes the eight Mahayana precepts and does the Medicine Buddha meditation. When he does that, because he has more control in his life, his AIDS gets better. But then he goes back to the city to help other people with AIDS, and probably his life becomes a little bit messy—it's harder to have discipline, harder to control his mind and his actions—so his AIDS gets worse. But then he goes back to the center again and takes the eight Mahayana precepts and does Medicine Buddha meditation again and *again* his AIDS gets better. Not only him, I've noticed other people like this. To have a realization of bodhicitta, we have to develop compassion for others. To do that, we have to know the suffering of other sentient beings, to feel how unbearable their suffering is. For that, we have to recognize our own suffering first.

Otherwise, if we don't know our own sufferings, if we think we are suffering just when we have relationship problems or we have headache or diarrhea, or when we have cancer, that is not enough. There is not only the suffering of pain, all samsaric pleasures are the suffering of change. I think I went through that yesterday. Did I go through yesterday? [*Ven. Robina*: You mentioned the three.]

The third is pervasive compounding suffering. Without understanding our own suffering, our compassion for others is just words between the lips. There is not much feeling, because we don't see their suffering. Our understanding of their suffering is very limited. Our compassion is, how do you say? Kind of not real. Then, our bodhicitta becomes just words. Even if we say it, we don't really feel it. It is like that.

Therefore, after the graduated path of the lower capable being, with the middle capable being, there is the renunciation of this life and the renunciation of future lives' samsara. We meditate on the details of all the suffering of our own samsara. It feels unbearable. Being in samsara is like sitting on a needle, or like our naked body sitting in the thorn bush, or our naked body in the middle of a fire. It is so unbearable. Being in samsara is like being in prison, even that loose example.

Only when we have renunciation for our own samsaric suffering can we feel unbearable compassion for the numberless other sentient beings suffering in samsara. We can't stand it that they are in samsara for even one day or one hour or one minute. We can't stand it! We have this incredible compassion for all the desire realm sentient beings, for all form realm sentient beings and for all formless realm sentient beings.

With that, we develop the realization of bodhicitta. We want to free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to peerless happiness, enlightenment, by ourselves. Even though there are numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas helping sentient beings, we have this special attitude that we want to do it alone because all our past, present and future happiness comes from sentient beings.

All sentient beings have also been our mother numberless times from beginningless rebirths and they have been so kind. Every day we survive, we stay alive by eating and drinking what has been created by the suffering of numberless sentient beings. For our food and drink, numberless beings have had to work and numberless have been killed. The house we live in and the comforts we enjoy come from the numberless sentient beings who were harmed and killed, as well as our clothing. Especially if it is fur or leather, so many sentient beings were harmed or killed. Our enjoyments totally come from the hard work of so many sentient beings, from them



being harmed and killed. All our comfort, our survival, our happiness totally come from the kindness of sentient beings.

There are many ways to meditate on their kindness. We want to free them from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment by ourselves alone to repay their kindness. That is right. Then, our bodhicitta becomes real. The more we meditate like this, the easier realizations happen.

Therefore, without knowing how we ourselves are suffering in samsara, we can't feel the suffering of others. Then, our compassion is very limited. It's not really compassion; it's just words, just reciting words. These meditations on the graduated paths of the lower capable being and the middle capable being are so important to develop compassion for others and to have a realization of bodhicitta. I didn't mention that yesterday, so I want to emphasize it now. It is so important.

As I said yesterday, Western people don't generally like to meditate on suffering because they don't know the purpose. Just meditating on love and compassion can be very shallow, with nothing real. Even if we spend millions of years—millions of lifetimes—meditating like that, realizations won't happen. We have to meditate according to how it is explained in the texts, not what we like. We need to follow the outline to develop the mind in bodhicitta and emptiness.

That is the common path. Then, there is the tantric path to achieve enlightenment. Without tantra, by meeting the Mahayana teachings, to achieve enlightenment we have to collect the merits of wisdom and the merits of virtue for three countless great eons. We have to complete those two merits and then we can achieve enlightenment, attaining the rupakaya, the buddha's holy body and the dharmakaya, the buddha's holy mind, to benefit sentient beings. But if we practice tantra we don't need to take that much time. We can achieve enlightenment in one [extended] life, even practicing the lower tantra. Practicing highest tantra, Maha-anuttara Yoga Tantra, we can achieve enlightenment in one brief lifetime of degenerate times. It is much, much quicker. It all depends on how strong our compassion is.

If we have compassion for sentient beings, we can achieve enlightenment. If we have no compassion for others, then there is no enlightenment. So, compassion is so important.

### ***Look at the Hallucinated Mundane World***

Yesterday I mentioned the quotations. It is so important to write them down. The thing we should concentrate on all the time, the important meditation and important practice in our life, is compassion for sentient beings. Then, we can achieve enlightenment quickly. It all depends on that. If we practice tantra without compassion, we can't achieve enlightenment; we have to have compassion for others.

The other one is as I mentioned about Milarepa. He didn't even have one rupee, as I said. You might think it strange to say he didn't have a rupee but, living an ascetic life, he achieved enlightenment. He practiced Dharma and in order to renounce delusion, he lived an ascetic life.

For example, once when a thief went to his cave, Milarepa had no other food to offer him, only nettles. He only picked and ate nettles. When he had boiled the nettles and made nettle soup [for the thief], the thief asked him where the salt and the chili were. He didn't have salt or chili, so when the thief asked for them, he said, "This is my salt," and he put some nettles in the pot for the salt, and "This is my chili," and he put in another nettle for the chili. I think after some time the clay pot broke, but because of [the residue] of cooked nettles, it still worked like a pot. You might think it strange that he achieved enlightenment without one rupee, but it meant he lived an ascetic life.

[Rinpoche asks Ven. Robina what time the tea break is]

The Fifth Dalai Lama mentions,

From now on, this one time that you have found the boat of a perfect human rebirth,  
The basis of achieving the collections of goodness of benefits and happiness,

If, without going to the land where you can definitely get jewels,  
You return back to samsara empty, your heart is rotten.

He uses the example of a boat, but this refers to the perfect human rebirth, which is found this one time. “Without going to the land where you can definitely get jewels.” As I explained yesterday, “jewels” means wish-granting jewels. We have received a perfect human rebirth, which is the boat and we can use that boat to go on the ocean to a place where we can definitely get as many wish-granting jewels as we want—meaning the perfect human rebirth is the basis we can use to achieve all the collections of goodness of benefits and happiness. “You return back to samsara empty, your heart is rotten.” If we return empty—meaning we waste this perfect human rebirth and don’t make this life meaningful—our heart is rotten.

Milarepa’s disciple, Gampopa, said this in *Pearl Garland*. It is a very important quotation. If you can, write it down, please. Write it down for your meditation to do. If you can remember it every day that is so good.

By looking at the hallucinated mundane world,  
Whatever you do is meaningless and a cause of suffering  
And whatever you think is of no benefit.  
Therefore, always train your mind to watch your mind.

I don’t remember the last line well, but in the quote he asks us to look at our mind. “Watch your mind,” something like that is the conclusion.

Looking at the mundane world we can see that it is hallucinated. So, here we are looking at how our worldly life is hallucinated, which means whatever is done is a cause of suffering. Because of that, whatever we think has no benefit. Therefore, Gampopa told us we must always train ourselves to watch our mind. That is the last line.

First of all, we have to understand how the mundane world, our life, is hallucinated, by looking at this life. We have to understand the meaning of that.

OK. I’ll just finish this.

Lama Tsongkhapa explained in the lamrim:

*Ti mug den dzin gyi dro tag päi rang zhin la leg pa dang nye päi dro dag nä. Leg pa dang nye päi dro dag. Dro dag means, leg pa dang nye päi dro dag nä dö chbag dang zhe dang kye war gyur la di dag gi dzin tang kyang rig pä siin jung war nü pa yin no.*

The ignorance holding to true existence, which is in the nature of exaggerating, exaggerates good and bad. After that, attachment and anger arise. Therefore, also the way they apprehend their objects can be eliminated with logical reasons. [4]

That is so important to realize. This is a mirror to realize our life. As I explained before, ignorance holds objects as truly existent. That is the basis. Do you understand? Nothing, nothing, nothing, in reality exists from its own side.

Nothing exists from its own side, so everything is empty. What exists, exists in mere name, merely labeled by the mind. Therefore, the ignorance that holds onto true existence, believing things to be real, exaggerates [those objects]. “This is real.” It exaggerates everything as real, in that nature. This is an incredible hallucination. The first basis is an incredible hallucination.

In that nature, after that, it discriminates good and bad. Then, attachment and anger arise. Only then, after that, attachment and anger arise. Maybe you think they arise together, but no, they don’t.

Attachment and anger do not arise before ignorance holding things as truly existent. There is no reason before that, only after. Then, it makes sense. Something is exaggerated as good, and then there is attachment. We see something that appears as good, we exaggerate it, and then attachment comes. We see something that appears as bad, and then anger comes. They only come after, not before, not at the same time. It is so important to understand that.

In Gampopa’s quote, I’ve translated *jig ten* as “mundane world,” but the literal translation is “changeable aggregates.” That is the word-by-word translation. In general, *jig ten* means our life. We need to look at that which is hallucinated as a hallucination—that is the first hallucination.

Then, the second hallucination is to exaggerate good and bad, truly existent good and bad. Then, after that, attachment and anger arise.

Our life is full of hallucinations. By looking at it like watching a movie, [we can see this]. That is great scenery to just look at our hallucinated life. [When we misapprehend things in this way] whatever is done becomes a cause of suffering. Because of the motivation everything becomes meaningless.

Basically, the motivation is attachment, ignorance or anger. Then, in particular, it is attachment to this life, to having a long, healthy life with power, wealth and reputation. Everything we do is for the happiness of this life; we are attached to that. Whatever action we do—doing business or even going to sleep, getting up in the morning, eating food—everything is to get happiness for this I, for this real I which is not there. Everything is for the happiness of this life.

[We are ruled by] our delusions, particularly attachment. Whether we become a king, whether we become a beggar, the motivation is just that—the happiness of this life—so it is attachment. Everything we do—eating, walking, sleeping, studying in university—is done with attachment to this life. Because that is a nonvirtuous mind, whatever we do becomes nonvirtue.

Even meditating, even studying, if it is done with attachment to this life, it becomes nonvirtue. Studying the Dharma or studying in college or university, it becomes meaningless, nonvirtuous, leading to rebirth in the lower realms. Everything we do not only brings problems in this life, it causes unbelievable suffering in the next life.

[The quote continues,] “Whatever you think is of no benefit to you.” Even if we are thinking of going to the moon, it is no benefit to us. What is the benefit when we die? There is not one single benefit; it doesn’t bring happiness in the next life. Then it says, “So always train yourself to look at your mind.”

It may have a specific explanation. It has many different meanings and I don’t know all the things, but one thing is to look at how everything comes from our mind. Our whole world comes from our mind. All our actions come from our mind. Our I comes from our mind. That is one way to think.

I’ll stop here.

The next meditation is this—how everything comes from our mind. How our whole world comes from our mind. Our happiness, our suffering, everything comes from our mind.

I’ll stop here. Everything comes from our mind.

OK. I’ll just stop here. I won’t go further.

So, please meditate on these things. OK, thank you.

[Rinpoche and students offer mandala]

### ***Dedications***

“Due to all the past, present, and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may bodhicitta, which is the source of all happiness for me and for all sentient beings, be generated in the hearts of all sentient beings. In those in whom it has been generated, may it increase.

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

[Dedications in Tibetan]

Thank you very much. Good night.

## Lecture 3: December 1



### ***Meditating on the Nature of Causative Phenomena***

[Rinpoche and students recite *Prayers Before Teachings*]

Because we have to meditate on *kar ma* [a star] and *rab rib* [defective view] to get a deeper understanding, I think it is good to explain it right now. What I explained yesterday or maybe the day before yesterday was something rough. This meditation is a very, very important meditation. Meditating on what the Buddha taught about this helps us realize the nature of causative phenomena, how they are in the nature of impermanence.

Usually, we hold them to be permanent; we believe they are permanent. We see things, including the I, as permanent. That is the wrong way of looking at them, because they are in the nature of impermanence, changing every second, even within a second. Due to subtle impermanence, due to causes and conditions, they don't last, not even for a second. Things, causative phenomena, change even in a split second, including the I, action, object. Whatever is a causative phenomenon constantly changes.

Examples are a person's body or a very attractive flower, but all the rest of the phenomena are like this. For example, this building changes; it doesn't last. It changes second by second, even within a split second, due to causes and conditions.

Things change within every hour, every minute. [We can see] gross changes when things change day by day, week by week, year by year. For example, the flower's color becomes dark. A rose blossoming looks very nice, but sooner or later it becomes kind of dark, old, no longer interesting like it once was. That is gradually happening. It is the same for the leaves of the trees. After some time they change color and fall. These are the gross changes we notice, but we don't notice how things are changing day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, second by second, even within a split second. We don't notice, seeing things as sort of permanent. Without checking, without meditating on their impermanent nature, we see things as sort of permanent.

Meditating in this way is looking at the conventional nature of things, not the ultimate nature, leading us to realize impermanence. Then, by realizing emptiness, we are able to stop delusions arising, such as attachment, anger, ignorance and so forth. We can control the delusions by realizing what they are, their nature. And by continuing to develop on the path, that helps to gradually cease the delusions. Especially the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness helps stop them arising.

Meditating on impermanence, on the nature of causative phenomena—including on the I, action, object—helps to complete the path and achieve the everlasting, ultimate happiness, nirvana. Not only that, it helps to generate great compassion for sentient beings and then it helps to actualize bodhicitta, which leads to enlightenment. By completing the Mahayana path, we cease all suffering and obscurations, not only the gross obscurations but also the subtle ones, and we achieve full enlightenment. Therefore, the meditation on impermanence is so important, so important, so important.

I want to tell you this. Millionaires, billionaires, zillionaires... I don't know if there are zillionaires. Are there zillionaires? [*Ven. Robina*: I don't know.] You don't know! Maybe you are a zillionaire. [*Ven. Robina*: No, Rinpoche. Not true.] Not in money but maybe in merits you can be a zillionaire. In merits—the cause of happiness, the cause of enlightenment—you can be a zillionaire. That's what I think. I'm sorry to mention this.

Tibetan beggars with nothing, just begging every day for food, recite OM MANI PADME HUM with refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The best thing is reciting OM MANI PADME HUM, unless we recite the mantra just with attachment, just for the happiness of this life, for a long life or a healthy life or something. Then it isn't holy Dharma, just worldly dharma. I usually explain it in that way.

There are exceptional actions [that become holy Dharma] such as circumambulating holy objects and making offerings with a deluded motivation. But people generally do things only with attachment clinging to this life, clinging to the happiness of this life. That is just delusion. Normal people in the world who don't know the Dharma, whose only motivation is clinging to the happiness of this life, are the same as ants, frogs, insects. They all have the same motivation; there is no difference. Those people have a human body but only the body is different [from animals], the mind is the same. The mind is nothing different.

But we came to this Kopan course to understand the meaning of life, so our motivation is different from the common people in the world. We have a Dharma motivation, a motivation with the three great meanings: the lower, middle and higher motivations. This is what makes the life meaningful, not doing things with only attachment to the happiness of this life.

When we circumambulate holy objects such as statues or scriptures, or when we do prostrations, even if the motivation is not virtuous, by the power of the holy object, our actions become Dharma; they become cause of enlightenment.

### ***Subtle Karma and Examining Our Life***

There is a story. An old man only began to practice Dharma when he was eighty, achieving the transcendental arya path in that life, achieving nirvana, the true cessation of suffering. I won't go through the details of the story, but I think I have to mention this. At home, his children teased this eighty-year-old man every day until he got so fed up with them, he decided to go to a monastery and become a monk, where it would be peaceful.

He went to the monastery and saw the arhat Shariputra, the abbot of the monastery, who was the Buddha's disciple and expert in wisdom. Shariputra didn't accept him, telling him he was too old, that he couldn't memorize the texts or do service in the monastery. The old man was so sad, he beat his head on the main door of the monastery and cried and cried. Then he went to the park and cried. The Buddha can see every single sentient being every second no matter how far away they are. There are numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, suras, asuras, intermediate state beings, and the Buddha can directly see every sentient being, can read their minds, knows all their suffering, all their needs. He can see the whole method to gradually free sentient beings from lower realms' suffering, then bring them to a higher rebirth and gradually reveal the higher and higher methods and bring them to enlightenment.

So, the Buddha saw the old man when he suddenly appeared in the park, and he asked the old man what had happened. He explained what happened at home and what happened when he came to the monastery and how the abbot said he didn't have the karma to become a monk.

Then, the Buddha said that he could see the old man had the karma to become a monk. Having completed the merits of wisdom and merits of virtue, the cause of dharmakaya and rupakaya, a buddha's holy mind and buddha's holy body, the Buddha could see this, which is something that Shariputra could not, because he had not completely abandoned the four causes of unknowing. Even though the higher arhats are free, liberated from oceans of sufferings of samsara, they haven't purified the subtle obscurations, and therefore they have the four unknowing minds.

One is the inability to see the secret actions of a buddha. Even though arhats have incredible qualities and power—it is utterly unbelievable what they can do—they can't see the secret actions of the buddhas.

The second one is their inability to see the subtle karma of sentient beings, such as the cause of a peacock's feathers' different colors. That is mentioned in the texts. We can also think about the causes of the many designs and colors there are on butterflies' wings and the different colors and marks that our own bodies have. Some can be due to gross karma, but some are from subtle karma. The cause of the different colors of a butterfly is subtle karma. We can think about why this plant has to be like this, with this particular shape, and even how its tiny flowers have so many designs and so many colors, and so many designs within the colors. Why is it like this? Of course, when we see it as something nice, it can be good karma. That is OK. But to understand why it is like this is so subtle. My understanding is it is similar to the peacock's feathers mentioned in the texts. The cause of all the small details is subtle karma.

The evolution of everything has a reason; it comes from karma. When people enjoy something, that enjoyment comes from their karma; if it is an unpleasant thing, it comes from negative karma, from the negative mind.

I think it is very interesting to go around and examine things, like those tiny flowers with so many designs and shapes. Where did they come from? How did they happen that way? I'm not going to talk much. That we enjoy and use them comes from our subtle karma. It is very interesting to examine the environment, to examine the plants, even the leaves, looking at the different shapes. The subject of karma is very interesting.

We don't have to watch TV and movies the whole time; we can watch our life. We can walk around and examine how things happen, why they happen. It's very interesting. Nothing exists from its own side; everything depends on causes and conditions. I find it incredibly interesting. When we look at plants and think, "This has come from my mind; nothing comes from its own side," this is such an interesting thing to do. Having fun in life is not only watching TV and movies, not only relying on somebody else to make up the whole story.

This precious human life we have is short; we don't have long. It's not sure how long we have—how many years, how many weeks, how many days, how many hours. Life is so short. So, this is much more interesting. It is more fun to examine our life in this way. Then, that inspires us to do positive things. If we do healthy actions of body and speech, if we do positive, virtuous things, positive results, no matter how small, even enjoying a tiny flower, all these good things come from our good actions, from our good, healthy mind. They are a projection of that. If we have negative thoughts, all the unpleasant, sad things come from that mind.

Seeing this inspires us to develop our mind, to always have a positive, healthy mind, a virtuous mind. Then, everything turns out good. Our main success is developing our mind, especially a good heart. By developing a virtuous, positive mind, a Dharma mind, everything turns out good. That is the best success. That is how to make our life successful.

Otherwise, with a negative heart, with a cruel, selfish mind, we only think of ourselves. "When I can be happy? When I can be happy?" Then, everything turns out bad. "I don't like this; I don't like that." Everything disturbs us. Other people don't like us. Wherever we go, in the city or the countryside, even birds making noise outside disturb our selfish mind. If dogs bark, it irritates us. It's like that.

I must go back! I must not walk around. I must go back to the subject!

I find it very interesting to check, to examine how everything comes from our mind. It inspires us. It doesn't make us feel hopeless. It inspires us to meditate, to practice Dharma. Up to now, whatever positive things we have done, all that appears, all the beautiful and pleasant things we have experienced are like that.

### ***The Four Unknowing Minds***

So, what I was saying before was this. If we have attachment, not only attachment to future lives' samsara but even attachment to this life's happiness, that attachment obscures the mind. Instead of enlightening the mind, freeing the mind, it obscures the mind and then that becomes a cause for many other delusions to arise. That is the definition of attachment.

However, our actions of circumambulating, prostrating, making offerings to holy objects—not only to the Buddha but to statues and stupas—become virtue, become Dharma, the cause of enlightenment [even without a virtuous motivation]. That is an exception by the power of the holy object. What am I saying?

Except for those things, we need a virtuous motivation. A Tibetan beggar who has nothing, just a little food every day by begging, but who recites OM MANI PADME HUM with faith in Chenrezig, that beggar collects unbelievable merits. Even without bodhicitta, they collect more merits than there are drops of water in the ocean, more merits than all the sand in the ocean. Unbelievable merits are collected by reciting OM MANI PADME HUM even without bodhicitta.

As I mentioned to Robina—not Robini, Robin-a, Robi... what? Robina. Sometimes my mind forgets. Sometimes when I try to mention something correctly, it doesn't happen. Robina. That person is a millionaire, a billionaire, a zillionaire in merits, but poor in money or facilities. A millionaire, a billionaire, a zillionaire, somebody who has money, the king of the country, those rich people, although they have so much wealth, they haven't met the Dharma, they don't know the Dharma, so they don't create good karma. Only those who have a good heart, even though they might not believe in reincarnation and karma, with a good heart they collect merit. But that is not common; there are only a few like that.

They might be wealthy but they don't have merit. It is so difficult to collect merit, the cause of happiness. Even if they collect a little merit, it is soon completely destroyed by anger. Then, dedicating to achieve enlightenment is impossible for them. It is so difficult to collect merit. Even if a little is done, it is soon destroyed by anger because our mind has been habituated with anger from beginningless rebirths. Our mind has not been habituated with the positive mind of patience but with anger. It arises so forcefully. Therefore, although we might collect a little merit, which is so difficult to collect, it is soon destroyed by anger.

So, that eighty-year-old man I was talking about. The Buddha checked who could look after him and saw it should be the arhat Maudgalyayana, his other main disciple who was expert in psychic powers. When the old man became a monk, in Maudgalyayana's monastery he was teased by young monks, so he got fed up again and one day, without telling the abbot, he left and jumped in the river. Although he couldn't see him in the monastery, Maudgalyayana was checking with his clairvoyance and saw him jumping in the river. He immediately went there and grabbed the old man. The old man was shocked and couldn't speak for some time, but then he explained about how the young monks teased him. Realizing he needed to complete renunciation of samsara, he told the old man to hold the corner of his robe and then he flew into the sky, going on and on and on.

They finally landed on a huge mountain of bones. When the old man asked Maudgalyayana whose bones they were, Maudgalyayana replied that they were the bones of his previous life, that he had been a whale in his previous life. When the old man heard that, all his hairs stood up. Then, I think, from that he got renunciation of samsara.

There are six sufferings of samsara [listed]. They are that there is nothing definite in samsara; that there is no satisfaction in samsara. No matter how much we enjoy samsaric pleasures and



enjoyments there is no satisfaction. Whatever body we take, we have to leave it again and again, numberless times. We have to join from one life to another life again and again. Lama Tsongkhapa mentioned that in the lamrim. Other lamrims mentioned going from one life to another but Lama Tsongkhapa mentioned the continuation of this mother of this life we were born to and how our mother had a mother and so on, the continuation of this mother, this mother's mother, that mother's mother, continuing so that they couldn't be counted, even if the whole earth was made into juniper? [*Student: Berries.*] Juniper berries. Even if we made pills that size, we couldn't count them.

The number of mothers we have had is countless. The whole earth made into pills [could be counted], but they would not be enough to count our mothers. In that way, Lama Tsongkhapa explained the shortcomings of samsara. Similarly, we can think of our father's father and on and on. Even though it's not mentioned, it's the same. Our body comes from the sperm of our father and the blood, the egg, of our mother. They combined and our consciousness was conceived on that.

The way to think is that our body is a collection of our father's sperm, our father's father's sperm and on and on. Even the whole earth made into juniper berry pills is not enough [to count that number]. And then our mother's mother, our mother's mother's mother and on and on.

This body is a kind of old garbage collection from all the fathers and mothers. This is my own understanding, sorry, but it is what Lama Tsongkhapa explained. That is my own understanding, the way to be detached, to free our mind from delusion, the cause of samsaric suffering. To renounce attachment to our samsaric body, we should think in that way on the shortcomings of samsara. Then we can achieve nirvana, everlasting happiness, ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara, forever, not just for a few days. It's not like a few months' holiday and then we come back to samsaric suffering. It is not like that; it is forever, forever! You have to understand that deeply—forever!

The fifth of the six sufferings is that after being high, we become low from life to life. In this life we are a king; in the next life we are a servant. Even if we are not born in the lower realms, in hell, we are still a servant. In this life, as a very rich king, everybody serves us, but then, in our next life we become a servant and have to work very hard. It not only changes from life to life, it also changes in this life, going from higher to lower. Nothing is definite in samsara.

After the desire realm and the form realm, there is the formless realm, with the levels of infinite sky, infinite consciousness, nothingness and the tip of samsara. With the tip of samsara, we have reached the highest point in samsara, but in our next life we can be born in the lower realms, even in the lowest hell realm. It can change.

The last of the six sufferings is that when we die, we die alone. We even have to leave our body. The consciousness alone goes to the next life; we can't take anything with us. Even if we are a universal king, with millions and millions of subjects and servants, we can't take even one with us to the next life. It is said in the teachings that the king with palaces and all these rich things and the beggar with only one stick, [are the same because] when we die we can't even carry that stick to the next life, we have to leave it. Only our consciousness goes. When we are born, we can't bring anybody with us. It is said that when we take a hair from a slab of butter, the butter doesn't come, only the hair comes. It is like that with the consciousness.

[When Maudgalyayana showed the eighty-year-old man the bones of his former life], he realized how samsara is in the nature of suffering. He then renounced attachment to samsara and in that life he realized a direct perception of emptiness, which ceased the cause of samsara, karma and delusions, and then he achieved nirvana.

What was I saying?

The Buddha explained to the eighty-year-old how he did actually have the karma to become a monk. Shariputra couldn't see it because it was so far in the past. It was way, way back, eons ago. At that time, that old man was a fly and there was a stupa with cow dung floating around the stupa, maybe in running water. It is not that [the fly thought] the stupa was so precious. It is not

that the fly went to a monastery to study. It's not like that. With attachment, the fly followed the smell of cow dung around the stupa, so it unintentionally went around the stupa. That became one circumambulation. And that was the cause for the old man to become a monk at eighty. This is what the Buddha explained.

That is why we, the FPMT organization, try to build big statues to create merit. Besides many small statues, we build large statues and stupas in Tibet and Nepal, even in the West. The larger it is, the more people come from far to see it. Then, this holy object can purify their negative karma and they can create good karma, the cause of enlightenment. So, for all those beings who come to see the holy object, it plants a seed in their mind to achieve enlightenment.

The bigger the statue is, the more people will come. Many years ago, we had a project to build a fifty-story statue of Maitreya Buddha, the future-time buddha, in Bodhgaya, but of course we built it in a dream. It didn't happen. We didn't manage to build it. Now, it has become two statues, not fifty stories, four stories. A part of the land went to the world organization. Because you can't build high things on part of the land, only if you go out of there. We are now in the process of doing that. There will be a fifteen-story Maitreya statue in Kushinagar, where the Buddha passed away and where the future Buddha Maitreya will take birth. Shakyamuni Buddha took birth in Lumbini; Maitreya Buddha will take rebirth there. We have the plan for a fifteen-story statue there. It is not like Russia or other countries where it's easy to build something. There are so many problems there.

We have already built many holy objects. Recently, we built a large stupa in Solu Khumbu, like the Boudha stupa, not the same size but smaller. It was built by the manager of Kopan, Tenpa Choden. He has so much merit, good luck, merit. He was able to build it so well to benefit so many sentient beings, to liberate them from samsara and bring them to enlightenment, even flies, insects, besides human beings. We have done big ones. So, we aim to do this continuously as much as possible.

That is not the only thing. The best way to benefit others, of course, is education, learning the Buddhadharma. To have realizations, we have to learn the Buddhadharma. We have to learn, reflect and then meditate in order to actualize the path. We have to bring into our heart what is explained in the books by the Buddha and by the pandits.

Sorry. I forgot. Way back, where did I start? How did I start? [*Ven. Ailsa: Kar ma rab rib*, about impermanence.]

I only explained two of the four unknowing minds. The third one is the inability to see things that happened a very long time ago, things so unbelievably distant. Even the higher arhats cannot see this. And the last one is the inability to see very long distances. So, one is long distances and one is distant by time, having happened unbelievably many eons ago. I think those two might be like that, but you can check.

There is a story how Maudgalyayana went to the hell realms with his psychic powers to visit the teacher Kundegiyur, who was the founder of a sort of Hindu religion. When he met him, Kundegiyur sent a message [through Maudgalyayana to his disciples], telling them to not go around his stupa because when they did, he suffered so much. [Not believing their teacher could be in hell,] the disciples didn't believe the message Maudgalyayana gave them. To prove the message came from his teacher, they tested Maudgalyayana by asking him where his mother was. However, due to the great distance, Maudgalyayana was unable to see her. So, they refused to believe him and severely beat him. (In the text, the expression used is they "chopped him.") They beat him so badly.

The point of this story is to show us how we need to achieve enlightenment to help sentient beings, to free sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment. Just becoming an arhat is not enough because the four unknowing minds are still not abandoned so we can't completely help. Shariputra could not help the eighty-year-old man become a monk because he couldn't see his karma, but the Buddha could. To be able to help sentient beings perfectly, without the slightest mistake, we need to achieve the state of

omniscience. To be liberated from the grosser disturbing thought obscurations alone is not enough; we have to abandon the four unknowing minds.

I think that is enough. I will just go straight. Too much talk.

### ***With Dependent Arising We Eliminate Ignorance***

As I began explaining *kar ma rab rib*, looking at causative phenomena as like a star, as a mirage—sorry, not a mirage, as defective view. I started from that. As I mentioned yesterday, Lama Tsongkhapa praised the Buddha for having revealed dependent arising. Then, I said numberless sentient beings in the past have become liberated from samsara and become enlightened, numberless sentient beings are becoming enlightened now, and numberless will in the future. We have met the Buddha's teachings and we are learning that now.

[In *In Praise of Dependent Origination*, Lama Tsongkhapa said:]

[2] Whatever degenerations there are in the world,  
The root of all these is ignorance;  
You taught that it is dependent origination,  
The seeing of which will undo this ignorance.

I also told you that yesterday. The root of that is ignorance. The meaning of subtle dependent arising is the meaning of emptiness and the meaning of emptiness is the meaning of subtle dependent arising. Therefore, the Buddha taught subtle dependent arising. Seeing this, “will undo this ignorance,” which is the root of all the suffering.

Therefore, Lama Tsongkhapa said. “You [the Buddha] taught that it is dependent origination.” It doesn't say “emptiness” but “dependent origination.” There is gross dependent origination and there is subtle dependent origination and meditating on subtle dependent origination more and more is a great help to realize emptiness.

This ignorance, this concept is where all suffering comes from, all the oceans of hell suffering, the oceans of hungry ghost suffering, the oceans of animal suffering, the oceans of human being suffering, the oceans of sura being suffering, and the oceans of asura being suffering. All the suffering of samsara comes from this ignorance, this wrong concept. It is like this. OK.

Our I has been created by our mind. How is it done? How is it created by our mind? There has to be a valid base, which are the aggregates. It has to be valid. We can't label the “I” on our shoes or on our nostrils. We can't label the “I” on any [random] thing. We must have a valid base—the aggregates.

If we were to label the “I” on our shoes, that is not a valid base. First, the mind focuses on the valid base, the aggregates, and then it labels “I.” It not only labels “I” but it *merely* labeled “I.” That's it. There's nothing else. How the I exists is nothing else. You have to know that. Write it down! You have to carve it in the brain. It's very important.

If we don't like suffering, we must know that. If we want to help other sentient beings, to free them from suffering and for them to achieve liberation, we must learn this. All suffering comes from the mind. We must learn this. The mind focuses on the valid base, the aggregates, and then makes up the label “I.” Not only that, it merely labels “I.” That's it. How the I exists is nothing more than that. What is the I? Nothing more than that. Just that. Just that. It is the nature of that. You have to know that! Clear?

We should meditate. Maybe we meditate on that, OK? Just a little bit.

[Pause for meditation]

### ***The Subtle Middle Way Between Eternalism and Nihilism***

In reality, that is the I that exists. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] That is the I that exists. But what it is is *so* subtle, so unbelievably subtle. It is not that it doesn't exist. It exists, but how it exists is *so* subtle.

When many famous meditators in Tibet meditated on the emptiness of the I, they fell into nihilism, thinking that there is no I at all. It is like walking out on the ice; we fall down. We can

easily slip into nihilism, thinking that there is no I. Or we can think that the I exists from its own side, a truly existent or real I, falling into eternalism. Either nihilism or eternalism, it's so difficult to stay in the middle way. We have to have so much merit to see the I in the middle way, without falling into nihilism and eternalism. Even in Tibet famous meditators either fell into nihilism or eternalism when they meditated on the I.

In the first second, the mind, focusing on the aggregates, merely labels "I." With the first second, it is that, unbelievably subtle. It's not that there is no I, there is an I, but it is like it. You can almost say that although it's not that the I doesn't exist, it's *like* it doesn't exist. You understand? Write it down. It is very important. Even if you don't understand it now, you will later. Having the correct realization, the correct understanding, is so important.

It is so subtle like that. It's *like* it doesn't exist. That is the reality. Like that, our aggregates of body and mind, all the senses and forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, the objects of the mind, consciousness, our whole world—our senses and all the objects of the senses—are like that, merely labeled by the mind.

Like how we meditated just now on how the I is merely imputed by the mind, in reality the whole thing is not what appears to us now, what we believe. The whole thing is like the I—so subtle. It is not that it doesn't exist, but it is like that. You understand? That is the reality. That is what the meditation on emptiness is. That is what we should meditate on—the reality, not a hallucination.

I have a retreat house called Amitabha Buddha Pure Land in Washington. There is an Amitabha Buddha statue there made in Vietnam. What stone is it? [*Ven. Roger*: Marble.] Marble stone. It is bigger than life size. They did it their own way with the eyes kind of closed, but an ex-monk from Kopan, Gelek, fixed them how it is explained in the texts to do the Buddha's eyes. Then, there is a throne with different animals, which signify the five root delusions. He made those animals and another artist came and finished them.

We do an Amitabha celebration every year. I've done it three times now. We invite people and give them a delicious Tibetan lunch. For many people, the statue is not the main thing; the food is the main thing. In the morning, we do our practice of offerings. Then there is food. During the food and after the food, people can offer dance, such as the 'Twenty-One Taras' dance. There is a small center there, Pamtingpa Center, and they can offer whatever songs they want. Last time, some Sherpas came from Seattle and offered song and dance.

I have diabetes, so I'm supposed to go for a walk, but it doesn't get done. One time I went for a walk with Roger, Sherab, and two monks who live there, Tharchin and Tenzin. While we went from the house down to the main road, we meditated on impermanence and death, thinking about how many seconds there are from now up to death, how life is finishing so quickly. With that awareness, we walked down the hill. And then, coming up the hill, I explained to the two monks about the refuting object, *gag cha*. One of the monks studied philosophy in Nalanda but got *lung*. I explained the *gag cha*, the false I, the false object, the false action; I introduced many things. Coming up the hill with the meditation on emptiness, we looked at the real I, action, object, everything, looking at that which is a hallucination as a hallucination. That is one meditation but there might be others.

Walking with this awareness we went up, it seemed to me that Amitabha Buddha Pure Land retreat place, the house, almost looked like it was not there. Somehow walking with that mindfulness meditation on emptiness in that way helps. But, of course, I'm too lazy; I didn't continue that meditation. You are supposed to develop, to be able to get to the point where you completely see it in a non-objectifying way. It is not that there is no house, which would be nihilism. Not that! That would be a very simple thing, but it's not that.

For example, the I, just the I, without pointing out the false I, the real I, without pointing to that, just the general I, the merely labeled I or general I—the hair is not I, the brain is not I, all that, all the pieces inside, heart and all that, are not I. The heart is not I, the stomach, all the

pieces are not I. The legs are not I. There is no I.... At the end, there is no I—not that. That is nihilism, falling into nihilism.

In *Lamrim Chenmo*, Lama Tsongkhapa said that when we check where the vase is, “This is not the vase,” “This is not the vase,” if we fall into nihilism destroying the dependent arising, that is due to not differentiating the *gag cha* and the *nang wa* [the object to be refuted and the appearance]. If we fall into nihilism, thinking that things do not exist, I saw in a text that that negative karma is like having killed one hundred million people. It is very heavy negative karma if we fall into nihilism. Therefore, we have to be very careful when teaching emptiness. If people fall into nihilism, they create that very heavy negative karma, like having killed one hundred million people.

In the sadhanas, when we say OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABAHAVA SHUDDHO HAM, we meditate on emptiness and generate ourselves as the deity. When we practice tantra, there is always a meditation on emptiness before we generate as the deity. So, with TONG PA NYI DU GYUR, everything becomes empty. It becomes empty. It becomes empty. When we think it becomes empty, if we also think that it doesn’t exist, if we think that TONG PA NYI DU GYUR means it doesn’t exist, that is nihilism. You have to know that is nihilism. If we meditate like that, that is nihilism. Each time we say TONG PA NYI DU GYUR, it is nihilism, not a meditation on emptiness.

There is no I. Of course, there is no truly existent I, but to think that there is no I at all is nihilism. It becomes nihilism, thinking it is not there. Our meditation on TONG PA NYI DU GYUR becomes nihilism. We have to be very careful not to do that in our meditation.

A truly existent vase, a *real* vase, of course, *that* is not there. It appeared to us and we believe it to be there but it is not there at all, not even in name! But the vase exists in mere name! The real I does not exist at all; it is a hallucination. It doesn’t exist at all, but there *is* an I which exists in mere name. A real I does not exist, even in mere name. So you understand? If we are focusing on the real I or real vase, that is correct. That is correct. That basis doesn’t exist there; that is correct. But to think that there is no vase, that is nihilism. We have to be really careful in our meditation on emptiness.

Sorry, the time is finished.

### ***Only Prasangika Have a Perfect View of Emptiness***

Now here, all of phenomena—the I, action, object, the world, our world—everything that appears real to us, everything we believe to be real, is not there. Just as we meditated on how the I is merely labeled by the mind, everything is like that. It is not that things don’t exist, but they don’t exist from their own side. Everything exists in mere name. It is unbelievably subtle how the I is. That is the reality with the I and with everything.

In the first second, the I appears to us, but in the next second, when it appears back to the hallucinated mind, it appears back as not merely labeled by the mind. In the first second, the I is merely labeled by the mind. OK? But in the next second.... There is a negative imprint collected on the continuation of the consciousness by ignorance, the particular ignorance that has held the I as real from beginningless rebirths, as a truly existent I, a real I. That ignorance has left a negative imprint all the time up to now, decorating or projecting the merely labeled I as real. On the merely labeled I, it decorates or projects something real, existing by nature, truly existing or existing from its own side. From that second second onward, for our ignorance, our hallucinated mind, it is true. This I appears as real and we apprehend it as true.

That is the root of all the suffering—of the oceans of hell suffering, the oceans of hungry ghost suffering, the oceans of animal suffering, the oceans of human suffering. Every problem—depression, cancer and so on—every problem comes from that. The oceans of human problems, the oceans of relationship problems, the oceans of sura and asura problems—every suffering in the world comes from that. The suffering of rebirth, old age, sickness, death, the suffering of change, pervasive compounding suffering—it all comes from that concept.

The ignorance that believes that this is real, that apprehends this as real, is a very subtle concept. Even the Svatantrika believe that it exists by nature from its own side but it is also labeled. The Svatantrika think that is the correct one. That is what they believe. But for the Prasangika, that is totally wrong. [The object that] is labeled but also exists from its own side, that is totally the *gag cha*, the object to be refuted. That is what we have to totally realize, how it is empty as it is empty.

Of the four schools, that last one, Madhyamaka, has two [subschoools]. What the [first subschool], Svatantrika thinks—that it is labeled but it also exists from its own side like that, the Prasangika school thinks is totally nonexistent. That is the realization of the correct view of the Prasangika view of emptiness.

That wisdom is the only one that can eliminate the root of samsara, ignorance. That is the only one. None of the other views—not the Vaibhashika school, the Sautrantika school, the Mind Only school or the Madhyamaka Svatantrika school—have a realization of emptiness that is complete, perfect.

It is not only the I that appears real to us; it is the same with our body and mind, with the five senses—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects—with our whole world; it all appears real to us, real from there. The light from there, the colors, the paintings, everything from there, everything appears from there, a real one. Take you and me. You see me, crazy Lama Zopa, appearing from his own side; I see you. When you go outside, the sky appears to you, trees appear to you, everything appears to you as real.

In this way, whatever we do is meditation. Even if we go to the toilet, it is meditation. While we are doing *pipi* and *kaka*, it is meditation. Whatever we do is meditation—being aware of how it is not there. Even if we are eating, the food is not there. The real food is not there. Whatever we are doing, that is the best meditation. Even going shopping should be meditation. Our life becomes meditation. Even if we walk around, we practice the mindfulness of this. When we are eating, going to the toilet, whatever, we continuously practice this mindfulness. Whatever we do, our life is meditation; they are one. That is the best. That is the happiest life.

So, *kar ma*, the star, is emptiness, as I explained to you. Everything exists in mere name. Samsara and nirvana, happiness and problems, everything exists in mere name; it is empty from its own side.

### ***“Nothing Exists and Yet It Appears”***

Then *rab rib*, defective view, is the next one. As I explained, the I appears real. It is projected by the negative imprint left by ignorance, which decorates it as real. On the merely labeled I, all this is decorated.

What was I saying? Now I’m forgetting. Our whole world, which is merely labeled, appears to us, is projected as real. This hallucination is decorated on everything.

There is a verse in *Dhammapada*, then I’ll stop.

All existents are like a dream and an illusion.

There is nothing that is truly existent.

Nothing exists yet it appears. Therefore,

Don’t cling so much to phenomena!

Just like when in a dream, we know the dream, we can understand how all phenomena [exist]. We can get some idea, “All existents are like a dream, like an illusion.” *Den päi ngo wo chi yang me*, so, “There is nothing that is truly existent.” Do they truly exist? No! There is not even one [atom of true existence]. That which is truly existing is a hallucination. It is projected by the negative imprint, all decorated by our mind, by ignorance. “Nothing exists yet it appears.” Especially as truly existent. “Don’t cling so much to phenomena.” Don’t grasp, don’t cling too much.

Write this down. This is the Buddha’s teaching, from the *Dhammapada*.

I’ll stop here.

### ***Dedications***

[Rinpoche and students offer mandala and recite short dedication prayers in Tibetan]

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, which is merely labeled by the mind...” Now you understand, now you have some understanding. “May the I who is merely labeled by the mind achieve buddhahood, which is merely labeled by the mind, and lead all the sentient beings, who are merely labeled by the mind, to that buddhahood, which is merely labeled by the mind, by myself alone, who is also merely labeled by the mind.”



## Lecture 4: December 3



[2 December 2019 – No teachings]

### ***That Which is Dependent Arising Is Empty***

[Rinpoche and students recite *Prayers Before Teachings* until *kar ma rab rib...*]

As I explained, now it is easier to get some idea. *Kar ma* [a star] is a meditation on emptiness. I used that example. The I is empty, the action is empty, the object is empty, samsara and nirvana are empty, hell and enlightenment are empty, everyday life happiness and problems are empty, the whole of phenomena is empty. As I mentioned to you, it exists in mere name. All the things that exist, exist in mere name.

This is most unbelievably subtle. It exists but it is *like* it doesn't exist. I told you to write that down! It exists but it is like it doesn't exist. It is unbelievably subtle. From that we can get the idea that things do not exist from their own side; they do not exist by nature, they do not exist truly. There is no *real* thing—no real I, no real action, no real object, no real pizza, no real ice cream, all those things that we are attached to, and all the things we are angry at—there is no real enemy who abuses us.

We make an enemy for a whole year, for years, thinking “This person is so bad.” But there is no such real thing. In reality, there is no sure real enemy. You have to understand. In reality, all these things are empty; they do not exist from their own side, by their nature. They do not truly exist. They are not real. “Real” means from its own side.

That is why they exist but they are empty. While they are empty, they exist—they exist in mere name. Now you can see the middle way, which in nature is the correct way, whereas other ways are wrong. This is how existence and emptiness are unified. You have to write it down! This is what you have to realize. That is the correct one.

My memory is so bad. I have to look at the text because I don't remember it. I don't remember the words.

Nagarjuna said,

[25:18] Whatever is dependently co-arisen

That is explained to be emptiness.

That, being a dependent designation,

Is itself the middle way. [5]

This is Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*. Nagarjuna is the second buddha who elaborated the Buddha's teachings on emptiness. He wrote six different texts just on that, included in the *Fundamental Wisdom*.

"Whatever is dependently co-arisen, that is explained to be emptiness." I explained how subtle dependent arising means existing in mere name. All phenomena that exist—the I, action, object—exist in mere name. How it exists is unbelievably subtle. *Nam*, that is explained as empty. That means it does not exist from its own side, which means it is empty. While it exists, it is empty. It comes to that point.

Then, the next one. Because of that, it is merely labeled. To make it clear, without worrying about the translation, it is merely labeled by the mind. "That... itself is the middle way." That is emptiness.

This is what we have to realize in order to eliminate the very root of the entire suffering of the hell beings, the hungry ghosts, the animals, the human beings, the suras and asuras, how for all problems and delusions, the root is ignorance.

There are the three poisonous minds, the six root delusions, twenty secondary delusions, but the root is ignorance. The only one to be eliminated is ignorance. That which is empty exists merely imputed by the mind, in mere name.

All that is the middle way, the way that is devoid of nihilism and devoid of eternalism, the false view that see things as truly existent, as existing from their own side.

Now it comes. Nagarjuna says,

[24:19] Something that is not dependently arisen,

Such a thing does not exist.

Therefore a nonempty thing

Does not exist.

There is no phenomenon that exists but is not empty. There is no such thing. Slightly different wording but the meaning is the same.

While things exist—the I, action, object, any phenomenon, enlightenment and hell, samsara and nirvana—while it exists, it exists *in mere name*. Unless we know how something exists, we can get confused by the meaning of "existing." Nagarjuna says that there is no such phenomenon that is not a dependent arising and therefore there is no such phenomenon that is not empty. "Empty" means empty of existing from its own side. There is no phenomenon that is not empty of that. You understand?

In Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*, it says,

[99] Because the phenomena of forms

Are only names, space too is only a name.

Without the elements how could forms exist?

Therefore even name-only does not exist. [6]

The phenomena of forms exist in mere name, which means that even space exists in mere name. Form without elements does not exist. The elements are fire, water, air and earth, "Therefore, even name-only does not exist." That means it does not exist truly. Even the mere name itself does not exist from its own side.

This is the same as what is mentioned in the *Heart Sutra*, which lists many things. There is no I, there is no form, there is no sound. It means it doesn't exist from its own side. So, even the mere name does not exist from its own side. These are Nagarjuna's words.

So, in the first second, there is the valid base, the aggregates, and the mind that focuses on the valid base and that merely labels "I." That is the first second. And then, in the second second, because of the negative imprint left on the continuation of the consciousness from beginningless rebirths, right after the mere imputation, that negative imprint projects [true existence], like putting the roll of film we have taken pictures with into the machine with electricity and seeing the film on the movie screen, whatever picture it is, whether it's a war or people having a party and enjoying themselves. The negative imprints that have accumulated on the continuation of

consciousness decorate or project true existence onto the object, making us see it as existing from its own side, existing by its nature, as the real one. What we say in our everyday language is “real.” It means existing from its own side. That is decorated or projected.

Then, in the third second, we believe it. It appears as real and we believe it to be real. We believe it a hundred percent. This is what we have believed from beginningless rebirths. A good example is the I.

Then, from that concept, the oceans of suffering of the six realms happen. We have already experienced that numberless times, not just once. And unless we practice Dharma, unless we realize the three principal aspects of the path of renunciation, bodhicitta and right view and in particular emptiness, we will have to [experience this] again.

We have received this perfect human rebirth just once! It is like a dream. Except for those who practice Dharma, most people don’t think of the perfect human rebirth. All their life, they are a slave to money. The whole human rebirth, for thirty, sixty or a hundred years, is used for money, as a slave to money. It is not used for things that are meaningful. It’s the other way around [from the way it should be]—we become a servant for that. Consequently, this life is totally wasted, totally misused.

This is without talking about nonvirtue, the cause of the unbelievable suffering in samsara and the lower realms for eons and eons. Without realizing emptiness, we can’t eliminate the root of samsara, ignorance, *marigpa*! If we don’t eliminate that, we have to suffer in the six realms again endlessly. We also have to go through all the suffering of human beings: birth, old age, sickness, death and so on. We will experience it again numberless times in future rebirths if we don’t practice Dharma in this life. This one-time perfect human rebirth we have received is totally wasted, totally misused.

As the Fifth Dalai Lama says,

[From now on, this one time that you have found the boat of a perfect human rebirth,  
The basis of achieving the collections of goodness of benefits and happiness,  
If, without going to the land where you can definitely get jewels,  
You return back to samsara empty, your heart is rotten.]

The ocean is full of wish-granting jewels and, although we can get as much as we want, we return empty. That is the example. If we did that, people would think we were totally crazy. The Fifth Dalai Lama uses that as an example for making life meaningless. If we don’t realize emptiness in particular, if we don’t eliminate ignorance, the root of samsara, this is what will happen. We have to develop that; we have to see everything as like an illusion.

When we have a direct perception of emptiness, we can cease the seed of karma and delusions. Then, we can be liberated from the true cause of suffering and achieve nirvana.

### ***Looking Back on the Mirage of True Existence***

What was I going to say?

After we merely label [the I onto the base of the aggregates], it should appear back to us as it is, as merely labeled by the mind. Its reality should appear to us! But that doesn’t happen. Except for somebody in equipoise meditation, for everybody else, whatever appears—the I, action, object—everything appears as truly existent.

Of course, if we have a direct perception of emptiness, understanding that it exists in mere name, when it appears, it still appears as if it exists from its own side, but we don’t believe that. Although we don’t yet have a direct realization, we don’t believe it. It’s like we have crossed the desert where there is no water, and we look back and have the appearance of water. We know there is no water but when we look back and have a vision of water, we know this is a mirage. That is a good example. It is like a mirage, like a dream, like an illusion.

Even the arya beings who have a direct perception of emptiness, who have directly realized that nothing exists from its own side, in the post-meditation break time, when they are not in equipoise meditation, anything that appears—the I, action, object—appears to exist from its own

side. It is a hallucination, but they know it is a hallucination. We *don't* know it is a hallucination, so we believe it to be real. We are totally trapped. I don't want to say this, but seeing we totally believe the hallucination to be real, somebody might call us totally crazy! But even the exalted beings who see emptiness directly, when they are not in equipoise meditation, anything that appears appears as if it exists from its own side.

But for them, the way they see things is like a mirage, like when we come from the desert and look back and see what appears to be water but we know there is no water; we know it is not true. The meditator has that vision like a mirage, like a dream, like an illusion.

A buddha does not have a hallucination at all. Why? Because they have totally purified, completely ceased the subtle negative imprints that decorate or project the hallucination of true existence. They have totally purified all the obscurations. There are no obscurations when we become a buddha, neither gross nor subtle ones, and all realizations are completed. "Buddha" in Tibetan is *sang gye*. *Sang* means totally purified; *gye* means nothing more to develop.

So, a buddha does not have the subtle negative imprint in the mind that projects the hallucination of true existence. That has been totally purified. Therefore a buddha does not have the hallucination. Sentient beings—even arya beings with a direct perception of emptiness during post-meditation break time—have the hallucination. Whatever appears, there is the hallucination of existing from its own side. But for them because there is a direct realization of emptiness, the hallucination they see is like the mirage for us, seeing there is water but knowing there is no water.

Another example is like a dream, where we have a certain appearance. As I said before, in the dream we become the American president or we get married and have a hundred children, or we have a hundred helicopters or boats or ships. In the dream we have all these things, but when we wake up we don't have them. The texts often say "during the dream" but I would rather use "when we wake up" to make it even clearer. We know it was just a dream, it was not real, these things didn't exist. Then, for the person who recognizes during a dream that it is a dream, there is appearance but they do not believe it; they know it is not true. This is how it is with arya beings until they achieve enlightenment, until they cease completely the subtle negative imprints left by delusion.

I think in the Madhyamaka texts an example used is the magician who uses certain mantras and materials to hallucinate the audience. For somebody who doesn't know this is a magic trick, they believe what appears, such as a diamond palace. The magician can even illusion the people to get them to believe that there is a whole city. We can see that in the texts. The person who doesn't know that this is a magician can believe the palace of diamonds or whatever is real, or I don't know what, a beautiful man or woman, a gold elephant, whatever. Far out, far out things! He can illusion the audience, but they don't know he is a magician and believe the illusions are real.

What is projected... What is the word? What is projected by the magician, what is created. There may be people in the audience who don't know that it is black magic [created by the magician], who believe it is real. It is like that for us. For those of us who haven't realized emptiness, like me, we are like the audience believing what is created by the magician to be real. We are totally hallucinated! *Totally hallucinated!* [Rinpoche laughs at his own raised voice] I just did it two times; I want to do a third repetition. That example is enough for us to understand the nature of our life—*we are totally hallucinated!* That is the third loud repetition. I didn't mean to do that but it happened by accident. Accident, by our karma!

The person who has realized emptiness sees that what the magician has created is not real. There is the appearance but they don't believe it. For the exalted ones who have a direct perception of emptiness, there is the appearance of true existence but they don't believe it.

We are at Kopan. We think all this is real. Whatever discomfort you have is real. Hot is real. Cold is real. Everything is real—real Kopan Monastery, real gompa, real food. But the person who realizes emptiness, especially the exalted ones who have a direct perception, everything still appears to exist from its own side, but they don't believe it at all because of the direct perception.

We have to reach that level. Not only by studying, that is not enough. If we have a lot of merit from the past, it can happen that we realize emptiness, but otherwise just studying is not enough.

### ***Four Ways to Achieve Realizations***

In *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, Pabongka Rinpoche says that when Lama Tsongkhapa asked Manjushri about the way to quickly achieve lamrim realizations, Manjushri answered there were four ways: purifying obscurations, collecting merits, receiving blessings through single-pointed prayer to the guru and training in the actual body of the meditation.

The first thing is to purify the obscurations, which usually means [doing a practice like] Vajrasattva, as well as the Thirty-Five Buddhas practice, which is one of the many ways to purify. Collecting merit means doing things such as offering mandala. That is the common explanation. We need to do a lot of that.

My idea is that even though there are so many methods for purifying and collecting merits, the most powerful way is fulfilling the guru's wishes and advice, offering service and paying respects to the guru. All these things are the most powerful.

Conversely, making a mistake by not correctly following the virtuous friend, the karma of that negative mind toward the guru becomes the heaviest negative karma. We have to also understand that. In a positive way, with a positive body, speech and mind, by fulfilling the guru's wishes and advice, offering service and respect, we collect the highest merit. From that, we can also understand the negative side, how we create negative karma if we make mistakes in correctly following the virtuous friend.

"Receiving blessings through single-pointed prayer to the guru." That's why if we just meditate, going straight through the analytical or fixed meditation but never purifying or collecting merit, never making requests to the guru, if guru devotion is left out, realizations don't happen.

Then, the fourth one is "training in the actual body of the meditation." Correctly following the virtuous friend, realizing the guru is the embodiment of all the numberless past buddhas, all the present buddhas and all the future buddhas, that every single action of the guru's body, speech and mind is every buddha's actions of the holy body, speech and mind—if we have realized that with a stable mind, with a realization, we can have lamrim realizations of each of the paths: the graduated path of lower capable being, of the middle capable being and of the higher capable being, including right view, as well as the two stages of tantra.

When these things happen—purification, collecting merits, single-pointed requesting the guru and receiving the guru's blessings—even if not much meditation is done, even a few words in the teachings wake up our mind. It clicks. Otherwise, it just remains words. Like in the past we might have debated that things don't exist from their own side, but while debating we have been thinking something else. Recognizing our own mistakes, right now the way we think and believe is like somebody else. For years it is like that. But when these things happen—purification and collecting merits, requesting the guru single-pointedly, then just hearing two or three words on emptiness clicks in our mind. We wake up.

### ***The I on the I***

For example, when all conditions happen, that there is vase on the vase, that there is an I on the I, that clicks. Suddenly, we look outside at the ceiling which has seemed to exist from its own side, the thangkas and the brocade, the red, blue, green, which has seemed to exist from their own side, the I that we have believed in from beginningless rebirths—not only from this morning, not only from birth, but from beginningless rebirths—only now we recognize [the reality].

Then, we look at the I; the I is just there. There is an I on the I. *Now*, we recognize the real I, the *gag cha*, the Prasangka's object to be refuted, the real I. Now we recognize the real I. Somebody praises us, "You are so nice," "You are so kind," making us so happy. At that time the I becomes so big. Our emotional I becomes so big. Then somebody says, "You are so bad,

so selfish,” then our emotional I thinks, “Oh, he hurt me.” It becomes very big again, but we don’t recognize that is the *gag cha*, that this is what we need to realize doesn’t exist.

Some examples. With the real I, realizing emptiness, “the I on the I” means the first I is the merely imputed I and the second one is the real one. The meaning is like that. With the vase on the vase, the first vase is the merely imputed vase and the second vase is the real one, the one existing from its own side. Just two words and it clicks. Then, suddenly the I cannot stay. The real I cannot stay. No way! Once we have recognized it as false, it cannot stay.

*Shigpa* is dissolved, but it is still there. I don’t know the word. When you dissolve medicine in the water, it is still there. It’s dissolved but it is still there, *shigpa*. I don’t know the word in English. Totally nonexistent, it cannot stay as it is. We have been holding the real I like this from beginningless rebirths. Not only from this morning, from birth, but from beginningless rebirths, but suddenly now there is nothing there. There is nothing to hold on to when we realize emptiness. I don’t have the good luck to realize emptiness, the fortune, but they say it is like this. Suddenly, it’s not there.

As I mentioned yesterday, “I want happiness,” “I want this, I want that.” We want so much, and if we don’t get it, we get angry. We get angry with others and that causes so many problems in life. But the I [that wants all these things] is not there. Not knowing the reality—that the real I is not there—is the biggest hallucination. We totally torture ourselves, giving ourselves so much suffering constantly. All the time we suffer unbelievably living our life in the hallucination, believing the I to be real. It’s unbelievable.

What was I going to say?

Bodhisattvas who have so much merit, when they realize emptiness, when they discover that the I that they have believed to be real is not there, they are so happy. Tears come out; their hairs stand up. I remember a monk at Land of Calm Abiding in America understood emptiness; it happened to him like that. But for bodhisattvas of lower intelligence, fear comes out. When that experience happens, I think there is more fear than meeting a tiger on the road. Great fear arises when we realize emptiness, even if we just see there is no I. That there is no I means a not-merely-labeled I. It means the real I, what the *Heart Sutra* says, no this, no that. It means a real I, existing from its own side. It means that one.

I think I mentioned to you that practitioners of lower intelligence have unbelievable fear. They have believed in the I that is real not only from this morning or from birth but from beginningless rebirths, but now they start to see it is not there. There is nothing to hold on to, there is nothing there to cherish. We hold on to that I and on top of that we cherish it. When we realize there is nothing there to cherish, to apprehend, to hold on to, at that time we might think we are falling into nihilism. If we don’t have the complete experience of emptiness, if the teacher didn’t teach us the complete experience—maybe they taught us the words from the text but didn’t teach the complete experience—when we meditate and realize there is no I, we have incredible fear, fearing we are falling into nihilism. But we are not falling into nihilism. What we are experiencing is correct, but we don’t know it’s correct, so, we think we are falling into nihilism.

I have to tell you one thing. I think if we were falling into nihilism, we wouldn’t be afraid. For example, if we did the meditation of looking for the I and looked from the head down to the toes, checking that this is not I, this is not the I and so on. Or the same for the mug. [Rinpoche points to the various parts of the mug on his table] “This is not mug,” “This is not mug.” We don’t find mug. And the same for the I. We won’t be afraid. We won’t experience that incredible fear. Why? My idea is this. Because our meditation on emptiness didn’t touch the *gag cha*, the truly existent I. We didn’t touch it. We can look for the general I or the merely labeled I, but we didn’t look for the real I, the one we believe in. We didn’t do that. That hallucination is left out, untouched. It is left there because we didn’t touch it. Even if we didn’t find the I, we wouldn’t have that strong fear. But if our meditation touches the *gag cha*, the real I, and we didn’t find it, with that correct meditation on emptiness, then the fear comes.

I think that if the fear comes, that is the correct way of realizing emptiness. Therefore, what I'm going to say is that just as we have to cross the river, we have to cross this fear; we have to go through the fear. Like having to cross the river to get to the other side, we have to go through the fear. That fear is the correct one!

So, don't be afraid of falling into nihilism. If we think we are falling into nihilism and then stop, for so many years we won't get back to the same point. We won't get the experience.

### ***The Importance of Preliminary Practices***

Anyway, Manjushri advised Lama Tsongkhapa that this practice of purification, collecting merits and single-pointedly requesting the guru to receive the blessings are so important! [In order to actualize] the fourth one, studying and meditating, such as meditating on emptiness, these three other things become so important. That is why preliminary practice and prayers, all these practices are so important. It is not blah, blah, blah, to make the time pass.

I mentioned about the retired person who has nothing to do so they walk around their garden for hours not knowing how to live their life, not practicing, not meditating, not reciting mantras. Tibetans recite OM MANI PADME HUM and do many other things. In Switzerland, I don't know what happened but once there was no work for so many of the Tibetan people there and they were so happy because they had time to do prayers. The Western people there who hadn't met the Dharma were so unhappy. I heard that story.

What I've explained about this practice of purification and collecting merits is very important for you to remember. There are many practices. Single-pointedly requesting the guru is so important. When we do these things, the experience comes. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] The experience comes. Normally, it doesn't happen. We study about compassion or impermanence, and before it was just words, we didn't feel it. But when our mind is with the preliminary practices, when our mind is purified or we collect merits, then the experience comes. Then, we are really surprised! We think we will never get a realization in our life, that maybe it is not true, but when we really practice continuously, the experience comes. Then, we surprise ourselves.

The Kadampa geshe Thorbu, who is in Nepal, said we don't believe realizations like bodhicitta or renunciation will happen for many years because they look difficult, but when we practice, it can happen even within seven years.

### ***Everything Is Created by the Mind***

Some Western people who teach Dharma are attractive and intelligent, although I don't know, maybe they're not *fortunate*-intelligent but *unfortunate*-intelligent. I had one uncle who passed away. He was a monk but he disrobed. He said Kopan monks won't last, that after some time they would be carrying rucksacks on treks, meaning they will go looking for money. He said they were unfortunate-clever. Being clever but unfortunate, they could not stay monks. He said that they had learnt so much Dharma and were on the path to enlightenment, but they had no karma to continue. Therefore, he said these Kopan monks were unfortunate-clever.

Some people attract new people when they talk about the Dharma but they themselves don't know about guru devotion practice. They have no idea; they think that maybe Tibetan lamas made it up for their own benefit, something like that. They don't feel comfortable talking about it to others. I think this is because they haven't studied well.

What I'm saying is that this is inner science. Like this clock, which depends on so many things to enable it to give the time, this is how all these lamrim meditations work; it's similar. If we do them correctly it happens. It clicks in our mind when the conditions come together.

When we plant a seed in the ground, with the right water and soil, everything comes together and it grows. Other seeds take time but this one that has all the right conditions grows first. This is similar. Do you understand what I'm saying?

A buddha is like somebody who can't be fooled by the illusions that the magician produces. The magician can hallucinate other people but a realized being cannot be hallucinated. Knowing



that this is [an illusion produced] by a magician, it cannot affect their mind, their senses. That is the example of a buddha. They are there in the audience, seeing the illusion but knowing it is not real because it has been created by the magician. They see the appearance but they don't believe it, whereas people who don't know this is a black magic [trick] believe it to be real.

I use that as the example of us, who totally believe the hallucination, who totally live our life in that hallucination. We totally believe in this real I; we do everything for this real I which is not there at all. We do everything for this real I: cheating sentient beings, killing them, having wars, bringing court cases. We can harm hundreds of thousands, millions, all to get power for this I. It's unbelievable. Our whole life, we work so hard, getting an education and working so hard for this I. But it is not there!

I often give the example that for us, the I, the action, the object, hell and enlightenment, samsara and nirvana—everything appears real from there and we totally believe it. I didn't finish the quotation from Lama Tsongkhapa. First of all, there is the hallucination exaggerated by ignorance into seeing things as truly existent: the I, the action, the object, everything. Then, the next one, we further exaggerate by seeing it as bad or good, and then attachment or anger arise, which is another hallucination. We live our life like that.

I didn't say the last part of the verse [from *Lamrim Chenmo*]. I'm not going to repeat it now. These incorrect ways of apprehending objects can be eliminated with logical reasoning. We can prove they are wrong and, by meditating on this, we can eliminate them. That is what Lama Tsongkhapa mentioned.

That is one way, seeing how everything is created by the mind. Our world is created by our mind, our I, the action, the object. Everything is created by the mind. For example, the I is created by our mind. Focusing on the valid base, the aggregates, the mind merely imputed the I. Do you see? Like that, the I is created by the mind. You must know that. Like that, *all* phenomena are created by the mind. Our whole world is created by the mind.

When we learn language, when we learn any subject, science or Dharma, when we learn the name of the path, the name of the suffering, when we learn all the names, we believe what we are taught. Our mind labels the same thing as what we were taught. So, the whole thing is created by our mind.

I'll just give you an example. I want to say something, just short—the old students have heard it before. When we are a child learning the alphabet, our teacher or our parents who are teaching us the alphabet write an “M” on the blackboard like this. [Rinpoche makes four lines in the air] They haven't yet explained what it is, we haven't been taught yet, so we just see the four lines. We don't know it is an “M” so there is no appearance of M. That's because we haven't labeled “This is an M.”

After the teacher teaches us that this is “M,” following the teacher, we believed it and we label it “M.” After we label it “M,” the M appears to us; we see the M.

The first time, we label the “M”; the second time, the M appears; and the third time, we see the M. The process is like that. Seeing the M depends on our mind labeling the M. So, the M we can see comes from our mind. And that comes after somebody has taught us that those four lines are an M. That is how we know everything. Like the M, the I and all phenomena come from our mind. That is the example. Everything comes from our mind; our mind creates it.

Then, of course, what we see is a real M. A real M appears to us and we believe in this real M. Where is the real M? This [one line] is not the real M; this one line is not the real M; this one is not the real M; even all together they are not the real M. Depending on these four lines, our mind immediately labels them an “M,” but all these are not a real M. All these are the base to be labeled “M” which is *tag cho* in Tibetan. The lines themselves are *tag zhi*, the base to be labeled “M,” and [what is labeled] is *tag cho*. They are different but they are not separate. Just as I and aggregates exist differently but not separately, this is the same. The base for the M exists and what is labeled “M” exists. These two do not exist separately but differently. You have to know all that.

Therefore, if we look for the real M, we can't find it. This line is not the real M. Even all the lines together are not the M; they are the base. If the base were the M, then the aggregates would be I. Mind would become I, body would become I. All the atoms of the body would become I—*so many* Is. I don't know how many atoms you have. Like my talk, *so many*.

We have to debate; we have to see the mistake. When we buy a plane ticket, we only pay for one person but if there were so many Is, so many persons, we would have to pay tickets for everybody, for however many Is we have.

Like that, many mistakes can arise. I'm just giving an example. You should check more. So, this is just *tag zhi*, the basis to be labeled. And the label, *tag cho*, the "M," those two exist differently but not separately.

This proves the real M is not there, that it is a hallucination, the same as the real I.

Now I'm giving you an example, but we have to be able to expand that to everything. It is so important to understand. How we discriminate bad or good, what we call bad or good in our life, comes from habituation from past lives. This color or shape is bad, this one is good; this person is handsome or beautiful, this one is ugly. That is due to our past life habituation or to our culture, our society, what society believes to be good or not good. Sometimes, it relates to our society or culture; sometimes it even comes from a past life, related to our past life's habit, our past life's recognition. It's like that. Bad and good—we see this is bad, this is good.

If a hundred people look at one person, some see that person as exciting, handsome, beautiful, some see them as ugly, or as just OK, neither beautiful nor ugly. Of the hundred people looking at that one person, they see them in many different ways. After they label them in many different ways, they see them in many different ways.

Now I'm going to stop. Things come from the mind like this. I'll tell you one thing. Please keep this. We have never found this person's body interesting but then, when they have been very kind to us, helping us, we see them as beautiful. We never thought their body was beautiful before, but after they have been very kind to us, we feel close to them and our view of that person changes. We think they are very beautiful.

This not only changes for other people; sometimes we see ourselves differently. Sometimes, we see ourselves as beautiful, but then, if we get angry with somebody and they get angry with us, we don't see beauty. We see the person as very fearful, not beautiful at all, even if we saw them as beautiful before. So, everything comes from our mind. When somebody criticizes us, makes us work very hard, abuses us in many ways or when they are angry with us, upset with us, even if we didn't do anything bad in particular to harm that person, it comes from our mind.

They do not exist from their own side; this comes from our mind. Our mind created it. This is what Shantideva, the great bodhisattva from Nalanda, said and what the Buddha said. This is the reality. [In *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* Shantideva said,

[6:42] Previously I must have caused similar harm

To other sentient beings.

Therefore it is right for this harm to be returned

To me who is the cause of injury to others.

[6:47] Having been instigated by my own actions,

Those who cause me harm come into being.

If by these (actions) they should fall into [the hole of] hell

Surely isn't it I who am destroying them?] [7]

You *must* write that one down! And then you'll understand. Otherwise, you hear it once and then it's kind of gone far to another universe. Write it down, then you can see it again. If you have problems, it is so helpful. It brings so much peace in your mind, in your life.

"Previously, I must have caused similar harm to other sentient beings." Our karma persuaded them, therefore, we receive this harm. Whatever it is, people criticizing us behind our back, people being angry with us, our karma persuaded them and therefore they are harming us. And by harming us, they are creating negative karma. What happens is that that makes them be born

in hell. “If by these (actions) they should fall into [the hole of] hell surely isn’t it I who am destroying them?”

It means that although they are now in the human realm, because they harmed us and created negative karma, with that angry, negative mind, they will be born in hell, lost from the human realm and gone to the hole of hell. That is because in the past we abused that person. Not necessarily in this life, but in past lives. It can be in the life before this, it can be a few lifetimes ago, it can be many millions or billions of eons ago. It was our negative karma that persuaded them to harm us. Therefore, we are responsible for sending them to be lost in the hole of hell. Here, Shantideva clearly shows us the evolution—how we caused it. That person giving harm to us is the result of us harming them in the past. That is why it happened.

Whatever we are experiencing now in all the twenty-four hours—pleasure or discomfort—there is always a reason. It all has a karmic reason; it’s all due to the past karma we have created. Everything we experience today comes from our past actions. Whatever we experience within each twenty-four hours, everything has a reason. Discomfort, pleasure, whatever happens, everything has a reason. Everything has a cause for happening—that is our karma from a past life or from this life, even from the year before or from yesterday or this morning.

[Knowing this] helps us to not become angry, to not create the negative karma of harming back. If we harm somebody back, that means we create that negative karma again. Because we are retaliating, we will be harmed in return for five hundred lifetimes. If we cheat one sentient being, we will be cheated for five hundred lifetimes; if we kill an insect, we will be killed for five hundred lifetimes. That is experiencing the result similar to the cause.

That is why, although the young Tibetan people want to fight China, like in normal countries, His Holiness the Dalai Lama advised them not to fight. He said they should practice compassion for the Chinese, that peace will be achieved by compassion, not by fighting. That is the Buddha’s advice. If we fight, we will suffer for hundreds, thousands, millions [of lifetimes] and receive harm from others, without end. Harming others always causes so much suffering, and without end we receive harm from others.

Therefore, His Holiness says we should practice compassion, peace, and then we’ll get success. That is just one example. If we harm others, we continuously create suffering. We receive suffering from others continuously.

Not only that, when we practice compassion, we are not only *not* harming others, we are helping them. Whatever we can do, we are helping. Even reciting the mantra OM MANI PADME HUM helps us to not be born in hell, to achieve enlightenment. We dedicate our merits to help others.

I want to bring this up about emptiness, how everything is created by our mind. It is so important to realize.

I think I’ll stop there. That is so important. That is what the Buddha advised; that is what the reality is. That is what makes our life most beneficial, most happy, not only for us but for all sentient beings. It is the quick way to not only be free from samsara but also to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings.

OK. Thank you so much.

### ***Dedications***

[Rinpoche and students offer mandala]

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

## Lecture 5: December 4



### ***The Real Kopan Is Defective View***

[Rinpoche and students recite *Prayers Before Teachings*]

I just want to repeat again to make clear so that everyone is clear. *Kar ma*, “a star,” and what? [*Ven. Karin*: A star, a defective view.] OK. I just want to make this clear. For example, relating to the I, we create the I. The mind focuses on the valid base, the aggregates, and then merely imputes the I. The I exists, but how it exists is most unbelievably subtle. What it is—it only exists in mere name. So, the meaning of the star is emptiness. Not only the I but all phenomena are like that. That is the meditation.

Then, in the second moment after the I appears, it appears due to all the negative imprints left by ignorance from past lives, projected, decorated with true existence. This hallucination appears as real. It appears, and then our ignorance, our mind, holds it as completely true. That is ignorance. This hallucination doesn’t exist; there is no such thing existing, but we believe that it is real. That is the root of the oceans of sentient beings’ suffering, of every problem, including depression and abuse, every single problem of the hell beings, the hungry ghosts, the animals, the suras and asuras, the human beings.

In the second moment, it appears real. *That* is the “defective view” of the verse. The first example is the star and the second is defective view—meaning the I that appears real. Then, all other things are “defective view”—everything appears as real: the real, I, action, object, hell and enlightenment, samsara and nirvana, everything! Forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, all the senses, everything! If we look at it here, it is already mentioned.

This doesn’t only appear real to us here at Kopan. In the West, this defective view has covered our whole view of the world from beginningless rebirths. We have to think about that. This hallucination covers our view of the whole world, like the defective view, the second example. This meditation has a very deep meaning! Just calming the mind is not [that effective] but this is really deep. This allows us to see the truth of the I, understanding what the I is, what outside phenomena are.

I just want to mention that, to relate everything to defective view. That term “defective view” covers everything, because everything appears real. I gave the example of the real I that appears. I want to make sure your meditation is more than just mindfulness, that you are not satisfied with just temporarily calming the mind.

Of course, if we are angry and we visualize ourselves as a rock or a tree, like the big tree in front of the Kopan gompa, the anger will pass. It will be pacified. It is mentioned in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* to visualize we are a rock for a few seconds. But if we want ourselves and others to be free from the oceans of suffering, we have to know the root where the suffering comes from.

We have to go deep. Just spending our whole life doing a breathing meditation is not enough.

OK. So, we continue the prayer. [Rinpoche slowly chants the verse]

*Kar ma rab rib mar me dang*

*Gyu ma zil pa chbu bur dang*

*Mi lam log dang trin ta bur*

*Dü jä chhö nam di tar ta*

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

An illusion, a dew drop, a water bubble,

A dream, lightning, a cloud:

See all causative phenomena like this.] [8]

Think, “Due to ignorance, I’ve been experiencing the oceans of suffering of the six realms numberless times from beginningless rebirths. And if I don’t meet and practice the Dharma, if I don’t actualize the emptiness, I will have to suffer again in the oceans of the six-realm suffering numberless times, without end. But it is not only me. There are numberless sentient beings—numberless hell beings, numberless hungry ghosts, numberless animals, numberless human beings, numberless suras and asuras—who just like me are suffering and who are just as important. I might think I am the most important, the most precious, but we are all exactly the same. Everyone, every ant, every mosquito, thinks the same as I do. Even the tiniest one I can’t see with the eyes, only with a microscope, is exactly like me. They have been suffering from beginningless rebirths in the oceans of suffering.”

They don’t have karma to meet the Dharma. There are numberless universes with numberless ants, mosquitoes, tiny bugs, and they don’t have the karma to come to Kopan Monastery and do the course, to hear lamrim teachings, to hear the teachings on emptiness or the three principal aspects of the path. I’m just relating it to your life. They have to suffer again and again without end in the suffering of samsara.

There are oceans of numberless sentient beings in each realm. Can you imagine? Think, “I must liberate them from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment. Therefore, the solution *is* listening and meditating, leaving a positive imprint on the mind in preparation to realize emptiness. I must first be free from samsara myself and achieve enlightenment in order to enlighten other sentient beings. For that reason, I’m going to recite the *Heart Sutra* and do the meditation.”

You should do that all the time, whenever you meditate on the *Heart Sutra*. It is very important! Later, we should organize a *Heart Sutra* commentary and a meditation retreat, so it is important. Or when you attend other lamas’ teachings, not necessarily at Kopan, it is so important.

Before you die, you should understand how to meditate on the meaning of the *Heart Sutra*. Then, in your next life, it’s much easier to have a direct realization of emptiness. Then, your life gets better like the sun and moon benefiting the world. Then, you go to enlightenment.

So, please do this. Understand how important it is to meditate on even one verse of the *Heart Sutra*! Or those verses that I mentioned. Even just meditating on the meaning of AH, as I told you, becomes a very important meditation. It eliminates the object of ignorance by seeing how the truly existent object does not actually exist. Ignorance is harmed by realizing the object is empty.

Before that, there is the praise to Prajnaparamita. “It is inexpressible...” Do you have it? [Ven. Karin: No.] You can go to buy it in the supermarket or in the department store. You can go there to buy emptiness! [Ven. Robina: You can get it on Google.] You can ask Google what emptiness is. That is a very good question. Probably, they think it’s nihilism, maybe not.

[Rinpoche and students recite the *Heart Sutra* and the prayer for dispelling interferers]  
Everybody read and concentrate. Read it in the book or if you have it there [on the screen]—  
*The Foundation of All Good Qualities*.

[Rinpoche and students recite *The Foundation of All Good Qualities*, mandala offering, refuge and bodhicitta]

### ***Freeing All Transmigratory Beings***

I mentioned the motivation for the *Heart Sutra* and it is similar here. I didn't bring the text. I don't remember it by heart but there is one verse I forgot from Kyabje Khunu Lama Rinpoche, who I received many teachings from: Lama Atisha's *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* and *Praise to Bodhicitta* composed by Kyabje Khunu Lama Rinpoche himself, a great, great bodhisattva, a holy being. [*Praise to Bodhicitta* [9] says,]

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

Wandering beings, *dro wa*, can be translated as "transmigratory beings," meaning reincarnating in samsara always under the control of karma and delusions, without freedom, always suffering.

When we recite refuge and bodhicitta, *dro wa* in Tibetan means "going," "transmigrating," so "transmigratory being," means a being completely under the control of karma and delusions, having transmigrated in the six realms without beginning and again having to transmigrate in the future without end, due to not knowing the Dharma, not actualizing the Dharma.

Transmigratory beings are numberless, "pervading space." Equaling the sky, meaning limitless like the sky. They are the basis for all the happiness, and bodhicitta is that which can eliminate the suffering of all sentient beings. That is very important. We should be able to bring all the happiness to the numberless sentient beings: the happiness of this life, the happiness of future lives, liberation from samsara and peerless happiness, the great liberation of enlightenment, which is the total cessation of obscurations and the completion of all realizations. To cause all this to the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings—there are numberless universes, so there are numberless human beings, not only in this world—the numberless sura beings, the numberless asura beings and the numberless intermediate state beings. If we generate bodhicitta, we can cause all the happiness up to enlightenment for *every* sentient being! For every sentient being! If we can actualize bodhicitta, we can do that not only for ourselves, but we can also liberate every sentient being from the oceans of suffering.

With the "power of the sublime precious thought," bodhicitta, that is what we can do. We can offer our life to the numberless sentient beings. That is what we can do, whether our body is tall like this or small. With bodhicitta, that is what we can do for the numberless sentient beings. You must know that. Write that down! Otherwise, our life has so much depression. "Oh, oh, oh, *my* happiness. *My* happiness," "When can *I* be happy? When can *I* be happy? When can *I* be happy?" So sad, "When can *I* be happy? When can *I* be happy? When can *I* be happy?" Then, not achieving happiness, there is dissatisfaction. Even if we get *some* happiness, there is dissatisfaction.

Can you imagine being able to free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of suffering? We should know what we can do. Our mind has the capacity to do that if we develop in that way. *That* is the happiness of life! That is the greatest happiness we can achieve in life. We should think of happiness in that way! It is unbelievable. Our mind is totally happy wherever we are. If we practice bodhicitta in the city or outside, on a mountain or in the ocean, wherever we are, we are so happy.



We need to dedicate our life for others, to live our life for others. That is what we need to learn. That is how we should dedicate our life; that is how we should live our life if we want happiness and don't want suffering.

The way to develop our mind is to study the lamrim, by listening, reflecting and meditating on the lamrim. The lamrim is not a small thing, not just a small subject. It's not like that. Then, we are able to develop bodhicitta, and then we can accomplish the happiness of all sentient beings.

Therefore, the purpose of our life is to free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings: every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal, every human being, every sura, every asura, every intermediate state being, to free them from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to peerless happiness, to full enlightenment. What I was going to say is that even when we do one prostration, we should first think of bodhicitta. Usually, every Buddhist practice—the preparation, the actual body and the completion—has that. You must know that.

Every practice has the *preparation*, the *actual body* and the *completion*. “Preparation” means the motivation, making sure our mind is always in the Dharma. Our mind has not become the Dharma yet. When it becomes the Dharma, everything becomes a cause of happiness. Every action of body, speech and mind becomes a cause of happiness. Not only that, with the preparation, our motivation becomes bodhicitta, which involves [compassion for] every being, not just for those we like or love but not those we don't like or that we hate. It's love for all sentient beings, loving kindness, not just love for those we like, which is conditional; it's attachment. It's the same for everyone: those who harm, those who help, those who praise, those who criticize. It doesn't matter. The motivation of bodhicitta means being involved in all sentient beings. Bodhicitta means involving *every* sentient being; the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals—those in the ocean, the large ones eating the small ones, those living in the deep ocean where there is no sunlight, where it's so dark—the numberless human beings, the numberless suras and asuras. Bodhicitta means freeing everyone from the oceans of samsaric sufferings, not just from diarrhea, not just from a headache! Freeing them from *every* suffering and bringing them to enlightenment. Bodhicitta means we are able to do that. A buddha doesn't have slightest mistake, so when we are able to achieve enlightenment, it is unbelievable. So, every prostration we do is for every sentient being.

Bodhicitta covers every sentient being. It covers every ant, every insect we see on the road here. We find ants in our bed, so we are doing prostrations for those ants. Not one ant is left out; not one snake is left out; not one mouse or spider—the animals most people hate—is left out.

### ***Rinpoche's Mouse Karma***

During the Vajrayogini retreat in France, when a lady, I think it was Vicky Chen, was in her retreat room, a rat or a mouse came out so many times and disturbed her. She almost couldn't do the retreat, she told the center. I don't know the name of the person who was in charge, but although they did something, the rat or mouse was still there. When she told me, I explained that I have karma with mice. I said that when I stayed in the Sangha house in Chenrezig Institute in Australia, after one or two days a mouse came. It came because of the karma I have with mice. It didn't disturb me but it came out. When I left, His Holiness Sakya Trizin's secretary, a monk, stayed there, and there was no mouse. That is my karma, my mouse karma. Because it is my karma to have a mouse, the mouse is there.

If we killed a mouse who was bothering us, then we would have to kill numberless sentient beings who bother us. There would be no end to them. I told her that.

Once, when I was doing a retreat, a small mouse came out in the night. This mouse was checking me to see whether it would harm me or not. It was checking my face, similar to what dogs sometimes do. I didn't bother it, so it went around. That is nothing. They also have to check whether the person is harmful or not. Sorry, my wandering talk.



In Kopan, in the old times, in my room in the old gumpa, Lama Yeshe knew there was a mouse, although he didn't see one. He told the cook, who has now died, called Chöphel. We were the very first class studying *dura* in the monastery, and he was the leader of my class. He came with a stick, which he put under the bed as Lama advised. It seems it had made a nest under my spring bed. Then, the mouse came out and went out the door. I followed it to see where it went. The mouse jumped down from upstairs one story or maybe more, down into the field.

Then, what happened, there was a *zen*, the most precious thing in my room. This is called a *zen*. [Rinpoche points to his upper robe] This one was a very, very thin one. It was the only precious thing besides an extremely high-quality statue of Lama Tsongkhapa. The *zen* was new and very thin, given by Mommy Max, who was taking care of Lama and me. She was a nun, a teacher in Lincoln School in Kathmandu. She was the first one after Zina Rachevsky, who was called Princess Rachevsky because her father was a king in Russia, like the kings in India. After Russia, she went to France but she lived everywhere. She was the first student. When we do courses here, I speak English, and there are now a hundred and sixty or seventy centers. All that is because of her, the Russian lady. Later she became a nun. We requested His Holiness but His Holiness asked a very learned high lama who helped His Holiness, Lati Rinpoche, so she ordained with him. She was the first student and then the second was Mommy Max, who took care of us. She was a nun. She's still alive, in Santa Cruz or Santa Fe. I forgot. She's been there for many years.

Because Lama wanted to go to Japan and she thought it would be very hot, she bought this *zen*. It was well folded four times and placed in the cupboard. Then, the mouse we kicked out with the stick came back and ate the only precious thing we had, the very thin *zen*, folded four times. It made a hole through the middle of it, so when I brought the *zen* out and spread it out, there was a hole here, here, here and here. [Rinpoche points to demonstrate] Mice can do like that.

Maybe you don't have the experience. But there are many amazing stories about animals. They have politics; they know how to harm without having to go to school. Human beings go to university to learn politics, but animals have politics to know how to harm others. The only precious thing was this very thin *zen* and the mouse knew how to harm. Having a human body and knowing how to harm is nothing special. Even animals can harm; even ants can do that; even insects can do that. So, that is not the meaning of a human life.

There are many stories. What was I saying? I'm getting lost in my talk.

### ***Making Charity to Animals***

[Even if we only do] one prostration with a bodhicitta motivation, we do that one prostration for every sentient being, to be free them from suffering and to achieve enlightenment. We do it for the numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, suras and asuras, and no one is left out. When we generate bodhicitta, nobody, not one person, not one insect, is left out. We practice like that in Tibetan Buddhism. It came from India. You have to know these things. At the beginning, with the preparation of a bodhicitta motivation, when we recite OM MANI PADME HUM, it benefits every one of the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, every insect, every ant. I saw a nest with thousands and thousands of ants, just one nest.

Sorry, I have to say this. When I went behind the house in Washington, I saw two nests, I have a text on how to make charity to ants, with the prayers to recite, so I made *tsampa* with flour and water and blessed it, to not just fill up their stomachs but also to purify their minds of the negative karma collected from beginningless rebirths, so they don't always get born in lower realms but can take a rebirth in higher realms and meet the Dharma. Somebody who did one hundred *nyung näs* [10] in Lawudo cave—he was a lay person but he became monk—when he gave me a human thigh bone to do *chöd* [11] practice, he also gave me that text.

I made charity with the two ant nests, sprinkling the blessed tsampa mixed with butter and water. One of the two monks there makes charity to the ants every week. When I was last there, there were a hundred and seventy ant nests around the house, outside. He makes charity by sprinkling the blessed water, mixed with tsampa and maybe some sugar, on the nests. Then, I think the next day or on the third day, it has disappeared completely. Next week there were less nests, maybe a hundred and sixty. We should take whatever opportunity we have to make charity to sentient beings, such as making charity to ants. That is one way to practice charity.

In the past, the monks bought fishing worms every week from a supermarket and put them in buckets and boxes that held about three hundred. They then carried them around the Medicine Buddha statue we built from volcano stone that we received from students.

Now, we have an Amitabha Buddha statue made from marble from Vietnam. We painted the eyes, making the artwork better, and built a beautiful throne, so it's finished now. They planted flowers around it and they say mantras, so it makes a beautiful offering. When [insects and animals] are taken outside and carried around, it purifies them and helps bring them to enlightenment.

In the house, there are many relics and holy objects, and when I was there I tried to carry worms in the bucket around the holy objects. Sometimes, the shopkeeper in the supermarket got angry because we bought so many worms that he didn't have enough to sell to people who were going fishing. Once, the person selling was happy that we were doing a lot every week to [alleviate] the unbelievable suffering that happens when the hooks [go into the fish].

### ***Alleviating the Darkness of Ignorance***

Those who fish don't understand this. It's some sort of blockage, some ignorance. It's skies of ignorance; their mind is totally dark like the sky without the sun or moon. They don't know about the suffering; they have no idea. They are blocked. Like we use paper to wipe kaka, they use fish. They are going to suffer for eons and eons, being caught by human beings. There is no opportunity to explain this to them; they wouldn't accept it. I don't know when it is time for them to understand. There is no time, there is no karma for them to understand. When can they wake up? When can they have light in their mind instead of ignorance? When can they have illumination to understand the Dharma? For eons and eons, there is no light. There is no way for these people to develop compassion. It is so difficult.

That is why the world has so much suffering, so many problems. Because the mind is like this. There is no way to bring the light of Dharma to people like this. So, you must know that you are *so* fortunate to have met the Dharma this time; you are so unbelievably fortunate compared to most sentient beings. Your coming here and meeting the Dharma, you are *most* fortunate.

Knowing sentient beings' suffering—not only some problems but the deeper sufferings of samsara—and generating the wish to free others from suffering is so good, so good. Knowing others' suffering—the suffering of pain, [the suffering of change], pervasive compounding suffering—and wanting to liberate others from all that suffering—you are so fortunate to come to Kopan to hear lamrim teachings from Robina.

[Rinpoche asks Ven. Robina] How many years have you been going around the world teaching Dharma? Tea or teachings, it doesn't matter?

*Ven. Robina:* Rinpoche told me to do it in 1987, thirty-two years ago.

*Rinpoche:* Going around the world like that. The busiest person going around the world giving teachings is Robina. You have to appreciate her; it's not easy. Not easy at all. It is very kind, extremely kind. Now since I have briefly introduced her, where there is darkness, without the sun, mentally like that, she goes around to teach Dharma, to light up the world with Dharma wisdom! You understand? You have to appreciate that. It is unbelievably important to introduce people to the Dharma, to teach it.

“Teach” doesn't mean like this. Teach refers to having conversations anywhere. Talking about compassion to anybody is teaching. It's bringing the light of Dharma in their mind, alleviating

the darkness of ignorance. The sky is dark, but we bring light into their mind, talking about the Dharma, talking about compassion to anybody. It's so important. To talk about what you have learned, what you have meditated on, what you know, it is so important to make them understand.

I'm not going to talk about the unbelievable benefits of talking about the Dharma. Maybe I also don't remember them! My bad memory.

What was I going to say?

### ***Taking Precepts Brings Great Benefit to the World***

Many terrible things happen in the world, with the bad weather, with all the dangers of fire, water and air. This all comes from the mind. It all comes from the sentient beings who live on the Earth. What are these things normally called? [*Ven. Ailsa*: Natural disasters.] Natural disasters. They come from the mind. It is said in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakosha*,

[41] The various worlds came from karma.

The various worlds come from karma, from the mind. Karma is a mental factor. There are six principal consciousnesses and fifty-one mental factors. Among the mental factors are the five "omnipresent" ones, as it's translated, that always abide with the principal consciousness. One is called "intention." Like a magnet, when iron is pulled there. Does the magnet go to the iron or does it pull the iron? [*Student*: The magnet stays and pulls the iron.]

[Natural disasters] are not natural; they don't happen from their own side. If there were no causes and conditions for them, they wouldn't happen. Because it's due to causes and conditions, the mind created them. If everybody practiced bodhicitta, if everybody practiced patience, if everybody practiced the sincere mind, the good heart, thinking of others first, that would purify the past heavy negative karmas. That would bring so much peace and happiness in the world; it would reduce the dangers of earth, water, fire and air. It would stop all the tsunamis. You have to know that.

You took eight Mahayana precepts today? [*Ven. Robina*: Yes.] That brings peace in the world, peace to the sentient beings. Do you understand? It helps reduce and stop all the dangers of droughts, scarcity of food, the dangers of fire, water, air, earth.

I don't know whether you heard the story or not, whether the four harmonious brothers, *thunpa pun zhi*, were explained. [*Ven. Robina*: We haven't discussed that.] Among the students here you have to make four harmonious brothers! I'm joking!

This happened once in India, when the rains came at the right time and there was not too much rain. It was what was needed to make the crops develop, so there was plenty of food and the economy developed. The king thought he did it; the ministers thought they did it, so one minister said they should go to see a sage in the forest. When they asked the sage who was responsible for the economic development of the country, he replied it was none of them; it was four harmonious brothers, four animals living in the forest. The elephant lived in the five precepts and spread them to the other elephants; the monkey lived in the five precepts and spread them to other animals; and the bird and rabbit did the same. Because of the four harmonious brothers the country developed economically.

There is a drawing of the four harmonious brothers. Actually, the bird was a manifestation of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, the elephant was Ananda, the monkey was Maudgalyayana and the rabbit was Shariputra.

If you have disharmony in the family or at work, it's useful to have the picture at home in the office or the Dharma center. It helps make people harmonious and brings the practice of virtue. It has that benefit. If there is a lot of disharmony, that is a picture you should keep at home or in the office as well as the eight auspicious signs.

Today you took the eight Mahayana precepts—not only five but eight! With bodhicitta! Not just for yourself. That is unbelievably helpful. Besides [being the cause of] enlightenment, helping sentient beings achieve enlightenment, it helps the world now.

What was I going to say?

Oh, sorry. If we recite OM MANI PADME HUM once with bodhicitta, it brings skies of benefit to every sentient being. Can you imagine? It helps free everyone from samsara and achieve enlightenment. Then if we recite one mala! It's the practice of Tibetan Buddhism but Mahayana Buddhism came from the Buddha; it came from the Nalanda pandits.

If we are not happy with this, with practicing this Buddhadharma, with practicing bodhicitta, where else are we going to find happiness? *Goodbye!* Now the time is finished.

The preparation is the motivation for the actual act. Bodhicitta is so important, so good, so fantastic. When we generate bodhicitta and go around a stupa or a holy object, each step benefits *every* sentient being. It benefits the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless suras and asuras. Every step helps everyone be free from samsara and achieve enlightenment. However many steps we take, every step does that.

With bodhicitta, anything we do—eating, walking, sitting, sleeping, doing our job—is to free every sentient being from samsara and achieve enlightenment. Every bite of food or sip of drink we offer to the Buddha in our heart, to ourselves as the Buddha or to the Buddha on the throne, to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Whatever action we do with body, speech and mind, with bodhicitta the benefit is unbelievable. *Lama khyen, lama khyen*. “Lama khyen” means “Guru, understand.” I say it when there is something terrible or something unbelievably good.

After the preparation there is the actual body of the practice and then the completion, which is the dedication. I don't know whether I told you about the dedication or not. Did I tell you the other day about dedication? No. Dedication is so important.

The seven-limb practice is the basic thing. The seven very important parts create enlightenment, so it's the important practice. Now, the dedication.

I think I might have mentioned at one time that it is so rare, so difficult, for our actions to become Dharma because our mind is impure. From the outside, the action might look like a Dharma action, but because of the impure mind, because it is not free from attachment to this life, *at least*, even if not pure of self-cherishing thought, even though the action looks like a Dharma action, because of our mind it doesn't become Dharma. It is difficult. We might try to do something Dharma but then anger arises so easily. Because the mind has been habituated to negativity from beginningless rebirths, when somebody looks at us in a negative way, looking down on us or speaking badly, we easily get angry. Then, even if we have collected any merit, it's burned like rice in a fire which we cannot grow if we try to plant it. Our merits become like that.

We might have done many retreats in our life, thinking, “I have done this retreat, I have done that Vajrasattva retreat, I did this, I did that,” counting a whole mala of retreats like that, or we might have done many good things, “I helped this project, I did this project, I did this project,” but, in reality, because we haven't practiced patience in our normal daily life, every time anger arises it completely burns our virtue; it destroys it. How much virtue we have left is difficult to say. We are therefore unable to develop the mind; it takes so long. We need to generate renunciation, bodhicitta, right view, the tantric path and the root of the path to enlightenment, realizing the guru as a buddha. We need to see it that way, but even if we do so many things in life, any anger we have destroys all our merits if we don't practice patience. Therefore, even if we don't believe in reincarnation and karma, practicing patience is so important to not destroy our merits, to protect them.

Completion means we have to dedicate the merits to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, to free sentient beings from suffering and bring them to enlightenment. We have to do that so the merits don't get destroyed, so the merits increase. So they increase all the time. After we dedicate the merits to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings in that way, even though the big mountain is still there no matter how many trucks come to take the stones away, it still becomes weaker. The mountain is still there but it's weaker. Like that, our merits don't get destroyed by anger, but now, for virtue to not get weaker, we have to seal it with emptiness. That's what we're

going to do now. We seal our virtue with emptiness by seeing the I, the three-time merits collected by us and the numberless buddhas, the sentient beings and enlightenment itself as empty. In that way, the merits can neither be destroyed nor become weaker. Even if anger arises later, the merits cannot be destroyed or become weaker.

As Kyabje Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche explained, the wisdom realizing emptiness is the only thing able to eliminate the root of samsara, ignorance, *timug dendzin marigpa*, to eliminate the root of all the suffering. Only the Prasangika view of emptiness eliminates that ignorance. Because of that, by sealing [the merits we have created] with emptiness, if anger arises later, they cannot be destroyed. You have to understand that; it's so important. Otherwise, the merits don't become the Dharma, the cause of happiness, and sooner or later they are destroyed by anger. So, the practice of patience is so important, so important, so important, so important. You have to know that.

I'll stop here. I didn't get to do the subject! Maybe the whole course will be like that. Thank you very much.

### ***Dedications***

[Rinpoche and students offer mandala]

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by the numberless sentient beings and the numberless buddhas, may bodhicitta, which is the source of all the happiness and success, including enlightenment for me and all sentient beings, be generated in my heart and in the hearts of all sentient beings, in the hearts of all of us here and our family members, dead or living.” It is very important to pray for them. Because most of them haven't met the Dharma, except those who practice a good heart, they will get reborn in the lower realms and suffer. “Without delay of even a second, may the bodhicitta that has been generated in the hearts of others increase.”

Dedicate to have the realization that samsara and nirvana have not even an atom of true existence. While it is like that, nothing exists from its own side, everything is totally empty. While it is empty, from virtue the result of happiness arises and from nonvirtue the result of suffering arises. Being empty doesn't contradict karma. Like that, emptiness and dependent arising are unified; they do not contradict each other. So, pray for that realization, that all the students and all of us here, including our family members have that realization.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by the numberless sentient beings and the numberless buddhas, which are empty from their own side, may the I, who is empty from its own side, achieve enlightenment, which is empty from its own side, and lead the numberless sentient beings, who are empty from their own side, to that buddhahood, which is empty from its own side, by myself alone, who is also empty from its own side.”

We pray for the success of His Holiness' wishes and for him to have a stable life until samsara ends.

[Prayer for the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama]

## Lecture 6: December 5



### ***Bodhicitta Eliminates All Faults and Generates All Qualities***

[Rinpoche and students recite *Prayers Before Teachings*]

It is very important to pay attention to not only become free from samsara but also to achieve the rest of the Mahayana path and cease even the subtle defilements and achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, to free numberless sentient beings from oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment.

That is our largest project, that is our biggest goal. There is no other bigger goal; that is the biggest meaning of life. By paying attention even once to that, we plant the seeds of the path to enlightenment in our mind. Whether we make that preparation in our mind is up to us. It is very important to pay attention. Doing the meditation for even a few minutes makes skies of difference in our life. Our life, which might become like garbage, becomes like gold, diamonds, like the sky. To pay attention is so important when we recite; it makes our life so worthwhile.

Having been born a human being, if we hear this once, if we are able to pay attention even once, it makes our life unbelievably worthwhile. We might have many degrees in science and this and that, but when we die, there is no benefit, nothing; there is no happiness after this life. There is nothing to benefit our life beyond this one. But this makes us actualize the path to enlightenment for ourselves and then to free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsara and bring them to enlightenment. That is incredible! There is no biggest meaning of life than that, if you want to know.

[They recite *The Foundation of All Good Qualities*, the mandala offering and refuge and bodhicitta)

I want to do the *lung* of the Namgyalma mantra and the mantra from the *Sutra of Great Liberation*. It is incredible, but every time I forget to do it. At the end of the teachings, I rush to go back, so I think I missed many days. So, I'm going to do it first!

Yesterday, one word wasn't clear, which I want to correct, but basically what I said was OK. In *Praise to Bodhicitta*, Kyabje Khunu Lama Rinpoche said,

[186] The precious supreme thought alone has the power  
To be the ground for the continual production of benefit and happiness  
For wandering beings, pervading space, who have been one's mother,  
And for relieving all the suffering of each of them.

I mentioned yesterday that transmigratory beings, who have all been our mother, are numberless. Here, *kha khyab* means numberless, pervading space or covering the whole sky. *Dro wa* means “transmigratory beings.” Yesterday, I had some doubts but this is the basis of bodhicitta. That is one way to understand that sentient beings are the basis of all happiness but here it is relating it to bodhicitta—the basis of generating happiness and peace forever, *re rei dug ngäl kiin sel la*, and eliminating every sentient being’s suffering. There are numberless sentient beings in each realm. “That precious supreme thought alone has the power to be the ground for the continual production of benefit and happiness,” through the power of bodhicitta. That means if we have bodhicitta, that is the basis of all the temporary and ultimate happiness from this life up to enlightenment, always! Always, to every sentient being, to *every* sentient being.

Each time we generate the bodhicitta motivation, even if we don’t have it now, it becomes that. You have to know that.

That is what I said yesterday. Today I want to say [from *Praise to Bodhicitta*]:

[21] Supreme bodhicitta is the wish to remove  
Every flaw from every living being and to  
Bring about limitless good qualities in each of them.  
This is outstanding even among the outstanding!

Bodhicitta eliminates the mistakes of every sentient being: every sentient being in the hell realm, every sentient being in the hungry ghost realm, every sentient being in the animal realm—there are numberless universes so it’s every single tiny ant, every single tiny bug we can only see a microscope—every human being in the human realm without leaving a single person out. Bodhicitta eliminates the mistakes of every sentient being and makes them generate infinite qualities. What makes them generate that is supreme bodhicitta. Khunu Rinpoche says it’s amazing, wonderful; it’s more wonderful than wonderful. This is what it says. That is enough.

I’ll do the next verse. [*Praise to Bodhicitta* says:]

[22] If one wants to benefit everyone, one needs bodhicitta.  
If one wants to befriend everyone, one needs bodhicitta.  
If one wants to gain the confidence of all, one needs bodhicitta.  
If one wants to be everyone’s spiritual friend, one needs bodhicitta.

OK. I’ll stop there. But if you can write it down, that is very good. Otherwise, you fill up the books with all kinds of fairy tales, stories that you made up. I’m joking.

Think, “The purpose of my life is not just to achieve happiness for myself; it’s not even to achieve ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara. The purpose of my life is to free the numberless sentient beings—the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless sura beings and asura beings—from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to enlightenment, by myself *alone*. Even though there are numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas working for sentient beings, this is my [responsibility].

We have received all our past, present and future happiness, every happiness including enlightenment, from sentient beings. That is the most extensive kindness. But I won’t explain it today; that is the evolution.

In particular, all sentient beings have been our mother, not just once but numberless times from beginningless rebirths, *everyone*! We must think again of their kindness. They gave us our body through that kindness; every day they bore hardships, protecting our life from hundreds of dangers, giving us an education. These reasons are gathered in the four outlines of the kindness of the mother. And all that is from beginningless rebirths, not just this one time. As I mentioned before, all our happiness and comfort, survival and everything, depends on them.

In water there are tiny sentient beings we can’t see with the eyes. They are killed when we make tea or food. Numberless sentient beings are directly killed when food [is produced], causing people to create such unbelievable negative karma. To build a house, to lay the foundations, so many small sentient beings have to be killed, creating so much negative karma. And clothing that

comes from sentient beings, like silk and animal skin, means that animals are killed. There is so much suffering so we can survive. We get our comfort and happiness by depending on so many sentient beings being killed and suffering.

Therefore, it is our responsibility. Even though there are numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas working for sentient beings, it is our responsibility to free every sentient being from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment, by ourselves alone.

### ***Oral Transmission of the Namgyalma Mantra***

Therefore, we need to achieve the state of omniscience. Therefore, we need to purify the defilements and collect merits, to actualize the path to enlightenment. Think, “Therefore, I’m going to take the Namgyalma *lung*,” the lung or the oral transmission of Namgyalma.

In the past, Lobpön Yignyen [Vasubandhu] wrote the *Abhidharmakosha*. There was a pigeon on the roof at the hermitage who heard him reciting it every day. After the pigeon died, Vasubandhu checked with his clairvoyance and saw the pigeon had been born as a human being down in the valley, *way* down, in the house of a family. Vasubandhu went down there and asked the family whether he could have the baby. The family offered [the baby] to him and he brought the boy up, who later became a monk called Lobpön Loden [Sthiramati]. He became an expert on the *Abhidharmakosha* because he heard it so many times as a pigeon when Vasubandhu was reciting it in the hermitage. Lobpön Loden became an expert on the *Abhidharmakosha* and wrote four commentaries on it.

Kyabje Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche said he may have had some difficulties when he was studying Madhyamaka because he had not heard much of that in the past life. You have to know that. That is why even listening to an oral transmission is *so* important, so important, even if you don’t get to study it. Just to hear it, just to get the oral transmission is so important for your future, for you to get free from samsara, to become enlightened and to help others.

Kyabje Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche said when Lobpön Loden was small and he wanted to make a food offering to a Tara statue which surrounded by glass, he stuck the food on the glass. I saw in Bodhgaya, where there is the big stupa with the Buddha statue inside, Hindus put food inside the mouth of the statue to get merit, which of course means enlightenment. That means they rely on the Buddha. Sometimes they think the Buddha is a manifestation of Krishna. That is what Hindus believe.

Like getting the benefit by hearing the mantra, by receiving the oral transmission, there is unbelievable benefit in the future, actualizing the path that is to be attained and ceasing the delusions. And not only freeing ourselves from samsara and achieving enlightenment for sentient beings, being able to bring the numberless sentient beings to enlightenment. That achievement is the goal. That is the advantage of even receiving a lung, an oral transmission.

Namgyalma is an unbelievably powerful long-life deity. If we hear the mantra, we never get reborn in the lower realms. It’s so powerful, in all our lives we go toward enlightenment. As our life goes higher and higher and closer to enlightenment, we are always around buddhas and bodhisattvas. That is a very short [explanation]; there are extensive benefits. I’m telling you this is very short, but it’s important just to hear it, even if you don’t recite it every day.

I’ll do the *lung*.

There are five paths to achieve nirvana but there are also five Mahayana paths to achieve enlightenment: the Mahayana path of merit, the Mahayana path of preparation, the Mahayana right-seeing path, Mahayana path of meditation and the Mahayana path of no more learning. The second Mahayana path of preparation has four parts: *beat*, *tip*, *patience* (*zopa*) and *sublime Dharma*, and when we achieve *zopa*, we are confident that from then on we won’t be born in the lower realms at all from that time. When we achieve the fourth one, sublime Dharma, at the time however many oral transmissions we have received in the past, we will remember everything by heart. Kyabje Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche explained that.

In the *Sutra Requested by Sagaramati*, it says,



[12:37] Perfecting the mind of awakening, upholding the Dharma,  
Practicing the Dharma, and having compassion for beings—  
These four qualities bring infinite merit.

The Well-Gone One cannot describe their limit. [12]

Generating the thought of enlightenment, bodhicitta, upholding the Dharma, which means practicing the Dharma, listening, studying, memorizing, actualizing, everything, and generating compassion for sentient beings, the benefit of that is limitless. Even though Buddha has omniscience, he doesn't see the limit. So, there is limitless benefit from generating bodhicitta.

“Upholding the Dharma” can mean just taking a lung, an oral transmission, of any of the Buddha's sutra or tantra teachings, even taking an oral transmission to not degenerate, to not lose the Dharma.

To receive the lineage of the oral transmission, to not let it degenerate, to not lose it in the world, you are taking the lung with this thought. The benefit is limitless. I don't remember the exact words but the meaning is that even the Buddha doesn't see the limits. It's unbelievable, unbelievable.

With oral transmissions, I'm telling both old and new students, you must write down what you receive, otherwise you'll never know what you received. It is not only for yourself, but sometimes you need to pass the lineage to others. You never know, people may have to rely on you to receive the lineage, so write it down. It can be very useful to know what oral transmissions, commentaries and initiations you have received. You must write it down and then you'll clearly know what you have and haven't received. Then, you can help other people.

The motivation to receive the lung is to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. That means you are taking the lung for the benefit of every single sentient being in the numberless universes: every single ant, every single one of the tiniest insects, every animal you can see—I talk more about animals—every single hell being, every single hungry ghost, every single human being. There are numberless universes where there are human beings, and you are taking the lung for everyone; there is no discrimination, “This one is beautiful, I like. This one is ugly and bad, I don't like,” there is no such thing. Without discrimination, you are taking this for everyone, to free them from suffering. You must know this.

[Rinpoche gives the oral transmission of the long Namgyalma mantra]

[Long Namgyalma Mantra]

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE SARVA TRAILOKYA PRATIVISHISHTAYA /  
BUDDHAYA TE NAMA / TADYATHA / OM BHRUM BHRUM BHRUM  
SHODHAYA SHODHAYA / VISHODHAYA VISHODHAYA / ASAMA SAMANTA  
AVABHASA SPHARANA GATI GAGANA SVABHAVA VISHUDDHE /  
ABHISHINCHANTU MAM / SARVA TATHAGATA SUGATA VARA VACHANA  
AMRITA ABHISHEKARA / MAHAMUDRA MANTRA PADAI / AHARA AHARA /  
MAMA AYUS SAMDHARANI / SHODHAYA SHODHAYA / VISHODHAYA  
VISHODHAYA / GAGANA SVABHAVA VISHUDDHE / USHNISHA VIJAYA  
PARISHUDDHE / SAHASRA RASMI SANCHODITE / SARVA TATHAGATA  
AVALOKINI / SHAT PARAMITA PARIPURANI / SARVA TATHAGATA MATE /  
DASHA BHUMI PRATISHTHITE / SARVA TATHAGATA HRIDAYA /  
ADHISHTHANA ADHISHTHITE / MUDRE MUDRE MAHA MUDRE / VAJRA  
KAYA SAMHATANA PARISHUDDHE / SARVA KARMA AVARANA  
VISHUDDHE / PRATINI VARTAYA MAMA AYUR / VISHUDDHE SARVA  
TATHAGATA / SAMAYA ADHISHTHANA ADHISHTHITE / OM MUNI MUNI  
MAHA MUNI / VIMUNI VIMUNI MAHA VIMUNI / MATI MATI MAHA MATI /  
MAMATI SUMATI TATHATA / BHUTA KOTI PARISHUDDHE / VISPHUTA  
BUDDHE SHUDDHE / HE HE JAYA JAYA / VIJAYA VIJAYA / SMRARA  
SMRARA / SPHARA SPHARA / SPHARAYA SPHARAYA / SARVA BUDDHA  
ADHISHTHANA ADHISHTHITE / SHUDDHE SHUDDHE / BUDDHE

BUDDHE / VAJRE VAJRE MAHAVAJRE / SUVAJRE VAJRA GARBHE JAYA  
GARBHE / VIJAYA GARBHE / VAJRA JVALA GARBHE / VAJROD BHAVE /  
VAJRA SAMBHAVE / VAJRE VAJRINI / VAJRAMA BHAVATU MAMA  
SHARIRAM / SARVA SATTVA NANCHAKAYA PARISHUDDHIR BHAVATU /  
ME SADA SARVA GATI PARISHUDDHISHCHA / SARVA TATHAGATASHCHA  
/ MAM SAMASHVAS YANTU / BUDDHYA BUDDHYA / SIDDHYA SIDDHYA /  
BODHAYA BODHAYA / VIBODHAYA VIBODHAYA / MOCHAYA MOCHAYA  
/ VIMOCCHAYA VIMOCCHAYA / SHODHAYA SHODHAYA / VISHODHAYA  
VISHODHAYA / SAMANTANA MOCHAYA MOCHAYA / SAMANTA RASMI  
PARISHUDDHE / SARVA TATHAGATA HRIDAYA / ADHISHTHANA  
ADHISHTHITE / MUDRE MUDRE MAHA MUDRE / MAHAMUDRA MANTRA  
PADAI SVAHA]

I think I recited it but to make sure I'll go back a little bit.

[Rinpoche gives the oral transmission of the short Namgyalma mantra]

[Short Namgyalma Mantra

[TADYATHA] OM BHRUM SVAHA / OM AMRITA AYUR DADE SVAHA]

This is short one. If you are going to recite it, if you can, recite the long one three times or one time, and then a mala of this short one or you can recite it twenty-one times. You can recite however many times you want, but if you can, recite one mala of the short mantra.

### ***The Oral Transmission of the Mantra of the Sutra of Great Liberation***

The mantra from the *Sutra of Great Liberation* (*Tharpa Chenpo Do*) is a most powerful mantra. If you hear it even once, you won't get reborn in lower realms and your life always goes up to enlightenment.

[Rinpoche begins the oral transmission]

When I recite it quickly it is OK, but when I recite it slowly it stops.

[Rinpoche gives the oral transmission]

[The mantra from the *Sutra of Great Liberation*:

NAMO BUDDHAYA / NAMO DHARMAYA / NAMAH SANGHAYA / ADANTI  
DHARANI / TADYATHA / AKASHANI VAVINI / SARVA DHARMA NI VANI /  
ISHAMANA / VIPASHANA / VIMALA SUPARI / DHARMA NI KHANA /  
VARUNI CHAYA TAMALE / CHALE / HULU HULU / SHIVITE / MANTRA  
MANTRA MANTRAH SVAHA]

By the way, I did this Stainless Lotus Pinnacle mantra. This mantra is very powerful. How powerful is it? If because a fully ordained monk has received the four defeats—killing a human being, committing sexual misconduct, telling a lie that he has realizations and stealing—and is reborn in hell, if somebody remembers him and recites this mantra, he gets liberated from the hell realm. It is that unbelievably powerful.

It is very good to recite this mantra for animals and people. It's been two or three days [since Thanksgiving]. I don't know how many hundreds of millions [of turkeys were killed] in America. Somebody started that [tradition] in early times, a long time ago, killing and eating turkey meat. Then, at Christmas, so many millions get killed. We can pray together for those who have already been killed and for those who will be killed, to free them from samsara and to achieve enlightenment.

Then, five hundred thousand people died from the disease from Africa [Ebola]—an unbelievable number. And some time ago so many animals were sacrificed in Nepal. Think it is for all of them.

### ***Reciting the Five Powerful Mantras***

I suggest [you recite] the five powerful deities' mantras. The Namgyalma mantra is one, then the Kunrig mantra, the Stainless Pinnacle deity mantra, the Lotus Pinnacle [of Amoghapasha, and the Mitrugpa mantra].

Then OM MANI PADME HUM and Medicine Buddha. At that time, I suggested to recite seventy or seventy-seven Stainless Beam mantras. Then the beings who were killed and were reborn in lower realms would be liberated. Because that came out [in my observation], I suggested to the students to recite that. There are methods to recite to purify our negative karma, so why don't we do it? Why don't we use it? Why don't we help them?

That is the thing, we have the opportunity, so why don't we? Not only by reciting this mantra, even just by seeing it, reading it, touching it, remembering it, even if they are not Buddhist and don't have faith, by seeing it they get liberated from the lower realms. Anyone by seeing, touching, remembering or reciting it, so easily gets liberated from lower realms. It purifies negative karma to get reborn in the eight major hot hells.

They are the hell of being alive again and again and the black line hell, where we are used like a carpenter uses wood. We suffer for an unbelievable length of time; there is so much suffering until the karma is finished. Then, the gathered and crushed hell, where any sentient beings we killed in this life, the shape of their face appears in the mountains and we are crushed between them, our blood coming like a waterfall. And it goes on and on; we revive and then are crushed again. It goes on and on until the karma is finished. Then, the hell of crying and the hell of great crying, where we are oneness with the fire. The hell of great crying is twice as hot. Then, in the hot hell, we are burned in a huge pot. I forgot the name of the liquid iron. What is it called? [*Student*: Molten iron.] What did you say? Lava? Yamas stir the liquid iron, and as we are pulled up, we revive and all the meat, the flesh, is separated again from the body. Then, the extremely hot hell. These hells are not truly existent; they come from the negative mind.

It is similar to earthquakes or wars or certain things that happen in this life that we never expect. Earthquakes destroy everything, but we never expect them to happen. And wars too, certain times things happen that we never expect, but they still happen. This all comes from the mind, the negative mind. Similarly, hell comes from the negative mind. It is a projection of the negative mind. [Our body] is sort of a mountain of bones, and we are crushed, like mashing salt and chili in a pot. I don't know if you mash them in the West or not like that. It's endless, until our karma finishes. Unbelievable, unbelievable. Or like the brown sugar tree [sugar cane?] that is pushed through a machine and pressed out. The machine presses it and the stuff comes out. Or like noodles are produced [by the dough being pressed] through a machine. Our body is totally wrapped up in barbed wire until our karma finishes. We don't die until our karma finishes. There are all these kinds [of suffering] due to negative karma. They happen because we didn't meet Dharma and didn't purify. If we are wise, we can purify before we die and this [won't] happen.

That is why Vajrasattva is very important. Doing a Vajrasattva meditation every day and then doing a Vajrasattva retreat is so important, so important, so wise, so wise! Then if it is done, [the karma is] finished. Otherwise, we have to suffer so much negative karma.

Then, in the inexhaustible hot hell realm (*Nyalwa Narme*) where our body becomes one with fire, like a burning log becomes red in the flames. In all four directions, unbelievably hot fire comes. The only way we can be recognized as a sentient being is not by the shape, only by the noise, by the voice screaming. The length of life is one intermediate eon. I'm not going to go through the details. Then half an intermediate eon. If our negative karma is not finished, even if this universe finishes, we get reborn in another hot hell and we still suffer. Therefore, we must purify in this life, before we die. There is no time to wait; we must purify today, even today, even now.

It is so wise to purify our negative karma. We can purify past negative karma. Whatever we have already collected we can purify. It is all collected by our mind, so our mind can purify it. Our mind can make us suffer in samsara from beginningless rebirths, but our mind can also

make us *free* from samsara. We must know that. It is not only negative karma. It can make us achieve enlightenment. It can purify *all* the negative karma to be born in lower realms.

Even just reciting one mantra OM PÄDMO USHNISHA VIMALE HUM PHAT [the Lotus Pinnacle of Amoghapasha mantra] is so powerful that we never get reborn in the lower realms. Then, for a hundred thousand eons we achieve the status of a wheel-turning king. Only one wheel-turning king ever happens in this world; two never happen. [As a wheel-turning king] everybody's mind is able to stay in the ten virtues. It is so powerful. By thinking of sentient beings, if we recite this mantra seven times a day, we will be reborn in Amitabha Buddha Pure Land.

There are different pure lands. I must tell you. If we are born in Amitabha Buddha Pure Land, there is no suffering of pain, such as the sufferings of rebirth, old age, sickness and death. Depression doesn't happen. None of these sufferings happen. On top of that, there is no suffering of change, which are the temporary samsaric pleasures that, because they can't continue, becomes the suffering of pain later.

Pleasure itself is in the nature of suffering because it doesn't last, unlike Dharma happiness which lasts and can develop. Samsaric pleasures cannot continue and be completed but Dharma happiness can continue and it will be completed when we achieve enlightenment.

People in the West try to fly by tying on wings and running [over cliffs] but they either hurt themselves or kill themselves. Or people jump out of an airplane with everybody holding hands. Sometimes, the parachute doesn't work and they drop down and die. All those are in the nature of suffering. All samsaric pleasures are in the nature of suffering, including the pleasures of food, of clothing, of houses, and of all the sexual pleasure, everything. The pure lands don't have this.

Then, the third level of suffering is pervasive compounding suffering, which is where the other two sufferings come from, under the control of karma and delusions, the contaminated seed that arises and produces the suffering of pain and suffering of change. The pure lands don't have pervasive compounding suffering. We are not born there due to karma and delusions but due to the merits, due to the prayers we have made. Otherwise, we have to generate the whole five paths to nirvana, we have to actualize the true path of the four noble truths: true suffering, the true cause of suffering, true cessation and the true path. We have to actualize the true path, and of the five paths, the direct perception of emptiness.

If we are born in Amitabha Buddha Pure Land it is easiest. There are other pure lands like Tushita, but we need very pure morality [to be born there]. We ordinary beings are full of delusions, but it is still easy to be born in Amitabha Buddha Pure Land. Lama Tsongkhapa praised Amitabha Buddha Pure Land so much because it is easy for us ordinary beings full of delusions to be born there.

That is something special. Even if we recite OM MANI PADME HUM we can be reborn there. By reciting mantras, by generating bodhicitta, by dedicating [our merits] we can be reborn there in the pure land of Amitabha Buddha.

If we are able to recite [these mantras] every day, we are very wise. I'm talking like a crazy person. I've already apologized to you about becoming crazy sometimes. Nobody speaks like a crazy person like I speak, but I am emphasizing that. When I speak like that I am emphasizing something. You have to know what is best to do in the life. You have to know that! This present human life has incredible freedom, *incredible* freedom. You must know that!

The incredible freedom we have is unbelievable. It's incredible what we can do in our life with this human body.

I still want to mention one or two words on emptiness. Sorry, I left out doing the *lung* of the last mantra.

[Rinpoche gives the oral transmission of the Lotus Pinnacle of Amoghapasha mantra]

OM PÄDMO USHNISHA VIMALE HUM PHAT

I received the oral transmission of these. OK. That's all.

## ***Being Aware of the Illusion***

How much time is there to go? [*Ven. Robina*: Thirty minutes to go.] Thirty minutes! I'll do the Kangyur and Tengyur! Or the Bible. I'll read the whole Bible. If there is still time, I will read all the Bible!

As you go out for lunch, as you go around, you can practice this while you are here. Everything that appears—the I, the action, the object, Kopan, the buildings, the trees, the sky—everything that appears appears as real. What appears as real, all this is a production, a projection, a creation of your delusion, your ignorance, *timug dendzin marigpa*. The ignorance holds the I as real; it holds everything as real. Everything appears real—the I, action, object, food, everything. Practice the awareness of that, the awareness that this appearance is due to the negative imprints piled on the continuation of the consciousness from beginningless rebirths. All this is projected, decorated, so it all comes from your mind, from your ignorance. It is not there. The real I is not there. It's like a dream.

A dream is a very good example. After you wake up, it's not there. In the dream, you don't recognize the dream as a dream. In the dream you see everything as real. You get married; you have a hundred children; you become the president of America. But when you wake up—nothing. So, all this is like a dream. It has all come from your ignorance, from your negative imprints. Practice this awareness.

On top of that, your ignorance believed it is true. What appears as real, you believe is real. "All this is real." Like that, it's exactly the same as in a dream. While you are dreaming you believe everything is real. It's exactly the same. It's totally wrong! *Totally* wrong! Do you understand?

For example, after you have crossed the sand, although there is no water, when you look back you have a vision of water. But you *know* there is no water. It's exactly the same. *Exactly* the same! Do you understand?

Practice this awareness. It is such an incredibly profound meditation. Therefore, deep in your heart happiness arises. There is no longer attachment or anger. It's like your life is boiling water, bubbling away, causing your life to be up and down, up and down, up and down. But now, like pouring cold water on it, your emotional life becomes like this, very quiet and peaceful. Practicing this awareness meditation is very profound.

This is one of the best walking meditations. Just being mindful—"Oh, I'm walking,"—even planning the best robbery, you have to have great awareness of the right time, how to steal from the bank, how to escape and everything. If you don't have awareness, you'll have problems. But the mindfulness like in this meditation is excellent; it is so profound.

Like that, you can go to the market or a department store from here and you don't even have to buy anything. You go for the meditation. You have nothing to buy but you go for meditation; you walk up and down with this mindfulness, being aware that everything that appears to you seems real—all the people, all the makeup shops, (there are a hundred thousand things to sell for makeup), clothing shops—you don't even have to buy anything when you go there to meditate.

[Although it appears as real], you see that nothing exists from its own side. Everything appearing real is a creation, a projection, a decoration of your ignorance. You go up and down the steps, the electric ones, [the escalators], like that. Even if you are shopping, you the buyer, what you buy, [the seller], it's the same: the real one from there. What you buy, which seems the real one, is not there; the person you pay, the seller, who seems the real one, is not there. That is the meditation.

If you are going for pilgrimage, do the same meditation. If you go for pilgrimage, that is great! Don't just go for the external pilgrimage but do your side meditation on emptiness. If you go to the beach, the ocean appears to you as the real one, the hundred thousand naked people lying down all appear as the real one, but they are a decoration or a projection, a creation of your own ignorance, of the negative imprint. With that mindfulness, you walk around the beach.

That is one way—looking at that which is a hallucination as a hallucination. When you do that, your mind has great peace. Whatever appears, everything is empty. One meditation is looking at everything as empty: the I, the action, the object.

Another meditation is seeing it is merely labeled. The I walking is merely labeled, the action of walking is merely labeled; there is the merely labeled road, the merely labeled beach, the merely labeled people, the merely labeled ocean. Here, there is the merely labeled Kopan, the merely labeled food, the merely labeled trees, the merely labeled sky. In the supermarket or the department store, everything is merely labeled. Practice the mindfulness of subtle dependent arising.

### ***Meditating on the Suffering of the Beach***

Since I mentioned the beach, I want to mention this. You can also do it with bodhicitta, practicing the mindfulness of bodhicitta. This is the most profound meditation, bringing incredible benefit to sentient beings, not only to yourself. I'm using the beach as one example, but it can be on the road, in the city, in the cinema. Wherever people gather you can meditate. You develop compassion for all those thousands of people who love water so much, who have so much attachment to water, and for the many animals who, due to attachment, are already born in the water as animals.

People have received a human body but they are creating the cause to be born as animals. Develop kindness for them. They don't know at all that they have been suffering. The oceans of hell being suffering, the oceans of hungry ghost suffering, the oceans of human being, sura and asura suffering, from beginningless rebirths, they have been suffering numberless times but they have no idea at all about this. They are totally ignorant, like the night sky. They have no idea about past and future lives. They don't have the karma to meet the Dharma, the karma to practice the Dharma, so again they have to be reborn in samsara and again experience oceans of six-realm sufferings numberless times in the future without end.

You've heard about the Wheel of Life and the twelve links. They have to suffer endlessly in the six realms. While you are walking on the beach, you develop compassion for all those people. You have met the Dharma; you can practice the Dharma, but they can't. In reality, they have no idea, so develop compassion for them. You really don't want them to suffer for even a day, even an hour or a minute or a second. You want them to be liberated from samsara, so you develop compassion for them. There are a lot of people [on the beach], so while you are walking, you can meditate on compassion like this and at least recite OM MANI PADME HUM or whatever benefits them, whatever purifies them, like these mantras that I mentioned.

The other thing is to think of their kindness. As you walk on the beach, think of their kindness. All your past, present, and future merits from beginningless rebirths, all the merits up to enlightenment have been received from them, from the numberless sentient beings of the six realms, from all the animals and all these people. Meditate on their kindness. They have all been your mother from beginningless rebirths and have been kind numberless times in the four ways I mentioned. The food, shelter and clothing you have comes from the numberless sentient beings. They were killed and had to suffer for it. You can meditate on their different kindnesses as you walk. This is an idea, an example.

What is the time now? Fifteen minutes? [*Ven. Robina: Fourteen minutes.*] Thirteen minutes.

### ***Look at Unharmonious Situations as Like Illusions***

OK. I just want to mention to you that that meditation is very useful.

The bodhisattva Thogme Zangpo said in *Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*,

[24] All forms of suffering are like a child's death in a dream.

Holding illusory appearances to be true makes you weary.

Therefore when you meet with disagreeable circumstances,

See them as illusory—

This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

You must write that down and apply it in your life, doing a practice of mindfulness. Especially when you have relationship problems, use this meditation! Practice this mindfulness! Or if you have cancer, use this meditation to see its emptiness. Of course, this is also to generate bodhicitta, but do this one for emptiness if you have cancer or anything like that. Apply this verse for any problem you have.

The great bodhisattva Thogme Zangpo, the holy being, said the various sufferings are like the death of our child in a dream. First of all, in the dream, we get married and are so happy. Then, we have a child. Wow! We are *so* happy, but then the child dies. As I mentioned yesterday, we have several children but one is taken by river, one is taken by animals, one is burned by fire, so we get upset; we get wrinkles and white hair. When our child dies like that, there is so much suffering, but it's not true. Thogme Zangpo says the various sufferings in the life are like our child dying in a dream. The Tibetan, *thrül nang*, means it's not true; all these are "illusory visions." In a dream, we hold everything as real, exactly the same as in the daytime—all this is real. *Thang chhä* means "exhausted," "tired." We become tired and then we suffer. We get mountains of problems by believing it is real. We get into trouble. Therefore, he said when we encounter unharmonious, undesirable conditions, we should look at them as illusions.

As I said about practicing mindfulness, we should look at that which is a hallucination as a hallucination. That is the practice of bodhisattvas. The mind attains great peace; anger and attachment do not arise, and ultimately we become free. By realizing emptiness, we become free from samsara.

Now finished? [*Ven. Robina*: Ten.] Ten minutes. Not finished. Still!

Write it down, you must practice it. Otherwise, what? Otherwise, just here then gone. You never get free from all the problems, from the anxiety, from all the depression. Then, the human life we have is uninteresting.

I'll tell you one more thing and then finish.

This is a very profound teaching by the Seventh Dalai Lama. [*Jewel Garland (Norbu Threngwa)* says:]

Every single phenomenon of samsara and nirvana

Is an illusion created by your conception.

By holding them to be true, they cheat you.

Therefore, don't grasp at hallucinated appearances and look at them as empty.

It is the same advice, just said a little differently. This is so important; it is a very rich practice. "Every single phenomenon of samsara and nirvana" also includes enlightenment, not only nirvana. It includes great nirvana, enlightenment.

It is "an illusion created by your conception." I mentioned to you how the I is created by the mind. The mind, focused on the valid base, labels the I. All the labels are merely imputed by the mind. Like that, the I is merely imputed by the mind by focusing on the valid base, and in the same way all the phenomena of samsara and nirvana are labeled by our mind. Therefore, nothing exists from its own side.

What exists is extremely, extremely, extremely subtle. It exists but it is like it doesn't exist. I'm not saying it doesn't exist, but it is *like* it doesn't exist; it is so subtle, like the I. Our own conception merely labels it, so it exists. It is good to think about that.

Then it appears, as I explained before for the I. All the imprints collected on the continuation of consciousness project or decorate "real," seeing the I as real, not as merely labeled; it is projected as real. All phenomena are made "real" in this way, projected or decorated as real. Then, our concept holds onto that as real, "Oh, it is real!" Like the example of I, we believe all the phenomena of samsara and nirvana are real.

The second line says it is an illusion created by our conception. It all appears real but it's not true, so it's like an illusion, like a dream, like a mirage. "By holding them to be true, they cheat

you.” In that way, we have been cheated from beginningless rebirths. We have cheated ourselves; our ignorance has cheated us, from beginningless rebirths up to now. It is most unbelievable. Now what to do? The Seventh Dalai Lama says don’t grasp at hallucinated appearances. Don’t hold on to illusory appearances. As I gave you advice on how to meditate with mindfulness, when we do that meditation, we don’t cling, we don’t grasp. “Don’t grasp at hallucinated appearances and look at them as empty.”

I’ve said that before. I’ll stop here.

Nagarjuna wrote in *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*:

[24:14] For him to whom emptiness is clear

Everything becomes clear.

For him to whom emptiness is not clear

Nothing becomes clear.

This is good to hear. Because of emptiness, everything can happen. I explained how the I is empty, how the real I is not nonexistent. Because it exists in that way, everything is clear, everything can happen. If it were not empty, nothing could happen.

What am I saying?

Tomorrow Khadro-la will speak in the morning. I requested to Khadro-la to speak so she very happily accepted. She came from Tibet only recently to protect His Holiness from obstacles. So many times, when His Holiness took the aspect of very heavy, very dangerous sicknesses, when the doctors gave advice, she could see their mistakes. When His Holiness went to Delhi, the doctor was very surprised. This hasn’t just happened once but at different times. She only came to make His Holiness’ actions successful in the world.

Once, there was huge eruption in the Himalayas and many people died. She could see this. Then, His Holiness gave her a project and she has built many stupas around near His Holiness, one at Norbulingka, and TCV school [the Tibetan Children’s Village in Dharamsala].

At that time, when I met her, it seems she was able to see there would be a small earthquake that could not be stopped. It happened, but I heard only a cow died. All this happened a long time ago. Then, in Taiwan there was going to be a typhoon, but she was able to pray and stop it from happening. She has all the ten qualities of the guru mentioned in the *Lama Chöpa*, the ten inner and outer qualities in lower and highest tantra. She has all those qualities. She has all the guru’s qualities mentioned in *Lama Chöpa*. She looks like a very humble human being, a girl, but in reality [she is very different].

There is a prayer that I have written for her, a long-life prayer. She is Tara; she is Vajrayogini; she is Machig Labdrön; she is Lama Marpa’s wisdom mother [Jetsun Dagmema]; she is Padmasambhava’s wisdom mother, Yeshe Tsogyal. Hearing her teachings, you’ll want to recognize her as a guru. There is no question of mistakes; it is completely OK. If you are lucky, you can regard her as a guru. This is what I want to express. I have taken her as a guru. I have many gurus, but she is the one lady guru that I have taken.

[Dedications]

Thank you very much.



## Lecture 7: December 7, am



### ***Rinpoche Denies Being a Bodhisattva***

[Rinpoche and students recite *Prayers Before Teachings*]

[Rinpoche holds up a stuffed animal] First, this one wants to say hello to everybody!

[Rinpoche asks the person who gave him the stuffed animal] What's the name? [*Student:* Thubten Kunkyen.] His name is Thubten Kunkyen. *Thubten* is “teachings of the Buddha” and *Kunkyen* is an “omniscient being,” one who is enlightened without needing to practice. It became enlightened without needing to practice, without needing to meditate, without needing to purify. It has been enlightened from beginningless time!

You enjoyed Khadro-la's teachings? [*Students:* Yes.] Realized? Khadro-la says I'm a bodhisattva but there's no hope. There's hope in the future, after a hundred eons, maybe more. So, she's preparing for the future hope to be a bodhisattva.

[Being a bodhisattva means] whatever we think, whatever we do with body, speech and mind is totally dedicated for sentient beings—for *every* sentient being, not just some that we love. We only help those but not strangers or those who criticize or abuse us, who kill us or cut us or do all the bad things to us. It's not like that.

Starting from the president, the king, down to the beggars, even the animals, generally in the world that is how it is. Whatever we do, everything is *only* for sentient beings, and that includes everyone! Not just those who praise us but also those who criticize us; not only those we like but everyone. We have compassion and loving kindness for everyone.

Every single thing we do, even drinking a cup of tea, even taking one sip, everything is for numberless sentient beings. That is the bodhisattva. You have to understand. It is not easy to be a bodhisattva. Just believing we have a good heart, we are helping people, does not necessarily mean we are a bodhisattva. With a bodhisattva, every single thing is for *every* being, without even one ant being left out. As I said many times, the bodhisattva does everything for everybody's happiness, to free every single being from suffering. If we were a bodhisattva, our life would be unbelievably rich. I'm not saying rich in material wealth but rich in mind, holy. That is the real holy. Do you understand?

There is no way [I'm a bodhisattva]. For me, it would take hundreds of eons and maybe even that is not enough. That is Khadro-la's pure view. When we look at others, even if the object is not pure, from our side we look at it as pure, we look at everyone as a buddha, as a bodhisattva.

That is her pure view, but, as I described to you, I don't even have the smell of a bodhisattva. *Kaka* smells, but even if the *kaka* is not there, if you do a fart, the smell is there. I don't even have the smell of a bodhisattva. You have to understand what "bodhisattva" means.

Then not only that. [To be a bodhisattva we must have the wish] to free the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless sura beings, the numberless asura beings, to free everyone from the oceans of samsaric sufferings, to free them from the cause of suffering, karma and delusions, and not only that, to bring them to peerless happiness, the total cessation of obscurations and the completion of all realizations, to bring them to enlightenment. We must wish to do that by ourselves! That means although the numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas are working for sentient beings, we determine to do it ourselves.

You need *lhag sam*, special attitude, another English word I don't know. There is another English word for the Tibetan *lhag sam*, special attitude. Is there another word for *lhag sam*? [Ven. Ailsa: Special intention.] Special incense? Special intention? More or less the same.

If we want the best life, the most meaningful life, the one most beneficial for every sentient being, we have to try to have the bodhisattva attitude. We must try to follow the bodhisattva's actions. That is the sort of life to copy.

When we dance, we try to copy, what's his name, the young guy? [Student: Michael Jackson.] Michael Jackson. Small children like Michael Jackson. That's OK. Then the girl, Goa? [Ven. Ailsa: Lady Gaga.] Lady Gaga. In America once, His Holiness was invited to give a talk to American mayors. There were probably three hundred mayors there from the many different cities. Lady Gaga was there, His Holiness was in the middle, and there was another lady who introduced him and asked him questions. There was another lady, then Lady Gaga and another man. The question was how to run as the mayor of the city? Then His Holiness said he didn't know how to do the mayor's job. Often His Holiness says, "I don't know," but then later it comes out.

When there was a break, Lady Gaga goes like this, her fingers go like this. [Rinpoche points up] Then, she talked about compassion. I think that is very good that she brought up compassion. At least to bring up the word "compassion" is very good, very valid. Maybe she doesn't know exactly what His Holiness normally does, but I think in the conversation His Holiness mentioned working for the Tibetan government-in-exile. He said that even if a person working for the government is negative in one way, there are other jobs the person could be expert at. You don't have to look at it as totally black and white. His Holiness didn't say that, but you have to look at the other things the person can do. Even though one action is bad, you have to look at what they do that is good. Usually, you want to get rid of them. Everyone, including me, would say to get rid of them because we don't look at other good qualities.

Lady Gaga was wearing trousers with some holes in the knees, like they are worn out. I think maybe she didn't understand it was disrespectful. His Holiness pointed to the holes [Rinpoche points to his knees] and she answered something, but I didn't hear it on the TV or iPad.

She will also be coming tomorrow to speak. [Rinpoche sees people's look of disbelief and confusion] Sorry! Not Lady Gaga—Khadro-la. Khadro-la. I requested. She has time, so I think she will come tomorrow.

### ***Rinpoche Remembers the Nepalese Earthquake***

The great bodhisattva Kyabje Khunu Lama Rinpoche said in *Praise to Bodhicitta*,  
[89a] Remember bodhicitta when you feel down.

Write it down! Probably this has become my name, "Write It Down," because I've said it many times. In Tibet, when somebody does something many times, it becomes their name. When we are unhappy, when we are feeling down, discouraged, we should remember bodhicitta. Then we become so happy because we see our life is so meaningful, so beneficial for sentient beings. When we remember bodhicitta, we feel great joy.

Then, Kyabje Khunu Lama Rinpoche said,  
[89b] Remember bodhicitta when you are scared.

Sorry! This is just my story but it's not good. When the earthquake happened in Nepal some years ago, I was here. I think I had just come from Lawudo, I'm not sure. I was here at that time in the big room in the house. It was nine o'clock in the morning or something when the earthquake struck. It was quite a big earthquake, a six-level earthquake. Of course, that is just one example but maybe at other times I won't know what I would do. During death, when suddenly the breath stops, I don't know what I will do.

There were statues and flowers on my round table and they all fell down. Sangpo, my attendant, ran up. He was holding the table like this, intensely saying HRIH VAJRA KRODHA HAYAGRIVA HULU HULU HUM PHAT, the mantra of Most Secret Hayagriva.

I had read some texts of *lojong*, thought transformation, on how to transform fear, suffering and unfavorable conditions into happiness. Because of some memory of that, at that time I did *tonglen*, taking the suffering of others and giving them happiness. I don't know about other times, but I did *tonglen*, I think maybe from *Lama Chöpa*:

[LC 95] And thus, perfect, pure, compassionate Guru,  
I seek your blessings that all negative karmas, obscurations, and sufferings of mother  
transmigratory beings  
May without exception ripen upon me right now,  
And that by giving my happiness and virtue to others  
All transmigratory beings may experience happiness.  
Also,  
Whatever suffering transmigratory beings experience,  
May it all ripen on me.  
Whatever happiness and virtue I accumulate,  
May it all ripen on others. [13]

Sangpo was holding the table and reciting very intensely HRIH VAJRA KRODHA HAYAGRIVA HULU HULU HUM PHAT. At that time, fortunately, I remembered the words, I don't know about other times. There was not much fear because I was reciting the words. I don't know if it would happen but because of doing the prayer I was not really scared. Then I went upstairs but one of the monks said you must sit down, not stand up. Then Jinpa, who translated yesterday, carried me down the steps through to the back of the monastery near the stupa. We were there for maybe two weeks in a tent, then I think I had to leave for India or somewhere.

There were many earthquakes. On the next day, a four- or five-level earthquake happened. The top of trees in the garden went like that. [Rinpoche waves his hand back and forth] But I think it wasn't as bad as the first one.

If we know the different words of taking other sentient beings' suffering within us, into our heart, and destroying the ego, the self-cherishing thought—the cause of all our suffering from beginningless rebirths—and giving all our happiness, our body, possessions and merits to others, if we can recite them, even at the time of death [we can be happy]. Otherwise, death can be the most fearful time.

### ***Generating Compassion and Taking on the Suffering of Others***

Not for everybody, but for some people, the time of death is very happy. For some people, after death they go to the pure land of a buddha. I described Amitabha Buddha Pure Land, where there is no suffering of pain, no suffering of change, no pervasive compounding suffering, how even though we haven't attained the five paths to liberation or enlightenment, by being born there we don't have those sufferings. We get born there by prayers and merits not by generating the path. Amitabha Buddha Pure Land is for ordinary people like us, like me, filled up with so many delusions. Even though there are many other pure lands where it is very easy to

achieve enlightenment, such as Vajrayogini Pure Land, *Dagpa Kachö*, Lama Tsongkhapa talked about the qualities of Amitabha Buddha Pure Land. If we can, it is very good to remember them at that time.

For example, Panchen Shakyashri, a great yogi, said,  
When happy, I shall dedicate my virtues to all;  
May benefit and happiness pervade all of space!  
When suffering, I shall take on the pains of all beings;  
May the ocean of suffering become dry! [14]

“When happy, I shall dedicate my virtues to all.” That means that sentient being receives skies of happiness, not just some small happiness, not like some ice cream or pizza or something. The happiness and benefits will fill the limitless sky. “May all sentient beings receive that. May sentient being receive happiness pervading space, like the sky.” Then, if we are suffering, if we have fear or are sick or whatever, we should take all sentient beings’ suffering on ourselves. Not only the suffering of that particular animal or person, but *all* sentient beings, we should take their suffering. “May the oceans of suffering become dry.” That means that a particular sentient being, who has suffered continuously in samsara because of being unable to meet Dharma, who cannot practice, [is freed from all suffering]. And here it means every sentient being. The oceans of suffering dry up for that particular sentient being and for all sentient beings. This is an incredibly powerful prayer.

[Video extract: [Tonglen: Generating Compassion and Taking on the Suffering of Others](#)]

Tonglen is so good. It is the best Dharma practice, the best meditation. Especially for us, it is the best meditation. Some people may say, “I meditate on chakras, winds, drops,” things like that. Some people only talk of *dzogchen*. They never mention lamrim, bodhicitta, emptiness. They only talk and think in that way, that dzogchen is the only worthwhile thing. We might think it is something very high, but actually *this* practice is the best Dharma practice, the best meditation. If you want to know what is the best meditation, this is the best meditation. If you have that question, it’s this. It’s so great.

Maybe, I’ll mention it today since Robina went over the seven techniques of Mahayana cause and effect, the bodhicitta meditation. [*Ven. Robina*: We went over the seven techniques a few times.] I’ve not finished the quotation, but maybe I’ll mention it here anyway. You must pay attention. It is very important. The best meditation is bodhicitta, to practice bodhicitta. You must write it down, to not forget.

You heard briefly about the suffering of the six-realm sentient beings. We begin by taking the sufferings of other sentient beings, generating compassion for them, as I told you already. We study what is described overall in each realm of suffering. Not only that, when sentient beings in other realms were human beings, they experienced the six types of suffering, the seven types, the eight types of suffering. In *Lamrim Chenmo* I think only six are explained, but in the outline there are seven or eight.

Each individual sentient being has experienced the suffering of each realm, not only once but numberless times from beginningless rebirths. Numberless times from beginningless rebirths, every sentient being has been experiencing the hell realm sufferings, the hungry ghost realm sufferings. Numberless times from beginningless rebirths, without beginning. When the suffering began, there is no beginning. There is no beginning for the continuation of mind. It is beginningless. Delusion, the cause of suffering, is beginningless. Karma and delusions are beginningless. That is unbelievable, unbelievable, most unbelievable.

Not only that, most sentient beings don’t have the karma to meet the Buddhadharmas, the holy Dharma. For eons and eons and eons, they don’t have the karma to meet a buddha. Without practicing Dharma, without actualizing the path, there is no way to be free from suffering. So, then they will have to experience suffering in samsara again and again, endlessly! Can you imagine?

Thinking like that, we develop unbelievable compassion for every sentient being, for all the numberless sentient beings in samsara. I gave you an example of how to meditate on compassion when you go to the beach, for the naked people lying there and the animals in the water. Remember I told you how to develop compassion? You walk along the beach and meditate on compassion. Not only at the beach, I told you that where there are a lot of people, you can do that meditation to develop compassion.

Compassion has to arise. There's no choice! Compassion has to arise! As His Holiness says, human beings are in the nature of loving kindness and compassion. That is our nature. His Holiness said to develop that.

There are different prayers, but tonglen is the same. I don't know what is explained.

Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen from Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, who was maybe the third or fourth Panchen Lama, explained in the *Guru Puja*,

[LC 95] And thus, perfect, pure, compassionate guru,  
I seek your blessings that all negative karmas, obscurations, and sufferings of mother  
transmigratory beings  
May without exception ripen upon me right now,  
And that by giving my happiness and virtue to others  
All transmigratory beings may experience happiness.

"And thus" refers to the previous subject, how the root of all suffering is the self-cherishing thought and how all happiness, including enlightenment, comes from bodhicitta, from cherishing others. "And thus," *je tsiin la ma*, which I translate as "perfect." I don't know how others translate it. It has a great meaning, so I translate it as "perfect." It refers to somebody who has achieved the dharmakaya. This is the way my guru Geshe Rabten Rinpoche explained it when he gave mahamudra teachings in Dharamsala. To keep it short, it's talking about the qualities of the lama or guru.

"All the sufferings of mother transmigratory beings." "Mother" means from beginningless time they have been our mother and so kind to us. It means every single sentient being, all the samsaric beings and those who are outside of samsara but who still have subtle obscurations, *she drib*. Even those who are free from samsara still have subtle obscurations.

*Dag la min pa dang*, "May it ripen on me right now." *Dag gi de ge zhan la tang na yi*. *Dag gi* means "mine" and *dag gi de ge* means "my happiness and virtue." "I request the guru, the merit field, may all transmigratory beings have happiness." That means all the happiness up to enlightenment, not just eating ice cream and pizza or, I don't know, maybe turkey meat. [Thanksgiving] just finished one or two weeks ago, so not just that. We are asking that all sentient beings have every temporary and ultimate happiness, including liberation and enlightenment.

First, with compassion, we take their suffering. By developing compassion, we take all their suffering and the cause of suffering, karma and delusions. We can think of taking all the undesirable, suffering conditions, that have caused us to suffer from beginningless rebirths, now and in the future, into our heart, right on the self-cherishing thought. They have never allowed us to achieve enlightenment, never allowed us to be free from samsara; they have always caused us to suffer the six-realm sufferings from beginningless rebirths up to now.

All this is totally caused by all the obstacles, all the undesirable, unfavorable conditions, all the undesirable things, including black magic. When somebody is angry at us, when somebody abuses us, [this is the cause]. Nowadays it's kind of a big topic in the West for some reason. Here, in the bodhicitta practice, [it mentions] even black magic. Scientists don't believe in black magic. Anyway, it includes all that, and abuse, depression and all the sufferings we experience. All the sufferings, all the obscurations, all the karma and delusions, all the unfavorable conditions, we visualize in the form of darkness—not light but darkness—as smoke [pouring] onto our main enemy, the self-cherishing thought. Here, in the Mahayana tonglen practice, it's the self-cherishing thought.

When America was fighting Iraq, there was a target. The missile came from very far away, *exactly* hitting on the army camp, totally blowing it to pieces! Like that, we totally eliminate the ego, the self-cherishing thought, which I described to you before. It becomes nonexistent even in name. It doesn't exist even in name.

As I suggested at that time, the ego, the self-cherishing thought, thinks this real I is *so* precious. This is so precious! There are numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas, there are numberless sentient beings, but this real I is *so precious! So precious!* I'm acting! In the West I made a joke that I was the Solu Khumbu, the Himalayan comedian. The Solu Khumbu comedian. Now, there's not much time.

[With this practice] the real I that we cherish so much all the time, day and night, all day, every second, is dissolved, *shigpa* in Tibetan. I'm not sure. When concrete things dissolve, small particles are left, but this is not like that. The Tibetan word, *shigpa*, means it becomes nonexistent. The real I that we cherish so much becomes nonexistent.

When that becomes nonexistent, we meditate on emptiness. *That* becomes the meditation on emptiness. This meditation harms the ignorance, the root of samsara, because the real I is the object that is apprehended by the ignorance holding the I as truly existent, which is the root of samsara. The real I is non-objectifying, so this meditation destroys the ignorance, not only the self-cherishing thought.

Meditate a little bit on that. Then, it not only becomes a powerful bodhicitta meditation, a tonglen meditation, but also emptiness is there. It is a very important meditation to eliminate the root of samsara, ignorance. We have been suffering not only from this morning, not only from birth, but from beginningless rebirths, and now, all that has caused us to suffer in samsara again and again is destroyed.

### ***The Kindness of All Sentient Beings***

Then, by meditating on loving kindness for all sentient beings, we do the practice of giving. I'll just elaborate on this a bit because I didn't mention it. Robina mentioned it, but I didn't. Did your holy speech mention it? [*Ven. Robina*: Which one?] It doesn't matter.

As I mentioned, due to the kindness of sentient beings, every hour, every minute, every second we are alive and able to be a human being. [We can enjoy] all the pleasures of having a house because of the numberless sentient beings who were killed or harmed, or who bore so many hardships—including human beings—when we laid the foundations. Our survival comes from them. As I mentioned, with our food, so many sentient beings have been killed and harmed so that we can have the pleasure of eating and can survive every day, every hour, every minute as a human being. Then, so we can learn Dharma, and especially so we can practice Dharma, so we can be clothed, again so many sentient beings have died and suffered, especially with animal skins.

I can't remember whether I told you or not, but in Ladakh, the Changpa are nomads who live with many sheep. I don't know how many times they take the wool from the sheep. I don't think they pay much attention to the sheep when they take the wool. I remember a man was [shearing] the sheep, which was looking at the man. The shears were very rough, unsharp, and it must have pulled. The sheep was constantly looking at the man's face while he was working, roughly pulling off the wool. And, of course, without the wool, there was unbelievable suffering. The Changpa nomads live in a very cold place with lots of snow. At nighttime it is so cold. But wool is the people's living; they make the cloth and sell it. The sheep get kind of looked after by the humans, but the humans use them for meat, skin and wool. They don't seem to have much awareness or feeling for the sheep. You really need a good, sharp knife to shear the sheep. I just remembered that.

As I mentioned the other day, the mother's kindness is often listed as the four ways of kindness, and every sentient being has been our mother and kind like this not just once but from beginningless rebirths. Like this present life's mother, all sentient beings have been kind. They

have given us a human body, so we are able to practice Dharma and meditate now. That is the most unbelievable kindness. When we were in the womb, our mother didn't have an abortion. If she had had an abortion, rather than having this human body, by now we could be a bird, or a worm that the bird eats. We could be anything, you never know, by this time. With her kindness, our mother bore so many hardships every day, protecting our life from danger, from so many dangers every day. That's the second kindness.

Then, she gave us an education. Not just this one time, but from beginningless rebirths. Not only this life's mother, all sentient beings have been like that. They have been our mother and kind to us in these four ways from beginningless rebirths. That is one thing, their kindness.

Here, I am talking about their great kindness, how all our past, present and future happiness [comes from them]. All our past happiness from beginningless rebirths, and our future temporary and ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara, and peerless happiness, the total cessation of obscurations and the completion of all realizations, all that comes from every single sentient being. We have completely received every single happiness, even the happiness in a dream, by the kindness of every single hell being, hungry ghost, animal, human being—and there are numberless universes—every single sura being, asura being, every single ant—even in one nest there are tens of thousands and there are numberless universes with numberless ants. From the kindness of every sentient being we have received all our past, present and future happiness, including enlightenment.

For example, whatever we don't like—this spider or snake or ant, or the person who abuses us, who doesn't like us, who harms us, who is angry at us—compassion is generated depending on them, depending on their suffering. Their minds are obscured and suffering, so great compassion is generated by depending on them.

From great compassion, bodhicitta is generated. From bodhicitta, the bodhisattva happens. From the bodhisattva, the buddha happens. There are two holy actions of a buddha. One is the buddha's own secret action and the other is the buddha's action that is within us sentient beings; that is good karma, virtuous action. Our virtuous action is the buddhas' holy actions. It is called *sang gye keyi trinlä*. Good karma is the buddhas' holy actions. For example, our past happiness from beginningless rebirths, our happiness now and in the future, including enlightenment, all comes from our good karma, our virtuous action. And our good karma is the buddhas' holy actions. All our three-time happiness comes from the buddhas.

A buddha comes from a bodhisattva. So, all our three-time happiness comes from the bodhisattvas. Bodhisattvas come from great compassion that is generated by depending on those snakes, those spiders, those ants, those mosquitoes, or those people who abuse us, who are angry with us, who criticize us, whose minds are obscured and suffering. So, great compassion came from that, generated by depending on their kindness.

Therefore, all our past happiness, present and future happiness, including liberation and enlightenment, all completely come from this ant, from this mosquito, from this snake, from this person who abused us, who is angry with us, who always criticizes us. It comes from that. Therefore, those who abuse us, who are angry with us, those insects, those mosquitoes, they are most precious. They are most precious, most kind to us, most dear to us; they are wish-fulfilling. All the happiness we receive from them—from this mosquito, from this person who abuses us—means they are most kind; they are our wish-fulfilling [gem].

All sentient beings whose minds are obscured. What to say? Their minds are obscured and suffering, and we receive every happiness—past, present and future up to enlightenment—from every one of the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless suras and asuras and the numberless intermediate state beings. Not only that, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha that we always take refuge in before we practice all come from sentient beings.

Sentient beings are the most precious, the most dear, wish-fulfilling for us. Even the Buddha who has no suffering, no mistakes, who has completed all the qualities, even the Buddha,



Dharma and Sangha come from sentient beings. If we have money, we can buy many things that we like, therefore we think that money is precious. Similarly, if we have a field, we think it is precious because we can plant crops—not corpse, crops—and they can grow. Like this, all our qualities come from all sentient beings, from this ant, this insect, this mosquito. Because all the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha come from them and all our happiness comes from them, they are so precious.

Sorry my talk is getting so late. I'm saying people in the world who believe in God can believe in God but they should place sentient beings first, because they are so precious, so kind. Not God first, sentient beings should be first and then God second. Then, there will be so much happiness in the world; there will be no fighting, no war! Then, all the people will cherish sentient beings. People will love sentient beings; they will do their best for sentient beings. Like they make offerings to God, they will take care of sentient beings.

Even if we believe in God, because God created sentient beings, if we take care of them, it is like taking care of God. If we harm sentient beings, it is like we are harming God. If we are harming sentient beings, we are harming God because God created them. It is very strange—we harm all these people that God created. That is very strange when at the same time we think they are created by God.

So now I'll finish. I think if we harm sentient beings, we harm God. So, the first thing should not be God but sentient beings. Then second, God. God will be unbelievably happy. Then, there will be so much peace in the family and in the world. People won't harm animals. The billions, zillions and trillions of chickens that are killed every day in the world won't happen.

[End of video extract]

Where did I reach?

All our three-time happiness is received by the kindness of every single sentient being, every single ant, every single mosquito. Because of that, with loving kindness, we give our body, possessions and three-time merits to all sentient beings.

I'll stop here and continue in the afternoon. I'm going to south India, so that is why maybe there's not much time. I want to introduce samsara before refuge and talk a little bit about the twelve links, some things like that. It's very important before taking refuge. Then you can see the deeper purpose of refuge.

OK. I'll stop here.

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

OK. That's all. Finished.



## Lecture 8: December 7, pm



### ***Giving Creates So Much Merit***

[Rinpoche and students recite *Prayers Before Teachings*]

I was going to do just the motivation but it got expanded into the tonglen practice so I think I will just complete that since it happened.

[Video extract: [Give Away Your Body, Enjoyments and Merit to Others](#)]

[The second part of tonglen] is, by generating loving kindness, we give everything to sentient beings, giving our own body, enjoyments and three-time merits. About the body, I wrote to my root guru, Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's younger tutor, asking a question. I think he wrote back that we don't visualize the skeleton and flesh, we visualize our body as an eight-sided wish-granting jewel.

I think I explained that wish-granting jewels are taken from the ocean. I saw a Tibetan—I don't know if he was a geshe or an old meditator—who explained how in the Tibetan medicine texts it says that after a long time the Buddha's relics go in the ocean and become wish-granting jewels. In the past, universal kings, maybe bodhisattvas who have so much merit, go in the ocean and find wish-granting jewels. They put the jewel on top of a banner on the fifteenth day [of the lunar calendar], an auspicious day, and then whatever people pray for, the needs and enjoyments of this life, materialize. I think at the beginning of the course, I compared the wish-granting jewel to our perfect human rebirth. Which is more precious? Do you remember that I told you at the beginning of the course, I think on the first day?

Even if we have not just one wish-granting jewel but the sky filled with wish-granting jewels, that alone cannot stop the negative karma to be born in the lower realms; it cannot stop rebirth in samsara; it cannot make us achieve a higher rebirth as a deva or human being. We cannot achieve everlasting happiness, nirvana. That alone cannot make us achieve the great nirvana, full enlightenment. But with our human body, by practicing Dharma, we can purify the cause of the lower realms; we can stop rebirth in the lower realms, and by taking refuge and protecting karma, by living in the precepts, we can create the cause to receive a higher rebirth of a deva or human body, we can be free from samsara and achieve nirvana, and, with bodhicitta, we can achieve full enlightenment. I explained that before. *This is why this our human body is so precious!*

But when you explain this teaching to others, you don't have to make a lot of noise! If you do, maybe they will think that you have taken drugs or have gone crazy. Then, they won't be sure what you are going to do next, whether you are going to hit them or what you are going to do.

This body is so precious, more precious than a wish-granting jewel that can give us whatever comforts of this life we pray for. I mentioned Sai Baba. Do you remember? So, [for tonglen] we visualize our body as not just one wish-granting jewel but numberless. This is my explanation of what I try to visualize when I do the practice, but I don't know, maybe normally people just visualize one wish-granting jewel.

Then, we offer numberless wish-granting jewels to every hell being, and there are numberless hell beings experiencing the heaviest suffering right now. We offer numberless wish-granting jewels to each one. There are numberless hell beings, not just one or two, and we offer to everyone! This is more precious than diamonds and sapphires. Comparatively, they are nothing.

Then, we offer to the numberless hungry ghosts. I haven't told you yet about the sufferings of the hungry ghosts but you can read the book. We offer our body as wish-granting jewels to the numberless hungry ghosts, to every hungry ghost.

Then, we offer our body as wish-granting jewels to the numberless animals, to every mosquito and ant, to every tiny insect, even those we can't see with our eyes but only with a microscope. There are numberless universes and there are numberless animals in each universe, and to them we offer numberless wish-granting jewels.

Then, we offer our body as wish-granting jewels to the numberless human beings. There are numberless universes with numberless human beings. Don't only think of this world. There are numberless universes and numberless human beings and we offer our body as numberless wish-granting jewels to every human being.

Then, we offer to every one of the numberless sura beings and every asura being, asuras, whose lives are full of distraction, who are totally distracted, totally lacking in conscientiousness. Conscientiousness? [*Student*: Conscientiousness.] Unconscientiousness. Even if they live for an unbelievable length of time, they are still totally distracted. If they were to meet the Dharma, it would be so hard to remember anything because they are so totally distracted, their life full of all the unbelievable enjoyments. They are like the extremely wealthy people who have so many varieties of sense pleasures, whose life is fully occupied with attachment, so they have no time to meditate, no time to think of the Dharma. Even if there were an opportunity, because they are fully occupied with attachment to sense pleasures, they would never [do anything].

The heaviest suffering of the suras is the five nearing signs of death and the five distant signs of death. And the asuras fight [the suras] because of the great jealousy they feel for the suras' wealth. They always fight.

The suras have an elephant with six trunks, and when it blows air from the nose.... What do you call it? From the nose? [*Students*: Trunk.] From the trunk. No, this one is the trunk. This one? [*Student*: Tusks.] When it blows air from the trunk, the whole [asura] army is blown away, like being blown by a typhoon or a big tornado. When they fight, wherever the asuras are hit, they die, whereas the suras only die if they are hit in the neck.

So, we offer to the numberless sura beings and asura beings.

Of course, if we want, we can do it one by one, slowly, giving our wish-granting body, then our wish-granting enjoyments, then our wish-granting merits. After each, they get everything they want and need. They get everything they *need*. First, what they *want*. Next what they *need*. They *need* a perfect human rebirth; they *need* to meet Dharma, to meet the Mahayana teachings, to meet a perfectly qualified Mahayana virtuous friend who reveals the correct path to enlightenment. That's what they all need. They need to receive teachings and actualize the whole path.

Then, everyone in the six realms can become free from all the gross and subtle defilements and they can achieve enlightenment. They achieve the enlightenment of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha or Maitreya Buddha or Chenrezig—whatever we want, depending on our deity.

So, if we want to, we can do it one by one, giving after each one, [body, enjoyments and merit] or we can do all three at once. If we don't have much time, we can do it like that.

It is much more elaborately explained in the teachings. This is the essence.

Then we give our enjoyments. We give every enjoyment, for example, our hats. We have many different hats, so we give every one. And money! Don't forget the money in the bank, everything, every piece. We have shoes for inside, shoes for outside, shoes for when we go to the mountains. We have so many clothes. We give everything, every single possession is wish-fulfilling. Whatever they need, they get from that. Every single thing is wish-fulfilling for them. You have to think like that. I saw it in a text. Every single piece, even money in the bank. I'm using an example. Even a tiny needle, we offer everything. Everything is wish-fulfilling for them, for the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless sura beings, the numberless asura beings. The powerful devas kick out the weaker ones.

Even if we only have one rupee, we give them that. This is an unbelievable practice. How many shoes we have to wear at different times, inside and outside, and hats, we offer to the numberless sentient beings. In each realm there are numberless sentient beings, so we offer everything. We dedicate, we give everything away with loving kindness. With each material possession we give, with each small coin of money we give, we collect skies of merit. With the motivation of loving kindness, with each one we collect skies of merit. You have to know that. From each piece.

However many possessions we have, when we give them in the practice of tonglen, we collect unbelievable merit. Making charity to the numberless hell beings, we collect skies of merit; then to the numberless hungry ghosts, we collect skies of merit; then to the numberless animals, we collect skies of merit.

After that, we offer all our merits—all the past merits from beginningless rebirths, all the present merits and all the future merits—we completely offer to the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless sura beings, the numberless asura beings and the numberless intermediate state beings.

[Video extract continues below]

### ***With Karma We Can Transform Our Life***

When somebody dies, the family does puja for them. They either do the practice by themselves or they invite monks or nuns from the monasteries to do pujas, dedicating the merits for the person who has died. In that way, they purify that person's heavy negative karma and, even if they are already born in the lower realms, by purifying the negative karma and collecting merits, they get a higher rebirth. Lamas and meditators can even do *powa*, where they can shoot the consciousness into a pure land.

Even beings reborn in the lower realms, when the family dedicates the merits, it purifies their karma and helps them to get a higher rebirth, maybe in a pure land. Besides for ourselves, we can do like that for our family members—our father, mother, brother or sister—or for other friends, even for our enemy who has died. We can help. It's incredible to do that. Normally, we are so sad when a friend dies but so happy when an enemy dies. But here we do puja for our enemy who has died. That is so good, so special. That is what a bodhisattva does; that is the bodhisattva attitude. That person has given us harm but in return we give them benefit. That is the best.

There are the Fifth Dalai Lama's very powerful words. I have to read them but I don't know them by heart. I'll just introduce you. If somebody like our parents, somebody very kind to us, has died, is gone, if we feel there is nothing we can do, it's not like that. That is because we haven't studied Dharma; we don't know karma. Even saying a mala of OM MANI PADME HUM and thinking of that person saves them from the lower realms. We can pray to Chenrezig and say OM MANI PADME HUM. There are many things we can do. You should know that.

There are numberless things we can do to help. It's good to know that [instead of thinking] "Oh, they are dead. There's nothing to do." Or "They are dead; they've become nonexistent." It's not like that.

I'll just ask one question. Even in one family of five children, they all have different lives, different mentalities, different [personalities]. They are not all the same. With food, one person likes one sort, another one doesn't like it. They don't like the same things. These different lives, different characters, where did they all come from? Why do some have to experience so much unbelievable suffering their whole life, with problems one after the other? Some presidents, some kings, suffer in all kinds [of ways]. Why? Why do they have different lives? That is a good question.

If you don't think there is karma, why? All the different characters, all the different lives, where did they all come from? That is my question. [The children] have different characters from their parents. They don't all have the same mind as their parents; they don't have the same intelligence; they don't have the same compassion. Some don't have compassion; some have unbelievable compassion. There are all kinds even in one family. In one family, one child cries with compassion when they see other people killing animals and insects, while the other child, just by seeing that, wants to kill.

Where did all this come from? Did it come from the rocks or the trees? Did it come from water? No. There is the continuation of consciousness. It's karma, the continuation of consciousness. It came from past lives. Of course, we can change. That's why we meditate; that's why we learn Dharma. We meditate to change ourselves, to get better, to develop our mind toward enlightenment, to become a better human being.

OK. Finito. Now we'll go back.

### ***The Bodhisattva Attitude***

[Video extract continues: [Give Away Your Body, Enjoyments and Merit to Others](#)]

Now, all our merits, all our past, present and future merits we totally give to the numberless hell beings right now. It's so important. They need it. Because they need it, we give it to every one of them. Then, [we give all our merits] to the numberless hungry ghosts and the numberless animals. As you know, there are numberless mosquitoes, numberless ants, everything, and this includes animals we don't like, like rats or something. We give everything.

We give all our merits to the numberless human beings, and we give them to the numberless sura beings and the numberless asura beings.

I'm giving an example. When a person dies, the family members request lamas or meditators, the monks and nuns in the monasteries they go to. They make offerings for them to do prayers and pujas for the person who has died. There are many different practices [for that person] such as *jangwa*, the purification practice to get a higher rebirth, to be born in a pure land. Then, they dedicate the merits. Here, it's the same [in the tonglen practice]. We give all our merits to everybody. It's such a wonderful practice; it's so good that we give everything.

Then, they have everything, whatever they want. The hell beings receive everything they want; the hungry ghosts receive everything they want; the animals receive everything they want; the human beings receive everything they want and the suras and asuras receive everything they want.

Now, what they want is done. The next thing is what they *need*. I already mentioned this before. We think that what they need is to attain a perfect human rebirth, to meet the Mahayana teachings and a perfectly qualified Mahayana guru who reveals the unmistakable path to enlightenment. They [need to] receive the whole path to enlightenment that frees them from gross and subtle obscurations and allows them to complete the whole path. Then, having ceased the gross and subtle defilements, everyone becomes enlightened. All the hell beings, the hungry ghosts, the animals, the human beings and the suras and asuras become enlightened. We can

visualize them becoming Guru Shakyamuni Buddha or Chenrezig or our own deity. Whoever we want. It's our choice. This is great.

When we do that practice, when the practice comes, the old students who have taken a Highest Yoga Tantra initiation and do the six-session guru yoga day and night know there is a long or short tonglen there—giving the body, possessions and merits to numberless sentient beings. If we just recite it “Ooo-ooo-oooh” and then it's finished, it's like going for a walk. We don't even notice it. We don't even notice the prayer if we just do it [quickly] like that. This practice is there in the six-session guru yoga. If we stay aware as we are doing it, it's an incredible practice. It's the best practice.

I've already told you, skies of merit are collected with each [thing we offer]: our human body, our possessions, [our merit]. So many times, skies of merits are collected. Then, it is unbelievable purification. The heavy negative karmas collected from beginningless rebirths, harming others, are purified. Every time we do this practice, so much negative karma is purified. You have to know that. Every time we do this, we become closer to being free from samsara and each time we become closer to enlightenment, to buddhahood. We become closer to buddhahood so quickly. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers]

You must know the benefits. That is the happiest life. If you want to know what the happiest life is, it's this. We might think that having parties is the happiest life, but they are nothing but suffering, the suffering of change. [But with this practice] there are so many times skies of merit and so much unbelievable purification. Each time we get closer to enlightenment. If we do this practice every day, our life becomes unbelievable for sentient beings. [Our life] becomes precious for sentient beings.

I want to say this. When we eat, the food we are eating belongs to sentient beings. We are eating for sentient beings, to serve sentient beings. Do you understand? The clothes we wear belong to sentient beings; we wear clothes to serve sentient beings. It belongs to sentient beings, so we dedicate it for them. Our house belongs to sentient beings; we use it to serve sentient beings.

We are like the servant or the maid and sentient beings are like the master. How do you say, master? Like dog and master. We are a servant to sentient beings. Everything belongs to sentient beings so we use it for sentient beings. Everything the servants of rich people use belongs to the owner. They eat to survive, in order to serve the master. This is exactly same. We use things but it is in order to serve sentient beings. Do you understand?

That is the bodhisattva attitude; that is the bodhisattva conduct. That means we are able to practice the bodhisattva vows. If we have that attitude, we are able to practice the bodhisattva vows, which are the cause to achieve enlightenment. If we want enlightenment, we take the bodhisattva vows.

[End of video extract]

Fred, in Singapore, was a commandant. He was in the army, a commitment? [*Student:* Commander.] Commander, yes, commander. I make everybody a comedian. When a person is a thief, they think others are thieves. They point to everybody and think they may also be thieves. A person with a good heart thinks others are positive. But somebody who is very selfish [thinks], “Maybe this is a spy.” It is like that if you know people's lives. I'm just joking. I'm making everybody a comedian. Sorry. I apologize for that.

It is very easy to think [like this]. It helps. Instead of thinking “This is mine,” and having all the worry and fear of losing it, we think that it belongs to sentient beings and we take care of it for sentient beings. We take care of our house or our things for sentient beings. We take care of them, but we do it for sentient beings. That is the way to live a bodhisattva life. We use them to offer others. We use these things to help sentient beings, to work for sentient beings.

I mentioned Fred. For a long time in this life, he has been in the army as a commitment. [*Student:* Commander.] Oh, commander. His wife suddenly died. She looked young but she suddenly died. I told him to become a monk, so he became a monk. He became a monk and he

usually takes students or people around Mount Kailash in Tibet. I think he has already been many times. There was a person who was sick with cancer, so Fred told him that he must take all the sentient beings' cancer on himself, by doing the tonglen practice of taking. The person accepted it very seriously and he did it, and he recovered from the cancer. That was not so long ago. When you get cancer, you never know when the doctors will say. If they have good luck, they will practice. They will do it. This man recovered from his cancer.

In Tibet, there was a yak-skin boat going over a lake but there were too many people in it and it was about to sink. So, two men dedicated their lives and jumped in the lake. They gave their happiness to the people in the boat and they just jumped. Then, a rainbow came. A rainbow is usually like this [Rinpoche makes the shape of a rainbow with his hands] but it was not that. It was just colorful clouds and they received incredible benefits.

I'm telling you that as one example. This is the same as tonglen. They gave their happiness to the people in the boat so it would not sink; they gave their life for them. But when they jumped in the lake, beautiful, incredible colored clouds appeared.

Kadampa geshe Chekawa always prayed to be born in hell for other sentient beings. The day he was passing away a vision of a buddha's pure land happened around him. He told his attendant, a young monk, "I didn't succeed in my prayer," because he had been praying to be born in hell. Giving up ourselves for other sentient beings with bodhicitta, we never get reborn in lower realms. When he was dying, he had a vision of pure land around, so he told his attendant "I didn't succeed in my prayer." His own wish was to go to hell to help the numberless sentient beings suffering in hell. He decided to suffer in hell for all the sentient beings. So that sentient beings didn't have to be in the hell realm suffering, he would suffer for them. But when he was dying, Kadampa geshe Chekawa had a vision of a pure land.

### ***Transforming Suffering***

[Video extract: [Transform Your Experience of Suffering into Happiness](#)]

Please write this down. I'm not going to talk much blah blah blah. But it is very important, very important. When we have problems, relationship or business problems, or cancer or an incurable disease, we must recite this; we must do this practice. [Choje Gotsangpa said:]

By my experiencing this, may all sentient beings be free from all diseases, spirit harms, negative karmas and defilements, and achieve enlightenment.

We can just repeat this, like reciting OM MANI PADME HUM with a mala, OM MANI PADME HUM, OM MANI PADME HUM. In the same way, we recite, "By my experiencing this, may all sentient beings be free from all diseases, spirit harms, negative karmas and defilements, and achieve enlightenment."

Like reciting OM MANI PADME HUM, we recite this, sitting or walking; it's fantastic. Whether we have cancer or any other curable or incurable disease, even a headache or knee pain, whatever, we make it beneficial for *every* sentient being: for the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless suras, the numberless asuras. There are numberless universes with numberless human beings, as well as numberless sura and asura beings, and numberless intermediate state beings. We are making our condition useful for every sentient being.

Otherwise, we kind of torture ourselves, suffering not only physical pain but also mental pain. We give ourselves so much mental torment. Negative emotions make the condition worse. Even if we didn't have cancer, it can cause us to have cancer. People who are so worried, with a really selfish mind, people who have so much anger, often have a blood clot and die. They have blood pressure. Blood pressure? [*Student:* High blood pressure.] High blood pressure, a blood clot.

Scientists have checked and noticed people who have a lot of anger, the majority have heart attacks. You understand? *Write it down!* I heard that a number of years ago they found out that the majority of people dying of heart attacks have anger problems. Definitely a peaceful mind, with compassion, loving kindness, patience, tolerance and satisfaction [helps us stay healthy]. We



have to learn these things, otherwise we will die with so much suffering. We live our life with negative emotions, causing so much suffering all the time. Even if we live longer, we have so much suffering.

That is why, whether we believe in reincarnation and karma or not, everybody has to be a good human being. That is what we have to practice.

With this practice, we have no obstacles. We use whatever problems, obstacles or sickness we have on the path to achieve enlightenment, to achieve the total cessation of obscurations and the completion of all the realizations. We use everything, every problem, to achieve the path to enlightenment. Everything becomes useful—every sickness, every problem. We use every problem to achieve buddhahood for sentient beings. Whatever problem or sickness we have, we use it for sentient beings. We use it to achieve enlightenment for all the sentient beings.

This Tibetan Mahayana Buddhist practice came from the Buddha; it came from Nalanda. It is so amazing, so incredible, so wise. Making everything in our life, even our problems, into the path to enlightenment is thought transformation. These are the benefits of thought transformation.

[When we do that] our body is called “a pure land.” Amitabha Buddha Pure Land. I mentioned that one. Whether it is very tall or very short, by practicing bodhicitta, thought transformation, our body is called “a pure land.” We use every problem on the path to achieve enlightenment. We use every problem for the happiness of all sentient beings, to bring them to enlightenment. Because of that, there is so much joy; there is incredible happiness in our life. It says that in the teachings that this small body becomes a pure land.

The great Kagyu yogi, Choje Gotsangpa advised us to do this practice, which is his own practice. He almost passed away three times due to having so many lice on his body. He voluntarily kept them, not getting rid of them. He dedicated himself completely for the lice. He almost died three times. Choje Gotsangpa practiced like this. This was his Dharma practice. He bore hardships for sentient beings; he practiced Dharma for sentient beings. If we boast we have done so many years of strict retreat or so many years of prostrations, whatever we say is just moving our lips compared to him. It is nothing, compared to his practice. He bore so many hardships to practice Dharma for sentient beings. Purposely keeping the lice on his body, he almost passed away three times. It’s unbelievable.

[End of video extract]

I saw the life story when I received the *lung*, the oral transmission, from Zigar Rinpoche, at Tso Pema, where Padmasambhava [stayed.] [15] There were two wisdom mothers: Khandro Yeshe Tsogyal was one and Lhatsang Mandarava, the king’s daughter, was the other one. The life story is that she went to the mountain where she met Padmasambhava, and because she had the karma, he gave her the initiation. Then the king was looking for her; he came out and saw this.

The king was very famous, and he [went] down and made a sandalwood fire, which was so hot.

For seven days he piled wood and he put Padmasambhava in the middle to burn in the fire, but what happened was that instead of Padmasambhava being burned, water appeared. There was no water before, but a lake happened around there, and maybe a lotus. When the king heard this, he went down there and then he realized that Padmasambhava was no ordinary being. The king then did prostration and invited Padmasambhava to his palace. The lake is called Tso Pema, and it has continued up to now. It has never dried up.

I went there two or three times. So I got the *lung* from the abbot of the great Drugpa Kagyü monastery, and a few other *lun*gs. This is one practice to do when we have problems. To dedicate for sentient beings, make it useful for all sentient beings. It’s incredible.

I’m supposed to practice it, but sorry, I don’t.

### ***Developing the Bodhisattva Attitude***

[Video extract: [How to Think When Seeing Suffering People and Animals](#)]

Sometimes, when some pain comes, we might think it's not very serious, but also fear that perhaps it's cancer or something. At that time, we should recite a tonglen prayer, such as the short one by Nagarjuna:

Whatever suffering transmigratory beings experience,  
May it ripen on me.  
Whatever happiness and virtue I accumulate,  
May it ripen on others. [16]

I recite this. Even if it is just a very slight pain, the pain stops. If there is eye pain, even not very serious pain, by just remembering the words, the pain stops.

The purpose of thought transformation, *lojong*, is not to stop the pain. It is while we are experiencing a problem, making it useful to achieve the path to enlightenment. We utilize it on the path to enlightenment! We utilize it for all the sentient beings to achieve enlightenment while we are experiencing it. It's not to stop the problem. We have to know the real purpose of thought transformation, but I'm just talking about what happens if we practice. The real practice is to use the problem to achieve enlightenment in order for all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment.

The very best practice, especially when we have sickness and problems, is to take all the problems of all sentient beings on ourselves and let them be free.

I want to tell you one thing. When we walk in markets or on the city streets in India and Nepal especially, we see many suffering animals and human beings. We see beings with [impaired] legs or no legs at all; we see all kinds of suffering. We can't immediately help them get legs. So, what we do is pray for them to not have much suffering in this life, to not be reborn in lower realms and to be reborn in pure land where they can become enlightened or at least receive a perfect human rebirth, meet the Mahayana teachings, meet a perfectly qualified guru, and achieve enlightenment by most pleasing the holy mind of the virtuous friend.

We pray they may achieve enlightenment and we do tonglen, taking all the suffering they are experiencing now and its cause, negative karma. We take it into our heart and let it destroy our self-cherishing thought. We can practice that while we are walking. We can practice that when we see an animal about to be killed in the road or a buffalo being used to farm the land. What do you call the thing for making the land soft? [*Student*: Plow.] Plow. We can practice that when we see a horse carrying a huge load. Horses have to pull [huge loads] even when the weather is so hot. We take all their suffering. When we see them, we take all their suffering and its cause.

Then we pray, as I said before. When we take it, it destroys our self-cherishing thought. Then, we recite OM MANI PADME HUM. It is so good, so good. Even for sick people, for dying people, when we recite OM MANI PADME HUM, if we do it with tonglen, it is so good, so good. There is nothing much we can do to help right away, but we can do tonglen practice. Some people have the karma, so they can get better from us doing tonglen. There are many stories.

OK. I think that's it. I'll finish there.

### ***Verses from Praise to Bodhicitta***

[*Praise to Bodhicitta* says,

[89ab] Remember bodhicitta when you feel down.  
Remember bodhicitta when you are scared.]

As I mentioned before, when we are afraid, remembering bodhicitta is the best. The best! When we are dying, with our last breath, if we remember bodhicitta, that is the best. It is the *best* way of dying. His Holiness often says that to remember bodhicitta is the best way of dying. You have to know that. You must write that down because we all have to die. I think I told the Kopan monks and nuns some years ago to write that down in their book so they will know what to do when they are dying.



This is what you want to do when you are dying. Write it down! This is the practice and meditation you want to do. Write it down! Prepare! You can prepare! You understand? It is *so* important.

We make so many other plans. “I’m going to the moon,” or “I’m going to Mount Everest.” But death can happen anytime. Death can happen anytime. It can happen tonight. We can’t say. We are neither omniscient nor clairvoyant, so how do we know? How do we know when we are going to die? We make plans but *this* plan is so important. “I’m going to Mount Everest,” or “I’m going to Tibet.” Like we are making plans for the next thousand years. But death can happen anytime, so this plan is the most important. It is so important to know what we will do, how we will practice.

I don’t remember whether I explained the Mahayana practice of the five powers near the time of death. We need to use this most fundamental, most important practice! I don’t remember, sorry. At Kopan, the five powers near the time of death are based on bodhicitta. You must get that book and read it. I wrote a book called... What is it called; it’s about death? “How to Help Yourself?” [*Ven. Robina: How to Enjoy Death*, Rinpoche.] *How to Enjoy Death*. I’ve explained there about the five powers near the time of death. That is a Mahayana practice.

That is the fundamental practice, the best practice [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] to apply at the time of death. The five powers are integrated into a whole lifetime’s practice for everyday life, but there are also the five powers near the time of death. I’ve explained it there, so read it. Study it. Write it down in your notebook, in your diarrhea book. It is so important to make preparations for what to think.

There is a tantric practice, *powa*. With *powa*, the [channels] get swollen, hair and pus come out, and then you have to do “hick” many times, so *powa* will not necessarily work. But the five powers are definitely the best practice of bodhicitta. You must write down what to do. Then you are very wise! Suddenly you will find it. When you are dying you will know that this [practice] is what you will do. Then you are very wise.

OK, sorry. Now, I won’t expand on that.

[*Praise to Bodhicitta* says:

[89cd] Remember bodhicitta when you suffer.

Remember bodhicitta when you feel joy.]

Even when we are happy, we must remember bodhicitta. When we are successful, when we have pleasure, when we have so much, when people are praising us and we are totally distracted with attachment to pleasure, we are then unable to practice the Dharma. Our life has become negative. Totally distracted by attachment, by the pleasures of this life, our life is wasted. It doesn’t become meaningful. Therefore, the best thing to do is remember bodhicitta, even when we have pleasure. The best way to make life meaningful is to remember bodhicitta.

For example, say we are staying in a five-star hotel, where there is so much comfort. We dedicate all this comfort to all sentient beings. When we have incredible pleasure, we dedicate it to sentient beings, we give it to sentient beings. Here, when we remember bodhicitta, our pleasure becomes useful for all sentient beings.

Maybe I’ll recite this. [*Praise to Bodhicitta* says:]

[159] If you lack bodhicitta you will not become enlightened

Even if you restrain from wickedness,

Even if you gather together wholesome dharmas,

Even if you meditate on the channels, winds and drops.

Even if we abstain from all the vices and collect all the virtues, even meditating on the chakras, winds and drops—we do all these things—but without bodhicitta we cannot achieve enlightenment. You have to know that. Without bodhicitta none of these things we do will cause us to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings.

[*Praise to Bodhicitta* says:]

[216ab] With bodhicitta one's own purpose is accomplished.

With bodhicitta others' purposes are accomplished.

If we have bodhicitta, we are able to accomplish all the work for ourselves and all the work for others. So, bodhicitta is the best. Even to complete all the work for ourselves, practicing bodhicitta, actualizing bodhicitta is the best. If we have bodhicitta, it's the best. And to complete the work for others, if we have bodhicitta it's the best.

[Then it says:]

[216c] With bodhicitta one gets rid of what causes fear.

If we have bodhicitta we are free from fear, free from danger. If we have bodhicitta, devas, nagas and all those spirits are very happy with us. Without a selfish mind, only cherishing all sentient beings and wanting them to have happiness, the nagas, the spirits, those outside beings who normally harm people, all help us wherever we are. They don't harm us because we have a good heart, by having bodhicitta. This is very common for bodhisattvas.

It is a common story for bodhisattvas to stop a river so they can cross and then the river restarts. I think this is the same for Christians. Saint Francis in Italy wore ragged clothes, black robes with many patches, like the Tibetan meditators, the Kadampa geshe. He led a very simple life, a very humble life but he had great realizations of the path. He achieved that for sentient beings. Many great holy beings are like that.

Saint Francis and his disciples wore ragged clothes. When the priests above them saw them on the road, the priests, wearing very expensive white clothes, all spit on him because he did not look like them. But his level of realization was same as the bodhisattvas, as the Kadampa geshe. He had bodhicitta.

Once, there was water running where his disciples were meditating. It's a place close to Lama Tzong Khapa Institute in Italy. What's it called? [*Student: Assisi.*] Assisi. The water was running from the mountains, and the disciples nearby could not meditate because of the noise of the water. Calling the water "Sister," he said, "Sister, please stop because my disciples can't meditate." Then, the water stopped. You can see the mark where the water ran, but so far, since that time, it hasn't returned. They say that if the water returns, it will be very bad for Italy or something.

Bodhisattvas are like that. Bodhisattvas who have realizations can cause water to stop. Bodhisattva Jamyang Monlam, who is Keutsang Rinpoche in this life, was a bodhisattva in Tibet many lifetimes before. There was a flood coming toward Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, so he wrote on a stone, "If it is true that I have bodhicitta, please turn back." Then the flood water turned back. Western scientists have no idea that it is controlled by the mind. Bodhicitta has the power to control outside elements, to stop danger. So, the water went back.

What was I going to say?

[*Praise to Bodhicitta* says:]

[216cd] With bodhicitta one gets rid of what causes fear.

With bodhicitta an antidote clicks in.

Then it says:

[231] When happy remember bodhicitta.

When sad remember bodhicitta.

When old remember bodhicitta.

When dying remember bodhicitta.

When we are happy, we must remember bodhicitta. When we are suffering, we must remember bodhicitta. When we are old, we must remember bodhicitta. It brings happiness. No matter how old we look on the outside, it makes our life so meaningful. No matter how many years, how many months, how many days, how many hours, how many seconds we have left in this life, it makes it *so* worthwhile for every sentient being. Even if we are dying, we must remember bodhicitta. I told you that.

[*Praise to Bodhicitta* says:]

[296] If one is in possession of bodhicitta  
It is fine if one is sick, fine if one is dying,  
Fine if one is studying and fine if one is meditating;  
One seems to be fine no matter what one is doing.

If we have bodhicitta, everything is good. If we have bodhicitta, it is very good to get sick, because we dedicate the sickness for sentient beings. We utilize it in the path to enlightenment. We take all the sentient beings' suffering, so our life benefits all sentient beings. Even if we die, it's good because dying with bodhicitta is unbelievably beneficial for sentient beings, as I told you. With bodhicitta, if we listen to teachings, it is very good, because we listen for sentient beings.

Sorry, I didn't get to tell you the motivation for listening to these teachings!

When we listen with bodhicitta here in Kopan, we are listening to the teachings for the tiny ants walking around. When we go out, there are the birds and insects and we are listening to the teachings here, doing retreat, doing everything for all the dogs, for all the animals, for all the insects, for all of them. When we do it with bodhicitta, not one is left out. Listening to teachings, meditating, taking the eight Mahayana precepts with bodhicitta, it is for all of them. It is for all for the tiny ants walking around. It is to benefit them. The tiny ants, mosquitoes, the insects walking around, those we never relate to, we feel we have no connection with, if we can feel we have taken the eight Mahayana precepts today for this ant, that is so good. If we can recognize what we are doing in this way.

It benefits everybody, even the people we see. It benefits everybody, even the birds we see when we go around the mountain. We must do that. Our life benefits all those insects. Normally we say, "Sentient beings, sentient beings," but we never relate it to this, "This is a sentient being; I'm a human being." Do you understand? It's not like that.

"Even listening to teachings is good, even meditating is good." Whatever we do is good. If we have bodhicitta, even if you are making kaka and pipi, whatever we do, we do it to benefit sentient beings.

[*Praise to Bodhicitta* says:

[338ab] When you walk, walk with bodhicitta.  
When you sit, sit with bodhicitta.]

If we are walking, we walk with bodhicitta. If we are sitting, we sit with bodhicitta. Did you read the book or not read it? [*Ven. Robina*: Yes, Rinpoche, we did a little bit yesterday.] A little bit. How much? OK.

[*Praise to Bodhicitta* says:

[338bcd] When you sit, sit with bodhicitta.  
When you stand, stand with bodhicitta.  
When you sleep, sleep with bodhicitta.  
[339] When you look, look with bodhicitta.  
When you eat, eat with bodhicitta.  
When you speak, speak with bodhicitta.  
When you think, think with bodhicitta.]

Whatever we are doing, sitting, standing, lying down, looking, eating, speaking, even examining something, we should do it with bodhicitta. Of course, when we eat, we must make sure that is the motivation. Having a bodhicitta motivation is so important, even to visualize making the offering, we must do it with that motivation. "If you eat, eat with bodhicitta. If you speak, speak with bodhicitta. If you think, think with bodhicitta."

It's five o'clock so I'll stop here. One or two minutes more and then I'll stop. I want to maybe still mention one or two things.

***Benefiting Sentient Beings Is Benefiting the Buddha***

I must mention this today. I explained the tonglen practice. With tonglen, when a sentient being, a beggar or someone, asks us for help, to give them money or food or whatever, it's an incredible pleasure to give help in whatever [way possible]. Whether they ask or not, they are the most precious thing, as I described to you, they are the being we receive all the past happiness from, from beginningless rebirths until now, and we receive all the current happiness from and will receive all the future happiness from, including all the realizations, liberation from samsara and enlightenment.

So, this sentient being is so precious. Even the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha we always take refuge in—to be free from the lower realms, to be free from samsara, to be free from lower nirvana and achieve enlightenment—even the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha came from this sentient being, therefore they are so precious, so precious. They are most kind, most dear, most precious; they are wish-fulfilling. Now, to be able to give them something is most precious; we are most happy to give. Numberless Buddha, Dharma and Sangha came from this sentient being.

The Buddha bore so many hardships and collected the merits of wisdom and merits of virtue for three countless great eons for sentient beings. For three countless great eons the Buddha made charity of his holy body to the sentient beings. He practiced morality with many hardships for sentient beings for three countless great eons; he practiced patience for three countless great eons; he practiced perseverance for three countless great eons, and then meditation, concentration and wisdom.

So, for three countless great eons even the Buddha himself made charity of his body and practiced morality with great hardship for this person. Then, he practiced patience, perseverance, meditation and wisdom for three countless great eons, bearing so much hardship for this sentient being. Therefore, to give them one rupee or a little food or some clothing, that is so precious. It is the happiest thing we can do. Even if we can't do like the Buddha did, it is so unbelievably precious to give something. [The Buddha said,]

Under the control of compassion, I completely gave  
My wives, sons, wealth and a great king's reign,  
My flesh, blood, fat, eyes and bodies to anyone.  
Therefore, if you harm them, you harm me.  
Therefore, if you benefit sentient beings, it is a supreme offering to me.  
Harm to sentient beings is the worst harm to me.

The Buddha is talking about his own experience. He gave his extremely beautiful wife and his dear son from his heart. He gave his wealth and a great king's reign. He gave his own flesh, blood and fat—not fart!—his own eyes and all his bodies countless times, being under the control of compassion for that sentient being.

It means all these things that I mentioned, all the parts of the body, even the most beautiful wife and the most heartfelt, dearest son, and all the king's wealth, we offer to sentient beings.

Shakyamuni Buddha said that if we harm that sentient being, we harm him. It's the same thing if [we are Christian and think that] God created the world. If we then harm people, we are harming God. If we can understand that, it brings peace. And if we benefit this particular sentient being, that is the best offering to the Buddha. You have to know that.

Even if we give a glass of water or a candy to a beggar, we give something that is the best offering to the Buddha, and not only one buddha but numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas. That is the best offering. Whatever way we can help, carrying somebody's heavy luggage or something, whatever help we can give. That is the best offering to numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas.

So, the focus is sentient beings; not the Buddha but sentient beings. Taking care, cherishing them, doing whatever we can for them, even if we recite OM MANI PADME HUM and dedicate the merits, that is the best. That is what pleases the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

[End of video extract]

OK, I'll stop here.

[Students offer a short mandala of thanks]

[Dedication prayers]

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, which is merely labeled by the mind, may I, who is merely labeled by the mind, achieve buddhahood, which is merely labeled by the mind, and lead all the sentient beings, who are merely labeled by the mind, to that buddhahood, which is merely labeled by the mind, by myself alone, who is merely labeled by the mind.

[Dedication prayers continue, including the long-life prayer for Lama Zopa Rinpoche]

Good night.

## Lecture 9: December 9



### ***Verses from Praise to Bodhicitta***

[Rinpoche and students recite *Prayers Before Teachings*]

I came late! That is my excuse, my excuse to mother Prajnaparamita. Is the praise finished?

[*Ven. Karin*: Almost.] OK. Sorry, I came late due to laziness.

Kyabje Khunu Lama Rinpoche said [in *Praise to Bodhicitta*]:

[33] For raising your spirits when you are down,  
For removing arrogance when you are flush,  
Nothing in the world compares with the  
Non-deceiving friend that is bodhicitta.

When we are discouraged, at that time if we practice bodhicitta, if we generate bodhicitta, if we have an actual realization, there's no question, it generates happiness. When we are rich, it eliminates pride and arrogance. In that way, bodhicitta is our unbetraying friend, the friend who never cheats us in all existence. It is only bodhicitta.

If we have bodhicitta, even if we don't have a realization but if we are practicing generating it, when we feel discouraged, down, thinking we are hopeless, then the thought of bodhicitta generates happiness. If we are wealthy, even if we don't have a realization, just practicing bodhicitta eliminates pride.

[*Praise to Bodhicitta* says:

[50] Bodhicitta gets rid of nastiness.  
Bodhicitta banishes suffering.  
Bodhicitta frees one from fear.  
Bodhicitta stops bad conduct.]

With bodhicitta, we abandon harming others, we abandon harming ourselves or others. With bodhicitta our suffering is eliminated. Here, it says "taken out" like having an operation in a hospital to take out a cancer or something. With bodhicitta, the suffering comes out or the suffering is taken out. We heal the suffering. With bodhicitta, we are free from fears. With bodhicitta, we stop all negative actions and vices.

[*Praise to Bodhicitta* says:

[90] Remember bodhicitta when your courage begins to wane.  
Remember bodhicitta when you slack off from doing things for others.

Remember bodhicitta when you become lazy.

Remember bodhicitta when you feel run down.]

When our heart is low, when we lack zeal, z-e-a-l, heart strength, when we don't have much courage, we should remember bodhicitta. Any time we feel weak working for sentient beings, like becoming director of a Dharma center—that is another example—when we think we can't do it or we can't take responsibility for working for other sentient beings, for benefiting them [we should remember bodhicitta.]

When we become loose working for others, for example, right now, I didn't make it in time to come here. When we become lazy or depressed, we should remember bodhicitta.

Mentally, we don't need to go around the world looking for a cure for depression. Bodhicitta is here; the teachings on bodhicitta are here. We have the lamrim. We can read the books [on it], the lamrim, the whole thing. We have received teachings on bodhicitta; we have meditated on it, so it's right here. So, when we are depressed, we remember bodhicitta. Do you understand? Keep that in mind. And my usual thing. Write it down! That is very important, otherwise, we have the method right here but then we look in the world, in the sky, in the ocean, for happiness.

[*Praise to Bodhicitta* says:

[125] The philosophy connected with bodhicitta is supreme.

The meditation connected with bodhicitta is supreme.

The spiritual activity connected with bodhicitta is supreme.

The result connected with bodhicitta is supreme.]

Practicing the [philosophy of the] right view is the best when connected to bodhicitta. It's very important; write it down. Then, meditation is best related to bodhicitta and the best conduct is related to bodhicitta. The result, the best is related to bodhicitta. The best result is enlightenment. Even being free from samsara ourselves is not enough; that is not the purpose of our life. Even that is not enough. The purpose of our life is to free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings: to free the numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, suras, asuras and intermediate state beings, to free them from oceans of samsaric sufferings, and not only that, to bring them to peerless happiness, the total cessation of gross and subtle obscurations and the completion of all realizations.

### ***The Purpose of Our Life Is to Repay Others' Kindness***

The word for buddha in Tibetan is *sang gye*. *Sang* means "cessation" and *gye* means "developed" [all the good qualities]. [When we have that we are enlightened.] Many people translate "enlightenment" as "awakening." A simple example is waking from sleep. When we are asleep, we are totally in the dark, never knowing what is happening around us. But from there we wake up and become aware of what is happening around, of the dangers or whatever. We wake up. That is a simple example, but of course here "waking up" means becoming free from not only the gross obscurations, which arhats do to achieve nirvana, but also the subtle obscurations, the leftover delusions. When we cease even the subtle obscurations, we can complete the realizations and achieve the awakened state. "Awakening" or "enlightenment" are synonyms. Both words have the same meaning. Many people translate enlightenment as the awakened state.

So, the purpose of our life is to bring sentient beings to that state. For that reason, in order to do that without the slightest mistake, we ourselves need to achieve the state of omniscience. Even though there are numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas working for sentient beings, that is our duty, our responsibility. Our responsibility is to free all sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment by ourselves alone.

That is our job, our duty. It is the way to repay the kindness of sentient beings. Therefore, we need to actualize the whole path to enlightenment. Therefore, we need to do the three actions of listening, reflecting and meditating on the lamrim, the essence of all the Buddhadharma. *Therefore*, we need to do the listening.

I mentioned this yesterday, but I want to say it again today. What we are doing is [for everybody]; it's for these tiny ants going around looking for food. It's for that. What we are doing right now is for them, to free them not only from the lower realms but from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment. Even the tiniest insects we see going around, even the birds outside, the dogs, the people, whoever we see, it's for everybody. It's for everyone we see—everyone making noise, making a noise expressing their suffering, making an angry noise, making a noise of attachment. It's for *everyone*, for every sentient being, and not only in this world. There are numberless universes with numberless sentient beings, so it's for everyone.

If possible, whenever we do any practice, such as reciting a mala of OM MANI PADME HUM or whatever mantra, whatever we are doing—meditation or anything—at the beginning we must remember that “I'm doing this for everyone.” Otherwise, “sentient beings” becomes just on the lips. Then, even though there are skies of sentient beings, when those around us are angry, because of our obscured, proud mind, we don't practice patience, we don't practice loving kindness and compassion. When we actually meet them, they must be something else [other than the sentient beings we are trying to save]. Maybe they are not even sentient beings! Because all the people we have problems with are not sentient beings, they have to be killed. The sentient beings are in the sky. Actually, we're not sure what sentient beings are!

It becomes like that if we don't do the practice well. Then, when the sound of people living in the center or at home or wherever [annoy us], making us angry, they are to be killed. In the meditation texts, it says “sentient beings” but maybe they are just something in the sky, something like that. That is totally wrong. We have to start the practice with the sentient beings we can see around us. From there [we extend] to the infinite sentient beings. Our meditation, our prostrations, everything we do is intended for them. We have to do that. That is the Mahayana practice. We have to bring that awareness, that compassion and loving kindness, into whatever our practice is, like the seven techniques of Mahayana cause and effect on the basis of equilibrium meditation.

Maybe I'll mention two or three words, then move on.

### ***The Three Capable Beings***

Nagarjuna said in *Precious Garland*,  
[80] A person is not earth, not water,  
Not fire, not wind, not space,  
Not consciousness, and not all of them.  
What person is there other than these?

*Kye bu* (person) actually means “capable person.” There are three types of capable being. The lower capable being [seeks freedom from lower rebirths] by gaining realizations on the perfect human rebirth—how it is highly useful in three ways and difficult to receive again—on the nine-round meditation on impermanence and death and on the lower realm sufferings.

Then, seeing the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, we rely on them to be free from our suffering. Not only that. We rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha to become free from lower nirvana, to not fall down into the lower nirvana but to achieve great nirvana, enlightenment. Then, by protecting our karma, we have the realizations of the graduated path of a lower capable being.

Then, with the graduated path of a middle capable being, we realize how samsara is in the nature of suffering and we develop the renunciation to be free from samsara, and to achieve nirvana, everlasting happiness. That is the middle capable being.

And as a higher capable being we let go of the selfish mind and attain bodhicitta. That is the motivation. Then, we practice the six perfections, the bodhisattva's conduct to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. The higher capable being [works] to free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings: the numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts



and beings of each realm, to free them from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to enlightenment. That is a higher capable being.

### ***Seeing the Suffering of Others Inspires Us to Practice the Dharma***

Then, there is also an “ordinary” capable being, one who is only grasping for the happiness of this life, only following the happiness of this life, like animals, like ants, like snakes, like tigers. There’s only happiness now. A human being with this attitude has a human body but the attitude, the mind, is the same as the insects. There is no difference. To them, there is nothing else, only this life’s happiness, now. Working for this life is just that, to achieve happiness now. Of course, tigers have nothing else to eat but meat. They don’t eat fruit, just meat, so they have to kill, they have to eat other animals alive. Also snakes and many other animals are not vegetarian. There are many animals like deer or zebras who are vegetarian, but many animals which are not vegetarian. For them, staying alive means eating meat, eating other animals alive.

We could be born as a tiger after this human body. With this human body we go to school and university, we gain many high degrees, we become famous. We have so much education in this and that, but then, after we die, we are reborn as a tiger, for example. When we are born as a tiger, we have to eat living animals. That’s our life. That’s the nature of a tiger’s life. We have no choice, chasing after those pitiful animals, like the deer, who do nothing to harm others.

Once I saw on TV, there was a tiger just standing there and there was a deer at some distance, pawing the ground very strongly. This is the only thing they can do to show power. They don’t have any dangerous claws or anything—it’s the tiger who has the claws—so they thump on the ground. That’s all they can do. The tiger was there, but maybe its stomach was full. It didn’t do anything, but usually they stay very quiet in the grass and then, when they are very close, they run at what they aim to eat. Of course, the deer always loses and the tiger eats it.

For myself, for example, if after this I’m born as a tiger, I won’t manifest as a tiger to protect other animals, to help other animals. There was a tiger I once saw on a video helping a small baby deer. It was trying to protect it, and although the deer baby didn’t go near the tiger it also didn’t go away. It was very interesting. It was not afraid. It didn’t go far away but also it didn’t go near the tiger. Once, the tiger pressed its tail, trying to keep it nearby. Sometimes it carried the baby deer. [Rinpoche indicates by the scruff of the neck] It put the deer in the middle of some long grass to save it. I heard that when the tiger went away for some time another tiger came to eat the deer, but the deer was not there. The other tiger came to eat the deer and this tiger was trying to guard it. Then, the other tiger didn’t bother it.

If we are not under the control of karma and delusions, if we are free from that, like the bodhisattvas, we can purposely manifest as an animal to protect other animals. That is different; that is a great holy being’s activity. But when normal samsaric beings like us are born as a tiger, we eat animals to survive. Also, like those birds, I don’t know what you call them, with a big beak, huge skin and wings, then they eat [their prey]. It takes time; it’s amazing.

For example, if we are born as an ant we eat worms. A worm will be attacked by many hundreds of ants. If we are born as a common samsaric being, it is like that. That is our life, so we do like that. We have done that numberless times already. After we were born as a human being, because we didn’t meet and practice the Dharma, we didn’t purify negative karma, we didn’t do Vajrasattva, because of that, numberless times we were reborn as an ant, or a snake or a tiger. We were born as all those fearful animals numberless times. Due to skies of ignorance, we don’t remember our beginningless rebirths.

We have had beginningless rebirths already numberless times. Again, if we don’t meet the Dharma and practice it in this life, if we don’t do purification, purifying negative karma, if we don’t change our mind from a bad heart to a good heart, we will have to undergo numberless changes in the six realms again. Then we will be born as tigers and different animals eating meat, being unbelievably fearful for other animals, killing countless other animals. We will have to be born again like that numberless times. It’s so pitiful.

The reality is like that. Even if we know the word “lamrim” but we don’t practice, we don’t practice awareness, when we see sentient beings we don’t think that. The mind is totally in hallucination, not only ignorant of true existence but hallucinated, differentiating things as good and bad, causing attachment and anger and different delusions, such as pride and so forth, to arise. On the basis of [believing in] true existence, on that base hallucination, the different delusions arise. We live our whole life like that, in piles of hallucination.

It is so important to see this. I mentioned [walking along] the beach as an example. When we go to the market or wherever there are people, we must remember that. When we go shopping in the market, when we are in the street or in a cinema or restaurant, wherever we see many people, we must remember that these people have been suffering in the six realms from beginningless rebirths because they haven’t met the Dharma. And again in this life they don’t have the karma to meet the Dharma, so there is no way to practice. Their understanding is far from the Dharma. Not understanding karma, they are just like animals, only living for this life, nothing else. They will live for however many years, months or weeks—I don’t know—as a human being, and then the lower realms. [They have had lives in] the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm numberless times; they have suffered numberless times. They can’t see the end of samsara. They have no idea. Their mind is totally skies of ignorance, totally dark, without any light.

Thinking like this, compassion *must* arise. We have no choice when we think of their deep suffering in the past and in the future. We have no choice; compassion must arise for them. That inspires us to practice the Dharma. That inspires us to practice the Dharma, to always study the Dharma, the Buddha’s teachings. Then, our mind wakes up more and more and more. The more we study, the more we wake up. The more we learn the correct Dharma, the more our mind wakes up.

Then, we are able to help others; we are better able to benefit others. That is the advantage of studying the Dharma. His Holiness gave general advice recently to many monasteries (although not related [solely] to monks), saying that even if we don’t believe in reincarnation, we should still study the Dharma. Just like science, it can help. His Holiness divides the Dharma into three parts and one part is the science of mind, to help the world, to help others. So, with compassion for others, when we want to help others, we have to develop ourselves.

### ***The Real I and the Snake***

Sorry, that was an expansion of the meaning of *kye bu*, “capable person.” That is the correct translation of *kye bu*. There was another translation from Dharamsala in the old times. I forgot? [Ven. Ailsa: Scope.] Scope. That is OK but it’s not the exact translation of *kye bu*. It does give kind of the meaning of being “capable.” *Kye bu*, sorry, I ran away.

[A person is not earth, not water,  
Not fire, not wind, not space,  
Not consciousness, and not all of them.  
What person is there other than these?]

What I was explaining was an ordinary capable being who only seeks this life’s happiness. Relating [the verse] to ourselves, “is not earth, not water.” “Not earth” means not the body and “not water” means not liquid. Neither is a person fire, wind or space, the other elements. The person is not even consciousness. The person is not [any of the elements separately]—earth, water, fire, wind, space—and not even altogether. The person is not all this.

We can relate this to the “person” or here the “capable being.” We can say “I,” as in “I am.” We can meditate on this relating it to ourselves: the I is not earth, not water, not fire, not wind, not space; the I is not even the consciousness. The I is not any of these separately. And the I is not all these. But then where is the person? “Other than these, where is the person?” Separate from that, other than that, where is the person? Other than all these, where is the I? Where is it separately from that?

One by one, the I is also not the consciousness. All together the I is not even that. And yet, it doesn't exist separately from all these. You can write this meditation down. This is one meditation you can use.

*Kye bu*, the capable being, the I, is labeled. It exists. It exists in mere name. It is merely labeled on the gathering of all the six elements, the consciousness being the last one. That is the valid base. The I, the person, is merely imputed on that. That is not the I! That is not the person! But it is merely imputed because of that. Do you understand?

Now, with this analysis, we are examining what the I is. The person, the I, is not this, not this, not this. It is not consciousness. Earth is not the I, water is not the I, fire is not the I, wind is not the I, space is not the I, consciousness is not the I. All together, they are not the I. Now the opposite; the I is not the opposite. We meditate like that. Even all together they are not the I.

That is one meditation, based on Nagarjuna's words, on Nagarjuna's science, looking at the ultimate nature of the I, the person.

I'll give you one more quote that gives the same flavor. The meaning is basically the same but it presents a slightly different way of meditating on emptiness. This is [from *Sacred Words of Manjushri* by the Fifth Dalai Lama]:

Due to the defective view of the heavy darkness of ignorance,  
The way your body and mind appear to you is like a variegated, coiled rope.  
From the fear of a poisonous snake due to thinking "I"  
Comes the terror of the three [types of] suffering.

[This is] said by the Fifth Dalai Lama. The words are very powerful, very tasty. Due to the heavy darkness of ignorance, the defective view, we see our body and mind as like a coiled rope. The way it is coiled, with the colors mixed, we mistake it for a fearful poisonous snake, causing us fear. I don't know what the word is. Terrible? I have a very limited English vocabulary. Terrifying? When we meet a tiger we are so scared? [*Student*: Frightening?] Not just frightening. Very strong. [*Ven. Robina*: Terror.] Maybe terror, thank you. Terror, the "terror of the three sufferings." Terror happens due to the main cause, dark ignorance. The example is something very heavy and dark, like the nighttime sky with no moon, no stars, nothing, not only that but foggy. "Due to the defective view of the heavy darkness of ignorance."

[Video extract: [The Real "I" That Gets Angry Does Not Exist](#)]

The example used here is believing our body and mind is like a piece of different-colored rope we see on the road curled like a snake. *Nang tshil la* means the way it appears to us. The body and mind are like a coiled piece of different-colored rope. That is the appearance. Because of the way it is coiled and the different colors, because it is unclear in the evening light and we don't have clear eyes, we think it is a snake. We label it "snake" and we believe our label. Then, we get frightened. There is no snake anywhere there on any of the strands of the rope, but we label "snake" because in the evening time, at dusk, because of the different colors and the way it is coiled, it appears as a snake and then we are terrified.

Like that, this body and mind are not I. They are not I at all. I told you this yesterday or the day before yesterday. But we label "I" on that and believe that is the I, just as we label "snake" on the rope and the fear comes. It is not the I. It is the base to be labeled "I" but it is not the I.

Do you remember I mentioned M? How there is the base to be labeled "M" and "M" is what is to be labeled. *Tag zhi* means the base to be labeled, and M is what is labeled. They are not separate but they are two different things. Remember I said that the I and the aggregates are two different things but they are not separate. We must know that, otherwise we will get caught in the hallucination, the wrong concept. We believe the body and mind are the I, then all the worries and fear arise. From that hallucination, that wrong concept, that ignorance, all the fear comes.

Then, the quote says, "From the fear of a poisonous snake due to thinking 'I' comes the terror of the three types of suffering." Believing that this is the I, then the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering arise. All the sufferings of samsara come in these three. From beginningless rebirths up to now we have been suffering. Who made

us suffer? This wrong concept, ignorance, believing our body and mind are I. Due to that wrong concept, we have suffered from beginningless rebirths. And if we don't realize emptiness in this life, we will suffer again without end. Our wrong concept, ignorance, makes us suffer in the same way that labeling "snake" on a piece of coiled rope causes us all the fear. We can't find the snake; it's not there. Like that, this real I is a hallucination. That is a very good meditation.

There are many different examples of how to meditate on emptiness, but some I don't know. I received so many teachings but due to laziness I didn't study. I'm just giving you some to meditate on. The easy ones!

That wrong concept, ignorance, makes us experience the three types of suffering: the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering. It has made us suffer like that from beginningless rebirths [and will continue to make us suffer] if we don't study about emptiness and realize emptiness, realize the two truths. [There is that] danger. Therefore, we need to study. We need to meditate.

I'll stop here.

### ***Emptiness Is Not Nonexistence***

I want to tell you this. When we meditate, as I mentioned many times, focusing on the valid aggregates, when we think how at the very beginning the I is created by the mind, how the I is merely imputed, we see that the I is nothing other than that, nothing! It is not even an atom more than that. Even an atom [of real I] doesn't exist. The I the size of an atom would be a hallucination. What the I is, is just merely labeled by the mind. But the I is not nihilism, something that totally doesn't exist. It's not that. The meditation is not that. It is *like* that, but it is not that exactly. The I exists; it exists in mere name. It is most unbelievably subtle how the I exists.

All the rest of phenomena—enlightenment and hell, samsara and nirvana, everyday happiness and problems—everything that exists is like that, unbelievably subtle. Everything is empty. Saying everything is empty does not mean nonexistence. It doesn't mean everything is nonexistent. I'm not talking about that. I told you that already. Everything is empty but everything doesn't *not* exist. It is empty of existing from its own side; it does not exist by itself. It is empty of that. It exists in mere name, merely labeled by the mind, but it does not exist by itself at all.

While the I exists, it is empty. This unifies emptiness and existence. We have to get that idea in our mind, otherwise we are lost. If we can't put them together we are lost. We will be unsure whether our meditation is on emptiness or not. We are lost if we can't come to this point, understanding how the two truths exist, how the two truths are related to each other, how they are unified with each other, how they are not contradictory to each other.

[When we get angry there seems to be a real I.] For example, when we have a meeting and people criticize us, then we get angry. Our ignorance creates our emotional I, which is not there, the truly existent I which is not there, the real I which is not there. We have been talking about this for so many days. That real I is not there. Our ignorance has created the real I, and then anger comes.

As we are getting angry, if we could suddenly go back to the nature of the I, how the I is merely labeled by the mind, if our mind could go inside and check how the I is merely labeled by the mind, the anger would be gone. We should concentrate on how the I is merely labeled by the mind, using the reality, instead of being distracted by ignorance, thinking "He is criticizing *me*, criticizing this real I," and then getting angry. If we could meditate on the I that is merely imputed by the mind, the anger would be gone! There would be no space for anger because that view is correct. There is no reason to get angry.

With the emotional I, with the real I, there is anger. As Lama Tsongkhapa mentioned, from that we discriminate good and bad and then attachment and anger arise. Then, we create all the sufferings.

As a meditator, we are an inner scientist. Meditating on emptiness, the I is merely labeled by the mind; it is a subtle dependent arising. That understanding eliminates anger. And the same with strong attachment, with the strong grasping mind. Again, seeing how our I is merely labeled by the mind, meditating on that, attachment is gone, the strong grasping attachment that creates problems for us and for many people, is gone.

Not only that, meditating on how the I exists in mere name also eliminates ignorance. From the ignorance believing in the emotional I, the real I, by now seeing how it exists in mere name, it becomes totally the opposite. It is like putting water on the fire. It's the remedy to ignorance. It harms the ignorance; it destroys the ignorance. The meditation on emptiness becomes the remedy to pride and all the delusions.

When we look at the mistakes of a person we have so much attachment for, we lose that attachment. We look at it as impure, with mistakes, and then we lose the attachment. When we meditate on patience, anger goes away. For each different delusion there are different methods, but the meditation on emptiness cuts everything. It is the antidote to all the delusions. It is so important to meditate on emptiness, because it negates all the delusions. Please understand this. It's so easy.

Then, I'll mention one thing. Sorry. I was supposed to stop before. How many minutes? [*Ven. Robina*: Two minutes.] Two minutes! While I'm talking to you, it finishes in a few seconds.

Aryadeva said in *Four Hundred Stanzas*:

[136] When dependent arising is seen

Confusion will not occur.

Thus every effort has been made here

To explain precisely this subject. [17]

This is talking about subtle dependent arising, merely labeled by the mind. The I exists because there is a valid base, and because there is a valid base to label the I on, that is why the I exists. It is due to that valid base there is the merely labeled I, the merely imputed I.

That is subtle dependent arising. *All* phenomena are like that! Of course, it doesn't appear to us like that. Everything appears to us as truly existent, but that is wrong. That is the hallucination!

When we think of subtle dependent arising, how everything is merely labeled by the mind, we realize how everything is empty, how nothing exists from its own side. That is so important. I mentioned one meditation on the merely labeled I. This quotation was found in Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Stanzas*. One meditation is to always be aware of how everything is merely labeled. When we are eating, we eat merely labeled food; when we are walking, we do merely labeled walking on the merely labeled road. It applies to everything we do. It means everything is empty. It comes to that conclusion.

Then [*Dhammapada* says]:

Even though birth and death happen,

There is no birth and death.

For one who realizes this,

This concentration is not difficult to find.

Even though birth and death happen, there is no birth and death. For us, birth is real birth, death is real death. Birth and death are truly existent, existing from their own side, existing by nature, real [birth and real] death. In reality, there is no birth and death. That means real birth and real death, real ones that exist from there, do not exist. [Thinking they exist], we are so afraid.

Some are not afraid because of the good heart. Even though they don't believe in reincarnation, because they have a good heart, thinking of others, they aren't afraid. Then of course, those believing in reincarnation, even without bodhicitta but with a good heart, are not afraid of death. [They are confident they] will go to a pure land, with all the benefits, all the qualities of a pure land, so they are so happy to go there. As I mentioned, without worry or fear, when we are sure we will be born as a human being again, we are happy at death.

And the last one, the third way there are no worries is that we know we won't get reborn in lower realms. Most people, even animals, are afraid of death. We always try to stay alive, to not die. We always put effort into not dying. When they get a little bit of time off from their jobs, people in the city go jogging for hours—in order to not die. All the time they are on bicycles, going around for hours, in order to not die. Have you got the idea?

In reality, there is no such thing as real birth and death. It's not saying there is no birth and death, but there is no *real* birth and death. You understand? The verse says, "This concentration is not difficult to find."

I just read this last verse from the [*Dhammapada*]:

[5:62] The fool worries, "I have sons, I have wealth,"

Indeed, when he himself is not his own,

Whence are the sons, whence is wealth?

People in the world believe they have a son, they have a child. Then, their child, their son or daughter has a child. What do you call them? Grandchildren. Wow! Grandchildren are something real. Do you understand? "I have wealth." "I have a billion dollars, a zillion dollars." "I have a son. I have wealth." I have a real son; I have real wealth. The Tibetan, *ji pa*, doesn't mean "child," but we use "child" as an example. The meaning in this context is how an ordinary being who hasn't realized emptiness completely believes the hallucination to be real. They believe every hallucination is real. Not realizing it is a hallucination, they think every hallucination is real, that it is a real "child."

Then, just like a child, when we build a house of sand [in a sandpit] and some other child destroys that, we cry. It's nonsense. Believing all the hallucinations to be real is like that child who believes the sand house to be real. Even the I does not have an I. There is no real I. There is no real I as we believe it to be. So, "Whence are the sons, whence is wealth?" There is no real I, so how is it possible there is a real son and real wealth? There is no real money.

[Then, *Dhammapada* says:]

[20:278] "All things are not-self."

When one sees this with wisdom,

One turns away from suffering.

This is the path to purification.

If there is no I, how can there be mine? If there is no real I, there is no real mine, no real body, no real mind; it does not exist. The ignorance that believes there is a real I and real mine ceases by meditating on emptiness. When that finishes, we have no rebirth in samsara. We don't get reborn in samsara. We are then forever free from the oceans of samsaric suffering: the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering.

OK, finito. I think that is enough on emptiness. I just talked a little bit but there is vast study by the monks and nuns in the monasteries and nunneries. They study for many years.

[End of video extract]

[Mandala offering and dedication prayers]

OK, thank you. Please enjoy!

[Long-life prayer for Lama Zopa Rinpoche]

## Lecture 10: December 10



### ***Does Alzheimer's Exist?***

[Rinpoche and students recite *Prayers Before Teachings*]

As I mentioned before, due to ignorance, the root of samsara, we hold the I and aggregates as truly existent. We belong to Sera Je, but there are also Sera Mey, Ganden and Drepung that are monasteries within Lama Tsongkhapa's tradition in Tibet. From Mongolia and Ladakh, when many learned, holy beings went to Tibet in the early times to study extensive Buddhist philosophy, they went to Sera, Ganden or Drepung to study. Many became holy beings, very learned, and they benefited the countries they came from so much.

In particular, in Mongolia, there were many extremely learned geshe, highly learned in the five major texts. I forgot the name in English. *Tsema Namdrel, Pramanavarttika* or something. *Prajnaparamita, Madhyamaka, Vinaya*: the extensive teachings on the Vinaya, the thirty-six vows, then two hundred and fifty-three gelong vows and the vows of the gelongma, the fully ordained nun, which has three hundred and sixty-three or three hundred and sixty-five, something like that. Then, the *Abhidharmakosha*, the evolution of the worlds and the details about the mind and mental factors. And *Tsema Namdrel, Valid [Cognition]*. I forgot the Sanskrit name. It doesn't matter. In the *Pramanavarttika*, there are four subjects and I think the second one proves how the Buddha is a reliable person, as well as the logical proof of reincarnation.

Then there is tantra. In the monastery it depends on the student. Many study tantra as well. When they have finished the examinations, they go to the Upper Tantra College or the Lower Tantra College, both founded by disciples of Lama Tsongkhapa, each with a slightly different tradition, but both are basically the same. There the students have to learn the root tantras and memorize and recite many hundreds of pages. There are many things they have to memorize, learning sand mandalas, the meanings and all that. And there are many other things.

A student who has a long enough life can become a perfectly qualified Mahayana teacher, able to reveal teachings of the Lesser Vehicle path and the Greater Vehicle path, the Mahayana. They can reveal all the sutras and tantra; they can reveal Kriya Tantra, Charya Tantra, Anuttara Tantra and Maha-anuttara Tantra, the different levels of mind the Buddha taught. After they become a perfectly qualified teacher, if they have a long enough life, they can become the regent of Lama Tsongkhapa, sitting on the golden throne in Tibet. That is a very profound thing to do. It's



incredible. The benefit to the world of being fully qualified to benefit sentient beings is unbelievably great.

Even far from Tibet, in India, Ladakh, Khunu and Mongolia, scholars went to Tibet in the past. I heard there were many learned teachers, geshe, in Mongolia even without going to Tibet. I heard there were a hundred geshe who had memorized Lama Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo*, the *Great Lamrim*, by heart. So unbelievable.

So, there are the Upper and Lower Tantra Colleges, Ganden, Drepung and Sera Mey and Sera Je. We belong to Sera Je. Each one has an altar, and the great holy beings wrote the five root texts. They are basically the same, but there are a few differences in the answers.

Ours is Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen, an incredible great being. I think he wrote both sutra and tantra. He explained that the root of samsara is ignorance, holding the I as truly existent while it is not. And also the aggregates. We have five aggregates at the moment, so holding those five as truly existent, existing by nature, as "real" in ordinary language, that is also the root of samsara.

Due to not realizing emptiness, we have been suffering from beginningless time in samsara, from beginningless rebirths up to now, in the oceans of hell suffering, the oceans of hungry ghost sufferings, the oceans of animal suffering, the oceans of human being suffering, the oceans of sura being and asura being suffering. We don't have omniscience; we don't even have ordinary clairvoyance. We can't see past and future. Even so many things we have done just in this life we have forgotten. Something happens, like a story, but we forget; we don't remember.

Somebody who has bad memory like me forgets so many things. We don't remember what we ate yesterday. People who have Alzheimer's don't recognize their parents, their brothers and sisters; they don't even recognize their own name. That's the degeneration of the mind. There are so many people like that in the world. Then, there are people developing more awareness. More understanding.

There are those who remember past and future lives, remembering more and more, deeper and deeper. When they progress, when they clean their obscurations and purify, their memory [improves]. I don't remember by heart, but people who actualize the path of merit and path of preparation can remember past and future lives. Then, there are the five clairvoyances.

There are the five Mahayana paths to achieve enlightenment and the ten bhumis. It's unbelievable. I don't remember all the names.

[When we progress through the paths,] developing the mind, we see more and more past and future lives, hundreds and thousands and then millions. We can fully develop the mind because the mind has buddha nature. That is why we can develop it.

A mirror is not one with dirt; even though it is extremely covered with dust, we can clean it. In the same way, by meditating and actualizing the path, we can clean all the obscurations. We can clean all the dirt, all the obscurations. Then, we will be able to see our past lives and future lives. All the things that ordinary people don't know about, we can see. We have to use our intelligence, our mind. In the ordinary world, without meditation, people's minds degenerate and they forget.

With Alzheimer's, we even forget our name. There are other people who are really clever and who clean the mind through meditation and with so many practices, cleaning the obscurations and actualizing the path. Then, they can realize more past and future lives and they can read others' minds, telling others about their past lives. There are people who can develop their mind and go up and there are some who go down.

We can believe that Alzheimer's doesn't exist. If Alzheimer's doesn't exist, that means we don't exist, the world doesn't exist, Kopan doesn't exist, nothing exists. We don't have parents because we don't exist. Because we don't exist, we don't have money. I just brought this up to show you have to use your intelligence. Reincarnation is like that.

***We Can't Disprove Reincarnation Just Because We Can't See It***



In the early Kopan courses, not here in the gompa but in the tent, for many years we spent a few days meditating on the mind, maybe three days, because people had come from the West, a totally different culture, where most thought the brain was the mind, that there was no separation from the brain. That would mean the mind had to be physical, that it was not formless. The mind is shapeless, formless, colorless, able to perceive objects, but they didn't know that. At that time [it was thought that] the brain was the mind.

Then, quite a number of years ago His Holiness started meeting with scientists, and through the discussions, they started to realize the mind is separate from brain. Of course, the mind depends on the brain, but it is separate. Mind is not brain; brain is not mind. Many years ago, they analyzed this through discussions and debates.

What was I saying? Back in the early Kopans, we did a lot of discussion and meditation, looking at how today's mind comes from yesterday's mind. You can say the same thing: that this second's mind comes from the previous second's mind.

This hour's mind comes from yesterday's mind and yesterdays' mind comes from the past year's mind. It's the continuation of that. And then, when we go back to the mind in our mother's womb, the first moment we were conceived in our mother's womb [and the moment before that], people who had a very clear mind could remember their past life in Tibet. They could even see the *dong nga*, the wooden churn ringed with brass used to make Tibetan tea by mixing butter, salt and tea. They could remember that. I think maybe they could see things in the kitchen, such as some people, although not everything that happened. This was because the mind had become very quiet and subtle during the course.

If we don't have our own experience of seeing past and future and conclude that other people are wrong, that past lives don't exist, that is so silly. It is like not accepting somebody who has more education than we do, like a teacher. It might just be somebody who knows more about common things, like how to clean or how to cook. Even in the West, people even learn how to be a waiter. It's good. I think California waiters [greet people], asking how they are when they arrive, and then talk about the weather or something. Then, at the end, they say "Have a nice day. Thank you." They were taught how to make the customers happy. So, it's not just others' education we should accept; it's more than that. If we don't accept that other people can remember past lives, that means we shouldn't accept other people who have more education than we do. We should only accept those with [the same degree] of education.

Because we can't remember past lives, that means nobody should be able to remember them. That's what this means. Because we don't know, nobody can know. [If we accept that], we don't need to accept any teacher. When we don't go to university, to college, to primary school, when we don't go to kindergarten, when we don't go to learn what others know, we don't accept that. It becomes like that.

I want to tell you one thing. The seed of a bodhi tree is very small but if it is planted the tree grows so big. The branches are huge. In hot countries, in India, you can see it from the train. The branches can cover five hundred horse carriages, but the seed is so small. [Once, when somebody did not believe the power of karma] the Buddha [used this as an example,] saying, "I know that reincarnation is true because I know past and future lives. I see them even though you don't."

Like the Buddha, there are many people who can see past and future lives. There are many people who know the future, who can predict it correctly. Not necessarily high lamas. There are many people, young and old, who can see the future correctly. It becomes very funny to deny this because we ourselves can't see it. It's very strange.

### ***Being Used by Others***

I'm going to recite these words today by Nagarjuna, a second buddha, who propagated in the world the middle way the Buddha taught, the Prajnaparamita. He wrote the six collections of wisdom texts with his extensive experience. In *Precious Garland*, he says,

[483] May I always be an object of enjoyment  
For all sentient beings according to their wish  
And without interference, as are the earth,  
Water, fire, wind, herbs and wild forests.

“According to their wish and without interference” means may sentient beings use us without any resistance blocking that, however they want. That is what is directly mentioned here, but I think we can condense it to wishing sentient beings to always use us completely, however they want.

The earth is used to make fields to plant crops for food so we can live. It brings wells for water as well as roads, tracks for trains, airports for planes. On the earth we build houses and factories, all kinds of things, whatever we need. The earth is used in so many different ways for people’s comfort and happiness. In the same way, may we ourselves be useful for sentient beings in whatever way they want for their pleasure and comfort.

This is Nagarjuna’s practice. Nagarjuna gave this advice on the basis of what the Buddha taught. Some people say this only comes from Nagarjuna, that the Mahayana teachings are not the Buddha’s teachings. A long time ago, a professor told me this was not taught by the Buddha, but by Nagarjuna. In his talks, even His Holiness says that [this attitude is wrong].

Water is used for drinking, for swimming and so forth. In so many different ways, water is used by sentient beings for their comfort. In the same way, may we ourselves be used by sentient beings, however they want. Fire is used in so many different ways for sentient beings’ happiness, not only for cooking and burning. May we ourselves be used in so many different ways by sentient beings for their happiness, for their pleasure.

I told you the night before how one sentient being is so precious because of their kindness. I gave the reasons, so I’m not going to repeat this again and again. They are so precious. The Buddha, Dharma and Sangha came from this mosquito, this insect, who is most precious, most kind, most dear, wish-fulfilling for us. All our happiness came from them, so they are wish-fulfilling for us. I told you this.

On the basis of that, we can understand this practice, otherwise we might think this is a crazy thing. I already explained to you the whole thing, how they are so precious. Remember I said, helping sentient beings, even in a small way, like offering a seat to somebody who needs it on the bus or train or carrying somebody’s heavy load or offering a cup of water or tea or a candy, something small, such a thing makes others happy. It’s a small thing, but it makes another sentient being happy. That is the best offering to the numberless buddhas and numberless bodhisattvas, because for three countless great eons Guru Shakyamuni Buddha practiced the merits of wisdom and merits of virtue for this sentient being, this mosquito or this person asking our help, this lame person, this beggar.

The Buddha did this for all sentient beings, including us, so this sentient being was there. The buddha practiced for three countless great eons making charity of his body, his limbs. He gave charity of his body to the tiger [who was too weak] to eat. He cut himself with a plant and produced blood, letting the tiger and her four children slowly drink it and then eat his body. By eating the Buddha, they made a connection. When they became human beings, they became monks in Sarnath in India, becoming the Buddha’s first disciples, the five monks the Buddha turned the first wheel of Dharma for. Those five were the five tigers.

It’s mentioned in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life*, at the very end of the benefits of bodhicitta, the last word is a bodhisattva makes prayers to have a good connection with even the sentient being who harms them, benefiting them in return for their harm. There is a verse, but I don’t remember it, on the very last benefit of bodhicitta.

[[1:36] I bow down to the body of those  
In whom the sacred mind is born.  
I seek refuge in that source of joy  
Who brings happiness even to those who bring harm.]

Even if we haven't made the connection, if we harm a bodhisattva, the bodhisattva benefits us in return; they make prayers to benefit us. When the Buddha gave his holy body to the tiger, what then happened was, due to that connection, they became the five monks who were the first disciples in Sarnath, the ones the Buddha turned the first Dharma wheel for. He revealed the four noble truths to be free from samsara.

So, this one sentient being—this mosquito, this snake, this person we dislike or who gets angry and criticizes us, who abuses us—the Buddha made charity of his limbs for them for three countless great eons. Then, he practiced morality with great hardships for this sentient being. That includes us and it includes this sentient being. Then he practiced patience for three countless great eons. then perseverance, then meditation, then wisdom. The Buddha did that. I've already read the quotation the other day how the Buddha gave his flesh and blood, including his beautiful wife and many things, in order to make charity to sentient beings.

So of course, if we benefit [somebody], if we give them a small help, it is a great offering to the numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas, not only to one bodhisattva but to the numberless bodhisattvas. It is a great offering to them, the best offering to them, something most pleasing to them. Even if we don't do so many water bowls or other offerings, just giving a small help by giving food to ants or worms, whatever, that is most pleasing to the numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas; it is the best offering to the numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas.

### ***The Time of Death***

We should remember that every day. We should practice that mindfulness. Carve this in your brain or your heart! Attachment doesn't come from the brain; it comes from here. [Rinpoche points to his heart] Compassion doesn't come from the brain; anger doesn't come from the brain. Compassion and loving kindness come from there. It's true. I'm talking from my experience. They don't come from the belly, the feet, no, from the heart. That is very important knowledge the West must know. It is the heart, but not the bumping heart. At the center of the heart chakra, inside, there is the indestructible seed, half red, half white, the size of a bean. That is the central place of the mind.

Why does anger come from there? Why do patience, compassion, loving kindness come from there? That is according to experience.

Did you lead them in the death evolution meditation? [*Ven. Robina*: We did.] How many times? [*Ven. Robina*: Once.] Half. Half? I'm joking. Because you went through the meditation, you understand.

After the breath stops, that is just the gross death. Even without meditation, natural death can last up to three days, although not a sudden death like in a car accident. There are twenty-five absorptions, and the consciousness abides in the indestructible seed. When that leaves the indestructible seed, at that time there is the subtle death.

I tell you, that is the time in Tibetan monasteries when many meditators meditate. When they die, when the breath stops, they meditate. There are many who even sit up with nothing supporting them. There is no smell and they look very bright, radiant. I've seen meditators meditating like that for however many days they had planned. I'm talking about natural death. Some meditate lying down like the Buddha, in the snow lion posture with two legs stretched out. Many die in that way, in the Buddha's lying position, like the position of a snow lion. Many meditate during that time.

One of Lama Tsongkhapa's regents, not the previous one, who was Rizong Rinpoche from Ladakh, but even before that, the Ganden Tripa who passed away, he was very learned and very pure. He led a pure life; he had pure conduct, living in the vows, meditating with pure view. When he died, he stayed in meditation for eighteen days. With Kyabje Ling Rinpoche, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's guru, I think it was fifteen days.

In the monasteries, there are many monks who are ordinary monks, not learned at all, who don't know much Dharma, who don't debate. Normally, people don't respect them or regard

them as special. But when they die, they die in meditation. When they die, everybody is so amazed. Then, everybody praises them so much. I think, even though they don't know much, they are not expert in debate, they are very good in their daily practice, in keeping samaya with the guru, in keeping their commitments. They are not learned but they are very good people, very good practitioners. That is how they can meditate as they die.

Even though people don't think they are special, there are signs as they die that show they lived a good life, with pure Dharma practice. There was a monk in Sera who was famous for being angry. I might have already mentioned him. After a few minutes talking with him, he would always get angry. He was famous for that, and everybody was scared of him, but when he died he stayed in meditation for some days. Then, everybody was so amazed; they highly praised him.

Sometimes, somebody like that can seem like an ordinary person, looking ordinary, getting angry, but actually they can be a holy being. On the outside they act ordinary. There are many like that, who look very ordinary but in reality are not necessarily like that. Some are extremely learned but many are ordinary.

There was a monk in Tsawa Khangtsen, Lama Yeshe and Lama Lhundrup's *khangtsen*. (*Khangtsen* means a college or house where a small group from the country you belong to stay.) There was a monk, I don't know his name, who was not an expert in debate or anything like that. He did puja for Tibetan families. They invited him to do puja—there are many monks who do this—and he was always back by five o'clock. He had many students, little monks, so of course when the teacher went away they played. When he came back he would beat them—maybe not in the West but in Tibet this is a common thing. In this house the monks were beaten by the teacher, then in the next house the master returned from puja and beat them again. So, those little monks were always crying. I heard that.

I heard this monk was very sincere, very devoted to his gurus. He died in meditation, which really surprised the other monks. He had received initiations like Guhyasamaja, Heruka and Yamantaka, and the story is that he never missed his commitments. He was not learned but he was a very devoted and sincere monk. Because of that, when he died, he died in meditation, meaning it was impossible for him to go to the lower realms and he possibly could have attained a pure land.

What you have to understand is that for common people, when the breath stops, that is death, but it just gross death, not the end of life. It is said in tantric texts that for common people, even animals, who die naturally, the consciousness stays there for three days. Of course, for the meditator it is different. The tantric texts mention that.

I had a dog called Om Mani Padme Hum. Each time his name was called, it planted the seed of the whole path to enlightenment. But, of course, people didn't call him Om Mani Padme Hum. They called him Mani—not “money” but Mani. The dog bit Sogyal Rinpoche, Geshe Ngawang Dakpa, and some of our students, Pete and Massimo, when they went to pet him. The dog died while I was here in Nepal. Holly was taking care of him. Holly left the dog as it was because it didn't look dead. It looked very natural, like it was sleeping, not with its tongue hanging out, not very sad. It looked like it was sleeping and there was no smell for three days. After three days, then I think blood came, like with a period.

What happens is that [when the mind finally leaves the body] blood from the mother comes up from the navel. In the West they say the seed is from the testicles, but the seed comes from here. [Rinpoche points to his forehead] When they meet, there is darkness, then when they split, after that, there is the clear light. The white one, the seed, goes down, and the red blood comes up, and then subtle consciousness leaves from that. As soon as the consciousness leaves the indestructible seed, the intermediate state being begins. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] So, this sign happened for the dog; blood came out after three days.

What came out of the nose? [*Ven. Holly*: Blood.] I see. Usually, if blood comes, then the white seed comes out, but this doesn't necessarily always happen. It depends on the health. Both don't

necessarily happen. The blood or the white seed happen depending on whether it's a male or a female. Either both or one can happen.

The sign of death is that the smell starts after that. Then, the face changes. You have to know that. If people in your family die, that is the sign of death. There is hospital, what do you call that? The English word. [*Ven. Ailsa*: Hospice.] No, no, the hospital has decided they are dead but that is not death. That is the gross death, not the subtle death.

Up to three days [after the breath stops], the consciousness is there. But after the consciousness leaves, the sign is that smell starts. And if you touch the body and the skin stays up, then that person is dead. If the skin goes down, it means the consciousness has not left yet. In Australia or Italy, somewhere, they asked the government if they could leave the body for three days, but I don't know if they got permission or not.

There are many practices in sutra and tantra, such as *jangwa* to purify the person's karma. Unbelievable! To not get reborn in the lower realms and to get higher rebirth, to be born in pure land.

### ***Cherishing Others More than Ourselves***

This was a side talk.

[Nagarjuna's verse says we should be used like the earth, water, fire and so forth.] The wind is used in so many ways by sentient beings for their happiness and comfort, such as the air we use for breathing. In so many ways it is used for the happiness and comfort of ourselves and of other sentient beings. Medicine is used by sentient beings for their happiness in so many ways, to be used like that. And firewood is used in the monasteries. I don't know. Maybe it's not so economical, as the monks waste wood. They're very relaxed; they just let it burn, not controlling it very much.

Like all this, we should allow ourselves to be used by sentient beings for their happiness and comfort. "Without any resistance, without any interference." That is the bodhisattva's attitude, the bodhisattva's practice.

Next Nagarjuna said [in *Precious Garland*],

[484ab] May I be as dear to sentient beings as their own life.

And may they be even more dear to me.

What it is saying is that just as we cherish ourselves, we should cherish sentient beings. "Cherish" means like how we now cherish our life as the most precious. Even though there are numberless sentient beings, numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas, even we have our father and mother, we still think this I, our life, is the most important thing, the most precious thing.

This is so important. Now, we think the same for the numberless sentient beings, for anybody. Just as we cherish our life, we cherish *all* sentient beings. We cherish every sentient being in the six realms—even the tiniest thing we can't see with the eyes but only with a microscope.

Just as we cherish ourselves now, like that we cherish all sentient beings. We cherish everybody. Everybody is most dear to us. Everybody is in our heart, most dear, so precious, so precious. Just as our life is so important, everybody is so important.

Then, the second line says, "May I cherish them much more than myself." In the first [line], we see sentient beings as the same as us, most important, most dear in the same way. Now, in the second [line], we see them as more important. The Tibetan, *dag la*, is complicated. It means cherishing sentient beings more than cherishing ourselves.

When I asked a geshe [what *dag la* meant], he said it does not mean cherishing another being, like we cherish His Holiness and follow him. Of course, that is good, but this doesn't refer to cherishing in the way ordinary people cherish. What ordinary beings want—those who cherish themselves, who have attachment to this life—is for everybody to cherish them, to think they are the most precious. It's not that here. That is not a path. That is not a realization. That is not the bodhisattva's attitude. This line, "May I cherish them much more than myself," means that we *only* cherish others. We let go of the I and cherish sentient beings the most. That is bodhicitta.

In the first [line,] we and all sentient beings are equal; we cherish both equally. In the second line, we cherish others more than ourselves because all the suffering comes from the I. All the suffering of the past, from beginningless rebirths, all the present suffering—all the endless suffering of samsara comes from the I.

There are numberless sentient beings, but even comparing ourselves with one, just us and this one person or us and this insect, this ant. Who is more precious? Where does all our happiness come from? We have received all our happiness—the happiness from beginningless rebirths, the happiness now and all the future happiness, including liberation from samsara and enlightenment—from this person who abuses us or from this insect. Wow! Of course, they are so precious.

If we cherish this one being, there is enlightenment for us. If we don't cherish them, there is no enlightenment for us. If we cherish this one being, we become free from samsara and achieve enlightenment. That is the benefit. Even if it is one sentient being, if we cherish them, there is enlightenment. If we don't cherish them, there is no enlightenment. That is clear! That is what this line contains. Because of that, "May I cherish them much more than myself." Even one sentient being. That is the most important practice, bodhicitta.

Next Nagarjuna says,

[484cd] May their ill deeds fructify for me,  
And may all my virtues fructify for them.  
[485] As long as any sentient being  
Anywhere has not been liberated,  
May I remain [in that world] for the sake of that being  
Though I have attained highest enlightenment.

May all the sentient beings' negative karma ripen on us and may all our virtue, the cause of happiness, ripen on them, ripen on the sentient beings who are numberless.

This shows the bodhisattva's attitude, how they live their life. For example, as I told you, the great meditator, Kadampa geshe Chekawa, always prayed to be born in hell for sentient beings. That means he prayed to experience all the sufferings of hell and for sentient beings to be free from all that suffering and achieve enlightenment. He always prayed for that but the day he was going to die a vision of the pure land happened, so he told his disciple his prayer didn't succeed. Because he totally dedicated his life to sentient beings, a vision of hell was supposed to happen as he was dying, but a vision of a pure land happened instead because he dedicated his life to others.

So here Nagarjuna [sets out] the bodhisattva attitude. Even though we could achieve enlightenment, we pray to abide in samsara, in the suffering realms, to be able to help sentient beings. This is the bodhisattva's attitude—letting go of I, and instead of cherishing the I, cherishing only all sentient beings.

This is just side talk. An American monk, John, was the original person at Vajrapani in America. Before we blessed the land, his family was living in, what do you call it? [*Student: Teepee.*] A teepee, like a tent with three posts, a teepee in the forest in Santa Cruz. Somebody offered the land. When we invited the previous Kyabje Zong Rinpoche to bless the land, a snake came out, maybe a naga. Then, we built Vajrapani center there. We built a gompa, a room for the geshe and retreat rooms. Then, gradually, a stupa. After Lama passed away, we built the stupa. The day the stupa was finished, the incarnation of Lama Yeshe, Lama Ösel Rinpoche was able to go there. It was incredible.

John was lay for a long time. His job was building houses. Then, he separated from his wife and his children, and then he met another lady. I told him to become a monk, so he became a monk. He helped me to get to Land of Calm Abiding. The old lady who owned the land only knew John, so he contacted her. She checked the FPMT through John for a year before giving us the land for meditation.

The purpose of the land is to achieve *zhi nä*, calm abiding. Everybody who has gone there to meditate has had a great experience. When he was there, Ribur Rinpoche, one of my gurus, highly praised the Land of Calm Abiding. To get there, you have to go over Big Sur, the mountain. There are sometimes lay people there but mostly Sangha. A Chinese nun died there. She went to meditate there for a long time. She's the only person so far. John helped to get the land and to run the place.

He has usually been in retreat in Washington. We have a retreat place in Washington and his house is above the hill. We are down below the hill and he is up. He led the last Kopan course. That was his first time. He was very surprised. He doesn't have a particular reputation for leading meditations, but he did. Anyway, I asked him one day, "Do you want to be born in a pure land or not when you die?" He is a very good practitioner. He told me he didn't want to be born in a pure land but in a suffering country to help others. That is a very good attitude, a compassionate attitude. That is similar to Nagarjuna's wish here.

I suggest you write Nagarjuna's prayer down in nice English and stick it in your room. And there is another one to put in your room to remind yourself. There is this one and another one, but I don't remember it. Anyway, make it nice and then keep it in the house. Stick it [in your house] to remind you. This is what I suggest. It is so good, a key practice.

This is the same as the bodhicitta practice *tonglen*. It makes our life the most beneficial for every sentient being. That means for us to be the happiest. It is a quick way to achieve enlightenment, a quick way to free sentient beings from the oceans of suffering and bring them to enlightenment. That is incredible.

With this, if we die, there is no worry. We are so happy because we will never ever get reborn in the lower realms again. Even though, like Geshe Chekawa, we might wish to get reborn in the lower realms, with bodhicitta we won't. Our mind gets transformed because of this and we go to a pure land.

### ***Refuge Preparation***

How much have you done on the subject of the Wheel of Life, I mean on samsara? Have you covered it all? [*Ven. Robina*: We covered it all, but you can start again.] Of course, we have to start numberless times until we are free from samsara!

I think maybe I'll do refuge. I was going to go through as an introduction to samsara on the basis of Geshe Sopa Rinpoche. [*Ven. Robina*: I made a mistake. We didn't do that at all. I thought you meant... I'm sorry.] Geshe Sopa Rinpoche made an explanation, so I'm just going to briefly explain it. He was Lama Yeshe's guru from Tibet. I received many teachings from him, but he passed away many years ago. Maybe he has reincarnated in Tibet, but I'm not sure whether he has been found yet.

I think maybe it is time to go to bed to sleep, so I'll do the refuge before sleeping. [*Ven. Robina*: They are here to take refuge.] They want to take refuge in what? They want to take refuge in ice cream? They want to take refuge in milkshakes? They want to take refuge in potatoes? Like in Thailand, where they put many frogs on a stick—one, two, three, six, seven—and they burn them in the fire. Are they taking refuge in that? [*Ven. Robina*: No.]

Besides samsara, the nature of suffering and all that, you have already been through all that and then you went through bodhicitta and of course many days on emptiness. I'm just going to do refuge very quickly.

Generally taking refuge. When we are hungry, we take refuge in food; when we are thirsty, we take refuge in water. We are taking refuge all the time. We take refuge in buildings, in rooms, to protect our life. Children take refuge in parents; they rely on their parents. Always, our whole life, there is refuge like that. When it is hot, we take refuge in a fan or an air conditioner. When it is too cold, we take refuge in a heater. It is like that. We take refuge in the toilet!

But here, the benefit [of taking refuge in a worthwhile subject] at death time is that we won't be reborn in the lower realms. That's the first thing, to not be reborn in the suffering lower realms.

We protect ourselves from rebirth in the lower realms by taking refuge in the Buddha [or any deity] such as Tara or Medicine Buddha, by relying on them when we are dying. If the very last thought is relying on any of the buddhas, we won't get reborn in the lower realms. Remembering their names, reciting their mantras, is enough. We won't get reborn in the lower realms. Even remembering or reciting the *Heart Sutra* near the time of death, or reciting *Lama tön pa chom dün dä de...* or TADYATHA OM MUNE MUNE MAHA MUNAYE SVAHA remembering that, we won't get reborn in the lower realms.

Then, remembering the Sangha, a monk or nun we have devotion in, if we remember that, we won't get reborn in the lower realms. We don't need all three, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

But to be free from samsara, [we need all three.]

The definition of samsara. Samsara is not a factory, not a farmhouse, samsara is not our house. To understand what samsara is, the definition is the *continuity of the rebirth of the contaminated aggregates caused by karma and delusions*.

That is the definition of samsara. Samsara is that—the continuation from beginningless rebirths up to now of the aggregates caused by karma and delusions, the contaminated seed, like I explained for pervasive compounding suffering, the contaminated seed of karma and delusions. Because of the continuation of that, we have continual rebirth; we die and then we are reborn, we die and are reborn. With the continuation of beginningless rebirths up to now, these aggregates are in the nature of suffering. We always die and we are always reborn.

To be a human being in the next life depends on karma. That is samsara—the continuity of rebirth of the contaminated aggregates caused by karma and delusions. That is samsara. You must write it down. That is what samsara is.

We receive teachings explaining the whole path to nirvana, liberation from samsara, explaining the five paths. We receive teachings, we listen, reflect and meditate on this, and then we actualize the five paths to liberation. Then, we become free from karma and delusions; we become free from the suffering of samsara.

The Buddha revealed four noble truths: true suffering, the true cause of suffering, true cessation and the true path. We need to listen, reflect and meditate on the whole path to liberation to be free from samsara.

So, by coming to Kopan, by listening, reflecting and meditating, you have been doing just that. Now, you have to continue. It is not enough to realize emptiness; you have to develop the direct perception of emptiness. Then, that ceases the seed of karma and delusions.

That is what we need, to become free from karma and delusions. When we actualize the first path, the path of merit, and then we do much listening and reflecting, during that time, on the path of preparation, with shamatha meditation and so forth, we realize emptiness.

At that time, we remove ignorance, *kun tag*, “all labeled”, the ignorance that is due to doctrines. Then, by actualizing the right-seeing path, *tong lam*, when we attain the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, at that time we abandon the simultaneously arising ignorance. Then, on the path of meditation, we completely abandon all delusions. To be free from samsara, we need all three refuges. We have to rely on all three.

The example is like a patient who is sick needing to rely on a wise doctor, somebody who can diagnose their sickness without mistake, and where it came from, the cause. Then, they can give the right medicine, not the wrong medicine. We need the medicine the doctor has prescribed, and we need a nurse who can help us take the medicine. That is their job; we need a nurse. A sicker patient needs all three. We who have had the chronic disease of karma and delusions, causing ignorance, anger, attachment and so forth from beginningless rebirths, we who have the chronic disease of the three poisonous minds, [need all three objects of refuge].

From beginningless rebirths we have been sick with this chronic disease in the six realms, as a hell being, a hungry ghost, an animal, a human being, a sura or asura being. We have been sick from beginningless rebirths. For us to be free from samsara, from the oceans of suffering of the six realms, we need to rely on the Buddha who revealed the correct path, like the patient who



relied on the doctor. Then, we need to follow the path that the Buddha taught, like taking the medicine that the doctor gave us. Like that, we have to follow the path.

We need to do the listening, reflecting and meditating to actualize the path. The four noble truths are the basis. For that, we need the Sangha, like the nurse who helps us, who inspires us, the one we look to as an example. The Sangha inspire us, helping us practice the Dharma.

We need to rely on all three otherwise we can't be free from samsara. Now you understand that to take refuge is to free yourself from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and the cause.

Of course, that is the first thing. Then, the second thing is that once we have done that ourselves, we can liberate numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsara. It's the same thing, of course. Once we have achieved peerless happiness, great liberation, great nirvana, enlightenment, we can bring all the numberless sentient beings to peerless happiness, to full enlightenment.

So, there is the refuge of the Lesser Vehicle being. By knowing our own samsara, how it is in the nature of suffering, and then, to free ourselves from that, we take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. That is the refuge for the being who follows the Lesser Vehicle path.

With the Lesser Vehicle, there are two causes of refuge. The first is useful fear, the useful fear of our own samsara, seeing how it is in the nature of suffering and having the useful fear of that. Then, having faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, knowing they have the power to free us from samsara. These two are the causes of the Lesser Vehicle refuge. With that mental factor relying on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, that is taking refuge the Lesser Vehicle way.

With the Mahayana way of taking refuge, the extra thing is compassion. Based on our own renunciation, we have compassion. When we think of the numberless sentient beings—the hell beings, the hungry ghosts, the animals, the human beings, the suras and asuras—suffering in samsara, we want to free them from the oceans of suffering of samsara. Then, we go for refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. [This is with] the useful fear of our own samsara and faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, that they have the quality to free us.

For many years, the monks and nuns in the monasteries study the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, how they have the power to free us. They study all their qualities for a long time. This is something we need to understand through study and logic. Then, in the Mahayana, the extra thing is compassion for sentient beings, the intense wish to free them from the oceans of samsaric sufferings. Just as we have renunciation to our own samsara, we have compassion, wishing others to be free from the oceans of samsaric suffering. For that, we go for refuge—the Mahayana refuge. Then, there is tantric refuge. That's it.

### ***The Refuge Book***

While you are sitting, I'll explain this. For those who want, there is only the refuge vow, the *upasika* [or *upasaka*] only refuge vow, without any of the five precepts you can take, or the four or the two or the one precept. The Buddha is so skillful. He gave us a choice, according to the capacity of sentient beings, according to what we can do. We can just take the *upasika* refuge vow without the other precepts.

With refuge, you went through the three things to abandon and the three things to practice? [*Ven. Robina*: Yes.] The three things to abandon and the three things to practice. That is very, very important.

I don't know about other centers, but I know in our centers, many people, even those who know the lamrim from beginning to end, don't know these basic practices, so they put Dharma books, the Buddha's teachings, on the cushion. The spiritual coordinator arranges [Dharma books] without any cloth, nothing; they just put them on the cushion or chair. You can't do that! I've seen that in many centers. It is OK to arrange them, but they don't know that [putting them on a cushion without a cloth] is disrespecting the Dharma books. That obscures the mind from having realizations. Disrespecting them obscures the mind. It's mentioned in the teachings that if

we see even one syllable in the garbage, we should take it out and put it on our crown thinking it is the actual Dharma, then put it in a high and clean place.

The Kadampa geshe in Tibet practiced like this. Whenever they saw even one syllable in the garbage or even a piece of a torn page from a Dharma text, they would put it in a high place so that other people wouldn't [inadvertently] step over it and create negative karma which obscures the mind. [If we do this negative action] it obscures the mind and blocks us from realizing guru devotion—correctly following the virtuous friend—renunciation, bodhicitta, the sutra realizations and the two stages [of highest tantra]. Even if we have some compassion or something, after some time even that disappears. Our mind becomes so degenerated. Things like that happen.

What we have developed for a long time by doing retreats on this and that, our mind degenerates. The mind becomes empty like a hot desert where nothing grows, where nothing happens, where there are no realizations. This can happen. It takes a long time to have realization, but that obscures the mind, and then it's difficult to understand the Dharma. Things like that are explained here in the refuge book. There is a detailed explanation. You must study this detailed explanation.

Then, there are the benefits of keeping the refuge precepts.

At the end, I added a Jesus picture [that belonged to] Saint Francis, a great holy being, a bodhisattva. The picture spoke to him, like we have so many statues [in the Tibetan tradition] who speak. When somebody has great devotion, high realizations or pure karma, statues or paintings can speak to them or give answers or guidance. This has happened many times in Tibet, Nepal and India. I thought because [Saint Francis'] mind is bodhicitta, unbelievably pure, with no self-cherishing, no attachment, he is such a pure bodhisattva, that's why the buddhas spoke to him through this picture, so I put it there.

I changed the last [verse] about heresy as it might cause confusion. I added it there because it might be useful. Then there are seven or eight general advices. It is there; you must study it well.

You should do prostrations in the morning. You should do three prostrations to the Buddha by seeing his qualities when you get up and three prostrations before you go to bed. Before you eat or drink, even chocolate or candies, before you eat you should offer to the Three Rare Sublime Ones or to the Guru-Buddha, understanding that the guru is the Buddha. Thinking in that way, the guru is the richest object of refuge. Then, you make offering of candy or whatever you are going to eat. You offer and take it as a blessing to receive the realizations of the whole path to enlightenment and benefit sentient beings. You take the blessing like that.

When you do prostrations or offer food, you collect skies of merit each time, the cause of happiness up to enlightenment, when you do it with bodhicitta. The number of atoms of the earth is tiny compared to the limitless skies of merit you collect when you offer with bodhicitta to the Buddha. Collecting merits to achieve enlightenment and enlighten sentient beings makes life so unbelievably rich.

### ***The Merits of Offering to a Statue***

Please understand this. Normally, we ordinary people think there may be small merit when we make an offering to a statue or a visualized deity, whereas if we were to actually meet a buddha and make offering, there would be unbelievable merit. We might think like that. I don't remember the text, my memory is very bad, but the Buddha said this. This is very important. Everybody ought to understand this. I will read it and translate it.

If my four [types of] disciples

Make offerings to me now

Or if in the future, with devotion,

They make offering to my statues,

There is no difference at all.

The merits and ripened-aspect results are exactly the same. [18]

Whether the Buddha's disciples made offerings to him [while he was alive] or made offerings in the future to his statue with devotion, there is no difference at all. Seeing the Buddha now and making offerings and making offerings to a statue creates exactly the same amount of merit. The Buddha said there is no difference. You have to know that.

We are so lucky to be able to understand this. We are so lucky to be able to make offerings and make prostrations, even to a statue of the Buddha. Having the opportunity to do this, we collect unbelievable, unbelievable merit, the cause of happiness, the cause of realizations of the path to enlightenment and of enlightenment. That is amazing. Just that makes our life so rich. Being able to attain all the realizations and then enlightenment, we can free all sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment.

For ordinary people, a statue probably seems nothing [compared to] the Buddha, but it is not like that. The two are *exactly* the same. You must know that. You must write it down. I'm not going to explain now, it takes time.

That's why we have already built so many big statues in the world, such as the seven-story Padmasambhava statue. Now, we have to build the statues of Maitreya, the future buddha, one of four stories in Bodhgaya and one of fifteen stories in Kushinagar, where the Buddha showed the aspect of passing away. Kushinagar is such a complicated place and there were so many problems. It has taken a long time, but that is what we are planning now.

We just finished building a large stupa in Solu Khumbu. The manager, Tenpa Choden, has great merit. He built it for the people, the old people and the children, and even the animals, who create so much merit, the cause of enlightenment, by going around it. They have invited me to go there to bless it. We have already built so many of the hundred and eight stupas we plan to build in Ladakh. I think many hundreds of years ago they were built by Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo, a great holy being, but now they are broken, so we plan to rebuild them.

I think I explained to you a long time ago, even a fly that goes around a stupa creates the cause of enlightenment. Holy objects are of unbelievable benefit to sentient beings. It is so easy [to create merit]. Our wishes for happiness in this and future lives, for liberation from samsara and for enlightenment—all our happiness—depends on good karma. It all comes from good karma, and having holy objects makes it so easy.

Even if our mind is not Dharma, even if we are looking for the happiness of this life, not Dharma, just attachment, even if our heart is black, by the power of the holy objects—of statues and stupas—our actions of going around, prostrating and making offerings becomes the Dharma and the cause of enlightenment. It makes it so easy for even animals, dogs and people who go around.

When the dogs at the Boudhanath Stupa or in other holy places follow the people around, they create the causes of enlightenment so many times. The Buddha said, "The merits and ripened-aspect results are exactly the same."

Then, the Buddha said,

That is the Buddha's blessing,

But ordinary beings do not know this.

Therefore, in places where there are no buddhas,

There are no holy objects.

They do not exist in outlying barbaric countries.

They do not exist when the teachings of the Buddha degenerate.

They cannot be seen by no-level beings and animals.

Therefore, all holy objects are manifestations of buddhas.

"Outlying barbaric countries" do not have [holy objects]. When the teachings of the Buddha degenerate, holy objects don't exist. And *mutegpa*, follows of those religions opposed to Buddhism (*mu teg* means "no-level") those followers and animals can't even see holy objects. The Buddha himself said "Therefore, all the holy objects are manifestations of buddhas."

For example, when Lama Atisha went to Bodhgaya, there were paintings and statues around [the stupa] that spoke to him. When he asked them what the best, the quickest way to achieve enlightenment was, they all answered, “Bodhicitta.” When we have pure devotion and our mind is purified enough, statues and paintings will speak to us.

I have to tell you this. If we make any offering, even water, to the Buddha statue or the visualization of the Buddha, we collect unbelievable merits. For eight [hundred] million eons and four million eons we will never be reborn in the lower realms. For eight hundred million eons and four million eons, we will never be reborn in the lower realms, even if we offer just water or anything to the Buddha. We get benefits like that.

For example, a lady, Drangtse Palmo, Brahmin Palmo, offered sandalwood powder to the Buddha, sprinkling it on the Buddha’s feet. The Buddha predicted she wouldn’t be reborn in the lower realms for eight hundred million eons and four million eons. The Buddha explained this to the bodhisattva, Miphampa.

So, the more holy objects—paintings, pictures, statues and stupas—there are, the more opportunity sentient beings have to go around, to do prostrations, to make offerings and all that.

For example, the Boudhanath Stupa is big. The bigger it is, the more people come to see it, not only animals. It is unbelievable. Day and night, everybody is creating the causes of enlightenment and, by the way, the causes of liberation from samsara and of all the happiness of future lives and of this life.

So, after taking refuge, each time before we eat, we should offer [the food] to the Buddha, whether we know a prayer or not. There are certain prayers. We offer to the Buddha and then we take the blessing. Then, we practice compassion for sentient beings by trying to control our mind, overcoming our anger and things like that.

When you have taken teachings from the guru, there are seven or eight general advices. Without thinking of the precepts, just having taken refuge makes life so unbelievably worthwhile. But then, on top of that, there are *upasika* precepts. If you cannot take all five, you can take four or three or two or one. I used to advise people in the past to take the precept to not kill, which means not only not killing human beings but all sentient beings, even insects. That is so important. If you don’t want anybody to kill you, you should take that precept to not kill others.

### ***The Four Suffering Results of Sexual Misconduct***

For example, sexual misconduct is one of the three negative actions of the body from the ten nonvirtues. There are four factors with karma; the base, *zhi*, which means the sentient being; the thought or motivation, *sampa*; the action, *jorwa*; and the completion, *thartug*, when the action is done. If it is killing, we kill the other sentient being before we die. If it is stealing, when we steal and we think, “This is mine.” That is the goal, the completion.

An action with these four factors is negative karma when done with delusion, done with the self-cherishing thought. It becomes negative karma because it is done with the self-cherishing thought, with attachment to this life. That is the negative mind that transforms the action into a negative one.

As a negative karma, it has four suffering results. The ripened-aspect result is rebirth in the lower realms, as a hell being, a hungry ghost or an animal. The other three suffering results [are when we are finally reborn] in the human realm.

The possessed result refers to the place we are born into, that we live in. [For sexual misconduct] it’s a very dirty place, with lots of mud, a filthy, dirty, very unhealthy place. Even we don’t live normally in a dirty place, if we have to go through one for even five minutes, that is also the result of the past negative karma of sexual misconduct. The possessed result is to do with the place. If we have to cross [such a place] for an hour, for five minutes or for even one or two minutes, that is the result of the past negative karma of sexual misconduct.

The third result is experiencing the result similar to the cause. That means that what we caused others to suffer we now have to experience. If in the past we lied, we abused others, we

committed sexual misconduct, what we did in the past, we experience a similar result now. Others do the same thing to us, such as sexual misconduct.

When others abuse us or cause us to suffer because of sexual misconduct, we are experiencing results because of our past karma. When top businesspeople and famous people in the West are sued because others can get a lot of money by saying they did something wrong, that is because those suing them were abused by them in the past. It is the result of them abusing others in the past, in this life or in past lives.

If we are experiencing [harm from] sexual misconduct, that is because in the past—in this life or in other lives—we committed sexual misconduct with a negative thought. We ourselves committed this negative karma. Having done it once in the past means we will have to experience it for five hundred lifetimes. For five hundred lifetimes, we will have to experience being harmed by others in this way. That is the reality.

Then, there is creating the result similar to the cause. Because we committed sexual misconduct in the past, in past lives, there is the karma, the habit, and we do it again in the future lives. So, in this life we again commit sexual misconduct, we abuse others. All that happens because of the habituation of past karma.

For example, there was a monk who was here, who is now a layperson in Italy. Although he knew stealing was not good, the thought came to really want to steal, the thought to steal arose so strongly. In many actions, negative karma is like that. We create the result similar to the cause, meaning the habituation of past negative karma makes us repeat the negative action over and over in many lifetimes. This happens.

I must tell you this quotation. It is very important to write it down. [*A Hundred Actions Sutra* says:]

By becoming habituated with negative karma, again in the future you will rely on negative karma, again you will do negative karma, and again you will be reborn following negative karma.

The Buddha said when we create negative karma, we get habituated to negative karma. When we engage in negative karma, that is due to habituation from the past and by doing the action we make ourselves more habituated. Then he said that in the future we will again rely on that nonvirtue. That means we will do it again in the future, repeating the same negative karma.

Following our mind, not practicing the Dharma, this happens again and again. We follow our delusions, the cause of suffering, [and commit negative] karma without end. Then, there is no end of karma and delusions. Not only is there no beginning but there will be no end.

You must write this down! And if possible, make a notice to put up in your house, in your room, to remind you. This is a really fearful thing.

For hundreds and hundreds of lifetimes it goes on and on like this uncontrollably. Our karma and delusions create endless suffering for us.

So, for each of the ten nonvirtues that has the four factors gathered, there are these four suffering results. I just gave you an idea. That is enough. Therefore, taking precepts is to go against that negative karma, to not make ourselves habituated to the cause of suffering that makes suffering endless. It is so important.

### ***The Refuge Ceremony***

Those who are taking refuge, don't only think of freeing yourself from samsara, think of sentient beings suffering in samsara, so you have compassion. And therefore, take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Think of the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless suras and the numberless asura beings, think of freeing them from samsara and bringing them to enlightenment. For that reason, you are taking refuge.

Those who are taking refuge, please do three prostrations.

[Rinpoche performs the refuge ceremony]

With taking refuge in the Buddha, there is the conventional Buddha and the absolute Buddha. The absolute Buddha is the Buddha's holy mind, the dharmakaya. The ultimate nature is the dharmakaya. The sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya aspects are the conventional Buddha. So, there are two aspects, the dharmakaya as one and the rupakaya manifesting as the sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya, holy body manifestations, as the other. You are taking refuge in these two things.

With taking refuge in the Dharma, [there is the absolute Dharma and the conventional Dharma]. The true path, the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness that ceases karma and delusions, that ceases the cause of suffering, that directly frees you from the suffering of samsara, that is the absolute Dharma. The conventional Dharma is the Tripitaka that explains the path. You take refuge in both: the absolute Dharma and the conventional Dharma.

The lasso of attachment, craving, ties you to samsara. The root of samsara is ignorance, but attachment is the close cause of samsara. It is what ties you to samsara, what doesn't let you be free from samsara. That is why when you take refuge in the Dharma, the Dharma is that which liberates you from attachment. Therefore, you go for refuge to the Dharma.

With taking refuge in the Sangha, there is also the absolute Sangha and the conventional Sangha. The absolute Sangha can be one person, ordained or lay, who has the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness. That is the absolute Sangha. It can be an ordained person or a lay person. It doesn't have to be four. But the conventional Sangha refers to those who don't have a direct perception of emptiness, and then it has to be four fully ordained monks or nuns living purely in the vows. Because in Vinaya, when there is a Sangha meeting to decide something, it has to be a community, and there have to be at least four members to decide. That is conventional Sangha. You not only take refuge in the absolute Sangha but also the conventional Sangha.

[Rinpoche concludes the refuge ceremony]

### ***Dedications***

"Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas..." Not just yourself, think of your family, think of all of us here, all the students, please think that. "In all the lifetimes may I never be separated from Lama Tsongkhapa as the Mahayana virtuous friend of me, my family, all of us here and all the students in the world. May we never be separated from the pure Dharma that is admired by all the buddhas."

[Rinpoche and students recite prayers in Tibetan and English]

Please pray for the world. "Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may the wars happening now and the wars that will happen be stopped immediately. May all famine and disease be stopped immediately. May all the dangers of earth, water, fire and wind be stopped immediately. May all the dangers to sentient beings be stopped immediately: the melting ice, the oceans rising, the tsunamis destroying cities. May all these problems be stopped immediately. And may the Dharma, the source of perfect peace and happiness, prevail in everybody's hearts. May the Buddhadharma, where all sentient beings receive happiness from, last a long time and spread in all the ten directions. May sentient beings meet Buddhadharma and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible."

Last thing. "Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may I fulfill the wishes and hopes of all sentient beings more than a wish-granting jewel. May I fulfill the wishes and hopes of all sentient beings more than a wish-granting tree."

"Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by the numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, which are merely labeled by the mind, may I, who is merely labeled by the mind, achieve full enlightenment, which is merely labeled by the mind..." [Rinpoche yawns] Sorry! I think I'm going to bed while I'm

talking to you. I might have to say goodbye anytime! “And lead all the sentient beings, who are merely labeled by the mind, to that buddhahood, which is merely labeled by the mind, by myself alone, who is merely labeled by the mind.”

For His Holiness’s holy wishes to succeed and to have a stable life.

Incomparably kind and supreme Tenzin Gyatso,

The wish-granting Wish-Fulfilling Jewel—

Source of every single benefit and happiness in this world—

May you have a long life and all your holy wishes be spontaneously fulfilled. [\[19\]](#)

[Rinpoche says mantras and blows on malas to bless them for the people who have taken refuge]

I’ve already given you the lung of this mantra that I’m reciting on the malas, OM PÄDMO USHNISHA VIMALE HUM PHAT. For anybody who touches it, it purifies the five heavy negative karmas: killing your father and mother, killing an arhat, causing blood to flow from a buddha and causing disharmony in the Sangha. These very heavy negative karmas get purified. I do the same to bless the dolls [the stuffed animals] before I give them to somebody. Anybody who touches them, it purifies their negative karma.

## Lecture 11: December 11, am



### ***Separating from the Four Clingings***

[Rinpoche and students recite *Prayers Before Teachings*]

I try to chant the Lion-face Dakini for people who have obstacles. [The *mo*] comes out to do Lion-face Dakini. I did the retreat, but I don't think I can do the initiation. Pray here to complete your Dharma practice in this life and I'll pray for that too. It is basically explained to pacify obstacles to benefit our mind for sentient beings. I make a general prayer to complete our Dharma practice. I did the retreat in Switzerland many years ago, then I did the fire puja in Manjushri Institute London.

[Rinpoche and the students recite *The Foundation of All Good Qualities*, the short mandala, *Request to Turn the Wheel of Dharma* and *Refuge and Bodhicitta*]

One question or half a question? No questions, then you can ask in the next life.

*Student:* Is the buddha's mind permanent?

*Rinpoche:* It is said that in general, buddha is permanent, but we can't say a particular buddha is permanent. In general, buddha is permanent but a particular buddha is not permanent. I don't think you can say Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is permanent. But general buddha always exists, so it is permanent. I wouldn't say the buddha's mind is permanent. Maybe your mind is permanent.

Your beard is permanent! Your beard will stay until even after you are reborn. Even after a few lifetimes your beard will stay!

Lama Tsongkhapa wrote *A Hymn of Experience of the Graduated Path to Enlightenment*, *Lamrim Nyamgyur* in Tibetan. This is the essence of Dharma. He wrote many other extremely important philosophical texts but the essence is *Lamrim Chenmo*, his most important commentary. Then, there is his *Middle-length Lamrim*, where the essence is discussing how to negate the wrong views. Then, the short lamrim is *A Hymn of Experience*. Even though it's short, it's both deep and vast. Then, he wrote the *Three Principal Aspects of the Path to Enlightenment*, *Lam Tso Nam Sum*, the essence of the entire Dharma—renunciation, bodhicitta and right view.

You have to understand that Lama Tsongkhapa [divides the path] into these three, but in the Nyingma and Kagyü tradition there are four aspects—I don't know the exact words—and each stops one of the four negative thoughts.

The first negative thought is attachment to this life, the second is attachment of future lives' samsara, the third is the self-cherishing thought and the fourth is the root of samsara, the



ignorance that holds the I as truly existent. These are the four negative thoughts and there are four corresponding aspects that stop these four negative thoughts.

In the Sakya tradition, it is *Parting from the Four Clings*, *Zhenpa Zhi Drel*:

If you cling to this life, you are not a practitioner;

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

If you cling to self-interest, you are not a bodhisattva;

If grasping arises, it is not the view. [20]

“If you are attached to this life, you are not a practitioner.” Even though we are reading and reciting Dharma texts, circumambulating temples, reciting mantras and prayers all the time, doing a lifetime retreat in a solitary place without seeing people—whatever we are doing, because all of these are done with attachment to this life, nothing is Dharma and we are not a Dharma practitioner. I wouldn’t say “a religious person.” I think it’s better to say a “Dharma practitioner.” Only when we renounce attachment to this life are we a Dharma practitioner.

Then it says, “If you cling to the three realms, that is not renunciation.” While we are attached to future lives’ samsara, it is not renunciation. We don’t have the cause to achieve liberation from samsara. Whatever we do—meditation, reading texts, reciting mantras twenty-four hours a day—unless it is done with the renunciation of samsara, nothing becomes the cause of liberation from samsara.

The next one is the self-cherishing thought. “If you cling to self-interest, you are not a bodhisattva.” If we cherish the self, meaning we cherish the I, whatever we do—meditating, reciting texts, going around stupas, even meditating our whole life in a solitary place without seeing anybody, without sleeping, without eating—if we do all that with the worldly self-cherishing thought, we don’t have bodhicitta, so none of those actions becomes a cause of enlightenment. We might look like a Dharma practitioner from the outside, practicing with unbelievable zeal, but if our mind is not pure, if our mind is a selfish mind, there is no bodhicitta and none of our actions becomes the cause of enlightenment. No matter how we look to other people, in reality we are motivated by the self-cherishing thought, not bodhicitta. Then, nothing becomes the cause of enlightenment, even though our whole life is spent doing retreat, doing meditation.

Finally, *Parting from the Four Clings* says, “If grasping arises, it is not the view.” That means grasping onto the I as truly existent, as existing from its own side, as existing by nature. In common language, we say that the I is “real.” We are holding onto the I as real. So, similarly, even though we spend our whole life doing retreats or meditating, doing all these things that look like incredible Dharma practice to outside people who don’t have clairvoyance and can’t know our mind, in reality none of these things become right view, because all those things are done holding onto the I as truly existent, as real. All these things might look religious, might look like Dharma from the outside, but without the right view, with the wrong view that holds the I as real, nothing becomes an antidote to samsara, nothing becomes a remedy to eliminate the root of samsara, ignorance. Everything becomes a support [to that ignorance] while we continue to believe the I is real.

Instead of cutting our ignorance, all these practices further develop our ignorance. The one before was cherishing the I, and this one is holding onto the I as truly existent. As the text says, “If grasping arises, it is not the view,” it is not meditating on emptiness.

### ***Avoiding the Wrong Meditation on Emptiness***

I want to tell you one thing. It might be helpful for meditating on emptiness. For example, [we can think we are meditating on emptiness] without at all touching the false I, the real I, the I that does not exist at all. We never touch that one, we leave it there, kind of like we are taking care of it. But we look at the merely labeled I, the general I, and see that the hair is not the I, the skin is not the I, the blood is not the I, the veins are not the I, the bones are not the I. No piece [of our body]—tongue, nose, tooth, ear, brain, heart, down to the toes—is the I, so there is no I. The I

is nowhere on these aggregates; it's not on the top of the hair, on the hands, on the belly, on all the pipi and kaka, on the legs. The I is nowhere there. All that is a wrong meditation on the I. You have to know this. Write it down! You have to know that is a wrong meditation on emptiness.

So many people think that this is the right meditation on emptiness. Even many monks who are excellent in debate, who are very wise in the Dharma, think that this is the right meditation on emptiness. No! This is not a meditation on emptiness. I once said to a well-known teacher that I don't know Dharma, I didn't study philosophy, that I'm lazy and I asked him if that is the meditation on emptiness. The geshe said of course this is meditation on emptiness, that it is well known among the people who debate in the monasteries. I said I wanted to see the text that says this is the meditation on emptiness. He told me he would show me the next day at lunchtime, but he couldn't find it. It's very funny.

If we are not careful, if we are not precise, if we ourselves don't analyze, we can make mistakes like this, thinking this wrong meditation on emptiness is correct, which leads to nihilism, thinking that there is no I at all. But I don't think we would have great fear that there is no I.

Lama Tsongkhapa used the example of a vase. When we check where the vase is, not the real vase, the truly existent vase, there is nothing. We didn't touch the vase that is merely labeled. "That is not vase. This is not vase. The neck is not vase. The belly is not vase. The bottom is not vase." We cannot find the vase. That is nihilism; we are falling into nihilism. We are falling into the nihilism that destroys the dependent arising. The vase exists because the valid base of the vase exists.

Similarly, because the valid base, the aggregates, exists, the I exists. The I exists because the valid base, the aggregates, exists. The reason is that. We must know the reason why it exists—because the valid base exists. Then what is labeled, *tag cho*, what is the label exists. Lama Tsongkhapa said when we don't find the vase, we fall into nihilism destroying the vase.

The vase exists in mere name, merely labeled by the mind on a valid base. The definition of "vase" is a round thing with a neck, belly and bottom, which has the feature of holding water and is able to function as that. That is the meaning or definition of vase. That is the valid base. Then *tag cho*, the label, what is labeled "vase" exists. [But in the above meditation, the analysis] didn't touch the false vase, the truly existent vase, what is called the "real" vase in ordinary language, which is expressed in philosophical terms as the truly existent vase, the vase existing from its own side or the vase existing by nature. It never touched that.

I'm saying that I don't think great fear would arise from that because the real vase or the real I is kept. Because we haven't researched the merely labeled I, just the general I, I don't think not finding it will cause us deep fear because we haven't hit ignorance, the root of samsara. The object of ignorance is always kept.

But when we look for the real I and don't find it, for a lower intelligent person, deep fear arises when the meditation works on the correct point. When it hits the ignorance we have suffered from for beginningless rebirths, deep fear arises even for lower intelligent bodhisattvas.

For higher intelligent bodhisattvas, great joy arises. Tears come; their hairs stand on end. The other one, it doesn't hit the ignorance. Not finding the mere I, the general I, we destroy the dependent arising of the existing vase and fall into nihilism. It destroys that, making it appear that there is no vase there. There is a vase that exists but we fall into nihilism, thinking the vase is not there. That means the I is not there, nothing exists. There is no Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, no karma. I don't exist, you don't exist, nothing exists. It becomes like that.

Then, if we have cancer, cancer doesn't exist. If the sickness doesn't exist, why do we take the medicine? What are we taking the medicine for? And the medicine doesn't exist. It is like that. If there is no hunger, why do we eat food? If there is no body, why do we need to eat? We only need to eat if there is a body, but if there is no body why do we need to eat? If there is no mind, why do we look for pleasure? Why do we play music? If there is no mind, why do we sleep? Why do we need to sleep for many hours if we don't have mind? It's very funny.

Lama Tsongkhapa said there is the appearance—the dependent arising object—and the object to be refuted, *gag cha*, and these two are not differentiated. Because of that, the appearance and the object to be refuted appear as real. Everything appears as real. These two are not differentiated. That is what Lama Tsongkhapa explained.

You must write it down. That is wrong meditation on emptiness. The wrong meditation on emptiness happens like that. I'm just giving you one example of meditation. You look for the table. The top part is not the table, the leg is not the table; any part is not the table. The leg is the leg *of* the table, not the table, just as our leg is not us. Do you understand? Our hand is not us. So, this leg *of* the table is not the table. Wherever we point to on the table is not the table.

In that way, we can't find the table. We look at the table but we can't find any table there. [Concluding there is therefore no table,] we fall into nihilism, destroying the table that actually exists, that exists in mere name, that exists merely labeled by the mind. It exists because there is a valid base, something that supports things, that is there. That is the valid base, and therefore the table exists.

Because this exists which holds things up, the table exists merely labeled by the mind. The table is there because the base of the table is there. That is how the table exists. When we don't look for the real table but where the table exists, we see that nothing is the table, not even the whole group. So, it *looks* like there is no table. That destroys the table that does actually exist, that exists in mere name because there is a valid base that holds things. It destroys that. That is falling into nihilism.

In one text I saw that if we believe in that and fall into nihilism, we create the same heavy negative karma as having killed one hundred million people. Falling into nihilism like that, thinking the table does not exist, we believe in nothing. That would mean that nothing at all exists, as I told you before.

If we look back at the table again, there seems to be a real table appearing from there. On this base, there is a real table appearing to us from there, but when we search for the real table, where is it? Piece by piece, every corner, every atom—nothing is the real table. Even all together, it is not the real table. When we check like that whether there is a real table appearing from there—from the base or on the base—it cannot stay. It cannot stay. It is *shigpa*, which means dissolved. The correct word is *shigpa*. It has the meaning of how we have been holding onto the real I from beginningless rebirths, our whole life, day and night, whatever we are doing, eating or sleeping, thinking this I is so important, but when we realize emptiness or even when we start to see emptiness, when we start to see that the real I that we have been holding onto is false, suddenly there is nothing to hold onto, there is nothing there. We have nothing to hold onto when we start to realize emptiness.

There is no real I there; it is dissolved, *shigpa*. I'm not sure if that is the right word. When we put medicine in the water, it dissolves, but maybe some small pieces remain; it's not completely dissolved. *Shigpa* is when we realize it is false. The first time we recognize that it is false, that it is not real, it cannot last, it cannot stay by itself. It becomes nonexistent, *shigpa*.

We have been cherishing this real I, holding onto it from beginningless rebirths, day and night, all the time. When we eat, when we fight, when we praise, when we criticize—whatever we do, there is a real I there all the time. We do so many things to not let this real I get hurt and to get happiness for this real I. Day and night, all the time, our whole life is trying to not let this real I get hurt, to not have problems, but for it to enjoy, to have happiness for this I. But when we start to realize emptiness, there is nothing there. We see it is totally our hallucination. There is nothing there.

We have been totally hallucinated, totally deceived by ignorance. Like that, the real table of the second meditation, the real table is not there, *shigpa*; it's not there. Not even an atom is there. That is emptiness. That is the realization of emptiness. It is like that second meditation, not the first one.

Some time ago, I think in Holland, I taught that meditation, and then I guided the meditation like that, how the first [way of looking at the I] is wrong and the second one is right meditation. That meditation is a very good one.

### ***Licking Honey from the Sword***

Why am I talking about this? Going back? To the root? [*Ven. Ailsa*: You did a quote from *A Hymn of Experience*.] Yes, yes, sorry, I must go through this. The quote [from *A Hymn of Experience* by Lama Tsongkhapa] is:

If you do not put effort into contemplating true sufferings— the faults of samsara— You will not develop the wish for liberation.

If you do not contemplate true origins—the steps for entering samsara—

You will not understand how to cut the roots of samsara.

Therefore, rely on weariness, definite emergence from samsara;

And cherish the knowledge of what binds you to samsara.

You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way.

I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way. [21]

Lama Tsongkhapa's words are very tasty, very extensive and very tasty, very profound. Unless we reflect on the shortcomings of true suffering, [we won't be able to search for liberation].

You went through the meditations on all the sufferings of samsara together—the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering. I described the suffering of change, samsaric pleasure, some days ago. Samsaric pleasure is like on the honey on [the edge of] a sword. We lick it and there is the taste of honey, but it cuts our tongue; it is like that. Samsaric pleasure is like poisonous food. If we eat it, it kills us.

Samsaric pleasure is like the worm the fisherman pushes onto the hook and puts in the water to lure the fish. It moves so the fish, thinking there is something to eat, rushes to it with so much grasping and gets hooked. Instead of enjoying the worm, it gets hooked. It is caught and killed and its skin is pulled off.

Samsaric pleasure is like the bait that hunters use. If they are hunting animals, they put some meat there to catch the animal or bird. When the animal goes there because it thinks there is something to eat, it is caught. Then, the hunter picks it up, kills it and eats it. Like that, samsaric pleasure, attachment, totally cheats us.

Samsaric pleasures are like that. They are like honey on the sword or sharp knife, honey that when we lick, we are cut. This is because the nature of samsaric pleasures is suffering; they cannot last, they become the suffering of pain. As I mentioned, when a greater suffering stops, another smaller suffering begins [which we label “pleasure”] but if it continues, the sense of suffering increases from small, increasing more and more until it becomes the suffering of pain. The feeling of it being pleasure doesn't last.

It cannot increase like Dharma happiness because it is in the nature of suffering. Dharma happiness can increase; with it we can achieve liberation and enlightenment, but samsaric pleasure is not like that. We have been trying samsaric pleasures from beginningless rebirths up to now, but still we have never had satisfaction. Attached to them, we can never free ourselves from samsara. That is why from beginningless rebirths up to now we have been suffering in the six realms of samsara, as you meditated.

I'm just telling you how to meditate on the suffering of change, how it is in the nature of suffering. There are many examples like that. I've just given you a rough idea, a few examples. That is just how to meditate on how samsaric pleasures are the suffering of change; how they are in the nature of suffering.

What Lama Tsongkhapa said is the main thing. “If you don't attempt to think of the shortcomings of true suffering, seeking liberation doesn't happen exactly.” Then I added this so we know how to meditate on it. When we only think suffering is the suffering of pain, there are only problems. We don't know all the other aspects of true suffering, how because we don't

know the suffering of change is in the nature of suffering, we believe it is real pleasure, and we have no idea about pervasive compounding suffering.

Then the liberation we are seeking is very limited. We are just [trying to be free from] some problems, those we know about. We don't know about all the rest. We think liberation from samsara is only being free from these few problems. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] That's very limited, very, very limited. We don't know what liberation is. Because we have no idea what we are supposed to look for, we can't achieve liberation.

"If you do not contemplate true origins—the steps for entering samsara—you will not understand how to cut the roots of samsara." True origins refers to the all-arising evolution of samsara, how all suffering comes from karma and delusions. If we don't know that, we don't know how to cut the root of samsara. We don't know how to cut or eliminate the root of samsara because we don't know the cause of suffering. Unless we know the cause of suffering, we won't know how to cut the root of samsara. Then, we don't know how to be free from samsara at all. This is so important.

"Therefore, rely on weariness, definite emergence from samsara; and cherish the knowledge of what binds you to samsara." Understanding of what binds us to samsara is so important.

[The teachings on the twelve links of dependent origination] list three delusions: ignorance, craving and grasping. There are these three delusions and two actions: karmic formations and becoming. Out of ignorance, karmic formations arise. That is one action. Then, out of craving and grasping, the second action arises, becoming. Becoming is signified by a pregnant woman, making the imprint manifest powerfully as the birth, to become a human birth.

This is the way the consciousness goes from one life to another. Of the link, name and form, name is the mind and form is the body. Then, there are the six sense bases, then contact, then feeling, and then birth and old age and death. These are the seven results. During that time, again from ignorance and craving and grasping, so many links of karmic formations and becoming arise. Even in one day there are these three delusions and two actions, causing the seven results to happen. For us now, birth is done and old age is happening, so death is the only thing that is left, the only thing left to happen.

Even in one day so many sets of twelve links are started and so many of the seven results are experienced, so many in one day, in one hour, in one minute, in one second. So many sets of twelve links are started in the evolution of samsara through not practicing mindfulness in emptiness. As I mentioned, we do that in three ways, looking at everything—the I, action and object—as the hallucination that it is. But we are not doing that, not seeing the mere I, the mere action, the mere object, not seeing how all are merely labeled by the mind. By not practicing that mindfulness, we completely follow ignorance, where everything appears real. [That false reality] is decorated, projected by ignorance. Then, we totally believe a hundred percent that everything is real.

We start [one set of] the twelve links, the evolution of samsara, each day so many times, each hour so many times, every minute and second, started by ignorance. I'm supposed to mention this later but now is OK. What I normally mention is this. There is a prison, but even if we get free from this prison, there is another prison outside that, and if we get free from that prison, there is another prison outside of that one. So, it is endless. We start with the three delusions and two actions. They happen, so many in one day, in one hour, in one minute, because we don't realize emptiness, we don't practice seeing things as illusions. There is no practice, not even mindfulness meditation, the awareness is not there. So, we completely believe that what is projected or decorated by ignorance is real.

The evolution of the twelve links ties us to samsara endlessly. Every day we create numberless sets of links. That is how we suffer in samsara endlessly.

Lama Tsongkhapa said, "You, the perfect guru, practiced in this way. I, who am seeking liberation, will also practice in this way." We recite it like that. Sorry. How much time? [*Ven. Robina*: Lots of time. Plenty of time.]

This is how to meditate on the Wheel of Life. The conclusion. Then, we know how it is so important to realize emptiness, to meditate every day on emptiness. That is one very important meditation. The other one is bodhicitta. If these two can be our main practice, that makes our life the best! Our life is the *best*! If people ask us what we are practicing and we say bodhicitta and emptiness, rather than saying we are doing dzogchen or chakras, winds and drops or something like that, then we are really rich. Then, we are doing the most important Dharma practice.

As I have read before, Kyabje Khunu Lama Rinpoche said [in *Praise to Bodhicitta*]:

[159] If you lack bodhicitta you will not become enlightened

Even if you restrain from wickedness,

Even if you gather together wholesome dharmas,

Even if you meditate in the channels, winds and drops.

No matter how much we do of all those other meditations, we can't achieve enlightenment. They are just big names to sound to other people's ears, but we can't achieve enlightenment with them. Some people like very much to say they are doing very high things, like high tantric practice and so forth. Just to be free from samsara and achieve liberation is [not] enough as a purpose of life, we must free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment by ourselves. Therefore, we must achieve enlightenment. Therefore, we must listen to the teachings.

That is what my teacher, Geshe Sopa, said. He was Lama Yeshe's teacher from Tibet. Geshe Sopa was an outstanding, very learned teacher in Sera, Ganden and Drepung to many tens of thousands [of monks]. Even in Sera alone there are seven thousand.

### ***How the Buddha Teaches Us***

Maybe I'll begin with doing this. I won't mention everything that is said here, just some. Why did the Buddha descend in this world. What is the purpose? The purpose is to liberate sentient beings from samsara, from samsaric sufferings, and to lead them to liberation and the state of omniscience. That is the only reason the Buddha descended in this world. There is no other reason *at all*. It is said in a sutra:

The Great Ones do not wash away sin with water;

they do not rid beings of suffering with their hands;

they do not transfer realizations of suchness onto others.

They liberate by teaching the truth of suchness. [22]

Hindus wash their bodies with the water of the River Ganga, thinking they purify everything. It is not in that way. The buddhas do not wash away negative karma with water. And they do not take out the suffering of transmigratory beings with their hands, which means like taking out a thorn with the hands when it's in the body. That is not the way the Buddha liberates sentient beings from suffering. And they don't "transplant their realizations into us." It's not like taking a monkey's brain and transplanting it into a human or replacing [diseased organs] with healthy ones. That is not how buddhas do it, by transplanting their realizations into us sentient beings. The way the Buddha liberates us from the sufferings of samsara is "by teaching the truth," the ultimate nature, emptiness. That is what is said in sutra by the Buddha.

To subdue the minds of the sentient beings, the sentient beings who are objects to be subdued by the Buddha, the Buddha has revealed the 84,000 teachings. The four noble truths are the basis, the root of the 84,000 teachings. After he became enlightened, the very first teaching of the Buddha was what is called the first turning of the wheel of Dharma, which reveals the four noble truths, showing us exactly what is to be practiced and what it to be abandoned.

In Maitreya Buddha's teachings, *Do De'i Gyen* [*Ornament of the Sutras*], the example given is [of disease and cure]. The disease is what is to be known; the cause of the disease is what is to be abandoned; the cure is what is to be achieved and the medicine is the way to become cured. Like that, the four noble truths are: suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the true path. First, the truth of suffering is to be known, then the true cause of suffering is to be



abandoned, the true cessation of suffering is what is to be actualized, and the true path to achieve that cessation is what is to be followed. Maitreya Buddha said that.

For example, in the world, when somebody is very sick, to become completely free, they must first know the essence of disease, the shortcomings of the disease. Then, they should look for the cause of the disease, where the disease came from. Then, to abandon it forever, they need to not just be cured of the disease but also of its cause. When they have generated the wish to be free from the sickness and its cause forever, they have to take the right medicine and for that they have to rely on a wise doctor. Only in this way can they become completely better, from both the disease and its cause.

For us sentient beings who are tormented by the sufferings of samsara, the kind Guru Shakyamuni Buddha taught true suffering, then he taught where that suffering comes from, from karma and delusions, which we need to abandon. Then, he taught the all-arising truth. After we have generated the wish to be free from all suffering, including its cause, to achieve that, the Buddha taught the true cessation. Then, he showed the graduated path, the true path, the method to achieve liberation.

That's why in a sutra it is mentioned,

This is true suffering for the arya beings.

This is true cause of suffering for the arya beings.

This is true cessation of suffering for arya beings.

This is true path for the arya beings.

It is explained like that.

For example, being under the control of the true cause of suffering, karma and delusions, without break from one life to another life, we continuously get reborn in samsara. That's how we sentient beings circle in samsara. By ceasing the cause of suffering, karma and delusions, sentient beings become free from the suffering of samsara. To show the details, the Buddha revealed the twelve dependent-related limbs, *ten drel'yan lag chu nyi*. That is the evolution.

Then vice versa, vice verse? [*Ven. Robina: Vice versa.*] Vice versa, [taking the twelve links in reverse], old age and death comes from rebirth; rebirth comes from the becoming; becoming comes from craving and grasping and so forth. Maybe put it this way. Of the seven sufferings, besides birth and old age and death, the others are [consciousness,] feeling, contact, six sense bases and name and form. All these seven results come from ignorance and craving and grasping, the three delusions, and the two actions, karmic formations and becoming.

Clarifying the twelve links, there are the Lesser Vehicle sutras, *Differentiating the Twelve Dependent-Related Limbs* and the *Rice Seedling Sutra*. In that sutra, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha holds a rice plant in his hand. The sutra said,

Venerable Shariputra then said to the bodhisattva mahasattva Maitreya, "Maitreya, here today, the Bhagavan, gazing at a rice seedling, spoke this aphorism to the bhikshus:

'Bhikshus, whoever sees dependent arising sees the Dharma. Whoever sees the Dharma sees the Buddha.'" [\[23\]](#)

In that way, the twelve dependent-related limbs are explained in an external way and an internal way.

The outer dependent arising in the world is the cultivator, the farmer. The cultivator plants a rice seed, gathering water, minerals and heat to makes the seed grow. From that, plants, leaves, flowers and fruit gradually arise. Because of depending on the previous ones, the later ones gradually arise. Without the previous ones, the later ones could not arise. In that way, the twelve dependent-related limbs, from ignorance up to old age and death, are explained.

OK. I'll stop here. That was only to give a brief idea.

I'll start this afternoon because I have to leave tomorrow morning. We'll probably do a Vajrasattva initiation, probably, probably. Maybe you'll get enlightened before I do the Vajrasattva initiation. You'll become enlightened so I won't need to do the Vajrasattva initiation.

Or you'll become an arhat by achieving liberation from samsara so I won't need to do the Vajrasattva. I can just go to bed.

OK. Thank you.

[Dedication prayers]

OK. Thank you.



## Lecture 12: December 11, pm



### ***The Benefits of the Longest Chenrezig Mantra***

[Rinpoche and students offer mandala]

Any question? Just one question?

*Student:* If I don't want to take the initiation of Vajrasattva now, can I stay only to receive the blessings? I will receive Vajrasattva from other teachers.

*Rinpoche:* You received Vajrasattva initiation before?

*Student:* Yes.

*Rinpoche:* Whatever you like, it's your choice.

*Student:* Do you recommend staying, if I will not receive the initiation. Is it good for me or anybody?

*Rinpoche:* If you are going to practice Vajrasattva you can take it. It's up to you. It's up to what your holy mind decides. What were you going to say?

*Student:* Rinpoche, could you talk to us about the relation between karma and merit?

*Rinpoche:* Karma and merit. Karma, there is virtuous karma and nonvirtuous karma. [Rinpoche asks the abbot something in Tibetan] I was asking Khen Rinpoche about indifferent karma, karma which is neither virtue nor nonvirtue. Khen Rinpoche, the abbot, was saying there is karma that is a mixture of black and white, virtue and nonvirtue. There is a kind of karma like that. I think if the power of the seed planted on the continuation of your consciousness is positive, I think that is good karma, merit. Merit and good karma don't have to be separate.

*Student:* Rinpoche, would you please explain to us about the twelve links and dependent arising and how this helps to develop renunciation.

*Rinpoche:* I already mentioned this morning how to meditate on twelve links of dependent arising, how we circle in samsara. Out of ignorance, we start so many [sets of] links every day, every hour, every minute.

Then I said even if we are free from one prison, there is another prison outside. Even if we become free after a long time, there is another prison outside; there are more and more circles. It's kind of endless. Therefore, we must see how important it is to realize emptiness unified with dependent arising, and at least practice mindfulness on emptiness, to meditate every day on emptiness. To study the teachings is so important, so important.

By developing that into a direct perception of emptiness, that ceases the seed of karma and delusions, the cause of suffering. Then, we become free from all the results, all the sufferings. Practicing mindfulness on emptiness is so important. It helps free us from the prison of samsara. It is so important to do this every day and to study the teachings on emptiness as much as possible in this life.

This is coming! More teachings are coming!

Before that I must do the *lung*. I always forget to do the *lung*. I must do the *lung* first, otherwise I always plan to do it at the end but I always forget. This is the longest Chenrezig mantra. The shortest one is OM MANI PADME HUM. It is not OM MANI PADME HUM HRIH, which many people recite.

HRIH is the seed syllable of Chenrezig's holy mind, so OM MANI PADME HUM is six syllables, not seven syllables, six. OM MANI PADME HUM HRIH is not that. His Holiness has said that many times. So, that is the shortest one.

In the *nyung nä* text, there is Eleven-faced [Chenrezig] mantra:

NAMO RATNA TRAYAYA / NAMA ARYA JNANA SAGARA VAIROCHANA  
VYUHA RAJAYA / TATHAGATAYA / ARHATE / SAMYAKSAM BUDDHAYA /  
NAMAḤ SARVA TATHAGATEBHIAḤ / ARHATBHIAḤ SAMYAKSAM  
BUDDHEBHIAḤ / NAMA ARYA AVALOKITESHVARAYA / BODHISATVAYA /  
MAHASATVAYA / MAHAKARUNIKAYA / TADYATHA / OM DHARA DHARA  
/ DHIRI DHIRI / DHURU DHURU / ITTE VATTE / CHALE CHALE /  
PRACHALE PRACHALE / KUSUME / KUSUMA / VARE / ILI MILI / CHITI  
JVALAMAPANAYA SVAHA

This one is not in the *nyung nä* text, it is in the Mani Kabum. The very first time I went to Malaysia, I met Tony Wong. His job was to print books. His wife is strongly Christian. He has very close connection to female Chenrezig, the buddha who in China is called Kuan Yin, but his wife said she would allow him to become Buddhist if he won the lottery. He won—I don't know how much money. She was quite far away, so he did like this. [Rinpoche raises his arms in the air] He won the lottery and was allowed to become a Buddhist.

He has a very close connection to Kuan Yin. At nine o'clock every morning, he would go to his office and ask Kuan Yin, the female Chenrezig buddha, and receive answers from her. In the afternoon, on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, he did his main healing of very sick patients. Then after, when his office was full of sick people and there was not enough room, with people sometimes sitting on the steps, he recited mantras for hours, on and on, on and on.

I gave him a mantra, I don't remember the name of the deity, but he also recited that for hours. Although there was no statue of Chenrezig, there was a picture, and he put a bottle of water in front of it. There was no visualization; he just put it there with a strong belief that it was blessed. Then he gave the water to the sick people to drink. For example, once there was a man who had cancer, who had to be lifted up by his wife and a friend. But by drinking the water, he was sick but he got better, and the next day he walked alone without anybody's help. Like that, so many people were healed of their sicknesses by going to his office.

There is a Malaysian city near Singapore, Johor Bahru, where there is a Kagyü monastery. When I was going there from Kuala Lumpur, driven by somebody who had met Lama Yeshe in the past, Tony Wong came with me. All the way from Kuala Lumpur to Johor Bahru, he was explaining how many people had recovered from sickness. Even when we arrived, he hadn't finished his story.

I went there a few times, until we started the center [in Kuala Lumpur]. A lady called Huei wrote me a letter saying she wanted to start a center. Before meeting me, she wrote a short letter, and then it happened. Before [the center started], Tony Wong twice arranged the timetable. We went outside to see old folks' homes and different things. Much of the time was in the office, meeting all the sick people, doing observations, checking what they should do, things like that.

It takes a lot of time. I don't know how other lamas do it. Probably they have clairvoyance and so do things very quickly, but I don't, so it takes a long time. Tony told me his wife was waiting at home. It was after five o'clock and maybe she was a little angry about having to wait so long, I'm not sure. Then, he didn't go home. He recited this long mantra with all the people. It's supposed to be in Sanskrit, but there was only one Sanskrit word in all the words he recited. He asked me about this mantra but at that time I didn't know about it. He asked many other Kagyü lamas, but it seems he didn't get a reply. Maybe those many high lamas showed that aspect. I said I would check.

Once when I went to London, there was a student, a nun, Sarah, who was at the London FPMT center. She gave me the Mani Kabum. The Mani Kabum is written by Chenrezig, the compassionate buddha, the Dharma king of Tibet, Songtsen Gampo. I read it but not all. I saw this long mantra, and there were many pages about the benefits, about how it heals so many different sicknesses.

I gave it to Geshe Tegchok, the abbot of Nalanda, the FPMT monastery in France. They have been doing it for many years when they do *sojong*, the confession ritual, reviving the vows that are degenerated. They also do it when they are abiding in summer retreat. All the monasteries are supposed to do these three things. During the summer retreat, you have to recite the whole sutra, what the Buddha said, which, besides the study of sutra and tantra, makes the place qualified to function as a monastery. Therefore, I gave it to Geshe Jampa Tegchok, the abbot of Nalanda monastery, who was well-known in Sera, Ganden and Drepung. I gave it to him to be translated, so he sent it to the Tibetan university in Sarnath in India to be translated into Tibetan. Most of it was translated but some wasn't because they said it is very secret.

I'm going to do the *lung* of that. Sorry, it became a long, long story. They recite this for hours. I think maybe it is supposed to be Sanskrit, but only one word sounds Sanskrit. I don't think it's Chinese. I don't know whether it's some broken language or whether it is written that way for the patients. If we recite this mantra once, it's the same as having recited a hundred million times OM MANI PADME HUM. It's exactly the same. When we recite this once we get the benefit of having done so many years of retreat. It is unbelievably powerful. Whoever recites this mantra even once, when they go in the water, in a lake or an ocean, when the water touches their naked body, the water becomes holy water, blessed water. When that water goes away and touches people and animals, it purifies the unbelievably heavy negative karma created in the past, even like having killed our father or mother, or an arhat, or having harmed a buddha or caused disharmony in the Sangha. Those very heavy negative karmas collected in the past get purified when that water touches anybody, the people playing in the water or any sentient being in the water.

By reciting the mantra, we are free from the three types of birth. We don't get born in the womb; we are free from that. And we are free from birth from an egg. From our consciousness being conceived in an egg. And we are free from birth due to heat, like lice; we are totally free from that. From here up to enlightenment we are always around buddhas and bodhisattvas, so our life always goes up to enlightenment; it never goes down to the lower realms. That is why anyone who touches the water we have blessed, anybody who goes into the water, people or animals who touch that water, receive incredible benefits. Many lifetimes of heavy negative karma they have collected get purified. Our life always goes up to enlightenment because we are around buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Not always, not to every sick person, but I generally give water blessed by this mantra. You can bless water with different mantras but this is the main one to bless water. I think the power of this mantra helps many people. I'm sure it does for those who have the karma.

Sorry. It doesn't look good to say that, but it is the power of the mantra. Even though I don't have the blessing, reciting this mantra gives the power to purify others' negative karma. I think, by touching their body somewhere and things like that, it becomes great purification. So, when we recite [the mantra and bless] the water of the lake or the ocean, when the water then touches

other beings—all the big or small animals in the ocean and the people—it is very precious water; it helps them so much.

I myself don't have any power, but I try to bless the water especially with this mantra and then put it in the ocean. I did it in Singapore and maybe in Russia. In Russia we went to Kalmykia, a monastery where they built a Maitreya statue like we did. Theirs was a few stories, I think maybe three stories. They built it by using our Maitreya statue as an example. I went there to consecrate it with other monks. I got permission to go to that secret place. It is huge. It is the largest ocean. [Rinpoche is referring to a trip to the Caspian Sea in October 2019] I got permission and soldiers took me out in a boat with quite a number of bottles of water blessed with the mantra. After some time, I poured a little bit of water out and then everybody poured the water [into the Caspian Sea.]

All the animals, all the living beings in the water that the water contacted were purified. There were two or three boats. Different people went and as the boat went out, so many birds came. The soldiers said because the boat had a machine down below, the small fish came and so the birds came to eat them. The birds followed a little bit, but I didn't see them eating the small fish. They didn't follow us all the way through, maybe because the sun was setting. I tried to do this. My plan is to try to help sentient beings everywhere living in the water. Whatever they are, big or small, they always have great fear, either trying to eat somebody who is alive or, at the same time, running from their enemy who is right there, trying to eat them. It is like that.

Of course, from an airplane the water looks so blue, and there is a beach and mountains. It looks so nice, so blue, with the sun shining. But when we go a little bit below the surface of the water, there are so many fish, some big like mountains, some tiny, with the big ones eating the small ones, and the small ones, wherever they are, near stones or wherever, trying to hide. But, due to karma, their enemy is right there. Wherever they go, their enemy is always right there. It is like that! Can you imagine the suffering? When a shark comes, it's huge. And then this other fish. What's it called? I forgot the name. I wrote down the name of the fish. I wrote it down but it's in a different book. Sorry.

There are millions [of small fish] in the ocean. I don't know who leads them. Then, when the shark comes, they get scared and go like this. [Rinpoche indicates with his hands the fish bunching together] They get scared and go like this, becoming a ball. Then, it's very easy for the shark to eat them, very easy to get them in its mouth. They are so scared; they don't know, and then they are eaten. That is just one example. Not only sharks, there are other fish that eat them. There is not much we can do but help them, but we should do whatever we can, even just reciting this mantra and blessing water, and then taking it to the oceans or lakes. We should do whatever we can to help them. They are our most dear, our most dear, our most kind, our most precious; they are wish-fulfilling.

On the day [we went to the Maitreya statue], it was good weather. Usually, it seems it's difficult to stay where the statue was built because so much wind brings dust with it and you get it in your eyes. It's difficult just being there. That is what they said when they did the consecration the first time. On that day we were lucky. It was very good weather, totally blue, with no wind. Because I didn't know the place, I bought many plastic bowls, big ones and small ones, maybe a thousand, to make offerings. Before I went, they made beautiful traditional offerings around the statue, with incense. Then, we did puja and did the consecration.

So, think, "The purpose of my life is not just to achieve happiness, even liberation from samsara for myself, not just that. It is to benefit others, to free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings: the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless suras, the numberless asuras—to free everyone from the oceans of samsara and bring them to enlightenment by myself alone. Therefore, I must achieve enlightenment. Therefore, I'm going to take the oral transmission of the mantra."

I received this mantra from Kyabje Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche, whose qualities are like the sky, an amazing, learned, good-hearted and pure teacher.

[Rinpoche begins the *lung* of longest Chenrezig mantra, *The Holy Name Mantra of Chenrezig*]

OK. That's enough. That is the *lung*.

### ***The Rice Seedling Sutra***

In the *Rice Seedling Sutra*, I think ignorance is like the farmer, the cultivator. Then the field is used as an example of karma. In the field of karma is planted the seed of consciousness. Seed is used as an example of consciousness. The seed is planted in that field. Then, the farmer makes it wet with the water of craving and grasping. From that, the sprout—name and form—arises.

That is what it says. First is the ignorance holding the I as real. That motivates the karma. [Rinpoche yawns] Sorry, I have many bad behaviors. That motivates the karma. Ignorance is the cultivator.

Then, from the field come the crops, bad crops and good crops. Various crops grow from the field. As I said before, the field is used as an example of karma. From the karma, the bad and good results come. Various samsaric rebirths arise. Therefore, karma is like a field. The consciousness, that which goes from one life to another, holds the seed or capacity of bad and good karma until the result manifests, the fruit ripens. Consciousness holds the seed or potential of bad and good karma until it ripens.

So, consciousness is like the seed. With water and heat, when the seed is moistened.... There is the Tibetan word, *bang ru*, which means the grain used for making alcohol inside a pot. In Solu Khumbu we put a hollow bamboo tube inside and suck the wine through the tube. *Bang ru* refers to the wet grains inside [the pot] that are used to make *chang*. It is the material that becomes *chang*.

So, the heat and water make the seed wet and ripen it and from that, the plant grows. Wetness is used as an example of craving and grasping. From the wetness of craving and grasping, becoming happens. From becoming, the seed of karma is propagated, and from there comes birth, the next life. The links of craving and grasping are like the water and minerals, causing the consciousness to join in the mother's womb, bringing about the birth.

That is the result. In the example, the plant grows. That is like birth. That is the consciousness joined in the womb and taking birth. In the *Rice Seedling Sutra* it says,

Well, the phrase dependent arising means that something arises because something else already exists; something is born because something else was already born. That is to say, ignorance causes formations. Formations cause consciousness. Consciousness causes name and form. Name and form cause the six sense sources. The six sense sources cause contact. Contact causes sensation [feeling]. Sensation causes craving. Craving causes appropriation [grasping]. Appropriation causes becoming. Becoming causes birth. And birth causes aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, suffering, despair, and anxiety. Thus does this entire great heap of suffering arise. [24]

I remembered I wanted to tell you this. At Vajrapani, Santa Cruz, there was a Japanese boy. I don't know if he had cancer, but he was dying anyway. He must have been quite intelligent, but when he was dying he thought the way phenomena appeared to him cheated him, deceived him. I think he got angry because the way phenomena had appeared to his mind had cheated him. Therefore, he got angry at the time of his death. He must have been quite intelligent. Actually, how things appeared to us as real, as truly existent, as existing from their own side, as existing by nature, all this is decoration, projection by our ignorance, through the negative imprints left on the continuity of the consciousness. He knew he was being deceived but he didn't know that it came from his mind. Because he hadn't met the Dharma, he didn't know the Dharma, he didn't know that. Thinking the way things appeared to him cheated him, he got angry as he was dying.

The most important thing is that this came from his mind; it was projected by his mind, by the negative imprints left by ignorance on the consciousness from beginningless rebirths. He didn't

know that, so that most important thing was missing. If he had known that, it would have helped him know what it was that had cheated him, his mind, the ignorance. Ignorance had cheated him, not only in this life but from beginningless rebirths up to now. He had been cheated by his own ignorance.

Therefore, studying Madhyamaka, shunyata, emptiness, as much as possible and meditating to actualize emptiness is the most important thing we can do if we don't want to suffer, if we want to be free from samsara. If we want to be free from samsara, this is what we need. All suffering arises from ignorance. As the sutra says, if there is this, that arises, and at the end is the result. This is the evolution of the dependent arising of the all-arising, which means karma and delusion.

Now, with the evolution, we can reverse it. Old age and death come from birth; birth comes from becoming; becoming comes from craving and grasping and so on. It goes down to compounded action comes from ignorance. So, there are two ways, forward and backward, and this second way is going backward.

Similarly, by ceasing ignorance, we cease the karmic formations. By ceasing the craving and grasping, we cease becoming, then birth. From this we cease the seven results: [consciousness,] name and form, the six sense bases, contact, feeling, then birth and old age and death.

Then, in the same way, by ceasing birth we cease old age and death. Then, all the way down to ceasing karmic formations and ceasing ignorance. That is the traditional evolution of dependent arising. Then going backward is the dependent arising of cessation.

That's why the yogi who seeks liberation needs to meditate like this to become an expert in the evolution of the four noble truths, taking it from ignorance and going back to ignorance.

### ***The Wheel of Life***

With the four noble truths, the Buddha provided the information for sentient beings to understand this very easily. The Buddha used the rice seedling, an outside crop, as an example to understand the twelve dependent-related limbs. Then, making a drawing [of the Wheel of Life] makes it easy for sentient beings to understand.

One of the stories is explained in *Dulwa Namche, Clarifying the Vinaya*. Among Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's disciples, the hearer-listeners, the supreme, the one excellent in wisdom is Shariputra, and the one who is expert in psychic powers is Maudgalyayana. From time to time the two arhats, with their psychic powers, would travel through the six realms. When they came to Dzambuling, this human world, they explained to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's disciples the various ways that sentient beings are suffering, such as the sufferings of the hell beings and so forth. The Buddha's younger brother, Chungawa, didn't like at all the idea of becoming celibate, so Shariputra and Maudgalyayana took him to the lower realms with their psychic powers and showed him the sufferings of the lower realms. They showed him how desire leads to the lower realms. That is how the Buddha's younger brother entered the Dharma.

And then, all the Buddha's disciples came around and this story was explained to the Buddha by his attendant, Ananda. Then, in this sutra *Clarifying the Vinaya* the Buddha said,

Ananda, those two great disciples Shariputra and Maudgalyayana won't happen like that at other times, with one excellent in wisdom and one excellent in psychic powers, therefore, draw the Wheel of Life outside the monastery.

Outside the monastery means like we have done here in Kopan, outside the gompa. The Wheel of Life depicts the five [types of] transmigratory being: the hell transmigratory beings are one, the animal transmigratory beings, the hungry ghost transmigratory beings, the human transmigratory beings and the sura and asuras (which are put into one category).

Then, the Buddha said,

Below draw the hell sentient beings and the animals and the hungry ghosts, the three lower realms draw [and above] show the deva and human beings. Then, draw the eastern world, Exalted Body, and the western world, Enjoying the Ox. These worlds come in the

mandala. They have many qualities, so offering to them helps us have success. Then in the north, Uninteresting Sound. A week before they die, they hear a bad sound, which means a sign that they are going to die. Then, also draw the human world, Dzambuling. In the center of the wheel, draw attachment, anger and ignorance.

That is what is explained in *Clarifying the Vinaya*. So here, in the center of the Wheel of Life, there is attachment, anger and ignorance.

It will come again later with the clarification, but I'll explain this anyway. [At the hub of the wheel] there is a pig, [a pigeon and a snake]. Both the pigeon's tail and snake's tail should come from the pig's mouth. In many Wheels of Life, they draw the tail of the rooster in the mouth of the pig and the snake in the mouth of the rooster. That is incorrect. In Nepal maybe people draw the Wheel of Life as they have been taught by their teacher without looking to see what is explained by the Buddha in his teachings.

Drawing it that way is probably to show that anger arises due to attachment. But how it is explained in the sutra is that from the pig's mouth come the tails of both the pigeon and the snake, signifying that ignorance, holding the I real, is the root of samsara. The pigeon signifies attachment. I saw a geshe explain once that pigeons have so much attachment. If you throw your spit on the ground, a pigeon will take it and feed its wife or husband. I don't know, it will feed the other pigeon from its mouth. There is so much attachment in the relationship. That is why a pigeon is used in the Wheel of Life for attachment.

Then the snake signifies anger. Both tails are in the mouth of the pig. That means if we have the root of samsara, the ignorance that holds the I as true, then anger and attachment also come. These three are the three poisonous minds. There are many other delusions, such as the six root delusions and the twenty secondary delusions. Then there are the 84,000 delusions. But these three poisonous minds are the true cause of suffering; they are delusions.

On either side of the hub there is a black side and a white side. Depending on which of the six realms the being is going to be born in, there are different signs in the intermediate state. If they are going to the lower realms, such as hell, they are depicted on the dark path. When they are going to a higher realm, they are depicted on the light path. The intermediate state beings who are going down are depicted as naked people, chained and in the black part showing the negative karma, going to lower realms.

Then, there is white one, the virtuous path, then... [Rinpoche sneezes] Excuse me. I think it's time to stop. It says time to stop. On the white path, the beings are going to the higher realms. They are well dressed, even the lay people, well dressed, going up. Due to virtue, they are going to be born in the upper realms.

OK. I'll stop here. After a few minutes, we'll start again. I'm joking! OK. Break.

*Rinpoche to Ven. Robina:* How many dedications did you do while we were doing one? While I was doing one slowly, I think you did it a few times, three or four times.

OK, thank you.

You can leave.

[Rinpoche leaves but later returns to do his preparation for the Vajrasattva *jenang*]



## Lecture 13: December 11, pm



### *The Benefits of Reciting the Buddha's Name Mantra*

Remember this!

[Rinpoche begins by reciting Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's name mantra many times]

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's Holy Name Mantra

LA MA TÖN PA CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG  
DAG PAR DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ PÄL GYÄL WA SHA KYA THUB PA LA  
CHHAG TSHÄL LO

To Guru, Founder, Bhagavan, Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly Completed Buddha, Glorious Conqueror, Shakyamuni, I prostrate.

TADYATHA OM MUNE MUNE MAHA MUNAYE SVAHA

These few syllables of the Prajnaparamita have unbelievable benefits. It has unbelievable benefits.

First, when we recite this, it purifies 80,000 billion eons of negative karma, 80,000 billion eons of negative karma. This is mentioned in the Buddha's teachings, the Kangyur. The Buddha's teachings, the Kangyur has more than a hundred volumes, and it is mentioned there. If you want to know where it is mentioned, it is mentioned in the Kangyur. I don't remember the number of pages; there are a number of different texts. It depends on the different texts, depending on different volumes, the page changes.

It purifies 80,000 billion eons of negative karma when you recite this. You must write it down! It is mentioned in the Kangyur. The benefits are also mentioned in the lamrim texts, but much less. When you read the Kangyur, it is mentioned that 80,000 billion eons of negative karma are purified. You have to know that. You have to know that.

Second, our life always goes toward enlightenment; it never goes down. Our life always goes to enlightenment. That's the second benefit, that our life always goes directly to enlightenment, it never goes down.

That helps us to not get depressed, thinking "I can't do anything. I'm nothing!" In the West, there are millions of people with depression. The major problem is that they don't know the meaning of life, they don't know how to make life meaningful. The problem is that they don't know how to make their life happy. Does everybody understand?



When we don't know how to make our life happy, we moan and cry, "Ooooooooooh," like this for months and years. [Rinpoche hangs his head] "Nobody loves me, nobody loves me," for months and years, years and years. Our precious human body is wasted.

It's like arriving [on an island] where there are so many wish-granting jewels that we can collect but we never *recognized* them and so we return empty-handed. Do you understand? Like that, we have totally wasted our perfect human rebirth. We only have this one time and then death happens and it's finished.

Our whole life is used to create negative karma, the cause of the lower realms, the cause to be born as a hell being, a hungry ghost or an animal. Our whole life, day and night, is used for that. It's very sad.

This is not the first time. It has been like this from beginningless rebirths. Fortunately, like in a dream, something impossible has happened this time and we have attained a human rebirth, which we can use to achieve the three great meanings. You have meditated on that already. The three great meanings are to achieve higher rebirth, to achieve liberation from samsara, not just a few months or a few years and then come back, but forever. Forever free from samsara and its causes. And the third great meaning is attaining full enlightenment for the sake of sentient beings, so we are able to free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment.

The third benefit is that reciting [this mantra] creates the karma to be able to practice tantra. It creates the cause to actualize the tantric path, the quick path to enlightenment, to achieve enlightenment in one lifetime. Especially, by practicing highest yoga tantra we can achieve enlightenment in a brief lifetime of degenerate times or within a few number of years, like Gyalwa Ensapa did.

Then fourth, we can bring incredible, unbelievable extensive benefits to sentient beings. By reciting this, we are able to do like Chenrezig, the compassionate buddha, and like Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Just as they received benefits from this, by reciting this we will also get the same, because the nature of our mind is buddha nature. I'm not saying that our mind is a buddha mind. I'm not saying we are a buddha. If that were the case, if we were already buddhas, it looks like there would be two sorts of buddhas: obscured, suffering buddhas and buddhas who are free from suffering. Therefore, we would be an obscured buddha!

What does the term "buddha" mean? "Buddha" means being free from all the sufferings and obscurations. That is the meaning of "buddha." And the completion of all realizations, that is what "buddha" means. That means we are not a suffering being, that we don't have obscurations, if we are a buddha. Like that, like Chenrezig, we are able to bring incredible, extensive benefits to sentient beings, which is the fourth benefit.

You must write this down. You must know the four benefits of reciting the few syllables of the Prajnaparamita. It is incredible.

I'll do the *lung* of that, OK. To achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, I'm going to do the *lung*. [Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's Holy Name Mantra.]

LA MA TÖN PA CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG  
DAG PAR DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ PÄL GYÄL WA SHA KYA THUB PA LA  
CHHAG TSHÄL LO

To Guru, Founder, Bhagavan, Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly Completed Buddha, Glorious Conqueror, Shakyamuni, I prostrate.

TADYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SVAHA

Not "MUNI MUNI." That is wrong. Kyabje Khunu Lama Rinpoche said that is wrong. It's MUNI MUNI but many texts have MUNI MUNI because they didn't check. Sanskrit is not like English. Rinpoche said that is mistaken. TADYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SVAHA.

You have received the *lung*, the oral transmission, which I received from Kyabje Khunu Lama Rinpoche and I think His Holiness.

I'll continue.

### ***The Wheel of Life [Back to]***

The text *Gyuma Namche* then says [of the Wheel of Life], “you draw the Buddha’s holy body pointing to a white circle, which signifies the cessation of suffering.” Often this is depicted [in the top corner] of the drawing of the Wheel of Life, where there is the Buddha, pointing his finger to this side. [Rinpoche points up and to his left] This shows this is the true path, [leading from] the three poisonous minds, from the three lower realms’ suffering, creating good karma that means we get a higher rebirth as a deva or a human being.

Besides the desire realm, there are also the form and formless realms. The form realm has four firm contemplations, *samten zhi*. Within that, there are seventeen categories. The beings of the third realm, the formless realm, have no form, only mind. That is not normally drawn in the Wheel of Life. Some drawings show seventeen lines depicting the seventeen of the form realm but not the formless realm. Because it doesn’t have form, it is not drawn.

Geshe Sopa said that there is suffering of change in the form realm but in this text it says there is no suffering of change in the form realm. Anyway, in the formless realm there is pervasive compounding suffering, the third suffering, but no suffering of pain or suffering of change.

If we want to be free from the all-arising, from karma and delusions, from all suffering, the Buddha points this finger out here, pointing to the true path. [Rinpoche gestures up and to his left]

Then, there are a few lines of a verse and, on top of that, a circle, which is sometimes above the Buddha’s hand. If we want to be free from suffering, we must practice the true path. Then, we will achieve the true cessation of suffering, the sorrowless state. There are sometimes two verses either here or here, and the Buddha points above this, indicating if we practice the true path we will achieve the true cessation of suffering.

In Nepal, many people, both men and women, draw Wheels of Life to sell to Western people in order to make money. But if you don’t know how it should be, what you buy will be imperfect. Many thangkas, many mandalas, many drawings and designs are imperfect, and if you don’t know how to buy them, you can spend so much time and money. People buy huge thangkas of mandalas, but they are not perfect; they are just made up. You need to take somebody from Kopan, somebody who knows well what is correct, and they can help you buy the correct one. Otherwise, many Wheels of Life are incorrect because the artists don’t know the teachings. Of course, there are also artists who have been taught correctly, as the Buddha explained in the teachings, but many Wheels of Life are incorrect.

The form realm, which has four firm contemplations, is not there most of the time. There is no space, so there is no Buddha, no true path. Even the Buddha pointing the way out [of samsara] is not there, pointing out true suffering and the true cause of suffering. If we practice the true path, we achieve the true cessation of suffering. That is what the Buddha is pointing out. That is the solution. It’s so important. In most Wheels of Life the Buddha is there, but in many [there is no indication of] true suffering and the true cause of suffering. In many Wheels of Life you get in Nepal there is just Amitabha Buddha Pure Land. The true path is not there.

When the Buddha taught the four noble truths in the first turning of the wheel of Dharma in Sarnath, he taught the true path, but he did not mention pure lands. It comes later. Many don’t have that, [the true path,] so it’s very sad. There is only true suffering and the true cause of suffering but there is no solution to get out of suffering. Then, we would have to stay in suffering forever, whether we like it or not. Very sad. This is not there in many Wheels of Life. Some don’t even have the Buddha. Like that, it’s very sad.

Even if the Buddha is there, there is no true path, or there is just a pure land, which the Buddha did not mention in the sutra teachings. [Later] it was explained that even if we are full of delusions and mistakes, it is easy to be born in Amitabha Buddha Pure Land. If we pray and collect merits, if we think of the qualities of Amitabha Buddha Pure Land and recite Amitabha

Buddha's mantra. As I mentioned, if we are born in Amitabha Buddha Pure Land, we are so lucky; we don't experience the suffering of pain, the suffering of change or pervasive compounding suffering. We are free.

Many great lamas who have completed the path said that. Asanga said that. Jetsun Chökyi Gyaltsen, of our Sera Je College, mentioned that. It's OK, but we must have the true path; we must have those words [in the drawing of the Wheel of Life]. If that is too high, we write there, but we should have the English, so everybody can read it. That is too far away to read. [Rinpoche gestures up and to his left] So, maybe the English can be here. That is very good.

It says in the text that death, [intermediate state] and rebirth are like the bucket that is lowered into the well and then brought up. For the Wheel of Life, the Buddha said to draw the evolution with the twelve dependent-related limbs, [forward as well as] backwards.

Another thing is [the wheel] held in the mouth [of Yama], showing impermanence and death. Yama is not a deity. There are no skeletons. Having skeletons is a mistake. The artist who draws skeletons and offerings down there is wrong. Holding the wheel in Yama's mouth shows us how our life is trapped in impermanence and death. The numberless beings circling in the six realms—we and everybody else—are in the nature of impermanence and death and being held in the mouth [of Yama] shows this.

I think the [two folds of] a monk's *dongka*, the yellow robe, represent Yama's fangs. Seeing them we are supposed to be aware of impermanence and death, how our life is. We are supposed to always remember how we and the numberless beings are in the nature of impermanence and death. It's easy that way. This is not only to frighten us but so that we practice Dharma all the time, so that we never waste our life. This is so that we not only make our life meaningful for ourselves but—the best way—so that we make it meaningful for every sentient being: for the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless suras and asuras, as I mentioned yesterday.

The benefits of practicing the mindfulness that our life is in the nature of impermanence and death are like that. We achieve higher rebirth; we achieve liberation from samsara; we achieve enlightenment! All the numberless sentient beings in the six realms, in samsara, are under the control of impermanence. This impermanence is what the Lord of Death shows by holding the whole Wheel of Life in his mouth. It is to show that every being in samsara is under the control of impermanence and death. But the Lord of Death is not a deity. It shouldn't be drawn like a tantric deity, with skeletons. Skeletons? [*Ven. Ailsa*: Skulls.] Skulls. [The Lord of Death] doesn't have skulls.

And holding the wheel with his two hands shows true suffering and the true cause of suffering. I think it might be like that. Holding it like that shows that we are all under that, under true suffering and the true cause of suffering. But [Yama] is not a deity. That is one mistake.

Then there are two verses [from the *Dhammapada*]:

[23:327] Delight in heedfulness! Guard well your thoughts. Draw yourself out of this bog of evil, even as an elephant draws himself out of the mud.

We should enter the Buddha's teachings, [but not] like an elephant going into a mud hut. When an elephant goes into a mud hut it ruins everything!

Anyone who has great conscientiousness,

Should enjoy the holy Dharma of the Vinaya.

There are five paths we must complete to be liberated, to be free from samsara, but the essential path is the three higher trainings: the higher training in morality, the higher training in concentration and the higher training in wisdom. Morality is unbelievably important; it is the basis for the other two. To be free from samsara, that is the basic path. But it can also be the Vinaya. "Dharma" means subduing our mind. It has that meaning.

The perfect human rebirth has eight freedoms and ten richnesses. The eight freedoms include being born as a human being and in the center of a religious country, like Bodhgaya or somewhere where there is the lineage of vows with male and female *getsuls* and male and female

*gelongs*. Wherever there is a lineage of vows that we can receive, that is a religious country. [With morality, we can be born] with perfect organs and not fall into committing extreme actions, such as the five immediate negativities: killing our own father and mother, killing an arhat, [maliciously] drawing blood from a buddha and causing disunity among the Sangha. If we have done any of these, we have fallen into the extreme action; if we have not committed any of them, we have not fallen into the extreme action.

Another teaching says it is not having committed any of the ten nonvirtues; that is the strictest way [of interpreting it]. It is having faith in the teachings in the Tripitaka, but my guru Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche said [practicing] the Buddhadharma is subduing the mind, so it is the Buddhadharma, and not just the Vinaya, that subdues the mind. Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche said that in Varanasi many years ago when I received the lamrim teachings for the first time.

I don't have to say all that. Having faith in the Tripitaka, or having faith in the *dulwa la depa*, that is not necessarily just the Vinaya, it's having faith that the Buddhadharma subdues our mind. It means having faith in the lamrim, having faith in karma. The text says,

Anyone who has great conscientiousness,  
Should enjoy the holy Dharma of the Vinaya.  
If you enjoy this, you abandon rebirth in samsara.  
Your suffering becomes the last; there is no continuation.

We abandon the cause of suffering, negative karma, and we create the cause of happiness, virtuous karma. As I mentioned, in that way, we can be free from samsara. The basic path is the higher training in wisdom, which depends on the higher training of morality. That is contained there. We can abandon rebirth in samsara. As the text says, "there is no continuation." Our suffering in samsara is finished. This shows the true path.

The Buddha explained that monasteries should not only have [the Wheel of Life] drawn outside in the gateway, like we have at Kopan, to be seen when you come in, but also for people who don't know the meaning, there must be a monk, a bhikshu, to explain it to people.

I was thinking, in Bendigo [in Australia], where we are building a huge stupa similar to the Gyangtse stupa in Tibet, we should have a very big Wheel of Life, maybe lit from behind so it stands out very nicely. Then of course, when there is the need, somebody can explain the details. In *Lung Namche*, the Buddha said that when brahmins, when families, go to the monastery, there should be a monk, a bhikshu, who can explain the meaning of the Wheel of Life.

Another text, *Lung Tensag*, talks about when the Buddha was abiding in Shravasti, living in Shravasti. Shravasti is an incredible holy place where the Buddha lived for twenty-five years, somewhere near there for five years and then in total twenty-five years [doing the rainy season retreats there]. It was the longest time [he lived anywhere].

Kyabje Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche, one of my gurus, said it is incredibly powerful for meditation. I sent an Italian student, Stefano, who was maybe a monk at that time, to check out Shravasti. He said, "When you are there, meditation just comes. You need effort in other places, but there, meditation just comes." That is the benefit of the place he experienced. It is so powerful. So, I thought to build seven retreat houses there. This was many, many years ago.

At that time, it was not so easy. We have many centers, in Dharamsala, Bodhgaya, Pokhara. In India and Nepal we have different places and you always have to find people to take care of these places. That is so difficult. People say yes, but that is not enough. The person has to take care of the place. It's difficult to find people to look after these centers, especially in those times. When I think of that, I get very tired! Then, I lose hope to build those seven retreat houses there, so that not only me but other people can do retreat there. I have to find the right people but it is so difficult.

When the Buddha was abiding in Shravasti, a lay benefactor offered the *kunga rawa*, which I think is the place where you keep Dharma texts, sort of like a library, with the Dharma texts on the shelves. He offered to build the *kunga rawa* in the park for the four-directions Sangha. It didn't have a painting. It looked ugly, so they asked the Buddha, who told them to make a

drawing. They didn't know what to draw, so again they asked the Buddha, who told them to draw a gateway, like the outside gate of Kopan, [depicting] the Buddha's great miraculous powers, the miracles he displayed over fifteen days, and the Wheel of Life, and the Buddha's life story. The Buddha explained this clearly.

When the Buddha was abiding in India, in the outlying country, Ugyen or Oddiyana, King Udrayana (Making Sound) sent a very precious jewel armor to King Bimbisara (Zug Chen Nyingpo, Essence of Form). Bimbisara couldn't find a suitable present to send back so he consulted with the ministers who suggested he ask the Buddha. [First] the ministers said to draw the Buddha's holy body. That might be better to send that to the outlying country, Oddiyana. They tried to draw the Buddha's holy body by looking at it, but the Buddha's holy body was so magnificent they couldn't draw it. Then Buddha sent a shadow on a cloth stretched on the ground, and they could draw from that. Then, the Buddha asked them to put paint on it. After the Buddha was drawn, down below [there should be] taking refuge, the higher training of morality and the twelve dependent-related limbs, [which should be both the evolution of that [in forward order] and in reverse order. They were the verses to be written, and the Wheel of Life was to be there.

When that was sent to the outlying country's king, Udrayana, just by hearing the name of the Buddha and seeing the painting of the Buddha's holy body, he got incredible devotion. Then, he went for refuge to the Buddha. Then, day and night he meditated on the twelve dependent-related limbs, the evolution and backwards. Udrayana directly realized emptiness and in the end achieved arhatship. This is brief. The detailed explanation is mentioned in *Clarifying the Vinaya*.

Gen Sopa-la said that the best method for the sentient beings to be free from samsara is through the four noble truths and the twelve dependent-related limbs. The twelve dependent-related limbs show the evolution of samsara and [the four noble truths] show how to be free from it, how to achieve nirvana, what is to be practiced and what is to be abandoned. That is the path shown here.

For example, as I told you already, at the hub of the Wheel of Life are the three poisonous minds, then there are the twelve dependent-related limbs, with the meaning [clearly shown] in the painting, with various methods precisely shown.

Most Buddhist temples are supposed have this outside the temple. Geshe-la said in the center of Tibet, most of the temples have this at the door, like Kopan, [so people see it] before entering the gumpa. [This is not common] in other Buddhist countries, like Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand. They don't have this drawing. This is what Geshe-la said. Then, he said there were often some incorrect [elements] in the drawings.

[The drawing shows how] samsaric beings, being motivated by the cause, the delusions, the three poisonous minds, collect various virtuous and nonvirtuous karma. Due to that, the result, they take birth in samsara. They get reborn in the six realms. Then, unceasingly, they experience the three types of suffering. The drawing of the Wheel of Life signifies the suffering of pain, the three lower realms, and the suffering of change, the human world and the world of the desire realm gods, the suras and asuras. Pervasive compounding suffering is signified by the form devas, but very few Wheels of Life have the seventeen categories, the world of form, and none have the formless realm, which is also not free from the third suffering, pervasive compounding suffering.

Nagarjuna said,

If you have the grasping at the I, karma is motivated.

From the karma comes rebirth.

Motivated by karma, birth comes, with no beginning, no end, no center. The circle of the samsara is like fire, [like twirling a lighted stick of] incense. [Rinpoche spins his hand quickly] It goes around and there is no beginning, no end, no center. Like that, we circle in samsara due to karma and delusions. Unceasingly going around through the twelve dependent-related limbs, like that, we circle. [The Wheel of Life] is shown in forward and reverse order.

Geshe Sopa said there are different examples of the twelve dependent-related limbs, but the purest reference is what Lama Atisha taught Dromtönpa, who is Chenrezig. He was a translator for Lama Atisha in Tibet. Lama Atisha came from Nalanda in India and Dromtönpa is Tibetan.

I don't know there is not much time, but Lama Atisha taught Dromtönpa this:

Ignorance is signified by the blind old lady. (And he gave all the reasons.)

Compounding action is signified by the potter who makes many clay pots. (Which means the karmic formations.)

Consciousness is like a monkey.

Name and form is like going by boat.

The six sense bases is an empty house.

Contact is signified by [two people] kissing.

Feeling is shown by somebody with an arrow shot in the eye.

Craving is shown by somebody drinking alcohol. (With somebody putting a bottle of alcohol on the table, like a Tibetan-Sherpa-style party, which they are enjoying.)

Grasping is shown by a monkey catching fruit.

Becoming is signified by a pregnant woman.

Birth is signified by the child coming out.

Old age and death is signified by a person carrying a corpse.

It is said in the sutra, all these beings are held by impermanence, so this is in the mouth of the Lord of Death. (Which I've already told you.)

### ***We Are in the Fangs of Yama***

[Video extract: [You Spend Your Whole Life Between the Fangs of Yama](#)]

I mentioned that the [two folds in a monk's] *dongka* represent the fangs of Yama. It's like we are in the mouth of Yama, in the nature of impermanence, under impermanence. At any time, his mouth can close. At any time, death can happen. We never know, we never know. By this time next year, we could be somewhere else, in the hell realm or the deva realm. We never know where. By this time next year, by this time tomorrow—we can't say—Yama can close his mouth, the mouth we are inside now. We are between the fangs now, but it could close at any time.

That is a very good meditation, to meditate on how it could close at any time. [Rinpoche closes his fingers] It could close at any time. Death could happen at any time. We never know. Even recently, I think in America or somewhere, [Thubten] Pende's mother and father were talking to each other in the house and his father did like this. [Rinpoche turns his head] During that time, his wife just died. The father and mother were just talking and when the father looked away, the mother died. It often happens like that.

A student here wanted to become a nun so much. Khadro-la could see that. She was young. I don't think I inspired her to become nun. Of course, Khadro-la can see the past, present and future. She died here in the bathroom. I have a big Buddha in my room. I told [her parents] to make [offerings] there for her good rebirth. I was thinking that her father could keep the Buddha in their house but the father didn't want it, so I have it in my room. I forgot her name.

Then another student, an Iranian lady, what is her name? She was here many years. When she came to Kopan she was always drunk. What is her name? [*Student: Mandana.*] Her husband is a bank manager of a world bank in a very high [position]. He's a very good human being. She died in England in the bathroom. I think she might have slipped.

Then, there is the Chinese nun, Dechen, that we had long time ago in America, in Land of Calm Abiding. She was there with another Chinese nun for some years. I think she died a few days ago. She was found in the bathroom, sitting on the toilet. Maybe there was some blood. We didn't know that.

So, you really can't say. Death can happen any time. I think that is the most important meditation. I haven't started the Vajrasattva yet, but that is my last advice. To always remember impermanence and death, to always be mindful of it. That is my last *very* important advice.

I think that was also said by the Buddha to his disciples. Kadampa geshe Sharawa said,

You have a hundred thoughts, but the mistake is not having thought the one thought.

We have a hundred thoughts, but the mistake is not having thought that one thought. Because of that we are under one mistake. We might have so many degrees from university, we might even know all this Dharma—we know the Madhyamaka, we know Pramāṇavārttika, we've done this retreat, that retreat, and so on and so forth—but if we are not mindful of impermanence and death, if there is the concept of permanence, our life is under the control of hallucinations.

Even if we have a hundred qualities, we are under the control of that one mistake. We might have learned so many things in Dharma texts, but if we never have the thought of impermanence and death, we will always live with a concept of permanence, thinking we will live for a long time. If we always live with the concept of permanence, our actions of body, speech, and mind don't become the Dharma. We might have become very learned in Dharma, unbelievably learned, but we never think of impermanence, we never think our life is [in the shadow of] impermanence and death. Thinking we are going to live long, our actions of body, speech, and mind don't become Dharma.

So, even if we are an expert in Dharma, we waste our life. We've done this retreat and that retreat, but we've never seen how our own life is impermanence and death; we always live with the wrong concept of permanence. That is what Kadampa geshe Sharawa said. Even living in a monastery, doing extensive study, being able to understand and explain [profound texts], when we never have the thought of impermanence and death, with the concept of permanence, our actions don't become Dharma.

Then, when death happens, we know we have cheated ourselves. That is what we totally come to know. As I said, even if we are not learned in Dharma but have a lot of degrees, a lot of education in science, but we have never thought of our life as impermanent, always living in the concept of permanence, then suddenly when death happens, we get so upset. We have so many regrets because we didn't expect it.

If we are normally mindful of impermanence and death in our life, if we remember to practice mindfulness every day, then even when death comes suddenly, we are not surprised. We are not worried because we did the preparation. Because of the mindfulness of that, we have already done the preparation. Thinking of impermanence and death, we have no worries when the actual time of death comes, knowing in our future life we will achieve happiness, the body of a happy transmigratory being, and then liberation from saṃsāra and enlightenment.

We might think that for businesspeople it would be easier, but normally because people don't think [about death], there is incredible fear, even anger, like what happened to the Japanese boy. There can be incredible fear, and then of course, [that affects] the next life reincarnation, whether it's a higher rebirth or a lower rebirth.

Here it says, our [human] body is here now in our bed, but by this time tomorrow our body could be on the firewood, burning, with [the brains] coming out of the skull. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] This can happen any time. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] It is so good to meditate on that, even that we are dying now. We should meditate on the whole thing that is going to happen: the body being taken to the cemetery this time tomorrow and put on the fire. It could happen next year or next month, next week or tomorrow. The body could be there.

It is such a good meditation to think that. That is the reality. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers multiple times] Then, our attachment to this and that, our anger to this and that—there is no purpose to get angry or attached to this and that, to have all the problems. Because there is no reason for anger and attachment to arise, the mind has great peace, free from attachment, free from anger.

[End of video extract]

Now, I am about to finish.

The sutra said,

Your life of impermanence and death is in the aspect of wrathful Yama.

Wherever you are, there is no place where you are free from the harm of death.

While you are in samsara, you can't be liberated from the mouth of the Lord of Death.

Even if you actually meet the Buddha, there is nothing higher to teach you. [25]

Yama holds the Wheel of Life like this, with both hands. What do you call them? [Ven. Ailsa: Claws.] With the claws, holding with the claws. So, Geshe [Sopa]-la said that the Buddha explained it should be drawn like this. Then, even if we were to actually meet the Buddha, there would be nothing more to teach us, nothing more to tell us.

Geshe-la said that for people who follow the Buddha's compassion, the compassion buddha, it is good to spread out [disseminate?] the Wheel of Life, because it helps the Buddhadharma to spread in the ten directions and last a long time.

There are some more details about the twelve links, but I'll stop here.

### ***The Meaning of Vajrasattva***

Now Vajrasattva. Some of you may have received Vajrasattva in the past, the highest tantra Vajrasattva with the wisdom mother. Vajrasattva is a buddha so you don't say "consort." It's Vajrasattva with a wisdom mother. You shouldn't think of ordinary couples, like in New York, embracing each other, kissing or embracing or having sex. It's not like that.

I very briefly mentioned how a buddha's holy mind is the dharmakaya. I must have mentioned something like that. Otherwise, this initiation would be single, only the father, not with the mother. Highest tantra Vajrasattva is with the wisdom mother. I don't say "consort." "Consort" is on the way to enlightenment. Vajrasattva is a buddha. A buddha's holy mind, the dharmakaya, the mind of transcendental wisdom—those of you who practice highest tantra should understand that. That is the definitive meaning of Vajrasattva. The dharmakaya has skies of joy nondual with emptiness. That is the definitive meaning of Vajrasattva, which manifests in the holy body, the rupakaya, in the aspect of male and female. So, the definitive meaning Vajrasattva manifests in the male and female aspect, embracing.

[Ven. Karin begins to tell people who are not taking the initiation that they can leave]

Not yet. Not yet. Not yet. Until tomorrow at six o'clock. You can go to bed at six o'clock!

A very special disciple who has so much merit, who has the highest intelligence, can achieve enlightenment in one life. By practicing lower tantra, we can achieve enlightenment in one [extended] life, and if we only practice sutra we have to collect the merits of wisdom and the merits of virtue for three countless great eons. It takes a long time to achieve enlightenment, but even practicing lower tantra we can achieve enlightenment in one life. But now, practicing highest tantra like Vajrasattva father and mother embracing, by practicing that we can achieve enlightenment in a brief lifetime of degenerate times. For the disciple who has so much merit, so much intelligence and so much devotion, when that disciple fits this practice, they are able to achieve enlightenment in a brief lifetime of degenerate times.

There are many single father deities but also many deities like Vajrasattva father and mother, where father and mother embrace. This is talking about a highest tantra practice. It is the quickest way to achieve enlightenment.

I'm explaining what the definitive meaning of Vajrasattva is, which I said takes the form of Vajrasattva father and mother, manifesting in that aspect for the special disciple who has so much merit, intelligence and devotion to quickly achieve enlightenment. This is a very special meditation. It is not a couple, not like ordinary people having sex or kissing. We don't visualize it like that. To do this, we need to have so much merit, devotion and intelligence, we need to have the karma to practice highest tantra. We need to quickly diminish and overcome the ordinary defilements, the ordinary concepts. We need the quickest way to actualize the clear light, which is the highest tantra path.

Those of you who have received Vajrasattva before as a single, lower tantra father aspect, you just do the same meditation. Here it is Vajrasattva father and mother, but I think that for many



of you here it is the first time. You might have had Vajrasattva from lower tantra without the wisdom mother.

I'm not going to talk much but there is one thing that is very important to understand about the Vajrasattva practice. Lama Atisha said if you put the mandala like this and suddenly dust comes, it will be full of dust. It's like how when we don't cover our car, it becomes full of dust. We receive so many vices, so many negative karmas, by breaking the pratimoksha vows, the bodhisattva vows, the tantric vows. It's like dust falling on the mandala, covering it completely in a short time, just as dust covers a car if we don't cover it. But Lama Atisha said because of the Vajrasattva practice, we can clean the mandala in just one time. Like that, it is gone.

There were two Drepung geshe whose view was to never take initiations because they couldn't keep the vows, such as the tantric vow and samaya commitments that come with great initiations. Their view was to never take initiation because they couldn't keep the vows. That meant for them to achieve enlightenment it would take eons and eons and eons—an unbelievable length of time. That means that sentient beings would have to suffer in samsara, in the lower realms, samsara, for so many eons.

Lama Atisha said that the two geshe thinking like this is like a blind yak who cannot see all the grass. A blind yak can't see all the grass, so it eats some and leaves some. Lama Atisha said the two geshe are like that. He said that even though there are so many vices, so many negativities, like a waterfall, the two geshe didn't know the practice of Vajrasattva, how even a mandala full of dust can be cleaned in one time. With Vajrasattva we can purify more and more and more, and get higher and higher realizations, better and better realizations. Then, we can achieve enlightenment. Probably, the two geshe could never achieve enlightenment!

Please understand this. Even if we cannot do much practice, Vajrasattva is so important! (I didn't have to make a very loud noise!) Because our motivation from this morning has been either anger, attachment or ignorance. When we get up, we get dressed with attachment to this life, so it is nonvirtue. When we wash, it is with attachment to this life, so we will look good, so again it is attachment to this life; it is nonvirtue. When we eat breakfast, it is with attachment to this life, it completely becomes nonvirtue. Again, the motivation for going to do our job is normally attachment to this life, attachment to achieve happiness. There are people who don't believe in reincarnation but are very good-hearted, helping others, benefiting others, but generally, for people like me, we go to work with attachment, seeking the happiness of this life, which is nonvirtue. We spend many hours working, doing actions of body, speech and mind, and it is all negative karma. Then, we eat lunch with the motivation of attachment, with nonvirtue, and dinner with attachment to this life, with nonvirtue. Everything. Sleeping, no question. We think, "I'm so tired," and we go to sleep with attachment. Everything is like this.

Because the motivation is negative, all actions become negative actions. Even if we try to do a meditation, we try to do some Dharma practice, even if we are making charity to a beggar or somebody, we fail to remember their kindness, we never think how precious they are. Or we give something to a beggar but we do it—I don't know—with pride or with attachment.

All the negative karma [we commit today] becomes double tomorrow. That's why we have to practice Vajrasattva! All of today's negative karma done with body, speech and mind becomes double tomorrow and becomes triple on the next day and on the fourth day, after triple what do you call? What? [*Student*: Quadruple.] Qui-truple. Quite triple? I have to ask a hundred times. Anyway, it becomes double, triple and so on.

If we don't purify with Vajrasattva, at the end of the day a small negative karma becomes double the next day and then triple, and after some time it becomes like a mountain. It becomes like the size of this earth. One negative karma, by multiplying, by the time we die becomes the size of this earth. One atom multiplying becomes the size of the earth. This is how negative karma multiplies. When we die, one negative karma becomes like mountains. Then, our life becomes so difficult. Because we didn't purify it, we have to suffer for eons and eons and eons, in the hell realm, as a hungry ghost or an animal.

It is said,

To the wise man, even a great negativity becomes small; to the fool, even a small negativity becomes huge. [26]

It is very important to listen to this. Somebody who doesn't know Vajrasattva, even though the negative karma they collect is very small, because they don't know Vajrasattva and don't know how to purify, it increases every day and it becomes great. When we create it, the negative karma might be so small, but it increases and becomes unbelievable heavy negative karma. On the other hand, the wise ones know how to practice Vajrasattva, so even though they might create heavy negative karma, because they purify with Vajrasattva, it becomes small. They can purify it completely.

For example, if we don't do Vajrasattva, even we do small negative karma, after fifteen days, by increasing, it has increased ten thousand times and eight thousand on top of that, and then a hundred eighty-four. I'll repeat that. After fifteen days, the small negative karma increases to become the same as if we had killed a human being. It is very heavy. It increases ten thousand and eight thousand and a hundred and eighty-four. It's the same as if we killed a human being. It's not that we had killed a human being, but it's as if we had, because the karma has increased day by day.

Kyabje Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche or Kyabje Chöden Rinpoche said something about how the numbers increased, how they become double and triple and more and more. I don't remember what they said, but it's amazing.

However, if we do Vajrasattva at the end of the day, reciting not even a mala but just the Vajrasattva mantra twenty-one times, the negative karma stops increasing. There is the hundred-syllable Vajrasattva mantra but also the short one OM VAJRASATTVA HUM, which we need to recite twenty-eight times to stop negative karma multiplying.

There is also OM VAJRASATTVA AH, but when I asked my root guru, Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, he replied that OM VAJRASATTVA HUM is better.

So, this is important. Even if we don't do much practice, if we recite Vajrasattva, all our negative karmas become so small. Even heavy negative karma becomes so small when it is purified. It makes a huge difference to all our future lives. I want to tell you, that is why we practice Vajrasattva.

And then, for general purification, there is the practice of reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas, and purifying today's negative karma with taking self-initiation and other practices. Before going to bed, Lama Tsongkhapa recited the Thirty-five Buddhas thirty-five times, making his life very comfortable and happy, with no worries about death. Lama Tsongkhapa did that.

There are some more details about the twelve dependent-related limbs but I think maybe we'll stop there and do Vajrasattva. Otherwise, everybody might become enlightened before the Vajrasattva initiation. Then, I won't have a job. I'll be jobless!

I'll do the *gegtor* [the torma for the interferers]. You can meditate on compassion for sentient beings or meditate on emptiness or something.

[Rinpoche performs the *gegtor* ritual]

[Students offer mandala to request the initiation]

We'll just do this quickly. Think "The purpose of my life is not just to achieve happiness for myself, not even liberation from samsara, but to benefit others. I must free the numberless sentient beings in each realm from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and lead them to the state of omniscience, Vajrasattva's enlightenment, by myself alone. And to do that quickly, for that reason, I need to achieve the state of omniscience. For that reason, I need to actualize the path to enlightenment; I need to purify the defilements and collect extensive merits. Therefore, I'm taking the Vajrasattva initiation." Think that.

[Rinpoche confers the Vajrasattva initiation]

## Endnotes

Cover image of Lama Zopa Rinpoche on the Caspian Sea, Kalmykia, Russia, October 2019. Photo by Ven. Lobsang Sherab. Cover design by Gopa & Ted2, Inc. Interior images of Lama Zopa Rinpoche teaching in the newly rebuilt Chenrezig Gumpa during the 52nd Kopan Course, 2019. Photos by Neal Patrick.

1. See *FPMT Essential Prayer Book*, p. 79.
2. See *FPMT Essential Prayer Book*, p. 79.
3. See *FPMT Essential Prayer Book*, p. 77.
4. This quote corresponds roughly with a passage from the *Lamrim Chenmo*.
5. See *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* (Oxford University Press), p.69.
6. See *Nagarjuna's Precious Garland* (Snow Lion), p. 108.
7. See *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* (LTWA). Rinpoche quoted these verses in Tibetan but did not translate them.
8. See *FPMT Essential Prayer Book*, p. 79.
9. This text, *The Jewel Lamp: A Praise to Bodhicitta*, has been translated into English by Gareth Sparham as *Vast as the Heavens Deep as the Sea* (Wisdom Publications).
10. A two-day Thousand-arm Chenrezig retreat that involves fasting, prostrations and silence.
11. A tantric practice aimed at destroying self-grasping, where the practitioner visualizes dissecting and distributing the parts of the ordinary body to spirits and other beings as a feast offering.
12. See *The Questions of Sagaramati (Sagaramatipariprccha)* at <https://84000.co/translation/toh152>.
13. See *FPMT Essential Prayer Book*, p. 216.
14. See *Mind Training* (Wisdom Publications), pp. 213–14.
15. Tso Pema, or Rewalsar, is a sacred pilgrimage site in Himachal Pradesh, India, revered by Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs.
16. See *FPMT Essential Prayer Book*, p. 216.
17. See *Four Hundred on the Middle Way* at [bodhiwisdom.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/400-Verses-Root-Text.pdf](http://bodhiwisdom.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/400-Verses-Root-Text.pdf).
18. Rinpoche often attributes this quote to *Manjushri Root Tantra*, but Ven. Tenzin Namjong has found it quoted by Tsongkhapa.
19. See *FPMT Essential Prayer Book*, p. 286.
20. *Mind Training* (Wisdom Publications), p. 517.
21. See *FPMT Essential Prayer Book*, p. 127.

22. Quoted in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* (Wisdom Publications), p. 247.

23. See *The Rice Seedling Sutra* at [read.84000.co/translation/toh210.html#UT22084-062-010-section-1](http://read.84000.co/translation/toh210.html#UT22084-062-010-section-1).

24. See *The Rice Seedling Sutra*, Ch.1, v.4, at [read.84000.co/translation/toh210.html#UT22084-062-010-section-1](http://read.84000.co/translation/toh210.html#UT22084-062-010-section-1).

25. Unable to find the source of this quote.

26. Quoted in a slightly different translation in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* (Wisdom Publications), p. 184.

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## About Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche (1945–2023) was born in Thangme, Nepal and was recognized as the reincarnation of the Lawudo Lama at the age of three. From 1956 to 1959 Rinpoche studied at Domo Monastery in Tibet. He then fled Chinese oppression in Tibet and continued his study and practice in Tibetan refugee camps in India, where he met Lama Yeshe (1935–84), who became his principal teacher. In 1969 the Lamas began teaching Buddhism to Westerners at their Kopan Monastery, Kathmandu, Nepal and in 1974 they began traveling the world to spread the Dharma. The FPMT, an international Buddhist organization, was founded by the Lamas in 1975. As spiritual director of an extensive network of centers, projects and services for almost forty years, Rinpoche's philanthropic work has seen a proliferation of charitable projects and beneficial activities worldwide. On April 13, 2023, Lama Zopa Rinpoche showed the aspect of passing away in Kathmandu, Nepal, after returning from a trip to Tsum Valley. More details of Rinpoche's life and work may be found on the LYWA and FPMT websites.

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[The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition](http://www.fpmt.org) (FPMT) is an international organization of Buddhist meditation, study and retreat centers, both urban and rural, monasteries, nunneries, 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 130 FPMT centers, projects and services in over thirty 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.

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, an online learning center, a link to the excellent FPMT shop, and links to other interesting Buddhist and Tibetan pages. You can also find links to FPMT centers all over the world, especially those in your area, where you will find details of their programs.

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## 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.

