



LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

TEACHINGS FROM THE 51ST
KOPAN MEDITATION COURSE

Lamrim Teachings from Kopan 2018

The Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive

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Teachings from the 51st Kopan Meditation Course: Lamrim Teachings from Kopan 2018

Lama Zopa Rinpoche



Kopan Courses

Series editor Gordon McDougall

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About Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive

Introduction



From December 6–18, 2018, Lama Zopa Rinpoche taught the students of the fifty-first Kopan course, the one-month intensive lamrim course given each year at Kopan Monastery, Kathmandu, the principal monastery of the FPMT.

This ebook presents twelve lectures given by Lama Zopa Rinpoche during this meditation course. In the teachings, Rinpoche gives an overview of the path to enlightenment, and explains that the antidote to the sufferings of samsara is meditation on emptiness. The teaching given during the long-life puja offered to Rinpoche on December 17 is not included here, however, you can [watch the video here](#). The meditation course concluded with a Vajrasattva initiation on December 18. Prior to the empowerment, Rinpoche taught on Vajrasattva and explained how to purify our negative karma.

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

You can [find all of Rinpoche's lectures from Kopan 2018 here](#). To watch, listen to or read more teachings by Rinpoche, go to [Rinpoche Available Now](#) webpage on the FPMT website.

The archive number for these teachings is 2087. To access the edited transcripts online go to 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.

About the LYWA Kopan eBook Project

In 2024, LYWA launched 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: December 6



A Star in the Daytime

[Rinpoche and students recite *Prayers Before Teachings*]

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. [\[1\]](#)

I guess everybody has the text with the rest of the meditation in English. So, I'll chant it in Tibetan, but you can meditate. The purpose of chanting is to be able to meditate rather than just saying blah blah blah. That is the purpose of meditating.

The first analogy is a star in the daytime. The star is there but the sun is so bright that it obscures the star. That is like ultimate reality, emptiness. Anything that exists comes from emptiness. Why it exists is because it is empty, because it is empty from its own side. It's not empty in the way that our purse has run out of money—there is no money in our purse so it's empty of money. It's not like that. I'm talking about the emptiness of the hallucination, of what appears—the real money that exists from there—and what we totally entrust to be true.

The first mistake is that real money seems to appear from there, [from its own side] and then on top of that, the second big mistake, we totally entrust in that hallucination. In reality, it is not there. There is money. There is money in our purse, but not that money, not the money that appears as totally true to us and that we totally entrust, not that. If we looked for that money, we could not find it.

There is money, yes. The money that is in the purse is money that is merely labeled. Merely labeled money exists. Merely labeled money comes into existence, it abides and then it ceases. Coming into existence happens in mere name, it exists in mere name and it ceases in mere name.

There is no real I that appears from there and that we totally entrust in. That is similar to the hallucination that we have a billion dollars appearing in our hand—maybe not a billion; let's say one hundred or one thousand dollars appearing in our hand now and we totally entrust in that; we totally believe in that.

For example, when we cross the sand in a desert and we look back, we see a mirage, the vision of water, but we know there is no water because we have just come from there. But the sunlight hits the sand in a certain way and when we look back it looks like there is water. It is a mirage. We know there is no water because we have just come from there, but we have the vision of water. If we didn't know it was a mirage, we would have the vision of water and we would totally entrust that that is water. That is exactly the same as how we believe in the [real] I. That is exactly the same, and exactly the same as the money in the purse that we totally believe hundred percent. It is all exactly the same.

Say, in a dream we get married to the person we want and we have a hundred children. We believe that, but when we wake up we realize it's not true. While dreaming, we don't see the dream as a dream. (Although some practitioners do realize that.) When we are dreaming we don't have that capacity to recognize the dream as a dream, so in the dream we totally believe we get married and have a hundred children or whatever. We totally believe everything that happens. That is exactly the same with the money in our purse or the way the I appears. We totally believe in exactly the same way. Only when we wake up, then we realize it is not true.

In a dream, after Trump, we become the American president. We get elected and become American president after Trump—or while Trump is president!—and we totally believe it is true. If we don't recognize the dream as a dream, we totally believe it. We only know when we wake up that it's not true. During the dream, we don't know the dream is dream! This is a hallucination but it appears real, and we totally a hundred percent believe it's true. We only know it's not true when we wake up, but in the dream we don't know. That is exactly the same! In our daily life, it is exactly the same.

We are not sleeping now. We can say we are not sleeping, but it is the same as sleeping. We are not sleeping but in some ways it's like sleeping. I put in the word “like.” Of course, in meditation it's good to think “this is a dream” even without adding “like,” to be effective for our mind, to recognize the hallucination, but usually we put “like” because it's not a dream.

As an example of “like a dream,” whatever we are doing at Kopan Monastery, everything appears as real, as real appearing from there. All these real thangkas, the real sky, the real trees, the real clothes, the real carpets, everything appears to us as real from there. You look at me—the real crazy Lama Zopa—and I look at you and see the real you from there. That is the same as the real money in the purse, the same as how I talked about dreams. The happiness and problems of daily life, relationship problems or happiness, whatever there is in daily life—samsara and nirvana, enlightenment and hell, the whole thing, is like that.

All these are decorations by our mind. True existence is decorated by our mind, projected by our mind, by our ignorance, by all the negative imprints left on the mental continuum from beginningless rebirths, which then project that true existence. From that, all these hallucinations are decorated.

I gave the mirage as another example. There is a mirage but, when we don't recognize it as such, we believe it is real water. That part, the part we believe—the real water—is not there. From beginningless rebirths we have been believing that the hallucination is real. Because of that, we still have not been able to free ourselves from the suffering of samsara.

The Buddha has revealed the teachings and numberless sentient beings have become liberated. I mean this happened in Shakyamuni Buddha's time, but even before that, there were numberless

buddhas revealing the teachings and numberless sentient beings becoming free, becoming liberated from suffering, who realized emptiness, the ultimate nature, who recognized what is the hallucination, who recognized the dream as a dream. While you are dreaming, you recognize that it is a dream. That is like those who realized emptiness, recognizing that this hallucination is a hallucination. From that, they saw emptiness, ultimate nature.

So, even before Shakyamuni Buddha, numberless beings have become free from samsara; they have become enlightened. But because we—beings like me—have not had a chance or we have not had the luck, it has not happened so far that we can recognize the hallucination as a hallucination. We still cannot see emptiness, ultimate nature. Therefore, we are still not free from suffering: the suffering of rebirth, the suffering of old age, of sickness, of death, the suffering of dissatisfaction. We are still not free from that.

Becoming Free from Pervasive Compounding Suffering

Not only can we not become free from the suffering of pain, we have to know that the suffering of change, all the temporary samsaric pleasures, [is also suffering]. All the temporary samsaric pleasures: the pleasure of music, the pleasure of food, the pleasure of clothing, the pleasure of having a home. The pleasures that depend on others in so many ways, the pleasures people try to have in the world, such as the pleasure of sex, these are all the suffering of change. Unlike Dharma happiness, which can continue and become complete, samsaric pleasure can never satisfy.

For example, when we become liberated from samsara and achieve nirvana, at that time we achieve the complete Dharma happiness. And especially when we achieve full enlightenment, the total cessation of all obscurations and the completion of all the realizations, *sang gye*. Dharma happiness can be completed but samsaric pleasures cannot.

We have been trying to achieve samsaric pleasures from beginningless rebirths, again and again, again and again. There is no beginning and no end. We try and try but samsaric pleasures cannot continue, they cannot be complete. There is no way we can complete them. We have tried numberless times from beginningless rebirths up to now, but we have completed nothing. Why? Because the nature of samsaric pleasure is suffering. That's why we cannot continue them, develop them or complete them.

[Samsaric pleasures] are the suffering of change, but afterwards they become the suffering of pain. Like, drinking alcohol. At the beginning we might find pleasure, but when we drink more it becomes the suffering of pain. And food. We get hungry and then we eat, but the more we eat, the more the suffering and discomfort increases. The pleasure stops and the suffering of pain [begins]. These two sufferings, the suffering of pain and the suffering of change, come from the third suffering, pervasive compounding suffering, which in Tibetan is *khyab pa du je keyi dug ngäl*. These aggregates are under the control of karma and delusions, so they are pervaded by suffering. Because of that, the five aggregates we now have, our mind and body, are under the control of karma and delusions. They are pervaded by suffering; they are in the nature of suffering. And not only that, they are *compounding* suffering because they are the contaminated seeds of delusion. From the seeds, delusions arise again, and then there is more suffering.

Once we become free from the third suffering, pervasive compounding suffering, we are free from the suffering of pain and the suffering of change forever. That is nirvana and nirvana is forever! Not just a few weeks or a few lifetimes. It's not like going on vacation to Goa or Tahiti for a few weeks' holiday, not like that! It's forever. We are free from suffering forever. This is the whole thing. The whole thing depends on attaining a direct perception of emptiness. That is the only way to directly cease karma and delusions, the grosser disturbing-thought obscurations. Then, with the great support of bodhicitta, we attain unbelievable merits and then the subtle obscurations [to knowledge] cease and we achieve full enlightenment, the state of omniscience.

We do this not only for our own purpose but also for all sentient beings, so that after achieving the state of omniscience we are totally qualified to embrace every sentient being with great compassion: every single hell being, and there are numberless hell beings, and 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. I'm not only talking about the six realms of this world. There are numberless universes. I'm talking about the six-realm sentient beings in all the numberless universes. I'm not just talking about this world. So, that great compassion embraces every sentient being. Then, we have perfect power to be able to read every single sentient being's mind directly at the same time without mixing.

For example, even just among the animals, there are numberless ants. Can you imagine the thousands and thousands of ants in even one nest? I don't know how many people there are in a city, but even if there are millions of people in the city, in a few ants' nests there are more ants than people in the city. So, like that, with omniscience, without mixing and at the same time, we will be able to directly read the minds of the numberless ants in the numberless universes, the minds of the numberless mosquitoes in the numberless universes, the minds of the numberless tiny flies in the numberless universes. We will be able to see their minds at the same time. And the same with the numberless human beings, suras and asuras—all the different levels of intelligence, the different karmas, all the different things, we will be able to see them so clearly, so directly.

Then, there are also all the different methods of how to guide each sentient being from happiness to happiness, to liberation from samsara, nirvana, ultimate happiness, and then to enlightenment. There are an unbelievable number of methods to guide even one sentient beings from the lower realms up to enlightenment. With omniscience, we know everything directly, all the methods to guide them, to bring them to the ultimate happiness, to enlightenment. When we have perfect power, we can guide them perfectly.

I have a guru, Kyabje Zong Rinpoche—the incarnation is teaching Dharma now—who was extremely well educated. In his past life, he was like the ancient Nalanda pandits, like Chandrakirti. He said that people who do not accept past and future lives because they do not have the capacity to see them is like saying the back of your head does not exist because you cannot see it. It's a little bit strange. The doctor checks and says we have cancer. And because in the West people believe everything the doctor says—we believe the doctor is a buddha—so, of course, if the doctor says we have cancer, we believe it, but we don't know it; we cannot see it. [Using this logic,] if we cannot see it, the cancer does not exist. That is not good logic.

If we were a buddha, we could say, "If I don't see it, it doesn't exist." Arhats who are free from samsara, of course, can see things too subtle for us to see. They still have the four causes of unknowing, still not able to see the subtle things that higher bodhisattvas, those on the eighth or ninth bhumi, can see. Even before they become a buddha, they can manifest in millions and billions—zillions—of aspects to work for sentient beings. For us, those bodhisattvas are like buddhas. Even if they have not attained enlightenment, it's like they are buddhas. It's amazing what they can do. I think maybe even arhats or before they become arhats, can see and count how many atoms there are in a big mountain. They can tell us. The higher bodhisattvas are like buddhas for us.

A Star in Daytime (Back to)

I should go back. To finish the prayers, we are going to recite *Heart Sutra*, which shows the ultimate nature, emptiness. That is what exists, but for our mind it is *like* it does not exist. What does not exist is the way that things appear to us, the real I, the thing we totally entrust in. Like in the dream, we don't recognize the dream as a dream but we totally believe what appears. That is exactly the same. What does not exist appears as if it does exist. It appears as real, and we totally entrust it, we believe it. But we don't see what exists. We don't see the ultimate nature, emptiness. It exists but we don't see it. It's like that for our mind and it is totally wrong. The way the things appear and the way we apprehend them are totally opposed.

The first part of the verse, *kar ma rab rib*, explains emptiness, so meditate on that. It's not that it does not exist in mere name. The hallucination does not exist at all. The way it appears as something real, the thing we hold onto, what we totally entrust as real, as true—that is not there. I gave many examples, so that is easy.

I'm going to lead the chanting, so please meditate.

[Rinpoche slowly recites]

Kar ma rab rib mar me dang

Gyu ma zil pa chhu 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.]

[The *umdzé* recites the dedication verse]

Can somebody start the *Heart Sutra* in English, by chanting, not just reading.

[Students chant the *Heart Sutra*, the prayer for dispelling obstacles, the mandala offering and refuge]

Talking About Kopan

At the beginning I didn't get to say hello to you and to thank to you. Sincerely from my heart, I want to give numberless thanks. Even just for yourself, not only have you been suffering from this morning, not only from the time of birth and the life before. This life is suffering because in our previous life we did not free ourselves from samsara. Then, it goes back to beginningless rebirths of samsara. Even concerning ourselves, so far we have not become free from samsara. Can you imagine? Can you imagine all the sufferings that I mentioned before? Just concerning us, not thinking about helping others, liberating numberless other sentient beings from the suffering of samsara and bringing them to buddhahood, without thinking to bring them there, just wanting it for ourselves it is unimaginable. For example, although there may be some here who can remember past and future lives, most of us don't remember, and me too, I don't remember. Just like me, you don't remember.

As I mentioned before, "That didn't happen because I didn't see it..." Sometimes I even forget what food I ate yesterday. I forget what I talked to other people about. That doesn't mean it didn't happen! I have forgotten so many things, not just from childhood but even from yesterday and today. Some people can't remember things because they have Alzheimer's. They don't remember they have done something. Somebody else tells them they have done it but they deny it because they can't see it. So, we cannot put our trust in only believing what is evident—if we don't see it, it does not exist; only if we see it, then we can trust that. Because I've even forgotten what I had breakfast yesterday or a conversation I've had with somebody, that doesn't mean that I didn't do it, that I didn't eat breakfast.

Now you have come to Kopan to help yourself. This is without talking about helping other sentient beings, just yourself. Compared to the West, this is a very poor country, a third world country. Compared to many years ago, it's become quite developed but compared to the West it's a very poor country. But despite that, you have come here to Kopan, to do the Kopan meditation course.

In Boston there was a man who ran Wisdom Publications. He ran it for twenty years, right? [*Ven. Roger*: Nearly thirty years.] Nearly thirty years. His name is Tim [McNeill]. Of course, it started from

Dr. Nick, an Australian doctor who was asked by the great lama, Lama Yeshe, to start to print the books and make them available in the world to free the sentient beings from the suffering of samsara and bring them to enlightenment. Nick started a long time ago, working for the [Lama Yeshe Wisdom] Archive, publishing Lama Yeshe's teachings and my gossiping, my chattering. Tim ran Wisdom Publications for nearly thirty years. He was one of the directors for the longest time. Now Nick is running the Archive. What am I talking about? I forgot. [*Ven. Sarah: About Boston.*]

Oh, Boston, yeah. Tim was driving a car. The city of Boston is so developed. How many million people are there in Boston? Although it is so developed, he alone came all the way from Boston to Kopan Monastery to do the course, only him. Only he came all the way here. Can you imagine? That is due to his karma, cause and effect. Because in a past life he created the karma to hear the Buddhadharma, to come here to do the course, to meditate and learn the Dharma. He had karma from a past time, so that is why. There are millions of people there; it is such a developed country, but only he came *all* the way to Nepal! I was so surprised to see the city. He has come to Nepal quite a few times. When you think about it, it's very interesting.

Each person who comes to the Kopan course, for example, Dr. Nick and his wife, wife or girlfriend, I don't know, Yeshe Khadro. Now she is a nun. Those two and Tim [Tom] and Kathy, four people, bought land in Queensland, Australia, which became the [first] center, Chenrezig Institute. That started a long time ago. There is a geshe teaching there and some monks but mostly there are nuns. They invested money and bought land there.

Nick and Yeshe Khadro planned to travel the world, to see the world. That was their plan. What happened, they stopped and were lying on a beach in Thailand when a man came along and told them about the Kopan course. He was not somebody they knew. Of course, he could have been a buddha or a bodhisattva. You never know who people are. He was just an ordinary person, walking around the beach, who told them that at Kopan there was a meditation course. They had no plans to come to Nepal. They were going to another place, but they changed their plan because the man said there is a course at Kopan. That is due to past life karma. That made them come here.

So they came here—I'm using them as an example. They came for the third course, which was in the old gumpa. That was the first time we did a course in the old gumpa. We did the previous two courses in the old British-style house. It was not built by the king who died but the one before. He had built it for his guru, an astrologer. The first two courses we did in the British-style house. The third course was done in the old gumpa. Nick and Yeshe Khadro came. I did the course and Nick had already started his busy life. He was a doctor so he gave injections to Lama Yeshe. Then he started to work on books, even at that time. He kept busy working on the books, going to town. I had been translating with him, doing a course book I had been using in courses in earlier times. What is the title? [*Ven. Ailsa: The Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun.*] *The Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun* is the title.

I translated quite a bit with him. Since that time up to now, his life has always been busy with books. That is the way he has dedicated his life to the organization, to the FPMT, to make it most beneficial for sentient beings and particularly to this world, to the human beings in the world, because animals don't read books, ants don't read books!

[Tea offering]

Please keep drinking.

It's very interesting how each person found out about the course, how they came here. It's very interesting what people say. Of course it's karma, but it's very interesting how the karma to come here ripened. Due to past karma, having heard about Buddhism and meditation however many lifetimes ago. The karma could have been from millions, billions or zillions of eons before, but it has now ripened. Some conditions happened and they came to know about the Kopan course and came here. The story of how each individual happened to come here is very interesting.

What I want to say is this. Without speaking about taking the responsibility to liberate numberless sentient beings from the oceans of suffering of samsara and bring them to the total cessation of

obscurations and the completion of realizations, to buddhahood. Without talking about that, just to come here to help yourself, to liberate yourself from samsara, whose continuation has no beginning—that is amazing, amazing, amazing, amazing, amazing. What is happening to you at this time, that is really, really amazing. You are unbelievably fortunate.

You have the karma to have met the Dharma, which explains what is right and what is wrong. All suffering comes from that—not knowing what is right and what is wrong: all the global problems, all the problems of each country, society's problems, the family's problems, the individual's problems, including those of the tiniest insects. It comes from believing what is right is wrong and what is wrong is right. Besides the enlightened beings and the bodhisattvas, those who know the Dharma, for the rest of the world, it is totally opposite. It's like they regard poison as medicine. They look at life and see what is right as wrong and what is wrong as right. And that brings all the suffering for the world, all suffering for you.

The I and the Aggregates

The very basic thing is not understanding what the I is. We think about the I day and night—so many times even in just one day we say, “I this,” “I that,” “May I be happy.” But what is the I? We have no idea. Where is the I? We have no idea. Is our I in the head? Is our I in the... [Rinpoche points somewhere else]. It's very interesting, where the I is. We just do not know, but we dedicate our *whole* life to the I, day and night, from kindergarten, primary school, college, getting married, having children, having to suffer in the world, becoming a millionaire or a billionaire—all for this I. We go here and there for this I. We go shopping for this I; we go to the beach for the I; we do everything for this I. But where is the I? What is the I? It's really very funny.

Our whole life is totally dedicated to the I. We make children, not for the happiness of the children. We get married and have children so *we* can be happy. In the whole world, there are only a few people, only those who are bodhisattvas, those who have a good heart, who do it for the happiness of sentient beings, to give them a human body. But for us, having children is for our own happiness, to make us happy, for this I! For this I, we study at university and get a degree and then find a job, all so we can give happiness to this I. We become a millionaire for this I, whatever it is. But we don't know what the I is or where the I is. We have no idea!

The root of the problems starts from that: global problems, a country's problems, a family's problems, an individual's problems—everything comes from that, from working for the real I. We serve it all the time, working for it day and night, doing everything, spending all our money on it. Everything is for this real I. But when we look for where the real I is, [we cannot find it].

Is this real I the aggregates? We have five—the aggregates of form, feeling, cognition, compounding aggregates, consciousness—so if that is the real I, there would have to be five Is. There are five aggregates, so there must be five Is. Not only that, but the physical body consists of millions of atoms—I don't know how many—so if the real I were the physical body, there would have to be millions and millions of Is. When we buy an air ticket, at present we buy a ticket for one person, but then we would have to buy millions of air tickets for the millions of Is. If we then think that the real I is only one, that would mean all the aggregates would have to be only one. That danger happens.

The mind has no color, no shape, no form; the mind is formless. So, if the real I were the mind, the real I would have no form, no shape, no color. Then we would have to say, “I have no color. I don't have a body.” If we did not have a body, we would not have hunger or thirst. We would have no need for sleep, and we would not have to eat because we have no body. If the real I were the mind, because the mind has no body, the I would have no body, no shape, no color. Therefore, the I would not need food, the I would not need education to get a job to get money to get food.

Similarly, problems come if we think the real I exists separately from the aggregates. We usually call whatever the body and mind experiences as “I.” We say “I fell down” when the body falls down. When the body is lying down, we say “I'm lying down.” When the body is walking, we say “I'm

walking.” Whatever action the body is doing is given to the I. If the mind is happy, the I is happy. If the real I were separate from the body, that would not happen, the I would not have hunger and thirst. The real I would not have death because it is independent from the aggregates; it would exist separately from the aggregates. When the body happens and ceases, whatever happens to the body and mind, the I exists separately, with no connection to the body and mind, so we cannot apply anything. We can’t say, “I’m happy,” because that does not depend on the aggregates; it does not depend on the mind.

If the I existed independently, the I would not have karma. Even if there was karma, it would not have a cause; it would not have karma created before, because there would be no cause. So like that, karma doesn’t exist. When we cease the cause of suffering, we cease suffering; when we create virtue, that is the cause of happiness. If the I existed separate from the aggregates, that would not happen. Ceasing the cause of suffering would not result in happiness. All these mistakes arise.

Also, if the real I and the aggregates were one, because the aggregates are the possession and the I is possessor, possession and possessor would become one. It’s like we are the owner of a house, so the house is the possession and we are separate, the owner. But here the owner becomes one with the possessed. Possession and possessor, those two are different. They have to be different phenomena. But here, the possessions, the aggregates, and the possessor, the I, would become one. So, “my body,” “my mind,” “my aggregates,” what are clearly possession and possessor, would become one. There is that danger in thinking like that. It is not possible.

Also, if the aggregates were the real I, then we would have to label “I” on the I, then on *that* I we would have to label a second “I,” and on that second I we would have to label another “I,” and so it becomes endless labeling of I on the I. That mistake also arises.

The real I is neither oneness with the aggregates nor does it exist separately from the aggregates. So, this real I is nowhere.

From the top of the crown, from the tip of the hairs down to the toes we cannot find it anywhere. We cannot find it anywhere outside or anywhere inside the body. Thinking it’s not in the head, not in the toes, not in the feet, not in the legs, we don’t normally think like that. It’s not in the stomach. We don’t think the I is in the stomach. Somewhere below the neck but above the stomach, that is where we might normally believe it to be, but if we check the details, it’s nowhere in the central channel and nowhere outside the central channel, it’s nowhere in the chest, nowhere.

Where does anger or compassion arise from? We don’t get angry from the head; we don’t get compassion from the head. No way. Not at all! Our experience is that anger, compassion, patience and things like that don’t come from the head at all. That is our experience. Anger, patience, compassion and all that seem to come from here. [Rinpoche points to his heart] Even if we were to check there for the I, we still would not find it there. We cannot find the real I there. It’s nowhere at all. It’s nowhere in our home in the West; we cannot find the I there. We cannot find the real I anywhere in the world, if we check.

If we don’t check, the I is there. We believe the real I is there. And we do everything for this real I, everything, every movement we make! We do everything for this real I but *it’s not there*. We can’t find it. If we check, if we meditate, if we analyze, we can’t find it. It’s nowhere in the world.

But what exists is the merely labeled I. What exists is the merely labeled I. But even that, where is it? Where is it? We have to think, discuss and meditate on that. Where is the merely labeled I? That is what exists but where is it? That is good. So far, we have not thought about that, we have not analyzed that, but it’s very important we analyze.

What You Are Doing Here in Kopan Is the Most Important Thing

You have spent so much money to come all this way here to Nepal, to Kopan, so you have to meditate. The whole conclusion is that by meeting the Buddhadharma, by listening, reflecting and

meditating, you have come to know more and more about what is right and what is wrong. First, you understand, listen, reflect and then meditate, and then you experience the path in your mind, in your heart. Then, the more you understand what is right and what is wrong, the more freedom you get in your life. Without mistakes, knowing what right is right and wrong is wrong in life is very scientific. It's not blind faith. All the reasons showing what is right and what is wrong are very scientific.

Please listen. We have a monk called Thubten Sherab. He was one of the intelligent students when he was here many years ago. We asked him to go to France, to Nalanda Monastery. They do the *sojong*, the monks' practice of reviving and purifying degenerate vows, to keep the vows pure, as well as *yarne*, abiding in the summer retreat, and then releasing from that. So, it's a real monastery, it alone is a real monastery. A long time ago, it was used by a Christian group, but anyway, it's a complete monastery.

What was I saying? I forgot. [*Ven. Sarah: Thubten Sherab.*] That's right, Thubten Sherab. He studied well. He had to translate Lama Tsongkhapa's very important teachings, *Drang Nge Legshe Nyingpo, The Essence of the Explanation of the Interpretative and Definitive Meaning*. He translated many courses for Geshe Jampa Tegchok, a great teacher who is well known in Sera, Ganden and Drepung Monasteries. Then, I think after eleven or twelve years, he disrobed and left for Spain. When I met him, he told me that his friends who were working with him had so many problems but he didn't have problems because he knew the Dharma. He said that he didn't practice, but he knew the Dharma, and even intellectually knowing it helps so much in life. Even without practicing, he knew what is right and wrong. He is very sincere. He doesn't make up things, so he says whatever he feels.

Even if we don't practice, just learning gives great wisdom, the wisdom that is able to check what is right and what is wrong. Do you understand? Then we can help ourselves and help others; our mind does not follow the hallucination. So, of course, if we really practice, then we are helping ourselves—really helping—and we are able to develop the essence, wisdom and compassion, so much. It's so important to understand. It's all scientific, mental science, inner science.

His Holiness has been working with scientists for so many years. What do you call it? [*Ven. Sarah: Mind and Life.*] What the Buddha explains about the mind and what Western science explains. The scientists also find it very interesting to learn about the Buddhist view. They help each other. For many years this has been happening and the scientists are understanding at a deeper and deeper level; they've kind of come to understand what Buddhism is. One scientist told His Holiness that Buddhism is not a religion, it's science. Among the religions in the world, Buddhism, the Buddha's teachings, is the only one that goes with science. They find this very interesting.

What time is it? [*Ven. Roger: Fifteen minutes.*] Fifteen minutes, OK.

What I want to tell you is what you are doing now, what you have been discovering through your experience since you came here, this is the most important thing. It is the most important thing. Of course, it's the best thing to help numberless sentient beings, to be of benefit to them. It's the real help. But first of all, just for yourself it is the most important thing. In the world, there is no more important education than what you are learning here.

What you are learning here not only helps you to stop suffering, it helps you stop creating the cause of suffering. Right away, you are able to see what is right and wrong and you are able to stop. The benefits you are learning here, you are experiencing here, bring happiness not only to this life, not only at death, but liberation from samsara and ultimate happiness, every happiness up to enlightenment.

Then, you will be able stop continuing to experience suffering without choice; you will be able to stop the oceans of suffering of samsara, being under the control of karma and delusions. First of all, you will no longer be reborn in the lower realms—the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm and the animal realm—which has been our residence for numberless eons in the past. And your experience

here, the understanding you are gaining, frees you from lower nirvana, that blissful state of peace that you get caught in for eons and eons, making you unable to help sentient beings.

Even when the Buddha revealed four words and sent light [to cause you to arise from lower nirvana], it would still so difficult because your mind had become habituated in that blissful state of peace for eons and eons. It would be so difficult to feel bodhicitta; it would take a long time. It's like when you take a sleeping pill and the mind becomes so slow; you are hardly able to think. It's like when you put a lot of water in milk, like Indian milk! I was talking [about that example] in the past. The mind becomes so slow. What was I saying? I forgot again.

It is so important. You are unbelievably fortunate to have been able to come here at this time to do the meditation. The more you learn the Dharma, the more you will discover how fortunate you are. As I mentioned before, how many millions of people there are in Boston, but only this person came here. Like that example, not everybody has the karma.

So anyway, please enjoy. It's so worthwhile to enjoy what you are learning here, what you are meditating on. This is incredible; it's the most worthwhile thing to learn, to experience, to enjoy. This is real enjoyment. At other times, it's just hallucination, hallucination with attachment. Now, this is real enjoyment, real happiness, inner happiness.

John [Ven. Yarphel] is not a scholar, not somebody who says, "I know this." He worked as director of Vajrapani for how many years? [*Ven. Yarphel*: Twenty years.] Twenty years as director of Vajrapani. They were the ones living in the forest in teepees. You put the three branches together and [cover] them with a tent. How many people were living inside? [*Ven. Yarphel*: Five.] I couldn't see how five people could live there.

We invited Kyabje Zong Rinpoche to do a puja and bless the land. At that time a snake came out. [*Ven. Yarphel*: Yes, many snakes.] Anyway, John divorced from his first wife, the one he made children with, and then the second wife didn't last long. So, I told him to become a monk. Since then, he has been doing retreat in Washington, where we have a retreat house down below my house. He has been doing retreat and sometimes he teaches at the small center there, Pamtingpa. Like I said, he's not a great scholar, "I know this, I know that," not like that. But I think in correctly following the virtuous friend, he did better than me. His teachings can benefit you, you understand?

Kyabje Denma Locho Rinpoche was a great Gelug lama. Once, he said in Dharamsala that he never displeased His Holiness Kyabje Ling Rinpoche, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's guru, even for one second. And because of that, the teachings he was going to give would benefit us a little bit. That is what he said. I think [John] did much better at correctly following the virtuous friend than me, so his teachings can benefit you. Benefiting does not mean so many people come; it's not necessarily by number but it means even one person deeply benefits, gaining a deep understanding, a realization. Benefit does not mean so many people come. Many people can come and listen to a talk about the wrong path, the hallucination, not what the Buddha taught, but that does not mean that many people benefit.

When His Holiness was in England, I don't know which function, it was huge. A number of people gathered. It was raining and the ground was very muddy. His Holiness had mud on his shoes. He only said a few words in the meeting, adding to what the scientists said. He said, "Fear and anger eat your immune system." That means when disease comes there is no protection for you. That is what Western scientists say. Even for that reason, you need to meditate, you need to learn what is right and wrong!

So, what you are doing is so important. It is the most important thing in the world. The most important thing in the world. First, it's to help you. Then, it's to help not only the human beings in this world but numberless universes' human beings, the six-realms' sentient beings. It's the best.

Also, from your own experience, you know there are two types of happiness: physical happiness and mental happiness. No matter how many physical problems you have, if your mind is in a state of happiness, you can control the physical problems. That is a great thing to know in your life.

You can control physical problems; they can go away. You can have so much physically—wealth, swimming pools, so many Rolls Royces, so many TVs—you can have everything possible, but the mind can still be so dissatisfied, so unhappy. Physical comfort cannot solve mental problems, but if the mind is happy, it can solve the physical problems; it can pacify them.

You have come here to learn meditation. There are all kinds of meditation in the world. People teach all kinds of meditation, but the meditation you need to learn is this meditation, the lamrim, the graduated path to enlightenment. You need to hear it, reflect on it, meditate on it. There are all kinds of practices called “meditation” in the world. Even in Buddhism there are all kinds. It’s very hard to meet the correct Buddhism. If you think about it, you have to have so much merit to really meet the right teachings. That is what I want to say. So, please enjoy. As I said, this is the thing to most enjoy, this is inner happiness, not attachment, outer excitement, but inner happiness, peace. This is a great thing in your life.

So, thank you very much. I’ll stop here.

Helping Others Is Helping Ourselves

Rinpoche: One question? One and a half?

Student: How do you find a balance between caring for yourself and caring for everyone else?

Rinpoche: Generally, when we work for others, whether it is animal, insect, or human being, when we help others, by the way it is a support for us, even if we are not thinking of it as a support. We are helping others, but in helping others, we are supporting, benefiting ourselves. But when we benefit ourselves without thinking of others, it’s very difficult, very complicated. Shantideva, the great bodhisattva from Nalanda, said in his teachings,

[8:131] If I do not actually exchange my happiness
For the suffering of others,
I shall not attain the state of buddhahood
And even in cyclic existence shall have no joy. [2]

Cherishing the I brings so many problems, making it hard to succeed in our own wishes and in the wishes we have for our family and other people. Obstacles always come from that, even for the works of this life. That is the advice.

There are numberless sentient beings. But even if there were only ten people, or even two people, we are one and therefore by number those two people are more important than us. That is why in an election the person who gets the most votes wins. It’s determined by the greatest number, and the more people, the more important. Here, I’m saying even if it’s one person, one other being, whether it’s an insect or a person, just us and one other, who is more important?

Cherishing the I is opening the door for all suffering. From beginningless rebirths up to now, we have been suffering because of cherishing the I. When we cherish others, even one, we achieve enlightenment. With cherishing the I, there is no enlightenment. It is the main obstacle to achieving enlightenment for sentient beings. So now, by letting go of the I and cherishing others, even cherishing one, we can achieve the peerless happiness of full enlightenment. We have to practice compassion for one; we have to practice patience for one; we have to cherish one. Then, the result is that we open the door for *all* the happiness up to enlightenment. You have to know that.

I’ll just give you one example. Sorry, it’s a little bit late, but this is so important in your life. If we cherish one sentient being, it opens the door for all the happiness up to buddhahood. Whether it is a person, whether it is an insect, it doesn’t matter. Sorry, it’s a little bit late.

There is the story of Ngagpa Chöpa, a great yogi who often flies with five hundred dakinis, females with attainments. He flies in the sky with damaru and bell. He was going to a place near

Oddi to do the very last practice of tantra—not Hindu tantra but Buddhist tantra. Oddi is near Buxa, where I lived for eight years when I escaped from Tibet through Bhutan. I didn't go there [to Oddi] but one of my teachers who led me to become a monk in Dromo Geshe's monastery in Tibet and then took me through Bhutan to Buxa, he went there. Some monks who go there hear music, like pujas, chanting in the cave at Oddi.

Beside a huge river, there was a lady who was totally covered in pus with blood coming out, suffering from leprosy, very filthy and dirty. She was waiting on the river bank and she asked Ngagpa Chöpawa, "Can you take me to the other side of the river?" The yogi didn't bother; he went straight to the other side. Later, his disciple, a monk with thirty-six vows, came. When the lady asked him to take her to the other side of the river, he had no thought of getting the disease, but instead had unbelievable compassion. Immediately he grabbed her and put her on his back.

When they reached the middle of the river, she appeared in the form of a deity, the enlightened being Dorje Phagmo. She was not an ordinary being, she was an enlightened being, but because of his karma, his mind was obscured, so when he met her, he saw her appearance as very filthy, dirty, full of leprosy. Normally as a monk he couldn't touch a woman, but he had great compassion and he totally sacrificed himself and carried her. He didn't have to cross the whole river, just half; his negative karma and obscurations were purified by carrying her. With his karma purified, he could see this enlightened deity in her pure form. So, Dorje Phagmo took him in that body to the Vajrayogini pure land, Dagpa Kachö, without him needing to die. That is just [the result of helping] one being. In his ordinary view, he never thought she was a buddha.

Even if we dedicate our life for just one being, taking care of them, we are able to attain a pure land and achieve enlightenment. That is the most important teaching today. Even serving one insect, if we want happiness in our life, we do that. That is the best life. That is the best way to achieve happiness.

So, I'll stop here.

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, may bodhicitta, the source of all happiness up to enlightenment for us and for every sentient being, be generated in my heart and in the hearts of all sentient beings.

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

Thank you very much.

Lecture 2: December 7



Defective View

[Rinpoche and students recite *Prayers Before Teachings*]

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.

Look at all the causative phenomena like a star, a defective view, *rab rib*. Defective view. Look at everything in that way, all the causative phenomena and in particular our family, friends, enemies, particular objects of attachment, anger and ignorance, our enjoyments and our body. Look at them all as *rab rib*. Recognize them as a defective view. We have been believing in these things, this *rab rib*, from beginningless rebirths, not only from this morning, not only from birth, but from beginningless rebirths.

As I mentioned yesterday, to use everyday language, [we believe in] a real I, or as more specifically described in the philosophical teachings, a truly existent I, existing from its own side or existing by itself. [That's what we believe,] but if we look for it, we cannot find it anywhere. It's nowhere in the world; it's nowhere in existence. We cannot find it anywhere. We believe it is there, not outside the body but inside the body. We don't believe the I is on top of our head or under our heels, or in our shoes or under our shoes. We believe it is inside the body but if we check, as I mentioned yesterday, it is nowhere. We cannot find it anywhere.

Western scientists—those experts—should be able to realize this and announce this to the Western countries. They should be able to reveal the reality of life, what is the truth, the truth of I. They should realize this themselves and teach others, but that has not happened yet. It is very obvious if

we look for it. If we analyze it, we cannot find it. Sorry for the expression on my face! It's like that. It's a *big* surprise, a *huge* surprise!

Seeing this brings great agitation and fear, because we have been believing [in this real I] not only from this morning, not only from birth, but from beginningless rebirths. We have been holding onto this real I as it has appeared to us and we have totally believed in it, totally entrusted in it. Our mind has become so habituated to that wrong view, so unbelievably habituated, from beginningless time.

The Buddha, the Omniscient One, with compassion for every sentient being, embracing every sentient being, has taught dependent arising. There is gross dependent arising and subtle dependent arising. I, action, object; hell and enlightenment; samsara and nirvana; problems and happiness; all these things exist. It is not saying they don't exist; they exist.

It is not that nothing exists, like Zen Buddhism says. I don't know whether Zen Buddhism accepts nirvana or not. I don't know. I haven't got to discuss whether because nothing exists there is no nirvana. All these things exist, but they exist in *mere name*. They do not exist in the way they appear to us and the way we apprehend them to exist and believe they exist. They do not exist in that way. They exist in mere name, merely labeled by the mind. Merely existing cuts the idea of no existence at all. It's not that from the object's side there is no existence, not at all. It cuts that completely.

That is the main thing we have to know, to meditate on and to experience. We have to see the reality, not just believe it. There is nothing from its own side, not even the size of an atom. There is nothing from its own side; it is totally empty. That's the reality. Everything exists in mere name. Everything gets born in mere name; everything exists in mere name; everything ceases in mere name. The cause happens in mere name; the effect happens in mere name—everything happens in mere name. We experience suffering in mere name; we experience happiness in mere name; we achieve enlightenment in mere name.

The way these things appear, including the I, the second we apprehend them that way, we totally entrust in that, like while we are dreaming we fail to recognize that it is a dream but totally believe it. It not only appears in that way but we also totally believe that everything is true. Only when we wake up, we realize it is not true.

Of course, practitioners—especially practitioners who practice Dharma and who practice tantra, Buddhist tantra and not Hindu tantra—recognize a dream as a dream. When we do not recognize a dream as a dream, the dream appears real and we totally trust it, like the mirage we believe is real water. The example is that. We don't recognize it is a mirage so we believe it is real water. There are many examples like that. Hell and enlightenment; samsara and nirvana; problems and happiness; all phenomena appear as real and we one hundred percent entrust that they are real. That is *rab rib*. All those are a hallucination; that is *rab rib*. The first meditation, *kar ma*, a “star” is about emptiness. The second one is *rab rib*, “defective view.” The objects of attachment, our family and friends, or strong anger for the enemy and examples like that, possessions, our body, all are *rab rib*. *Rab rib* is an incredibly profound meditation.

Like a Butter Lamp

The next one is *like a butter lamp*. A butter lamp is made depending on many things, on many causes and conditions. And a butter lamp changes hour by hour, minute by minute, second by second, even within a second. According to the Mahayana, there are three hundred and sixty-five shortest moments in the snapping of a finger. According to Vasubandhu—sorry! Not Vasubandhu but Vaibhashika—there are sixty-five shortest moments in a second. But things change even within a shortest moment by being under the control of causes and conditions. The cause changes, so the result changes. The nature is like that. It changes; it doesn't last even within a second.

Like a beautiful flower or a beautiful body—something we get attached to—it changes. Attachment arises and because something appears to us now as real beauty, we really entrust that it is really true, not being aware of the future. We are not aware that even in the next second, it will have changed.

We think it is going to be like this forever. We think this beautiful body or beautiful flower is going to be like that forever. Our concept of permanence is that it is going to be like this forever. We never think of the future, of all the wrinkles to come. With the flower, the color changes, it becomes old and dark, but we don't think of that. We don't think of the wrinkles. We entrust in what is only now, what we see; we entrust it is going to be like this forever. Then, we get attached the person's body or the beautiful flower.

But we only have to think of the very rough changes, the gross changes, how the shape changes, how the thing kind of gets old, whether it's a body or a beautiful flower. The color changes and the shape changes, and then the body becomes hanging. [Rinpoche gestures to his face sagging] I don't know, I can't say much about the nose, but hanging, all the hanging, you know? Wrinkles and... You see that later everything changes. Now, what we see seems really beautiful from out there. But the more time goes by, the more things change. The flower becomes a bad color, dark, and the body—we can think about how the body is going to change in the future, going from what looks beautiful today to something that totally changes and decays. The more we can remember the decay, how the body will look, the more we are able to control our attachment. We can do that when we think of this decay, especially the way the complexion changes, when we think about what comes later.

From what we see of how things change, we will see it is just a very short time; it does not last. Things change from day to day; they change by the hour, that happens; they change by minute, that happens; they change second by second, that happens; even within a second they change. While we are looking at something, it changes. The nice flower or nice body, it changes. Even within a second it gets older, it decays. It is so subtle that we don't notice it. We have a concept of permanence. Permanence is kind of a hallucination. Just as we have a hallucination of true existence, similarly we have a hallucination of permanence. There is permanent beauty. But while we are looking at it, it is becoming decayed, minute by minute, second by second, within a second.

[When somebody is dying,] once the consciousness leaves, if the body is not in the ice cream—not in the ice cream, I mean not in the ice box—there is a terrible smell. When it's put in an ice box, maybe we don't get the smell. Is there a smell even though the body is in the ice box? Once the consciousness leaves, the smell is terrible, like rotten meat. There is the smell of death, but there is another smell once the consciousness leaves, like rotten meat. I'm just expressing this for fun. It's really amazing. Sorry my talk is getting longer and longer, longer and longer and longer. It's like rubber, you pull it out like a rubber band.

Once in a hotel in Delhi, there were some Indian businesspeople in the room next to mine. Because I happened to be there, they asked me questions. They suddenly asked one question about attachment, how when you have such strong attachment to the body—I think they maybe meant girls—how it is difficult to control the mind and relax. The problem they had was that it was difficult for them to control the mind and have real peace in life, so they asked that question. So, I think at that time I mentioned that they should think of what is inside the body. They can still analyze what is outside, but inside the body there are things like the skeleton, the pieces of flesh wrapped with veins, the liver, the brain, the intestines and the bowels with *kaka* inside. They were very surprised. They had never thought about the inside. They never went inside, so they were very surprised. Attachment cannot arise while we are thinking about the inside of the body.

I think I've expanded the subject!

It's like the magician who illusions the audience with mantras and substances, with all kinds of things that are not there, that are not true. The magician illusions the senses of the audience and creates all these hallucinations that are not there. All causative phenomena are like this, illusioned, in particular relating to all the objects of attachment, to the family and possessions, as well as the objects of anger, the enemy. All these are like an illusion. Sorry, I'll tell you now.

This is another meditation I'll tell you, just from this verse. Ignorance, our ignorance, is like the magician. It leaves a negative imprint on the mind. Just as the magician uses certain materials to illusion the audience, mantras or whatever, ignorance, like the magician, leaves a negative imprint on the mind. The ignorance—there are many ignorances but this one in particular—holding the I that exists in mere name as real, as it appears real due to the negative imprint left by ignorance—this ignorance holds it as true. That is the root of our samsara, of all our suffering and depression.

I went through the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering. The negative imprint left by that ignorance projects the illusion that everything is real. On the basis of the merely labeled object, it projects the real object. What is merely labeled by the mind is projected, like you put a roll of film into a projector and project it on a movie screen. Like that, the negative imprint left on the mind projects “real” onto the merely labeled things, onto the merely labeled I, the merely labeled action, the merely labeled object, the merely labeled enlightenment, the merely labeled hell. It projects it and makes it appear real to us. That is an illusion. [The sense of being real] is created by, illusioned by, our ignorance, which is like a magician.

That is also a very good meditation to do in daily life at certain times, seeing ignorance as like a magician who creates everything—the real I, the real everything, thus illusioning the audience to view that which is not there as real. Right now, how you think you are, how you see me, how I see you, the whole thing is not there, not even one atom is there, but this particular ignorance creates everything, projecting or decorating onto the merely labeled things the illusion that makes everything [seem] real.

We live our life with this belief and we are always worried about something, especially that something is going to happen to this real I. Our whole life we are worried, “When I can be happy?” “When I can be happy?” like Tibetans recite the Chenrezig mantra OM MANI PADME HUM. In the West, the mantra daytime and nighttime is “When I can be happy?” “When I can be happy?” It's not when the *merely labeled* I can be happy but when the real I can be happy.

Because of that, we don't see the suffering of the world; we only see our own suffering. If we go to the market, we only see our own suffering. Even if we are walking, we only see our own suffering, we don't see the suffering of the world. It's like that. Then, like that, we live our whole life in suffering, with no positive mind to bring happiness to ourselves and to others, with no Dharma practice, no positive, virtuous way of thinking, no way of thinking that solves suffering and brings happiness in life.

We have no way to have the most beneficial thought, which is to benefit others, to cherish others, to have bodhicitta. We don't know that. Bodhicitta is the thought that brings the happiness of this life and of future lives, all the happiness up to enlightenment. Bodhicitta brings every happiness up to enlightenment for all the numberless sentient beings: the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless suras, the numberless asuras. I'm not just talking about this world, I'm talking about the numberless universes. Like this world, there are numberless universes. I'm talking about the sentient beings of the six realms. Bodhicitta brings them all the happiness up to enlightenment.

But if we have not met the Dharma, if we have not met the Mahayana teachings, we just don't know. We have no idea what we can do with our mind for both ourselves and for the numberless sentient beings. We have no idea that it brings all happiness up to enlightenment—temporary happiness, ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara, the blissful state of peace, and enlightenment. If we have not met the Mahayana teachings, we have no idea.

That is why we are so unbelievably fortunate to have met the Mahayana teachings, that we are able to hear the Mahayana teachings, that we are able to begin to practice with that bodhicitta motivation from the beginning. That is so important.

OK. To go back.

Like a Dew Drop, a Dream, Lightning, Clouds

The next is *like a dew drop*, like water dew. A dew drop can pop and fall to the ground at any time. That shows impermanence, the impermanence of causative phenomenon. These things, especially those to which we have much attachment for—our possessions, our body and so forth—are in the nature of impermanence. They can cease any time.

I'm sure you have heard the story. Somebody was getting married when he was shot and he had to go to hospital. Maybe he was not that injured, the bullet went somewhere, but he had to go to hospital. Then he went back and joined the wedding again. I think this was recently. There are people who got married yesterday and died today. We can never tell.

Kyabje Denma Locho Rinpoche, the great lama, said that a water bubble looks very nice but it can be popped at any time. Any beautiful object like a beautiful body, any material possession like the body, might be something beautiful but like a water bubble it can pop at any time. Like that, all causative phenomena are impermanent. The water bubble is to remind us of the nature of impermanence.

Then, *like a dream*. As I told you, we see things [as real] but they are not there. All these real things are not there. It appears and we believe in that appearance a hundred percent but it is not there in reality, even the size of an atom.

And *like lightning*. Again this is about impermanence. [When there is a flash of lightning,] for a very short time, we see things and then they are gone. We don't know when we die. We are a human being, we have our family and all these possessions, but when we die they will all be gone. We don't see it like that at present, but at death what we have is gone. Our precious human body is gone; we have to leave it. Our family, whatever we have, it happened and then it is gone. Like lightning, it is gone. That happens at death, especially at death.

Even if we have not met the Dharma, we still might think we should live more positively, our life should be more positive, healthier, but then why don't we? Even if they have not met the Dharma, many people feel this. "I should have lived a better life, a healthier, more positive life, with a good heart, most positive to myself and to others. I should not have done those negative things." It can happen even without the Dharma. That thought can arise. But then they have no time; the human life is finished.

Then, *like clouds*. While we are watching the clouds, they are changing. While we are watching, they are there and then they are gone. We see there is a cloud, and then the next minute when we look it is not there. It's like that for all causative phenomena, in particular those things we are attached to: in particular our family, our possessions, our body.

The main thing is the Buddha's teachings. Because of the cause of samsara, we have been experiencing the oceans of suffering of samsara from beginningless rebirths. By meditating on emptiness, we recognize that this wrong view, true existence, is a hallucination. Through meditation, we recognize the hallucination as a hallucination instead of believing it to be true. There are many examples to remind us of impermanence, that causative phenomena are in the nature of impermanence, especially the object of attachment, all these things, such as our possessions, our body and so forth. We meditate on this to cease the cause of samsara, ignorance, to cease the cause of anger and attachment, and to achieve nirvana, the blissful state of peace forever. Not only that, to achieve peerless happiness, the total cessation of the obscurations and the completion of all the realizations, *sang gye*. With this wisdom, directly seeing emptiness with the great support of bodhicitta, we directly cease the subtle obscurations and achieve enlightenment, the state of omniscience.

OK, we can meditate on this. Meditate to be able to actualize the realization of the path to nirvana, the path to enlightenment.

[Rinpoche slowly recites *kar ma rab rib*... and dedication verse while the students meditate]

[Rinpoche and the students offer mandala and recite the refuge prayer and Rinpoche recites some auspicious verses]

Yesterday, you asked a question, so I just wanted to clarify it. Generally, what I told you yesterday, that is one thing. I'm sure everybody faces the same thing, not right away in your case, but someday you will. For example, you have many prayers and commitments, which of course is all meditation, but then somebody dying needs help. Somebody is dying or they are having major problems, something very critical and you have to go to help. If you do that, you might not be able to do your commitments and prayers.

In that case, His Holiness said that because you are doing prayers for others—it's not supposed to just be for you, for your self-cherishing thought—if something very crucial happens and somebody needs your help, and in helping them you don't get to do your prayers, His Holiness said that's OK.

I'm just saying that. It's not your case [now] but I'm just giving an example. His Holiness says that because the prayers are for others, that's OK. If you go to give help to somebody who is critically ill and don't do your prayers, that's OK. But if it is due to laziness, for your own pleasure, to play or watch TV, and you don't get your practices and prayers done, that is a great loss for yourself.

I'm giving you that [advice]. I said prayers but that is just a story to help you understand. It is not necessarily prayers, but it shows that the best thing is to live your life for others, not just for the I. We have been living our life for the I from beginningless rebirths, but we are still in samsara. We are still not free from the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering. So, when we live our life for others, that is the best thing. In that way, our life becomes easier, less complicated. When it is for the I, we find it difficult to help others. When our mind is for others, when we live the life for others, it's very easy. It's a very happy, very easy way of living our life; it solves a lot of problems. When we keep the I, all the problems come, like showers of rain.

The Mind and Emptiness

Any more questions? I wanted to clarify his question because it is useful for others. Yeah.

Student: There is a merely labeled I, so what is this true I that is not inside the body or the aggregates, not outside? Why is it coming from one life to another?

Rinpoche: That is the merely labeled I. Coming from one life to another is merely labeled consciousness, not a real one, but the merely labeled consciousness. That is the basis, then the merely labeled I is on the merely labeled consciousness, the basis. So, the merely labeled I goes from one life to another. Next?

Student: You can't find the I in any of the five aggregates, but why can't you say the I is the sum of the five aggregates and that is the true I?

Rinpoche: Can you repeat again?

Student: I can understand that my feeling is not I, my perception is not I, and none of each of the aggregates is the I, but why can't you say the I is the sum of the aggregates, all the aggregates put together is the I?

Rinpoche: I explained that yesterday. There are many faults, many faults. One thing you have to remember is if the aggregates, the collection of the five aggregates, if that is the I, then the I is the receiver and the aggregates are what is received. [The aggregates are] what is received, and the I is the receiver; those two do not exist separately but they exist differently. They exist differently but they don't exist separately. The aggregates are the possession, what the I possesses. The I is the possessor; the five aggregates are the possession, what the I possesses. Those two cannot be one. Those two do not exist *separately*, but they do exist *differently*. Possession and possessor exist differently. So the mistake arises that what you possess becomes you. The five aggregates become you. That becomes very funny—your possession becomes you. You are the possessor, so then there

is no way your possession becomes you. It's not possible. You understand? You have to remember that; it is very helpful.

Otherwise, yes, it is very easy to think that the I is all five. No, not even the five. There are many defects, many shortcomings on the basis of what I mentioned yesterday. It is almost like, as I mentioned, the owner of the house and the house. The house is the possession, what is possessed. So the house is the owner, the possession is the possessor. You are saying the house is the owner, it becomes like that.

Anything else?

Student: The mind is empty and the mind can realize emptiness. Is there a difference between mind and emptiness?

Rinpoche: Emptiness. Mind is the conventional truth; emptiness is absolute truth. The emptiness of the mind is absolute truth; the mind is conventional truth, the truth for the all-obscuring mind. They are not separated; the emptiness of the mind and the mind are not separated. The mind is empty. Not the mind is emptiness, no. Mind is empty, empty of true existence, of existing from its own side, of existing by its nature, of being empty of real mind. Mind is empty of real mind. Mind is not empty of the mere existing mind, but mind is empty of the real mind. Okay? Okay.

Student: I worry that if we students are not correctly established in this correct view of emptiness, we might fall into a nihilistic view. How can we prevent that?

Rinpoche: You need to study. You need to receive continuous teachings from a qualified teacher. Not only us here, but in Tibet many famous meditators fell into nihilism. You need a lot of merits, you need a lot of good karma to see the middle way devoid of nihilism and eternalism. Even in Tibet, many famous meditators fell into either nihilism or eternalism. Finding the middle way is very difficult. You need to continuously study the unmistakable teachings on the absolute truth, emptiness. I say the term "unmistaken teachings." That is very important—the *correct* teachings. There are many teachings from different meditators that explain their view, but they are not necessarily correct. So, you need to study continuously from a qualified teacher.

Then, you are able to see the middle way devoid of nihilism and eternalism. You have a lot of veils, of negative karma, a lot of obscurations. So, studying alone is not enough. You need to purify those obscurations that obscure the mind. It is like a light that shines to eliminate the obscurations. It is like a small mirror that gives the reflection of a whole city, if there is no dust. If you clean the dust, the mirror can give a reflection of the whole city. The mind is colorless, shapeless, so to be able to see emptiness, the middle way, you need to purify it, like cleaning the dust from the mirror.

Therefore, you need to constantly purify, not just for one month. You need to constantly strongly purify and to collect merits, with a single-pointed request to receive the blessings of the guru. Through that, when you study and meditate on emptiness, you can realize it.

For example, Lama Tsongkhapa asked Manjushri what the quick way to actualize lamrim realizations was. Manjushri is all the embodiment of all the buddhas' wisdom. So Manjushri answered to have a realization of the lamrim, purify the defilements and collect extensive merits—these two things. Purify the defilements means generally doing a Vajrasattva practice or something like that, but, of course, it is not only that. There are many ways, such as prostrations by reciting Thirty-five Buddhas prayers or working very hard for sentient beings with compassion, with a sincere heart, even if you are doing service for others, like deformed children or older people. There are many ways of working for others with a good heart, with compassion. Dedicating your life to doing hard work for others is great purification.

As I gave the example yesterday, when you asked a question, what is your name? [*Student:* Michael.] Michael asked a question then I gave the example of the monk and the lady with leprosy. When she asked him to carry her, he got incredible compassion, without the thought of even getting the disease, how that was such strong purification. Then, when he was carrying her across the river, all

the negative karma that blocked him from seeing her as a buddha, an enlightened deity, all that was purified. From projecting the ordinary, incredible suffering person, very dirty, he could now see a deity, the enlightened being, Dorje Phagmo. Then, without crossing the river, just halfway across, she took him to a pure land. I think maybe he got enlightened before his guru, a great yogi. I gave this example about the power of compassion yesterday. Really, like a mother taking care of her most beloved child, taking care of sentient beings, bearing hardships, that is unbelievably great purification.

I gave the example of Getsul Tsembulwa [?], how it is incredible purification when somebody bears hardships offering service to the monastery. There are many ways to purify. The most powerful way is fulfilling the guru's wishes—not all the gurus in the world but your guru with whom you received a Dharma connection—fulfilling the advice and wishes of the guru, whatever pleases the guru. That is the most powerful purification—doing what pleases the guru. That is also the quickest and most powerful way to collect extensive merits. That is the quickest way to achieve enlightenment, the quickest way to achieve realizations, the quickest way for all mental development to be successful and to achieve enlightenment. So, there are many different ways, not only Vajrasattva [practice].

The other one is single-pointedly requesting the guru. Even if you don't have a realization seeing that guru is all the buddhas—the past, present, and future numberless buddhas, the ten-direction numberless buddhas—even if you don't have that realization, if you meditate with quotations and logic, by meditating on that, sooner or later, you will be able to realize it from your side. So, it is so important to request with your heart [for the guru] to grant the realizations, to bless your mind to receive all the realizations to enlightenment. Then, you will receive the blessings of the guru. Then, gaining realizations comes very quickly. You might think you won't make it in this life, that it will take many lifetimes, but if you really practice like Manjushri said, then realizations happen.

Something that you cannot hope will happen. Thinking your mind is so selfish, you cannot hope to cherish the numberless sentient beings like a mother cherishes her only child, how could that be possible? You think your mind is so selfish, you cannot understand how you can even cherish one sentient being. But if you practice what Manjushri said, sooner or later the mind changes. By receiving the blessings of the guru, it changes. You achieve the realization. I think Kadampa Geshe Torbulwa [Tsembulwa?] said that what is difficult to achieve you can achieve in even seven years because the mind progresses, the mind changes. For example, people in the West think that unless you have attachment, how can you have a life? You think like that in the West. But [you can,] as Manjushri explained with these three things.

Then, number four is meditating on the lamrim, meditating on the path to enlightenment. With the three things before as support, you then meditate on the path. Then, you can see your attachment becoming less and less; then you are free from attachment forever. This happens, even though at the beginning it seemed impossible.

Tea.

[Rinpoche and the students recite the tea offering verse]

Up to six o'clock? [*Ven. Roger*: Twenty past five.] Six o'clock.

The Motivation for Listening to the Teachings

Lama Yeshe's teacher, his guru, from Tibet, and my teacher, is a professor, Geshe Sopa Rinpoche, who taught at Madison University in America for I think twenty or thirty years, or something like that. What do you call him, a professor? Geshe Sopa Rinpoche is an expert, an outstanding teacher, known in the greatest monasteries, Sera Mey, Sera Je, Drepung Loseling and Ganden, and to so many of the thousands of monks in each college. Each college has a top expert, maybe five, six or seven top experts that everyone knows, but Geshe-la is an outstanding teacher known in all the monasteries in Tibet.

So, this is his explanation of the twelve links, how we circle in samsara. He gave this teaching many years ago in Switzerland in a meeting of the most learned ones in Switzerland. I don't know if [teachers from] outside came or not, I wasn't there. I thought to explain this on the basis of what Geshe Sopa said. Geshe-la is very learned and compassionate; the way he teaches is very effective for the mind. So, I'll start from that.

The first thing today is the bodhicitta motivation. The purpose of listening to teachings is not just for happiness of this life, to get power or reputation, or anything of this life. If it were for that, listening to teachings would become a worldly activity, nonvirtue, the cause of the lower realms. The action of listening to teachings and the mind listening to teachings should not be worldly concern, attachment to this life, it should not be that. It should not be looking for reputation, power, the things of this life. The purpose of listening to teachings should not be for the happiness of this life. And listening to teachings should not be for the happiness of future lives in samsara. Listening to teachings like that becomes the cause of samsara, so it should not be that.

Listening to teachings should not be in the service to the self-cherishing thought, to achieve liberation from samsara for ourselves. It should not be like that. That becomes an obstacle to achieving enlightenment for sentient beings. It only brings problems. Listening to achieve liberation from samsara, for us to be free from samsara, becomes the cause of lower nirvana, so it should not just be that. The motivation should not be for the self-cherishing thought.

The motivation should be bodhicitta, benefiting not just one sentient being, not just our family or our friends, but the numberless sentient beings. As I said before, I'm not just talking about the hell beings in this world, in this universe. There are numberless universes, so *every* hell being, for them to be free from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and to bring them to enlightenment. Then, listening to teachings is for every single hell being within the numberless universes with the numberless hell beings. Not one hell being is left out. We are listening to teachings for every single hell being, to free them from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment by ourselves.

Then, we are listening for the numberless hungry ghosts. There are numberless universes and numberless hungry ghosts. I'm not just talking about this world, this universe, no! There are numberless universes, numberless hungry ghosts, and nobody is left out; not one hungry ghost is left out. We are listening for every single hungry ghost in the numberless universes to be free from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and to bring them to enlightenment.

The purpose of listening to the teachings is for the numberless animals. I'm not just talking about this world, even though the animals in the oceans, under the earth, in the bushes, those tiny flies, the ants, are numberless, even just in this world. In the bushes, inside the trees, even in this world. I'm talking about the numberless animals in the numberless universes, without leaving out one ant, one mosquito, one rat, one spider—not one animal is left out. We are listening for every single animal to be free from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and to bring them to enlightenment.

Then, the purpose of listening to the teachings is for the numberless human beings in the numberless universes. I'm not only talking about this world. That is very important. Maybe [we think human beings], including ourselves, are only this universe. There are numberless universes with numberless human beings, and no one is left out. For example, we are not listening to teachings for some human beings, while leaving out other human beings, such as our enemy.

[We are listening to the teachings] to free every single sentient being from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment, and then to free the numberless suras and asuras in numberless universes from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment by ourselves alone! For that reason we need to achieve enlightenment, to achieve the omniscient mind; for that reason we are going to listen to the teachings. That is the motivation.

Bodhicitta is incredible, unbelievable. No sentient being is left out; there is no sentient being we fail to benefit. When we meditate on bodhicitta, not even a tiny insect is left out; it is for everyone. Remember this. Remember this. I won't repeat this every day, but remember this. Have this

awareness, remember how to achieve enlightenment, and then listen to teachings. When we meditate, when we eat, when we walk, when we sleep—whatever activity we do—any activity done with bodhicitta means it is done for every sentient being. We dedicate our life to every sentient being, to free them from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment. And it is for this reason we are doing whatever activity it is—walking, eating, sleeping, meditating, studying, working.

Each time we think in that way, when we do actions such as listening to teachings for sentient beings, when we do anything for sentient beings, we collect limitless merits, merits more than the sky. It's unbelievable. From *that*, we achieve enlightenment and we are able to benefit numberless sentient beings, freeing them from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bringing them to enlightenment. We are able to do all this.

It is mentioned by Lama Atisha in *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*,

Although someone may totally fill with gems
Buddha-fields equal in number
To the grains of sand on the Ganges
And offer them to the Guardians of the World,
Yet should anyone press his or her palms together
And direct his or her mind toward bodhicitta,
His or her offering would be more especially noble;
It would have no end. [3]

When it talks about the benefits of bodhicitta, the Ganges is not the Indian river Ganges, it is the ocean, the Atlantic Ocean. This was in Pabongka Rinpoche's notes, when he received teachings from his guru, I don't remember his name, Dagpo Lama Rinpoche or something like that. The number of sand grains of the Atlantic Ocean, that many universes filled up with the seven types of jewels and offered to *jigten kyi gonpo*, which means the Saviors or Guardians of the World, (which means the buddhas)—we offer to the buddhas that many universes equaling the number of sand grains of the Atlantic Ocean filled with the seven types of jewels. Then somebody puts their palms together and simply generates bodhicitta, "May I achieve enlightenment for sentient beings." This one is called *kye-par pagme*, which means "extraordinary." This one is exalted; it is much greater than the universes equaling the number of sand grains of the Atlantic Ocean filled with seven types of jewels and offered to the buddhas. If we put our palms together [and think], "May I achieve enlightenment for sentient beings," this is far greater than making this offering. The benefit has no end, as Lama Atisha says. Simply putting the palms together in this way is limitless. You have to know that.

For example, if we generate bodhicitta, when we go around a stupa or a gomba, each step becomes incredible purification and collects more than skies of merits. As we go around the stupa, with each step with bodhicitta we collect merit, good luck, more than the sky. It's amazing! It's the happiest life. If we are thinking to live a happy life, we should live our life with bodhicitta. That is the happiest life, not only bringing us temporary happiness but also ultimate happiness, enlightenment, and ultimate happiness to the numberless sentient beings, with not one left out—not one ant, not one mosquito, not one red bug jumping. What is it called, that bites? [*Ven. Sarah*: Flea.] Not one flea left out. [Rinpoche hears something] What? [*Student*: I didn't say anything.] But your mind is talking!

With bodhicitta motivation, when we are eating food, each spoonful of food is for the numberless sentient beings with not even one left out. When we are eating or drinking tea, with each spoonful

of food we collect more than skies of merit if we do it with bodhicitta. Say, we are eating a *big* plate of rice with bodhicitta, because it is bigger, we collect more than skies of merit. It's unbelievable.

Sleeping with bodhicitta, with each hour, with each minute, we collect merits more than sky. You have to know that. It is the same with every action we do. We have to get the idea of how to live our whole life with bodhicitta.

So, today John led the equilibrium meditation? You led the equilibrium meditation? That is the basis for the meditation on bodhicitta. Otherwise, what happens is we do not have that realization. If we cannot place our mind in equanimity for every sentient being, our compassion, our loving kindness is only for those we like, for example, cats. We don't like spiders, we don't like snakes, we only like cats! We only like certain people, our friends, not the rest, so there is no loving kindness and compassion for the rest of the sentient beings, only the people we like, those who praise us. Without the equilibrium meditation, it becomes extremely partial, extremely limited. Doing the equilibrium meditation gives us a chance to realize that all sentient beings have been our mother and have been kind, [and from that we are able to generate] loving kindness and actualize bodhicitta. From there, we are able to generate the rest of the path, the six perfections, and achieve enlightenment for sentient beings.

OK? I will start.

The Buddha's Great Compassion and His Mantra

Geshe-la says the purpose of Shakyamuni Buddha descending in the world is to liberate sentient beings from the suffering of samsara, meaning from the oceans of samsaric sufferings. That also includes us. Don't think sentient beings are out there somewhere without us being included. No. Sentient beings include us, and Shakyamuni Buddha descended to the world to liberate everyone from the oceans of suffering of samsara and bring them to liberation or the state of omniscience. So, that includes us. There is no other purpose at all, only that.

I will mention this. Do you recite TADYATHA OM MUNE MUNE MAHA MUNAYE SVAHA? I'm not going to go through the words. I explained LA MA TÖN PA CHOM DÄN DÄ in Bendigo, so I'm not explaining it here, but I want to say this. When we recite this, [it means that] Guru Shakyamuni Buddha renounced the I to help sentient beings, including us. He gave up the I, where all the suffering arises from. He gave up the I and cherished the numberless other sentient beings including us. The Buddha cherishes us a hundred thousand times more than we cherish ourselves.

With that bodhicitta, he cherishes the numberless sentient beings. He practiced the six perfections, including the perfection of charity, giving away his limbs, his eyes, making charity of even his whole body. For three countless great eons he made charity of himself for other sentient beings. That includes us. He did it to free us all from samsara and bring us to enlightenment. For that, the Buddha made charity of his body to sentient beings for three countless great eons.

Once, in India, he was in meditation on a mountain. The king's wife had received teachings from him or something. I don't remember completely. After that the king went to him and asked him what he was doing. The Buddha replied he was practicing patience. So, the king cut off the Buddha's hand, his limb, and again asked him what he was practicing. Then he cut off a leg, then another. He cut off all four limbs, so all that was left was the torso. After that the torso was thrown in the garbage dump. But even with his body, the Buddha was able to make charity for the thousands and thousands of ants. This was not the only time he did this. He made charity for three countless great eons for all sentient beings including us.

The Buddha did this for us, making charity like that with bodhicitta. He totally dedicated for us to be free from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and brought to enlightenment. The Buddha did that for us. Not only practicing morality with so many hardships for three countless great eons for sentient beings and for us, he also renounced anger and practiced patience for three countless great eons for

sentient beings and for us. And the Buddha practiced perseverance, and was able to suffer in the lowest hell for as many eons as there are drops in the Pacific Ocean. He suffered in hell for sentient beings, including for us. The Buddha practiced perseverance for three countless great eons.

The Buddha practiced meditation, *samten*, firm contemplation, for three countless great eons for sentient beings and for us. And the Buddha practiced wisdom for three countless great eons for sentient beings and for us. And the Buddha completed the merits of wisdom and merits of virtue for sentient beings and for us. And the Buddha achieved the state of omniscience for sentient beings and for us. For us. That is unbelievable kindness!

He taught the Dharma for sentient beings and for us, giving the 84,000 teachings of the Lesser Vehicle teachings, the Mahayana sutra and the Mahayana tantra. In the Lesser Vehicle path, he revealed the four noble truths, showing how we can be completely free forever from suffering and the true cause of suffering and we can attain the true cessation of suffering by actualizing the true path.

Then, with the Mahayana sutra path, we practice bodhicitta and the six perfections for three countless great eons and we achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. Then [by practicing] Mahayana tantra, we can achieve enlightenment in one lifetime. [By practicing] the lower tantra, you can achieve enlightenment in one [extended] lifetime. If we only practice Mahayana sutra, it takes three countless great eons. It takes so much time. We can achieve enlightenment but it takes an unbelievable length of time, meaning sentient beings have to suffer for such a long time. Therefore, with unbearable compassion, seeing sentient beings suffering for such a long time, it is mentioned in lower tantra, it is more skillful in method and wisdom if we can achieve enlightenment in one life. We don't need to practice for three countless great eons, we can finish in one life. Then, with Mahayana Yoga Tantra [Highest Yoga Tantra] we can achieve enlightenment in one brief lifetime of degenerate times. The Buddha revealed all these teachings without the slightest mistake. He revealed all these teachings for sentient beings—for us! That is the second thing the Buddha did for us.

With the thought of appreciation for the Buddha's kindness, like the sky, with this feeling that the Buddha became enlightened for us, with a compassionate mind, with a loving smile for us, then recite TADYATHA OM MUNE MUNE MAHA MUNAYE SVAHA, the Buddha's name mantra.

I'll mention this now. The benefit of reciting this once is that we purify the negative karma we created over eighty thousand billion eons. It's unbelievably powerful. This is mentioned in the Kangyur, the Buddha's teachings. We don't normally hear that much, but in the Kangyur it is mentioned. So, when we recite one mala, two malas, three malas, it is amazing, amazing! Like Chenrezig, the Compassion Buddha, we can do extensive benefit for sentient beings.

That comes from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's mantra. And Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's unbelievable benefit to the sentient beings also comes from the mantra. That also means that as we recite the mantra often, we are able to do like [the buddhas] and achieve enlightenment. The benefit to sentient beings is unbelievable. And we are able to achieve tantric realizations by reciting this. There is no turning back; our life always goes toward enlightenment. There is no returning to the lower realms. That is one unbelievable benefit it has.

When we recite the mantra we say TADYATHA OM MUNE MUNE MAHA MUNAYE SVAHA. It's MUNE MUNE not MUNI MUNI. Kyabje Khunu Lama Rinpoche, the great bodhisattva, corrected us. Many texts have MUNI MUNI. Sanskrit is not like English that everybody learned in Tibet; only very few lamas learned it. Sanskrit is a well-known language, but mistakes sometimes happen.

So, with great devotion to the Buddha, being close to the Buddha we feel from the heart by thinking of the benefits, as I explained, and we recite TADYATHA OM MUNE MUNE MAHA MUNAYE SVAHA. OK.

This is without explaining LA MA TÖN PA CHOM DÄN DÄ. I think I'll stop here.

Dedications

[Rinpoche and the students offer a 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, may bodhicitta, the source of all the happiness up to enlightenment for me and for every sentient being, be generated in the hearts of every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal, every human being, every sura being, every asura being, every intermediate state being, including myself, without delay of even a second. For those who have generated bodhicitta, may it be increased.”

[Prayers in Tibetan]

The most important prayer, for the teachings of the Buddha to last a long time and for sentient beings to achieve enlightenment. It is very important for His Holiness, the Buddha of Compassion, to have a stable life until we are free from samsara and for all his holy wishes to succeed immediately.

[Long-life prayers for His Holiness the Dalai Lama]

“May Lama Tsongkhapa become the Mahayana virtuous friend for all the students, including us here, for our family members who are already dead or are still alive. May Lama Tsongkhapa be our Mahayana virtuous friend in all our lifetimes, and may we never be separated from the pure path that is admired by all the buddhas.”

This is to actualize Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings within our hearts. Then we pray for the world.

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may the wars that are happening now and in the future be stopped immediately, may all the disease, spirit harms and famines, all the problems, be stopped immediately, the danger of fire, water, air and earth, including all the global problems—may all these things to be stopped immediately, and may perfect peace and happiness prevail in everyone’s hearts by revealing Dharma, by generating loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta in their hearts. May the Buddhadharma—from where sentient beings receive peace and happiness—last forever. May they meet the Buddhadharma and achieve enlightenment quickly. May sentient beings be able to actualize bodhicitta, cherishing other sentient beings. May I myself be able to cherish all mother sentient beings more than the sky filled with wish-granting jewels, and may I be able to free them from samsara and bring them to enlightenment.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may any sentient being who sees me, who hears my name, who remembers me, who even sees a picture of me, just by that may it immediately pacify all their suffering and may they achieve all the happiness including enlightenment.

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

Thank you very much.

[Long-life prayer for Lama Zopa Rinpoche]

Lecture 3: December 8



The Uncontrolled Mind Causes So Much Suffering

[Rinpoche and students recite *Prayers Before Teachings*]

As mentioned, the Buddha said,

Do not commit any unwholesome actions.

Engage in perfect, wholesome actions.

Subdue one's own mind.

This is the teaching of the Buddha. [\[4\]](#)

Unless the mind gets subdued, [great danger happens]. I heard the First World War started from one person. At the actual beginning the problem came from one person, and then it got bigger and bigger. The First World War is [an example of] the mind that does not get subdued, maybe the largest one. What happens is that the mind becomes under the control of anger, attachment and ignorance and then danger happens. The largest one, the First World War, started from that. One person did not control their mind, did not subdue their mind; then the First World War happened.

When the Second World War happened, so many millions of people died. How many millions? It was mentioned. So many million people were killed during the Second World War, not just one million people, but many millions of people were killed in the war. If the mind is not subdued, if we do not control our mind, if we do not look after our mind, if we have an uncontrolled mind, we do whatever our mind says. We just let the mind run around like a crazy monkey or a crazy elephant. This is without talking about our own problems but the problems it can cause in the world, such as so many millions of people being killed.

I heard that in Singapore when the Japanese came to take over the country, they put children on a spear. They had spears and they put the children on top of them. So many people got killed at

different times. I heard during Hitler's time, so many children were burned in fires, killed by oxygen in the train. Many millions of people died in different times, caused by different people in the world, not just Hitler, but many from different countries. When that one person does not control the mind, does not take care of the mind, so many millions of people in the world are killed.

What happens if our mind is under the control of anger and attachment? Here, we are just talking about human beings; we are not talking about animals. One person not subduing their mind, it originally started like that. We can see that the great sufferings in the world started from one person who did not take care of their mind. If we do not take care of our mind [this can happen.] You have to know. You have to see very clearly, besides all our own problems from life to life, affecting us for hundreds and thousands of lifetimes, our negative mind, our negative actions harm others. It affects us from life to life, for thousands of lifetimes. It goes on and on as long as we fail to subdue our mind. As long as we don't meet the Dharma, we don't practice the path, we don't subdue our ignorance, anger and attachment, it goes on and on and on. It becomes millions and millions of lifetimes, endlessly harming ourselves and harming numberless sentient beings.

Our ignorance, anger and attachment harm numberless sentient beings. Our self-cherishing thought, which we have had from beginningless rebirths, has not only been harming us, it has been harming numberless sentient beings from life to life. From beginningless rebirths we have been following the self-cherishing thought. It is due to that dictatorship. Our selfish mind is a dictatorship; it is the real dictatorship. It is the reason that we can harm anybody, we can kill anybody in the world, we can complain, we can do anything, but nobody can complain to us. That is the selfish mind. That is what the selfish mind wants. We can do anything to others—abuse them or whatever—but nobody can even complain or say bad words about us, or even look at us in a bad way, with the nose up. Nobody can do that; nobody can get angry at us, nobody can complain about us. That comes from the ego, the self-cherishing mind. For no reason, we can harm anybody, we can kill anybody, but nobody can harm us. That is the dictatorship.

Everybody wants happiness. The chicken wants happiness, the fish wants happiness. Everybody is the same. That is dictatorship. We can do anything but nobody can complain about us, which is ridiculous. It is very strange, very funny. If we check, it is like that. The self-cherishing thought, the selfish mind is a dictatorship. His Holiness says that the self-cherishing thought has already harmed us and others, meaning numberless sentient beings, from beginningless rebirths.

A Good Heart Is the Most Important Education (Sixteen Guidelines)

We need the good heart. Instead of being careless, renouncing others, we must cherish others. We must let go of the I and cherish others. That brings happiness not only to us but to others; it brings happiness to numberless sentient beings. Numberless sentient beings receive happiness from us, from this one person with a good heart, with the ultimate good heart cherishing others and letting go of the I. We are free from the dictatorship of the self-cherishing thought, the selfish mind. We are free; we gain independence from our dictator, from our demon, from self-cherishing. Cherishing others gives us happiness—all the happiness up to enlightenment—and happiness to the numberless sentient beings up to enlightenment. Can you imagine? One person. We are that one person by changing our mind. Living life with a good heart cherishing others is the best life, the happiest life, the most meaningful life.

That education is missing in schools and universities. This is something people need to learn from kindergarten. We can even teach small children what they can learn in a simple way. At school, college, university, that should be the main education, the most important education, the root of everyone's temporary and ultimate happiness, not only liberation from samsara but also the peerless happiness of enlightenment.

As I started to speak my talk got more and more expanded. We have a school in Chailsa, [\[5\]](#) which I think has one hundred sixty children now. Before, there were four thousand Tibetan people, but

they left for the West and India, so now there are only two families. The Snow Lion Foundation did not want to sponsor the school, so we look after the school, sponsoring it, helping it expand, making better conditions, and all that. I was there for one month last time. I was supposed to go to Korea. A businessman who became a monk became the abbot. We have a large Jade Buddha, one and a half stories high I think—even the throne is jade—and he asked the Jade Buddha to go to Korea. He invited me to go, but it seems the abbot is not easy to communicate with. If I had gone there, I would have had to practice a lot of patience. You have to prepare for that from the beginning. By knowing, you prepare for patience, otherwise, then you suffer. Anyway, he was difficult to communicate with, so in the end I apologized and said I could not go. Instead I went to Chailsa, which is a day's traveling. We have a school and monastery there.

It is good land, not too cold and not too hot, probably better weather than upper Solu Khumbu. I met the school teachers. I don't remember if the children were there or not, but the school teachers gathered and we talked about language, grammar and the many things they learn. I said the most important education, the main education, should be the good heart. Even in their childhood, at school they should learn to practice the good heart. I don't remember exactly what I told them word by word but generally I said to be kind to others and practice the good heart. If you meet unfavorable conditions and somebody gets angry at you or whatever, you should practice patience from your side. If somebody bothers you, you should not become angry but practice patience. If somebody harms you, you should practice patience back. So, like that. A good heart, practicing a good heart, being kind to others.

We have a Universal Education school, where there are sixteen human Dharmas and ten divine Dharmas. I have not started the ten divine Dharmas yet. It has started in Malaysia. When I was there they did ten divine Dharmas. It was demonstrated and it is very good. That was the first one. I translated and planned the course but Malaysia was the first one. Before that, there have been many advices from His Holiness and from Lama Yeshe about the good heart. There are many books from those ancient Indian pandits from Nalanda on the Buddha's philosophy. You take it from different subjects, then use the philosophy to show all the logical reasons to practice a good heart.

All the reasons behind [practicing a good heart] are, for example, by not harming ourselves or others, by only doing good things, we create the cause of happiness for ourselves and create the cause of happiness for the numberless sentient beings. There are all the logical reasons behind that, such as dependent arising and ultimate nature, emptiness. Then, to be able to benefit others more, of course we need to do meditation, yoga. [In Malaysia] they do feng shui and astrology to help others as much as they can. I kind of put something together like that.

There are seven things, and the very first one is to *practice kindness* day and night, not only to human beings but even to animals and insects. We practice kindness day and night, all the time. That is the first one.

And then I think the next one is maybe *rejoicing*. Instead of jealousy, being jealous that somebody has a very luxurious or beautiful house, a very expensive car, like a Volkswagen, and so on and so on, instead of being jealous somebody is rich and disliking them, we should rejoice. Our whole day, our whole life, we should rejoice instead of being jealous. When we see others enjoying something good, like a good body, good hair, a good car—whatever good things others have—we should always rejoice. How good it is, how wonderful it is that they have this. Instead of being jealous, feeling a kind of negative mind, we rejoice and feel happy for them. Seeing others enjoying beautiful things, seeing others having success, like a successful business person, we feel happiness. It doesn't have to be our family member or a friend, just anybody in the world. Even seeing animals enjoying good things, we rejoice.

Psychologically, our mind becomes very healthy; it is not disturbed but so healthy and happy. We become a happy person, always smiling. Our mind is light, not heavy. Anybody can speak to us very easily, very happily. That mind is a positive mind; it's a virtue, not a nonvirtue.

For example, when we think about another person's good karma collected from beginningless rebirths, we rejoice by feeling happy. We can think, "How wonderful it is," but rejoicing means not just reciting the words, our mind has to feel happy. When a mother cherishes her beloved child more than her life and somebody praises them, she is so happy. They don't even praise her but her child, but that makes her so happy. Even somebody giving a small present to her child makes her so happy, whereas complaining about the child or hurting them in some way makes her very angry or sad. Now here, we feel happy that that sentient being has collected merit, good karma, from beginningless rebirths and we rejoice.

If that person's level of mind is lower than ours, we collect double their merit. However much merit that person has collected from beginningless rebirths, we collect double. It's unbelievable; it's incredible. There is no such business in the world! If that person's level of mind is the same as ours, we collect the same amount of merit. However much merit that person has collected from beginningless rebirths up to now, we collect that same amount of merit. If that person's level of mind is higher than ours, we collect half what the person has collected.

For example, in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, the bodhisattva Kyabje Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo said if we rejoice in a bodhisattva's merit collected in one day, even though we do not have bodhicitta while they have it, by rejoicing we get half of the merit collected by that bodhisattva in one day. Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo says if we don't rejoice, it would take thirteen thousand years to collect that much merit. But if we rejoice in one bodhisattva's one-day merit we get half of that merit, in a second! [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] Like that.

So of course, by rejoicing in not just the merit of one day collected by that bodhisattva, when we rejoice in all merit they have collected from beginningless [rebirths], even though we do not have bodhicitta the merit we collect is unbelievable. But there are numberless bodhisattvas, and if we rejoice in the merit collected by all those bodhisattvas, how much merit do we collect? How much cause of happiness do we collect, not just temporary but ultimate happiness, even enlightenment? Even for somebody whose level of mind is higher than ours, for example, a bodhisattva, it is like that.

Then, by rejoicing in our own merit collected from beginningless rebirths, each time we rejoice the merit is doubled. So, the second time we rejoice that is doubled, becoming four times, and then rejoicing again it becomes six times. I don't know, maybe it becomes double four times! Sorry. There is no such business in the world. If we know how to practice Dharma, we create the cause of happiness.

Sorry, my talk got expanded. It's like that. Rejoicing in others' merit every day, day and night, keeps the mind very positive and very happy, psychologically. We don't drive ourselves crazy. We don't have to go to a mental institute. What do you call it? [*Student*: Psychiatric ward.] Psychiatric home. We don't have to go there.

I think that is the second thing. The third is *patience*. If we want a happy life we need to practice patience. I'm saying this not only for somebody who practices Dharma. Even a nonbeliever who doesn't believe in reincarnation and karma, if they want happiness, if they want to have a long-lasting relationship in their family, with their husband or wife, even if the other person doesn't practice patience, they have to practice patience.

Practicing patience, we have so much happiness. Then, even if the other person doesn't practice patience, by our practicing patience we make the other person happy. First, we become happy; then, because we practice patience and don't retaliate, don't get angry back, that makes the other person happy. Then, the relationship lasts a long time. That is in the family, but of course that means with anybody inside the family or outside.

With patience, our mind becomes happy; we have a happy life and we give happiness to the family and to outside people, even to animals. Even if we don't believe in reincarnation and karma, there is so much happiness. It brings peace in the world, starting from our family—our husband or wife, our

parents, our children—starting from them, we bring happiness and peace in the world, instead of harming and causing danger. It is so important. As I mentioned yesterday, anger and fear eats your, what? What did I say, I forgot? [*Student*: Immune system.] Yeah, immune system, and then our health becomes weak, without protection from sickness. It destroys our health. That means we lose ourselves.

Then, if somebody harms us, we accept it. I forgot the word? If somebody harms you? [*Student*: You accept the defeat.] Defeat? If we made some mistakes, if we have harmed others, we immediately apologize. If somebody harms us or says something bad to us, then we immediately forgive them.

Who said that? That's right, I forgot. *Forgiveness*, then we have made the other person happy; they become closer to us and there is happiness. If we can do like that, there is happiness. It brings peace in the world, by training with the people that we deal with every day, and from there to the rest of the people around and then the people in the world. We are able to bring peace and happiness in the world.

The other one is instead of depressed, "I can't do anything," putting yourself down, being so sad, instead of that we build up, what? [*Ven. Sarah*: Courage.] *Courage*, yes, courage. Even though we don't understand buddha nature, generally speaking our mind has buddha nature. We build courage by thinking that because the ultimate nature of the mind is pure, we can overcome any problem. Because of that, any problem can be overcome and we can develop all the good qualities. That is the main reason. We can think of many opportunities to develop courage that helps others.

Then, I don't remember. [*Ven. Sarah*: Contentment.] Yes, the practice of *contentment*. In other words, practicing satisfaction in our life. There is a very big problem with drugs in school. Children meet friends who are involved in drugs and then they get involved in the same thing, like drugs or alcohol. It destroys their life; it harms the family and others' lives. Alcoholics harm so many other sentient beings. It's the same with lack of contentment, dissatisfaction, in the relationship, with sex. So much of the suffering and problems in the world are due to that, dissatisfaction, discontentment.

People finish one whole set of problems, whether they are married or separated, and then they start another whole set of problems, similar [to what they have just finished]. The whole problem starts again, the same as before, but again that does not last. And then again there is another whole set of the same kind of problem. I don't have to describe it; it goes on until the person dies.

The whole of life is unbelievable suffering through not practicing satisfaction, contentment, in life. There are many other things that are so important. We need to practice contentment, even if we don't believe in reincarnation and karma.

This is unbelievably important education. First, for our own happiness, and then, the next thing is for others. There are so many other sentient beings; it is so important for them. If we have satisfaction, if we are living our life in contentment, we are able to give happiness to so many sentient beings in the world.

Yeah, OK. Tea.

[Tea offering]

The Buddha Manifests in Many Forms

I'll just tell a story for all of us to practice. There's a horse in the West who shows affection to sick people. The horse chooses the room, which person to go to see, and then it goes there. Then, the horse sort of touches [the person] which is kind of very unusual. The person feels loved, feeling the affection of the horse then somehow gets healed or something. The story of the horse that helps is very interesting. Was this recent? Yes, it happened. It is very interesting. The horse comes right in the room through the door.

Among the various forms of animals, there can be a buddha in the manifestation of an animal, a bodhisattva manifesting as an animal to help others, to help animals. That is just one example. In China, Wutai Shan is Manjushri's holy place. Manjushri is the embodiment of the buddha's wisdom. Anybody who goes to Wutai Shan can meet Manjushri, although ordinary people don't recognize him. But anybody can meet Manjushri in an ordinary form. Kyabje Trulshik Rinpoche, who went there, told me the first being you see is Manjushri. He saw birds flying in the sky. Whether it is in the form of an animal or a human, whatever you see first is Manjushri. Generally, anybody who goes to Wutai Shan meets Manjushri. If you have awareness, sometimes something little bit strange [occurs], something that in ordinary aspect is quite unusual—maybe something other normal, ordinary people can't do—so, if you have that kind of awareness, you are able to recognize that is Buddha Manjushri.

A long time ago, a lay person was given a letter to give to a bodhisattva, mentioning the place where the bodhisattva was. The person went to that place and read the name of the bodhisattva to the family there, but they said, "We don't have a bodhisattva here of that name but we have a pig with a similar name." The pig always used to go after the other pigs—the other pigs would go first then this pig always went last, maybe as a sort of protection for the other pigs. So they read the message to the pig, "Your karma to benefit in this world is finished. Now, you have to go to another world to benefit others." As soon as the message was read, the pig made a huge noise and immediately passed away. It means his consciousness left and went to another world. The pig was a bodhisattva. It was the bodhisattva Manjushri manifested for ordinary people. That happened.

Anybody who goes there meets Manjushri. It's kind of like that. I'm just telling another story. There are holy beings in various forms. Buddhas manifest in human forms, as women, as men, as ordained people. You might therefore think I'm announcing I'm a buddha. But I'm not saying that! No way. It will take numberless eons for me to become a buddha. It's like that for all of us. [I'm just saying that buddhas] take all kinds of forms.

This is mentioned in the sutra, *Meeting the Father and Son, Gyab Se Jahvai Do*. The Buddha manifests as Indra who is worshipped by the Hindus. The Buddha manifests in the form of the worldly gods, like Indra and Brahma. He manifests as mara. Here, it says *dul* which means mara or demon. It actually says he takes the costume of mara. *Chache* means costume. He takes the costume of mara and works for sentient beings in that form. But, *jigten kham*, the people in the world do not recognize that as such.

The Buddha takes the "costume of woman." He also manifests as a woman. And the Buddha also manifests in animal form. Although he is without attachment, he shows [having] attachment. He manifests having attachment. Of course he has no attachment. Even arhats have no attachment; even the other arya beings before achieving arhathood have no attachment, and we are not talking about buddhas or bodhisattvas. This is talking about the Lesser Vehicle path—even they do not have attachment. Here we are talking about the Buddha. He has no attachment but he shows the aspect of having attachment. He has no fear but he shows the aspect of having fear. He has no ignorance but he shows the aspect of having ignorance. He has no craziness but he shows the aspect of having craziness. He shows all kinds of manifestations, *nampar trul*, to benefit, to subdue the minds of sentient beings.

There is a longer quotation but this is another quotation. The bodhisattva Thogme asked a question, "Now we are guided by the Buddha, but in the future who will guide us?" That means when the Buddha has passed away, who would there be to guide the disciples? The Buddha answered him, "In order to ripen the minds of sentient beings, I show birth, old age, sickness and death." The Buddha said this to benefit us sentient beings.

So, that's just by the way, just an aside. Now, I'll go back.

A Good Heart Is the Most Important Education (Back to)

The way the Buddha guides us sentient beings to enlightenment, including you and me, is to guide us gradually. So, this is a very deep subject, one we have to remember in our daily life, both during our practice and in our daily life. I was telling this to the school teachers when we had lunch, that the main education is the good heart, practicing kindness all the time. I'm talking about being kind to others, but of course, remembering the kindness is one thing.

I told them this is the main education, that they have to grow up with that. Then, what happens if this is our main education, when we grow up and become old, there is so much happiness in our life. There are no difficulties. Whatever we wish for happens, because in earlier times we helped others, we were kind to others. Because of that karma—the cause—the effect is that as we grow up all our wishes are fulfilled and happiness comes. That is one thing.

The second thing is that we become a good-hearted, kind person, so even when we grow old, we always help others in the world, giving so much happiness to others, and so other people keep us in their heart and they pray for us. They wish good things for us; everybody wants to help us. I mentioned this to them but I didn't say the details.

The other thing is this. If the children grow up with a good heart as their main education, practicing a good heart, being kind to others, when they become government people—presidents or ministers or whatever—by living their life with a good heart and having an important job, because of habituation from a young age practicing a good heart, instead of using the population for their own power, for their reputation, to get power and possessions for themselves and their family, they become a source of happiness for the whole population, for all the millions of people in their country and in the world. Here, it is totally different. With a good heart, we might seek our own happiness but we principally seek the happiness of so many people in our country and in the world. We wish to fulfill their wishes for happiness. That is so good, so important. The result is a huge difference, starting from childhood, if this can be the main education.

With a good heart, we can become the president or a minister and be a source of happiness for everybody, for all the millions and millions and millions of people in our country. You have to know that.

I explained this to the school teachers of Chailsa. There was maybe a third thing, I don't remember. I don't remember whether there were two or three things I explained. Of course, there is practicing meditation, practicing the Dharma. That is the best. That is the best way to practice a good heart. Serving others is the best meditation, the best Dharma practice. You have to know that. It's not that [we sit still] for many hours and then do nothing to help others. We spend our whole life like that but don't do anything for others. Life would become very strange, very sad, [if that were the case]. There would be no good result to show at the end.

Sorry, I should go back. In the world many people do that. They meditate and meditate but the mind never changes, the personality never changes, the egoistic, selfish mind never changes. There is no happiness or peace in life. As I'm talking here about teaching children, the idea I wanted to bring to the school teachers is that having a good heart is the *main* education. And that what I want to say to you, especially if you have children. Of course, this is for you yourself but if you have children you should know that is the main education, the most important education.

When somebody has a good heart, they are liked by everybody in the world. It is like the sun shining. The person becomes like that. And of course, if the parents practice a good heart, that becomes a good example for the children; they become an example for the children to copy. "My parents do like that," then the children naturally follow, also developing a good heart. So, that very much depends on the parents.

Subduing Our Mind, There Are no More Enemies

Unless you know that the most important education is developing a good heart, when you have children you bring them up to suffer. Most people make children for their own happiness, to bring

themselves happiness, to make this real I happy—this real I that is not there at all. That is the reason for them having children. They get married, have children, and the children have children, all for this real I, to make it happy. But it is not there at all. That is really laughable! It is not even there.

[If we think like that,] we keep our whole life so busy, running around the city. If we find a little bit of time off work, we jog or run around the city to be healthy, to have long life. We keep so busy for this I, to achieve happiness for this real I which is not there. It is very funny, but people in the world never check. They believe the real I is there, and they keep their life so busy, day and night, for this real I. But it is not there! Do you understand?

People are so worried about cancer and this and that. They are terrified this real I will get cancer, but the real I is not there. There is an I that exists, the I that experiences the oceans of suffering of samsara. We can stop that [suffering] and achieve not only nirvana but also enlightenment. There is the merely labeled I, but people don't know that. There is an I that exists but there is no real I, but they don't know that. They unbelievably don't know that truth, the truth about their life, that there is an I that exists—the merely-labeled I—and there is the false I, the I that doesn't exist.

Because of that, people keep their life so busy, day and night, so busy, all to get happiness for this real I, this I that is not there, that we cannot find anywhere in the world. The numberless buddhas see that this real I is not there, that it does not exist. That's funny.

As the great bodhisattva Shantideva said, those who are bothering us, harming us, who are angry at us are numberless, like the sky. If we wanted to kill them all, it would never end. But if we just destroy our own anger, we destroy every enemy. When we are free from anger, nobody bothers us, we have no enemies.

Once we have destroyed this one thing, our anger, it is like having destroyed all our enemies. It is like nobody becomes our enemy. Once we have destroyed our inner enemy, our anger, there is no enemy outside. In *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* Shantideva said,

[5:13] Where would I possibly find enough leather

With which to cover the surface of the earth?

Yet (wearing) leather just on the soles of my shoes

Is equivalent to covering the earth with it.

If we want to [travel over] the whole earth, in order to not get thorns we would need to cover the whole earth with leather. There would not be enough leather to cover the whole earth. But if we were to just wear leather shoes, we could walk anywhere without getting stuck with thorns, so it's like the whole earth is covered by leather. The meaning is if we destroy our anger, it's like having destroyed all the numberless enemies.

We have a car in Aptos, America. I put a sticker on the back of the car saying, "No anger, no enemy." Many people look at it. Some people look at *all* the messages on the car. Some write them down. Once at the airport, an old lady was copying everything, all the messages on the car. Many people looked and read them and others started copying them. One side of the car has the saying by His Holiness: "My religion is kindness." Then on the other side there is: "Cherishing others is source of happiness."

On the front there are many mantras. Especially when you drive at night, so many insects die, so to benefit them there is Namgyälma protection in the car. Namgyälma is unbelievably powerful. I brought the text to explain to you but now I've run out of time. Although so many insects die, because the car has become holy by having the protection, when they die under the wheels, it purifies their negative karma and they do not get reborn in the lower realms. Things like that.

On the front of the car I have a very important meditation, teaching: "Less desire means more happiness." Do you remember?

Ven. Roger: “Letting go of desire means gaining real happiness and satisfaction, no problems.”

Rinpoche: Can you say it again, slowly?

Ven. Roger: “Letting go of desire means gaining real happiness and satisfaction, no problems.”

Rinpoche: So, that is on the front of the car. Most people don’t know that. It is a very important education, showing how you can free your life from problems, how to do that. How to achieve satisfaction in your life. So, that education is here.

There is one more quotation but it is difficult to remember, I can’t remember it. [Tibetan] So anyway, the essence is this: Subduing your mind, all those harmful animals are subdued. It mentions tigers and lions, *sengge*. It says lions. There is the snow lion and the mud lion, the African mud lion, living in the mud, as well as *langchen*, elephant, *drel*, mule, snakes, and all the enemies. When we change our mind, it’s like all those harmful animals are changed; they become harmless. Because our mind is changed, controlled, none of those harmful animals can harm us; it’s like they are chained. By subduing our mind, all those harmful animals who would normally harm us are subdued; they are so peaceful.

For example, King Majeta who always competed with the Buddha, who always wanted to harm the Buddha, sent a crazy elephant to harm him. But when the crazy elephant came in front of the Buddha, it did a prostration like this, like a dog, like this. [Rinpoche demonstrates] It was unable to harm the Buddha. Even though it was a crazy elephant, because of the Buddha’s subdued mind, bodhicitta, it could not harm him. It was subdued like that. Once our own mind is subdued, all those harmful animals are subdued, Here it was because of the Buddha’s bodhicitta, letting go of the I and cherishing numberless sentient beings. So, the crazy elephant went in front of the Buddha and humbly prostrated like this.

The Tibetan bodhisattva, Thogme Zangpo, was an ordained person who wrote the *Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*. He had two animals, a cat and a wolf. Because the bodhisattva was a great practitioner of the ultimate good heart of bodhicitta, because of that blessing, the cat and the wolf both became vegetarian. They did not harm mice and other animals. Just because of the power of his bodhicitta, the minds of the two animals were naturally subdued and they no longer harmed other sentient beings.

I lived for eight years in India, in Buxa, the place where Mahatma Gandhi-ji and Prime Minister Nehru were imprisoned and where so many people were killed in that time. While I was there, I learned philosophy, studying like a child. The abbot of the Sera Je and Sera Mey monastery, Losang Wangchug, was very learned, very famous in Sera, Ganden and Drepung. Each college had many thousands of monks. Sera had 7,700 monks and there were many well-known monasteries, famous for Buddhist philosophy, for sutra and tantra. Losang Wangchug had a cat, but when a mouse ran around the room, the cat just stayed there; it never ran out to kill the mouse. The cat just naturally became harmonious because of his blessing, his bodhicitta. You have to know that.

In Italy, even Communists appreciated Saint Francis. Everybody likes him, harmonious and not harmonious. There was a wolf in the forest that had harmed many people. When he heard, Saint Francis said he wanted to go into the forest to tell the wolf not to harm others, but his disciples told him not to go because the wolf would harm him. But Saint Francis went into the forest, and when the wolf met him, it was like when a dog sees its master. The dog became humble, like the elephant I explained. Instead of harming Saint Francis, the wolf became so humble, maybe licking his legs or something, harmless, only delighted. Then, Saint Francis told the wolf he would beg food in the city and bring it to the wolf. He did that and the wolf stopped harming others.

Saint Francis’ external appearance was very different to the other priests, who wore very good, pure white robes. I saw his dress in the monastery. When you drive from Spain to Italy, on the way there is a big monastery in front of a mountain, like a Tibetan monastery. There were many clothes inside. I don’t know the name, but the robe was hanging, old and black, with many patches, not like the robes of the other priests, but like a Tibetan yogi, a pure practitioner. A Tibetan yogi wears robes

like that, full of patches. To renounce the pleasure of this life, he had a rough belt made of I don't know what, grass—not grass—I don't know what, a belt with two ropes to tie around inside against the skin to renounce pleasure of this life or something. That was shown there. Then, because of his bodhicitta, even the elements could not disturb him.

Our main center in Italy, Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, is about half an hour or something, from Assisi, where his holy body is kept, but you cannot see the body. There are some thorn bushes around. Lama Yeshe sat down to do meditation in front of where his body is kept. There was his disciple, a nun, who had three hundred disciples. Her body, which was very tall, was kept in glass and still looked very good.

When Saint Francis was there, his disciples, who had been meditating near the water complained to him they could not meditate because of the noise of the water, so Saint Francis went to the water and said, “Sister, please stop because my disciples cannot meditate.” Then, the water stopped and has been stopped since then. Far up in the mountain there is a kind of mark where the water came to. Up to now the water has never come back.

There are many stories of how the big rivers stop when bodhisattvas travel, and after they have crossed the water starts again. Keutsang Rinpoche in a past life was called Keutsang Jamyang Monlam. The incarnation lives in Dharamsala. One of his past lives was Keutsang Jamyang Monlam, a bodhisattva at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Tsang in Tibet. Once, flood water was coming from the other side going toward the monastery, but Keutsang Jamyang Monlam wrote on a stone, “If it is true I have bodhicitta then the water should turn back.” He then put the stone facing the water and the floodwater went back. That is common to bodhisattvas. They are able to stop the danger of the elements due to the power of bodhicitta, the good heart.

Saint Francis was like that, like many bodhisattvas, so this shows he had bodhicitta. He recited “God, God,” very humbly while going on the road. His disciples went with him. A priest kind of spit on him from above. In Sicily there is a place where there are many chairs. There is a picture of Jesus Christ there that spoke to Saint Francis. Similarly, we have many Buddha statues in Tibet, Nepal and India like that. For example, in Bodhgaya there is a Tara statue outside the stupa, but not only that one. People think it is only the Tara [that spoke], but during Lama Atisha' time many statues outside the stupa spoke. That is what Kyabje Khunu Lama Rinpoche said, not only Tara but many statues in Tibet and Solu Khumbu. I think because of the purity of his mind, bodhicitta, the ultimate good heart, all the numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas are of course very happy, very close. As I mentioned before, the Buddha manifests even as demons to help. If by manifesting as a demon the Buddha can help sentient beings, in the form of a picture, this picture spoke to bodhisattva Saint Francis. I think it is like that.

I'll stop here. I didn't get to go over the subject. I'm so sorry.

Dedications

[Rinpoche and students offer mandala]

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me and all the three-time merits collected by the numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may bodhicitta, the ultimate good heart, the source of all happiness up to enlightenment for me and every sentient being, be generated in me and in the minds and in the hearts of all sentient beings, and those who have developed it...”

Maybe I'll mention this. I've elaborated on this once today. We pray that bodhicitta is generated in the hearts of the numberless hell beings so that they achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. The hell beings are the ones with the heaviest suffering and they are numberless. I heard some people left the gompa—not Kopan but the gompa—when John went through that. I don't know how long they left the gompa for, how many hours. The advantage is that when you meditate, when you go through the sufferings of the hell realm, you know what it means to be a hell being, with the most unimaginable suffering that we humans could not stand for even a second. There are the

sufferings of the major hot and cold hells, the six neighboring hells and the suffering of the ordinary hell.

The six neighboring hells I'm talking about, it's like being in the very center of fire, being born there and suffering, like a quagmire, a septic tank, full of unbelievably dirty things, or like the whole ground is covered in swords that cut you wherever you put your foot down, but then your leg revives as you raise it and then it cuts you again. And the trees become swords that go through the body. [That hell is] called *Shalmali*.

Then there is the hell called *Churabme*, which is liquid but oneness with fire. My idea is that it is like lava that flows from a volcano, like in Hawaii and many places. I don't know if the scientists mention the depth it comes from, but it is so deep and it shoots up. It's much hotter than human fire. All the rocks it touches are melted. I went to Hawaii to see the lava, so I think *Churabme* might be like that, liquid lava. It looks like liquid but it's oneness with fire. Of the six neighboring hells, the last one is *Churabme*. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's disciple, the arhat Maudgalyayana went to the lower realms with his psychic powers. I want to bring this one up to you, about *Churabme*, the lava, the last and sixth of the neighboring hells. This is what I think it is.

By following the meditation, we can develop compassion and actualize bodhicitta. Then, by actualizing bodhicitta as the motivation, we can practice the six perfections and complete the path. Then, we achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. And then we are able to liberate numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment. So, now you understand how it is unbelievably important to know the suffering of other sentient beings. Even though we are not suffering like that right now, that is what we have already suffered numberless times before, and if we don't practice Dharma in this life, if we don't take care of our mind well, we will suffer like that again numberless times in the future. So, by learning about the unimaginable suffering of the sentient beings of the lower realms, we can develop compassion. It becomes so important to learn about it, to know about it.

I want to tell you, in the West people are so curious. People can spend years learning about one species of harmful spider, searching for it in the forest. That is one example, but there are so many different animals that people study for years. They are so curious to learn something new. From that side you should not think, "I don't want to learn, I don't want to hear." That is ridiculous! In the West, where people are so curious, always wanting to learn something new, you should see that it is so important to develop compassion for sentient beings, even for devas. Then, we are inspired to pray for them. We have to help, we have to pray, we have to practice Dharma, we have to actualize the path. If we become free from the oceans of samsaric sufferings, if we attain renunciation, bodhicitta and the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, we can help liberate other sentient beings. Because we see their suffering, we are qualified and we can liberate other sentient beings from those sufferings.

Otherwise, liberating others from suffering never happens. We just stay in our kind of cave, I don't know how to say it? [*Student: Cocoon.*] We never move, we stay like this, [Rinpoche covers his head] so we don't see other sentient beings who have unbelievable suffering. Now I should finish. We have to help, we should pray. We have this most precious human life we have received about only once, just this life, so we must make it most beneficial for the numberless sentient beings. At least, we should pray and dedicate our merits like we are doing now to help them.

Before you came here, you had no idea at all, only thinking of yourself, but now, after all that, you can see the advantage. You yourself are able to help numberless sentient beings. There is no greater happiness than this. Then, you can bring them to enlightenment by yourself. Can you see how that is most important to do in your life? Can you understand now?

"May bodhicitta be generated in the hearts of the hell beings and may they achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. May bodhicitta be generated in the hearts of all the hungry ghosts. May every single hungry ghost achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. May bodhicitta be generated in the

hearts of all the animals.” As I said yesterday, there are numberless universes with numberless animals. “May bodhicitta be generated in their hearts. May bodhicitta be generated in the hearts of all the human beings and may they achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. May bodhicitta be generated in hearts of all the suras, asuras and intermediate state beings—they are numberless—and may they achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“In particular, may the sentient beings in this world, in particular in Nepal, in particular the FPMT centers in Nepal, the people who come to the centers and monks and nuns here, all the staff of the centers, may they generate bodhicitta and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. May all the students in the world, including those who rely upon me, who I have promised to pray for, those whose names were given to me, may they achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.” I say “mine,” but you can think yours. “All the sentient beings, insects, human beings, all the sentient beings who I see, all the sentient beings who see me, may bodhicitta be generated in their hearts and may they achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. Then, anybody who hears my name, who hears my voice, who remember me, who touches me, who even seeing photos of me, may they all be able to generate bodhicitta and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.” Sorry, I don’t have the blessing but just my hand touching anybody, it includes all that in prayer. Those whose head or hands I touch are included in the prayer. “May they achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, the most important thing in the world, may the Buddhadharma last a long time for the happiness of sentient beings. May His Holiness Chenrezig abide stably until our samsara ends. May His Holiness have a stable life and all his holy wishes succeed immediately.

[Long-life prayers for His Holiness the Dalai Lama]

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may we be guided by Lama Tsongkhapa, our Mahayana virtuous friend, in all lifetimes.”

This prayer is not only for you and your family but for all beings, those who are living and those who are dead. It’s so important to pray for them. You don’t want them to suffer without end in the six realms of samsara all the time, do you? No, you don’t want them to suffer, so you must pray. Coming here you have come to know this, so now you must help them. You have met Dharma and you have a great opportunity to help other sentient beings, so this prayer is also for them.

You also have to think, “May no being ever be separated from the pure path admired by all the buddhas. May they be able to actualize Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings in this very life—not only to study but to actualize—and be liberated and achieve enlightenment.”

Then you must 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 in the future be stopped immediately, and may the disease and famines happening now in the world be stopped immediately. May all fires stop, especially those recently in California that have burned for so many months, killing so many people.”

They don’t count the big animals, like the deer, or the numberless insects burned by fire. They never talk about the animals. In America the danger of fire happens quite often. It’s connected with the karma of the president as well, not only of the population. It depends on the good luck of the president. [With good karma, or luck, there are] less problems in the country; with not so much good luck there are more problems in the country.

“May the dangers of fire, water, air, earth, tsunamis, landslides, earthquakes—all the many problems—be stopped immediately. And may perfect peace and happiness prevail in everyone’s heart by generating loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta in everyone’s heart. May the Buddhadharma, where sentient beings receive peace and happiness from, last a long time, and may

they meet Buddhadharma and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. May I be able to cherish every sentient being more than the sky filled with wish-granting jewels.

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

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

Thank you very much.

[Long-life prayer for Lama Zopa Rinpoche]

[Rinpoche stops to respond to a student’s question just as he is about to get off the throne]

As he asked a question, I thought to say some things. For example, Lama Tsongkhapa was invited by the [Ming] dynasty [6] in China to receive an initiation or give teachings, but he didn’t go. He sent another lama, Jamchen Choje, who founded Sera Monastery. [7] He went and gave teachings. Even though the Ming dynasty invited Lama Tsongkhapa, he didn’t go. [The student] asked a question about sometime working for others, so I’m giving two examples. Even though Lama Tsongkhapa was invited by the Ming dynasty in China, he didn’t go; he sent another lama. I don’t know, but maybe if he had gone, the great benefit to the teachings of the Buddha in Tibet wouldn’t have happened. That’s one thing. You have to know what is right. That is very profound. You have to know which has more advantage, right or wrong.

Then another example. While Lama Tsongkhapa was giving so many teachings on sutra and tantra to many disciples, Buddha Manjushri advised him to go to a solitary place to meditate, so he and eight disciples went. They renounced life, going with nothing, carrying only what monks need. He stopped the teachings and went to a solitary place to meditate with eight disciples. Manjushri advised Lama Tsongkhapa to do that, while he was giving teachings to many disciples. So like this, you have to know what will be more beneficial in the future—giving teachings or going to a solitary place to meditate. Because Manjushri advised this, he suddenly stopped giving teachings and went to the mountains to a solitary place, in order to meditate. So you have to know those very important things. What you asked is not like that, but your question includes very high things like that. It is true not just for normal life but even for very high beings such as Lama Tsongkhapa. You have to judge what is most important by knowing that. Thank you very much.

Lecture 4: December 10



The Secret of the Mind

[Rinpoche and students recite *Prayers Before Teachings*]

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

[5:17] Even those who wish to find happiness and overcome misery

Will wander with no aim nor meaning

If they do not comprehend the secret of the mind—

The paramount significance of Dharma.

About the secret of the mind, when my teacher, Geshe Sopa Rinpoche, gave teaching in Deer Park to us students, because he was giving teachings on the different texts on emptiness, such as the great commentary of the *Root Wisdom*, Geshe-la related the “secret” to emptiness, but in the commentary by Gyaltsab-je, he said that this “secret” is not related to emptiness. I think because Geshe-la’s main subject was emptiness, maybe he related the meaning of secret to emptiness, but Lama Tsongkhapa’s main disciple, Gyaltsab Rinpoche, explained that it is not emptiness.

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, the kind compassionate buddha, the Omniscient One, whose compassion embraces every single hell being, every single hungry ghost, every single animal—with not even one ant or one mosquito left out, not even the tiniest flies—every single human being—not only in this world but also in the numberless other universes, scientifically mentioned and which the Buddha mentioned—every single sura being, asura being and intermediate state being, his compassion embraces every single sentient being including us. In his life he taught 84,000 teachings. I can’t say these 84,000 teachings are the only ones he taught. His Holiness Sakya Trizin, the head of the Sakya sect who I took many initiations from, said what the Buddha taught was not just the 84,000 teachings; these were just the majority. That is because [he taught for] all the sentient beings who have different levels of mind, different levels of intelligence, different levels of karma, therefore it comes into three levels: the Lesser Vehicle teachings, the Greater Vehicle sutra teachings and the Greater Vehicle tantra teachings. (This is not Hindu tantra but Buddhist tantra.)

Those three are contained in the lamrim, the graduated path to enlightenment, as the graduated path of the three capable beings: the graduated path of the lower capable being in general, the graduated path of the middle capable being in general and the graduated path of the higher capable being. The lamrim is divided into these three categories. The goal [of the graduated path of the lower capable being] is to achieve a higher rebirth as a deva or human, a good rebirth, and to be free from the suffering of the lower realms: the suffering of the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm and the animal realm. The method for that is relying on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, taking refuge in them, and then protecting our karma.

We abandon the cause of the suffering, the cause of the lower realms, nonvirtue, and only create virtuous action, virtuous karma, causing happiness and higher rebirth. That means abandoning actions such as the ten nonvirtues, which cause the lower realms, as well as the suffering in this life, of course, and then practicing the ten virtues, which brings happiness in future lives as well as this life. Even if our motivation isn't the happiness of this life, of course it does that.

For example, by taking the five lay vows, we free ourselves from committing the five nonvirtuous actions of killing, stealing, committing sexual misconduct, telling lies and taking alcohol, which interfere with us practicing Dharma, creating virtue, making the mind wild, kind of unconscious. Instead of subduing the mind, it makes the mind wild, causing danger to our life and to others. Even if we can't practice the five virtuous actions [through keeping] the lay vows, if we can keep four, three, two or one from those five, whichever ones we can, in that way we can protect our karma with a mind relying on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, taking refuge in them, and then our protecting karma. That is the graduated path of the lower capable being.

Then, on that basis, with the graduated path of the middle capable being, the aim is to achieve liberation from samsara. To be free from samsara, the method is practicing the three higher trainings: the higher training of morality, the higher training of concentration and the higher training of wisdom. The higher training of morality means with refuge. Without refuge, it cannot be a higher training. Then, on the basis of that, the higher training of concentration or meditation, and on the basis of that, the higher training of wisdom. That is the path to achieve liberation from samsara, to achieve nirvana, the graduated path of the middle capable being.

Then, on the basis of that, [with the graduated path of the higher capable being,] the goal is to achieve great nirvana, the total cessation of all obscurations, gross and subtle, and the completion of all the realizations, *sang gye*. So, the goal is for sentient beings. To be free from lower nirvana, from the self-cherishing thought, the motivation is bodhicitta. We let go of the I, where, as I mentioned, all the suffering arises from, all the obstacles to practice Dharma. We let go of the I and cherish others, all the numberless sentient beings.

As I explained about the Buddha's holy mind, his compassion cherishes all others, all the numberless sentient beings: the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless sura and asura beings and the numberless intermediate state beings. Cherishing every single sentient being is where all the happiness arises from. We get all our happiness up to enlightenment from others, so we cherish them.

With that motivation, we engage in the bodhisattva's conduct, the six perfections, and through that we achieve full enlightenment, buddhahood, for sentient beings. So, the Buddha's teachings of three levels comes down to the lamrim, showing us with three levels how to go to enlightenment, how to develop the mind toward enlightenment for sentient beings, how to develop the mind toward bodhicitta.

Without preliminary renunciation of samsara, without attaining that realization, although we don't like suffering, we also don't like renunciation, because we don't want to let go of samsaric pleasures, the pleasures we cling to so much. We don't want to give them up! Because of that, our mind does not develop bodhicitta.

As I mentioned yesterday or the day before, without meditating on our own suffering, without learning about our own suffering, there is no way to recognize or feel the unbearable suffering of others, so there is no way to generate compassion, and therefore no way to develop bodhicitta. Compassion is the preliminary step before bodhicitta.

Because John led the meditation all the way up to here, you can understand why it is so important to meditate on suffering, your suffering and others' suffering. I heard many stories from Spain, how the Sangha who went to teach Dharma in Spain found the people told them they did not want to hear about suffering! Because they have not really studied lamrim well, they don't know the reasons. Even in America we have a small center called Pamtingpa Center in Washington. I don't know the name of the specific area. I heard they said they don't want to hear about suffering. They told the nun who gives teachings that they don't want to hear about suffering!

Only in the Southern Continent Can We Practice Dharma

Of the samsaric beings in three realms—the desire realm samsaric beings, the form realm samsaric beings and the formless realm samsaric beings—only the desire realm beings experience all three types of suffering: the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering. When we don't know about the entire range of suffering, without an outline of the whole of suffering, not even all of the suffering of pain, we cannot get the whole idea. What we know about suffering, even of our own samsara, is very limited, so of course our understanding of how much others suffer is very limited. Then, the renunciation of our own suffering is not there, and so feeling compassion for others does not happen or it is hardly there.

Then, the compassion we feel is very partial, only for somebody we like. Maybe we have compassion for the cats we like but no compassion for rats or spiders or snakes. We have no compassion for the other animals we don't like. It's like that. We only have compassion for people we like but no compassion for others we don't care for. There can also be attachment to the animals we like or the people we like, such as friends. So, there is no way to develop bodhicitta; it's blocked. It's impossible. And there is no way to achieve enlightenment. It's hopeless.

Because our understanding is limited, we don't know that in the form realm there is the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering and in the formless realm there is only the pervasive compounding suffering. They do not have the two other sufferings but they still have pervasive compounding suffering. They are not free from that, so when their karma to be there finishes, past karma ripens then they get reborn in the lower realms of the desire realm.

We have been through that, achieving shamatha meditation, achieving the four levels of firm contemplation. We have achieved renunciation of the desire realm numberless times; we have been born in the form realm through meditation numberless times; we have been born in the formless realm numberless times, but because we did not achieve renunciation to the whole of samsara [we are still not free from samsara.] Even Hindus can attain the form realm and the four levels of the formless realm: *limitless sky*, *limitless consciousness*, *nothingness* and the *tip of samsara*. They can generate renunciation to that level by seeing, through the six analyses, that the next level is better, with more peace, than the level they are currently on. However, after the tip of samsara there is no higher realm of samsara so there is nothing to compare. Even though they have renunciation of the whole of the desire realm, the form realm and the first three levels of the formless realm, they can never renounce the tip of samsara because there is no higher samsaric realm to compare it to. So, they are stuck. This even happens to Hindu meditators.

I heard that at this time, of the three sets of delusion—gross, middle and small—the delusions are so subtle that the meditator believes they have achieved nirvana. They have not achieved it but they think they have. So, when the karma finishes to be in the tip of samsara, and the next rebirth manifests, in the lower realms or the human realm or whatever, they think, because they assumed

they were in nirvana, that they had been deceived and there is no nirvana. They develop heresy, thinking nirvana is not true, and that heresy causes them to be reborn in hell.

So, we have gone through all six realms of the desire realm numberless times. We have gone through these meditations and been born in the form and formless realm numberless times. Calm abiding is common to both Buddhists and Hindus and we have achieved that numberless times. We have achieved renunciation up to the tip of samsara numberless times. But we have to understand that even the tip of samsara is in the nature of suffering. Everything in samsara, from the tip of samsara to the very lowest hell realm, the eighth hot hell, the inexhaustible hot hell, is in the nature of suffering, like being in the center of fire, or like being in prison. We do not want to be in prison for even a second but we are in prison like that. It is like our naked body is wrapped in a thorn bush; we are sitting on a thorn bush.

We have to realize how everything up to and including the tip of samsara is in the nature of suffering, how it is most unbearable. Then, when we see that all sentient beings are suffering in samsara like that, we feel it is unbearable. The numberless sentient beings—the hell beings, the hungry ghosts, the animals, the human beings, the suras, asuras and intermediate state beings—are suffering so much in samsara. We feel it is unbearable, like being in the center of a fire. With that feeling, compassion arises. The more we see our suffering and then others' suffering, the more we feel how unbearable others' suffering is and the stronger our compassion for others becomes. And then we can develop strong bodhicitta.

In this world, in the southern continent, because there is pleasure but also so much suffering due to karma, it is very easy to see the suffering and to understand how samsara is so unbearable. We can generate strong renunciation, the first of the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment, and then bodhicitta and right view. We can generate strong renunciation in this continent, the southern continent where we are. And because of that, we are able to generate strong compassion for others and then strong bodhicitta for others, which allows us to achieve enlightenment quickly. Therefore, because we are born in the southern continent at this time, we are so unbelievably fortunate.

All the people of the northern continent live for a thousand years, and they are all like deva realm beings, so wealthy. Without any poverty, they cannot generate renunciation or compassion; there is no kind of opportunity. So, in the other continents it is difficult, whereas here it is so easy to develop the mind to enlightenment.

As I might have mentioned before, even if we don't generate the tantric path but the sutra path and attain a pure land, because there are no tantric teachings in Amitabha pure land, bodhisattvas there pray to be born in the southern continent where we are, because tantric teachings exist here and they can achieve enlightenment here.

For that reason, we are unbelievably fortunate to be born in the southern continent where tantric teachings still exist, where we can achieve any of the four levels of tantra: the lower tantras of Kriya Tantra and Charya Tantra, or [Yoga Tantra] or Highest Yoga Tantra (Anuttara Yoga Tantra) so we can achieve enlightenment in one life. Whereas only practicing Mahayana sutra where we have to practice the six perfections, that takes three countless great eons to complete the collection of merits of wisdom and merits of virtue. But by practicing tantra we can achieve enlightenment so quickly, in one lifetime.

With Highest Yoga Tantra we achieve enlightenment even more quickly. The reason is having unbelievable compassion. First, such strong renunciation of our own suffering of samsara, and then compassion so strong that we can't stand it for even a second that sentient beings are suffering in samsara. With that motivation, we practice Highest Yoga Tantra, which allows us to achieve enlightenment, the unified state of Vajradhara, in a brief lifetime of degenerate times. For that reason, we are so unbelievably fortunate. It is so important to recognize how fortunate we are. There is no time, no space, for committing suicide or getting depressed!

We should remember the eight freedoms and ten richnesses that give us the opportunity to practice Dharma. Each one we have is like the sky filled with wish-granting jewels. Thinking like that, remembering each of the eight freedoms and the ten richnesses we have, it's unbelievable. We feel there is so much to be happy for, so much to enjoy!

I normally mention, when I watched soccer on TV, at the beginning I didn't recognize when somebody won. Somebody put the ball in the goal and then they ran around, so fast, showing all the nerves outside, not smiling at all. I thought maybe they did something wrong. Later I realized it didn't mean that; it meant they had won. They seemed completely freaked out, running around like that. Here, day and night, every hour, for our whole life we can do like this, we can run! Even at night-time in our dreams we can do like this, we can run with all our nerves out! So, there is no time for depression!

So, the secret of the mind. Even though we all desire happiness and want to eliminate all suffering, because we don't know the secret of the mind, we are forced to wander in samsara. We have been wandering in samsara from beginningless rebirths because we don't know the secret of mind in this life. If we don't practice Dharma, we wander in samsara forever. Do you understand? You have to understand that. If we don't know the secret of the mind.

Actions done with the pure mind unstained by the worldly concern of this life, that is Dharma. That brings the happiness of future lives. Then, the mind that is even purer than that, unstained by the attachment to samsara, to the future lives' samsaric pleasures, that mind causes nirvana, the ultimate happiness. Now, actions with bodhicitta cause enlightenment, to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. Knowing the secret of the mind means that. If we want happiness we have to know this, otherwise we are like the bees who get into a pot through a hole but are unable to come out. They cannot see how to escape, so they buzz around and around. If we want happiness and do not want suffering, unless we know the secret of the mind, as the great bodhisattva Shantideva said, we are totally blind. What we do is only engage in worldly concern for this life, and then all our actions of body, speech and mind become nonvirtue, the cause of suffering. Then, with attachment to future samsara, the self-cherishing thought, what we do is only suffering.

Sorry, tea.

[Tea offering]

Ignorance Exaggerates Good and Bad

Connecting to my previous talk, Milarepa's disciple, Gampopa said,

By looking at the world as a hallucination, whatever is done is meaningless, the cause of suffering, whatever you think there is no benefit. Always train to look at your mind in that way.

This is very important advice. You must write it down. This is his experience, how he sees our life, but it takes a little bit of time to examine the world [in this way] as a hallucination.

Please let me explain. Lama Tsongkhapa said that it is the nature of ignorance to exaggerate. Therefore, things appear to us as good or bad, and from that attachment and anger arise. Normally we think that attachment and anger arise together with the beautiful or ugly object, but that is not what happens. First, we make the reason—"This is good; this is bad"—and then attachment and anger arise. They do not come together. It's important to know that all this comes from how our basic ignorance exaggerates [the qualities of an object]. We have to know that the whole thing comes from a totally false object and is then built up on that basis. There is nothing true in that; it is all false, a hallucination.

First of all, there is ignorance and then what arises from that is attachment, anger and all these wrong concepts. These wrong concepts come from the way the mind misapprehends the object. Logical reasoning can prove that is wrong; it can prove the way of apprehending the object is wrong.

You have to understand this. It is very important. Let me clarify. Through logic, we can prove the way of apprehending the object is totally wrong, therefore these concepts [such as attachment and anger] are wrong concepts.

Meditating on How the I Exists

It is the nature of the ignorance to exaggerate. I have to make that clear to be able to fully understand [why we misapprehend the I]. How we create the I—and that of course includes me—is from the base to be labeled “I.” We have the five aggregates—the aggregates of form, feeling, cognition, compounding aggregate and consciousness. [8] That mind merely imputes the I. That same mind that focuses on the aggregates merely imputes the I. There is nothing else; that is all.

[Rinpoche makes a noise] Sorry, my Sherpa comedy! I mentioned in Spain or Germany, I’m the Himalayan comedian, I’m the Himalayan Sherpa comedian because I make all kinds of noises. So I told the people there that.

So, the mind focuses on the aggregates and that mind merely imputes I. That is it. The I is nothing more than that. That is the reality. It’s nothing more than that. Anything more than that is a hallucination. Even something slightly more than that is a hallucination. That would mean the I exists from its own side. So, what is the I? Nothing else. That is the reality of the I. What is “you,” what is “me?” The I exists but it is unbelievably subtle. It exists, but it is so subtle it’s like it does not exist. You have to know that. You have to know the reality of what the I is. Without following what is projected by ignorance, that is the reality.

So, we are going to meditate on this, to practice the awareness of this, just for a little bit.

[Students meditate for some time]

In the first second, the mind focusing on the aggregates merely imputes the I. Now, in the next second or the next shortest time, the I appears back. It should appear back merely labeled by the mind but for us sentient beings that doesn’t happen. Even for arya beings, except in equipoise meditation on emptiness, it doesn’t appear merely labeled by the mind. Until we achieve enlightenment, how the I appears back to us is a hallucination.

A buddha doesn’t have that hallucination because the subtle negative imprints left by ignorance, delusion, have totally ceased by actualizing the remedy, the path. Therefore, a buddha doesn’t have a dualistic mind or a dualistic view. A buddha’s mind has been totally purified; it has become the buddha’s holy mind, the transcendental wisdom of the dharmakaya. To a buddha, the I is merely labeled by mind and it appears back merely labeled by the mind.

For us sentient beings, even arya beings and higher bodhisattvas, until the subtle negative imprints are totally ceased by completing the remedy, the path, there is the hallucinated appearance. The I appears truly existent. But of course these higher beings, who have a direct perception of emptiness of the I, do not believe the appearance. Even though the I appears to exist from its own side, they do not believe this.

It’s like I explained about the mirage. When you have been through the desert and know it is a mirage, you are not fooled by it. Or like the person who realizes they are dreaming while they are dreaming. There is the appearance of things and events but they do not believe they are real. Because arya beings have a direct perception of emptiness, how could they believe that things exist as they appear, existing from their own side? On the other hand, we completely believe it is true.

For us sentient beings, like me, who have no realization of the emptiness of this I, the I appears to exist from its own side when it appears in the next second, in the next shortest time. It appears as truly existent, as existing from its own side, because there is a negative imprint left on the mental continuum from beginningless rebirths by our ignorance.

In the first second, the mind merely imputes the I, then in the next second or the next shortest moment, that negative imprint projects true existence, projects an I that exists from its own side, that exists by nature. If we use everyday language, the I appears as real. When the I appears back to us, this negative imprint collected from beginningless rebirths by ignorance on our mental continuum decorates this truly existing I [onto the merely labeled I], making the I appear real. Do you see? The real I, the hallucination, is decorated by ignorance onto the merely labeled I. It is that which makes the I appear real to us.

Then, in the third second or the third shortest moment, our mind *believes* this hallucination. “This I is a hundred percent true, real!” That is ignorance. *That* is the root of our samsara. We have created it right now. Do you understand? We have created the root of our samsara right now, the root of all our suffering including depression, dissatisfaction, the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering. This is the root where all the suffering comes from. Believing this hallucinated I is true, that ignorance is the root of our samsara. *Now* you see. We totally believe this is real, this is true.

And as I mentioned, we live our life for this. We live our life to make this real I happy, to get power and happiness for this real I—which *is not there*. We work from childhood, through kindergarten, school, college, marriage, children, all to get power and happiness for this real I. Day and night we work for this real I. Making food, even going to the toilet, making pipi and kaka, every movement is done for this real I. Everything we say, everything we do with our body, speech and mind, every single thing is done for this real I—which *is not there*. *Which is not there*. Do you understand?

It’s created by our ignorance. This I has been projected, decorated by our ignorance, not by our wisdom. Then, if we have power and influence and there is someone we don’t like, we harm them. We can even start a war, like the First World War. I heard it originally started from one person. So many millions got killed, then the Second World War.

The I appears real and the mind decides this is completely true. Then, anything we dislike, we harm or destroy. There have been the First and Second World Wars, so we can start the Third World War, with so many millions and millions of people getting killed, suffering and suffering. And this is without counting the animals, just the people. It comes from this ignorance, this wrong concept that creates the false I, this object to be refuted. The ignorance creates the false I; it believes the I to be real.

Then, if there is anything we do not like, if somebody complains about us, we put that person in prison right away. We have a court case and put them in prison; we torture and kill them. In the world, we create problems like this all the time: problems within the country, problems within society, problems within the family, our own problems. It’s unimaginable.

Every single thing we do is done for this real I, which is not there. Do you understand? We need to learn what is false in life and what is true in life. That is what we are learning now, what is true in our life, what is false in our life. We have to know that.

Like this I, the body exists in mere name, merely labeled, but to our hallucinated mind, it appears the wrong way. As projected by ignorance, by the negative imprint, it appears as a real body, so that too is a hallucination. It’s the same thing with the mind; [it appears as] a real mind. The mind exists in mere name but because of the negative imprint left by ignorance, when it appears it is projected as real, as existing from its own side; it appears as a real mind.

Form is similar. Although merely labeled by the mind, when it appears, the negative imprint decorates the real form on the merely labeled form. Anything we see is like that. Form, all the thangkas, lights, everything we see here we see as real from its own side. When we look outside at the sky, there appears to be a real sky from there, a real road from there, real trees from there, real food, real people, real animals, real everything. Although everything exists in mere name, it does not appear that way. That additional appearance of real phenomena is the hallucination. It is a total hallucination.

Then, sound. Sound is merely labeled by the mind but when it appears, the negative imprint left by ignorance decorates a real sound existing from its own side. Whatever we hear—the sound of dogs, the sound of music, the sound of somebody [tapping] a paper cup, the sound of talking—we don't hear it as merely labeled sound but as real sound. We hear a cough and it appears as a real cough from there; laughing appears as real sound. All sounds appear like that. Even if we fart, the sound of the fart appears to come from there. All sounds are real sounds. But that is a total hallucination.

Then, smell. The smell of a fart! The smell of Lawudo incense; it's all real. We don't see it is merely labeled smell; we see it as a real smell, a real bad smell or a real good smell. That is a total hallucination.

Then, taste. When we eat chili, it is so hot and that hot taste seems to exist from its own side, not merely labeled. But again, this is due to the negative imprint that decorates it as a real taste. If it is salt, it is the real taste of salt or if it is sweet—such as when we eat ice cream—the taste of sweetness appears as real sweet.

Then, tangible. There appears real gentle touch, real soft touch. Every tangible thing is truly existent, not merely labeled. All this is a total hallucination. Form, sound, smell, taste, tangible. When we are walking on the road or sitting on the floor, we see [the surface] as something hard from its own side; it is not merely labeled hard but hard from there, real hard from there. That is a total hallucination.

The seat we are sitting on seems something real from there, not a merely labeled seat but a real seat appearing from there. That is a total hallucination. The whole thing is a total hallucination. Nothing is there in reality. Nothing, not even something the size of an atom, is there. This is an extremely profound meditation. If we can do a mindfulness meditation on this, that is the best mindfulness meditation. We look all these phenomena, which are all hallucinations, as hallucinations.

From beginningless rebirths we have been suffering in samsara. We are still not free from suffering because we believe all this is true, and because of that we get attached. On that basis, from attachment anger arises, and all the 84,000 delusions arise. On the basis of ignorance, on the basis of all the delusions, we suffer our whole life like this.

This is the best meditation, the most profound meditation. If you can do this meditation, this is excellent. For example, if you are walking on the beach, in the water there are fish, there are animals who live in the water. Many people who go to the beach have attachment to the water. On the basis of their ignorance, they see real water from there and the discriminating thought, seeing real bad and real good. Then, attachment arises. I'm sorry to say this, but many who are born in the water as fish were human beings before. It could be some of those human beings now [were fish before]; it could be the other way around, but I'll explain it in different way for the practice of mindfulness, to generate compassion for them.

While you are walking there, you see all those thousands of real people lying naked in the real water. As you walk along the beach with the practice of mindfulness, you look at all this as a hallucination. That which is a hallucination, you look at as a hallucination. Don't forget this.

While you are walking with this meditation, consider the reality of life—what is false and what is true in your life. This [hallucination] is false. By meditating on the false, by looking at the false as false, that meditation is also on what is the truth in your life. That is a fantastic reason to go to the beach. It is so worthwhile to go to the beach to do a meditation like this. Then, your mind will be subdued and there will be incredible peace in your heart.

You can do the same thing when you go to a department store. Even if you have nothing to buy, you can go there for the meditation. There is the women's makeup department with all the makeup for the face and the body; there are the children's and adults' clothing departments—there is so much to see. You can go to each level and do the same meditation, looking at that which is a hallucination as a hallucination. That is so meaningful. It helps you see the truth of your life. It is amazing. That is one way.

You can do the same at the market, or even when you go for a walk on the beach and other places. That is the most unbelievably beneficial mindfulness meditation. That mindfulness is so profound. If you go for a walk, with that meditation you eliminate ignorance, the root of your samsara, the root of all the suffering. You can eliminate attachment, anger, pride, all the delusions, by meditating on emptiness like that. That is one way.

Since I mentioned it, you can do a similar meditation while you are trekking in the mountains, such as to Everest. Is there anybody here who is planning to go to Mount Everest, who wants to climb Mount Everest? I'm not sure. There is a Sherpa man in New York who climbed Mount Everest twenty-five times. I only met one man who climbed it five times. I told him to receive teachings from Kyabje Khyongla Rato Rinpoche. He was very surprised. Anyway, whether you are going trekking or on a pilgrimage, you should plan to do this. Even if you are planning to do a pilgrimage from home for many weeks and months, you should plan to meditate like this while you are walking on the pilgrimage, seeing the holy places, the temples. If you can practice mindfulness like this while you are doing the pilgrimage, meditating on emptiness, it is so worthwhile. Even just in your own room, try to practice mindfulness like that, as I explained.

Sorry, I didn't even finish the *lung*.

Practicing mindfulness in this way is a very good meditation, becoming the remedy to all the delusions. The other way is to meditate on subtle dependent arising, seeing the merely labeled I doing the merely labeled action of walking on the merely labeled road. Or seeing the merely labeled I doing the merely labeled action of eating the merely labeled food. Whatever you are doing, practice subtle dependent arising. As I mentioned, the merely labeled I you meditate on is an extremely subtle phenomenon, extremely subtle, but you are looking at the truth of your life—not the hallucination but the truth.

That is one way to do the mindfulness meditation on emptiness. Whichever way you do it gives an understanding of how the negative imprint projects something real and how none of this is true. It gives that understanding. So there are different ways you can do that.

I'll tell you one thing. When we are angry, if we can suddenly go back [to that feeling] and see that this I exists in mere name, if we can meditate on that, the minute we go back to that state, the anger is gone. The anger cannot exist because it is built on the hallucination. I quoted Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings. That is very important to write down. The awareness of the truth of our life is so important to know. When we think of the merely labeled I, there is no place for anger. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] Then, after that, when our mind is distracted, when the real I appears, the anger comes back.

We can clearly see what Lama Tsongkhapa explained from our own experience, how ignorance creates the real I. It creates the real I, the real form, the real sound, the real person, whatever. Then, the mind discriminates good and bad, beautiful and ugly, and then attachment and anger arise after that. You have to know that.

This proves what Lama Tsongkhapa said. At that time, when we see the merely labeled I, there is no place for anger to arise. Anger is gone. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] But when the mind is distracted, the real I comes; again there is good and bad and anger comes again. With logical reasoning we are able to prove this wrong concept is wrong. We believe anger and attachment is the correct mind, but we have to know it is a wrong concept. The proof is here.

First of all, there is ignorance that creates the real I, then the mind discriminates good and bad, beautiful and ugly, exaggerating the qualities of the object, making them appear real. Then, attachment and anger arise, adding an extra exaggeration. In reality it is not there. The object that ignorance, attachment and anger believe is there is not there; that real, beautiful thing, that real, ugly thing is not there. It is all built on the basis of ignorance, a projection, an exaggeration.

Now listen. Our life is full of exaggeration. First there is ignorance, then, on top of that, we project beautiful or ugly. And then, attachment and anger arise. So many wrong concepts! We live our life

with these hallucinations, always suffering. By looking at our own hallucinated world and that of others, we get the idea of what Lama Tsongkhapa said. There are two things. First ignorance exaggerates, and then, on that basis, the mind exaggerates beautiful and ugly, the second exaggeration. Looking at the hallucinated world in that way gives the whole idea of what is false.

Whatever is done with that misunderstanding has no meaning; it is the cause of suffering. It is the cause of the suffering of the lower realms. Everything done with worldly concern, with attachment to this life, everything becomes nonvirtue. Every action of body, speech, and mind becomes nonvirtue, the cause of the lower realms.

Even if we want to become a billionaire, there is no benefit. It just develops unbelievable dissatisfaction, unhappiness. There's no benefit. No benefit. Even if we go to the moon, spending so many millions and billions of dollars, there is no benefit. It doesn't help us stop being reborn in the lower realms or getting a higher rebirth; it doesn't help us gain a human or deva rebirth. Whatever we think, there is no benefit. Therefore, we must always be habituated to looking at our mind. That can be done in many ways. Looking at our mind can be looking at the absolute nature of our mind or the conventional nature of our mind. There are these two main ways.

Many meditators think that meditating on the mind as formless, colorless and shapeless is meditating on emptiness, but it is not emptiness, it is the conventional nature of the mind. There are many different ways of getting habituated to looking at our mind. For example, whenever attachment or anger or whatever negative thought arises, not even looking at the ultimate nature, by even looking at the conventional nature of the mind, like looking in a mirror, by focusing the mind on that, the delusions go away.

Subduing the Mind, There Are No Enemies

Like that, we can transform our mind into the three secrets of the mind, as I explained before. By transforming our mind into the secret of the mind it becomes virtue, especially bodhicitta. With tantra, all the form that appears [is the guru-deity's holy body], whatever sound we hear is the guru-deity's holy mantra, whatever thought arises is the guru-deity's holy mind, the dharmakaya. There are many different ways.

I quoted this before:

[5:17] Even those who wish to find happiness and overcome misery
Will wander with no aim nor meaning
If they do not comprehend the secret of the mind—
The paramount significance of Dharma.

Unless we know the secret of the mind, it is like that. This is true of the whole world, not only those on the beach, those doing business, those going by plane, by car or by ship. I haven't been on a ship but I hear they have dances of ships and all kinds of things for people to enjoy. The people who know the secret of the mind are so few; the people who don't know the secret of the mind are numberless.

Everybody wishes to achieve happiness and eliminate suffering but because they do not know the secret of the mind, they wander meaninglessly in samsara from life to life, from beginningless rebirths. Therefore, we are now so fortunate, at this time, to be able to come to Kopan to do this course. We are unbelievably fortunate, at least to come to know the secret of the mind. Don't forget. Think of how many human beings are suffering in the world without knowing the secret of the mind. Shantideva continued,

[5:18] This being so,
I shall hold and guard my mind well.

Without the discipline of guarding the mind,

What use are many other disciplines?

If we do not protect the mind, whatever we do outside is of no benefit. Sorry, I left that verse out when I quoted before. Harmful sentient beings are like the sky, meaning they are limitless, numberless. To be free of them by killing them, that would be limitless, but when we destroy our anger we have no external enemies at all. As Shantideva said,

[5:13] Where would I possibly find enough leather

With which to cover the surface of the earth?

Yet (wearing) leather just on the soles of my shoes

Is equivalent to covering the earth with it.

To protect our feet, if we had to cover the whole earth with leather, there would not be enough leather, but it is sufficient just to wear a pair of shoes to stop being stung by thorns. It is like covering the whole earth in leather. He continued,

[5: 14] Likewise it is not possible for me

To restrain the external course of things;

But should I restrain this mind of mine

What would be the need to restrain all else?

By subduing our mind, our anger, all our external enemies, those who have harmed us in the past are subdued, meaning we have no external enemy. Therefore, subduing our own mind is the best. This is like the Buddha said,

Do not commit any unwholesome actions.

Engage only in perfect, wholesome actions.

Subdue one's own mind.

This is the teaching of the Buddha. [2]

It is incredibly important to subdue our mind. Even if we know all the Kangyur and Tengyur by heart—the Kangyur with more than a hundred volumes, the Tengyur with more than two hundred—even if we know the entire sutra and tantra by heart, unless we subdue our mind, we are not practicing the Dharma. It's like playing a tape recorder. We are not practicing the Dharma unless we subdue our mind. Even if we don't know much, if we can subdue our mind a little bit, that is the practice of the Dharma. This is so important.

I will stop here.

Dedications

[Rinpoche and the students recite 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, may I, my family members who are dead and who are alive, everybody, and all of us here, all the students, be guided by Lama Tsongkhapa, being our Mahayana virtuous friend in all our lifetimes. May we never be separated from the pure path admired by all the buddhas. May we actualize in our hearts and in the hearts of all other students Lama Tsongkhapa's unmistakable teachings in this life.”

[Rinpoche and the students recite prayers in Tibetan]

We must pray for the world; we are responsible.

“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 in the future be stopped immediately and may all the sicknesses and famine be stopped immediately. May all the dangers of fire stop immediately.” Like the fires that happened for many months in California, where numberless big and small animals and many human beings were killed. “May the danger of fire, the danger of water—the tsunamis and so forth—the danger of air and the danger of earth—earthquakes, avalanches, landslides and so forth that happen again and again—may all these stop immediately and may perfect peace and happiness prevail in everyone’s heart by generating loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta in everyone’s hearts.

“May the Buddhadharma, where sentient beings receive peace and happiness from, last a long time. May sentient beings meet the Buddhadharma and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. May I be able to cherish every sentient being more than the sky filled with wish-granting jewels.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas, may any sentient being who sees me or who I see, who hears my voice or name, who remembers me, who touches me, who talks to me, who sees my picture—just by that—may they be free from all suffering and achieve all happiness including enlightenment.”

Then the last dedication:

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

Lecture 5: December 11



Unless We Meet the Dharma, We Miss the Point

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. [\[10\]](#)

Kar ma [a star]. Relating to the I, there is no I, and not just that. Without relating to the object to be refuted, *gag cha*, just looking for the mere I, we cannot find it from the tip of the hair down to the toes, neither in the body or the mind. Nowhere in the entire collection of aggregates can we find the I. However, that is not emptiness. That is the wrong meditation on emptiness. We have to know that. If we don't know that, even if we meditate on that for a thousand eons, we don't realize emptiness. We are meditating on nihilism. We must know what nihilism is. Here, we are meditating on nihilism not on emptiness. You have to know that one hundred percent. You have to write that down in your book, otherwise you will make mistakes. Many meditators think this is a meditation on emptiness. Even those who debate well, those who are experts, think that this is a meditation on emptiness, on absolute nature. However, Lama Tsongkhapa negated that, proving it is not a meditation on absolute nature at all.

When we meditate on emptiness using the four vital points of meditation, the first is the *definite understanding of the object to be refuted*. If we miss that very first one, we are not meditating on emptiness. If we miss that, it's trying to shoot our enemy with a gun or arrow but hitting our friend instead. We hallucinate that our friend is a thief and shoot them, whereas we don't see the thief as our enemy.

To meditate on emptiness is to realize that the real I doesn't exist, the real I that appears to us and that we believe in a hundred percent. Only those who understand the Madhyamaka Prasangika view of emptiness well, especially those who have realized it, [don't believe in this real I]. Otherwise, no

question—the ants on the ground, the mosquitoes going buzz, they believe in the real I. Even human beings who have so much education, doing science at university, believe in the real I that is not there. Because they believe in that, from beginningless rebirths up to now they have been suffering in the six suffering realms. From beginningless rebirths. Not just once but from beginningless rebirths.

All the Buddhadharma comes in three aspects, the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment: renunciation, bodhicitta and right view, emptiness. Unless we meet the Dharma, unless we meet the lamrim teachings, we miss the point. We might have received a precious human body but we still have not met the Dharma, we still have not come to know the ultimate reality of the I. And, because of that, we must suffer again endlessly in samsara.

Even cancer or the worst problem of the human world, something that brings such unbelievable pain, is nothing compared to the smallest hell suffering. Compared to the smallest suffering of hell realm, the greatest, most unimaginable suffering for a human being is nothing. Comparatively, it is great peace. And yet, we must continue to suffer in each of the six realms on and on.

We have suffered from beginningless rebirths up to now, since time without a beginning. We have to really think well on that—*without a beginning*. It's not just words; it is something utterly terrifying. Without a beginning, suffering endlessly, unless we can find a perfect human body and use that to meet the Dharma. Achieving this human rebirth just once, unless we then get to learn the Dharma, we are just using this human body like an animal uses theirs. We are the same as the ants, the snakes, the tigers. We eat other sentient beings like they do, just as the big animals eat the small animals and the small animals eat the smaller ones. Unless we have the Dharma, we are no different.

In the City of Hallucination

As I mentioned yesterday, Milarepa's disciple, Gampopa, said,

By looking at the world as a hallucination, whatever is done is meaningless, the cause of suffering, whatever you think there is no benefit. Always train to look at your mind in that way.

[Unless we look at the world as a hallucination,] everything is basically done with attachment to worldly concern. Nighttime, daytime, every single activity is like that. There are anger and other delusions, but mostly there is attachment clinging to the happiness of this life, clinging to pleasure, and because of that every action is nonvirtuous; everything becomes negative karma. Every action is meaningless, becoming suffering in this life and bringing about suffering in the lower realms as a result.

Whatever we do in this life, living as a farmer or a businessperson, whether we drop out of an airplane and try to fly while holding hands with the people around us, whatever we do has no meaning; it is only the cause of suffering. As I mentioned yesterday, even if we try to become a billionaire or go to the moon, if it's done with the motivation of attachment to this life, it becomes nonvirtue. Even going to the moon is nothing, just nonvirtue. Whatever we do has no benefit for our future life. When we die, there is no benefit; and beyond this life, there is no benefit. [We must see this.] As the quote says, we should always train our mind in that way. That is Milarepa's disciple's advice. By meditating on the mind in this way, we can achieve enlightenment. I don't remember the exact words, but that is the meaning.

Since I mentioned this, as the continuation of yesterday's talk, there is very wonderful teaching from my root guru, Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's younger tutor. He passed away a long time ago in that aspect, so now there is the incarnation. Rinpoche was invited to Switzerland the first time by Dagab Kyabgon Rinpoche, a great lama. Although he was a monk before, he is now lay. He invited Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche to his home. I think it was about Christmastime, I'm not sure, but there were lots of fireworks, with various colors shooting out. Rinpoche was reciting *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga*, the *migtsema* prayer, so he used the fireworks for

the visualization of the Lama *Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga* where nectar comes to us and all sentient beings. He uses the many wonderful colors coming from the fireworks as nectar. Then, he reached Dagab Kyabgon Rinpoche's home which, because it was in the West and in Switzerland, was very luxurious. Rinpoche said this. I can sort of remember the verse from the great saint, Lingrepa, [11] which said,

In samsara, the city of preconceptions,
Wander the zombies of the eight worldly dharmas.
You are in a terrifying charnel ground;
Have your guru perform an exorcism. [12]

Unexamined, it seems as if everything is OK, very pleasant “in the city of preconceptions” or the city of hallucination. That is the first thing that appears to the mind. That is what common people think, what they believe—“It's OK, no problem. Everything is pleasant.”

It seems very pleasant in the city of hallucination. Remember that yesterday we meditated on how what we normally think is correct, without mistakes, what is not a hallucination, what is true, that this in reality is a hallucination. Remember, as I guided yesterday, this is a total hallucination; it is totally wrong. If we look at it like we did yesterday, in the city of the hallucination everything is an exaggeration. What appears to us, what we believe, everything is an exaggeration of ignorance, misbelieving that everything is true, everything is real, that there is a real I, a real friend, a real enemy—everything. So, the “city of hallucination” refers to the first hallucination, the basic hallucination.

Then, on top of that, we differentiate: this is good, this is bad; this is beautiful, this is ugly. Then, there is the second hallucination: attachment and anger. Attachment and anger arise in the city of hallucination. You have to know that—the city of hallucination, in our life.

This wrong concept of the eight worldly dharmas is created not only by ignorance but also by attachment and anger. With attachment to this life, we believe in the four pleasures as real and the four undesirable things as real. We like these four real desirable objects of this life and we dislike the four real undesirable objects. This causes our life to be up and down, depending on which set of four we meet, a real desirable object or a real undesirable object. But real! That's why many millions and millions of people are depressed in the West. All this comes from the eight worldly dharmas, which are caused by the root, ignorance.

Our acts are “acts of illusion.” For example, in the theater, one person might act as a king and then a servant, simply by changing costumes. The eight worldly dharmas are like that, an act of illusion. If there were no words, it would stop there. But there is an unbelievable amount of creation, of illusion, all created by worldly concern. But all that is a hallucination, a life of hallucination. None of that exists in reality; it is empty. So much is happening but it is all empty.

I don't remember the next verse but that is the essence of what His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche said. His Holiness was making a little joke, making fun of Dagab Kyabgon Rinpoche. He talked about how Brahma created four faces for his wife because he was incredibly attached to her. He made her with four faces so he could look at all four faces. I think His Holiness was making a little bit joke, but he used this as an example. Dagab Kyabgon Rinpoche has a wife.

Beauty is created by us. We merely label what exists but then ignorance also projects “beautiful” onto it, decorating it as real and beautiful. The whole thing is created by the mind. Something is real nice, is real beautiful, but all that is created by the mind. Everything comes from the mind. Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche used the example of Brahma, how he created his wife and then became so attached. He created four faces for her in order to look at her four faces. That is the story.

That is the reality, but Rinpoche was making fun. My memory is so bad that I don't remember the exact verses, but the meaning is like that. This teaching is great advice showing what is false in life

and what is truth in life. Our lives are kind of filled like that, with this double and triple hallucination, all of which is a creation of our mind. Everything comes from the mind.

The Table Exists in Mere Name

There are very extensive philosophical Madhyamaka teachings using many different logical reasons to be learned, but here in lamrim is the essence. For analyzing the four vital points as a way of meditating on emptiness, *establishing the object to be refuted* is the first one.

When I used to introduce a meditation like this, I would use the example of the table, just the name “table.” Where is it? If we don’t analyze the real table but just the table, where is it? I told you when we meditate on the I—the merely labeled I and then the real I—that is the biggest hallucination. So the table, just the table, without relating to the real table, where is it? There is no table anywhere. This is not the table, this is not the table, this is not the table. No part is the table. In the end it’s clear that there is no table.

However, that does not help to prove the existence of table; it does not help the conventional truth, how table actually exists. There is table, yes! It’s not saying there is no table. That would mean that there is no suffering, no cause of suffering, no liberation. That would mean that there is no Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. It becomes like that. So, realizing there is no table should finally help us realize how the table exists. *The table exists in mere name*. It should help with that understanding. You should write that down. If it did not help, if it could not help, that would be nihilism. If one understanding contradicted the other—how the table is unfindable but how it exists in mere name—that would be nihilism. That is the wrong meditation on emptiness. You have to know that.

The conclusion is if it helps to realize the table exists in mere name, then it is right meditation on emptiness. We have to know right meditation on emptiness. Some people might say they have realized emptiness but they cannot find the table. It should help to understand that the table exists in mere name.

This is so powerful. We have to practice good karma and abandon negative karma; we have to create the cause of happiness and abandon the cause of suffering. If nothing exists, there is no karma, so there is no need to practice, no need to do anything! It’s OK if we don’t eat, if we don’t work. We don’t need an education; we don’t have to go to school, to college, to university. Why do we need money to eat if nothing exists? Why do we need to eat if there is no hunger and thirst?

There was a Zen master who only accepted one disciple, a young boy. He was the only one and he was trying to meditate on Zen, believing in nothing. I don’t know whether I asked him that if nothing existed why did he need to go to the bathroom. Why did he eat? I don’t remember whether I asked that or not, if that is the consequence of nothing existing. So you see?

We can never touch the false table, the real table that appears from there, the truly existent table, the table existing by nature. We search for the real table—that is the correct meditation on emptiness—but where is it? Nowhere.

Not like before, [but when we meditate] deeply on emptiness, that is so powerful in training the mind in that, helping to realize that the table exists. The table exists in mere name. It is so powerful in helping us realize the table exists in mere name, not that the real table exists. It’s like the meditation on the merely labeled I that we did yesterday. How the table actually exists is so unbelievably subtle. That is emptiness, that is real emptiness.

In this way, the meditation on emptiness does not conflict with karma. When it is difficult to accept karma because of emptiness, this supports karma, showing karma exists in mere name. Therefore, we need to practice morality, abandoning harming ourselves and other sentient beings and benefiting sentient beings, who exist in mere name. [This correct view of emptiness] supports karma and morality. Otherwise, when we meditate on emptiness, when we think about emptiness, it seems contradictory to karma. That is the wrong way of thinking on emptiness. I don’t know if many

people think like that or not. The conclusion is that if the real table is still there, where is that real table? When we check everywhere like that, every atom, we find nothing exists, neither there nor anywhere.

The Varying Subtleties of the Refuting Object

[After] the vital point of understanding the refuting object, there is the *vital point of pervasion*. That means if the I truly existed (this first point), it should either be one with the aggregates or it should exist separately from them. That understanding is the vital point of pervasion.

Then, the next point is proving that the I is not one with the aggregates. Any phenomenon that exists has to exist as either oneness with the aggregates or separately from them. We have to understand this vital point, that the real I is not oneness with the aggregates, and then we have to understand the next vital point that the real I does not exist separately from the aggregates. These four vital points are very important. This is the very important basic meditation, the way to analyze how the I exists.

Tsongkhapa explained in the *Lamrim Chenmo* that it is like searching for the vase on the vase. We search for the vase on the base, the parts of the form of the vase—on the big belly, on the bottom part and so forth—each part comprises the base. So, if we check the vase—not the real vase but just the vase—this part and this part and this part, nothing is the vase. We cannot find the vase. Then, thinking [that the vase does not exist at all], that is falling in nihilism. It destroys the dependent arising, it destroys that which exists. We destroy the vase that exists, which is a dependent arising, existing in mere name, and we fall into nihilism.

That is because we have not differentiated appearance—the object to be refuted—and the base to be labeled. It has not been differentiated. I need to check that last word precisely.

I'm not sure whether I went through this or not. Hindus believe the I is permanent, that it is *atman*, but Buddhists don't believe this. We believe the I is impermanent, that it changes even second by second because it is under the control of causes and conditions. Not only changing hour by hour, minute by minute, even within a split second it changes because it is under the control of causes and conditions. That is subtle impermanence. It changes within the shortest time, which, according to the Mahayana is a three hundred and sixty-fifth of the time of the sound of a finger snap by a young person. According to the lower school, Vaibhashika, there are sixty-five within a finger snap. It's the shortest time; I think we would call it a split second.

Hindus believe the I is permanent, independent, existing alone without depending on parts, without depending on causes and conditions.

The four Buddhist schools—Vaibhashika, Sautrantika, Cittamatra and Madhyamaka—happened during the Buddha's time. There are eighteen [sub]schools within the Vaibhashika (Tib: *jedrag mawa*) school, and one of them, *nimade pepu*, is a little bit different, believing the I is neither impermanent or permanent. Only that school is a little bit different. It is not exactly like Hindu philosophy that believes the I is completely permanent but posits it is neither permanent nor impermanent.

Otherwise, all the other schools accept it is not only impermanent in nature but also that it is dependent in nature, depending on parts, not existing alone, not existing with its own independence, without depending on causes and conditions. The I also does not exist self-sufficiently, just as there can be no king without depending on the population. They think like that: that it is wrong that the I can exist self-sufficiently. It depends on the aggregates. Even though it appears to exist independently and we believe it, that is totally wrong. The Sautrantika school is also like that.

The Mind Only School posits eight consciousnesses. Although the other schools posit six normally, they say there are eight consciousnesses. The seventh consciousness is the basis of samsara and nirvana and the eighth consciousness is how things basically exist due to an imprint, a substance, left on the seventh consciousness that gets experienced as one object and one subject.

For example, the color blue gets experienced from one subject, with the perceiver, the mind, knowing the phenomenon, the object, blue. The Mind Only School posits that they both manifest together. There is no I that exists from its own side without depending on a substance left on the seventh consciousness manifesting out as subject and object. Without depending on that, the I does not exist. This means that there is no I that truly exists.

The lower [sub]school of Madhyamaka, Svatantrika, cannot accept that the I exists in mere name, merely labeled by the mind. For them, if the I were to exist in mere name, merely labeled by the mind, that would mean the I does not exist at all. For them, that means nihilism, which becomes the opposite to what they believe. They believe that the I exists being labeled by the mind, but while labeled by the mind, it exists from its own side. So, they accept both—the I exists from its own side and also labeled by the mind, but not *merely* labeled by the mind. Their view is that there is no I that totally exists from its own side, without the mind labeling it.

They cannot accept the I is *merely* labeled by the mind because they believe there must be something very subtle that exists from its own side. The I does not completely exist from its own side but there must be something from the object's side, from the side of the I.

That view is the very subtle object to be refuted, according to Madhyamaka Prasangika. That is exactly what blocks us from seeing the Prasangika's view of emptiness. That very subtle existing thing [that the Svatantrika's posit] is what we need to disprove, what we need to refute to totally realize emptiness. We need to realize that even that very subtle view is false, that it is totally empty, that there is nothing at all from its own side. That is the method to see the emptiness of the I. *There is nothing there from its own side!* [Rinpoche shouts this last sentence.]

I have to make a noise because, as I said, I'm a Sherpa comedian! I'm a Sherpa comedian from Mount Everest, so I have to make a funny noise. There is totally nothing from there. That's the Prasangika's view; that's the right view of emptiness. If we can realize that, we can eliminate the root of our samsara, we can eliminate all our suffering!

We can realize that there is no I that exists *from* the aggregates but there is I *on* the aggregates. There is no I from the aggregates but there is an I on the aggregates. It powerfully exists on the aggregates under the control of the name but there is no I from the aggregates at all. But, we have to understand that the I we see that is on the aggregates still does not appear to us as merely labeled. If we saw it as the merely labeled I, that would be OK; that would correct. The mistake is seeing the *real* I on the aggregates even though we see there is no I *from* the aggregates. That part is correct—that there is no I from the aggregates. But there seems to be a real I on the aggregates. The mistake is feeling that there has to be a real I on something.

There is no mug on this table; there is no mug on this flower, but because there are the parts of the mug together, this mug exists. The mistake is that we still see a real I on the aggregates. If we saw that the I was merely labeled, that would be correct.

I did not get to explain all the details to His Holiness, but I mentioned that there is no I *from* the aggregates; there is an I *on* the aggregates. He did not talk about the real I, which is the main block to realizing the Prasangika's view. I think His Holiness responded like this to inspire my mind, saying that this is the understanding of the Prasangika's view of emptiness. But then Kyabje Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche mentioned that that is the correct understanding according to the Svatantrika view. Kyabje Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche explained that is the experience of the Svatantrika view. So the mistake is thinking that there is the real I on the aggregates even though there is no real I from the aggregates. The real I, even the subtle one, is *totally* nonexistent. We need that realization.

When we have that experience [of emptiness] we meditate every day to increase the duration of our concentration. We need to use the technique from the nine levels of calm abiding meditation, how to do perfect meditation and overcome the two main obstacles, attachment-scattering thought and sinking thought. Other translators do not use "attachment" but I do. That's just my own translation,

“attachment-scattering thought.” There is gross and subtle. Then sinking thought—not *singing* like in singing a song—sinking thought, there is also gross and subtle. We have to overcome that.

The technique is mentioned there, so we use that meditation to develop our wisdom, to reach the special insight analyzing emptiness. We meditate on that, on the basis of shamatha. Then that leads to the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, by which we can cease the cause of karma and delusions. When we have gradually ceased karma and delusions, when we have finally ceased them totally, we are free from all suffering forever, not just for a few lifetimes or a few years. We are forever free from the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering.

[Tea offering]

Student: *Shimpodu* [delicious].

Rinpoche: When did you learn the word?

Student: Maybe two weeks ago in Dharamsala.

Rinpoche: Only then?

Student: Yes.

Rinpoche: One time at Lawudo I taught a very bad Tibetan word to somebody.

Student: What word was that?

Rinpoche: It is not something I can say in public! A Westerner came to Lawudo and I taught him “thank you” (*tujече*). But I added some things. I didn’t tell him what it meant but it was “Your fart is very delicious.” But I don’t remember whether I taught him “thank you” or not. He went down to Namche Bazaar, where the police office is, (it’s from there you go to Tibet and Mount Everest) so I’m sure people laughed at him. I’m sure he said it in the chai shops. But he didn’t ask me what it meant. I don’t know whether he came back or not.

As I mentioned before, the 84,000 teachings of the Buddha come in three levels: the Lesser Vehicle teachings, the Mahayana sutra teachings and the Mahayana tantric teachings. These all come into the lamrim, the graduated path to enlightenment, and can be divided into renunciation, bodhicitta and right view, which is the whole essence, the heart. Without realizing emptiness, even if we meditate on a very high tantra subject, like dzogchen or dzogrim, without knowing the secret of the mind that I explained yesterday, there is a danger that it even becomes the path to be born in the lower realms, as a hell being, a hungry ghost or an animal. This is even by practicing the highest meditation of tantra. Then, there is the danger that it becomes the cause of samsara. Even if it doesn’t become the cause of the lower realms, it becomes the cause of samsara. For the highest tantra teachings to not become the cause of samsara, we need to understand emptiness, we need to practice emptiness, and that is not just anything called emptiness by different schools, it has to be the Prasangika’s view. Only then, practicing tantra, practicing dzogchen or dzogrim, will our practice become a remedy to samsara, not a cause of samsara.

Then, by eliminating that, we are able to eliminate all the rest of the delusions. The sense basis of the eye, then sense basis of the ear, the sense basis of the nose, of the tongue and all that, all those are based on the sense basis of the body. Like that, all the delusions are based on ignorance, so by meditating on dependent arising, we are able to realize subtle emptiness, the Prasangika’s view.

[A cat climbs up onto the throne with Rinpoche]

Student: Best seat in the house.

[The cat sits right up against Rinpoche legs, calmly cleaning itself]

Rinpoche: His Holiness the Dalai Lama has a brother called Ngari Rinpoche, an incarnate lama. He says when the cat puts the hands like this, leg like this, the cat is playing the guitar. This cat is the

first one. No cat has come up on the throne before. I heard a cow baby, a calf, went on top of the throne of Ganden Tripa, the regent of Lama Tsongkhapa. I heard it went on top of the throne, but I don't know what it means.

So what was I talking about?

Student: The 84,000 delusions.

Rinpoche: By meditating on dependent arising then we are able to realize the Prasangika's view of emptiness, then that eliminates ignorance, that means all the delusions. Without taking much time, just about once we have received a perfect human rebirth in order to quickly realize this.

[The cat talks to Rinpoche]

Student: She wants you to move the stuff so she can go higher.

Rinpoche: She thought this was the place to wait for a mouse.

The Guru Is the Most Powerful Object in Our Life

We have to study well and we have to know well the first meditation of the lamrim, how to correctly follow the virtuous friend. That is the root of the path to enlightenment. We have to study that well, as it is explained in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, written by Kyabje Pabongka Rinpoche, the great Heruka yogi. *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* explains the nine lamrim attitudes of Lama Tsongkhapa. That is the mind that correctly devotes to the virtuous friend with the thought, looking at him as all the numberless past, present and future buddhas of the ten directions. And the thought that from our side every single action of the guru is all the numberless buddhas' holy actions. To have that realization helps us never have anger or heresy toward the guru, never having a nondevotional thought to the guru. Then, we need to not only correctly follow the guru with the mind but also fulfill all the wishes of the guru, following with our body, speech and mind all the advice the guru gives us. We need to remember the kindness of the guru, and then, the last one, we need to offer respect, offer service. If we have material substances then we should offer them to the guru to collect merit. And from the guru's side, they will take the offerings not with attachment, but to collect merits for the disciple.

Milarepa had nothing physical to offer, so he offered his body, speech and mind to his guru. His offering to the guru was his practice, his realizations. That is what Milarepa said. That is the best offering. Of course, in the lamrim and even in the sutra, *Dongpo Dupai Do*, it is explained that we become closer to enlightenment just by offering.

The guru is the most powerful object in our life. The guru is the one we have received even one stanza, even one verse of teachings, even a *lung*, an oral transmission of teachings, and we think of ourselves as the disciple and the other one as the guru. With that recognition, with that relationship, to even offer a glass of water or a candy we become closer to enlightenment, as is mentioned in *Dongpo Dupai Do*. For example, if we place his shoes [for him to step into], we become closer to enlightenment. With every single positive thing we do, because he is the most powerful object, the one we collect the highest merit with and do the greatest purification with, with every single positive activity like that, we become closer to enlightenment.

Therefore, we have to know about guru devotion well. How to correctly following the virtuous friend well is the root of the path to enlightenment, so we have to study it well. In Lama Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* just nine attitudes are mentioned. These are the most important attitudes we need in order to correctly follow the guru. Lama Tsongkhapa explained how following the virtuous friend is the root of the path to enlightenment but he didn't give much explanation; he only explained the nine attitudes.

We need to study but studying is not enough. We need to purify the mind and collect extensive merits. I mentioned Manjushri's advice before. We have to make the single-pointed request to the

guru with great devotion to the guru. I'm not going to mention it much, but just to emphasize. Kadampa Geshe Chengawa [13] said,

A disciple who has correct devotion to the virtuous friend, even if he is as foolish as a dog or a pig, will have no difficulty in becoming like Manjushri. [14]

We might be so foolish, so unintelligent, like a dog or a pig, but we will have no difficulty in becoming like Manjushri, the embodiment of all the buddhas' wisdom.

Normally, to develop wisdom we do a meditation on Manjushri and pray to Manjushri, saying his mantra. His Holiness the Dalai Lama says that in the morning when we get up, we should recite OM A RA PA TSA NA DHIH. It's very common for the monks and nuns to recite that in the monasteries when they get up. His Holiness said that it even helped him to develop wisdom. When he got up, he recited OM A RA PA TSA NA DHIH, the mantra of all the buddhas' wisdom manifested in Manjushri to grant sentient beings wisdom. So, we will have no difficulties, even if we are so foolish, as foolish as a dog or a pig, but we have great devotion to the guru. We will have no hardships becoming like Manjushri. That is Kadampa Geshe Chengawa's experience.

He said that the most fortunate person is the one who has the strongest possible devotion to the guru. That's the luckiest person, the most fortunate person; that's the one who gains all the realizations explained in the lamrim, all the realizations up to enlightenment. Even in the early times, when the mind is so dull, so foolish, later in life [realizations happen]. For example, early in his life when his father died and he and his mother were badly treated by his aunt and uncle, his mother told Milarepa to learn black magic, which he did. He went to the area where the family was and dug a hole, meditating for seven days. Then he did black magic, causing rocks to fall from the mountain, smashing the house where relatives were having a wedding and dancing and singing, killing them all. There were also many of their animals downstairs, horses, who were all killed. After that, he went to practice Dharma. When he met his guru, Marpa, he had nothing to offer. He asked for both the Dharma as well as a means of living, which Marpa provided.

Marpa made Milarepa purify his negative karma to have quick realizations. Marpa made him build a nine-story tower, which still exists in Tibet. I haven't seen it but others have gone to Lhokha to see it. Marpa made him build it alone, not even allowing porters. After he had finished, Marpa made him destroy it and put the stones back where he got them from. Then he made him build it a second time, and then destroy it and put the stones back. The skin of his back became blue and hard from carrying so many stones. He served Marpa like this three times, even though no teachings were given. He was only ever scolded and beaten during this time.

Nowadays, especially in the West, if a guru were to give a disciple a spanking, the disciple would bring a court case against the guru and the guru would be thrown in prison! Even a spanking, even a scolding, the next day the guru would be in prison. Marpa never gave teachings to Milarepa, but one day he went with the other disciples for teachings. When Marpa saw him there, he immediately scolded and beat him, throwing him out. For years he refused to give Milarepa any teachings, only making him work. But from Milarepa's side, he never felt any heresy or anger for his guru, Marpa, never.

When the perfect disciple and the perfect guru meet like this, enlightenment is so easy. Just as with dough we can make pizza, noodles—so many things—with the perfect guru and the perfect disciple enlightenment becomes as easy as kneading dough.

Milarepa was the perfect disciple who could bear any hardships in order to exactly follow the guru. Marpa wanted to let him to bear hardships even longer so that he could achieve enlightenment even more quickly, but Marpa's secret wisdom mother pushed him into giving Milarepa teachings and Marpa listened. Already enlightened, Marpa manifested as the deity in the mandala and initiated Milarepa and gave him teachings. Then, Milarepa went to the mountains, to different places like Tsipri, to meditate.

Even there, exactly following his guru, he bore so many hardships, eating only nettles, without salt or chili, nothing, only the nettles that grew around there. One day, a thief came to steal his things, but because he had nothing, he made some nettle soup for the thief. When the thief tasted it, he asked for chili and salt, so Milarepa put in another nettle for the chili and another for the salt.

Milarepa achieved enlightenment in that life. If Marpa had not guided him in that skillful way, making him build that tower, because he had killed all those people and animals, [he would not have been able to] purify all that karma and the karma collected from beginningless rebirths, and he would not have been able to achieve enlightenment quickly in that life, meaning he was able to liberate sentient beings from samsara and bring them to enlightenment more quickly.

When there is the perfect disciple and the perfect guru, enlightenment is so easy, like kneading dough. If we wish to have realizations, we must not waste this perfect human life, which is very short. This body is like a machine. We don't have the power to live forever. The breath can be stopped at any time; the heart can be stopped at any time. We are just not sure when. Life is very short and even this short life can end at any time.

We now have this precious opportunity. We have met the Buddhadharma at this time; we have studied the lamrim; we have met Mahayana teachings through which we can achieve enlightenment, and not only Mahayana sutra but also Mahayana tantra. With that, we can achieve enlightenment in one life, and with highest tantra we can achieve the full unified state of Vajradhara within a few years. Therefore, we must plan to not waste our life but to be able to achieve the greatest meaning of life. We must plan to learn, to practice—even highest tantra—in order to be able to liberate numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment by ourselves.

I have heard there are members of the Sangha as well as lay people who are kind of attracting people with their Dharma talks who don't really believe in guru devotion, in correctly following the virtuous friend. They somehow find it difficult to believe in that subject. Without the merit to understand guru devotion, correctly devoting to the virtuous friend, they do not believe it. And maybe they think it has been made up by Tibetan lamas. In early books written by tourists, it was called "Lamaism" and they thought that it had not come from India, not from the Buddha. Lamaism was about the lamas on their own trip. These early writers had not studied Buddhism; they really did not understand that [Buddhism] is very scientific. Just as a television or a plane or a clock only works depending on all the parts, how we get realizations of the lamrim subjects, of the whole path to enlightenment, the whole thing is based on the root of the path to enlightenment, correctly following the virtuous friend. All this is like television, like the plane, like the clock. Only by depending on each part, how each is connected to the other, are we able to tell time. Like this, [all the subjects] in the lamrim depend on each other. We are able to get realizations by depending on each.

This is mentioned by Gyalwa Ensapa, Lama Tsongkhapa's disciple's disciple, who achieved enlightenment in a brief lifetime of degenerate times, not like Milarepa but very comfortably, without bearing many hardships. That was due to Lama Tsongkhapa's presentation of the teachings. He said,

In short, whether we achieve great or small realizations depends on whether we have meditated with great or small devotion. Therefore, may I keep as my heart practice the instruction to reflect only on the qualities of the kind guru, the source of all realizations, and not look at the faults. May I fulfill this commitment without any obstacle. [\[15\]](#)

This is the experience and advice of Gyalwa Ensapa, who achieved enlightenment in a brief lifetime of degenerate times. If we desire to achieve enlightenment, it is like that. If we don't want that, it's different, but if we want to achieve enlightenment, to free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment, this is the practice.

All Existence Is Merely Labeled by the Mind

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.

The star shows deep emptiness. As I mentioned, first there is the merely labeled I. From that awareness, we then see all of existence in the same way: hell and enlightenment, samsara and nirvana, problems and happiness—in reality everything is merely labeled by the mind, which means that the way things exist is most unbelievably subtle. Nothing exists from its own side. Like that, it is emptiness.

Then, the second one is defective view, *rab rib*. As I mentioned yesterday, [as soon as the merely labeled I appears] in the next moment the real I appears, and then in the third moment, we believe in that real I. We create ignorance when our mind believes this. What appears to the mind is the real I and we believe that is true, thus creating ignorance, creating samsara. This comes in the third of the shortest possible moments.

The first moment there is the merely labeled I, merely labeled by the mind. Then, the next moment the I appears real, which is totally false. The real I is projected or decorated on to the merely labeled I by the negative imprint left by ignorance. The hallucination is created. Then, in the third moment, due to ignorance, we believe it is real.

So, defective view, *rab rib*, how the I appears real to us, then seeing everything—the body, the mind, the aggregates, the whole thing, hell and enlightenment, samsara and nirvana, problems and happiness—the whole thing is real for us. Everything appears real to us and we believe it. All that is *rab rib*. We need to practice awareness of that. All these things are *rab rib*; we are living our life in *rab rib*. From birth up to now, we are living our life in *rab rib*. From the life before and even before that, from beginningless rebirths we have been living in *rab rib*, in the defective view, in the hallucination, in the illusion, believing it is real. Instead of seeing it as the hallucination it is, instead of seeing emptiness, we see it totally in the wrong way. We believe it is real. That is *rab rib*.

That is an incredible meditation to do. That is meditating on what is truth in our life and what is false in our life. It is *huge*, unbelievably huge, clarifying what is truth or false. Not seeing this is why we are still not free from samsara, from the samsaric sufferings: the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering. We are still not free.

We'll just do this and then stop.

[Rinpoche recites *kar ma rab rib*, followed by a dedication. The students then offer a 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 and success up to enlightenment for me and for every sentient being, be generated in the hearts of all the numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, suras, asuras, intermediate state beings, in everyone’s hearts. For those who have generated bodhicitta, may it be developed.

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

Lecture 6: December 12



Knowing the Meaning of Life

[Rinpoche and students recite *Prayers Before Teachings*]

It didn't happen today but tomorrow we will do the walking meditation, so maybe there won't be a discussion. Sometimes it's not necessary. We can do other things, like a walking meditation or other things. Having discussion groups is not necessary all the time. But [we need to] practice mindfulness with the three principal aspects of the path—renunciation, bodhicitta and right view.

We need to do a walking meditation with the right view, a walking meditation with renunciation. With renunciation, nothing becomes the cause of samsara. It becomes the cause of liberation. Then, with bodhicitta it becomes the cause of enlightenment, and with right view everything becomes a remedy to samsara, a remedy to ignorance, the root of all our suffering, our samsara. Meditating on right view eliminates that. That's what we all need.

If we do not like suffering, we have to put effort into actualizing emptiness. If we do not like depression, if we do not like suffering, even diarrhea, we need to put effort into studying and realizing emptiness, not only all the extensive philosophical teachings but especially the lamrim, the essence, the short teachings, the very important teachings. We cannot just study, leaving everything on an intellectual level. That is like leaving it all up to tape recorder or the computer. We invest in information, put it all in a tape recorder. It's not like that. We invest in our brain, putting so much information in there, without practicing, only discussing, only in order to be an important... I forgot the word, what? University teacher? Professor! Like that.

We study to actualize the subject. Everything becomes practice, and through practice, we actualize. Then, everything becomes an antidote to our samsara, to our ignorance, to the root of samsara. It eliminates the root of the oceans of suffering of samsara. That is what we need. Unless we like suffering, we need to put effort into that. It's extremely worthwhile.

We not only need to free ourselves from the oceans of sufferings of samsara, but also with the help of bodhicitta, we collect inconceivable merits. Then, with the wisdom realizing emptiness, we directly cease the obscurations, not only the subtle ones but also the gross ones, bringing us the realization of emptiness. Then not only that! We are able to liberate all sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring everyone to buddhahood.

If we do not like suffering, if we have relationship problems—with the family, with the husband, with the wife, with the children, with friends—we should know that. The antidote is to be free from the suffering of samsara. For that, we need to be free from karma and delusions; for that, we need to be free from ignorance, from the root of samsara. For that, we need to meditate on emptiness. That is what we need. Otherwise, our problems have no end. Then, we will rely on a psychologist or a psychiatrist. It has no end. Our going to hospital has no end. Our going to hospital and having operations on our brain is endless. That is the nature of samsara.

When we have problems, we need to think this is a sign that we are in samsara. The problems prove to us we are in samsara. Then we think, “I need to be free from samsara; therefore I need to practice the Dharma.” The conclusion we should come to is that, to actualize the Dharma, the heart of Buddhadharma: renunciation, bodhicitta and right view. We should come to the conclusion that we need to practice the lamrim. That is the best conclusion.

We have to do what is most worthwhile for ourselves and for every sentient being: to benefit every hell being and there are numberless, [to benefit every hungry ghost and there are numberless,] to benefit to every ant, every fish, every chicken, every goat, every sheep—whatever we eat—to benefit to every mosquito, every small fly (they are so tiny but numberless), to benefit every one with bodhicitta. Then, we need to benefit every human being, every sura being, every asura being, every intermediate state being.

Then, instead of depression we have so much happiness in our life because we know what to do. We know the meaning of life. After they have gone to school and grown up, so many people think that they cannot find any meaning in life and they want to commit suicide. There is so much unhappiness in the world. After they grow up, life has no meaning for them and they want to commit suicide—old people, young people. I don’t know if it happens every day. That is because of not knowing the meaning of life. That is the big problem in the West—not knowing the meaning of life.

The mind is totally dark, without sun, without light, totally foggy. This is due to not knowing the meaning of life. That brings a lot of unhappiness, a lot of depression. Not knowing the meaning of life, the purpose of life, is the root of so much unhappiness. This is not talked about in education, at school or university. Some universities have a Buddhist subject [but that is only for intellectual study]. Trying to enjoy life [without knowing the meaning of life] is all a hallucination. It is sort of a hallucination over the hallucination. It is not the first hallucination, not the second hallucination, not the third—there are piles of hallucinations.

There is no way to really enjoy life if we do not know the purpose of life at all. Without knowing the secret of the mind, it is totally black. That is very sad, very sad.

The Mind is Like a Wish-Granting Jewel

At this time, your coming here to Kopan, Nepal, you have learned all these things. You have opened your eyes to see these things. You have seen other worlds; you have seen enlightenment and hell. Every religion talks about hell, but what you have seen is different. Here, you have learned that it is your mind that creates hell and it is your mind that can stop hell. It can create hell but it can stop hell, because hell comes from your mind, so your mind can stop it. That is the thing. You do not have to be forever in hell. Your mind created it so your mind can stop it. You can be free from samsara; you can achieve liberation from samsara and enlightenment. So you see, coming here, your eyes have been opened to see your life.

This human life is so unbelievably precious. What we can do is not just for ourselves. We are able to not just liberate ourselves but the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings. We are able to liberate every single sentient being in each realm from the oceans of sufferings. That is great happiness. That is amazing! We can do that by developing our mind. Then, we can bring them to the peerless happiness of enlightenment.

We cannot see the mind; it is colorless, shapeless, formless, but this is what we can do. We can use this mind to bring all sentient beings to enlightenment with bodhicitta. When we open our mind to see all we can do with our life, it is so precious.

Otherwise life in the West has no meaning; there is nothing to enjoy, there is no meaning. Most people have no idea. They think there is no life after we die. Although some might not be sure, this is not the main subject in society; it becomes like it's hidden. But the most important thing to discover is what is right and what is wrong! It's the most important thing to discover but it's like it's hidden. Generally Western people do not have a good idea of this, but this is something we have to discover. Then, we can get rid of suffering and achieve happiness. In this way, we understand the meaning of life. Unless we are with people who can explain all this, nobody can explain what life is all about. Then, it becomes a kind of hidden subject.

We all have to die; we all have to go through that. Because we have not had a direct perception of emptiness that ceases the seed of karma and delusions, the cause of samsara, we all have to die. If we could cease the seed of karma and delusions, that would cease true suffering: the suffering of rebirth, of old age, of sickness and of death. We could cease this by actualizing the four noble truths, by actualizing the true path.

We are in a society where nobody knows about life. We cannot get answers from our society. It is most important to learn but it is hidden. Nobody can explain it to us. People are totally hallucinated, so that is very, very sad.

Of the mind, there is the general mind and then the mind that has buddha nature. At this time, we have a human mind. There is so much potential, but the people around where we were born have no Dharma understanding at all—in fact, their way of thinking is opposite to the Dharma. Therefore that incredible potential we all have, like a wish-granting jewel from ocean, is totally wasted.

To find a wish-granting jewel in the ocean, first of all we need a lot of merit. Wheel-turning kings and bodhisattvas are able to do this. After they clean it in three ways, on the fifteenth day [of the lunar calendar] they put it on top of a banner and, when people pray for any of the material things of this life, everything they pray for gets materialized. The main thing is people's good karma. This is the condition. Sai Baba does this, where some people get gold chains or watches but most get ashes. This is from good karma. With a wish-granting jewel, whatever we pray for in this life, everything gets materialized.

Our human mind is like this. We can achieve any happiness: the happiness of future lives, liberation from samsara, even enlightenment, whatever we need. This mind with buddha nature is like a wish-granting jewel. It's incredible what we can do. There are so many different levels of happiness when we actualize the path, and we can achieve all that. But in Western society, people think totally the opposite to the Dharma. If we try to live our life according to the Dharma, people do not accept that; they think we are crazy. It's right, but right is regarded as wrong! Right is regarded as wrong because of society, culture, all those concepts.

The human mind has the potential to create all the happiness up to enlightenment. What the Buddhadharma offers is the complete method. By meeting the lamrim, we learn the correct method, with nothing wrong. Everything shows us how to achieve enlightenment.

You are so fortunate. Having been at this course, your eyes have been opened. You are using another eye, your wisdom eye, which has opened to discover all this. I think there must be some karma, some Kopan karma, that has brought you to Nepal. It is a very poor place compared to the West, but thousands of years ago it was an incredible holy place. Shakyamuni Buddha gave the

prediction that so many beings would become enlightened in Nepal. So many holy beings have achieved different things here. Milarepa achieved different realizations in Nepal. Anyway, it's your karma and Kopan's karma to have this one-month course together. We still have ten days, right? Ten days.

Ani Karin has been leading it for so many years. There is karma from your side—all you people coming from around the world—and karma from Kopan's side, from Ani Karin's side. This is what happened. Isn't it interesting? Without the karma to experience it, it cannot happen from our side. There's no way. So, it takes both sides. Both sides need the karma.

This one-month course has been going for so many years. What is the number? [*Ven. Roger*: Fifty-one.] Fifty-one one-month courses! That is what you are doing, the fifty-first course.

Early Kopan Stories

Sorry. We were in Bodhgaya. Kyabje Ling Rinpoche was giving a Yamantaka initiation, the extremely wrathful aspect of Manjushri. At that time, a Japanese Zen monk—I think his name was Zengo—came from Scotland, where there is Samye Ling monastery, the first monastery that happened in the West, founded by Lama Trungpa and his brother, Akong Rinpoche. The monk, Zengo, did a seven-day course in Bodhgaya. Our very first student, the Russian lady, Zina, was there. She liked to go to see many lamas from the four different sects and when the monk finished the seven-day course at the Burmese Vihar, she wanted to meet him. With her were Lama and me and I think Michael Losang Yeshe, a monk who had been living in Sera for a long time. He lived in Australia and translated for Geshe Doga at our center in Melbourne, Tara House. His mother was one of the very first people at Kopan, when Kopan was just the old astrologer's house built by the Nepalese king. As a little boy he was there with his mother.

There were one or two people there, I don't know who, so we went to see Zengo. He guided a meditation for an hour I think, but at the end of the meditation I thought that there was no difference between his guiding meditation and a deep sleep!

Zina asked Lama twice to lead meditation, but we didn't have the time. Lama had done retreat in Buxa on all these highest tantra deities such as Guhyasamaja, Yamantaka and Chakrasamvara, with many, many monks. If you are living in the practice of renunciation, bodhicitta and right view, in the practice of the lamrim, you are always in retreat. Tantra is a lifetime retreat. It is the unbelievable, unmistakable path to enlightenment. She asked Lama, but Lama didn't accept. At that time, I was reading this great commentary of *lojong*, thought transformation, and in particular the extensive teachings on *lojong* after the bodhicitta explanation, by Kachen Yeshe Gyaltsen, a great lama. Great lamas are like the sun and moon in the world. Animals can enjoy the sunshine; people can enjoy the sunshine. Like that, he was a high lama in Tibet who was of great benefit to sentient beings and the teachings of the Buddha.

I got that text from a Sherpa, Ang Nyima. (All the Sherpas have names starting with Ang.) This Ang Nyima was an ex-monk from Panchen Rinpoche's monastery in Tibet, Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. He was a vegetarian, not eating meat and maybe even not drinking alcohol, I'm not sure. He had a business selling statues and thangkas with about twenty young Sherpas, including my cousin, who he was like a guru to. When the monasteries from India wanted to raise money to build new monasteries, he invited all of his disciples, his people selling statues and thangkas, and explained about the monastery and they all gave donations.

One day he came to Lawudo. I don't remember my past life, the life of the one who lived in the cave at Lawudo, the one with knee pain for many years who lived in retreat and sometimes gave initiations and teachings to the people. Other lamas regarded him as a good practitioner, a lay lama, a married lama, but ascetic, kind of like that. I don't remember but other high lamas mentioned that I'm the incarnation of that Lawudo Lama. For that reason, Ang Nyima gave me Kachen Yeshe Gyaltsen's lamrim book on the extensive thought transformation. Then, for Lama, he ordered the

Heruka commentary written by Dagpo Rinpoche, who was Kyabje Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo's root guru. When Lama went out, I checked which part of the text Lama was reading, and even at that time he was reading about the completion stage.

I was reading this lojong text, and I took it up to Lawudo. I was supposed to be watching the workers, but I stayed in the cave reading the text. The text was made of very thin Tibetan paper with many stamps on the side of the text. I was reading the part on refuge and things like that.

The third time [Zina asked Lama to teach] and Lama didn't accept, she asked me. I then asked Lama. My inspiration came from that text, and I felt I wanted to very much. So, Lama said that if I thought it would be of benefit, I should do it. So, I accepted and we did a five-day course in the old astrologer's house. For the five days, every morning I did *gegter*. We made *torma* in the kitchen and give it to the interferers, those who interfere with giving teachings. On the last day, the fifth day, at night, I was talking about bodhicitta. There was an American who had become a monk on the mountain at Kyabje Trulshik Rinpoche's monastery. He was sitting there, and there were people who kept on coming every day from Zengo's course in Bodhgaya. I was talking about bodhicitta and that man stopped my clock. There was a clock on the table. He stopped the clock and wanted me to continue the talk on bodhicitta. Then, I stopped and went for dinner in Lama's room. It was the corner room, very small.

Zina was a nun at that time. She had become a nun long before from Lati Rinpoche. She requested His Holiness but His Holiness was busy, so Lati Rinpoche, who lives down below in Dharamsala, [ordained her]. Zina brought the dinner. She was totally surprised with my talk on bodhicitta that day. She expressed this in front of Lama after she brought the dinner.

Because of that, we started the second course, a ten-day meditation course. At that time Massimo Corona from Italy was there with two other Italians, Claudio and Piero. Massimo Corona is the one whose family offered the money for the land of Lama Tzong Khapa Institute, the main center in Italy. There are many branches to the Institute and both the Basic Program and the Masters Program have been done there many times. He offered the land to Lama. It was his share from his parents, but he offered it to Lama for the center. That is the main Italian center of FPMT but there are many other branches. He went from there to Lawudo when we were there and did a Vajrasattva retreat in a cave. He got up at three o'clock in the morning and drank some black tea. There was a geshe there who was the first Kopan monk at Lawudo. He was the abbot. Of course, it's best to finish a retreat, but I did another retreat in the cave and Massimo had to move to another village, a holy place, where we had a house. He did the retreat there, and then we left together, with his wife and a daughter, a little child called Maitri Drolma.

And then there was Piero, another Italian student. According to his karma, he saw Milarepa's life story in Milarepa's book, how he led an ascetic life with nothing, a completely austere life, just practicing the Dharma, achieving realizations and becoming enlightened in that life. When Piero read the book, he gave up everything. He gave all his things away to people, wanting to be like Milarepa, who meditated and became enlightened in that life. Through reading that book, he gave everything to other people. When he came here, he was wearing nothing but a very thin, yellow robe, like Krishnamurti. I think it's more or less stopped now but for many years, when many people saw us, they thought that we were Hari Krishna. Hari Krishnas wear thin, yellow dress. He wore that. You could see through it when he stood up! Probably afterwards he might have realized that, but the thought was to really give up all attachment, which brings all the problems of life. I hope afterwards he realized what a renounced life meant.

I did not finish the course. I had to go to take a Heruka commentary and many initiations from my root guru, Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche in Bylakuppe, South India. Lama was supposed to go too, but the course happened, so Lama stayed. Lama took the loss and gave the victory to me, sort of like that. I had taught up to karma. I did straight from *lama sang gye lama cho*, because the people there were not new; they had done courses before. After karma, I left.

Then, we continued, doing two one-month courses. Then, after we started traveling to the West, we only did one one-month course [a year], which is how it has been up to now. In that way, the courses have continued up to now. Fifty-one. Did you say fifty-one? [*Ven. Roger*: Fifty-one.] Like that, the one-month course has continued, right up to the fifty-first meditation course now.

Up to the seventh course, people praised me so much, saying what I did was fantastic, but in my mind I didn't think it was me doing it; I always thought it was Lama Yeshe. When people praised me, I always thought in my heart it was Lama Yeshe. Even though in many courses I came to do the guided meditation, I also taught. Anila Ann was there to help, especially in the early courses. We spent a lot of time discussing the mind, which is not a common thing in the West. But I thought that when people gave praise, in my mind it was Lama Yeshe.

That was up to the seventh. Then, after seventh course, I don't know what happened, something wrong happened to my mind. That feeling was gone; that feeling that it was the blessing of Lama, the virtuous friend. Now the BBC channel is finished [and it's just] CNN.

The FPMT meditation centers in the West were generally started by the young people who had taken drugs like LSD, hashish, whatever, I don't know. I didn't hear as much about cocaine at that time as you hear now, but hashish, marijuana and LSD. The young people came here and to India to look for a new happiness, to look for a new life. Many tried to find it by taking drugs, thinking the mind can travel without the body, all these things. I guess they disliked the material life in the West, so they came to look for a new happiness. Some met Hinduism and their whole life became Hindu, but after one or two years they met Buddhism. For example, Roger. Which place did you go to in India, near Bombay? [*Ven. Roger*: Rishikesh.] He went to Rishikesh in the mountains, where there were many sadhus. He went to see the sadhus. Is that how it happened? [*Ven. Roger*: Yes.]

One sadhu he met mentioned he should go to Kopan; he directed him to go to Kopan. That is why Roger came to Kopan. Very interesting. It's very well-known that there can be buddhas and bodhisattvas among the sadhus. In any of the different religion there can be buddhas and bodhisattvas. You never know who a sadhu is. So, Roger was told to come to Kopan. He didn't know about Kopan or Nepal, but that is why he came to Kopan. Of course, it depends on his karma from a past life.

The FPMT Grows

Like that, many meditation centers, such as those of the FPMT, were started by young people. They might have just finished university with a little bit of business experience, but they knew nothing about making money. They faced so many hardships, like the center in Barcelona in Spain. They invited a resident teacher and then a translator because the teacher did not speak [Spanish], so there were many debts. I think they were something like a hundred thousand dollars in debt. I think the huge hardships are still continuing at the center.

The centers came like this, slowly, with many hardships. But it is now better compared to those past times. There is also so much more Dharma understanding; the mind's wisdom eye really is learning so much Dharma, both sutra and tantra. We have forty-five or six geshe as resident teachers, mostly those who finished studying at Sera or other monasteries. They are expert teachers who have studied in the monasteries from the learned teachers there, studying and discussing for many years. And materially, the centers are much better now, compared with before.

It is by the kindness of the people who started the centers in the early times with many hardships that the centers continue to benefit the sentient beings, that the teacher, the translator, the director and the whole group can now benefit numberless sentient beings. Many centers also offer social service in many different ways, which are also of great benefit to sentient beings, like a lotus blossoming. And they offer great service to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the one guide leading sentient beings from the lower realms, from samsara, bringing them to enlightenment. The one

guide, who makes the buddhas work for sentient beings with compassion. He is the embodiment of compassion of all the buddhas. Like that, the FPMT offers service to His Holiness.

What I was going to say is tomorrow we will do the walking meditation on the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment, the very essence: renunciation, bodhicitta and right view. You can do walking meditation with renunciation or bodhicitta. You can use any of the meditations you do when walking. Walking is one thing, but of course with other activities you can meditate at the same time. To give you an idea, meditating does not mean you only sit on this thick, round cushion. You can go for a walk all day long doing meditation. As I explained, the idea of the meditation on emptiness, when you go to the beach or to different places—a department store, a pilgrimage, different places—the mind is still in meditation. The basis of tantra is renunciation, bodhicitta and right view, but there is also guru devotion, correctly following the virtuous friend. You can also do a mindfulness practice on that.

With a walking meditation, you can just think “I’m walking,” as you go back and forth, “I’m walking.” [That is mindfulness] but you can do the same thing while you are stealing. You can do the same thing when you go to steal from the bank. You have to know the right time, how to open the door and all that. I don’t know, you have to know all the techniques. So, while stealing you can think “I’m stealing,” and it’s the same with “I’m walking.” Whatever you are doing, you are doing that. I’m just comparing.

Up to now, how many centers do we have? [*Ven. Roger*: One hundred and sixty-six.] Some are schools but most are meditation centers. A hundred and sixty-six up to now. Only a few have started and then disappeared; most have continued. For example, many years ago Lama Tzong Khapa Institute started a center in Switzerland. Geshe Rabten Rinpoche, Lama Yeshe’s and my teacher, went there and gave teachings and I gave my blah blah blah. A couple, I don’t know their names, started it but they could not continue. At the beginning, they started in Switzerland but because they could not continue, they moved to Lama Tzong Khapa Institute in Italy. And the same thing in Hawaii, Shantideva Center. I don’t think it was started by Lama. A couple who lived for a long time in Dharamsala started it and offered it to Lama. They built a small room. I went to Hawaii at least twice to give teachings and an initiation. They divorced and the Shantideva Center disappeared, so that’s the name we now use for the center in New York. There are many people, and Sangha and lamas go there to teach. I also went there to give teaching. At that time, they did not have a place but now they have. I spoke at Tibet House in New York for three days.

So, there are a few centers that have disappeared. Having a meditation center is so important. Now that you have been to Kopan, you know the benefit of the Kopan course, so you can understand from there. That is the same. That is why the meditation centers started in the West. You can see the benefits of studying and meditating here. People come here to the Kopan course, they benefit from it, and when they go back home, they wish their friends can get the same benefit. That is how most centers started, by the students.

The exception is the Singapore center. When I was there and was giving teachings in different temples, I thought it would be so beneficial if there was a center there teaching lamrim and if possible the philosophy behind it. One thing that was different was that we didn’t speak Chinese. If we asked the question “How do you start a Dharma practice?” I think it was difficult to get a right answer. Even if you asked monks how to begin to practice the Dharma, it was difficult to get the right answer. That’s what I felt. So, I thought to start a center there where they can teach lamrim and philosophy.

Before he became Kopan’s abbot, Geshe Chonyi became the resident teacher there. He has been there for twenty years, teaching the Basic Program. The Masters Program has not yet started, but with the Basic Program, he has been very, very busy. Singapore is the center where you get the most students learning the Basic Program. At the beginning of the second Basic Program, there were about two hundred students. [Rinpoche confirms this with Geshe Chonyi in Tibetan] That is the

center with the most number of Basic Program students when they started it the second time. It has been very beneficial.

Geshe-la is the first geshe from Kopan who went to Sera to study. He studied here and then went to Sera to study and he became a geshe there. Even the older monks, the old geshe there, really appreciate and respect Geshe Chonyi. His life is learning. He has not just studied and learned the philosophy but with his conduct, he is a good monk. The old geshe regard him as a good practitioner. He has been very beneficial in Singapore for so many years.

At the beginning I thought like that, so I started that one center in particular. So many people are able to have the wisdom eye to learn Buddhism, the basis: the two truths of conventional and ultimate truth. There are two bases, conventional truth—truth for all-obscuring mind—and ultimate truth. And then the path, method and wisdom, which leads to the goal to be achieved: a buddha's holy body and holy mind, rupakaya and dharmakaya. Kopan has given so many the wisdom eye to see all this, and then ultimately to be free from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and achieve enlightenment. Kopan gives us this opportunity. It's unbelievable. That is the benefit Kopan brings to the world.

OK, we'll have tea.

[Rinpoche and students do the tea offering]

Practicing the Awareness of the False I

As I said before, if possible, every day it is very good, when you are traveling by train, by car, by airplane, or working at home or in the office, to practice the mindfulness of emptiness, the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment, being aware of the real I that exists, not the false one, the real I that exists, the extremely subtle one, meditating on that.

Then, the next one, the false I. There is the merely labeled I, and then the negative imprint left by ignorance decorates a real I on top of that, projecting the real I on that. The real I, the false I. In the same way, the body and mind—the aggregates—and all the rest of phenomena are made real because the negative imprint projects, decorates the real on the merely labeled. It makes real what is merely labeled, what exists in mere name, by decorating something false, something that is not there.

So, while you are in an office, as a secretary or whatever, while you are busy working, having a meeting, part of your mind is in meditation, seeing how the false I appears real. Here you are, aware of the real I, the real action of having the meeting, the real people—everything is real, truly existent, which is not there. Everything has been made real by your ignorance. Practice this awareness. While you are busy talking at the meeting, while you are writing, a part of the mind is in a meditation on emptiness, using your awareness to look at what is a hallucination as a hallucination. This is very important. This word “hallucination” is very important. Look at it as a hallucination because it *is* a hallucination. You have to write it down. That is the meditation.

In reality, it is not there. In reality, nothing is there. For example, the real beautiful thangka, the real light, the real everything from there—the real me, the real carpet, the real everything—there is not even one atom that exists. All this [that appears as real] is not there at all; it is a total hallucination. A total hallucination.

Yes, there is Kopan, a merely labeled Kopan. Yes, there is a merely labeled holy object, there is a merely labeled you, there is a merely labeled me. But this real light, this real thangka, this real you—what appears to be you, what you believe to be you—is not there. Do you understand? I'm not saying there is no Kopan. It is *almost* like that. I'm not saying there is no Kopan, but it is like that. You have to understand.

Even if somebody is fighting with you, a part of your mind should be in a meditation like this. Even if somebody is arguing with you—“You are so bad! You are so selfish!” whatever they say, part of your mind is in meditation, seeing all this as a hallucination. You look at it as a hallucination as it *is* a

hallucination. And because there is nothing there, you do not get angry. The other person is hallucinated, so you do not get angry. As I mentioned, when you are angry go back and look at how your I exists in mere name. Then, the anger is gone. Because it is unified with emptiness, with subtle dependent arising but unified with emptiness, the anger cannot last. Anger is built on the basis of the projection of ignorance. Both anger and attachment are based on their own hallucinations, based on ignorance, on what ignorance projects as real.

When you think of the merely existing I, the subtle dependent arising—which means the I that is empty—there is no basis. Because there is no basis of ignorance of what it projected, the anger cannot last; it cannot exist. You have to know this.

I want to tell you one thing. This real you, this real everything, is the view of ignorance. It is the view of your ignorance. Not somebody else's ignorance, of *your* ignorance. The whole thing—the real Kopan, the real everything—is not the view of your wisdom but the view of your ignorance. You have to know this.

In the view of wisdom realizing this, it exists in mere name. Everything exists in mere name; nothing exists from its own side. That is the view of wisdom. Now, everything that is real—the real I, the real everything that appears like that—that is the view of your ignorance. Even knowing that will help. Knowing it is the view of your ignorance, not your wisdom, even that will help a lot. When you get angry, shouting “You did that! I didn’t do it, you did it!” if you can remember at that time that this is the view of your ignorance, the anger will go away, because what you are fighting about is based on believing what your ignorance has projected. Believing it is real, you then fight based on that.

So, I’m saying that every day it is very good to do this very important meditation on right view, no matter how busy your life is. Even if you are playing football, while you are playing football, one part of your mind is thinking, “There is nothing there.” There is no real football, no real player. Not even an atom exists; it is a total hallucination, the object of ignorance. Your mind in meditation on emptiness is like this, looking at that which is a hallucination as a hallucination. That is a very profound meditation. While you are playing football, while you are driving a car, while you are having a meeting or cooking. People think they have no time to meditate. “I’m busy. When I get home, I have to look after children. I have to watch TV. I have to go to sleep.” Bah! While you are eating, while you are walking, you must do this meditation. Then you can enjoy your life, then you can be free from samsara.

This is preparation to realize emptiness and to be free from samsara. Otherwise, there is only the hallucination; there is only suffering. Then, life has no meaning. Following the hallucination, thinking it is real, there is only suffering.

You can do a similar meditation with bodhicitta. You can practice the mindfulness of always seeing the kindness of people, the kindness of other sentient beings. And similarly with renunciation and impermanence, the impermanence of you and others. You can do this at any time. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] Second by second, even within a split-second, according to Buddhism, it changes. Everything not only gets older, that is one thing, but it can also be ceased at any time. Your body is like a machine; it can be stopped at any time. You never know when. You can have a heart attack at any time. The person you are angry with, the person you are attached to, they can be stopped at any time.

And renunciation, meditate on looking at samsara—yours and others—as in the nature of suffering. Without talking about tantra, with renunciation, with bodhicitta, with emptiness, it is amazing. This is the way to enjoy life. You want happiness. This is how to enjoy life, how to bring meaning to your life.

Don't Cling to True Existence

OK, maybe I'll explain a quotation. This one, by the Seventh Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Kelsang Gyatso, is a good one to understand. This is a very important meditation, showing what is false and what is truth in your life.

First there is *khorde malupa* which means every single thing having existence, then *chochen* meaning phenomena. Every single *chochen* [phenomenon] having existence. *Khorde* means samsara and nirvana, so the first line is,

Every single phenomenon having existence, samsara and nirvana.

This is my own idea, but I thought it is in relation to emptiness. *Chonyi* is emptiness, ultimate nature, but *chochen* is having existence. I think maybe *cho* is related to emptiness. Just as the I has ultimate nature, the mug has ultimate nature, *chochen*, so having ultimate nature. This is my own idea. *Chonyi* means “ultimate nature” and *chochen* means “having ultimate nature.” *Malupa* means every single thing.

For example, I told you, there is focusing on the aggregates and the concept of the merely imputed I. So, like that, there is the merely imputed body, the merely imputed mind—the merely imputed aggregates—the merely imputed form, sound, smell, taste, tangible objects, all the rest of phenomena. There is the merely imputed enlightenment, hell, samsara and nirvana, happiness and problems—everything is merely imputed. In reality, like the I, everything is merely imputed at the beginning by the mind. Nothing—samsara and nirvana, everything—exists from its own side. That is the reality of what exists.

[Then, the next line:

By holding onto the meaning of true existence, believing it to be true, this cheats you.]

Rangtobpai chopai gyupala, the concept is created. That is the first thing. Then, second, it appears. For example, when the I appears, it should appear merely labeled, but we are sentient beings, we are not buddhas. I certainly am not; I can't say about all of you. When the I appears, it should appear merely labeled but, even though our mind merely labeled it just before, we don't recognize that. The negative imprint left on the mental continuum from beginningless rebirths by ignorance decorates a real I on the merely imputed I.

And it is like that with all phenomena. All are merely labeled by the mind but then ignorance decorates real on them, making a total hallucination. That happens in the second moment. Then, in the third moment, our concept believes it is true. We think that the I that appears as real really exists, that it is a real one. We believe that all phenomena, samsara and nirvana, the whole thing that appears to us [is real as it appears]. In that third moment, because of past ignorance, we believe it. We believe everything. That is what this quote says: *rangtobpai chopala*. The concept [of true existence] is created in the second moment and we believe it. What appears as real we believe is true. Everything, starting from the I, is true. Our concept created this. *Gyuma la* means the illusion is not there. It is not there *at all*. You see?

Then, *dondampa* by holding it as truly existent, it cheats us. By holding onto it as real—this is true, Kopan is real, this painting is real, these lights are real, these bananas, these apples are real, everything—*dondampa*. By holding this as true, by believing it is true, we are cheated; we are deceived.

I'm going to tell you this. This concept is not only deceiving us now; it has been deceiving us from beginningless rebirths. From this morning, from birth, from beginningless rebirths this ignorance has deceived us, has cheated us. And it will continue cheating us if we don't realize emptiness in this life, if we don't study, if we don't meditate, if we don't do anything. Even if we study but it is only talk, not practice, if we do not actualize emptiness, it will continue to cheat us endlessly.

Because of this ignorance, we have been experiencing the sufferings of the six realm from beginningless rebirths up to now and we will continue to experience them. We will be reborn

without end. This is the scariest thing. If a doctor told you that you had cancer, that would be nothing. That would be nothing compared to the endless suffering of samsara.

Our mind is so blocked, so ignorant, we cannot see this. We cannot see the past; we cannot see the future, but in reality it is like this. If we don't realize emptiness, one of the three principal aspects of the path—renunciation, bodhicitta and right view—that are the essence of Buddhism, we will experience the oceans of suffering of the six realms endlessly in the future. That is the scariest thing.

Understanding this, practicing Dharma becomes the most important thing, more important than money, more important than a job. Practicing Dharma is more important than anything else in life. It comes to that point here. People think that money is the most important thing in life, but money comes from the Dharma. People with a degree from university, having learned this and that, why don't they immediately find a job? Why does it take years and months? With all that education, why is it so difficult to find a job? Money comes from the Dharma. Money, a job, a means of living, wealth, all that is the result; it is a causative phenomenon. It is a result, coming from the past karma of charity, of being generous to other sentient beings. Instead of grasping and clinging, we give. It's the opposite of clinging. We give to sentient beings; we make charity to sentient beings. In our past lives we have made charity. That does not mean just the life before this one; it could have been billions, zillions or trillions of years ago. With that past life's charity we have wealth in this life.

This human body came from morality, from practicing morality in a past life, from abstaining from harming sentient beings, such as keeping some or all of the five lay vows or the eight precepts. You have been keeping the eight Mahayana precepts for these two weeks. Unbelievable! That has not just been done for you, but with bodhicitta, for every single sentient being, for those in hell who experience the heaviest suffering, drowning in lava coming from the mountain. That is just an example. That is not the main hell, just a secondary hell. You benefit the numberless hell beings, who experience the heaviest suffering, and the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless suras, the numberless asuras. You benefit every single sentient being: the numberless fish, the numberless chickens, the numberless goats that people eat, the numberless flies, even the tiniest ones. Even taking one precept with bodhicitta, the benefits are unbelievable, like skies of merit. I think you collect more than skies of merit! Incredible.

You can dedicate all this for the numberless sentient beings to achieve every happiness, especially enlightenment. Like that, you are so fortunate. You have not only been born as a human being but you are able to come to Kopan and take these eight Mahayana precepts for these two weeks. To even take them for one day is so unbelievably lucky. You have to recognize this. You have to appreciate it yourself.

So, the quote by the Seventh Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Kelzang Gyatso, says:

Every single phenomenon having existence, samsara and nirvana.

By holding onto the meaning of true existence, believing it to be true, this cheats you.

I'm making my own commentary on this. From beginningless rebirths up to now, this has cheated us, making us suffer, and we are still not free from samsara. We are still experiencing the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering. Unless we study emptiness, unless we practice, it will continue to cheat us without end. We will have to experience the oceans of suffering of each realm without end. That is the scariest thing.

We cannot see the future. If we could think of the future, there would be no way to fall asleep, no way we could even eat! If we could really see the future, it would crack our heart. But we do not see it; our mind is so obscured. To even remember our past suffering from beginningless rebirths, there would not even be a minute to relax without practicing the Dharma. Therefore, what to do? What should you do? I'm giving you the advice of the Seventh Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Kelzang Gyatso.

Don't cling to things that appear real to you.

So far, we have been believing. We have been entrusting ourselves to the appearance of true existence, believing in it. That has been the cause of suffering from beginningless rebirths up to now, and again it will be the endless cause of suffering.

If we do not want that, we must not cling! We must not believe in what appears as real. Even though it appears to us as real, we must not believe it. It's like a mirage, where there is the appearance of water but there is no water. Even though it appears, we do not believe it, we do not cling to it, we do not entrust in it.

Even if we cannot realize emptiness, we can still meditate like that. Even for an hour, in our room or wherever we are, we can sit and practice this mindfulness, not entrusting the real appearance of things, not believing in them, not clinging to them. So the whole quote is:

Every single phenomenon having existence, samsara and nirvana.

By holding onto the meaning of true existence, believing it to be true, this cheats you.

Don't cling to things that appear real to you.

Look at them as empty.

That is the advice by the Seventh Dalai Lama. Look at it all as empty. That is very, very effective.

Tomorrow, we will do a walking meditation with that mindfulness to get the idea. That means any work you are doing, even playing football or having a meeting, driving—whatever you are doing—your mind is in that meditation. That is very good. You cannot say, "I can't, I have no time." While you are busy, you can meditate. Meditating doesn't only mean putting the two legs like this!

I've heard about Zen masters who maybe lose teeth. If you are not good in meditation then problems arise, even physical problems. If you try to do this type of meditation where there is no particular object, no appearance, you can get stuck there for hours. You get stuck for a long time, but it is not meditation. It is not a meditation on emptiness, not even a meditation on conventional nature. It can cause disease; it can damage the mind. You should know this.

You should write it down. Sorry for saying that. If you write it down, then even if you forget, after many years you can open your book and see what you heard during the Kopan course. Even after many years, "Oh, the Kopan course!" Then, when you have certain problems, "Oh, it's perfect!" You have the remedy, like medicine; you know how to solve the problem.

I don't remember, I have to look at the text. My memory is very bad. The bodhisattva Thogme Zangpo [16] said that we should think of this particularly when we have problems such as relationship problems or cancer, even if we are dying.

Countries like China, India or Tibet, certain countries have so much racism. Tibet has racism but India has so much more [discrimination], such as their attitude to untouchables or to girl children. For example, I heard that in the villages near Bodhgaya, if a family has a girl child, they give her less and less food and let her die, but if it is a son they keep him. I heard this. It's terrible. I think that is why a son is more valuable in those countries. Even in the West, I think the son is [seen as] more capable of doing more work, I'm not sure. In certain countries, the son dying is the worst of all the various sufferings. When a son is born, the family is so happy, but if he dies, they are so unhappy. Like that, the whole of life's sufferings are like a dream. Like in the dream you get a son and you are so happy. It's a dream but you did not recognize it's a dream. But then he dies and you are so unhappy. Like that dream, it's not real.

We believe the various sufferings we experience to be real but there is not even a single atom of them that is real, as I mentioned a long time ago. We can use the son who died in a dream as an example. We had a son in the dream and that son died, but when we wake up, we have never had a son and that son has never died. But only when we wake up do we realize that. It's like that when we realize emptiness. Now we think, "I have so many problems. I have this problem, I have that problem." The problems seem to be real. But when we realize emptiness, nothing is there. There is

nothing real. Not even one problem is there as a real one. All these problems are hallucinations, *trulnang*. *Trulnang* means hallucinated appearance. All these are hallucinated appearance, but by holding them as true, by holding them as real, by entrusting in them, we suffer. We experience unbelievable suffering believing them to be real.

In *Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*, Thogme Zangpo said,

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. [17]

Especially, when we have problems, such as relationship problems—problems with our spouse or children, with friends or enemies—we need to apply this advice. This is what the bodhisattva Thogme Zangpo advised. You should write it down in your notebook, in your diary book, and use it at that time, especially with whatever problems you have. That is very wise. In that way, we use our problems to be free from samsara. And with bodhicitta, we use our problems to become free from samsara and to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings.

I'll just say one thing and then I'll stop. This is very useful. You can make it into a song and sing it to remind yourself to practice.

All phenomena are like a dream, an illusion.

Chochen, “phenomena,” so all phenomena are like a dream, an illusion. Unless we feel this, we will naturally think of the second one, the real I. The first one is the I that exists; the second one is the false I, the I that does not exist, the real I that does not exist. The real I is a good example. We should look at all phenomena, which appear as real phenomena, like the real I, appearing from there. We know that the real I from there is totally nonexistent in reality. Now, it covers all phenomena. It is exactly the same as the I, appearing from there, as real. That is exactly like a dream. All phenomena appear real, from there. Just like the I appears real, from there. “All phenomena are like a dream, an illusion.”

I have given you the meditation. Ignorance is like the magician who uses a substance, a mantra or whatever, to create the illusion for the audience. Like that, our ignorance creates the illusion for us, but it is not there. That is a very clear example. It is not there. Everything appears as truly existent, but in reality there is not even an atom that exists from its own side. Even though there is nothing from there, it appears to us as if it does. So, the Seventh Dalai Lama's advice is don't cling.

From our side, we must not cling. I think “don't cling” is simple. Don't cling. While we are dreaming, we don't cling to the things we are dreaming about. They do not exist so we should not cling to them. The magician performing the trick does not cling [to what appears in the illusion], knowing it is not there. It's

the same for us, not only for our dreams but also in our waking life. Even in the daytime, we must not cling to everything that appears real to us.

That is the practice we need, the remedy to be free from samsara. Don't cling! That is the Buddha's teaching in *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?

We are not a fool when we no longer believe in the appearance of things, when we realize their nature is empty. Whoever has realized emptiness is not foolish, is not a child. But who has not

realized emptiness, who believes everything that appears is true, that person is a child. For example, a child covers his feet with sand and thinks, “This is my house.” Then, when somebody breaks that sand, the child cries, “He broke my house!” If we see that, we say, “He is very childish.” Similarly, things appear truly existent to us and we believe them to be true. When we have problems, if we really believe they are true, we are childish.

Even though there is an appearance of truly existent problems or whatever, if we have realized emptiness, we do not believe it. The problem does not exist from its own side. Even though we have that appearance, when we disbelieve it, that is not being childish. “I have sons, I have wealth,” thinking they are real, that is childish—not childish meaning having a small body but having a childish mind. The person could be two thousand years old, but with a mind like a child.

In reality, the I does not exist. If there is no real I, how can there be a real son and real wealth. How is it possible?

In another quote from the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha said,

[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 “I” does not exist, how can there be a real “mine”? If there is no real I, how can there be a real body and a real mind, how can there be a real mine? When the ignorance holding onto the real I and the real mine ceases, taking rebirth due to karma and delusions ceases. Then, there is no rebirth. When karma and delusions cease, the cause of samsara ceases. Then, there is no true suffering of rebirth.

I’ll stop here.

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 be generated in the hearts of every single hell being, every single hungry ghost, every single animal, every single human being, every single sura being and asura being, every single intermediate state being. May the bodhicitta that has been generated be developed.”

To realize emptiness. “Due to all the three-time merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by the numberless sentient beings and the numberless buddhas, may emptiness be realized in all of our hearts, including the hearts of our family members, both dead and living. That includes our family members, all the students, and us here.

“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 Lama Tsongkhapa be our direct, virtuous friend in all our lives. May we never be separated from the pure path admired by all the buddhas and may we actualize the unmistakable teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa in this very lifetime.”

We should pray for the world; we are responsible. “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 all the wars that are happening now and will happen in the future be stopped immediately. May all the famines and diseases be stopped immediately in this world, and the danger of fire that kills numberless animals, big and small, and numberless human beings.”

I'm not sure, in Indonesia some disaster happened very recently, where people had no opportunity to escape. I think this was due to water from the ocean or a fire. And also in the United States, they had no opportunity to escape. So,

“May all the dangers of fire; the dangers of water—tsunamis; the dangers of wind, air—hurricanes, tornadoes; and the dangers of earth—earthquakes and so forth, be stopped immediately.

“May perfect peace and happiness prevail in everyone's hearts by generating loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta. May the Buddhadharma, the source of sentient beings' peace and happiness, last a long time. May they all meet the Buddhadharma and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“May we be able to cherish every sentient being more than the whole sky filled with wish-granting jewels.

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

You can do a retreat, like a month or fifteen days or a weekend, meditating on just this awareness—looking at that which is a hallucination as a hallucination. Just this one, using the example of the merely labeled I and the truly existent I, the false I. You can just meditate on it for months and years, for your whole life, it is so rich. Then, even when problems come, you don't believe they are real problems. This means there is so much peace and happiness in your mind. You don't suffer. Besides being free from samsara and achieving enlightenment, even in this life there is so much peace and happiness in your life. So that is why I say you must do this meditation every day. Not just listening to the course, and then when it's finished there is kind of nothing for your whole life, not like that. Every day you must do this meditation. It's so good.

OK, thank you.

Lecture 7: December 13



Meditation on the Awareness of the Real I

[Rinpoche starts talking while standing in front of the throne]

Before we sit down, what do you think? Is the weather good or bad? It depends on how you think. It can be good. Everything is good for people who think good; everything is bad for people who think bad. It depends on what you think. The weather being good or bad depends on how you label it.

So, we can do the walking meditation on emptiness. Use the simple, clear example of the I, what I introduced about the I, about the I that exists and the I that does not exist. That is the reality. I, action, object, hell and enlightenment, samsara and nirvana, happiness and problems, all the other things exist in mere name, merely labeled by the mind. Being merely labeled means things do not exist from their own side; it cuts off existing from there. That's the reality.

Maybe I'll sit down a little bit, OK. [A low throne is brought for Rinpoche and he sits down]

Recently, when I was in Washington where we have a retreat place, I was supposed to go for a walk every day for health, because I have diabetes. I don't have high blood pressure but it needs to go down for the diabetes, but I didn't get it done. One day I went for a walk from the retreat place to get down to the main road. Down there are two monks who take care of the retreat place, setting up all the offerings, in the upstairs three large rooms and downstairs, all the huge water offerings, all the many light offerings. I think there are three or four rooms. Every morning they spend two or three hours cleaning and making offerings. Besides these two other monks, there are also Sherab and Roger.

Going down, I was explaining the way to do the walking meditation related to impermanence. I explained it on the basis of the eight freedoms and ten richnesses that we have received, the usefulness and how difficult it is to find again. Then, not only is death definite, but the time of death is indefinite; it can happen at any time. So, going down the road, however many seconds it takes, you have from now on up to the death. As you are going down, you practice the awareness of how with each second, that is one second closer to death. As you walk, so many seconds are finishing and life

is becoming shorter and shorter; you are rushing closer and closer to death, and especially to the lower realms if you have not practiced the Dharma and purified your negative karma. You are getting so close to the lower realms, to the hells. You practice that awareness when you are going down.

Then going up, I introduced the two monks to mainly focus on the object to be refuted, the false I. Going up, I introduced them to that, looking at that which is a hallucination as a hallucination. That was the meditation.

Then, after explaining these two meditations, I explained what was totally understood, how [we think] this real Amitabha Buddha Pure Land retreat house—that is the name of the retreat house—is something concrete, something real, existing from there. Living in that house, I saw that it was not there. It was not there. That which I believed to be truly existent, that real Washington retreat house, Amitabha Buddha Pure Land, which seemed so real, with that meditation I could see it was not there.

Of course, because my mind has been habituated with ignorance from beginningless time, not only from this morning or from birth, because it is habituated with that belief in true existence so strongly, I could not stay in that awareness. Yes, that is the reality, and the mind is supposed to stay in that state, but the problem was I could not stay like that, because of my habituation. My mind was supposed to stay in that state of awareness but very quickly everything went back to seeming real. I'm just telling the story.

First, remember how we created the I, with the aggregates as the base to be labeled “I.” The I is what is labeled and then the base to be labeled “I” is the aggregates. The mind, focusing on the aggregates, makes up the label “I,” merely imputing it. That *merely* means there is totally nothing from there that is true; it is just a label. Meditate on the reality.

We will meditate a little. Then after that, meditate on the body and mind—the aggregates—and then form, sound, smell, taste, and all the rest of the phenomena, how they are all like that, merely labeled by the mind. Things do not exist from their own side. There is nothing real. There is no real I, and the same with the rest. There is nothing real. It appears to ignorance as real, but in reality there is nothing. So, we will start with the I.

[Long pause for meditation]

While the I is mere name, merely labeled by the mind, what the I is, is extremely subtle. It comes down to the same point, that the I is not existing from its own side, it's totally empty from its own side, and at the same time think that it exists in mere name, by thinking of the subtle dependent arising. There is no I from there. If you see that the I is empty of existing from its own side, the real I, then that causes you to realize that the I exists in mere name.

As I said before, meditate on how everything—the body and mind, the aggregates, and then gradually everything else—exists in mere name. This allows you to see it is empty from its own side.

[Long pause for meditation]

Practice that awareness. The conclusion is that all phenomena exist in mere name. That means that nothing exists from there; everything is totally empty from there.

[Long pause for meditation]

You need to meditate much longer, but anyway, next, you see that the I has to appear back that way. What is merely labeled by the mind in the first moment has to appear back to you like that. It *should* appear back to you merely labeled by the mind as it happened a moment before, but for us sentient beings it appears back as truly existent, existing from its own side, existing by nature, a real I. The I is merely labeled but when it appears back, negative imprints collected from beginningless rebirths due to ignorance holding the I as truly existent—that particular ignorance, not just any ignorance, but your own root of samsara—those negative imprints decorate true existence onto that merely

labeled I, making it seem that it exists from its own side, existing by nature. The real I, the false I is projected, decorated onto that merely labeled I.

Practice the awareness of this false I. Our mind has been habituated from beginningless rebirths to this real I, thinking this is true and believing it as true, from beginningless rebirths. The habituated is false but we believe it is true, having been habituated from beginningless rebirths. We now have to look at it as false for a while. Be mindfulness of that, looking at it as false, as the object to be refuted.

[Long pause for meditation]

Our mind has to now become habituated in a positive way, habituated to looking at it as false. We have been suffering in the six realms of samsara, one after the other, numberless times from beginningless rebirths, experiencing the most unimaginable suffering, such as the suffering the hell realm numberless times because of believing that the I that appears real is true. That is where all the delusions have come from, all the karma, all the three types of suffering; the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounded suffering. So, now we have to habituate ourselves in a positive way, thinking this is false. This is the mindfulness practice we must do in our everyday life.

We need to live our life in meditation on the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment: renunciation, bodhicitta and right view. This is right view. We have to put all our effort, our whole life, day and night, into this, by looking at what appears as real from there, looking at it all as false, including the I.

In this way, even if we have a real relationship with our husband or wife, with our children, parents, friends and enemies, even when birth and death happen for us or our family, we will see that there is no real death, there is no real birth, there is no real old age and sickness. There is only a merely labeled one. There is nothing else there, no real death or real birth, nothing, including ourselves, our family or our loved ones.

We need to get habituated. The main practice of emptiness in daily life is to get habituated in a positive way, seeing that all the real things appearing from there are all false, like the I, like hell and enlightenment, like samsara and nirvana, like happiness and problems, everything that appears from there. From our side, we need to look at all this as false instead of real. Instead of trusting it is true, we need to see the false as it is, as false. That is what we need to train the mind in. It is one of the most important meditations in life. We need to do that to free ourselves from the oceans of the most unimaginable suffering of samsara, to free ourselves forever. Then, we can help all sentient beings to be free from oceans of suffering of samsara forever!

Meditating on emptiness has these benefits even without talking about enlightenment. It's the answer for all the problems we dislike; it's the answer for what we should do. It's the ultimate answer, the best psychology.

Just like being aware of the real I, when we are walking we should be aware of the real action of walking, the real object of the road, the real sky, the real earth, the real trees, everything. We should practice the awareness of looking at everything as a hallucination, looking at that which is a hallucination as a hallucination. The practice of awareness is complete in that. In reality, [what we assume to be real] is not there. Even if we have some problems, such as relationship problems or problems in the family, when we think in that way, that it is just merely labeled, what happens is, when we see it as merely labeled by the mind, that there is no real thing, it brings incredible peace in our mind even right now. It no longer drives us crazy. It brings us great peace. With the help of bodhicitta, it leads to liberation and enlightenment.

We'll continue walking with this awareness. Don't talk. If you end up talking, it distracts you. This is important, so just meditate, just practice this awareness.

I mean, maybe you are going shopping in Kathmandu or whatever, or on pilgrimage or sightseeing. You can do the same thing on your way back from Kathmandu. When you go out, you can meditate

on subtle dependent arising, how everything exists in mere name; you can practice that awareness. And when you come back, you can do that, or do it with bodhicitta, or you can just meditate on emptiness as I have explained, in the three ways: looking at that which is a hallucination as a hallucination, looking at everything as merely labeled, how this I is merely a labeled I, this walking is merely labeled walking, this road is a merely labeled road, paying for shopping is merely labeled paying money, and a merely labeled shopkeeper, and merely labeled things. You can do it like that. Or you can look at everything as empty. So, you can practice awareness in those three ways.

OK. So, we'll go down. Maybe we'll go around Geshe Lama Konchog's stupa five or six times, then come back. Then we'll start all over again. OK.

[Rinpoche seems as if he is about to start teaching again]

I think maybe not; I won't talk to you at the moment. It's too much but there is an incredible prayer for going around the stupa.

[Rinpoche leads a walking meditation outside around the stupas]

Lecture 8: December 13 evening



We Must Renounce This Life

[Rinpoche and students recite *Prayers Before Teachings*]

The purpose of listening to the teachings is not just to achieve happiness for ourselves, including nirvana, liberation from samsara, not just that [but to bring happiness] to every single hell being [and all the beings of all the realms.] There are numberless sentient beings in each realm, so we are listening to the teachings for each single hell being, those with the most suffering right now, as you went through.

I think it's from the section of karma—I don't remember exactly—but I think once when the Buddha went for alms, a girl made an offering of a handful of grain into the Buddha's begging bowl, and the Buddha said due to that she would become the buddha Sanggye Tseme, [Supranihita]. I'm not sure, but I think this story is also about karma, how it is hard to believe what the Buddha predicted about karma, how from a tiny virtuous action the result can be so huge.

Then, the Buddha said that the seed of a bodhi tree is very tiny, but if you plant it, it becomes a huge tree, with so many branches that it can spread to cover five hundred horse carriages underneath. India is very hot so carriages naturally go under the shade of a tree, and [from a tiny seed] this tree can shelter five hundred carriages. The Buddha asked the one who doubted karma, "Did you know that?" The other person [Gelong Lekpai Karma, Sunakshatra] knew that, so the Buddha said it is similar with karma, how one tiny virtuous action can bring an unbelievable, inconceivable result, for example, that the girl will become the buddha Sanggye Tseme just by offering a handful of grain into the Buddha's begging bowl.

I'm not a hundred percent sure the example is about karma. I've forgotten a little bit, but it's the same for karma—one tiny virtuous action brings an incredible result. In life, we cannot understand how great pleasure or unimaginable suffering happen. We are experiencing them but we cannot understand why they happen.

In France, we have a translator who translated Dharma books at Institut Vajra Yogini for many, many years. She was young and kind of pretty, but then her whole body got this sickness. What is it? [*Ven. Ailsa*: Rheumatoid arthritis.] Rheumatoid arthritis. Her body, her fingers became like that. Her whole body changed. She couldn't believe it. It's something she would never think could happen to her in her life. She has been translating Dharma for a long time, [but the sickness] was caused by negative karma. She didn't think she had created so much negative karma. I think for her that meant killing people, stealing valuable things, that kind of thing.

Of course, negative karma depends on the motivation. Whether it is negative karma or not, if the mind is one of worldly concern, of attachment to the pleasures of this life, whatever we do—even meditating, studying Dharma, listening to teachings, working—whatever we do all becomes nonvirtue. It is worldly dharma not holy Dharma. Even if we are retreating in the Himalayas, on top of Mount Everest, not seeing people for our whole life, not even seeing birds, just retreating, reciting mantras, even doing meditation, eating, walking, sitting, sleeping, doing our job with that motivation, because the motivation is nonvirtue, it all becomes negative karma. As long as the motivation is worldly concern, the attachment clinging to this life's pleasures, even though we might be living our whole life in a cave in the Himalayan mountains, doing retreat, doing meditation, not seeing people, that is nonvirtue. Every action, even studying Dharma, reciting mantra or doing meditation, whatever, doing a job, eating, walking, sitting, sleeping—everything becomes negative karma.

There is a story you might have heard about Reting in Tibet. When Lama Atisha went from Nalanda Monastery in India to Tibet to revive Buddhism there, he advised his translator, Gyalwa Dromtönpa, to start a monastery, which was Reting Monastery. The third time I went on pilgrimage to Tibet, we went to see Reting. We stayed a few days in a tent, but before we arrived the Chinese authorities had announced to the Tibetan villages that nobody could come to see us. One morning, at about nine or ten o'clock, a Tibetan lady collected some plants to make incense and she came to give them to me. I don't know who she was; she was very ordinary looking, but I can't really say, just that she was not allowed to come. So nobody came.

Underneath there is water. Anybody who drinks that water from the earth will not be reborn in lower realms. It purifies all the negative karma so you do not get reborn in lower realms. On top, there is a holy object of Lama Atisha, I don't remember exactly, I think there's a statue this size of Sangdu Mikyo Dorje, Guhyasamaja or something. The statue belonged to them and it's unbelievably precious. They brought it to show us. You can offer gold, so I offered a pearl mala to it, and a student, Massimo Corona, from Italy, offered gold. On every special day [you can] offer gold.

The Chinese had appointed the head monk to look after the monastery. He invited us there as a kind of welcome, with tea and things to eat. We went up but we were a little bit late. It was where Lama Tsongkhapa wrote his famous lamrim teaching, the *Lamrim Chenmo*, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, that precious, incredible teaching. There is a ruined house where he wrote it; you can only see a side wall. I should have asked the monk to give me a stone from that to bring as a relic but it did not happen. We did a puja, *Jorcho*, the preliminary practice of the lamrim, and it became late. I don't know where Lama Tsongkhapa used to give teachings but there was another place which was his guru Lama Umapa's house, but we had no time to go there.

Then we came down. It was dark but nobody fell. All the trees are supposed to be from Dromtönpa the translator. Dromtönpa is Chenrezig, and from his hair sprinkled on the mountain these trees grew. It's like at Swayambunath, where it is said that Nagarjuna cut his hair and sprinkled it on the mountain and the trees grew. This is a similar story. The trees are very old and kind of very expressive, not like normal trees.

I forgot what I was going to say. Oh, yes. Gyalwa Dromtönpa was walking in the forest when he saw an old man going around the temple. Gyalwa Dromtönpa said to him, "It is good you are going around the temple but it is better to practice holy Dharma." The old man thought that he might mean reading Dharma texts, so he stopped that and read Dharma texts. The next day Gyalwa Dromtönpa came and said, "Yes, it is good you are reading Dharma but it is better to practice holy

Dharma.” So, the old man thought he should practice meditation, but later Gyalwa Dromtönpa came and said, “It’s good you are meditating but it is even better to practice holy Dharma.” Only at this time the old man asked him what he meant by practicing Dharma. (He hadn’t asked before.) Gyalwa Dromtönpa replied, “Renounce this life!”

That means all problems come from attachment, from worldly concern, from the attachment clinging to this life, to this life’s pleasures. It is like the roots of a tree. There is a tree and then there are the roots, and more roots and even more roots, spreading out further and further. The problems in this life come like that, from the attachment clinging to this life. So, that means we must renounce that. Then, when we rely on that, we can experience unbelievable peace, inner happiness. All our worries and fears comes from that, so renouncing that brings incredible peace and happiness, incredible satisfaction. It’s like Milarepa’s life, if you have read his life story. So Gyalwa Dromtönpa said that.

Maybe you have not heard about it yet but there are the ten innermost jewels that give us a real understanding of what Dharma really is. They show how we are supposed to practice Dharma. That is another subject.

Without understanding that, we think we are practicing Dharma but we are not. Many times it is totally wrong. Many times, what we believe is Dharma practice is not that at all. We do not know what practicing Dharma means. For example, for our whole life we live in a cave in the Himalayas, not seeing people, retreating or meditating, thinking we are a yogi meditating in the Himalayas—I’m just putting it this way to show what normal people think—but if we meditate with the attitude of worldly concern, that is not Dharma because the motivation is worldly concern, attachment to this life, to get power or to be famous so that people will say we are a famous meditator.

That is similar to politicians who are supposed to work for the population, supposed to serve the people’s happiness, but instead use the population to get power, wealth and reputation for themselves. So, it is the other way around; they are using the population for their own ends. That is why in Syria and many other countries, people revolt against the president or king or whatever. There are so many problems, with hundreds of thousands of poor people getting killed. It is mostly the poor people trying to escape who get killed.

They are supposed to work for the people’s happiness, but instead they use the population to get power, causing thousands of people to become refugees, crowding onto boats that cannot carry them, so they sink. And then, even if they survive and seek asylum in other countries, even if they travel for months and months, those countries do not accept them. Like that, so many people are suffering terribly. So much like that is happening now. The people are suffering so much!

And people working for the government, even the president or someone like that, cause so many problems. They use all the wealth for themselves and their family, and the country does not get developed. They get richer and the poor people get no help. There are so many sick and poor people who need help so much, but they do not get help. They suffer so much. That is because of the motivation of the rulers.

Even doing a retreat or a lifetime meditation or something like that, unless we know what it means to practice the holy Dharma, we can waste our whole life. Everything becomes negative karma, even meditating, even reciting mantras. We could stay in one of the large monasteries where there is so much study of the extensive philosophical subjects, the *Pramanavarttika*, logic, *Abhisamayalamkara*, the path to enlightenment, Madhyamaka, talking about the two truths, then *Abhisamayalamkara* (*Abhidharmakosha*), about the mind, about mental factors, and the *Vinaya*, the precepts. But even if we studied those extensive subjects, memorizing them every day, reading all those texts with such deep logic, proving the path—the base of the two truths, the path of method and wisdom and the essence, what is to be achieved, dharmakaya and rupakaya—even if we studied all that and debated so many questions day and night, negating wrong views and explaining the right explanations, even if we spent our whole life like this, unless we know what the holy Dharma is, we can waste our

whole life. All our actions can become non-Dharma, even though we are in a monastery where we hear, memorize, read, study and receive teachings day and night. Unless we know the ten innermost jewels, unless we know what the holy Dharma means, we can waste our whole life. Gyalwa Dromtönpa said, “Wouldn’t it be better to practice holy Dharma each time?” Unless we know that, nothing becomes holy Dharma. No action becomes Dharma, so no action can bring any happiness in this life.

A monk who had been studying a long time went to Bodhgaya from one of the big monasteries, from Sera, Ganden or Drepung, I don’t know which. Maybe from Sera. He went to His Holiness’ teachings and found out what the holy Dharma is. He was very surprised that he had only come know what worldly dharma was after many years of study of the extensive Buddhist philosophy in the monastery.

I didn’t finish telling you about the translator at Institut Vajra Yogini who has been sick now for so many years. How many years? [*Ven. Ailsa*: Thirty or forty years.] She has been very heavily sick for almost thirty or forty years. Sometimes she cannot move with the pain. Now, she says it’s kind of easy to die. She mentioned that maybe she will wait until I go to Institut Vajra Yogini and she will die at that time. She mentioned that. It happened like that, but she cannot believe why she has had to experience all this. She didn’t think she had created the karma to be sick like this.

First, we only think of this life, but that is not the way to think. We have to think from beginningless rebirths, not just this life. The reason I’m saying about the Dharma is because when we live our life with worldly concern, with attachment to this life, all the actions of our body, speech and mind become nonvirtue. Even when we’re meditating, even reciting mantras, even studying Dharma. That is why I’m give this example. Even studying extensive Dharma in the monasteries, unless we know what the holy Dharma is, our actions do not become the holy Dharma. Yes, we are learning the words, getting so much information, putting that information in our human brain like putting it into a computer.

First of all, she only thought of one life, this life; she did not think about beginningless rebirths, she did not think about karma. Why do we need to think about beginningless rebirths? Because we never know. We have created all kinds of karma. We have created good karma as well as negative karma. We have no way of knowing what karma we have created in past lives, billions, zillions and trillions of eons ago. It looks like she failed to see why she was suffering because she only considered this life; she never thought about previous lives.

Even in this life, we do not know all the karma we have created. How can we say we did not create the cause of this suffering instead of happiness? How can we say this if we do not know every karma? When people in the world experience something like that unexpectedly, they cannot believe it. Even if we suddenly experience great happiness, realizations, we cannot believe it is happening to us. Also suffering— we cannot imagine it, but it is still happened to us. Many people in the world are like that.

I’m using that example of hell. You have many questions about hell, whether it exists or not, so I’m using this as an example. I have a picture on my iPad from the West. I’ve never heard of anything like this in Tibet. But some people had just made a cake and they were about to eat it, when suddenly they were consumed by fire. The fire didn’t come from nearby. The fire came from the body, burning the body so just the legs were left. I have two or three pictures like that. If you see things like that, *then* you can understand that hell exists. Otherwise, if you do not see it, you think it does not exist. Maybe it’s just a Tibetan trip or Lamaism. Tibetan Buddhism comes from what the Buddha taught. It is from India, from Nalanda. What the Buddha taught was taken from the sutras and integrated into the lamrim when the Nalanda pandits took it to Tibet. It is like that, not a Tibetan trip; it is not Lamaism, the lamas’ trip.

I have three pictures on my iPad of the people in the West who died like that, in the fire. I remember, it even happened to me, in Indiana, in the early times. It was the first time I went to

America. I was staying in Louie Bob's house, upstairs. Suddenly fire came, very briefly. It was just a few seconds, but even I have had my own experience. So, you should know that hell exists. There are many times like that, where fire comes and burns the body, just leaving the legs. There was a cake made and there was a gentleman still sitting there, but the lady was burned by fire. The fire did not come from the fireplace. Even upstairs in Louie Bob's house, in my bed, there was suddenly fire. Just a few seconds.

I have already told you about the last of the neighboring hells, *Chuwō rapme* [*Vaitarani*, Uncrossable torrent]. It's not one of the main hells but the last of the neighboring hells, where lava flows, coming like a filthy septic tank. We are born inside that and attacked by insects, very tall with very long beaks that go through the body. The ground is full of swords that cut the legs, but when we pull our leg up, the wound is healed. We are revived again but must repeat this continuously until the karma finishes. Again, I have already told but there is also [the plain of swords], where our loved ones call us from the top of a tree, but as we try to climb, the branches become swords pointing down that go through the body with each step. When we reach the top, our loved ones call us from the bottom of the tree, but when we try to go down, the branches that are swords now point up. *Chuwō rapme* is the last one. It is water but it is oneness with fire, extremely hot fire, so I think it is like lava coming from the mountain.

In Hawaii I went once to see lava—I told you—from a distance. It was so hot that the rocks were molten. I think that lava coming from the earth is part of *Chuwō rapme*, the last neighboring hell. It is impossible to imagine the hell beings' suffering.

So, we must think, "May the numberless hell beings be free from all their sufferings. And may all the numberless hungry ghosts be free from all their sufferings." For even ten thousand years they cannot find even a drop of drink, but their karma is so heavy that they do not die; they just have to suffer like that for all those millennia.

The people in Solu Khumbu, in Namche Bazaar, go to Tibet for business. Once, the main person of the family had just left and he was walking through the snow. He did not look after his porter and the porter was under the snow for a week without food, with nothing, unable to move. But the man had just walked away, leaving him trapped in the snow. I know the porter. Because of the snow, his feet were damaged; they became like this. Yes, people who have heavy karma do not die but must experience great suffering for so long.

So, we must pray, "May the numberless hungry ghosts be free from the oceans of suffering. And for the animals to be free from the oceans of suffering. And for the human beings, the suras, the asuras and the intermediate state beings to be free from the oceans of suffering. May I bring them all to peerless enlightenment by myself alone. Therefore, I must achieve enlightenment. Therefore, I'm going to listen to teachings."

All Phenomena Are like the Reflection of the Moon

I thought I might read from Lama Tsongkhapa's lamrim teachings, the part on wisdom, on emptiness. The main quotation comes from a sutra. I think it might take some time, but I'll read some from here. The sutra is called the *King of Concentration* (*Ting nge dzin gyi gyal po do*), a very effective teaching. I took it from there.

I'll chant this verse so we can meditate. [Rinpoche chants in Tibetan]

[Phenomena are like an illusion, like a dream,
Like a mirage, the city of the smell-eaters.
They appear truly existent,
But they are empty, empty by that.
You should know that all phenomena are like that.]

Phenomena, *jitar* means “like,” *mig gyu* is “illusion,” therefore “like an illusion.” We meditated today on that, “like an illusion.” [Rinpoche reads Tibetan] The “city of the smell-eaters.” Smell-eaters are people who are killed in a war or just died, and are born into the intermediate state. Smell is food for them. We can give them sustenance by practicing *sur*, where [we burn] *tsampa*, flour from grain, if possible mixed with the twenty-five substances. It is very rich, very powerful, when we do that practice in a retreat or in a puja, mixing the twenty-five substances with the *torma* and offering to the deity. That makes it very powerful to bring success.

We made it like this when I was in America, but I was not able to get *mumen*. It needs *mumen*. I think it’s called lapis lazuli, but there is a Tibetan name. I didn’t recognize that, so the first time it was not included but the second time it was. In retreat, when it is put in the tea offering to the protectors, the deities, or in the tormas, that makes it very powerful for success.

In the *sur* practice, you burn the food, the *tsampa*, in the fire. You grind the grains, barley and things, into powder but it must just be food. You cannot use powdered wood or incense or things like that. It must smell of food. For those beings, that smell *is* food.

There was a prisoner in Tibet. The food they got was so little, maybe a tiny steamed bun, so they were always starving. Geshe Losang, the abbot of our monastery, Sera Je, was also a prisoner. He was one of the experts in the Madhyamaka, in the *Abhisamayalamkara*. He became the abbot but he passed away a long time ago. He was in prison for a long time in Tibet. The prisoners were so hungry they would go outside and find pieces of bones and chew on them if they could find them. The bones were not easy to find, but chewing on them helped give the body some strength. And kaka. The Mainland Chinese who worked in the prisons [ate soybeans] and then made kaka, so the prisoners opened their kaka to try to find beans inside. I think the soybeans did not absorb that well so the prisoners could find them in the kaka, and they would eat them.

It seems Geshe Losang had to eat them. Sorry, my talk has expanded. I think if he had not eaten human kaka in prison, he would have been unable to go to India and teach so many hundreds of young monks. There are so many of his disciples, monks who have been highly educated by learning from him, like Geshe Chonyi. We have geshees in the West nowadays who are his disciples. By eating human kaka, he was able to go and educate so many thousands of monks, then those other monks had many disciples. So, he has been of great benefit.

How long Buddhadharma lasts in the world depends on these big Tibetan monasteries. After being destroyed in Tibet, they started again in India and Nepal. So, how much the Buddhadharma can be spread in the world and how long it can last depends on these monasteries preserving it and continuing the education, with elder ones teaching the younger ones. All this knowledge comes from the great top lamas from Tibet. Keeping that lineage depends on that, on study and practice. By eating kaka, Geshe Losang was able to survive and go to India, to teach so many monks, who then became experts and were then able to spread Dharma in the world, especially the lamrim, the essence, and the deep philosophy behind it.

This lay person who was in prison in Tibet was also unbelievably hungry, but when he smelt the food that was being cooked by the Chinese workers who were looking after the prison, the smell of the food helped him so much to get strength, just smelling it. It benefited him so much that after he got free from prison he has been doing *sur* practice for those people who have died and are in the intermediate state, where the smell of the *tsampa* is food for them. Through his experience in prison, finding the smell of food so helpful, he has been doing *sur*, practicing charity by giving the smell to the smell-eaters. He has been doing this for many years.

Sorry, I made the wrong translation. The first one is not “like an illusion” but “like a mirage.” “Like a mirage, the city of the smell-eaters.”

I used to do water charity for the hungry ghosts every morning. For the hungry ghosts there are three types of water charity and food, but although I did it in the past, I don’t get it done these days, so I try to do *sur* but sometimes I forget. I try to do what I can, in the evening.

[These verses are from the *King of Concentration Sutra*. [18]]

[9:20] When the moon is in a clear sky,
Its reflection appears on the sea,
But the moon has not moved onto the water.
Know that all phenomena are like that.

[9:22] Echoes are produced
By songs, music, and weeping,
But the song that is heard does not exist.
Know that all phenomena are like that.

“Know that all phenomena are like that.” That means they appear real but that reality does not exist, as I said. It appears real but it is not there; it does not exist, not even an atom. There is no moon transferred in the lake; it is a reflection. That is not the real moon; it is a reflection. This is like we meditated on, that things exist in mere name.

[9:23] Although pleasures are enjoyed in a dream,
When the person awakes they are not be seen.
The fool, though, becomes attached to those pleasures.
Know that all phenomena are like that.

In a dream we are having sex with somebody we like, but we wake up it has not happened. All phenomena are exactly like that. After we wake up, we don’t see them. “The fool becomes attached to those pleasures.” To sex. Whoever sees that desire is empty, that it does not exist from its own side, that person is not a fool, not a child. The person who realizes emptiness, the ultimate nature, is not a child. But whoever does not see that, who totally believes what appears is real—the body, sex and so forth—who totally entrusts in that as true, they are a “child.” This does not refer to a child’s body but the mind that is childish, the mind that totally believes the hallucination is true. “Know that all phenomena are like that.” That means that although everything appears real, there is nothing there.

[9:24] A magician causes forms to appear,
Creating horses, elephants, chariots, and so on.
But though they appear they do not exist at all.
Know that all phenomena are like that.

The magician’s trick appears but it is an illusion; it is not there. Nothing is there as it appeared.

[9:25] In a young woman’s dream
She gives birth to a son and then sees him die.
She is happy when he’s born and sad when he dies.
Know that all phenomena are like that.

I think this is not according to the West, but in India, China or Tibet, people think it is better to have a son, so that is why it is used here, or something like that. A young girl is so happy when she has a son in a dream, but she is miserable when he dies. But it is a dream; it never happened. In reality there is no son. “Know that all phenomena are like that.”

Today we did a walking meditation on that, as it is explained here. I’m not reading everything, just some verses, so it is easy to understand.

[9:27] A thirsty person traveling

At noon during the summer

Sees a lake that is a mirage.

Know that all phenomena are like that.

[9:28] The water that is a mirage cannot be found.

Foolish beings want to drink it,

But water that is not real cannot be drunk.

Know that all phenomena are like that.

A mirage is not water, but an ignorant sentient being thinks it is, because it appears as water, and wishes to drink it. Water that is not real cannot be drunk. In the mirage, what we believed to be water is untrue, unreal water; we cannot drink it. What we believed in the mirage is water is untrue water; we cannot drink it. “Know that all phenomena are like that.”

Is it time? OK, we’ll stop here.

[Ven. Tsenla starts to chant the mandala offering]

Wait a minute! Wait a minute! I’ll do the *lung* [oral transmission]. I was thinking to do the *lung* of the mantras, but this is quick. It’s called *Phagpa Sang gye... Zung*, “the mantra having branches,” not branches, limbs I think, the *Mantra Having Limbs of All the Exalted Buddhas*. This is the name of the mantra.

I did this *lung* at Sera Je, our college in South India, before I did the Secret Hayagriva initiation. This has so many benefits. One benefit is that you maybe will not get cancer or sicknesses. There are many other problems this mantra protects you from. One thing is cancer. Maybe the text doesn’t mention cancer in particular but it says it stops you getting sicknesses, so because more and more people in the world are dying of cancer, I just mentioned that. It frees you from these diseases and the condition of spirit harm, but of course the main cause is karma and delusions, your obscured mind and karma. That is the main cause; the condition is spirit harm.

So, for our lives to become meaningful and to achieve enlightenment, I’ll do the *lung* of the mantra, the whole text. Listen to this to achieve enlightenment for the numberless sentient beings.

[Rinpoche gives the oral transmission of *The Dharani Called “Possessing the Attributes of All the Buddhas.”*]

There are other explanations, about the evolution and so forth, but the main thing is to recite the mantra. [Rinpoche recites the mantra] So, that’s the mantra.

There are different mantras to protect our life from different harms, sicknesses, many things. Many more people in the world are dying from cancer now, although cancer is not the only disease. There are others. The practice you need to do is purification. One example is the Vajrasattva initiation, which is a very powerful purification practice to purify negative karma in order to not suffer from cancer, for example, but also from any problems. But these problems are only the problems of this life. We don’t think of the life after this, as a hell being, a hungry ghost or an animal. We don’t think of those heaviest, endless sufferings, only the problems of this life.

We cannot know how many years, days, minutes or seconds [before we die], so these very powerful mantras are to protect our life. If we enjoy the problems we face in life, then we don’t need to worry. For example, if we *want* to experience sicknesses, cancer and so forth, if we enjoy having problems for sentient beings—I’m not talking about people who want to commit suicide—if we enjoy experiencing problems for sentient beings. Instead of them being sick, if we prefer being sick for them—so that they achieve enlightenment and we experience their suffering for them—that is the particular bodhisattvas’ excellent conduct of benefiting sentient beings.

Kadampa Geshe Chekawa prayed all the time to be born in hell, to experience hell for the numberless other sentient beings. He was always praying, praying, praying, but on the day he was going to die, a pure land appeared, so he told his attendant that his prayers had not worked. He really wanted to be reborn in hell because of his bodhicitta, but when we have unbelievable dedication to sentient beings, we do not get born in hell, we achieve enlightenment quickly and get reborn in a pure land. This is by the power of the ultimate good heart, bodhicitta, even though the prayer was to be born in hell to experience sufferings for other sentient beings.

I think I might have already told you this. In Tibet there was an animal-skin boat sailing on a lake. There were too many people on board, so two people thought to give up their lives for the rest of the people on the boat. They gave up their lives for the others, by jumping in the water. But something amazing happened. A rainbow with different colored clouds came and they didn't sink in the water. That was due to having a good heart, dedicating their life for others. That itself is protection. That itself is the best protection. And because of that, they didn't sink in the water. There are infinite examples of the good heart.

Of course, it depends on how much our mind is well-trained in *lojong*, thought transformation. We can do this while we are sick, while we are having problems. With *lojong*, we experience the problem for sentient beings. Rather than crying out that we have so many problems, suffering with our selfish mind, instead of that we experience the suffering for sentient beings, to free sentient beings from their problems and achieve enlightenment. We experience the problem for the numberless sentient beings, for them. Depending on how well-trained our mind is, we have incredible happiness when we experience problems for sentient beings. Unbelievable happiness, incredible joy. However, if the mind is not so much trained—we are practicing but not much trained—because we have not developed much, we need to use other methods, such as taking medicine, while we are experiencing the problem for sentient beings. This is how we do it if our mind is not that well-trained.

It is very important, especially now we have met the Dharma, not like before, to know how to make our life meaningful, to use our precious human life to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, to free sentient beings from suffering and bring them to enlightenment. We have met the Dharma, the Mahayana teachings, so now we know what we can do with our life, how we can make it meaningful. Having met the Dharma, having met the lamrim teachings, our life is unbelievably precious, so it is very important to take care of it.

Of course, taking care of it does not mean with attachment, anger or ignorance. It does not mean that. The best way to take care of our life is with bodhicitta. That takes care of all the harm, all the sickness. The best way is with bodhicitta, renunciation and right view. That is the best way to protect our life, the best medicine, the best psychology.

There are mantras to protect our life from sickness, harm, all these things. We can get cancer anytime, therefore purification is so important, purifying negative karma. One thing is to purify the negative karma collected not only in this life but from beginningless rebirths. That is so important. In the seven-limb practice we do every day there is confession. The main thing is to purify negative karma so we can achieve enlightenment for all sentient beings.

[Rinpoche continues the oral transmission of the text]

Here it says “Serving sentient beings is serving the Buddha.” I was telling Holly the other day about a Kopan monk who was a cook, Thubten Monlam. He was a very young monk but he cooked for Lama Yeshe and me for many years. Then, Lama went to America to have the operation for his heart, for his heart disease. Lama requested His Holiness to do an observation, and His Holiness said he should go to America, even though the hospital did not want him to because they said he was too old. We couldn't go inside, so Lama came out and said he had difficulties. Then, the next day Lama passed away, on the morning of Tibetan New Year. Lama had called the cook to America, so he went. Then, after Lama passed away, he went to school there and disrobed, working as a carpenter for many years. Then, he got some disease, not a common disease. What is it called? [*Ven.*

Holly: ALS, motor neurone disease.] ALS. It's not a common disease; it's a very rare disease. I met him and we discussed it.

That was a long time ago, but now, it's got worse. I was telling our nuns at the Aptos house—Anet, the Swiss nun who has been cooking at Aptos and two other nuns—that there was a monk there before but he is now at Land of Calm Abiding. They make water bowl offerings every day. There are so many offerings in the rooms, upstairs and downstairs. So, I was telling Holly that his wife had to give up her good job doing make-up because she had to serve him. There is nobody else in the house and Thubten Monlam needs help with everything. So I told Holly to tell the nuns that they needed to go to help him, even if it meant they could not do the water bowl offerings every day. What most pleases the buddhas and bodhisattvas is serving whoever needs our help, so rather than doing water bowl offerings, they should help Monlam. That is what pleases the buddhas and bodhisattvas the most.

I mentioned him but it means every sentient being, not only people, but even animals. I don't know how many animals we have here. We had twenty-five goats before but I don't know how many now. I buy them from a man from below who would have killed them. Each time I see him I buy some. They come from the nunnery in India. Before we had twenty-five but now I don't know how many. The road is very bad but I had to go there. Last time I went there to recite mantras and put blessing strings on them to purify their negative karma. There were mantras that Sherab had made, which he put on their heads. I don't know how many times he goes a week, maybe every day.

So, generally serving others means any sentient being. I'm not just talking about Thubten Monlam. I told the nuns to serve him because he needs help. That is what pleases the buddhas and bodhisattvas more than offering water bowls. On the basis of that, we offer. On the basis of helping sentient beings, our motivation is to help sentient beings, then we offer water bowls. We might make a hundred thousand offerings, but that does not please the buddhas and bodhisattvas if we harm sentient beings.

[Rinpoche continues the lung]

If you write the mantra and put it on your arms, it protects the arms.

[Rinpoche finishes the lung]

You have the lineage of the mantra. It is in English.

So, I'll stop there.

[Students offer mandala]

Dedications

“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, the ultimate good heart, the source of all the happiness, including enlightenment for me and for every sentient being, be generated in my heart, in the hearts of the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless suras, the numberless asuras and the numberless intermediate state beings. In those who have generated it, may it be developed.

[Dedication prayers in Tibetan]

We are responsible to pray for the world. “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 the wars happening now and happening in the future be stopped immediately. May all the famines, all the diseases, be stopped immediately. May the dangers of fire, water, air and earth, all those problems, be stopped immediately. May all the global problems—the ice melting, everywhere becoming warmer—be stopped immediately.”

Lhasa was cold before but now it's becoming warmer. One thing is people smoke impure substances. It not only harms other human beings, causing them to develop delusions like attachment, it harms many other beings, nagas and devas. When the smoke spreads, cities are destroyed, like being bombed, kind of like that. The city is destroyed by pollution, by bad substances. There is so much smoke, which brings pollution. Then, the weather changes. Before it was cold, but now it's getting warmer, hotter. In many parts of the world the weather is changing. The ice is melting and the ocean levels are rising, destroying cities. Tsunamis cause many billions and zillions of dollars [of damage]. It's already happened in America a few times.

So we dedicate. "May all the global problems be stopped immediately. May perfect peace and happiness prevail in everyone's heart by generating loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta. May the Buddhadharma, where sentient beings receive peace and happiness from, last a long time. May sentient beings meet the Buddhadharma as quickly as possible. May we be able to cherish sentient beings more than the sky filled with wish-granting jewels.

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

I didn't get to continue the Wheel of Life, so tomorrow afternoon, instead of a discussion there may be a teaching. But I'm not sure!

Lecture 9: December 14



The Kindness of the Mother

[Rinpoche and students recite *Prayers Before Teachings*]

The bodhisattva Thogme Zangpo said, “The mother sentient beings, who have been so kind to you from beginningless time...” For example, I saw on TV how turtles travel for three hundred and seventy days to lay their eggs. I don’t know where they are coming from, but very far away. They travel for three hundred and seventy days, sometimes up in the lake, sometimes more down, to lay their eggs in one particular spot. They dig into the sand on the beach to lay the eggs and then leave them. They don’t stay; they leave. Then gradually the babies come out and try to get to the water. In the meantime, the birds and other animals come to eat them. It’s unbelievable. All the hardships they have to bear to travel to lay their eggs in one particular place, probably in that lake or in that ocean, I’m sure. There are other animals who eat them, so the mother lays the eggs in just that place.

They have borne hardships like that for us, not just once, but numberless times from beginningless rebirths. They have done that for us. They have been our mother, laid eggs, given birth to us numberless times, not just once. This is true of any sentient being, even our present mother, any human being, any ant, any mosquito, any tiny fly, everybody has done that for us; they have done just what the turtle does. Everybody has done that for us numberless times, not just once but numberless times. When we were born as a turtle, our mother turtle did that!

When we see how much animals suffer, how they have to bear hardships, we should use that to consider how they have done that for us not just once but numberless times when we were born as an animal to that mother animal. As our mother, she had to bear hardships for us. We have to relate that to our life, to how every sentient being has done that for us numberless times.

What’s the animal in the ocean with the long mouth? [*Student:* Whales? Crocodiles?] Yeah, crocodiles. They don’t lay eggs in the water but outside. They make a hole and lay the eggs outside, near the water. Before they go in the water, the mother puts water in her mouth then keeps all the

babies in the water in her mouth. Their tails come out! She keeps them in the mouth to train them, so they get used to living in the water. I don't know how long she keeps them there. Once they are trained, they go in the water. This is not just for fun. As a crocodile, our mother crocodile has taken care of us like that numberless times. Every sentient being has been a crocodile and taken care of us like that. We need to relate it to ourselves. They have been so kind. This is the kindness of the mother.

And not just once but numberless times; they have done this for us from beginningless rebirths. That is a very effective way to see their kindness. We can feel it in our heart. Not, "I'm a human being; they are crocodiles." Not like that. We feel it in our heart that they are our mother.

I don't know but I think many people in the West think the mother is the enemy. Children, all sorts. When they were young, they stayed with the mother of course, but after, what age? Thirteen? No, twenty or something, because the mother always tells them what to do, I think the child sees her as an enemy. I don't know which age, but when they are old enough, they run away and most don't come back.

Roger's nephew ran away. I think many children run away, but he ran away for years. Maybe three years? I think one year. Do you remember? One year? He told me he ran away, but while he was with friends, he remembered how his mother had been so kind to him. Then, he returned home, kind of a good son. He remembered the mother's kindness and then he went back. He died a long time ago. He became a monk for a few years. He helped us in Mongolia. Well, he was going to, but he left to help some girl who had problems. And then somehow he disrobed because of that problem. How many years ago did he die? Two years ago. He died in a car accident. He was a nice boy.

Aptos and the Dog

He helped in the Aptos house where sometimes I go. There is stupa in the rear, like the one in Borobudur in Indonesia, although not so extensive. It is shaped like that but in the Tibetan style. I asked him to make a different color roof from plastic, so he made it from different colored sheets, smaller and bigger, held by posts. He was able to do that. I have a buddha outside from Indonesia made from volcanic stone. He made different color beams with wires, beams coming out for that buddha. He was able to do things like that. He was trying to help his mother. Roger's niece? Cousin? He was sent to help her. Then, he died. Why am I talking about him?

I have to tell you about the stupa we built in the rear of the house in America. Roger said we should have a dog. I said if the dog is in the hands of Buddhists, we have to make sure it will not be born in lower realms. We must take care of the dog. We must not allow a dog in the hands of Buddhists to go to lower realms! So, I think the news went to Vajrapani center, which is beyond Santa Cruz. They heard we needed a dog. A girl who works in a place where they keep animals had a dog nobody else would take. She had to go to Mexico, so she brought the dog to us. This dog was not easy to get close to. She bit quite a few people: Geshe Ngawang Dakpa and a few students, Peter from the Maitreya Project, Massimo Corona from Italy, Sogyal Rinpoche from France who has many centers in the world. He visited and the dog bit him when he tried to pat her. Her name is Om Mani Padme Hum. I gave her that name to leave a positive imprint on her mindstream, to plant the seed of enlightenment in her mind. That's the reason I called her Om Mani Padme Hum. If you call a dog "Potato," what's the use of that? What's the benefit? No benefit.

In Dharamsala during Lama Yeshe's time, we had many dogs, many puppies mixed with Lhasa [Apso] puppies with flat noses. I gave them names of the whole path to enlightenment: "Renunciation," "Bodhicitta," "Right View," "Dzogchen," "Mahamudra," "Dharmakaya," "Rupakaya"—named after the whole path to leave positive imprints on their mind, to bring them to enlightenment, to liberate them from samsara. They can even benefit from just having the name. We

have to think that. Even having the name can benefit the mind; it can free them and bring them to enlightenment. We have to help in every way we can. Otherwise, there is no meaning, no purpose.

After Lama passed away, somebody in the British embassy in Delhi, I think, asked for a dog, so I gave her a dog but I also gave her a commitment. I didn't ask for money, but she had to recite the *Foundation of All Good Qualities* for the dog. We didn't get to recite the *Foundation of All Good Qualities* this time. Normally, we recite it after the *Heart Sutra* and before the mandala, but this time we didn't get it done. Lama Tsongkhapa wrote the whole path to enlightenment in the *Foundation of All Good Qualities*. The lady was not Buddhist but she was a very kind, sincere person, so I gave her this to read for the dog every day. She did that for one year, but then one day the gate was open, the dog went through it and she lost the dog. I was supposed to give her another dog but it did not happen. It was very kind of her to do that so sincerely. She was a very nice lady. Now all the dogs have died. I don't know whether there is even one left.

I'm not going to spread out my talk! But I must mention this for you to learn. I said we must build a stupa at the rear of the house for the dog. That is why we built it. It was built by a student, a monk. What is his name? Brian. He was a monk for a few years. During that time he built it behind the house, a little bit like Borobudur but small and not empty, with so many *tsa tsas* inside. Outside there are many Kadampa stupas, big ones and many small ones, and Medicine Buddha statues and a small Mitukpa, which is very powerful for purification.

It is common when people die in Tibet and Solu Khumbu, people make *tsa tsas* to help the person who has died to purify their negative karma. If they are destined for the lower realms, it helps liberate them from that. So, they make many *tsa tsas* and statues and take them to the mountain and put them in a cave where they are protected from rain. Or they build a small stone stupa, kind of square, and put that inside. Even in Solu Khumbu, it's very common to make *tsa tsas* of Mitukpa, the Immovable Buddha. Even His Holiness has said that after you eat meat, you collect the bones and recite the mantra and bless the bones. This purifies the animal, liberating it from lower realms and allowing it to get a higher rebirth, meet the Dharma and achieve enlightenment.

The mantra is very powerful. If somebody who is dying sees the mantra, the heavy negative karma of abandoning the holy Dharma gets purified. If we create the negative karma of abandoning holy Dharma, the negative karma is so very heavy it is like destroying all the temples, all the scriptures, all the holy objects in the world. It's more than that. The negative karma includes lacking respect for the whole Dharma, such as thinking, "This text is Hinayana. I'm Mahayanist, so this is nothing." Or, "I'm a tantric practitioner and this is a Mahayana sutra so it's not important." Not liking [a particular teaching] is abandoning the holy Dharma, such as thinking this is Hinayana and you are Mahayanist. The Buddha has revealed different teachings because there are different levels of mind of sentient beings. One teaching does not fit everybody, so the Buddha taught the Lesser Vehicle teachings and the Greater Vehicle teachings, which includes the Mahayana sutra and the Mahayana tantra. There are different levels of teachings. For those who have great intelligence and merit, there are the Mahayana sutra teachings, but to think that the Hinayana teachings contradict the Mahayana teachings is to avoid the Dharma. And tantra, to think tantra is Hindu tantra or that the Buddha did not teach tantra, that is avoiding holy Dharma.

This can happen very easily. For example, because we think, "The *Abhidharmakosha* is of no benefit to me," we renounce it. Even though it is difficult to understand, we have to think, "May I understand it in the future." Even though we cannot understand it now, we do not decide it is of no use to us. It is the Buddha's teachings, so if we think like that, we give it up. We must not do that. We have to understand all the different karmas and what is the heaviest negative karma.

This Mitukpa mantra purifies the very heavy negative karma of abandoning the Dharma. Criticizing the Sangha is very heavy negative karma, but even that gets purified just by seeing this mantra, as well as purifying the karma of killing our father or mother, killing an arhat, causing blood to flow from a buddha, or causing disunity in the Sangha.

I thought I would take the dog around the stupa myself every day and then let everybody in the house do it, but I didn't get it done as I thought. The one who took most care of the dog is the cook, the Swiss nun Anet. She took the most care, taking the dog around the stupa to purify its mind. So much was done, but other people did it. I was not there when the dog died. I was here or somewhere else. Holly was there. The dog died but there was no particular sign, like the tongue hanging out or a kind of sad face. Not like that. It was as if it was asleep. I think she kept it like that for three days after the breath had stopped. Then, blood came out? Blood? Then, blood came out through the nose. Did you do the meditation about the death process or not? [*Ven. Yarpel*: Yes.]

You did! And nobody died? The indestructible seed, the size of a bean, half white and half red, opens. Was Om Mani Padme Hum female or male? Female. The blood comes from the heart, shoots up and comes out through the nose. Down there, normally the white seed comes out. It should be like this. For a female, white seed from the nose, blood from down there. But for the male I think blood and then sperm comes out. Male and female are a little bit different. Therefore, with the dog, after three days the blood came out, after blood was there a smell? Then, she took it away.

Not Knowing When a Person Is Dead

You have to know, it's said in the text that generally, after death, the consciousness stays three days. It does not leave immediately. You have to know that, because in the West you have not learned that. Society does not know that. Many times the hospital definition of death does not cover that. So many times people have been taken to the cemetery in a coffin, but then they scratch the coffin. They have not actually died; the consciousness is still there, and they are just temporarily unconscious. The consciousness is there but they do not seem to be alive. But then they wake up and scratch at the coffin. It has happened many times in Kalimpong, in India, and in the West. They are put in the coffin but then they scratch at the coffin. I think recently it happened and the person was OK; they were able to get up.

What happened in Nepal a long time ago, the father of the family was taken to Pashupatinath to burn, but he was not dead, just temporarily unconscious. Probably, his heart beat was not there and he was not breathing, but after the family put on the wood to burn, he became conscious. Because people there believed that nobody who goes to a cemetery returns, the workers there putting wood on the pyre thought it was very inauspicious, so they beat him and killed him. It happened like that. Once I saw a man had been taken to the cemetery but he did not seem dead. He could not breathe but he did not look dead. Many times people at the cemetery come back to life.

That is because the hospital definition of death is not complete. Because something is missing, this happens. It's very dangerous. There are many people not dead, the consciousness is there, but the heart has stopped beating. But then, after some time, they come alive again. The hospitals in the West do not have the whole understanding about the evolution of death and the evolution of rebirth. I have even seen this in India.

So, when our dog, Om Mani Padme Hum died, its face was not particularly sad; it looked just asleep. So, it's possible that because it went around stupa many times, maybe it died with a virtuous thought, maybe it had a peaceful death. I thought I might meet a child, an incarnation of the dog, but I haven't so far.

Not for a sudden death from an accident, but in general with death, the consciousness stays for three days. Of course, a meditator in the state of meditation at the time of death, meditating on the clear light, the nature of mind, can stay in that state for days or weeks. Kyabje Ling Rinpoche, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's guru, was in meditation for eighteen days. There was the previous Ganden Tripa—the Ganden Tripas are the Regents of Lama Tsongkhapa—I think this was three Ganden Tripas ago, who was in meditation for a long time, for twenty days or something. He was sitting up sometimes.

I saw a lama in meditation like this in Buxa in India, the place where Prime Minister Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi-ji were imprisoned, where so many people were killed during British times. I was there for eight years studying, like child studying Buddhist philosophy. For some years before he passed away, Pari Rinpoche, a very high lama from Tibet, acted crazy. Our house was quite close [to his] and we could hear him singing the *namtar*, Tibetan songs, historical stories. Once, I was taken by a monk, the disciple of our teacher, Geshe Rabten, to meet him. He had Tibetan tea in the silver, lotus-shaped cup. He put the butter, the grease from the Tibetan tea, on my face. You are not supposed to clean it off. It's very good luck to have something like this happen from a great practitioner, but his manager wanted to clean it off with towel. Then, the lama told me stretch out my tongue and he said it was good. He was taking snuff and he told me to take some but the manager would not let me. You are supposed to accept whatever the lama offers because it helps to develop wisdom. He was a great lama.

After he passed away, I went to see him with the same monk. He had passed away and he was meditating like this. He was in meditation for a week or something. On his nose was a spot of water, like dew. It was fantastic. He must have been a great practitioner. So many monks came to see him, to take blessings.

Even with the dog, who had a slow death, not a sudden one in a car accident or something, but a natural death, the consciousness stayed for three days. For common people it stays for three days, not just meditators. You have to know that. That is why she kept the dog, burying it only after the consciousness left and there was the sperm and blood. At that time the consciousness leaves, then there is smell. Before that there is no smell. If there is smell from the body, the consciousness has left.

That is one thing. The other thing is you hold the skin and then you do like this. [Rinpoche pinches the skin on his arm] If it stretches up, then the consciousness has left. If it goes back like this, the consciousness is still there. So there are three things.

So, she was able to help the dog. Now there is another dog, called Uma, Middle Way. But it doesn't bite anybody; it's totally the opposite to Om Mani Padme Hum.

I was at Geshe Sopha's place in Madison taking teachings and before I returned home to Aptos, I sent a message to build two small stupas at the door of the Aptos house. Because I have diabetes, I go around them; they are this size or maybe a little bit bigger, full of tsa tsas and statues of the Buddha inside. There are three levels like steps: one level, outside the big Kadampa stupa, is lined with Mitukpa tsa tsas, very beautiful. I got the first one in Australia. I was given the first one by a nun called Bonnie who is in retreat in Dharamsala. I'm not going to talk more about that because it would take a long time. She gave me the first tsa tsa, which had such beautiful hands. So, the three levels are full of tsa tsas, lined up so nicely. And around, on the steps on the way to the house, are flowers.

I was supposed to go around but I didn't get to go around much, only sometimes behind the stupa, and not every day. Sometimes I went around reciting a Dharma text like the *Diamond Cutter Sutra* or a very important Guhyasamaja text. I would go around the house with people and things like that. I would only sometimes go around three times when [people] came. Because I have diabetes, it is exercise for that, and because it is a stupa, it is unbelievable purification of negative karma, Because the diabetes comes from negative karma, it purifies that.

Generally, what I'm saying is that although you might not have a dog, it is so important to have a stupa, a small or a big one, in the house or outside the house. If you have a commitment to recite mantras, you can go around so you don't fall asleep. If you sit, you might fall asleep, so by going around, at least you create good karma with the body. It is unbelievable purification. There are extensive benefits to having even one small stupa or one statue, especially if it has the four dharmakaya relics mantra inside: the Stainless Pinnacle deity mantra is one, the Ornaments of Enlightenment is another. Even if there is one mantra. I'm just saying this to show the importance

of the stupa, if you have some mantras such as a four dharmakaya relics mantra inside. Then, by going around the stupa or statue even once, it purifies all the negative karma to be reborn in the eight hot hells, and when you die it is very easy to be born in the pure land, such as Amitabha Buddha pure land. It is so easy to achieve realizations, so easy to achieve enlightenment. It is so easy without taking much time to be free from samsara, so unbelievably easy.

Whether you have a dog or not doesn't matter, going around has such unbelievable benefits, such purification, just for you or your family or maybe outside people. It is so easy to be liberated from samsara and achieve enlightenment. It's amazing.

If you do commitments, you can fall asleep or have many distractions, but when you go around the stupa you are doing virtuous things. For example, in Aptos there are many relics in my room—many relics of the buddhas, many holy pictures around the room—and once I had to make phone call to a student in Italy which took an hour, so I took the opportunity to go around the stupa while I was talking. At least you collect the cause of enlightenment with your body, making your life meaningful, even if your talk is not virtuous.

Roger and Holly work in the office, so I told them if they have to take phone calls all day long, while they are talking they should circumambulate the table outside with the three levels of holy objects, full of statues, with many Kadampa stupas, then at least they would be doing virtuous action, creating the cause of enlightenment with the body, even if the talk does not become virtuous. Then, you don't waste this perfect human body. Life is very short. Death can happen at any time, and this practice is very good, and it's not expensive!

Generally, because people don't know how to die, then when problems come, they cry. They don't know about purification. Purification is a great opportunity but they don't give themselves that opportunity. For example, even if guests comes, we talk to them and show them around, and even if they know nothing about karma, [seeing the holy objects] purifies so much of their negative karma, even though they might not believe in reincarnation and karma.

I didn't mention this yesterday. Sorry, my talk is getting longer and longer.

The Importance of Holy Objects

If we offer to holy objects—to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, or statues, stupas, scriptures—if we do prostrations, make offerings or circumambulate the holy objects, even if it is done with a motivation that is non-Dharma, out of worldly concern, with attachment clinging to this life, even if the mind is not Dharma, by the power of the holy object, our action becomes virtuous. It becomes the cause of enlightenment. Generally, for our actions to become the cause of enlightenment, they first of all have to become Dharma, which means first of all our mind has to become Dharma and then bodhicitta. Unless this happens, our actions cannot become the cause of enlightenment. But this is the exception. When we circumambulate, prostrate or make offerings to holy objects such as statues, stupas and scriptures, the action alone not only becomes Dharma but also the cause of enlightenment. Even for dogs, birds or even flies, going around a stupa becomes the cause of enlightenment.

There is the famous story of the man who met the Dharma when he was eighty years old and then became a monk, renounced samsara and achieved the arya path in that life, realizing emptiness directly, meaning he achieved nirvana. The Buddha saw that this was because so many eons ago, he was born a fly and there was a stupa. Cow dung was floating in the water around the stupa, so the fly followed the smell of the cow dung. It didn't think that it had to go around because it was a stupa; it went around just because of its attachment to smell of cow dung. Going around the stupa became a circumambulation, just one, and that virtuous action was the cause to be a human being and become a monk in this life, and at eighty years old—I'm not going to tell the whole story, it would take time—he became an arya being through realizing emptiness directly, and maybe in that life achieved nirvana.

So, we can have a big stupa or a small stupa, anything. What am I saying? Oh, and even for insects going around it, it becomes the cause of enlightenment. There are four dharmakaya relics. Even without putting the mantra inside, it is already a holy object. For example, if children playing in the sand build something they think is a stupa, they create the cause of enlightenment. It does not have to be the exact shape, but by piling the sand up [Rinpoche indicates piling up the sand] and thinking it is a stupa, they create the cause of enlightenment. This is mentioned in the texts on the benefits of building holy objects. Even for children playing like this, it becomes the cause of enlightenment.

Even without the mantra, it is already a holy object. By circumambulating, prostrating, making offering, whatever we do, it becomes the cause of enlightenment. It's unbelievable. Then, when we put in the four dharmakaya relics, every atom has unbelievable power, meaning the stupas and statues we fill with this mantra have infinite benefit.

We just finished a stupa in Solu Khumbu. There was a big stupa before, but the earthquake destroyed it. When I went there, the old women said they wanted to see the stupa rebuilt before they died. They asked Tenpa Choden, the manager of Kopan Monastery, and he built them a stupa, the same shape as the Boudhanath stupa, but not the same size, smaller. There are so many unbelievable benefits explained by the Buddha in the Kangyur. There are stupas here and in different centers. I have to go there to the mountain to bless it. They are waiting. The old people, the fathers and mother who live there, as well as the children and animals, collect merits, the cause of enlightenment, without knowing much Dharma. They do not have much opportunity to listen to the teachings and learn the Dharma, so in this way it purifies all their negative karma and creates the cause of enlightenment and liberation from samsara.

It's not that building a stupa is just Buddhist tradition, Buddhist culture. It's not like that. If you read the benefits in the Kangyur, they are unbelievable, especially the benefits of the four dharmakaya relics. In your home you can have a big table where you create three or four levels, putting inside many tsa tsas, stupas, statues, all beautifully set up, and placing offerings around them. Then, every day you can go around the table, creating so much purification as you do your commitments. You have this precious human rebirth just this one time, so doing this is so important. And it's not expensive at all!

Now, I'll go back. Where was I? I can't remember. [*Ven. Amy: The kindness of the mother.*]

The Kindness of the Mother (Back to)

There are so many beings—people and animals—who bear great hardships for their babies. At the airport I watch families with three or four children. Some are crying, “I want this; I want that,” crying and crying. Just watching for five minutes I get bored. Once in America, I think in San Francisco or somewhere, there was a Muslim lady taking care of a boy and a daughter. She was totally paying attention, looking after them. They were close to us, and they moved back to where there was a pillar, looking at some pictures, but she was constantly looking after them. The girl was not old. I thought that just as she looked after her two kids, in exactly the same way she has done that for me. In exactly the same way, she took care of me when I was born to her. That helps us feel close to that person in our heart when we think that, but of course that is not just one time. That person has taken care of us numberless times when we were born to her. She has been our mother not just once but numberless times.

When we think about somebody like that, there is no longer a wall between us; we feel close to them in our heart. We feel close like that with everybody, not only with human beings but also with any kind of animal. I think it is good to see how they take care of their children, how they protect their children.

I think I mentioned about the deer in Spain and Germany. This was quite recently, I think. The mother deer was there with a few of her children close by when three tigers approached. The mother deer stood there; she did not run away but offered her body to the tigers to protect her

children. That is why they didn't eat the children right away. The tigers were starting [to attack] but she just stood there, protecting her children, not running away, just looking at them. She has done that same thing for us numberless times in the past, giving up her life to the enemy for us.

We see all kinds of things like this on TV or in the movies. Whatever we see, we should relate that to ourselves, to when we were born as that kind of animal. Here, I'm giving the example of animals. All sentient beings have been deer, and when we were born to them, they took care of us like that.

The text says this. If mothers sentient beings who have been kind to us from beginningless rebirths are suffering, what is the use of us being comfortable, being happy? For example, if our mother was being attacked by a tiger down on the ground, while we are up in a tree singing songs because we are free from the tiger's attack, how cruel that is, not helping our mother, not protecting her from the tiger. Just thinking we are free and then singing a song—that so selfish. We only think of our own happiness, but there are numberless sentient beings who have been experiencing unbelievable suffering from beginningless rebirths.

Our mother, who we were born to, created negative karma for us. She did not have bodhicitta; she did not have renunciation; she did not have the realization of emptiness. She just had attachment, such strong attachment to us. Her actions of body, speech and mind became negative karma to take care of us. She bore so many hardships protecting our life from many hundreds of dangers each day, bearing hardships and creating so much negative karma for us, resulting in her having to suffer in the lower realms, as a hell being, a hungry ghost or an animal, not just once, but from life to life. One negative karmic action results in five hundred lifetimes in the lower realms, and every day she creates millions and millions and millions of negative actions, creating the cause to suffer in the six realms, and especially in the lower realms.

If we do not practice Dharma in this life—even if we meet the Dharma, learning it intellectually, like getting a university degree or something so we can make money to teach, but we never practice, we never subdue the mind, we never reduce the delusions—we will have to be born in samsara continuously, so we will have to be born to sentient beings. And as our mother, they will have to create so much negative karma and suffer endlessly. Therefore, practicing Dharma now is so important, not just for our happiness but for the happiness of the numberless sentient beings. It is so important to realize emptiness, to realize bodhicitta, to realize renunciation. And this is without talking about tantric realizations. Practicing Dharma is for the happiness of every sentient being, for each of the numberless sentient beings in each realm to be free from samsara, so we do not have to be born to them again and again, and they do not have to suffer for us again and again.

That is one thing. The other thing is to free them from samsara, to help them and to bring them to enlightenment. Practicing Dharma is not a small thing. It is not just to free ourselves from being reborn in the lower realms. It is for every hell being. There are numberless universes and there are hell beings in every universe. So, it is for everyone, to free them from samsara and to achieve enlightenment. At least we do not have to be born to them and cause them to continuously suffer. For example, it is for the numberless ants in the numberless universes, for them to become free from samsara and bring them to enlightenment.

By coming to Kopan at this time to do this course, that is not just for you, not just for your own happiness, it is for every sentient being. It is so that you can help free them from samsara and bring them to enlightenment by yourself. You are doing this Kopan course for that. You have to understand the big way. Before, you just thought small, just for yourself. Now, you are thinking for every creature, even the tiny flies, for everyone, to free them from samsara and bring them to enlightenment. That is why you came to Kopan, to learn meditation, to learn Buddhadharma, the lamrim. You should understand it that way. Every day doing the course—having discussions, doing meditations, listening to teachings—is for that, for you to achieve liberation from samsara and then to help the numberless sentient beings be free from samsara and bring them to enlightenment. You are doing it for that.

So the text asks what is the use of us being comfortable if numberless mother sentient beings are suffering? Like the example I gave, we are on top of the tree, without the danger of being attacked by the tiger, so we sing songs while our mother, who suffered for us and gave us our human body, is being attacked by the tiger. Therefore, to liberate numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and to generate bodhicitta is a bodhisattva's practice.

That is the motivation. It has become a long talk! So think, "Not just for myself to be liberated from samsara but to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, to free the numberless sentient beings from oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment, I'm going to listen to the teachings."

What is the time? Do you need a *pipi* break? Pipi? Need a pipi or need something else? What do you think, or continue? OK, pipi.

[Students offer mandala]

OK. Thank you.

The Rice Seedling

My teacher, Gen Sopa Rinpoche, said the purpose of the Buddha descending in this world is only to free sentient beings—that means us sentient beings—from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and to lead them to liberation and the state of omniscience. Only for that purpose, for no other purpose. It is explained in the sutras,

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. [\[19\]](#)

The Great Ones (the buddhas) do not wash away negative karma with water, like Hindus washing their bodies in the River Ganga and thinking they are purified. They do not take out the sufferings of transmigratory beings with their hands, like pulling out a thorn that has gone into the flesh. The buddhas do not eliminate the suffering of transmigratory beings, including us, with their hands. Then, the third one, they do not transfer their realizations into our mind. They liberate us sentient beings by revealing the truth, ultimate reality.

I have been talking about that for many days and we have been meditating on it.

For the method to subdue the sentient beings, who are objects to be subdued, the Buddha has taught what is far-famed, the 84,000 teachings.

At the beginning, after he achieved enlightenment, the Buddha taught the first turning of the wheel of Dharma, the four noble truths, revealing exactly what is to be practiced and what abandoned. Maitreya Buddha said in the *Ornament of Sutra, Do De Gyen?* [*Ven. Ailsa: Sutra Alamkara.*] In *Sutra Alamkara, Do De Gyen*,

The illness is to be diagnosed,

The cause is to be abandoned,

Health is to be achieved.

The medicine is to be relied upon.

Likewise, suffering, its cause,

Cessation, and path are to be

Diagnosed, abandoned,

Reached, and relied on. [20]

To abide in happiness, we must abandon its cause. To become free from disease, we first must know the disease, and then we must abandon its cause. It's giving an example. Abiding in happiness is what is to be achieved; that is the health here. And the medicine is to be relied on, to be depended on, to be followed. This talks about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of the suffering and the path that leads to that. So, what is to be known is suffering; what is to be abandoned is the cause of suffering; what is to be achieved is the cessation of suffering; and what is to be relied on is the path.

Geshe-la explained that, for example, for somebody who is tormented by a very heavy sickness, to be free from it, they first have to recognize the sickness and see the shortcomings of the sickness. We need to know where the sickness came from, to look for the cause, and then cut the cause. For that, we need to consult the wise doctor and take the profound medicine. In the same way, the Buddha taught true suffering, in order for sentient beings, who are tormented by the suffering of samsara, to know the essence of the suffering of samsara and its shortcomings. I have mentioned already how suffering comes from the cause, from karma and delusions, which needs to be renounced, abandoned. After the truth of suffering, the Buddha taught the second noble truth, the true cause of suffering, the cause of all arising, which is karma and delusions.

[Knowing what suffering and its cause are], we generate the wish to be free from suffering and the cause of suffering, to achieve liberation. To actualize that, the third noble truth, the true cessation of suffering, is taught. After that, the Buddha taught the method to achieve liberation, the true path to meditate on the graduated path. These are the third and fourth truths, the true cessation of suffering and the true path. The quotation from sutra says the truth of suffering should be known; all-arising should be abandoned, cessation should be actualized, and the path should be relied upon.

Sufferings include birth, old age, sickness, death. That is the result, true suffering. The cause are karma and delusions; they are the cause of circling in samsara. Freedom from samsara is cessation, true cessation of suffering, or liberation. The method to achieve that is the true path. That's what is taught by the Buddha generally.

Then, in particular, he taught that human beings are under the control of karma and delusions from one life to another, getting reborn in samsara without interruption. That is why we circle in samsara. By ceasing karma and its cause, delusion, the result, suffering, ceases. That is how we can be liberated from samsara. To show this, he taught the twelve dependent-related limbs, *tendrel*, which explains the evolution, from ignorance and karma. He taught how old age and death come from birth, which comes from becoming, which comes from craving and grasping, and taking it back like that, down to ignorance.

He explained the first dependent arising in the Lesser Vehicle sutra, the *Sutra of the Plant* or something like that. [*Ven. Tsenla: Rice Seedling.*] Rice feeling? [*Ven. Tsenla: Rice Seedling.* Seedling.] What? Rice seedling? OK.

The Buddha taught this extensively from the Mahayana sutra and the Lesser Vehicle sutra and also the *Rice Seedling*, where the Buddha held a rice seedling in his hand and said that any bhikshu who sees dependent arising will see the Dharma. I think "seeing the Dharma" means "emptiness." He explained this by showing that dependent arising has two aspects: outer and inner dependent arising. Outer dependent arising is in the natural world, in the world of the farmers who are cultivating crops like rice by planting the seeds and nurturing with water and what, *lu*? [*Ven. Tsenla: Minerals.*] They put water, minerals and heat. And then the seeds procrastinate? Procrastinate? [*Ven. Ailsa: Propagate?*] They propagate. The sprout comes and then the stems and leaves and flowers. The result gradually happens.

Having the previous evolution happen, the later evolution happens. Without the previous evolution, the later evolution cannot happen. He used that as an example. With inner dependent arising, the

dependent arising that comes from ignorance up to old age and death, he used that example to understand this.

So here, in this sutra, ignorance is the cultivator, the farmer, in the field of karma. A field is like karma, and ignorance, the farmer, plants the seed of consciousness, making it wet by the water of craving and grasping. Then the stem being actualized is name and form.

The very first ignorance of holding the I as not merely labeled by the mind, holding the real I, that one motivates the action. Ignorance is like the cultivator. From the field, various crops grow, bad or good. Similarly, the result of karma is a samsaric rebirth, a good or a bad one. Various rebirths arise from karma, so that is compared to the field. Until the result is ripened, the consciousness holds the potential of the seed of bad and good karma. So consciousness is like the seed. Water and heat moisten and warm the seed and make it ripen, until it arises as the stem. Like that, becoming with the wetness of the craving and grasping... What is the word you used before? [*Ven. Ailsa*: Propagate.] Propagate. I'm not sure. The wetness of craving and grasping "propagates" the seed of karma. It makes it ripen, grow—that is what it means. It makes it actualize the next life. That is becoming, due to the water and the minerals. In the mother's womb, the consciousness joins [the sperm and egg], taking birth. That is like the stem growing to become the plant. There are some other quotation about this.

Ignorance obscures us from seeing the reality, how karmic formation plants the seed of the next reincarnation. The consciousness joining [the sperm and egg of the parents] leads to the next life. In that way, the transmigratory beings become ignorant, deluded. The other quotation [from the *Assuttava Sutta*] explains it a little differently from the previous one. About the twelve dependent-related limbs, it says,

When this is, that is;

With the arising of this, that arises.

When this is not, that is not;

When this ceases, that ceases. [21]

When there is this, that will arise. Because this is born, that will be born. Like that, because of ignorance, compounding action arises. The quotation continues,

Which is this:

From ignorance as condition, the formative mental functions;

From the formative mental functions as condition, sensory consciousness;

From sensory consciousness as condition, name and form;

From name and form as condition, the six sense bases;

From the six sense bases as condition, contact;

From contact as condition, sensation;

From sensation as condition, craving;

From craving as condition, clinging;

From clinging as condition, being;

From being as condition, birth;

From birth as condition, old age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, distress and tribulation all together come to be.

Thus there is the rise of this whole complex of suffering. [22]

It says sorrow arises and *menagdompa*, yelling? Screaming from suffering. [*Ven. Sarah*: Lamentation.] Lamentation. I didn't know. Then there is the suffering, unhappy mind, and then fighting. All these things happen. So, from this ignorance, this whole great heap of suffering arises. That is the evolution from the side of the delusions.

The other way of listing the twelve related limbs is backwards, where we see how old age and death come from birth and so on, all the way down to how compounding action comes from ignorance. Before the evolution of dependent arising started from ignorance, but here it's going back to the root, ignorance. The quotation says,

But from the fading away and cessation, without any trace remaining, of ignorance, there is the cessation of the formative mental functions;

From the cessation of the formative mental functions, the cessation of sensory consciousness;

From the cessation of sensory consciousness, the cessation of name and form;

From the cessation of name and form, the cessation of the six sense bases;

From the cessation of the six sense bases, the cessation of contact;

From the cessation of contact, the cessation of sensation;

From the cessation of sensation, the cessation of craving;

From the cessation of craving, the cessation of clinging;

From the cessation of clinging, the cessation of being;

From the cessation of being, the cessation of birth;

From the cessation of birth, old age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, distress and tribulation cease.

Thus there is the cessation of this whole complex of suffering. [\[23\]](#)

By stopping ignorance, compounding action is stopped; by stopping that, consciousness gets stopped. It goes on like that down to existence or rebirth, where it says that by stopping that, old age and death cannot happen. By taking it backwards we can see that by ceasing old age and death, we stop rebirth; by stopping that, we stop becoming, and so on down to compounding action, where by stopping compounding action, ignorance ceases.

It then says that meditators who wish to achieve liberation need to meditate on this. We need to become expert in the evolution of the four noble truths, of the twelve links [forward] and backward. So, for these four noble truths, there are some good quotations. Some things are not easily understood, but so that sentient beings can easily understand the four noble truths, the Buddha compared [the twelve limbs] to outside crops, explaining them in a forward order as well as a backward order. He showed not only how each individual being circles in samsara but also how to cease circling in samsara and achieve liberation. This is clearly explained by example.

The Wheel of Life

To make it even easier for sentient beings to understand, the Buddha had the Wheel of Life drawn. Among the Buddha's disciples, of the hearer-listeners of the Hinayana, the Lesser Vehicle, there are two arhats: Shariputra, who was excellent in wisdom, and Maudgalyayana, who was excellent in psychic powers. From time to time, they would both go into the other realms by their psychic powers and then return to explain to the Buddha's disciples how the hell beings are suffering and so forth. Chungawa, the Buddha's younger brother, did not like the morality of celibacy at all, so with their psychic powers they took him to show him the sufferings of the lower realms, proving to him the shortcomings of desire. In the human realm, there is so much desire for pleasure, so they

showed Chungawa the shortcomings, how desire results in the sufferings in the lower realms. In that way, they led him to engage in the holy Dharma.

The Buddha's disciples were around them when they explained this to the Buddha's attendant, Ananda, which is what the Buddha explained in the sutra, *Dulwa Namche, Clarifying the Vinaya*. With their psychic powers, Shariputra and Maudgalyayana traveled to the lower realms to take back news of the suffering there. And they also took the Buddha's younger brother to show him how the sufferings there were the shortcomings of desire.

Because we cannot see it like that, outside the monasteries are drawings of the Wheel of Life, usually on the part at the front. What do you call it? [*Student*: Porch.] You call the porch the one on the outside? "Porch" sounds like a boat! [*Ven. Tsenla*: Veranda.] [*Student*: Entrance.] Entrance.

The Buddha instructed the monks to draw the Wheel of Life, with five or six realms. (The suras and asuras count as devas, so in some drawings there are five realms.) The five types of transmigratory beings means hell beings, animals, hungry ghosts, humans and devas. At the bottom are drawn the hell beings, animals and hungry ghosts, with the devas and human beings on top.

It can also be drawn with the four continents: the eastern continent, Exalted Body, *Lupagpo*; the western continent, Cattle Gift Land; the southern continent, *Dzambuling*, where we live; and the northern continent, Unpleasant Sound. When we offer mandala, all the reasons for these names are explained, such as even the tail of the cow of the Cattle Gift Land is a wish-granting tree that gives whatever we need, all the enjoyments of that continent. And the northern continent, Unpleasant Sound, *Draminyen*, refers to the beings there hearing a negative sound [about their next rebirth] from the sky a week before they die.

In the center of the wheel, attachment, anger and ignorance are drawn [as three animals]. Then, on top, outside the wheel, is the Buddha's holy body, with his hand pointing to the true path. On the other side there are verses, such as the one 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.

The white circle shows the true cessation of suffering. Sentient beings are drawn transferring to another life and taking rebirth, in the manner of being pulled from a well in a bucket. I don't think you see this in the West much, but in India many places have wells with a bucket tied with ropes to a stick. You pull the rope and the bucket brings the water up. It goes down and brings the water up. In that manner, sentient beings transfer their consciousness and then get reborn. The Buddha instructed the monks to draw this.

Around the Wheel of Life are twelve drawings depicting the twelve dependent-related limbs, showing the evolution from ignorance to old age and death and backwards, showing how old age and death come from birth and all the way backwards. And the whole thing, the six realms of sentient beings, are all in the nature of impermanence, all under the control of impermanence and death—the whole of samsara: the hell beings, the hungry ghosts, the animals, the human beings, the suras and asuras, [are all under the control of] the Lord of Death. The Lord of Death is not a deity. Some artists draw it like a deity, with a crown of skeletons, but it is not. The Lord of Death holds the whole Wheel of Life in its mouth, showing how all the six realms are under the control of impermanence and death. Nobody is free from impermanence; everybody is under the control of impermanence. Holding the whole of samsara in its mouth signifies this.

It might come a little bit later, but to give an idea even before, in the very center of the wheel there are a pig, a snake and a chicken. The pig represents ignorance, and from the pig's mouth comes the snake, representing anger, as well as the chicken, representing attachment. The snake and the chicken both coming from the mouth of pig shows that anger and attachment come from ignorance.

A chicken? [*Student*: Rooster.] A rooster and a snake. I don't know, most of the Wheels of Life I have seen come from Nepal [where it looks like a pigeon]. I'm not sure, but it seems that what they

show is not according to sutra. The Buddha explained that both the snake and the pigeon's tails come from the pig's mouth. That is why a pigeon is used [in Nepal]. Pigeons have so much attachment; the husband or wife pigeons have so much attachment. If a human being spits snot on the ground, the pigeon picks it up and gives it to their wife or husband, they have that much unbelievable attachment. That is why the pigeon is used there.

In other drawings, the snake comes from the chicken. What is it called? Rooster. Probably that means that anger arises from attachment. When we have attachment and our attachment does not get what it wants, we get angry. When there is some harm to attachment, anger arises. From the sutra, both tails come from the mouth of the pig. That ignorance is the cause of suffering, the cause of samsara.

There are many types of ignorance, and here the pig represents the main type of ignorance, the one I have been talking about for many days. While the I that exists is what is merely labeled by the mind, the way it exists is unbelievably subtle; it's like for our mind it does not exist. It exists but it's like it does not exist. That's the reality, but when the I appears back to us, it appears in the wrong way, as you have heard *many* times. It appears as real and we believe in that. That is this ignorance, the root of our samsara, this ignorance holding the I as real. The pig signifies that—the root of *our* samsara, not other people's samsara, our samsara. That is the true cause of suffering, all-arising, where all the delusions arise from.

One side of the wheel is black, one side is white, which depends on the motivation of the karma that is created out of that ignorance. With anger, the action becomes nonvirtue. With attachment, if it is attachment to this life, the action also becomes nonvirtue, the cause of the lower realms. If the mind is unstained by attachment to this life, but has attachment to future lives' samsara, although that is still the cause of samsara, it is not the cause of the lower realms. Because it is the cause of the upper realms, it is a virtuous action. It is Dharma, but still the cause of future lives' samsara.

So, there is the black side of the wheel, showing naked human beings having created negative karma, chained and being dragged down to the lower realms by yamas, being reborn in the lower realms. The white side signifies good karma, where the human beings are well-dressed, carrying prayer wheels or whatever methods to collect merit and do purification. These well-dressed beings are getting a higher rebirth in the deva or human realm or in a pure land.

Delusion and then karma—those two—are all-arising; they are the cause of samsara. The main suffering of the three lower realms is the suffering of pain: the suffering of rebirth, old age, sickness, death and so forth. Dissatisfaction, separating from desirable objects, meeting undesirable objects, never finding satisfaction no matter how many desirable objects we find, even millions, billions or zillions of dollars, what we expect would make the mind happier and happier, it doesn't happen; the mind becomes unbelievably dissatisfied. The suffering of pain, depression, all that—this is suffering of the three lower realms. Then, the suffering of change is the main suffering in the human and deva realm, the suras and asuras of the desire realm.

Although rarely shown, sometimes in the Wheel of Life drawing there are seventeen categories shown. These represent the seventeen categories of the form realm. Human beings, suras and asuras show the suffering of change with all the samsaric pleasures of food, music, sex and so forth. All these samsaric pleasures signify the other suffering, the suffering of change. I think the form realm also has the suffering of change. According to Geshe Sopa Rinpoche, there are four firm contemplations, *samten zhi*, attained by achieving *shamatha*. Through meditation, we get reborn there. In the form realm, there is seventeen levels, seventeen categories. There, there is suffering of change.

Now, after that, there is no drawing for the formless realm. There is no suffering of change there, only pervasive compounding suffering. Although formless, they still have mind, which is in the nature of suffering; they still have pervasive compounding suffering. So, they have suffering like the three lower realms and the upper realms of the desire realm, the human, sura and asura realm. Although they have no form they have mind, which is still not free from karma and delusions, still

under the control of karma and delusions. Their mind is pervaded by suffering, contaminated by the seed of karma and delusions. From the seed, delusion arises, suffering arises, the future lives' suffering arises. In the formless realm, although they do not have the suffering of pain or the suffering of change, they have pervasive compounding suffering, which means when their karma to be there finishes, they get reborn in the lower realms or as a human being, a sura or asura.

In the drawing of the Wheel of Life, the twelve drawings of the twelve dependent-related limbs show how we circle in samsara. We'll go through that tomorrow.

Yama, the Lord of Death, is drawn holding the Wheel of Life in its two hands. That shows that the whole the six realms' beings are under its control. The whole of the six realms' beings must suffer, with true suffering and the true cause of suffering. The two hands holding the Wheel of Life shows that.

Above the white circle, there is the Buddha, pointing out here, showing the cessation of suffering, how if we don't like suffering and want to be free of samsara, here is the true path. Sometimes the white one is done here. And there is the verse we have seen:

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.

This means we should attempt to renounce nonvirtue and attain the path to liberation by attaining the three higher trainings, as I explained to you when we talked about the secret of the mind. The path of lower capable being and middle capable being is refuge, protecting karma, guarding morality and attaining the three higher trainings to achieve liberation, first to achieve a higher rebirth [as a lower capable being], and then to achieve liberation [as a middle capable being]. Then there is bodhicitta and the six perfections that can take us to enlightenment.

We must attempt to attain the true path and renounce true suffering and the true cause of suffering, and enter the Buddhadharma, like an elephant stuck in the mud must struggle to get out. Just as the elephant is stuck in the mud, we samsaric beings are stuck in samsara. We have to know that being in samsara means living with suffering—the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering. When we experience problems in our daily life, we should be aware of that. Problems happen because we are in samsara. We do not see the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering, only the suffering of pain, and maybe not all of the suffering of pain, so that is to remind us that we are in samsara and we need to be free from samsara. Therefore, we need to listen, reflect, meditate and practice the lamrim, the path to enlightenment.

We are like the elephant stuck in mud. I saw a house, not a large one but one big enough for an elephant to freely go inside. The elephant went inside and then collapsed. I also heard that in the explanation. To destroy our Lord of Death, we must be heedful. What was the word you told me once? [*Student*: Conscientious.] If we are extremely conscientious, conscientiously engaging in the Vinaya, the Dharma, we can abandon samsara, the cycle of rebirth and death. We can abandon that, then that becomes the last suffering of samsara. Then we become free forever from samsara.

The Buddha told the monks to draw this. Please understand, if you are buying a Wheel of Life, most Wheels of Life don't have that, because the artist did not read what the Buddha said in the Kangyur. What is there is mostly the pure land, and sometimes not even the pure land. The pure land is not the main subject, the four noble truths is the main subject, what the Buddha taught in Sarnath to the five disciples. What the Buddha taught at Rajgir, the *Prajnaparamita* teachings, and the third turning of the wheel of Dharma, that is not there. With many thangkas from Nepal, the artists have not read or studied. Some teachers might draw a pure land, but not this, not the true path. Many artist-disciples follow that, sometimes there is not even a pure land, not only no true path but not even a pure land. Many times it is missing. For the four noble truths, they explain true suffering and the true cause of suffering, but how do we get rid of that, how do we make ourselves free from samsara? By following the true path we achieve the true cessation of suffering. But that is missing in most Wheels of Life.

Many times the Buddha's hand like this and the white thing representing the true cessation of suffering are missing. So, either you give the artist the correct order for them to draw or you get the wrong Wheel of Life. You have to know that.

OK, maybe I'll stop here.

[Students offer mandala]

It's very sad because most artists have never studied; they only copy what is taught. Then, if somebody wants to learn, it is not correct. Many thangkas you buy to take to the West are like that. You have to pay a lot of money, but sometimes it is difficult to explain that to the person. You need to instruct them how to draw it correctly. I tried to have the true path drawn well for the Wheel of Life for the nunnery.

Sometimes, with the Lord of Death there is a skeleton representing impermanence. I think His Holiness mentioned this. It's not like the skeleton often depicted; it's there to show impermanence. It is very, very important to be correct.

The Buddha said that there should be a monk at the monastery who can explain the Wheel of Life when people come. From there, we can understand why it is important there are monks and nuns, why there are monasteries; we can understand that from the details they explain. If they are explained correctly, we can understand on a deep level, not just like on a Hari Krishna trip!

We'll stop here. Tomorrow, we'll do the twelve links.

Dedications

"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, may bodhicitta, the ultimate good heart, where all happiness comes from including our enlightenment and that of all sentient beings, be generated in the hearts of all sentient beings: in the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals—the numberless fish, chickens and goats we eat..." When you come from Kathmandu, there is room a bit up, not in Kathmandu but more up. The goats are taken there. I think they feel unsafe because they all have these big eyes; they are not sure what is going to happen next. There are many goats in this room and they sense they are going to be killed, so they are all afraid. Can you imagine if they were human beings? Can you imagine how frightened they are? Because they are animals, they are going to be killed.

"May bodhicitta be generated in numberless ants, mosquitoes, in the tiniest flies, in all the insects under the ground, in the oceans, in the bushes—may bodhicitta be generated in all of them and in all human beings." There are numberless universes with numberless human beings, as well as suras and asuras. "May bodhicitta be generated in all of them. In those who have generated it, may it be developed. May bodhicitta be developed in all our hearts, in the hearts of all the students, of all of us here, in all our family members, those who are dead already and those still living."

Some family members are already in the lower realms. Can you imagine that? They are in the lower realms but if you met them you would not recognize them. They could be animals, goats or fish, or hell beings or hungry ghosts. You don't know. Even if you caught and ate them, you would not know.

"May bodhicitta be generated in us, including our family members."

I was told that for Thanksgiving Day in America, what is that big bird? Turkey. Sixty-five million are killed on Thanksgiving Day in America. How can America expect to be perfect, to have all the freedoms, all the comforts? How long can that last when sixty-five million turkeys are killed for one day?

We practiced purification for them. We did Vajrasattva, the *King of Prayers* and extensive bodhisattva prayers for them. I told the students to pray. But many of the turkeys were Americans [before]!

Because they killed turkeys before, they were reborn as turkeys. People just do not know that many were turkeys before. And the fish. The fishermen killing fish, they were fish before. We circle like that. Can you imagine? I told the students, especially in America, the practices they should do.

They kill more than in Nepal. I thought Nepal was the country killing so many animals, due to wrong religious beliefs, as sacrifices, but in America in one day they kill so much more. The country has to suffer one day. It's very scary. The only thing is to generate bodhicitta. I mentioned to them the various practices they can do, such as the *Vajrasattva Tsog Offering*, to dedicate for the turkeys.

[Rinpoche and students do dedications in Tibetan]

We are responsible to pray for the world: “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, may the wars happening now and in the future be stopped immediately. May famine, disease, the dangers of fire, water, air and earth be stopped immediately. May the global problems stop immediately. May perfect peace and happiness prevail in everyone’s hearts, by generating loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta. May the Buddhadharma—where beings receive future lives’ happiness and peace from—last a long time. May all beings meet the Buddhadharma and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“May we be able to cherish every single sentient beings more than the sky filled with wish-granting jewels.

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

Thank you very much.

Lecture 10: December 15



Happiness and Suffering Are in Our Hands

[Rinpoche and students do motivation prayers in Tibetan]

The bodhisattva Thogme Zangpo said,

All suffering comes from the wish for your own happiness.
Perfect buddhas are born from the thought to help others.
Therefore exchange your own happiness
For the suffering of others—
This is the practice of bodhisattvas. [\[24\]](#)

All suffering comes from desiring happiness for ourselves. Deep down it is that. I don't know what the psychologists would say, but deep down this is where all our life problems come from. I didn't get to learn psychology, so I don't know whether they would agree. Maybe they would say all our problems come from the people we dislike, the people we want to spit at! I don't know what they would say.

The real psychology is what Thogme Zangpo says here. Deep down, all suffering comes from desiring happiness for ourselves. Of course, there is the happiness of this life, the happiness of this hour, of today or tomorrow; there is next life's happiness, future lives' happiness, which are all temporary. Then, there is liberation from samsara, nirvana, ultimate happiness, the blissful state of peace for ourselves. Then, there is peerless happiness, total cessation of obscurations, even the subtle ones, and the completion of all the realizations, *sang gye*, peerless happiness. The highest happiness that we should wish for, what we should achieve and what all sentient beings should achieve. That is peerless happiness, that is *sang gye*, the total cessation of obscurations and completion of realizations. That one is buddhahood. "Buddha" is Sanskrit. That is the highest, peerless happiness, a happiness that is forever, not just for one hour or one day and then we go back to samsara. It's not like that. It is forever.

Then, Thogme Zampo says, “Perfect Buddhas are born from the thought to help others.” I’ll give you an example. I saw on TV quite some time ago, there was a young man, maybe from England. He spoke about depression. He had been depressed for twenty-five years, a long time. He suffered so much from depression. Finally he found out from his experience that his cure was thinking of others, cherishing others, not himself. Thinking about others’ happiness, cherishing others, caring for others, *that* was what made him better. That was his experience, how he got better from depression. You must know this. Write it down.

If we rely on a psychologist, a psychiatrist, our life finishes and there is no recovery. Nothing. It’s in our hands. We are the doctor. If we know how to think, we are the doctor. You have to know that. We are the best doctor, the best guide. I think the most important thing is that in our everyday life, if we think properly, correctly, we have happiness. Right there, we have happiness! We do not have to go around the world to look for happiness. If we think correctly, happiness is *there*. Wherever we are, in the office, where we are sitting, happiness is there.

Otherwise if we think in the wrong way, we go around the world a hundred thousand times, but we are unable to find happiness. We go to the sun. We go to the moon. We go to the sun and the moon and have a snack on the way down, maybe durian and ice cream. Durian? I had some dried durian after lunch. Khen Rinpoche gave it to me.

I’m saying to have a snack when we come down from the moon and the sun, before landing on the earth. If we make our mind one of attachment, that functions to obscure our ability to see reality: both conventional reality, such as impermanence, and ultimate reality, emptiness. On that basis, all delusions arise, including attachment, the incredibly painful mind where it is difficult to separate from the object, to be free from the object of attachment. That is the nature of attachment.

When we are under the control of anger, pride and the many delusions, there is no happiness. The mind under the control of attachment is painful by nature; it is difficult to separate it from the object. The mind is so painful, kind of stuck, like oil soaks into paper. That is one major suffering we have.

It is all in our hands; it is up to us. After we learn the lamrim, if we want to think in a positive, healthy way, with non-anger, non-attachment, non-ignorance, if we want a virtuous, positive mind, the result will only be happiness, not only happiness today but liberation from samsara and highest enlightenment. If, on the other hand, all we want is to be under the control of delusions such as anger and attachment, if we allow our mind to follow the delusions, then we cause ourselves suffering. Nobody makes us. We make suffering for ourselves; we are the creator of our own suffering. We are the one who creates the problems.

When we meditate and study the lamrim, we come to understand that we are the creator of our problems and happiness. We are the creator of our hell; we are the creator of our enlightenment. We are the creator of our samsara; we are the creator of our nirvana. What we do with our mind is in our hands. When we are suffering, it is like we have no freedom. For our whole life we scream in pain. Even though we are creator of all our happiness, we do not know that; we have no idea.

Without knowing the Dharma, we have no understanding. We have no idea that we are the creator of all happiness up to enlightenment. So, if we do not know the Dharma, that is the problem. We do not know the meaning of life.

Almost every day, there are so many people in the world who commit suicide because they do not know the meaning of life, as I mentioned before. They are suffering so much. They do not have the karma to meet somebody to explain it to them, and even if somebody did, they would not believe it; they would get angry and run away.

So, it is totally in our hands. In our everyday life, happiness or problems are in our hands. It all depends on how we think. Our next life in the lower realms or the higher realms is in our hands; our samsara and nirvana are in our hands, enlightenment and hell are in our hands. We are the creator.

The Twelve Deeds of the Buddha

When we are sick, we need to find a wise doctor. If we find an ignorant doctor who gives the wrong diagnosis and the wrong medicine, [we can never be cured]. We have to find a wise doctor! A wise doctor who knows exactly the disease we have and the right medicine we need to take. But if we have all the information, all the medicine, but we don't take it, we will not recover. We have to take the medicine. Similarly, the Buddha, the Omniscient One, compassionately embraces every sentient being, no matter how tiny they are. The Omniscient One gave teachings and showed us the path. As Geshe Sopa said, he descended in the world and showed the twelve holy deeds so we sentient beings could learn the Dharma. To show why we need to practice the Dharma, he showed suffering.

The Buddha descended from Tushita, entered the womb of his mother and was born. As a child, he was like an ordinary person. When he was young, he was very competitive. As a young man, he married as his father wanted. Then, after the wedding, after he saw the suffering of old age, sickness and death, he ran away at night to practice the Dharma. Near the great river Naranjana, he cut his own hair and lived an ascetic life for six years. There is place in Bodhgaya where the Buddha lived his ascetic life. Then at Bodhgaya, he knew at dawn the next day he would become enlightened.

That evening, ten million maras attacked the Buddha, throwing every kind of weapon at him, but everything became flowers to the Buddha, falling down, giving no harm at all. The Buddha did not move; he just continuously meditated. Without moving at all, he subdued the ten million maras with loving kindness.

That is a great teaching for us. Not getting angry, not fighting back. What ordinary worldly people do is act like a tiger, like all animals. When somebody attacks them, they attack back. That is nothing special. The Buddha did not move, and he subdued all the attacking maras with loving kindness. Even when they attacked with all the bullets of Mount Meru, trying to harm the Buddha, or manifesting as old ladies in the front showing their sex to disturb the Buddha, they could not destroy the Buddha's concentration for even a second. Then, they manifested as young ladies showing their sex, trying to harm the Buddha, trying to distract him, but they could not.

Generating loving kindness for other sentient beings is the best protection, protecting us from harm from human beings and nonhuman beings. The Buddha showed us what we can do with our life, with our mind. Before, the Buddha was an ordinary being like us, with all the same problems, but he was able to change his mind into cherishing other sentient beings who are numberless, letting go of the I. Before, like us, he cherished the I and renounced others, which brought all the suffering and all the problems. But the Buddha was able to change. And not only the Buddha, there have been numberless sentient beings were able to do that and who have already become enlightened.

So, we are late! We are still not free from samsara even though numberless others have become enlightened by changing their minds to the thought to benefit others instead of cherishing the I. They benefit others, having let go of the I. Before, for beginningless rebirths, rather than cherishing others they cherished themselves instead, which only brought suffering. They might have had some happiness, but it was only samsaric happiness, which is in the nature of suffering, which is the suffering of change, which has come from pervasive compounding suffering.

Shakyamuni Buddha performed the twelve deeds, becoming enlightened in Bodhgaya in India. According to the Lesser Vehicle followers, it was the first time, but for the Mahayana, the Buddha was enlightened so many eons ago, and performing the twelve deeds was an act to teach us sentient beings. While the Buddha was taking birth here, in another universe he was enlightened. While the Buddha got enlightened here, in other universes he was doing different deeds at the same time. According to the Mahayana, the Buddha got enlightened many eons ago and this was to teach sentient beings about suffering and where the suffering comes from, the cause. And to teach us how we do not have to suffer, how we can eliminate it. And that there is a path we can take to achieve the cessation of suffering. He showed that by teaching the twelve links, showing us that even with this mind we have now, we can achieve enlightenment.

The mind has such incredible potential. He showed that. We do not have to always be depressed. He showed us why it is important to practice the Dharma, how to practice Dharma, all that through the twelve deeds. Our mind has buddha nature, buddha potential. He showed us this, clearly showing us how we can achieve enlightenment. To show that, he showed the twelve deeds.

Enlightenment Is in Our Hands

Maybe I mentioned, I'm not sure of the exact words, but even though Milarepa had killed thirty-six people and many horses through black magic in his early life, in his later life, when Marpa became his guru, Marpa made him build a nine-story tower alone [and made him do it three times]. Milarepa followed the advice of his guru. For many years, Marpa gave him no teachings, only scolding and beating him, purifying all his negative karma. Marpa was an enlightened being, not an ordinary being. He then manifested as the deity in the mandala and gave Milarepa an initiation. So, Milarepa became enlightened in that life. He achieved enlightenment in the brief lifetime of degenerate times. There are many others, but he is one who is famed in the world. There are many others who achieved enlightenment in one brief lifetime of degenerate times, like Gyalwa Ensapa or Chokyi Dorje. In their earlier life, they created much negative karma, but later they became enlightened. You have to know that.

If we work with our mind, we can become enlightened in the same life. We do not have to wait. We have not killed that many human beings. Many of us have not even killed one human being! So, you see? Milarepa killed dozens as well as the many animals. Many of us have not even killed one human being! You should know that. The purpose of reading Milarepa's life story is for us to get courage, not to become depressed. It is so we use our mind to achieve enlightenment. We do not just pray to God and decide God will do it for us, that we don't have to do anything. It's not like that. Many people in the world who believe in gods or buddhas, think their life is totally in the hands of God or it is totally in the hands of the Buddha, and they cannot do anything.

There's a family in Malaysia I stayed with once or twice before the center in Malaysia started. Tony Wong has a business printing books. His wife was Christian but he has a very strong connection with Kuan Yin, the female Chenrezig. His wife told him if he won the lottery, he was allowed to become a Buddhist, so he bought a ticket and he won the lottery. He became a Buddhist. Even before he had a connection with Kuan Yin, when you entered his office, you saw that on his side he had many friends who were incarnate Kagyü and Nyingma lamas. There were many statues of buddhas. On his wife's side, there was Sai Baba and Jesus Christ on an altar.

Before the center happened in Malaysia, he invited me to go there a couple of times, organizing where to stay, what to do, everything. I had to go to his office on Saturday or Friday, when there were many sick people there. He chanted the long Chenrezig mantra for many hours. Many sick people went, women, men; something possessed them. The sick people did mudras. The office was full; there were even people sitting on the steps. He had a special connection with Kuan Yin, so at nine o'clock he went alone to get a prediction from Kuan Yin. There were jars of water left on the altar, with a picture of Kuan Yin.

He recited the longest Chenrezig mantra, but maybe there is one word in Sanskrit. I don't know, but maybe he had done retreat. He asked Situ Rinpoche about this mantra that they recite, and Situ Rinpoche didn't know, so he asked me. I said I would check.

Much later in London, Venerable Sarah, who was at the London center, gave me *Mani Kumbum* composed by Songtsen Gampo, the king of Tibet. I didn't read the whole thing, but some. I saw the longest mantra there, which I asked Geshe Jampa Tegchok about. He was the abbot of Nalanda in France. He was also a teacher in Sarnath, where there was a Tibetan university. I gave it to him to translate into Tibetan, so he did, translating the meaning. Some he did not translate, saying it is secret, but he translated most of it. I got that many years ago.

Anyway, Tony has cured many patients. One day a man went there, supported by his wife and friend. Tony gave him water to drink. Then, the next day he returned alone without support. There are so many stories of people being cured.

The first time I went to Malaysia, he drove me to a place near Singapore, where there was a Kagyü center. The car was driven by one of Lama Yeshe's students. Tony Wong came with me and he started to explain how many people had recovered. He started explaining in Kuala Lumpur and still hadn't finished when we reached Johor Bahru, [a city just before the Singapore border]. He put me in a wealthy family's place. What normally happened was when a lama went there, Tony Wong or somebody took them to some friends or the family, they saw the lama and got some initiations. My feeling is they had little interest in teachings with logic, more in initiations and blessings. I think that had happened many times.

What happened, one day their son suddenly died. The father threw the statues given by lamas on the floor, saying, "The Buddha didn't help." He complained that the Buddha didn't help him. He thought everything was in the Buddha's hands, like everything was in the hands of God. He said the Buddha didn't help and he threw all the statues on the floor, breaking them. There is this danger if you do not learn the Buddha's teachings and understand the logic; you believe the Buddha will do everything or God will do everything.

I'm sure there are many people like this, thinking that either God or the Buddha will do everything. That is because they do not know karma. That meditation you went through a long time ago, the graduated path of a lower capable being, the graduated path of a middle capable being and the graduated path of a higher capable being, you went through that. John led. Then, you went through lower realms, karma, refuge, right? That family did not think about karma; they did not know about karma, how our positive actions result in happiness and our negative actions result in suffering. Not knowing that, they were totally ignorant. They thought it was the Buddha's fault, that he did not help.

Unless we learn the teachings well, if we just follow other people, going for initiations when there are lamas but not really learning, it is like that. Because we do not know karma, nothing helps. If we think of karma, it is like that. It's like getting a prescription from a doctor, and [buying] the medicine but not taking it. We have to take the medicine, otherwise whether the doctor makes the correct diagnosis or not, whether they give us the correct medicine, it cannot help. We could carry a huge suitcase of medicine around but never take any, so it cannot help. We are the ones who have to take the medicine. We are responsible. Do you understand? You have to know that well—in your brain, in your heart. We have the responsibility.

Otherwise, God or the Buddha, it's exactly the same! The Buddha explained the whole path to enlightenment in the Kangyur, and then all the Nalanda pandits, the Buddha's followers, made detailed commentaries on his teachings in more than two hundred volumes. If we take it, the disease gets cured. By taking the medicine the doctor gives us, the disease is cured. That is how the doctor helps us. We have to understand that. In the same way, by practicing the teachings the Buddha gave us to subdue our mind, we are cured of the cause of suffering, the delusions, and we cease creating karma.

First of all, the teachings are there; there are already teachings. The Buddha left them in the world and by practicing what the Buddha taught, we are able to free ourselves from the cause of suffering. So, the Buddha is helping us achieve not only liberation from samsara but enlightenment. Yes, we need to rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, but most importantly it is in our hands. It is up to us. It's the same as either taking the medicine or just collecting it. Whether we practice the teachings or not means we either purify our negative karma or not, we free ourselves from suffering or not. If we practice the teachings, we will achieve all this—ultimate happiness up to enlightenment. It is in our hands! It is up to us. We have to know that.

I think the main thing we have to understand is that we ourselves are the main creator of our happiness and our suffering. That is the main guidance the Buddha has given us. That is why he gave teachings, why he left his teachings in this world. We need to practice them; we need to actualize them. When we practice them, the Buddha is guiding us. I think the main thing is that it is in our hands. That is what I think.

If we follow the wrong doctor, the one who gives the wrong diagnosis and the wrong medicine, then a wise doctor cannot help us. If we fail to follow the Buddha but follow a wrong founder who shows us the wrong path, the Buddha cannot guide us because we are not following the Buddha. If we follow the wrong founder who shows us the wrong path, we will be misled, life to life, for hundreds and millions of lifetimes, causing us to suffer in samsara, in the lower realms.

So, you can see here, it is mainly what we do with our mind. If we follow the right guide, the right friend, the right founder, we have every happiness up to enlightenment. If we follow the wrong guide, the wrong friend, the wrong founder, we are misled into creating so much suffering in this life, and from life to life, including the lower realms. Everything depends on us. Our happiness, our suffering, everything up to enlightenment depends on us. We have the responsibility. So, we have to be careful.

OK. That's my emphasis. I'm telling you that you are the main one. Through your judgment, your way of thinking about your life, it is all in your hands. Your happiness, your suffering, is up to you. You have to know that.

This is another subject, sorry. The bodhisattva Thogme Zangpo said that "Perfect buddhas are born from the thought to help others... This is the practice of bodhisattvas." We have to listen to teachings to be of benefit to every sentient being, all the numberless sentient beings in each realm. We have to listen with a bodhicitta motivation. Even to achieve nirvana, the blissful state of peace, is not enough. We must achieve full enlightenment in order to free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment "by myself *alone*." That means the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless human beings, the numberless sura beings, the numberless asura beings, the numberless intermediate state beings—everyone. Because we must bring them all to enlightenment, we are going to listen to the teachings.

How the Wheel of Life Came into Existence

I should at least finish this.

According to the story mentioned in the text *Lung Tentsig*, the Buddha lived at Shravasti in India for twenty-five years. He lived for four or five years in another place, but he was in the area of Shravasti for twenty-five years. Kyabje Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche, one of my gurus and one I received many initiations and teachings from, met His Holiness in Shravasti to receive teachings on the *Foundation of All Good Qualities*. Rinpoche praised the place a lot. After many years, I didn't get to go there, so I sent an Italian student, Stefano, who I think was a monk at the time, to check the place. He said it was a very holy place. When you meditate there, the meditation just comes without effort. In other places, you have to put in a lot of effort, but there it just comes easily.

Sometime later I arrived there with some students and we did prayers there. There was only a Chinese temple, with Indian workers taking care of the place. They asked me to build a monastery there. That is the only place where Indian workers asked me to build a monastery. It's very interesting. I was going to build seven rooms for students to do meditation there, but you always have to look for students to run a center. In Tushita Dharamsala and Root Institute in Bodhgaya, and in many places, you always have to find students to run the center and it is difficult. It has to be beneficial. Because of the difficulties there, I cancelled building the rooms in Shravasti.

The text *Lung Tentsig* says that when the Buddha was abiding in Shravasti, he thought it might be beneficial, for Gume Tsechin, the head of the family there, to build a park for the four directions'

Sangha. The temple did not have drawings on the outside, outside the door, and it appeared ugly. This was explained to the Buddha, so the Buddha instructed them what to draw outside the door. The Buddha himself showed them the path, the Wheel of Life, and the five realms of the transmigratory beings, and around the wall of the temple, the Buddha's life story. The Buddha explained it clearly.

While the Buddha was still alive and abiding in the outlying country Dadrog, that country's king, Oddiyana, offered to the king, Tsulshin Nyingpo, priceless armor. It was offered as a present but King Tsulshin Nyingpo could not find an equally priceless present to give back to King Oddiyana. He discussed it with his ministers, who told him to ask the Buddha. They thought drawing the Buddha's holy body and sending it to Oddiyana might be good. The king requested the Buddha and the Buddha gave his permission but the artist could not draw the Buddha's holy body because it was too magnificent. So, the Buddha sent the shadow of the holy body on white cloth, and the artist drew it by copying that. The Buddha said to fill it up with various colors. After finishing the Buddha's holy body, the Buddha said to place underneath it taking refuge—the basis of the higher trainings—the precepts, and the twelve dependent-related limbs drawn around, with the evolution forward and backward. Then, on the Wheel of Life, to put the verse I translated yesterday that shows the true path. The Buddha explained this.

So King Tsulshin Nyingpo sent this to the king of the outlying country. The minute he heard the Buddha's name and the minute he saw the drawing of the Buddha's holy body, just by seeing that he got unimaginable devotion, and he went for refuge to the Buddha. Then, he meditated on the twelve dependent-related limbs, forward and backwards, and he directly realized emptiness! He became an arhat; he achieved that result. The details are explained in the text *Dulwa Lunamche*. As soon as he heard the Buddha's name and saw the drawing of the Buddha, he got unbelievable devotion. And then he realized emptiness directly and, through that, achieved nirvana, arhatship.

That shows us how having the Wheel of Life is of unbelievable benefit. It is the sublime method to liberate sentient beings from the suffering of samsara. It shows the four noble truths, the twelve dependent-related limbs and, through this, how sentient beings circle in the wheel, how they are involved in samsara and also how to become free from samsara. The Wheel of Life shows this. The Buddha explained how to draw this and, through this, the various methods are revealed.

Following that, almost all the temples have some form of the Wheel of Life outside. At the Kopan nunnery there is one that is more correct. Even in the outlying countries in the center of Tibet, everywhere, almost all the temples have this drawing of the Wheel of Life outside the door, at the entranceway of the temple, just as the Buddha advised. Geshe Sopa said that although there are maybe no Tibetan monasteries in countries like Sri Lanka and Burma, they still have the Wheel of Life drawn outside, although there are some differences. As I mentioned yesterday, in Tibet some of the drawings of the Wheel of Life are correct and some are not. Some don't have pure references, so they are not correct.

If you are going to draw it correctly, according to the Buddha's instructions, in the center there are attachment in the form of a pigeon, anger in the form of a snake, ignorance in the form of a pig. Then, the pig is eating the pigeon and snake's tails. You have to draw it like that. That shows that attachment and anger come from ignorance, that they are under the control of ignorance. Geshe Sopa said that in other drawings the bird is drawn as what? [*Ven. Ailsa*: A rooster.] Geshe Sopa said that it is usually drawn like that, with the tails of the snake and rooster in the pig's mouth, but in the root *Vinaya* text and its commentary, the Buddha explained it is not like that, as I told you already yesterday. In the root text, in the center there are attachment, anger, ignorance, the pigeon, snake and pig, in those forms, with the other two being eaten by ignorance, the pig. That is what the text says.

[Tea offering]

The Numberless Buddhas Can See Our Mind

As I described, because buddhas have purified all the subtle obscurations, a buddha's holy body has no resistance; it covers all existence. The way a buddha directly sees all existence is not with binoculars! When we use binoculars, we can see far, but it is not like that. A buddha sees all past, present and future phenomena directly, because the buddha's holy mind pervades all existence; it covers all existence. Not by looking from far away with binoculars. A buddha's holy body and holy mind has no resistance.

We have not actualized the path; we have not actualized any path to enlightenment. Nothing. So life is a very dark space, with no sun or moon, no stars. It is totally dark, clouded, foggy. Our mind is so obscured like that. Our body and mind have *so* much resistance but a buddha's holy body and holy mind has no resistance. A buddha is able to see directly the numberless sentient beings of the past, present and future: every mosquito, every ant, every tiny fly. A buddha is able to see them directly, individually, without mixing. A buddha can see the minds of the numberless sentient beings without mixing. A buddha directly sees what we need, directly sees our sufferings, our problems, our mistakes.

If our life were totally in the hands of the buddhas, because the buddhas do not want us sentient beings to suffer for even a second, [we would not suffer]. With their great compassion embracing all sentient beings, they have the power to guide us, to reveal the methods to bring us from happiness to happiness, up to enlightenment. But you see, as I said before, our suffering or happiness is totally dependent on what we do with our mind. It totally depends on that.

When we have not met the Buddhadharma, when we do not follow what the Buddha taught, we only have our own ignorance to follow. We only follow our ignorance, our attachment, our anger. We only follow our mistakes. Then, what we experience, the result, is only suffering—suffering now and suffering in the future.

So you see, it is in our hands. It is up to us. Everything is up to us, as I said before. The buddhas cannot do it for us. Like the example I gave before. When we follow the wrong founder, the wrong guide, the wrong friend, the wrong advice, we will never become free from suffering. Constantly, from life to life, for hundreds and millions of lives, we suffer. But by following the Buddha, the right founder, the right guide, we are able to develop our mind and go from happiness to happiness up to enlightenment.

Following our ignorance, our self-cherishing thought, is like following the wrong guide, the wrong friend. That is why we have been suffering from beginningless rebirths up to now. We have been suffering endlessly in samsara.

What I'm saying now is that the numberless buddhas know what we are thinking. If we are praying, the numberless buddhas can see that. Numberless buddhas can see our mind; they know what we are asking for, what we are praying for. When we follow our self-cherishing thought, our ignorance, anger and attachment, we suffer in samsara.

The conclusion is this. For those who believe in God as the creator, the God they believe in should have compassion for all sentient beings. That means that God wishes all sentient beings to be free from suffering, to have happiness. Therefore, for people who believe in God, the first thing is to think of sentient beings and not to harm them, but to cherish them, to bring them happiness. That is the first thing.

The second thing is to pray to God. The first thing is *not* to pray to God but to not harm sentient beings and to benefit them. That makes the best offering to God. That is what pleases God the most. That is what pleases the buddhas and bodhisattvas the most, to stop giving harm to sentient beings, and on the basis of that, to causing happiness to others.

If we can do that, we will not receive harm from others. Because we stop giving others harm, we will not receive harm. Because we cause others to have happiness, that is the cause for us to receive

happiness. If we do not harm others and cause them happiness, our work to be free from suffering and achieve happiness happens naturally, by the way. Working for others, causing others to have happiness, that is what makes the buddhas and bodhisattvas happy, that is what pleases them the most.

There are so many people who believe in God the creator. If possible, for them the first thing should not be God but sentient beings, to stop giving them harm. Then, praying to God is the second thing. Then, the world would have no war; there would be so much peace and happiness everywhere. Not only for human beings, even animals would not suffer or be killed.

Every day millions and trillions of chickens and fish are killed by human beings. I don't know how many. Not only thinking of human beings but animals, how many hotels in the world, how many hotels in one city, kill billions, zillions, trillions of chickens and fish every day to be eaten by human beings. So, besides human beings, [if people stopped harming,] even the animals would get so much peace and happiness.

This is the education that there should be in the world. For those who believe in God, praying should be the second thing, not the first; the first should be sentient beings. And then, by the way, every happiness is achieved and every suffering is eliminated. That happens by the way. Otherwise, like what happens in the world, you might talk about "God, God, God," but cheat and kill other sentient beings. You cheat and kill those you get all your happiness from. Do you understand?

The Elements of the Wheel of Life

As I also mentioned, the Wheel of Life shows how sentient beings go higher and lower in their lives, like being tied to a bucket at a well that is dropped down to pick up water and then raised, going up and down, around and around, again and again and again. Like that, sentient beings go around, circling in rebirth after rebirth, being born and dying, again and again and again. The Wheel of Life is drawn like that, with one side white, to show the human rebirth and the human intermediate state stretched out like white woolen cloth, and the intermediate state of the deva, yellow color, facing upward. Then the left side shows the intermediate state of the lower realms, black with the beings going down.

The white path signifies the virtuous path, the path of the happy transmigratory beings. The black path shows the path to the lower realms, the nonvirtuous path of the suffering transmigratory beings. The central hub signifies the three poisonous minds and right and left panels show the virtuous and nonvirtuous paths.

Then, within the four noble truths, the Wheel shows the cause of the suffering, the all-arising truth, with the delusions in the center and karma around. That shows the result, true suffering. Sentient beings, motivated by the cause, delusion, and having the three poisonous minds, create the various actions, virtuous and nonvirtuous, because they're under the control of those two, karma and delusions. Then, the result is to be reborn in the six realms and constantly experience suffering, tormented with the three sufferings.

The realms in the Wheel of Life are drawn as five, instead of the sura and asura realms shown separately. As I described yesterday, the three lower realms down below signify mainly the suffering of pain, then human beings and the desire realm devas, asuras, show the suffering of change. The form realm is drawn but the formless realm is not. Here it says the form realm devas show the suffering of pervasive compounding phenomena. Geshe-la said in the form realm there is also the suffering of change, but I think in the formless realm there is only pervasive compounding suffering.

Nagarjuna said,

If you have the grasping at the I, karma is motivated.

From the karma comes rebirth.

From those three paths—I-grasping, karma and rebirth,

There is no beginning and no end. [25]

When we swirl a stick of burning incense around, it makes a circle in the air that seems continuous. Like that, we circle from life to life, with no beginning and no end, unceasingly, always circling. Delusion creates action; action creates delusion; action, delusion, action, delusion, circling without beginning and without end, circling through the twelve dependent-related limbs.

That is the forward evolution but the twelve links can be shown backwards. There are different ways of drawing the twelve dependent-related limbs, but Geshe-la says the main reference comes from *Kadam Pachu*, a text that Atisha taught to Dromtönpa.

He explained it like this. Ignorance is depicted as an old blind mother. Compounding action is depicted as a clay maker [a potter]. A clay maker produces many different pots, big and small, and compounding actions are like that. Consciousness is depicted as a monkey; name and form as a boat; the six sense bases are depicted as an empty house that usually has six windows and no people inside, nobody looking out. Contact is depicted as two people kissing; feeling as a man with an arrow stuck in his eye; craving is depicted as drinking wine; grasping as taking a fruit. Becoming is depicted as a pregnant woman; birth as the child being born. As I think I told you, in certain countries, like Tibet, China or India, they use the son. Old age and death is depicted as people carrying a dead body.

From the sutra, it says that all the six realms are held by impermanence. As I mentioned, the Lord of Death, impermanence, holds the whole wheel in its mouth, depicting they are all in the nature of impermanence, under the control of impermanence and death. The cannibal is impermanence and death. The cannibal is drawn here in the form of Yama, the Lord of Death, in a terrifying aspect.

As it is explained in the sutra, wherever we are in the six realms, there is no place we are not harmed by death; there is no place we do not die. Wherever we are, we are not free from the mouth of the Lord of Death.

The two folds of this *dongka*, [Rinpoche points to his *dongka*, the shirt] signify the fangs of the Lord of Death; they are to remind us that we are in the mouth, that we are not free, that we are in samsara. They are to show us that we are in the mouth of Lord of Death, in the nature of impermanence, inside the fangs. This is to remember impermanence and death all the time. We are already inside the fangs, so death can happen at any time. [Rinpoche makes a crushing gesture] Death can happen at any time, so this is to always be aware of impermanence and death. That is the significance.

The Twelve Links

So, just some details. An old, blind lady who wishes to go to a happy place and have clean food and drink, because she is old and blind, cannot reach that place. Because she is old and blind, she stumbles into undesirable places with rocks and precipices or ponds or the ocean that she can fall into, causing her to experience so much suffering. Because she is blind, she cannot recognize what food is clean, so she eats old, rotten food, poisonous food, which harms her. Because she is blind, she cannot recognize it and she has to experience so much pain.

That is the example. The meaning is that due to ignorance, being under the control of ignorance, we cannot understand the profound ultimate reality, emptiness, the meaning of no self. That is the meaning. Being under the control of this ignorance, we cannot achieve wisdom because we do not know the method. We cannot achieve a higher rebirth as a deva and human being; we cannot achieve definite goodness, the happiness of liberation free from karma and delusions. Unable to achieve definite goodness, we fall down in the precipice of the lower realms, the evil-gone realms, we fall down in the ocean of samsara. Then, we have to experience so much suffering, all kinds of sufferings. That is the meaning.

The Nalanda *umdze*, the chant master, who studied from Geshe Jampa Tegchok and Geshe Jampa Gyatso and all the learned teachers, met an Italian girl who wanted him so much to be her husband. He disrobed. He was planning to be with her for twenty years then to become a monk again. That was his idea. But of course, there is no way that could happen once he became involved.

Now this is the end of the course. I'm sure by now you all have clairvoyance. Probably, you are all omniscient!

Falling in the mud is a good example of [being in samsara]. When we do, it is very difficult to get up. We are attached to samsara, therefore our whole life is spent destroying our enemies and looking after our friends, causing us so much suffering. Like that, it goes on and on. By depending on ignorance, we wander in samsara and experience all the various sufferings.

The second link of the twelve dependent-related limbs, karmic formation, *duje kyi lä*, is motivated by ignorance, the first link, which causes us to circle in samsara without freedom. The various karmas, the good karma and bad karma we create with our body, speech and mind, is signified in the Wheel of Life by the clay maker [the potter], who makes all kinds of pots, big and small, good and bad. Like that, compounding actions lead to the results: the samsaric realm we are in with this body, our possessions and so forth.

The third link is consciousness. What is that consciousness? Consciousness is the mind that goes from life to life. Sometimes you ask the question about what goes from life to life. It is the contaminated consciousness that holds the power of karma to be reborn in samsara again. That is consciousness, the third link. In the Wheel of Life it is signified by a monkey jumping from one tree to another.

The fourth link is the name and form. Of the five aggregates, feeling, cognition, compounding action and consciousness, these four are “name.” “Form” refers to the physical part. The example is passengers who get on a boat and are taken from this side to the other side. Consciousness is like the boat going from this life to the next. Consciousness is conceived on the parents’ sperm and egg, and our body is like a boat that temporarily carries our consciousness, the traveler, from here. When we leave this life, the consciousness goes to the next life. The body and the consciousness are not together forever; it is just for a short time, like the traveler being taken across the river in the boat.

The Seventh Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Kelzang Gyatso,

After you are born, you have no choice for even a second.

You are always running toward the Lord of Death.

We say, “I’m alive, I’m alive,” but actually we are always running toward the place where we are going to die, where there is danger to die. In *Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*, the bodhisattva Thogme Zangpo said,

Loved ones who have long kept company will part.

Wealth created with difficulty will be left behind.

Consciousness, the guest, will leave the guesthouse of the body.

Let go of this life—

This is the practice of bodhisattvas. [26]

Death can happen at any time.

The fifth link is the six sense bases, *kechig drug*. This is shown by a house where no one is staying. The six sense bases are actualized already but the guest, the senses, have not happened yet. The guests—the eye sense, the ear sense and so forth, have not yet happened. The sense bases have happened but the senses have not yet happened, so this is called “the six sense bases.”

The sixth link is contact. Contact is signified in the Wheel of Life by a man and woman kissing. When they kiss, their lips touch, just that. There is no immediate great feeling. Great feeling only

arises gradually. From there, pleasure arises. Like that, contact with the object, the sense bases and consciousness—all three meet, and gradually from that feeling arises.

Feeling, the seventh link, is signified in the Wheel of Life by a man who has been hit in the eye by an arrow. That is feeling. When an arrow goes in our eye, there is so much pain that we cannot see other people or other objects; all we are aware of is pain. So, to express feeling that example is drawn.

Sorry, I didn't get to write anything after that. I don't know what happened. I think I lost the text.

Then there is craving and grasping, the eighth and ninth links. For craving, there is the drawing of a man and woman relaxed and drinking wine. That signifies craving, attachment. Grasping is stronger than that. When craving gets stronger, it is called grasping. Grasping is signified by a monkey taking fruit from a tree. Like in the shop, when we go shopping, we first want that thing—there is craving—and then our hands reach out to get it—grasping. When craving gets stronger, when we go to get what we want, that is grasping, which is signified by a monkey taking fruit from a tree.

The tenth link is becoming, signified by a pregnant woman with a big belly. Motivated by ignorance, karmic formation leaves the potential, the imprint, on the consciousness, and now craving and grasping made it stronger, ready to ripen. That is signified by the woman with a big stomach, pregnant and about to give birth. What did you say yesterday? I said “procrastinate.” [*Ven. Sarah: Propagate.*] Propagate. Do you think that is correct? [*Student: Procreate?*] Procreate. Yeah, like that, becoming, about to give birth.

The karmic imprint left on the consciousness by ignorance is now made stronger by craving and grasping.

The next link is birth. The drawing shows the baby getting born from the mother. This shows the next life, the next rebirth.

Then, the last link is old age and death. Those two things are put together. Then, from that there are many sufferings. Old age is not the only one. Fighting and—I don't know—we can count depression and so many sufferings in that.

But if it is a *gelong*, a bhikshu, who is living purely in vows, there is so much happiness. There is no fear of death. There is so much happiness. That is the essence.

Nagarjuna in *Heart of Dependent Arising* said,

The first, eighth, and ninth are delusions,

The second and tenth are karma.

The remaining seven are sufferings. [\[27\]](#)

We start with three delusions and the two karmas, the two actions. While we are experiencing the seven results, the seven types of suffering, every day, with ignorance we believe the real I is true. So, ignorance, the root of samsara, means we start the twelve links every day, every hour, every second. It is endless. So many sets of twelve links are started but not finished—every day, every hour, every minute, every second. So much has been started with ignorance; there is so much to be experienced in the six realms, meaning we must suffer in all the oceans of samsaric sufferings of each realm: the oceans of suffering of the hell realm, the oceans of suffering of the hungry ghost realm, the oceans of suffering of the animal realm, the oceans of suffering of the human realm, [the oceans of suffering of the sura and asura realms]. We have already started the twelve links [for each of these] every day, every hour, every minute. It's kind of endless. We have to meditate like that, looking at how we are caught in samsara, how we are suffering in samsara, looking at the numberless twelve links we have started and not finished.

If we want to be free from samsara, we must practice Dharma every day, every hour, every minute, every second. The conclusion comes to that. We need renunciation, bodhicitta and right view to be

free from samsara. We need to meditate, as I explained, looking at the hallucination as a hallucination. We need that meditation to become our life. We also need awareness of the merely labeled I, the merely labeled action, the merely labeled road, the merely labeled action of eating, the merely labeled food, all that. When we can think like that, we then know everything is empty. We need to at least do that, even if we cannot meditate on the most profound meditation on emptiness.

The Importance of Meditating on Emptiness

Of course, there is the other main aspect, bodhicitta. But we need emptiness to be free from suffering, to be free from these numberless sets of twelve links that we have started but have not finished, to be free from the endless suffering of samsara. That is why meditating on emptiness for one minute or a few seconds becomes so unbelievably important.

We need to study, to take teachings from a qualified teacher. That is so important, to leave more imprints on our mind. We need to listen to teachings, to study, even just reading the *Diamond Cutter Sutra*. If we can do that, it is very good. Somebody was going to do that. A lady promised to do that every day for a year. Even if we cannot understand it, it is very good just to read it. But, we should read it mindfully, not like a tape recorder. Reading it mindfully leaves positive imprints on the mind, even if we do not understand it. Reading the *Diamond Cutter Sutra* creates skies of purification, leaving so many imprints and making it easy to realize emptiness in this life or the next life.

Any meditation on emptiness leaves so many imprints when we read it mindfully, making it easy to realize emptiness. It is difficult only for those people who don't have many imprints of emptiness on their mind, but for those who do, it is not difficult to realize emptiness. So, even if we do not understand it, to still be able to read it is unbelievably fortunate.

I'm not going to repeat it again, because I already talked yesterday about how [in the Wheel of Life drawing] the Buddha points to the true path, to the verses. If we want to practice the true cessation of suffering, there is the true path.

Geshe Sopa said that even if we meet the Buddha directly, he has nothing extra to show us. He has already shown true suffering, true cause of suffering, true cessation and true path. There is nothing more than this to be taught, even if we met the Buddha directly. That is why the Buddha regarded having a drawing of the Wheel of Life outside a gompa so important. And then to have a monk explain it when people come, so they can understand. As I said yesterday, that is why having a monastery and nunnery, why having monks and nuns, is important, because it becomes easy for people to understand the Dharma. Geshe-la said that we who follow the Buddha should spread this understanding. Then, it is the basis for spreading the teachings of the Buddha in the ten directions. With that, he prayed for peace to happen in the world.

The conclusion is that it is so important to meditate on emptiness even for a few seconds—of course, for hours is better but even for some minutes or seconds—to become free from these endless sets of twelve links, from this endless suffering of samsara.

I'll stop here. Maybe, we can do the Vajrasattva initiation in our dreams! Go to bed, and then you will have a dream.

Actually, when you go to meditate, see how in reality [everything] is exactly like a dream. Nothing is true; nothing is real, so it is exactly as a dream. You have to know, it is exactly as a dream. If you come to that conclusion, that is the best.

With the three higher trainings, we can become free from samsara. And then, with the help of great compassion embracing all sentient beings and with bodhicitta, with that unbelievable help we cease even subtle obscurations, and along with the direct perception of emptiness, we achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. We liberate numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment.

So, the Wheel of Life is a very important meditation. When we see the Wheel of Life, it reminds us that we are all in that, and that there are numberless Wheels of Life, numberless sets of twelve dependent-related limbs. We need to become free from all that. That reminds us to meditate on emptiness.

I have to say something about the benefits of Swayambunath. I brought the text that describes how in the time of one of the buddhas—I don't know which one—the most precious Swayambunath stupa was inside the mountain. In those times, the people's lifespan was many thousands of years. Then, it became shorter and shorter, and different buddhas came at different times. This has been a holy place for thousands and thousands of years. It's unbelievable.

There are some benefits of making offerings to the stupa. I thought I could read a few so you can understand. OK, I'll stop here.

What to Do After Leaving Kopan

Next is taking refuge and Vajrasattva. People can sit there. Even those who are not taking refuge and Vajrasattva can sit there. Until you fall asleep you can sit there!

In case I forget, people may have questions about what to do after you leave here. Normally, there are questions. I didn't get to print it out, but I think I have already told you about transforming your kaka mind into gold, changing your kaka life into gold, into a wish-granting jewel. Sorry if that sounds bad. Anyway, it is very smelly! You can transform your suffering life into every happiness up to liberation from samsara and enlightenment. This is the morning motivation. I think for every course we should have a book to give, like the refuge book. That is the most important thing.

I want to say this. The most important thing, the minute you wake up, what you should practice, is transforming your mind not just into the Dharma but into bodhicitta. Whatever you do in your life—listening, reflecting, meditating—do it for sentient beings. Do everything for every being. In the numberless universes there are numberless ants, so live your life for every ant, live your life for every mosquito, live your life for every hell being, for every hungry ghost, for every animal, for every fish, for every chicken, for every human being, for every sura [and asura]. Whatever you are doing—eating, drinking, sleeping—everything you do is for sentient beings. Even if you are going to drink a milkshake, it is for sentient beings. Everything is for the numberless sentient beings, not only for one or two. To live your life for every sentient being is the best.

Even if you only know a little Dharma, if you have a good heart, if you do that, your life is the best life, the happiest life, the most meaningful life, the healthiest life. Wherever you are, you can have such a happy life.

Ani Fran is going to send an email to everyone about this. Wherever you are, even if you are in prison or on top of Mount Everest, this is what you do. This meditation is the first thing to start your life, the first thing to do to achieve enlightenment.

Then, I think after that maybe the next most important thing is [to study] *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*. That might be easier for most people. But for some people, maybe study Lama Tsongkhapa's lamrim. There is great, middle and small. There is also a commentary on renunciation, bodhicitta and right view. Anyway, it is most important to read *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* from beginning to end. I'm not saying in one day! I'm not saying in one hour! I'm not saying that, but read whatever you can in a day, even just a page, from the front to the back, or even half. That is so important. Read it three or five times from beginning to end, depending on how you feel.

Then, respectfully mark anything you do not understand in orange, not like a professor correcting students in color. I was not there, but once when Jeffrey Hopkins gave a lecture to the nuns at Chenrezig Institute, he said that because he used to mark students' papers in black, he created so much karma to be born in the black line hell, the second hell realm. So, not like that. Mark the book

with orange highlighter. Because Western pens don't last, Kyabje Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche marked texts with saffron color. He put saffron water in a bottle and then marked the texts with that. It lasts a long time. The pen marks the text lightly, respectfully, like painting a thangka, like offering color or holy dress to the buddhas. Like that—nicely, respectfully, only creating positive karma. It depends on the motivation.

Or you can buy a notebook and nicely write down what you do not understand, and then you can discuss it. You can ask students who have studied well or with a geshe so you do not have the danger of getting a wrong understanding.

You do like that [read Lama Tsongkhapa's lamrim texts] three times, or if you still need it, you can read them more times, like five times. Somebody said that you should read Lama Tsongkhapa's lamrim texts nine times. Then, what you did not understand before, it leaves positive imprints and after nine times you understand. Don't read like monks doing puja, or like a tape recorder being played, not like that, but mindfully. You have to at least leave a positive imprint on the mind. If you do that, that itself is meditation.

You can do meditation while walking. Meditation does not have to be [on a meditation cushion]. A general idea is this. For one year or six months you can meditate on guru devotion, correctly following the virtuous friend, on that outline. You can do the guided meditation on the outline of the lamrim when you have read the commentary. *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* has outlines and there are outlines in books by Wisdom Publications or Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive. Or you can read *The Essential Nectar*. That is not too short and not too elaborate, with examples. It is quite good for daily meditation. Once you know the lamrim commentary, use *The Essential Nectar* as a guide to the lamrim.

In the evening you can do a Vajrasattva practice for purification, then *King of Prayers*. Then, in the morning maybe do prostrations. If you can do one hundred prostrations while reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas' names, that is excellent. I think Lama Tsongkhapa did about seven hundred sets of Thirty-five Buddhas with many prostrations. [28] Through that, he achieved realizations like rainfall and he had no fear of death. Likewise, your mind can be so happy that whether you live or die, it is so easy. Taking another body becomes like putting on new clothes. Practicing purification, collecting merits, single-pointedly requesting the guru, all that is in the *Lama Chöpa Jorhö*.

So, for six months or a year, meditate on the guru, and then renunciation, and then, after that, bodhicitta, and after that, emptiness. You can do it like that. Then, if you still think you need to do more, you can do it like that for another year or two. You can do it twice or three times; it's up to your mind.

You can meditate like that until you get realizations, and then you can do effortless meditation on correctly following the virtuous friend. Do this for however many months or however long it takes, until you get a stable realization of guru devotion. Go through the outline like that, doing the same thing with renunciation, and then after that bodhicitta and then emptiness.

You don't have to do them one by one. You can do two different meditations a day, such as guru devotion and renunciation. You can do two different meditations if you can, until you achieve realizations, but at least one. That makes your life so unbelievably rich, so meaningful. Even if you do not achieve any realizations in this life, it makes it so easy to achieve realizations in the next life, to quickly achieve enlightenment so you can free the numberless sentient beings from oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment.

That is the idea. Reading the lamrim is the most important thing. When you begin any meditation, always begin with bodhicitta. Even if you have no realizations, nothing, if from very beginning you begin with the bodhicitta motivation, everything you practice—from guru devotion and renunciation—everything is directed toward enlightenment for sentient beings.

One very important thing is because you have the motivation in the morning, every day in your life, whatever you do, everything you do is for sentient beings. Even if you are shopping for something,

it is for sentient beings. Everything is for sentient beings. That is the best life, thinking of sentient beings the most, in order to free them from suffering and bring them to enlightenment. Whatever you do, everything should be for sentient beings. That is the most important thing. It keeps your life happy and healthy; it is the best.

OK, thank you very much. That's all.

[Students offer mandala]

Lecture 11: December 15 evening



Saving Worms and Fish

On the basis of what I mentioned, to make the life worthwhile, meaningful, fulfilled, there is the practice of the ten virtues. Whether you kill some being or you order somebody to kill, it is the same, but with the ten virtues, instead of killing you protect life; you guide other beings from danger to their life. You protect, you save whoever is in danger of being killed.

I don't know how many beings we have saved. [Rinpoche speaks in Tibetan to the disciplinarian] Seventy-five animals. Goats and chickens? Chickens. I was thinking to buy land in Bylakuppe and build a house and to buy a thousand chickens or something like that. But chickens are very difficult. I bought some chickens in Patna on the way to Bodhgaya. The chickens were outside in bamboo [cages] waiting to be killed, so when Marcel was in Bodhgaya, I thought to buy them and take them there. But if you let chickens walk on the ground outside all day long, they eat worms. So, we put the chickens inside the house on a cement floor, and gave them food like that. We did that. Chickens are very difficult, not like goats and other animals.

I thought to buy a place to make a house, so you could get an idea how to help sentient beings. In the ceiling, we would put Namgyälma protection mantras—not just one but many, so by being underneath they would always get purified of negative karmas collected from beginningless rebirths. And then, when they die, they will not get reborn in lower realms. Even if there is one Namgyälma, it helps for that. Then, I wanted to put OM PÄDMO USHNISHA VIMALE HUM PHAT, written in big letters and covering as much of the ceiling as possible. By being underneath, a hundred thousand eons of negative karma get purified. I have recorded mantras, so if you play it for them, four sessions a day, it purifies their minds to not get reborn in lower realms and plants the seed of enlightenment. I wanted to play mantras for them through the speakers four times a day and different prayers like the *Heart Sutra*.

That's what I was thinking. I don't know how it's going. There is a good-hearted monk who has promised to look after them. I was thinking to do that a few years ago. Even if we are unable to buy chickens in different places, if we can at least do it in one place, we will give some benefit to the chickens. So, hopefully that will get done.

By abandoning taking life, killing, you protect beings from danger to their life. Sorry to mention this, but to give you an idea, because you have to learn. At the Aptos house, we buy fishing worms every week. How many worms? Sometimes Chinese people come from outside, from Santa Cruz, and recite mantras and prayers at our house. One of the nuns leads the mantras and prayers. I made a book on how to liberate animals, what different mantras to recite for the animals. They recite and go around the stupa, carrying the animals, the worms or whatever. I explained that the stupa is like the one in Indonesia but smaller. They go around carrying the animals, and each time they go around, because there are many statues of the Buddha, they create so many causes of enlightenment. They plant so many seeds of enlightenment each time they take the animals around. There are at least several hundred. By carrying them around and reciting mantras, it purifies their negative karma collected from beginningless rebirths and plants the seed of enlightenment in all their hearts.

When I'm there, I try to bless water with mantras, which they keep to purify the animals and insects. After reciting the mantras, they are supposed to blow on the water and use the water to purify them. Every week, people come from outside to help.

There are different places—one near Land of Medicine Buddha—where you can safely bury worms in the ground. I have seen this on TV, where people carry buckets [to dig for worms]. Near the water the earth is very wet, so the people dig quite deep and put the worms used for fishing in the bucket. They don't just do it in one place; they go to different places that are wet [to find the worms]. Our place is kind of dry, so I think they might have some difficulties because the worms live near water, where it is very wet. As I said, it might be difficult in Washington because it is very dry.

In Washington, there are two monks who prepare blessed water. I told them to blow on the water when they do commitments. After they bury the worms, they put water on top so the ground becomes wet. But also, one thing is when you bury worms, due to karma the birds see it and they dig the earth and then eat the worms. But if you dig a little bit deeper, it's OK. Unless it is deep enough, the birds come and dig up the worms and eat them.

In Washington, they do that every week with worms used for fishing. Can you imagine what it would feel like to have a hook through your body like that? If it happened to you, what would you think? If somebody did that to the fisherman, what would they think? But they do that to worms so they can fish! So, each week they do that, saving several hundred or something. [*Ven. Roger*: One thousand five hundred each week.] One thousand five hundred each week. They are not only buried, there is also a carved stone Amitabha Buddha from Vietnam, which is very good. The Amitabha Buddha is carved marble. I sent how to make the eyes. I don't think their own way, almost like the eyes were closed, was very good, so I wanted the eyes painted [differently]. They are very good artists but they are so used to doing it their own way.

There is a monk from Kopan Monastery, Gelek, who finished studying in Dharamsala. We got him from the private office. He cleaned [the statue] and then painted [the eyes] very well. He made a blue throne with two peacocks in front and a horse on one side and a garuda and elephants on the other sides, I think. Some parts are not finished. Most parts are. The peacocks have actual feathers and the throne is decorated. There are a lot of flowers I bought from the market to put by the sides of Amitabha Buddha and Medicine Buddha.

How many [worms are saved every week]? One thousand five hundred worms each week. Then, there is also the mantra from Padmasambhava—not Padmasambhava's mantra but the mantra from Padmasambhava—that you put it in the water. If you put it in the water, you can achieve enlightenment in this life. I think it makes it easy to purify negative karma and achieve realizations,

so you put that crystal with the mantras in the water. We also have a filtered water bird feeder outside, as well as His Holiness the Dalai Lama's mani pills. Thousands of monks and His Holiness pray and bless pills, and the blessed pills are sent to Tibet for Tibetan prisoners, so when they die they are not reborn in the lower realms. I put the pills in the bird feeding water to purify the birds with the blessed water, then the Padmasambhava mantra. The small birds come and enjoy the bath so much. For me to see them enjoying it is so good. It is very enjoyable.

Then, there is a bird house, where the birds come to eat food, which has mantras on the roof, so that when the birds come to eat they all get purified. One thousand eons of negative karma get purified. The mantras were done by the monk, Tharchin. Near where the birds come to eat food there is also a tape recorder playing *Golden Light Sutra* and *Diamond Cutter Sutra*, which Kyabje Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche and I have recorded, so they hear it all the time. We have two [speakers], one on either side. Are there still two? We put the tape recorder on the ground for them to constantly hear Dharma.

Then, very sorry, I bought a boat. You must think I'm crazy! I bought a rubber boat. I think John is part of this organization, what is it called? Amazon. So, I got it cheaper. It usually costs three hundred dollars but John got it for two hundred dollars. [*Ven. Roger*: It cost two hundred and fifty.]

OK. I bought it, but not for enjoyment on the water. We have the boat to feed the fish with fish food like the Vajrayogini [Tibetan] kind, a little bit fat and then finer. Well, we were supposed to try to make it like that. We made maybe two buckets of that with blessed mantra water, to purify the fish. I think they made it for two or three days and took it to the fish to purify them. How many people? Four people can fit in the boat. I went twice to give food to the fish in the lake. As the boat travels, we throw the food out. That is one thing. The other one is the blessed water, which we throw in the ocean to purify the fish.

Then, we have Namgyälma, the mantra for protection, which we carry above the water to purify the fish. It has not come yet but we also have these boxes that we put on the animals' and people's heads to purify them. We will hold them above water, so all the fish underneath get purified.

We are supposed to go up and down the lake to cover more fish, instead of going straight. Then, we are also supposed to play a tape recording of Kyabje Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche or me chanting mantras or prayers. The recording is played under the water, not on top, so they can hear the mantra, purifying them to not get reborn in the lower realms and planting the seed of enlightenment.

There are many lakes around, so each month we go to a different lake. The boat has two flags, one is the name of the boat, "Wish-Granting Boat for the Fish." It is wish-granting because by seeing the mantra, it purifies a hundred thousand eons of negative karma. There is more but I don't remember. The flag says how precious the fish are, how all our happiness is received from them. That is on the flag. There are two flags; on top of the flag there is *gyaltsen*, the banner, in different colors. Inside there are mantras, also Namgyälma.

When you put all that together, it sounds like quite an unusual boat. When people see it, there is a lot to learn from the flags. There are lot of messages to help them to purify their negative karma. There is a lot to learn, to give them the wisdom eye. So, two monks go each month on different lakes to help the fish to purify and to get higher rebirth and to achieve enlightenment.

Practicing the Ten Virtues with Animal Liberation

I think the Chinese centers in the organization liberate more animals. They have a kind of system. They normally take turtles to one temple and give them water there, something like that. In Singapore, the FPMT center, Amitabha Buddhist Centre, where Geshe Chonyi is the resident teacher, has liberated so many animals. Two hundred million? [*Ven. Roger*: More than two hundred million.] More than two hundred million animals have been liberated. That count was from a long time ago so there are much more than that.

Sometimes people who have cancer give them money to liberate animals. One person recovered from cancer by causing the long life of other sentient beings. You have long life by causing others long life. That's cause and effect; it works in that way.

But in Taiwan there was a monk. What is his name? Hatapasa. A long time ago he liberated eight million or something of one type of fish, a vegetarian fish, as well as many cows. Because he liberated many millions of animals, the government became suspicious of him, thinking he had maybe done something wrong. So, they checked up him. I'm telling you this just for you to learn how to help others. There are many different ways you can help others; it's very important. If you live your life helping others, your own things succeed very naturally. Your wishes—achieving realizations and achieving enlightenment—all those happen by benefiting others.

Animal liberation happens in other centers too. I think Hong Kong also does it. We have a center there that does it from time to time, maybe each month, I'm not sure.

Recently, I thought there have been so many fires in California, three huge fires that could not stop for months and months and months, but before that, fires happened from time to time. Many people died, but of course it is only the people's deaths that are reported. So many animals also died—tigers, deer, numberless ants also died in the fire, with unbelievable suffering, especially for animals.

So, I thought to do something to help, to do some pujas and practice and sponsor a monastery in India, [Drepung] Gomang Monastery. In the monastery itself there are many monks and it's a little bit difficult to sponsor. You have to make offerings to the thousands of monks. There are many smaller sections of the *khangtsen*, depending the place in Tibet the monks of that khangtsen come from. So, we asked one khangtsen to do Medicine Buddha puja for America to be safe from fires, so that not just people but also the numberless animals don't get burned and die.

The centers don't have much money to really sponsor this, so I tried to begin with a donation of twenty-five thousand dollars. The main expense was the offering to the monasteries for them to do pujas. Kopan Monastery as well. And also the nuns? I'm not sure. Like that, we have some Sangha at Aptos. And Yangsi Rinpoche recites the *Diamond Cutter Sutra* each week. A few Sangha, including Venerable Sarah, recite the *Golden Light Sutra*, and there is a monk from Nepal, Tsering, who writes the *Prajnaparamita* with real gold. He has been writing it for some years. I think he's now on a break, in Bodhgaya doing prostrations.

Doing a puja cannot stop it—the karma is so powerful—but it can help. It also depends on what kind of motivation there is for doing the puja. Of course, having bodhicitta is the most powerful, and a realization of emptiness and tantra of course. It depends on the qualities of the practitioners. It can help, but also sometimes the karma is much more powerful and it cannot be stopped. If the karma is very powerful for the fire, then of course this happens. In recent times, there have been so many fires burning for so many months in California. People had to run away, even the lady. What is the name of the lady, the singer, the actress? Even she had to run. [*Ven. Roger: Lady Gaga.*] Even Lady Gaga had to run; even she had to move her place. The fire came and Lady Gaga had to run. It depends; sometimes the karma is so powerful that puja is not enough. But puja can prevent the fire or make the danger of the fire less, and things like that.

It also depends on the leader, the king or president who runs the country. It depends on how much good luck the king or president running the country has. One of my gurus, Kyabje Tsenzhab Serkong Rinpoche, said that England had so much peace because of the queen at that time, Queen Victoria. This is because she is the protector Palden Lhamo, the protector of Tibet and His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Palden Lhamo has been the protector of all the incarnations, starting from the first, and of many great lamas for a long time. She is a Dharma protector, a manifestation of the wrathful aspect of Sarasvati, the wisdom female aspect of buddha.

The very first lady who recovered from cancer, one of her practices was liberating animals. I think she might have liberated a few thousand chickens, I'm not sure. She took the eight Mahayana

precepts and started to get interested in Buddhism. She sells fashion ideas. She can make a thousand dollars an hour selling the ideas. She recovered from cancer by reciting the Secret Vajrapani, Hayagriva and Garuda mantra and I think doing the eight Mahayana precepts and liberating so many animals. Because you cause others to have a long life, it affects your health, giving you a long life. I don't know if she is still alive; it was a long time ago. She was the first one to recover from cancer. Then, there were several others who got cancer and recovered.

If we abandon stealing but instead practice charity, this is the opposite of stealing; this includes charity, like I mentioned to you. Then, we abandon sexual misconduct and practice morality instead. Then, we abandon speaking harshly. We may be saying very nice words but it hurts others. Some people are very good at that. They speak very nice words but in a way that it hurts the mind of the other person. If we abandon speaking harshly, the opposite to that is speaking very gently.

Sorry, a director of a center in America, Land of Medicine Buddha, was quite impatient, upsetting many people. I wrote to her to show her how to speak by thinking of the kindness of others. We have received all our happiness, past, present, and future, from beginningless rebirths until now, and all our future happiness up to enlightenment, everything due to the kindness of others. [Thinking like that,] we should meditate on how they are most kind, most precious. On the basis of that, because they have been our mother and so kind, we speak very gently.

When you think of it, of course it is natural that when our way of talking becomes soft, when we speak very sweetly, that brings so much happiness to others. When somebody speaks very nicely to us, we are happy, so to speak nicely to everyone—people we like and people we dislike—brings happiness to so many people. So, I sent this advice about talking nicely instead of making others angry. If people don't like the center or the person running the center, they won't want to come to the center. So, it is very important to speak kindly, nicely.

Then, avoiding telling lies; we should tell the truth in the life. When we abandon slandering, it brings harmony among the people we meet. Harmony brings happiness. It helps us to bring peace and happiness in the world.

By abandoning gossiping, we talk about the Dharma. Whenever we speak to others, we talk about compassion, and that helps others. Nothing we say is meaningless; it is all worthwhile, to us and to others. Abandoning covetousness, we practice satisfaction. Abandoning ill will, we generate the thought to benefit others. And abandoning heresy, we develop faith in karma, in cause and effect.

By practicing the ten virtues, we collect extensive virtue. All our wishes succeed and we are able to benefit others more and more extensively. Then, it brings enlightenment.

The Eight Mahayana Precepts

In Maitreya Buddha's teaching, *Uttaratantra* [*Sublime Continuum*], he talks about how to make life meaningful. This is by doing things like writing Dharma texts such as the *Prajnaparamita* teachings on emptiness, making offerings to the Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, making charity to sentient beings, listening to teachings, reading the Buddha's teachings and memorizing them, doing daily recitations, thinking of the meaning of the teachings and meditating on them. If we can do that, we collect inconceivable merits. This is just to get an idea of how to make life meaningful other than what I mentioned before.

The most important aspects of the graduated path of a lower capable being in general is taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and protecting our karma in whatever way we can. We try to renounce one negative karma or two negative karmas or all five [by taking the five lay vows]. There are five precepts like that as well as the eight precepts of the Lesser Vehicle path and the eight Mahayana precepts that you have been taking over the last two weeks.

Because you have taken them with a bodhicitta motivation, that means that even keeping one vow, like abstaining from killing, benefits numberless beings. Just the example of keeping one precept,

abstaining from killing, you are doing this for the numberless hell beings, so it helps them. There are numberless universes where there are numberless hell beings, numberless hungry ghosts and numberless animals, so you are taking the eight Mahayana precepts to help all of them. To help the numberless fish in the water, some big like a mountain and some small. There are numberless universes with numberless ants, so it helps every ant. Taking even one precept with bodhicitta helps every being become free from suffering and achieve happiness. There are numberless mosquitoes and numberless of the tiniest flies in the numberless universes, so it helps all those. It helps all the animals, from the tiniest to the largest, and the numberless human beings in the numberless universes, and the numberless asuras and the numberless suras. Taking even one precept with bodhicitta helps everyone to be free from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and to bring them to enlightenment.

Although the eight Mahayana precepts are taken for one day, the benefit is not just for that day or for two days or two weeks, [but from now on]. You bring such unbelievable benefit to the numberless sentient beings. That is part of your coming to Kopan at this time. That is amazing.

I think John may have told you about the four harmonious brothers. I forgot the name but there was a country in India where the rains came at the right time, the crops grew well and the economy became so good. The king thought he was responsible for this and the ministers thought they were. Each thought they were the one to bring all this good fortune to the country. [Nobody could agree] so they went to the forest to see a sage and ask who was responsible. The sage said that none of them had caused this. It was the four harmonious brothers living in the forest, the four animals. The elephant spread the five precepts to other elephants, the monkey spread the five precepts to other monkeys, the rabbit spread the five precepts to other rabbits, and the bird spread the five precepts to other birds, and because of that the country developed economically. Shakyamuni was the pheasant, Ananda the rabbit, Maudgalyayana the elephant and Shariputra the monkey. They manifested as animals and spread the Dharma to other animals, which is why the country developed.

This is what you have done, coming to Kopan. For two weeks, you have taken the eight Mahayana precepts, dedicating your life with bodhicitta. It brings so much peace in the world. It brings incredible peace to other countries and to Nepal in particular. And besides that, it leads you yourself to enlightenment. With it, you free yourself from samsara and achieve enlightenment, being able to give unbelievable benefit to every sentient being with bodhicitta. You are serving all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. You are taking the precepts from them.

Cherishing the Enemy

For a negative action to be complete it needs four things. For example, for the complete negative karma of sexual misconduct, we need the *base*, the person we have sex with, then the *thought* and the *action* and finally the *completion* of the action. There are these four things. And when these four things are complete, there are four suffering results. Generally speaking, the [object of sexual misconduct] is somebody who is not our wife or husband—the texts say somebody we don't own—and the completion is when there is pleasure from the act.

The ripening result is rebirth in the lower realms, where we suffer for a very long time. Then, there are the three sufferings we experience in the human realm. The possessed result is to do with the place. For sexual misconduct, we are born and forced to live in a filthy place, full of kaka. If we ever have to walk through a place that is filthy, very unclean and unhygienic, full of bad smells, even for five minutes, that is the result of having committing sexual misconduct in our past life. Then, experiencing the result similar to the cause, our partner becomes unhappy with us, always challenging us, always in competition with us. We are not even physically happy, so it becomes a cause for divorce. Although all these problems are the results of our previous actions, we think they come from others. We always blame others.

In Mahayana thought transformation teachings Kadampa Geshe Chekawa said:

Banish all blames to the single source.

Toward all beings contemplate their great kindness. [29]

We receive every happiness of the past, present and future, including enlightenment, from that person we are blaming. By relying on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, we become free from samsara. When we take refuge and rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, we not only become free from lower nirvana, we also achieve enlightenment. Then, we are able to free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment. By taking refuge, we are able to bring all these numberless sentient beings unbelievable happiness; we are able to lead every sentient being to enlightenment. This comes from the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the Three Rare Sublime Ones, and it comes from every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal, every mosquito, every sura being, every asura being and every human being. Therefore, every sentient being is unbelievably precious. They have all been our mother and so kind. They have given us a human body; they have protected us from danger hundreds of times a day; they have had to bear so many unbelievable hardships from beginningless rebirths for us, giving us an education. That is what it means by “toward all beings contemplate their great kindness.”

So, meditate on the kindness of others. The person who is angry, the person who abuses us—if we practice patience, if we cherish that person, we achieve enlightenment. If we renounce that person, if we don’t cherish them, we have to experience the endless suffering of samsara and the lower realms. When we practice patience, there is enlightenment.

There are six perfections we need to practice to achieve enlightenment with bodhicitta and patience is one of them. If we practice patience with that abusive person, they give us enlightenment. What we get is enlightenment, the infinite qualities of the holy body, holy speech and holy mind of a buddha. We are able to do perfect work for sentient beings. It all comes from that person, therefore they are so precious. The one who abuses us, who is angry with us, that person helps us develop patience, a good heart, compassion, bodhicitta. They are so precious.

To have these qualities, we need them. To practice patience, we need somebody who abuses us, who harms us. Without that person who is angry at us, who abuses us, who harms us, we cannot develop patience. With that person we are able to practice what the guru-buddha teaches us. We can practice due to that person. They are giving us skies of kindness, unbelievable kindness.

I said I would explain this to somebody, it is very important, but my memory is not so good. I have written it here. I still haven’t been able to explain it to Lama Ösel, but I gave it to him to recite every day. Please, if you have your diarrhea book, write it down. If you are wise, you must write it down.

If I cannot even bear this present suffering,
Which is causing me problems and anger,
Because anger is the cause of the suffering of hell,
Why don’t I avert the anger?

Do you understand? It is so profound. This is the best psychology, if you want to know, the best psychology. If we cannot bear even these problems, why don’t we avert anger, the cause of the suffering of hell? You must learn this; you must write it down. The problem can be very simple, really nothing, but we cannot bear it. Not practicing patience, we get angry instead, which is the cause of the suffering of hell. Why not avert that? Do you understand?

The next thing is very important for you to learn, then I think maybe I have to stop.

If you didn’t give harm to others,
Nobody will harm you.

That is so important, otherwise whenever problem there is, we always blame somebody outside. If we have influence, we can even begin a war! I heard the First World War was started by one person.

The evolution came from one person. If we are an influential person, by blaming the outside person, we can even create a war in the world, the Third World War, the Fourth World War.

To finish, from Shantideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*:

[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.

What this is saying is that in our life, whatever undesirable things happen, when somebody abuses us or whatever, that is because we have harmed them in the past. If that person abuses us now, that is the result of us abusing that person in the past. If we had not harmed others like this, nobody would harm us now. That is very logical; it is because of cause and effect, because of karma.

We have to know that. We always have to remember this in our life. This is the basic thing. Then, rather than getting angry back, we can think of the kindness of the person instead. We harmed that sentient being in the past like this, therefore we are now receiving harm from them now. It is only right that we receive that harm.

That "harm" is actually harming the self-cherishing thought. With the self-cherishing thought, we can kill, steal, cheat, we can do anything to others, but nobody dares complain about us. Nobody can get angry at us. Our self-cherishing thought is the real dictator. When we follow our dictator, the self-cherishing thought, it is always like that. Thinking we can harm anybody, we can kill anybody, but nobody can ever get angry at us, nobody can complain to us, that is the self-cherishing thought. This verse says the opposite. Because we have harmed before, as a result we receive harm now. When we can see this, when we accept it, we don't become crazy, "Oh, he is harming *me*!" It's not like that.

Then, the next one,

[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?

The harm we have received from others is the result of us harming them in the past, but by harming us they create negative karma, which will result in them falling into the lower realms, into the hole of the hells. Isn't that our doing? When somebody harms us, instead of harming them back, we should use it to develop compassion. We should do whatever we can to save that person, to help that person not be reborn in hell. We should do whatever we can, dedicating our merits, making prayers and things like that.

I think maybe I should stop here. Oh, one left! Sorry!

The path to be liberated from samsara is the three higher trainings. If it is summarized, the three higher trainings are the higher training of morality, the higher training in concentration and the higher training of wisdom. "Higher" means with refuge.

That is the basic path of how we can free ourselves from samsara. Then, we can help other sentient beings be free from samsara and bring them to enlightenment.

I left out one before. I explained experiencing the result similar to the cause of sexual misconduct. Now the fourth one, creating the result similar to the cause. Because of habituation from the past with sexual misconduct, we commit sexual misconduct again in this life. When we are reborn a human being, we commit sexual misconduct again. That is the result of past negative karma,

habituation. It is a habit of our past life, so we do it again and again. That is creating the result similar to the cause.

Do you understand the four suffering results? Any harm we do to other sentient beings, we experience that harm over many lifetimes. If we abuse others, we create the cause to be abused by others for five hundred lifetimes. You have to know that. We create the cause to suffer for five hundred lifetimes. Unless we want to suffer, we have to abstain from that negative karma.

The Buddha explained in the sutra *The Lamp of the Moon*,

Compared to someone who, with a pure mind,
Has honored for millions of eons, as numerous as the Ganges sands,
Quintillions of buddhas with food, drink,
Parasols, flags, and rows of lights,
Another who practices a single teaching day and night
When the good Dharma is being destroyed,
When the Sugata's teaching is coming to an end,
Will have merits that are far greater than the first. [30]

What this says is something we should write down and read again and again. It is very important to make our life the best, the most meaningful, the most beneficial, not only for us but for the numberless sentient beings. We can make offerings to the numberless buddhas, more than the number of sand grains of River Ganga, and we can do that for eons, for tens of millions of eons, with faith, with devotional thought. We can offer food and drink, umbrellas and flags, garlands of light and so forth, and we can offer them billions of times. But compared with keeping one vow now, when the Buddhadharma is degenerating and the teaching of the One Gone to Bliss will soon be no more, the merits we create are *far* greater than having made all those unbelievable offerings.

You have received the lineage of the eight Mahayana precepts from Khen Rinpoche, therefore wherever you are, whenever you want, you can take the eight Mahayana precepts, which are for one day. Keeping precepts, even one precept, in your whole life is amazing. Keeping the five lay vows for your whole life is so amazing. Because you have received the lineage, you can take eight Mahayana precepts any time you want. They are just for one day, but you can keep them for one day or for life.

OK, I think I'll stop there. What time do you leave tomorrow morning? [*Ven. Yarphel*: Seven.] Seven o'clock! [Everybody laughs] I'm going to explain the refuge prayer through to *sang gyä chhö dang tshog kyi* ..., taking refuge and bodhicitta. Before that, because you have been meditating on the lamrim, with John guiding you on the lower capable being and middle capable being, I don't need to explain impermanence, hell, refuge, karma and all that.

Now think, "I have been experiencing the oceans of samsaric sufferings from beginningless rebirths." Without end, you have been suffering in samsara, endlessly. Before reciting *sang gyä chhö dang* you must think this at the beginning. Then, it has great taste; it has a real effect on the mind. Otherwise, it's just words, like a parrot reciting *sang gyä chhö dang*.

You went through the hells, the eight major hells, the six neighboring hells and so forth, and still there is no end. After that, the solution is that you rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, who have the complete power, all the extensive qualities. From them you can learn the extensive philosophy. The lamrim is the very essence, and it is very simple. So, you have to rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha to be free from the endless suffering of samsara. You cannot wait for even a second.

If you meditate on the lamrim, you can feel that; otherwise, if you don't meditate, it just becomes words. Then, your refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is just between the lips, like playing a tape recorder. It becomes real when you think this, that you cannot stand it for even one second, you must be free from it.

Then, think that the numberless sentient beings—the numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, suras, asuras and intermediate state beings—have been suffering the oceans of each realm's suffering from beginningless rebirths and they will have to experience those sufferings again endlessly. Every sentient being—even just us here in the gompa—will have to experience this endless suffering of samsara again and again unless we can rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. To be free from all this suffering, we wholeheartedly go to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The Buddha refers to the Omniscient One, the Dharma to the actual Dharma, the true path and true cessation of suffering. There is the absolute Dharma and the conventional Dharma, which refers to the texts, the teachings, which we must also regard as the rare sublime Dharma and respect.

In the texts, Buddhism is explained on the *basis* of the two truths, the absolute and conventional truths, and then the *path*, method and wisdom, and the *goal*, the rupakaya and dharmakaya, the buddha's holy body and the buddha's holy mind, which are to be achieved. Because they show the path we achieve, freeing us from samsara and achieving the rupakaya and dharmakaya, we must respect the Dharma texts as the actual rare sublime one, the Dharma.

So, I want to say here. Please, in the centers, the assistant or what do you call them? The SPC. Please be aware of this. I have seen many times, before meeting together, they put the meditation books on the chairs. This is maybe because they have not heard the explanation of refuge from the lamrim and maybe don't know. I've seen many times people put the meditation books on the floor or on a seat without any cloth. That is very bad. That is being disrespectful to the Dharma texts. We are supposed to respect them, as I mentioned. That is disrespectful and it obscures our mind. Then, it is difficult to purify the delusions, difficult to understand the Dharma, even intellectually. It makes it difficult to understand because it obscures the mind. It becomes so difficult to have realizations, to see ultimate truth, to generate bodhicitta and emptiness.

We cannot do that. We have to have something, cloth or something, underneath the text. Put it on a table, not on the seat or the cushion where the person sits. That is very bad. It obscures the mind, making it even more difficult to understand the Dharma, which is already difficult.

I've seen this happen in many centers, because the people there have not heard about refuge; they have not read about it and understood. Even if we cannot see the Buddha, when we respect the statues, stupas and scriptures, we create so much unbelievably good karma. Then, it makes it easy to receive realizations and easy to achieve enlightenment.

This time, when I was coming up, I saw some books left on the cushions. You cannot do it like that. I'll tell you a story about Lama Tzong Khapa Institute in Italy. Khadro-la came from Tibet to Dharamsala solely to protect His Holiness and to ensure His Holiness's holy wishes have great success. She just came for that. The first time she visited Lama Tzong Khapa Institute in Italy, there was a Chenrezig statue left on the ground. This was not at the main center but where people were doing *nyung näs*. I think the director also ran a company and although he had a lot of experience in business, maybe he didn't know the lamrim. He was studying the Basic Program but maybe didn't know the lamrim. The statue was left there on the ground. and when Khadro-la went there and saw it, she cried. She could not express herself so she cried and cried and cried, seeing the statue left on the ground.

Although Lama Tzong Khapa Institute has many branches in Italy and the two geshe who teach there, she thought Lama Tzong Khapa Institute did not know about refuge; they did not know how disrespectful it was to leave the statue on the ground. She cried and cried. The second time she went to the center, she had a discussion with the director, who said he had meant to bring it inside but

just temporarily left it outside. She thought that because it was still left on the ground, it did not help, so she cried and cried, thinking the center does not know about Dharma, does not know about refuge.

Do you have refuge cards? Everybody should get them. You have to respect them. When those great meditators, the Kadampa geshe, see even one syllable, like the Tibetan letter *na*, in the garbage, they take it out and put it in a high place. They treat even one syllable as the precious, sublime Dharma. Like that, you have to respect it. You cannot put your glasses on Dharma texts. You cannot even put Buddha statues on Dharma texts. On the altar, you put the Dharma texts first and then the statues, not the statues first and then the Dharma texts.

Once, just after Lama passed away, we went to see His Holiness. An Italian student, Piero, brought a brochure and a stupa, and he placed the stupa on the brochure. His Holiness quickly took the stupa off the brochure. Like this example, you cannot even put statues and stupas on texts, so there is no way you can put malas and glasses on texts. You cannot do that! If there is a wind blowing [and there is the danger of the text blowing away,] that is different, but otherwise you cannot put malas or glasses or even statues on texts. Otherwise, you might be studying philosophy using very big texts, very vast texts, but you still do not know how to practice lamrim, you still do not know the simple practice of refuge. It's very sad. This happens in FPMT centers, but I don't know about in other places.

Sentient beings have been experiencing the oceans of samsaric suffering of the six realms from beginningless rebirths, endlessly. So, with your whole heart, rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha because they have the power and qualities to free you from the oceans of samsaric sufferings. Relying on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha to be free from your own samsaric suffering is the Lesser Vehicle beings' refuge.

The next one is to understand that numberless sentient beings have been cycling endlessly in samsara from beginningless time. Relying on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in order to free them is taking the Mahayana refuge. Then, there is tantra refuge. When you rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the benefits are unbelievable. There are many benefits, but one benefit is this. If your refuge could take material form, even the three great thousand great universes [trichilocosm] would be too small a container. The three great thousand great universes means a thousand world systems makes a great world system and a thousand of those makes a second-order thousand-fold world system, and a thousand of those makes a third-order thousand-fold world system or three great thousand great universes. But even that would be too small to hold the benefits of taking refuge.

We cannot measure the water of all the oceans, but if the benefits of refuge materialized, they would be much vaster than that. That is Mahayana refuge. Refuge is something we really feel from the heart.

I want to tell you one thing. Because when I was a small child I escaped from the monastery a few times to return home, for no reason, just to play, my mother sent me to Rolwaling. It takes three weeks crossing snow mountains to get there. I was there for seven years. The people there were very primitive. On this side of Namche Bazaar, the people are clever, but on the other side they are not at all clever. There is the very holy place of Padmasambhava there. I think I went there twice from this side of Solu Khumbu, where Namche Bazaar is. There is a mountain where there are rock slides, with big and small rocks falling down the mountain. When you arrive there you have to take rest and drink *chang*, potato wine, which looks just like water but is so strong. I didn't drink it; the others did. I was carried by my teacher on his back like luggage. My teacher passed meat back to me that had been cooked at home. In the autumn, you can get more meat because animals get killed by wolves, so he passed pieces of meat back to me as we walked.

Before that mountain, everybody stopped to relax and warm their hands. Each time we were there, there was no sound, no falling rocks. It was very strange. Once we got a bit higher, there was no longer a road, just rocks we had to get over. The Sherpas had yaks carrying very heavy loads. They

had to pull the yaks [to get them to move]. It was an extremely hard life. You would not believe it. The first time I crossed the mountain, there was a noise like *wwwr, wwwr*. I wondered what it was, but it was everybody reciting the Padmasambhava prayer because of the great danger. Almost every time, there would be an avalanche and people would be thrown off the mountain, so everybody was reciting the mantra. Some were Tibetans, so maybe they recited OM MANI PADME HUM.

The minute we got across the pass, big stones started falling, *wooooh*, and then small stones, hitting the rocks. This happened both times I crossed the pass and both times I thought some of the last people had died. But I found out that nobody had died or been injured. Whenever that group had to make that trip, as soon as they got past that point, there would be an avalanche but none were ever killed. That's amazing. It's very interesting because they always took refuge in Padmasambhava with their whole heart.

Normally, if we have a realization of refuge, that is what has to happen to us. We can die at any time; we have no control over this, so we need to take refuge, to rely on refuge. But of course, mostly because we are totally distracted—and I include myself—we have no thought of refuge. But if we have a realization of refuge, the mind should be like that all the time.

After we got through the pass, I asked if anybody had died but nobody had, whereas whenever people went there, some would fall over the cliff. But this group was safe because they strongly relied on Padmasambhava.

That is refuge. Now, the next one is generating bodhicitta. “Due to the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by the numberless sentient beings and numberless buddhas...” So, everyone! If we collect one dollar from each of a million people, we can raise a million dollars. We can do big projects with a million dollars, otherwise we cannot do anything big. This is similar. When we say, “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,” we mean everyone. The three-time merits collected by the numberless buddhas are so unbelievably powerful.

Then we say, “May I achieve enlightenment in order to benefit all the transmigratory beings.” There are two things. The first thing is to benefit transmigratory beings by freeing them from the oceans of samsaric sufferings. The second benefit is to bring them to full enlightenment by ourselves. For that reason, we must achieve enlightenment.

You have to understand the meaning of “transmigrator.” It means somebody who has been under the control of karma and delusions from beginningless rebirths and who has been migrating in one of the six realms constantly during all that time. That means, being under the control of karma and delusions, they have constantly been experiencing suffering. That is the meaning of “transmigrator.” Another meaning of transmigrator is that after we are born, there are a certain number of seconds until we die. After we are born, we rush so quickly toward death. Unless we are practicing the Dharma, we are going so quickly toward the lower realms, toward the hell realm. We have only a certain number of seconds, and they finish so quickly. We are going so quickly toward death. That is also the meaning of “transmigrator.”

First is being under the control of karma and delusions, having to experience all the sufferings again and again. When we think of the meaning of transmigrator, suffering from beginningless rebirths, compassion has to arise. So, we think “May I achieve enlightenment for them.” That is generating bodhicitta.

Quite a few days ago, I explained the benefits that Lama Atisha spoke about, according to the Buddha's teachings.

Although someone may totally fill with gems

Buddha-fields equal in number

To the grains of sand on the Ganges

And offer them to the Guardians of the World,
Yet should anyone press his or her palms together
And direct his or her mind toward bodhicitta,
His or her offering would be more especially noble;
It would have no end. [31]

Just putting our palms together and generating bodhicitta creates far more merit than offering all those incredible offerings to all the buddhas for that incredible length of time. Offering to all the buddhas becomes tiny in comparison. This is far greater. The benefits are limitless. By seeing the benefits, we can rejoice that our life is most meaningful, most beneficial.

OK, now refuge. Think, “Therefore, I’m going to take refuge.” Usually, when I say the morning motivation, I mention changing our kaka life into gold. Sorry, I use the term “kaka life.” This is the bodhicitta motivation. “Therefore, I’m going to listen to teachings, to reflect and meditate on them for sentient beings. I’m going to live my life for sentient beings. Every single thing I do—eating, walking, sitting, sleeping, meditating, doing my job—everything I do is for sentient beings.”

Think like that. A morning dedication like that is very good. Plan to do it like that.

Here now, refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. When you die, if you remember the Buddha, the Buddha’s mantra or if you remember one of the Three Rare Sublime Ones—either the Buddha or the Dharma or the Sangha, like the *Heart Sutra*, if you can rely on just one object of refuge, [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] you do not get reborn in the lower realms. If you can think of a mantra, [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] you do not get reborn in the lower realms. If you can think of a Sangha member, a monk or nun you have devotion in, you do not get reborn in the lower realms.

So here, if you want more than just not being reborn in the lower realms, if you want to be free from the oceans of samsaric sufferings, to be totally free from samsara, for that you need to take refuge in all three. It’s like if you are a patient, you need a wise doctor, the right medicine and a good nurse, all three. So, [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] to be free from samsara, you need to rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The Buddha is like the doctor, the Dharma is like the medicine and the Sangha is like the nurse. The Dharma is that which ceases the suffering and the cause of suffering, the delusions; the Sangha is like the nurse who helps you to actualize the Dharma in your mind, in your heart. So, you need to rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. You have to know that.

So please repeat. [Rinpoche gives the students the refuge vow]

There are five lay vows you can take. You can take five, four, three, two or one—you can choose from the five precepts—but if you cannot take any vow until you die, there is the refuge *upasika* [or *upasaka*] vow only. Just taking the refuge vow has unbelievable merit. It is unbelievable protection for your life, bringing you happiness, freedom from samsara and the achievement of enlightenment.

There are three things to be abandoned and three practices to do. For example, even taking only refuge, before you eat and drink, you make offerings to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. You offer with the mind, whether you make a prayer or not. You offer with the mind and then take it as a blessing.

Each time you make an offering to the Buddha, even to a Buddha statue, a scripture or a stupa, whatever offering you make—a bowl of water, a stick of incense, a tiny flower, a grain of rice—each time you make an offering, you do not get reborn in the lower realms for eighty million eons.

One day, a female being, Palmo was her name, sprinkled sandalwood powder on the Buddha’s feet, and the Buddha predicted that she would not be reborn in the lower realms for eighty million eons. The Buddha said these were the benefits of sprinkling sandalwood powder on the Buddha’s feet. Therefore, whatever offering you make to the Buddha—a water bowl, a tiny flower, a tiny grain of rice—even if you have nothing [just visualizing], every time you offer, you do not get reborn in the

lower realms for eighty million eons. You have to know that. You have to write that down. We are unbelievably fortunate because of this.

Then, practicing compassion, relying upon the guru, receiving teachings from the guru, you control your delusions. Your senses are no longer under the control of the three poisonous minds, of the delusions. This brings the most unbelievable benefits, usually listed as about eight.

Even if you do not take any precepts, it frees you from samsara and brings you to enlightenment. There are five precepts, even if you do not want to take five, but take four, three, two or one—or even if you do not want to take any but just take refuge. The Buddha is very kind; he gave many choices regarding what you can take.

Please repeat. [Rinpoche continues to give the refuge vow]

OK. Finished.

Please read the refuge cards. There are three things to practice and three things to abandon. You must know that. And then there is the general advice. I'm not going to go through it, so you must read that so you are aware in daily life. So that's all, thank you very much.

How many people are taking Vajrasattva? Is anybody leaving tomorrow or the day after tomorrow?

Maybe we'll stop now, then maybe we'll do Vajrasattva the day of the long-life puja or tomorrow, the day after tomorrow or the day after that. The day after that is empty. There are two days empty after the long-life puja, so, if it is not on the long-life puja day there are two days empty.

[Some students indicate they will be leaving and there is a general discussion]

It can be done in some other space. We will see. But I think coming back you need to be more relaxed, because going around is maybe tiring. You'll want to be in your sleeping bags. So maybe we'll do it the day of the long-life puja in the evening. We will see. Now, it's too late. Thank you very much.

I forgot, three prostrations! At the beginning you did them and so now, afterwards, you need to do three prostrations. OK. Three prostrations.

Dedications

We are responsible to pray for the world: “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 the wars happening now and in the future be stopped immediately. May all the famines and disease be stopped immediately. May the dangers of fire, water, air and earth—may all global problems be stopped immediately. May perfect peace and happiness prevail in everyone's hearts by generating loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta.”

There was question on the iPad. The BBC asked what method is there to stop global problems. I told Roger I was thinking to translate the teachings Padmasambhava gave, which are a very detailed explanation of how opium and cigarettes harm the world. Not only health, it harms the world. It harms nagas, the cities of devas; it makes you lose your positive mind. I thought to translate it, to make it available, to send it to them because they asked a question. It doesn't matter where they believe it or not, because they asked the question, you just explain things like that, even if they don't believe it. Lhasa was cold but now it's become warm, because people smoke an unbelievable number of cigarettes. The Communist Chinese smoke so many cigarettes. That happened in Lhasa. This is what I thought.

Then, “May I cherish every sentient being more than the sky filled with wish-granting jewels.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, all the three-time merits collected by the numberless sentient beings and the numberless buddhas, may any sentient being who sees me, who hears me, who hears my name, who remembers me, who touches me, who even sees photos of

me, just by that may they be free from all suffering. May all their suffering be pacified immediately. May they achieve all the happiness immediately, including enlightenment.

“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 exist in mere name but do not exist from their own side, which are totally empty from their own side, may the I who exists in mere name, who does not exist from its own side, who is totally empty from its own side, achieve buddhahood, which exists in mere name, which does not exist from its own side, which is totally empty from its own side, and lead all sentient beings, who exist in mere name, to that buddhahood, which exists in mere name, by myself alone who exists in mere name.”

[Mandala offering and long-life prayer to Lama Zopa Rinpoche]

OK, thank you very much. Good night.

I saw at a temple in Malaysia there were three statues who spoke. I think there is a month they spoke. There was a news reporter who asked questions, but she could not understand them. There were two statues of the Buddha—not the Buddha, I don’t know, maybe Chenrezig, maybe Samantabhadra. Its mouth opened and it talked but the news lady could not understand it. Only the Chinese temple man who gives prediction could understand the two buddhas talking, but not always. They only did that for a few weeks. The news reporter was either unable to hear them or could not understand them. Only the temple man. It was something like that, quite a number of years ago. Thank you. That is the news.

Lecture 12: December 18



Preliminary Teachings to a Vajrasattva Jenang

[Rinpoche and students recite *Prayers before Teachings*]

So, the importance of practicing Vajrasattva.

[Referring to the audio in the gompa being very loud] I think the whole world can hear the sound! All sentient beings, even the ants and slugs, can hear! In Dharamsala, it's very foggy and there are lots of slugs on the road outside Tushita Dharamsala. Even they can hear my mumbling.

Vajrasattva is a very common practice, well-known in all four traditions: the Nyingma, Kagyü, Sakya and Gelug. The Buddha manifested into Vajrasattva and taught it. For all of you who have taken a highest tantra initiations, it is part of the practice to recite the hundred-syllable mantra at least twenty-one times. If you recite the Vajrasattva mantra twenty-one times, whatever negative karma you have collected with your body, speech and mind today will be purified. And not only that, the past negative karmas will be purified, not only from this life but also from all lives before this life. By reciting the mantra twenty-one times, today's negative karma does not multiply the next day; it does not become double.

Kyabje Chöden Rinpoche explained that negative karma [not purified] increases by double tomorrow. I don't remember exactly but Rinpoche said something like how the number increases the next day, it becomes double. That is common but I think the way Rinpoche counts is that it becomes double the next day and then triple on the third day. All the negative karmas collected with body, speech and mind today become triple.

It is very important to understand this. Whether you have taken the initiation or not, unless you recite Vajrasattva, unless you do the Vajrasattva practice at the end of the day, if you fail to purify it, one small negative karma collected today increases day by day. You must understand deeply that even if the negative karma is very small, it increases day by day and by the time you die it becomes like a mountain. I'm talking about one small negative karma, one light negative karma. By increasing day by day, it becomes like a mountain, like atoms increasing and becoming a mountain when you die. So, every day, every hour, every minute, every second you collect negative karma with your body, speech and mind, and when you don't do Vajrasattva, it increases day by day and each one becomes like a mountain. You have to know that in your heart. That is very important.

I think it was Sakya Pandita who said,

To the wise man, even a great negativity becomes small; to the fool, even a small negativity becomes huge. [32]

For the foolish one who does not know Vajrasattva practice, even though their negative karma is very small, it increases day by day and by the time they die, it becomes like a mountain. Then, they are forced to wander in the lower realms as a hell being, a hungry ghost or an animal for eons and eons. You see what happens? You cannot even hear a human voice for eons. There's nothing but incredible suffering, for eons and eons.

You have to know that. You have to know how important it is to practice Vajrasattva, whether you have taken the initiation or not. It's so important!

Sakya Pandita then said that even though the learned ones have created heavy negative karma, because they know the Vajrasattva practice, they can purify it. Even though when they created it, the negative karma was heavy, they know the Vajrasattva practice and can purify it, so it becomes small. That is very good to know. You have to know how important it is to recite Vajrasattva every day, whether you have taken the initiation or not.

If you cannot memorize the hundred-syllable mantra, you can recite OM VAJRASATTVA HUM, the short one, twenty-eight times. If you recite that, you stop today's negative karma increasing and becoming double tomorrow. You have to recite OM VAJRASATTVA HUM twenty-eight times to have that power.

The other thing is that some people say they do not want to take the initiation because they cannot keep the bodhisattva and tantric vows. They think it is very heavy to break the vows, therefore they can't practice like that. Lama Atisha told the story of two Drepung geshe who thought like this. He said it was like the blind yak eating grass. One eye was blind so it could not eat all the grass. [Because it couldn't see it], there was still a lot of grass left when it thought it had finished.

In the bodhisattva vows, there are eighteen root downfalls and forty-six secondary vices and the tantric vows have fourteen root downfalls as well as the secondary vices, and there are six types of mother tantra samayas with those special tantric secondary vows. If we break them, we accumulate vices, like dust continuously coming. We would become filled with dust. But Lama Atisha explained that doing Vajrasattva even once we are able to completely clear the dust. Just once will heal us. Just one time, even though there is so much dust.

When we break the secondary vices, those difficult ones, we constantly receive vices. When we leave a car outside without a cover, the whole car gets covered with dust. That is why many people use covers. Once the car is covered, the dust is completely gone. Vajrasattva is like the cover for a car. If we know Vajrasattva, if we practice the long mantra even just twenty-one times or the short one twenty-eight times, it is unbelievably easy to clean the mind, to purify the mind. Because our mind has not achieved the realizations of renunciation, bodhicitta, and not even common path of the lamrim, of course we receive the vices, especially those subtle ones. But then, there is this practice of Vajrasattva. With Vajrasattva, all the vices are completely purified.

Of course, if we do the practice very strictly in order to get realizations, we are able to keep the vows more and more purely. Lama Atisha explained that even though he did not break the pratimoksha vows or the bodhisattva vows, not even the forty-six secondary vices, he sometimes broke the tantric vows—not the main ones, the root downfalls, but those hard ones, the secondary vices, the subtle ones. He therefore always carried a small Kadampa stupa with his own guru's relics inside, and if something happened even on the road while traveling, and he incurred some vices, if he broke some tantric samayas, the secondary subtle ones, he would suddenly put the stupa there and do prostrations and make confession. He used the Kadampa stupa he always carried with him like that. That is something you should know.

That is why the Vajrasattva practice is so important. Especially if you have taken initiations such as highest tantra ones, the Vajrasattva practice is so important. Each time you do it, it cleans away all the vices that you received. I don't remember the verses, but there is a tantric text that says if you recite the Vajrasattva mantra a hundred thousand times, even the tantric root vows are completely purified.

Generally if you are doing the retreat of the practice of purification, practicing purification every day, there is Vajrasattva, but there are other practices as well, such as prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas. With Lama Tsongkhapa, whereas in his life story you hear he did Vajrasattva so many times, you don't hear how he did prostrations while reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas, although he did. For a long time I thought he had done 700,000 Vajrasattva prostrations, but his life story explained he did so much more.

At the beginning, because he recited the mantra without *de zhin sheg pa*, “suchness,” he saw Thirty-five Buddhas but without heads, but afterwards he added *de zhin sheg pa*, which explained the qualities, that phenomena do not exist from their own side, that existing from there is a hallucination. Because they are totally empty of existing from their own side, the omniscient mind seeing every single existent phenomenon as it is, which is empty, not existing from its own side. Seeing all phenomena, past, present, and future, like that as they are, as empty, that is suchness, *de zhin sheg pa*. When he added that, he saw the Thirty-five Buddhas with all their heads. Usually if you want to express the Buddha's name, that is one, but *de zhin sheg pa* expresses the qualities. Then, rainfalls of realizations happen so easily, all the way up to enlightenment.

When I asked Kyabje Denma Locho Rinpoche about this, writing to him from Australia, Rinpoche said, “Oh, you sent an order! Like the king gives an order to the population!” I think he said that because I voiced myself a bit strongly, he thought I was giving an order. But he answered why. He said when you recite the Thirty-five Buddhas once, you should do it according to the prayer, with the four opponent powers: the power of dependence, the power of regret, the power of resolve and the power of the remedy.

The power of regret is reflecting on the shortcomings of the negative karma [you have done], so that you feel regret for having done it. Reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas is the power of the remedy [in this practice]. And then, the power of resolve is the determination not to commit that action again.

Reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas prayer, even just once—if you do it exactly according to that, with the practice of the four opponent powers—has the power to purify even the very heavy negative karma of having killed your father or mother, or an arhat who is free from samsara, having caused blood to flow from a buddha or having caused disunity among the Sangha. These are the five immediate negativities, the five heavy negative karmas without break, where the karma is so heavy that you go straight to the eighth hot hell, the inexhaustible hot hell, where the suffering is unbearable. If you are born there, the lifespan is one eon.

Even if this world becomes empty, its time finished, and there is no hell of this world, there are numberless other universes so, because your karma is not finished, you get born in another hell realm in another universe until your negative karma is finished. But just by doing the Thirty-five Buddhas prayer well once, it has power to purify the five immediate negativities that cause you to be born in the lowest hot hell and all the other negative karmas get postponed. Rinpoche answered like that.

So, along with the Vajrasattva practice, in the Lama Tsongkhapa tradition, reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas prayer and doing prostrations is very common. Many people do that. Many lamrim lineage lamas, by reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas, do a thousand prostrations every day, or several hundred, or one hundred. That is very common in the Lama Tsongkhapa tradition.

Purifying the Results of Killing

I'll tell you this. For a negative karma to be complete we need four things. For example, with killing, the first things is *zhi*, meaning the object or base, which is the sentient being we kill. Then there is *sampa*, the thought to kill; *jorwa*, the action of killing; and *tarthug*, the completion, which for killing is the other being—the animal or human being—dying before we do. *Zhi, sampa, jorwa, tarthug*, these four things. When the negative karma has these four things gathered, the karma is complete.

For that, there is the power of dependence, *ten gyi thob*. We purify the negative karma collected with sentient beings with the bodhicitta practice. We purify the negative karma collected with the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha by taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Then, by thinking of the shortcomings of the negative karma, we feel regret. People in the West think that anything related to regret is bad, that it is negative. But here it is positive. You have to understand why it is positive. Because it purifies our negative karma. Do you understand? It is different from the Western system. It is positive because it purifies our negative karma; our suffering becomes less. It is like medicine. Our negative karma becomes less; our negative karma gets purified. Do you understand?

Then, the power of the remedy. In Tibetan it's *nyenpa kuntu chopai thob*, which I'm not a hundred percent sure but I think it means always enjoying, always engaging. That remedy is reciting the Vajrasattva mantra. Then, we determine to not commit the action again, the power of resolve. Do you understand?

There are four opponent powers because a complete negative karma has these four things. Sorry, I made a little bit of a mistake. The results of the negative karma, the ripened-aspect result is rebirth in the lower realms. There are three suffering results when we are reborn in the human realm, but the ripened-aspect result of rebirth in the hell realm is the heaviest suffering.

A text I saw of a great lama mentioned that by killing a sentient being, the ripened aspect result [is rebirth in hell] for one eon. Then, there are the three other suffering results we experience in the human realm. For example, the possessed result of killing is to be born in a very dusty place, a very sad, very depressed place, where there is nothing green or pleasant. Because we harmed others, the place has a lot of war, a lot of contagious diseases; there is a lot of harm to our life. That is what we get by harming others. Do you understand? You have to know that. If we do not want to be sick, if we do not want problems in our life, we have to abstain from harming others; we have to abstain from negative karma. A place with a lot of danger, with a lot of harm to our life—that is the possessed result.

Then, there is experiencing the result similar to the cause. I want to tell you this. We experience being killed by other people. Other people cause danger to our life. That is experiencing the result similar to the cause of killing. It comes from our past karma of killing others.

For one complete negative karma [of killing] that has these four aspects gathered, there is the ripened aspect result, which is rebirth in the lower realms, then, in the human realm, there is the possessed result and experiencing the result similar to the cause, where our life is in danger. We experience being killed by another person due to our past karma of killing others.

In America, it has happened many times that anybody, even children, can have guns. I think there is a gun that can shoot many bullets. Trump said this was very good, and he allowed people to have these guns. Anyway, I forget exactly where they came from, but it has happened many times again and again that children in school killed many people.

Two or three years ago, a man killed many people in a theatre. He was just a normal working person. They thought he might be a strange person, so they checked, as many people would freak out if he was a strange person, but they found his life was quite normal, like themselves. Just as they had jobs, he did the same thing. There was nothing strange in his whole life, but that day he killed many people in the theatre. They were so shocked that he was not a strange person but the same as them.

They could not explain why he killed many people that day because they don't know karma; they don't know Dharma.

This man on CNN, what is his name? Anderson Cooper. He is the main attraction on CNN. Anderson Cooper really wanted to know why it happened. He was asking people in the street why it happened. He knew they did not know the answer, but he was so eager to know. He didn't ask His Holiness! That is experiencing the result similar to the cause. Those people killed by that man or those who are killed by a child from time to time, are experiencing the result similar to the cause, the result of their karma done in the past, having killed others. That is why the child killed many people, or that man killed so many people that day, even though he was the same as the people who checked on him.

The other result is creating the result similar to the cause. That means [because of our habit], we do it again. There is a Kopan monk, Norbu Lamsang. He is not here; he is in Italy working as a translator. He was working in our kitchen during Lama's time. He was not the main cook but was helping or something, when he was beaten by Lama Pasang. I don't know what it was but he had stolen something. He told me that, even though he knew that stealing is bad, it was no good, he had no choice. Even though he knew it was bad to steal, the idea of stealing came so strongly. That is very interesting. That is creating the result similar to the cause. Not only stealing but other actions we know to be bad, because the urge is so powerful, we have very little control; we engage in that action uncontrollably. Do you understand? That is the result of past negative karma creating the result similar to the cause.

Because of these four things, the Vajrasattva practice is the perfect confession. When we do the Vajrasattva practice even twenty-one times, with the remedy of the four opponent powers gathered, that is the perfect confession, the most powerful purification. Otherwise, it is not the perfect confession.

If you want to write it down, the meaning of the mantra is this. DORJE SEMPA... "you Vajrasattva generated." THUG means the bodhicitta benefiting sentient beings, so DORJE SEMPA... "you Vajrasattva generated the thought." [Tibetan] SAMAYA means "commitment," like the samaya to liberate the mother sentient beings from samsara, the holy mind is enriched in that simultaneous holy action. What is the holy action? It is liberating mother sentient beings from samsara. "With great happiness." [Tibetan] Whatever kind of life I have, a happy or unhappy one, "With great happiness I never give up my guide." [Tibetan] "The realizations of the paths and bhumis." [Tibetan] "To stabilize the qualities of the higher realm," to actualize the eight common siddhis and the sublime mahamudra realization, enlightenment. And then maybe I left one out! "To generate the five wisdoms," HA HA HA HA HOH, the five wisdoms. [Tibetan] "Please make this happen in my heart." Maybe there is one left, I'm not sure. OK, that's the main meaning. These are each pieces of Sanskrit, but if you integrate everything, what it means is like this.

I don't clearly remember the meaning of OM VAJRASATTVA HUM, the short one, but it doesn't matter. OK, that's it. Now quickly.

If you can pay attention to the Vajrasattva practice every day, that is an unbelievable practice for you. It purifies however many negative karmas are collected in this life, every negative karma. It is unbelievable. As the saying says, even though the wise one's negative karma is great, it becomes small for those knowing Vajrasattva. That is unbelievable. Because you always do Vajrasattva practice, which is unbelievable purification, there is no reason to fear death. Even when death happens, your mind is happy. There is no need to be concerned about being reborn in the lower realms. Then, you can achieve enlightenment quickly.

Repaying the Kindness of Sentient Beings

The person who abuses us, who is angry at us, who hurts us, who always complains or whatever, that person is obscured and suffering. Seeing that, great compassion is generated. Great compassion

is generated depending on that person. And from great compassion, bodhicitta is generated. From bodhicitta, the bodhisattva happens. From a bodhisattva, a buddha happens. From a buddha, the Buddha's holy actions happen. The Buddha has two holy actions, one possessed by the Buddha's own mind and one within us—our own virtuous thoughts and virtuous actions are this second type of the Buddha's holy action. The Buddha's holy action is within us sentient beings. Our good karma is the Buddha's holy action.

From the Buddha's holy action, which means from our virtuous actions, all happiness comes. From beginningless rebirths, now and in the future, all the way up to enlightenment, all our past, present and future happiness all comes from our virtuous actions, which is the Buddha's holy action. Do you understand?

Even when we are tired, when we are feeling hot and a cooling breeze passes over our head or something, the pleasure we feel comes from the Buddha's holy action, from our good karma. Because the Buddha's holy action comes from the Buddha, *all* our past happiness from beginningless rebirths, all the happiness we have now and all the happiness we will have in the future, up to enlightenment, all comes from our good karma, even every single pleasure in a dream. Therefore, every single happiness comes from the Buddha.

Every single happiness comes from the Buddha; the Buddha comes from the bodhisattva; the bodhisattva comes from bodhicitta; bodhicitta comes from great compassion; and great compassion comes from that person who abused us, the obscured suffering sentient being. Compassion comes from them; compassion comes by depending on them. All our past, present and future happiness, every single pleasure, comes from them, the person who abuses us, the person who always hurts us, whatever.

Like that, we receive all our past, present and future happiness from every sentient being: from the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals—the ants, mosquitoes, the tiniest flies—the numberless human beings, the numberless sura beings, the numberless asura beings—from everyone we receive every single happiness, every single pleasure. That is unbelievable.

I don't think I mentioned this during the course, but when we go for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, we are not only liberated from getting reborn in the suffering of the lower realms, we are liberated from samsara, from lower nirvana, and we are brought to enlightenment. And after we achieve enlightenment, we can liberate numberless sentient beings from samsara and bring them to full enlightenment. That is the main reason for taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Now, where did the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha come from? From all the numberless sentient beings. From every sentient being, including this person who abuses us, who hurts us all the time. All the numberless buddhas, the numberless Buddha, Dharma and Sangha come from this person. Because they come from every sentient being, they come from this person! The numberless Buddha, Dharma and Sangha we take refuge in all come from this person. Therefore, we get all these benefits from this person who abuses us, who hurts us.

Therefore, this person is *most* kind, *most* precious, *most* dear to us. They are our wish-fulfilling gem. This person abuses us because we abused them in the past. It is the result of our karma, the result of how we treated this person in the past. As I mentioned the other day, whatever suffering we experience is because of what we did to those sentient beings in the past; it is the result of that. Otherwise, there is no harm we can receive without having harmed them before.

On top of that, they have been our mother from beginningless rebirths. As our mother, they gave birth to us, they protected us. Especially with a human rebirth, if the mother had not given us a human rebirth, if she had an abortion, we would not be here; we would have no opportunity to hear, to learn, to read, to write, to know the Dharma and achieve the three great meanings for sentient beings: achieving a higher rebirth and being free from samsara, and achieving nirvana and enlightenment. This would not happen, but because the mother gave us this precious human

body—she did not have an abortion—with this unbelievable kindness we can do all this. This is unbelievable. It's amazing. Then, she protected us a hundred times each day from obstacles, and she bore so many unbelievable hardships for us. She gave us an education. And she has done this from beginningless rebirths.

As our mother, all sentient beings have shown us the most unbelievable kindness. Therefore, we must repay that kindness. Just giving them money, food, shelter and so forth is good, but that alone does not become the answer. They have been Indra, Brahma, universal kings; they have had all the wealth in the past, but they still did not become free from samsara. What they need is to become free from samsara; what they need is to achieve enlightenment. That is what we need to help them do, in order to repay their kindness.

Now, generate great loving kindness thinking, “How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were to have happiness. I will cause them to have happiness. I take the responsibility for their happiness. How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were to be free from samsara. I will do that. I will free them from the oceans of samsaric sufferings. I must free them from samsara and bring them to enlightenment by myself alone. By myself alone!”

Even though there are numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas helping sentient beings every second, this is our responsibility, because all our three-time happiness is all due to the kindness of sentient beings. The opportunity to practice the Dharma now is by the kindness of sentient beings. Therefore, all our happiness is received by the kindness of sentient beings. So, even though there are numberless buddhas, Dharma and Sangha helping them, it is still our responsibility to free them from oceans of samsaric sufferings and to bring them to enlightenment by ourselves alone.

Therefore think, “I must achieve the state of omniscience otherwise I cannot do perfect work for sentient beings. Therefore, I'm going to take the Vajrasattva initiation, the *jenang*, the permission to practice.”

[The transcript of the Vajrasattva *jenang* is not available]

Endnotes

Cover image of Lama Zopa Rinpoche at the Maitreya School, Bodhgaya, India, 2018. Photo by Ven. Lobsang Sherab. Cover design by Gopa & Ted2, Inc. Interior images of Rinpoche teaching during the 51st Kopan Course in 2018. Photos by Venerable Roger Kunsang.

- [1.](#) See *FPMT Essential Prayer Book*, p. 79.
- [2.](#) See *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* (LTWA).
- [3.](#) Vv. 16 and 17. See studybuddhism.com/en/tibetan-buddhism/original-texts/sutra-texts/lamp-for-the-path-to-enlightenment.
- [4.](#) See *FPMT Essential Prayer Book*, p. 79.
- [5.](#) Sarganatha Secondary School is located in Chailsa, a remote village in Solu Khumbu district, Nepal.
- [6.](#) Rinpoche said Ching dynasty, however, he is referring to the Ming dynasty, which ruled China from 1368 to 1644.
- [7.](#) Jamchen Choje Shākya Yeshe (1354–1435), a close disciple of Lama Tsongkhapa, first travelled to China in 1414. Read his biography in [The Treasury of Lives](#).
- [8.](#) Also translated as form, feeling, discriminative awareness, compositional factors and consciousness.
- [9.](#) See *FPMT Essential Prayer Book*, p. 79.
- [10.](#) See *FPMT Essential Prayer Book*, p. 79.
- [11.](#) Lingrepa (1128–88) was a great lay practitioner and important Kagyü teacher; the Drukpa Kagyü line originated from him.
- [12.](#) Quoted in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* (Wisdom Publications), p. 335.
- [13.](#) Geshe Chengawa (1033–1103) was one of Dromtönpa's main disciples.
- [14.](#) Quoted in *The Heart of the Path* (LYWA), p. 114.
- [15.](#) Quoted in *The Heart of the Path* (LYWA), p. 171.
- [16.](#) Also known as Gyalse Ngulchu Thogme. A great master of the Nyingma and Sakya traditions and author of *Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva* and a famous commentary on Shantideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*.
- [17.](#) See *The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas* (Snow Lion), v. 24. Rinpoche's original translation was "When we encounter disharmony, we look at it as a hallucination. That is the practice of a bodhisattva." But as it is definitely from the *Thirty-Seven Practices*, this is as close as I could find.
- [18.](#) See the *King of Concentration Sutra* (*Samadhirajasutra*), ch. 9, at read.84000.co/translation/UT22084-055-001.html.
- [19.](#) Quoted in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, p. 247.
- [20.](#) Quoted in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, pp. 429–30.
- [21.](#) Quoted in Geshe Sopa's *Steps on the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. 2 (Wisdom Publications), p. 324.
- [22.](#) See *Assutava Sutta: The Spiritually-Unlearned* at accessinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.061.niza.html.
- [23.](#) Ibid.
- [24.](#) See *The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*, v. 11.

25. I have been unable to verify this quote but it closely resembles one from Nagarjuna's *Heart of Dependent Arising* quoted below.
26. See *The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*, v. 4.
27. See *Steps on the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. 2, p. 346.
28. Lama Tsongkhapa completed 3,500,000 prostrations to the Thirty-Five Confession Buddhas. See treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Tsongkhapa/TBRC_p64.
29. From the *Seven-point Mind Training* taken from *Mind Training: The Great Collection* (Wisdom Publications), p. 83.
30. Ch. 36, vv. 23–24. *The [Sutra of the Samadhi of the] Lamp of the Moon* (*Candrapradipasamadhisutra*) is another name for the *King of Concentration Sutra* (*Samadhirajasutra*). See read.84000.co/translation/UT22084-055-001.html.
31. Vv. 16 and 17. Translated by Alex Berzin. See studybuddhism.com/en/tibetan-buddhism/original-texts/sutra-texts/lamp-for-the-path-to-enlightenment.
32. Quoted in a slightly different translation in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, 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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About Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive



The LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE (LYWA) is the collected works of Lama Thubten Yeshe (1935–84) and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche (1945–2023). Rinpoche founded the ARCHIVE in 1996.

The Lamas began teaching at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, in 1970. Since then, their teachings have been recorded and transcribed. At present the Archive contains recordings from over 2,100 teaching events encompassing approximately 18,000 hours of audio, almost 16,000 transcripts, hundreds of video recordings and over 75,000 images. Many recordings, mostly teachings by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, remain to be transcribed, and most of those transcripts have been neither checked nor edited.

The work of the LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE falls into two categories: preservation and publication.

Preservation involves managing the collection of audio recordings, unedited and edited transcripts, photos, videos, and rare historical artefacts—pre-digital images, and analog film and audio—sourced from Dharma centers and private collections around the world. Original media are digitized and catalogued, after which they are stored safely while being kept accessible for further work.

The collection is being migrated to AssetBank, a digital asset management system that ensures the collection will be safely preserved and easily managed for many years into the future. LYWA works collaboratively with the FPMT to maintain all archival materials in AssetBank.

Other archiving activities include organizing audio transcription and producing checked transcripts that are made available to editors or others doing research on or practicing these teachings. We also work with images of the Lamas, preserving and digitizing the originals, cataloguing them in our image archive, and optimizing them for use in digital and print publications.

Publication involves making the Lamas' teachings and images available in all ways possible to reach interested practitioners round the world. We prepare materials for publication through various avenues including books for free distribution and sale; ebooks on a wide range of readers; a monthly eletter (see below); social media; online videos, audiobooks, multimedia and podcasts; and on our

website. We also support the translation of LYWA publications into more than nineteen languages. In all cases, the teachings require a significant amount of work to prepare them for publication.

This is just a summary of what we do. The ARCHIVE was established with virtually no seed funding and has developed solely through the kindness of many people. Our further development depends upon the generosity of those who see the benefit and necessity of this work, and we would be extremely grateful for your help. If you would like to contribute to help us accomplish any of the above tasks or to sponsor books for free distribution, please contact us:

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The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) is an international organization of Buddhist meditation, study and retreat centers, both urban and rural, monasteries, 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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The Buddhadharma is the true source of happiness for all sentient beings. Books like this show you how to put the teachings into practice and integrate them into your life, whereby you get the happiness you seek. Therefore, anything containing Dharma teachings, the names of your teachers or holy images is more precious than other material objects and should be treated with respect. To avoid creating the karma of not meeting the Dharma again in future lives, please do not put books (or other holy objects) on the floor or underneath other stuff, step over or sit upon them, or use them for mundane purposes such as propping up wobbly chairs or tables. They should be kept in a clean, high place, separate from worldly writings, and wrapped in cloth when being carried around. These are but a few considerations.

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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.

