

Kopan Course No. 27

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Lecture One: November 30, 1994

REFUGE

Before the talk, we take refuge and generating the bodhicitta.

“I go for refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha until I achieve enlightenment.”

Here it involves two practices, the causal refuge and the resultant refuge. “Until I achieve enlightenment,” that contains resultant refuge. So first begin with the causal refuge, by actualizing the actual refuge, that which actually, directly cures the disease, the medicine. So, Dharma is like the medicine, the actual refuge, that which is remedy to the disease, that which cures, that which stops, the sicknesses. Dharma is the medicine, the remedy to cease completely the suffering, the cycle of death and rebirth and all the problems between, all of that which is contained in the suffering of pain, the suffering of changes—the temporary samsaric pleasures, which if you analyze... when you do not analyze it looks like pleasure but when we analyze, what we discover is only suffering, nothing else than that. Only when we do not analyze, when we let our mind stay under the delusion of the concept of inherent existence, the hallucinated mind, then that which is suffering, we are not realizing that it is suffering, as it appeared as pleasure, and then believing that is true, that it is the reality. So that is another wrong concept.

When we let our mind remain under this wrong concept, the hallucinatory mind, then these feelings appear as pleasure, as pure happiness, as real happiness. But the minute when we analyze what it is exactly, how it arises, when we analyze, when we check, it's only suffering. Because of that, it doesn't last. That's why however much you put effort into that, it doesn't last.

This feeling that appears as pleasure cannot be developed, it cannot be increased by putting effort, by continuing the action which we normally believe is the cause of the pleasure, is creating this pleasure, what you normally believe as a cause. Instead, the more you continue the action, instead of increasing, the pleasure only decreases. By continuing the action the pleasure is gone, it becomes the suffering of pain. Besides this, the temporary samsaric pleasures, the feeling, the sensation that, “This is suffering,” the duration of this feeling is unnoticeable to one's own mind because it is subtle or small, very small. During this duration the discomfort is subtle or small. During this duration while it is unnoticeable to one's own mind then, one's own mind makes up the label 'pleasure' and then, after that, appears as pleasure.

When it appears, first your own mind makes up the label “pleasure” then after that, the result of that, is appearance of pleasure. That after, when the pleasure appears, after the label, then the pleasure does not appear to one's own mind as if it is merely labeled. “This is just now merely labeled by one's own mind,” didn't appear to oneself, the pleasure didn't appear this way. It appears, even though right now, with this minute, this second, it is a label of your own mind, when it appears to you it doesn't appear that way. It appears as not merely labeled by the mind. This appearance is the object to be refuted—from the four schools, the Buddhist philosophers, the fourth one Madhyamaka school, the second division of that one, the Prasangika school—for that school this is the subtle object to be refuted. However, it appears like this and then it is believed that is true. So one lets one's own mind believe that that is true and that is nature, that's the reality. That is nature means, is not talking about nature of emptiness or dependent arising, that which exist, it is talking about nature which doesn't exist, the inherent existent nature.

Then, so we let our mind believe, to apprehend, that the pleasure which appears is not merely labeled by the mind, but that is nature, that this is reality. Then on that basis, you see, then one lets one's own mind believe that this is not suffering, that it is pure happiness, pure pleasure.

Then after creating all these, after making all these projections, all these hallucinations, then attachment arises and one grasps or clings on that. That experience of attachment, that experience is very difficult to separate from that object, you see, so painful to separate away from that object. So that is the experience, the nature of the attachment.

While we are experiencing the three types of samsaric sufferings, the suffering of suffering that even animals do not want to experience, besides human beings, the suffering of changes and pervasive compounded sufferings, while we are experiencing these, which are the result of the past disturbing thoughts and karma, constantly emotions such as the attachment, clinging to the feeling that which is suffering but appears as pleasure, clinging to this again becomes the chain to tie oneself to samsara. Again tying ourselves to samsara, with this wrong concept, this disturbing thought, this attachment. The hallucinatory mind, apprehending the suffering as pleasure, as the pure happiness, ties ourselves to samsara, along with the concept of inherently existent pleasure.

While we are experiencing that, these sufferings of suffering, these sufferings of the samsara, at the same time, without guarding our mind, without watching our mind, without protecting our mind, in other words without applying the meditation, without Dharma practice, without living with the mind in Dharma, then there is no protection for ourselves. Without the mind living in, the mind becoming Dharma, without the mind becoming lam-rim, there is no protection in our own life. We have no protection. Our mind is completely overpowered or controlled or invaded by the delusions, invaded by delusions, taking it over.

Like Tibet was overtaken or invaded by the communists, by mainland China, our own mind is completely controlled by the disturbing thoughts, leaving no freedom for us, no rest. There is no rest for us from sufferings. There is no rest, no freedom, no holiday, even for a minute, a second, from the suffering of samsara. It is like this without dharma, without the mind becoming Dharma, without the mind living in lam-rim, the steps of path to enlightenment. While we are experiencing these sufferings of the samsara, caused by the past disturbing thought and karma, we are also constantly creating the cause again, the cause of samsara.

By actualizing the actual refuge, Dharma, within our own mental continuum, the true path, the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, the true path and the cessation of the sufferings. By actualizing this actual refuge, Dharma, we are able to completely cease the whole, entire suffering, all these sufferings of samsara, by completely ceasing karma and the disturbing thoughts, including the seed of disturbing thought. By having actualized the Dharma, the true path and true cessation of the suffering, that which is the actual refuge, we ourselves become the Sangha. Then, by completing the Dharma, the path, by ceasing even the subtle obscurations, the subtle mistakes of the mind, we ourselves become the Buddha.

So you see, “until I achieve enlightenment,” this contains the wish to actualize the Dharma within our own mental continuum, the actual refuge, Dharma. Then we ourselves become the Sangha, and we become the Buddha. This is the result refuge.

We can't actualize the resultant refuge alone, therefore we have to rely upon the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, possessed by others' minds. We rely upon those who have actualized the actual refuge, Dharma, the true path and the true cessation of the sufferings and so forth actualized in others' minds. In the same way, we rely upon the Sangha and then the Buddha in others' minds.

It's like the person who wants to become a qualified doctor. By relying upon other qualified doctors who have perfect education, experience, we learn. Then by completing the study with that person, we become a qualified doctor ourselves.

As a practitioner of the Mahayana path, by looking at our own samsara, we see this is only in the nature of suffering. From that, we develop renunciation, the determination to be free from this, to be liberated from this. Secondly, by looking at how others are, how there are numberless sentient beings and they are also similar, being caught in samsara, experiencing the oceans of sufferings of the samsara, we generate compassion. Then thirdly, we develop full trust, faith, that the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha—and no one else, no others except the Dharma and Sangha—have the power to liberate us and all the mother sentient beings from the whole, entire suffering of samsara, including the cause, karma and delusion. Our own mind becomes perfected with the three causes of refuge; with our whole heart we rely upon the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. That is the Mahayana way of taking refuge.

GENERATING BODHICITTA

And then next, generating bodhicitta. “Due to the merits accumulated by making charity, and so forth,” which includes by practicing morality, patience, perseverance and so forth, “all the merits that have been accumulated, may I achieve full enlightenment, in order to benefit all the migratory beings.” We should remember that. Yesterday, or day before yesterday, as you have heard the evolution of the samsara, the twelve dependent related links, we and all other sentient beings being who are under the control of karma and delusion migrate again and again through one of these six realms, again and again. We experience the oceans of suffering in the past and are experiencing them now over and over again. Without freedom these mother sentient beings, being under the control of karma and delusion, always migrate through the six realms, always in one of the realms, again and again continuously experiencing the suffering of samsara, without having any freedom themselves.

When you recite the word “migratory” that contains the whole explanation of the twelve links, the whole evolution of the samsara, how samsara is created. How is samsara created? What causes these aggregates, this body and mind—our own and others—which is in the nature of suffering, which is the nature of problems? That is clearly shown from the teachings of the evolution of samsara, the twelve dependent-related links, when talks about explaining true suffering, then the true cause of suffering, the disturbing thoughts and karma.

“In order to benefit all the migrator beings.” We are not the only one suffering in samsara. We are not the only one with problems; it's not just ourselves alone. There are numberless other mother sentient beings who have similar problems, who have no freedom at all, constantly migrating in samsara, experiencing the oceans of samsaric suffering, being under the control of karma and delusion.

We generate bodhicitta while we are reciting these words, “in order to benefit for all the migratory beings,” by remembering that whole explanation, the migrators, the twelve links, sufferings of samsara, the whole explanation of that. While we are reciting the meditation prayer, it becomes very effective for the mind. There is no choice, compassion has to arise when we look at the numberless others who are completely overwhelmed by sufferings and cause of sufferings. No choice compassion has to rise and no choice we have to do something. We have got to do something for them. We have got to help them. We can't not help, no choice. And then, whatever method, wisdom, that we have to do something to help all these numberless migratory beings who have been our own mother numberless times and been kind to us like that.

THE KINDNESS OF MOTHER SENTIENT BEINGS

Not only being kind to us by being our mother, but being kind even at other times. Being kind while our mother, that is just one part, but there is much more, there is other much greater, more extensive kindness, that each of the sentient being have given to us. There is more extensive kindness than having been our mother and giving us a human body, giving us the opportunity to practice Dharma. They are being kind to us by giving us hundreds of their lives each day. In other words, by saving our own life, having saved our own life from hundreds of life dangers each and every day. Then having led us in the path to the world, in education. Then, bearing so much hardship in order to take care of us, for our happiness. They have been kind in these four ways, the kindness of being mother and then the kindness of these four ways, numberless times to ourselves in addition to just being our mother. That kindness has been given to us by all migrating beings in samsara,. Think how much they have been suffering continuously since time without beginning, how long they have been suffering. If there is already strong compassion, the bodhicitta that we generate becomes that much stronger.

So now, we're going to recite the meditation prayer, taking refuge and generating bodhicitta. So as I just explained, even if we can't remember the more extensive way I've just mentioned briefly, at least remember the meaning.

“I go for refuge to Buddha, Dharma, Sangha until I achieve the full enlightenment. Due to the merits accumulated by me through charity and so forth, may I achieve full enlightenment in order to benefit for all the migratory beings.”

This time, listening to the teaching, to the explanation of of the teaching, dedicating the merits of this. We should think, you should recite or think, “Due to the merits,” from your side, “of listening to the Dharma,” then from my side, “Due to the merits of explaining the Dharma,” “may I achieve full enlightenment in order to benefit for all the migratory beings.”

SANG GYÄ CHHÖ DANG TSHOG KYI CHHOK NAM LA
JANG CHHUP BAR DU DAG NI KYAB SU CHHI
DAG GI JIN SOG GYI PÄI TSHOG NAM KYI
DRO LA PHÄN CHHIR SANG GYÄ DRUBPAR SHOG

[Lama Zopa Rinpoche chants in Tibetan]

THE RARITY OF THIS PRECIOUS HUMAN REBIRTH

The great pandit Shantideva in the *Bodhicaryavatara* says,

These freedoms and riches are extremely difficult to find.
[They accomplish what is meaningful for all beings.]
If we don't achieve the benefit with this body
How can we achieve it in the future?¹

What the great pandit Shantideva says is that at this time we have received the precious human body. Not just a human body but a *special* human body, which is qualified with eight freedoms and ten riches. If we don't benefit while we have this body, when can we even do it in the

¹ Ch. 1 v. 4.

future? With this body, in this life, we can achieve the three great meanings: the happiness of future lives, long-term temporal happiness, then ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara, and finally the great liberation, full enlightenment. There is no question, within one day, within one hour, one minute, even within a second, whatever happiness we wish we can achieve. With this body, we can create however many causes of this happiness we wish to create.

The conclusion, the very bottom reason, the conclusion, is that we wish happiness, whatever one we are looking for, and what we don't want to experience is suffering. If that is the case, then we must achieve these benefits, we must achieve these great meanings, in *this* body. In this body, while we have this precious human body qualified with eight freedoms and ten richnesses. For example, to achieve full enlightenment within one life, you know, it is impossible other than with this perfect human body, which happens in this southern continent, this continent where we are now—only in this world, in this southern continent, only with this precious human body can we achieve full enlightenment in one life.

Even though there are other human worlds, the beings there cannot achieve this, cannot achieve full enlightenment in one life. It is impossible to achieve full enlightenment in one life in other human worlds, with human bodies in other worlds. It's impossible due to heavier obscurations and so forth, due to many obstacles it's not possible.

In all the six realms, we can achieve full enlightenment in one life *only* in this southern continent *only* with the human body that we have now, that we have now received. By realizing this, this special benefit, the qualities of this special benefit, of having this human body of the southern continent, makes us realize how this body that we have now, how it is so precious, so unbelievably precious.

Without talking about this complete enlightenment, even to achieve the happiness of this life, to achieve a deva's body or a human body and so forth, to achieve liberation from samsara and so forth, we cannot achieve that if we don't have the benefit of this perfect human body. Without this perfect human body it is extremely difficult. With the body of a lower realm being which is extremely overwhelmed, possessed by very heavy sufferings there is no opportunity to practice Dharma, no opportunity to achieve the benefit that this great, meaningful human body can. Even with other bodies of the happy migratory beings—with a deva's body or with a body of the human being of the other worlds—it is extremely difficult to achieve this great meaning, this great benefit.

The last line asks, "How can we achieve this perfect human body in the future?" That implies that if we can't make it meaningful now, it will be very difficult to find again. "How can we find it?" tells us we won't be able to find it again, we won't receive such a perfect human body again. Why? What Shantideva implies is that to create the cause to receive this perfect human body is extremely difficult. That is, if we did not practice morality, if we did not practice the cause of the body of the happy migratory being, morality, without talking about a *perfect* human body, just to receive an ordinary human body is not possible. It needs the preliminary cause, having practiced pure morality. Just to receive an ordinary human body, without talking about a perfect human body qualified with eight freedoms and ten richnesses, just to have a human body needs the main cause, pure morality, having practiced pure morality.

Generally speaking, even in the world, by looking outside in the world, seeing beings living purely, even seeing one who has taken the vows, the precepts, living purely, even living in only one vow, even in one precept—there are very few are like this that we see. However, human beings who *don't* live in morality, who don't practice morality, who don't live even in one

morality—there are so many. There is such a small number living purely but so many living without even one vow.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MORALITY

So, now, it is like this. If it is explained how to make preparations for death, and the path to cease the death, to never to have experience the suffering of death and rebirth, while we are experiencing death, how we can use the death on the path to enlightenment. While we are experiencing death, we can use that. How can we use that death on the path to achieve enlightenment? How can we use the death to be free from, to cease death? How can we use death as a path to cease the death, to cease the cycle of the suffering of death and rebirth? Even if the death happens, we don't have to be afraid, we don't have to be scared of it. We can enjoy the death. We can use death, the death experience, and transform it into happiness, instead of the death experience becoming terrifying, something to be afraid of. If we can transform it like that at the time of death, we don't have any worries, any fears, any doubts.

Especially, we can realize that when we die it's a way to leave this old body and take a fresh, new body that has better conditions to practice Dharma. Therefore, with that new body, we are able to develop the mind more fully on the path to enlightenment. That is the explanation of how we can even achieve the happiness of the future lives. Again, to receive the body of a happy migratory being, the cause is to practice morality, by taking the vows, the precepts, by practicing morality. Even when this is explained, if we are unable to practice morality, unable to take the precepts, that is due to the mind being overwhelmed by delusion. We are unable to practice morality even when this is explained because our mind overwhelmed by desire, clinging to this life and then the concept of permanence, the thought that we are going to live long. Every day, every day we have this concept of permanence, "I am going to live for a long time." This concept continues even on the same day that we are going to have a heart attack and die. On the same day one we going to have a car accident and die, we still hold this concept, "I am going to live for long time," that continues even on that day, even in that morning. This wrong concept "I am going to live for a long time" continues even up until the minute before the car accident is happening or just a minute before the airplane crash. This concept of permanence, "I am going to live for many years" continues even in the same day of the death. Even the minute before death, this wrong concept that we will live for a long time happens, even just the minute before death.

Therefore, there is nothing to trust in this belief. Believing, following, this concept of permanence, that we will live for many years, only becomes the basis for the arising of the delusions of anger, attachment and so forth. It becomes the basis for laziness. This concept of permanence causes us to put off the practice. It only delays the practice. Even when we think of Dharma, even if we think that to practice meditation is a good thing to do, even while we have an understanding that practicing Dharma is a good thing to do in life, still it is always put off. It is always put off, until next year, or in the future or next life, including practicing morality by taking precepts. This concept of permanence, that "I am going to live for a long time," this causes laziness and so forth; it is the basis for delusions, basis for the desire, the clinging to this life, the clinging to the comfort of this life and so forth. It doesn't let us practice Dharma. So now, even when we accept or understand that it is a good thing to do, we are still unable to practice.

Relating to oneself, even for one who has taken the vows, the precepts, it is extremely difficult to show one vow that is pure. Keeping one vow purely is difficult to find; very few really keep it purely. What's kept pure is only a very little number, if there are even any kept pure. Even after

hearing the Dharma, the cause of happiness, the cause of the future life, the good rebirth, the body of the happy migratory being, even after hearing that, protecting morality, making charity, which is the support for that, and then dedicating the merit, which connects our future life to the body of the happy migratory being, by listening to the teaching, by studying Dharma—even when we understand all this, that doesn't mean we are immediately able to practice. Even if we have the understanding, it is still difficult to take even the five precepts for a lifetime, even difficult to take even one precept for a lifetime. And difficult to take eight precepts for one day! So, people are unable to practice pure morality. Even relating to our own experience, it's difficult to practice morality, even if we have taken a vow, it's difficult to keep it pure. Leaving aside a perfect human body, without pure morality we cannot even receive an ordinary human body, a body that is just enough to receive the name “human” or “human body.” To even receive an ordinary human body depends on creating the cause, pure morality.

Even if we have practiced so much charity, giving things to other sentient beings, but not practiced morality, then without that morality, even though we have accumulated much merit by making charity to other sentient beings, the body that we will have to take after this life will be a body of a suffering migratory being: an animal rebirth as naga, a wealthy naga. Even though we have accumulated a lot of merit by making charity, without having practiced morality, this is what will happen in the future rebirth. Even having accumulated a lot of merit by having made charity, if we have taken a vow but let it degenerate, being unable to keep it purely, then this is also what happens, an animal rebirth in the next life, an animal rebirth such as naga, a wealthy naga, having lots of enjoyment, having lots of wealth, but still an animal body, which is not like our present body that has this unbelievable opportunity to achieve all these three great meanings, which is the basis for doing whatever we wish, attaining all these different levels of happiness; whatever we wish we can achieve.

Therefore, Shantideva is asking if we don't get to obtain benefit in this life then how can we find this perfect human body in the future life, which implies that we won't be able to achieve it.

In conclusion, as is mentioned in the teachings by the holy beings, to know what we have done in our past life has done, we should look at this present body. And to know where we will go in our next life, we should look at our present karma, our present actions. We can understand what have done in the past life by looking at the present human body. This precious human body we have received is a result of what we did in our own past life one. That means in the past life we have done a good job.

Having practiced pure morality and having practiced charity as we just spoke about, we dedicated the merits and that made it possible to have this precious human body, this perfect human body, in this life time. That means, in our past life we created the eighteen causes, as we have received a perfect human body this time. In our own past life we have created the eighteen causes, so in our past life we have done good, practicing Dharma. In our past life we succeeded, we did a good job. Now the question is what will happen to us in the next life? Where will we go? Will we go to the realms of the happy migratory beings or the suffering migratory realms? Where will we go? That is up to us. We can understand the answer to that question by examining the present karma, the present actions of our everyday life, our day to day life actions of body, speech and mind.

WHAT IS NONVIRTUOUS?

First, we must define the meaning of a nonvirtuous action, an action that brings a suffering result, such as the body of the suffering migratory being, a narak or hell being, a hungry ghost or

preta, an animal—an action that brings one of these suffering rebirths. The definition of a nonvirtue, of a nonvirtuous action is any action that brings the result of suffering, motivated by ignorance, desire or anger.

If you examine your actions as you are getting up and dressing in the morning, what motivation do you have? If you are just like me, whose mind has been so habituated to always living life under the control of delusion, then when you get up and dress in the morning, if you examine your motivation, you'll find your motivation is of attachment, clinging to this life's comfort. When you are washing, again the motivation is desire, attachment, clinging to this life, to this life's comfort. There is no renunciation; there is no bodhicitta, no right view. There is no Dharma, no lam-rim. There is neither the common path nor a tantra meditation. When you have breakfast the motivation is again the desire clinging to this life, nonvirtuous thoughts. Then when you go to work, again the motivation is not Dharma; again it's attachment, clinging to this life, clinging to this life's comfort, to pleasure, to this life's enjoyment. Again it becomes nonvirtuous. Because the motivation is nonvirtue, the action becomes nonvirtuous. For four hours or eight hours, how many hours you spend at work, it is like that. Talking to people in that day, again the motivation is not a Dharma motivation; there is no renunciation, no bodhicitta, no right view. There's no Dharma motivation. Again the motivation is desire, clinging to this life's comfort, which is nonvirtuous. So again all the actions of speech, talking, all become nonvirtue. Then every action of the body, wherever you go, shopping or going back to home or whatever, wherever you go, again the motivation is not Dharma, but the opposite. The motivation is not Dharma, the mind free mind from anger and attachment, clinging to this life; it's not a healthy mind. Instead it is the opposite to holy Dharma. The motivation is worldly dharma, that which receives the name "nonvirtue."

Why does it receive the name "nonvirtue?" Not simply anger, ignorance and desire clinging to this life, not simply that, but these actions make the mental continuum unpeaceful; the effect is unpeaceful, disturbing, obscuring. The effect we get from these thoughts in the mental continuum is not peace, not happiness. An action motivated by this results only in suffering. That's why this attitude receives the label "nonvirtue," by the function, by the effect, by the negative consequence. It has the negative effect, one opposite to peace and happiness. How many actions of eating and drinking that are done, all these are motivated by the desire clinging to this life, and so they're nonvirtue; all these actions become nonvirtue.

All the actions of the body, such as eating, drinking or walking, become nonvirtue. All the actions of eating become nonvirtue. Even going to bed at the end of day again the motivation is difficult to find it becoming Dharma. It's difficult to find it becoming Dharma. The attitude we have when we go to bed, we go to sleep, it's difficult to find that which is Dharma. It is the desire clinging to this life's comfort, happiness, is that which is nonvirtue. So how many hours we sleep, eight hours or how many hours we sleep, it all becomes nonvirtue. All this resting, because the motivation is like this, one of the poisonous minds, most of the motivation is desire clinging to this life, for that many hours, with this motivation that many hours of even resting, becomes nonvirtue. Then, even if we try to practice Dharma, it is difficult to become pure Dharma practice. Even if we try to practice Dharma, the motivation is nonvirtue because of not having bodhicitta, not having right view, not even remembering impermanence and death. Again, the motivation is attachment, clinging to this life. Even when we try to practice Dharma it doesn't become pure. Even though we try to practice Dharma, it doesn't become holy Dharma.

Even if we try to accumulate virtue, there's no virtuous motivation, or even if there is a virtuous motivation at the beginning, the actual body, the meditation or whatever it is, is not perfect, not correctly done, because the motivation becomes lost. Then, even if *that* is done well there is no

dedication, there is no completion, there is a dedication but it is not pure. Even if there is some merit accumulated, it is destroyed by anger and heresy. If we have created some merit at least, it is destroyed by anger and heresy, and also pride. The power of the merit is made much weaker by pride. It is so difficult to create a perfect action, to make everything perfect: the preliminary, actual body and the completion. It's very rare for everything to be perfect.

Therefore, it is extremely difficult to find a body of a happy migratory being, without talking about a perfect human body. Now, the purpose of listening to the Dharma, of understanding the Dharma, is to practice, to generate the realizations of path to enlightenment within our own mental continuum as much as possible.

FEARLESSNESS AT THE TIME OF DEATH

Now what is the fundamental practice, what is the fundamental practice of Dharma? What is the fundamental practice of Dharma? What is the beginning of Dharma practice? It is protecting karma. Protecting karma, abandoning nonvirtuous actions, negative karma, and practicing good karma. Protecting the karma is the fundamental Dharma. Protecting karma is the beginning of Dharma practice.

Taking the eight Mahayana precepts is abstaining from the eight negative karmas. Abandoning the eight negative karmas and accumulating or creating of the eight virtues, the eight good karmas, the eight causes of happiness. The eight causes of happiness of future lives, of the body of the happy migratory beings, the perfect human body, the eight causes of the liberation from samsara. Because we take the eight precepts with a bodhicitta motivation, we create eight causes of enlightenment. We create eight causes to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. In other words, we create eight causes, the eight precepts, the eight good karmas, in order to free the numberless sentient beings from all the sufferings, the obscurations, and especially to lead them to full enlightenment.

This is the best preparation for death. This is how to live life and how to die, living and dying. This is best way of living, the best way to live life, and the best way to die, the best preparation for death. When death comes, the day death comes to us, when it's our own turn to experience death, if we have been living our life this way, protecting our karma, practicing morality, then the day death happens, we don't need to take refuge in somebody else. We don't have to rely on a hospice, we don't need help. We don't need to take refuge in some other people when we are dying, because, during our own life, by protecting our karma, by living in morality, we have purified so many obscurations, purified so much negative karma, accumulated so much merit, that we have guided ourselves without the need to rely upon others. We have made preparations for our death already in our own life. Therefore, the day death comes there is no regret. There is no regret; there is much satisfaction in our own heart, that we have done good, that we have lived a good life, that we have abandoned so many negative karmas and accumulated so much good karma by living in pure morality.

There is so much satisfaction in our own heart and there is so much confidence. It gives us so much confidence, and we have no worry, no doubt, no fear. There is no fear of death. Even while we are experiencing death, there is no fear. There's a happy mind, there's confidence. We feel secure. There is no danger, no risk to reincarnate in the lower realms. We have full confidence that we will receive the body of a happy migratory being, even higher than our current body, even better than that, like going to pure realm, the pure realm of Amitabha and so forth. Those different buddhas', those different deity's pure lands where is no suffering, where there is no suffering of death, of rebirth, old age or sicknesses. Where there is opportunity to

practice tantra and to become enlightened by receiving teachings directly from the deity of the pure lands, such as from Amitabha Buddha if it is Amitabha's pure land.

As it is mentioned in the teachings, at the time of death the mind of the best Dharma practitioner is so happy, like the mind of one so happy to be going to a picnic. Like returning home to meet the family, the mind is extremely happy. The middle Dharma practitioner doesn't have any difficulties at the time of death; experiencing death doesn't bother him. Death does not disturb the mind. He's happy, comfortable. Then, for the last practitioner of Dharma at time of death there is no regret, no sense of being upset in the mind.

Therefore, what we are doing here, taking the eight Mahayana precepts and doing meditation, all these things, is so worthwhile, even though something the mind finds it difficult, getting up early in the morning, shortening the sleep and so forth. But even though we might find it uncomfortable, actually it is not the whole mind that finds it difficult. The desire, clinging to this life—*that* is what finds it difficult. That mind, the attachment, clinging to this life, that is the one that finds it difficult to do these things. It is not the whole mind, our compassion, our loving kindness and so forth don't find it difficult to take precepts, to do the meditation practice. Our compassion, our loving kindness don't find it difficult, our bodhicitta doesn't find it difficult, our right view doesn't find it difficult. Of course, it looks at everything as empty. With the right view in the mind, that mind looks at everything as empty. So of course there's no question. However, just this one delusion, desire, clinging, attachment to this life, that mind finds it difficult to do these practices. It is not the whole mind. It looks like the whole mind is finding it difficult, but it is not the whole mind.

What we are doing here, the very last thing, even the very last thing, is something for which there will be no regret in the future. Even if we find discomfort, hunger, thirst, pain in the body, hot and cold, all these things, even though they appear difficult, all these things are to do with the mind, to do with the way of thinking and how much understanding of Dharma we have. How much understanding of karma we have and our way thinking decide whether all these things become something to enjoy, becomes something extremely worthwhile, or whether we find them difficult. It depends on how much understanding of Dharma we have, especially karma, how much understanding of karma, having the faith in karma. This is something to enjoy. Besides having no regret in the long run, it is something that brings no regret now. There is no regret now and in future. There is no regret anytime. Then, on top of that, there's something to enjoy. To enjoy and rejoice in now and in the future. It is something which has the results of infinite merit.

I'll mention one story then I'll stop there. [Rinpoche laughs] This is comparing the merit of a person who doesn't live in any vow, any precept. Three galaxies of the worlds filled with precious jewels, even the number of jewels that is equaling number of the sand grains of the River Ganges, the very long, very large Indian river, equaling even that, equaling number of the sand grains of the River Ganges. If we make offering of that number of jewels to the buddhas, and another person not living in any vow makes that offering. The texts also mention a person who *doesn't* live in any vows, but who then offers oceans of butter, Atlantic Oceans of butter, and Mt. Merus of wax to makes light offering of this great size to the buddhas. Then a second person, who *does* live in the vows, in the precepts, who makes light offering with wax the size of a hair and butter the size of a mustard seed, and butter, like that making light offerings to the buddhas. The merit that this person accumulates is far greater, so much more than the first person who makes unbelievable extensive offering to buddhas but without living in the vows, who hasn't taken any precepts. So there are huge differences in the merit. Even though the second person's offering is so tiny, the merit is like the sky, so much. Therefore it is extremely

worthwhile to attempt, as much as possible, to practice morality by taking the eight Mahayana precepts. Here it's not just one vow but eight. It's unbelievably fortunate that at this time that we have this opportunity to practice morality with these eight Mahayana precepts. Each precept, as it's taken with bodhicitta, has the merit infinite like the sky.

I heard that in some countries, in this country New Guinea, there are people who live in the forest, like Red Indians or like this. Anyway, some white people, a family went there to learn their native culture. They were missionaries. In order to test their trust, to find out if the missionary family were sincere, that they sincerely wanted to learn their life, the native life, the native people made the whole family—the father, mother and children—eat mice. If everybody could eat mice, living mice not dead mice [Rinpoche laughs] if they were able to eat living mice, the natives would be convinced they were sincere. So, you see, in the world, they had to eat mice in order to learn the natives' culture.

Anyway, in the world people do all sorts of things. [Rinpoche laughs] People give up their life, they sacrifice their life, in order to have a name. Even if the person cannot tell whether he will come back, he will return back home or not, even if the person cannot guarantee it. No matter how much risk there is to climb snow mountains, to climb the very dangerous peaks, for example, no matter how much danger there is to life and he cannot tell whether he will ever return home or not, to see his family again [he will still do it to get a name]. No matter how much danger there is, even if he has to climb the mountain by taking the most difficult route, the one that no other people cannot climb, some people especially put effort in that way. People sacrifice their life, they give up their life, they risk their life, no matter how much danger there is, just to get this reputation, this name, for their own name to become famous, to have fame in the world.

Even if the person doesn't die, he succeeds with many hardships, he is able to climb to the top and succeed, and he get a big reputation in the world and some wealth, some money, what does it benefit? The day the person dies—and sooner or later he has to since he not free from the nature of impermanence and death—after some months, some years, on the day of his death all this reputation, even the person had succeeded, what can it do to help? Nothing.

The day of the death all this becomes completely empty. All this wealth is completely empty; all this reputation is nothing on the day of the death, nothing. There is no one single benefit for the next life, to receive good rebirth or to not to be born in the lower realm. There is not a single benefit. It cannot stop rebirth in the lower rebirth; it cannot make him receive deva's or a human body, to achieve liberation from samsara, to achieve full enlightenment, nothing. For people in general, the motivation is simply attachment, clinging to this life, so everything becomes nonvirtue. All the actions that person puts effort into, climbing mountains and all these things, all the expenses that person spends, the many millions of dollars that he spends, all the travelling, everything, becomes nonvirtue because of the motivation. If the person dies, he dies by following nonvirtue. In other words, person has sacrificed his life for negative karma. In reality, his life becomes completely empty, completely empty. And, on top of that, he accumulates all the negative karmas. There are many examples like this.

We cannot say how much longer we will have this opportunity to practice like this. We cannot say, we cannot know how long we have this opportunity to take the eight Mahayana precepts, to practice lam-rim, the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment. Therefore, it is extremely worthwhile to put every effort, as much as possible, as I mentioned before, that what we are doing here is something which has no regret now and none in the future. And on top of that, is only a cause to be even happier in the future, even to rejoice to be happier.

[Rinpoche Chants]

Due to the three times' merits accumulated by myself, by the bodhisattvas and sentient beings, may the bodhicitta be generated within my own mind, the mind of other sentient beings, those who have never developed it.

[Rinpoche Chants]

Due to all the three times' merit accumulated by myself, by the bodhisattvas, sentient beings from now on may my actions of body, speech and mind, never become the slightest harm to any sentient being and become greatest benefit for all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. Whatever I have experienced in life, happiness, suffering, living or dying, even rebirth in hell, or rebirth in the deva, human body, whatever I experience, whatever rebirth I experience, may all these become only the greatest benefit for all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

Due to all the past, present and future merits accumulated by myself, by bodhisattvas, sentient beings, that which are empty, may the I, who is empty, achieve the Buddha's enlightenment, which is empty, and lead all the sentient beings, who are empty, to that enlightenment as quickly as possible by myself alone.

[Rinpoche Chants]

When I was talking about living in the precepts, I think I made one mistake. One quotation, I made mistake about three galaxies filled with the precious jewels and the making offering equaling the number of sand grains of the River Ganges, making offering to the buddhas, that one I got mixed up. The quotation was from the *Heap of Jewels Sutra*. There are three galaxies of sentient beings, they all reincarnate as wheel turning kings. "Wheel turning king" means a king who has no other king at the same level as competition in the same world. If there is then that's not a wheel turning king. In that world there is no other king that can compete with that king. In other words, he is the one who controls the whole world. There is no other king who can compete with power, wealth and so forth, with that king.

So there is a wheel turning king who controls one continent, two continents, like deva realm and so forth. There are different types of wheel turning kings, the one who has most control and most power, wealth. So three galaxies, that many worlds of sentient beings reincarnate as wheel turning kings, every one of them reincarnates as a wheel turning king, and then every one of them offers oceans of butter and Mt. Merus of wax, makes offering to the stupas, representing the Buddha's holy mind. It can be said to be symbolic, or, in other words, a manifestation. To a person, towards sentient beings who have the karma to, who have the merit that they, that can see holy object, stupa, and with that their mind can be purified and they can accumulate merit. So, it is symbolic of the Buddha's holy mind or, in other words, a manifestation to those sentient beings who have the merit, the level of mind, to see these holy objects.

So the three galaxies of sentient beings reincarnate as wheel turning kings and make that many offerings of oceans of butter, that many Mt. Merus of wax, each of them—not the whole group but each of them—making offerings to stupas. The length of time this lasts, I don't remember clearly, is the same number of eons equaling the number of drops of water in an ocean. This last part I'm not a hundred percent sure about, I'm not clear, but might be something like that.

However, this one person who living in the vow, in ordination, with renunciation, makes a tiny offering of butter the size of a mustard seed and a tiny amount of wax size of a hair, making offering to the Buddha. This person accumulated far more greater merit than all those three galaxies of sentient beings who have each reincarnated as wheel turning kings and have made such inconceivable extensive offering to the holy objects, the very powerful holy objects, such as stupas. So that is the quotation from the sutra. What I mentioned before wasn't correct. That wasn't exactly what I explained.

The reason why I was emphasizing so much about precepts, the conclusion, because yesterday, the other morning, when I gave precepts, there were not that many. There were many of you, but there are quite a number, and according to number how many there are total, not that many there during the precepts. So I felt sort of unbearable that it's something, a place where you can get a wish-granting jewel, you are in a place where you can get a wish-granting jewel, that which fulfills all your wishes. In a place where you can pick up a wish-granting jewel, but you are not picking it up. There are wish-granting jewels and you can pick up as many as you want by being in this place, but by not taking it, by not taking opportunity, you are losing so much, missing so much, missing so much opportunity. You are missing out on something that is extremely worthwhile, to practice, to benefit, even without thinking about happiness of others, even just only your own happiness, now and in the future, so much benefit.

THE TIME OF DEATH IS UNCERTAIN

If we are already enlightened, then we have already finished the work of accumulating merit, and ceased purifying the mistakes of the mind, the obscurations. If we have finished the work, if we have completed all this, then we are enlightened. Then there is nothing more, there are no more qualities to achieve, no more realizations to achieve, no more compassion to be developed; it's completed. There's no more understanding to achieve, no more power to benefit others to achieve; everything is completed, all the qualities. Then we don't need to practice. There is no need to practice.

But we are not even free from the samsara. We are not free, we are not liberated even from the cycle of death and rebirth, old age and sicknesses, we haven't overcome even death. We haven't even overcome death and rebirth. Death is riding on us, we are not riding over death. Instead of us riding over the death, death is riding over us. Instead of death being under our control, it is controlling us. We are under the control of the Lord of Death. So we are not even liberated from this. Death could happen tonight, death could happen tonight in the middle of our sleep, suddenly death could happen in the middle of our sleep, in the tent or in the room or in the sleeping bag. Warm death! [Rinpoche laughs] Anyway, I am joking. But if it happened suddenly now, right at this hour, some may have full confidence, no fear at all about reincarnating, no danger of being reborn in the suffering realms—the hell, hungry ghost or animal realm—but for most of us it may not be like that.

What is the protection? What is the protection to guard us, to save us, to guide us from the unimaginable sufferings of the lower realms? How do we make sure if the death happens right now, this hour, this moment, how do we make sure not to fall into the lower suffering realms? Death is like the deep ocean, like once we throw a stone into the very deep ocean, we're not sure when the stone will come back to the shore. We're not sure when. There is no security, and this security is the most important. Security is what we should achieve immediately, we should have it without delay of even a second. The security, this is the confidence we need so there is no need to fear.

People in the world make plans. People plan to build a house, to have property, to have a means of living. For that, they work so hard, besides just in the day time, even at the night they work so hard for the happiness of the coming years, the future coming years. They work so hard, they work so hard to make sure they survive, to not have difficulties, to have comfort and happiness. All those coming years—the next year, next month, next week, tomorrow—they work so hard for that from the time they were in kindergarten, from childhood. By going to kindergarten, in the form of play, learning—starting from there for twenty years, there are many years of education, school, college, university, however many years of education, and then after getting a degree they work so hard in order to not have difficulties in the present life, especially the coming future years of this present life.

However, until we are liberated from death, until we have control over death, either by achieving the lesser vehicle path, those arya paths, by having wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, by achieving the right-seeing path, the arya path, the path of meditation and so forth, or the bodhisattvas' arya path, or according to tantra, by having achieved the completion stage clear light—until we reach those levels of the path, there is no freedom, there is no control over death. We have no freedom from death. Until we are able to develop the mind in the path and achieve those levels, since we are still under the control of death, what's definitely going to happen is death. And that can happen any time. That can happen any day, any hour, any moment of life.

There is future life, the same as there was past life. That will still be from parents, whose body and mind is the nature of suffering, but we still may be born a child, a living being to that family whose body and mind is not like that of the parents, is of different quality. Even the parents' minds are of an impatient nature, an angry nature, we may be born as a child who has no anger, only patience, not having anger at all. That child is born so much in the nature of patience, with no anger at all. The nature of the parents' minds is still very egotistic, very ordinary, motivated by selfishness, but the child born to that family is child without ego, with the good heart cherishing others, concerned for others as themselves, for all other living beings, a very compassionate nature. A child which may have unbelievable wisdom that the parents did not have, might be born with that quality of mind. So many experiences like this have happened, not only in the East but also in the West. This kind of story, this experience, has happened in many different places. The child has a very different personality from the parents and from the other children from the same parents. There are so many young and old who are able to remember past lives and even who are able to see future lives then able to tell others, other people's past and future lives. Even in the West there are many people who are able to tell this, many who are born with that power of mind. Some develop it in this life.

WE CAN'T PROVE THERE ARE NO PAST OR FUTURE LIVES

Perhaps we believe all these stories, those of His Holiness Dalai Lama remembering his past or so forth. There are many stories of great holy beings and other ordinary beings who can remember so many of their past life stories. Those are explained, written, in books. However, if we think all these are not true, they're just imagined, what happened is this and this and that it's all just imagined, it actually didn't happen, in that case, it's the same thing. The person who believes there is one life, who thinks there is no past or future life, that it's just imagined, in that case, it's the same thing as the other person who says this. It is the same debate back to that person who believes in only one life, no past or future life. As far as that argument goes it is the same thing, that is also not true because that's just imagined, just visualized, just imagined that there is no past or future life, just this one life. That's also just imagined.

However the very bottom line is any individual person who says there is no past or future life, any person who comes to that conclusion, it is because past and future lives are not that person's experience. That's the basic reason that person can't accept this. That means that anything he doesn't know, anything he hasn't realized, anything he hasn't had the experience of, he cannot believe. Then everything becomes nonexistent. Anything that the person doesn't know, anything he hasn't discovered, all the rest of the phenomena he hasn't discovered, hasn't realized, doesn't know—these are objects that *are* discovered, that are object of knowledge to other living beings, other sentient beings, other enlightened beings who have completely ceased the two obscurations, completely ceased all the defilements of the mind. There are many other phenomena, like limitless sky, that are not the object of that person's knowledge now, but are objects of knowledge of many other sentient beings, object of many of other sentient beings' valid minds, true minds, unbetrayable minds, as well as those fully enlightened beings who have completely ceased all the two obscurations.

By checking, it comes down to the basic reason for his disbelief is whatever that person hasn't realized or hasn't experienced—all the rest of phenomena he doesn't see—do not exist. By questioning, it comes down to this bottom reason, the reason underneath is very simple. In that case, according to this, why shouldn't he learn? In the same way, whatever the person doesn't know, all the other objects of knowledge wouldn't exist, for example, knowledge of past and future lives, karma and so forth. Like the knowledge that by practicing morality we can receive a deva's body or a human body, a good rebirth and so forth. Or the knowledge that by not practicing morality, by engaging in the ten nonvirtuous actions and so forth, we create rebirths in the lower realms, in the body of a suffering migratory being.

Simply because all these things that he can't see are not part of his own experience, they are not already his knowledge, that means anything that person doesn't know, there is nothing to learn. There is nothing more to learn for that person because anything that person doesn't know already doesn't exist. It simply comes to this point.

It also means all these holy beings who talk about others or our own past and future, if all these are just not realized with this valid mind, they have just imagined it, just visualized it. If it is just a visualization, then the conclusion is that His Holiness and all the holy beings who talk about these experiences, they are all telling lies. If all these holy beings are telling lies then there is nobody in the world we can trust. There is nobody, there is no one living being we can trust. There is nobody in existence we can trust.

Then in this case, if the person himself doesn't know what is the truth and what is false, if he doesn't have the wisdom, then how can he trust even himself? If he doesn't know the difference between what's false and what's reality, if he doesn't have wisdom, then nothing can be trusted. According to this point of view there is nobody in the world who can be trusted—even that person. How can he have trust even in himself?

Following this line of argument, there is great danger that we cheat ourselves. If we don't have wisdom then there is a great danger that we cheat ourselves. We hallucinate ourselves. If we don't have the wisdom to discriminate what's right and what's wrong, what's right and to be practiced and what's wrong and to be abandoned, if we don't have this wisdom, it becomes questionable that we can have trust even ourselves.

According to that person's philosophy, the bottom line becomes like saying if karma, past lives, reincarnation and so forth actually exist then we should be able to discover them. The person is not saying exactly like this but the way he argues he implies this.

This line of argument doesn't work, however. As His Holiness Song Rinpoche often said, assuming past and future lives don't exist or karma isn't infallible—from positive karma the resultant happiness in the future is experienced and from nonvirtue suffering is experienced—when you assume something doesn't exist simply because you don't see it, then you have to deny that the back of your own head exists. If we ask that person to demonstrate conclusively that he won't die tomorrow, he won't be able to tell, except to say with a sincere mind, with straight mind, "I don't know." With a sincere, straight mind, the very bottom answer would be, "I don't know."

Generally speaking this kind of explanation, of philosophy, comes during childhood. Generally speaking, a child's mind is a fresh mind, it's like white fog; it's a fresh mind. During childhood the mind is fresh. Then, depending on what society believes, society shapes that fresh mind that way. That fresh mind doesn't have a particular philosophy, doesn't believe in this and that. Depending on what kind of society that we are born in, the culture or society, the philosophy, this way of believing, having this philosophy, is what is taught first, what is introduced to the mind first. Then, because there was no other knowledge before that, since we don't have the wisdom to be able to discriminate what is right and wrong, what is the false and what is the truth, whatever philosophy is taught, whatever belief the culture introduces, then of course we accept it. This is what happens. This is why people can assert things like this.

I think the clock can go to bed. [Rinpoche laughs]

Anyway, there is no wisdom from that person's own side to analyze, to realize what is false and what is truth, what is right and wrong. Then, he accepts whatever is introduced first, the culture or belief, the philosophy. This doesn't happen in every case but generally it's like that.

In reality, there is nobody who has realized that there are no past or future lives. There is no one who has realized this, who has discovered this. There is nobody who, through meditation, by developing the mind, who has discovered, who has realized there is no past or future lives, nobody. By developing the power of mind, by purifying the mind, by developing the mental capacity, those who have realized there *are* past and future lives are numberless. And even through, according to our own experiences, by opening the heart, by opening the mind to learn different cultures...

[An alarm goes off marking midnight] [Rinpoche laughs]

...especially the Buddhadharma, the unmistakable path, the peace revealed by the kind, compassionate Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Especially by studying and through meditation practice we get experiences and discover things we didn't believe in the past, we didn't believe before, new experiences.

There are great differences, effects to the mind, between just visualizing, just imagining, and our own mind actually being able to recollect past lives or able to see future lives. There are great differences in the effect. There are huge differences in the effect and in the experience of these two minds. Just visualizing, just imagining, or realizing, actually seeing, there are huge differences.

WE CAN HAVE FAITH IN THE BUDDHA'S WORDS

The way of discovering the phenomena is explained in three ways. First, some phenomena can be discovered through direct perception. Some phenomena are able to be discovered through direct perception, but some phenomena can't be discovered through direct perception. The way to discover some phenomena is by the inferential, valid cognition. And, since we have neither the common attainment, clairvoyance, nor the omniscient mind, the sublime realization, the third way to discover phenomena is only by having faith in the quotations. Not just anybody's quotations, not just quotations by anybody who says something, but quotations by the Omniscient One. We have faith in the quotations said by the one who has ceased all the obscurations and has completed all the qualities, who has all the realizations, where there is not the slightest mistake, not the slightest defilement. There's not one slightest resistance, that mind can see every single existence directly, all the past, present and future times all at the same time. That mind can see everything all at the same time, directly.

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha explained karma. The Buddha explained that by practicing morality we will achieve the result of a human body in future lives and by practicing charity we will achieve the result of wealth and so forth. In the beginning, in the past, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha himself was like us, having all the mistakes, like us having all the delusions, having all the mistakes, having all the suffering of samsara.

But, in time, he met the virtuous friend who revealed the unmistakable path, and by depending on that he changed the attitude from cherishing oneself into cherishing other sentient beings. Then, with this attitude, for so many eons, innumerable number of eons, by following the path, he accumulated extensive merits. By bearing many hardships for the benefit of sentient beings, he achieved full enlightenment, the state of the omniscient mind. Then, exactly as he himself proceeded on the path to enlightenment, how he himself actualized the path, the Buddha revealed that method exactly to sentient beings.

Then, innumerable numbers of sentient beings, those who practiced correctly as the Buddha has shown, had the same experience, ceased all the obscurations and achieved full enlightenment, the state that has the complete quality of cessation and realizations. Those innumerable numbers of yogis, pandits, those who experienced this, they analyzed those teachings. They put them into practice and so reached enlightenment. What the Buddha actualized, innumerable numbers of living beings have also reached that same goal. Like this, the Buddha's teachings are valid, undecieving. They don't cheat us; they are undecieving. Therefore, the Buddha is the true founder, the valid founder that we can trust. He is the true founder, one in whom we can take refuge without danger.

One more reason we can have faith in the Buddha's teachings, or quotes or quotations about the teachings on karma and these things: if what the Buddha explained on karma received harm from another omniscient one, if it could be negated or harmed by another omniscient one, by another buddha, only then can it become a subject to question or doubt. But if there's no opposing quotation, there's no negation from another omniscient one, it doesn't receive harm. There may be other quotations denying or opposing the Buddha's teachings from other beings, from other pandits, but there is no opposite quotation from another omniscient one. Therefore this is the reason we can have faith in the Buddha's teachings, faith in karma, in these quotations. However, the basic reason to trust him, maybe not so much even the knowledge itself, I think, is how the Buddha has completed the mind of compassion; the Buddha has completed the mind training in compassion towards all sentient beings, without leaving even one, without exception.

I think that this compassion is the most important thing. Even if there's knowledge but there is no compassion, somebody can cheat us. A person who has so much education, so much knowledge, but who doesn't have compassion, he can still cheat us, he can give us a lot of harm. I think the main reason we can trust the Buddha is because of his compassion. The main thing is that the Buddha has completed the mind training in compassion. This is my own thinking. So, however, this third of the types of phenomena, such as past and future lives, karma and so forth—by practicing morality we can achieve deva body in next life or that actions opposite to morality, such as ten nonvirtuous actions and so forth, cause us to receive the body of a suffering migrating being—these types of phenomena, if we doesn't have either clairvoyance or the omniscient mind, then the way to discover these phenomena is by having faith in the Omniscient One's quotations. That's the only way.

ONLY TWO WAYS TO GO AFTER DEATH—PRACTICE MORALITY

What I was saying before is that if death happened, if death happened, [Rinpoche laughs] if death happened tonight or right now, there are only two ways to go, there's no third way. Either we go to the lower realms or to the realms of the happy migrator being. The cause of the lower realms is nonvirtue, as Nagarjuna explained. The action born from the ignorance, anger and attachment is a nonvirtue. From that, all the evil migrator beings, all the suffering migrations arise. The action born from non-attachment, non-anger, non-ignorance, that is a virtue. From that all the happy migrator beings arise. The Second Buddha, the savior, the glorious Nagarjuna, explained this.

Therefore, from this moment, from this second, until death, each day, each hour, each minute, each second, is a time to decide, a time we have the opportunity to choose where to go. Whether to go to the lower realms or whether to go to the realms of the happy migrator being. Where to go? It is time to choose. Each moment of life, each second of life, is so crucial, very crucial, an unbelievably important time to decide this, and we have the opportunity.

So, therefore now, coming back, [Rinpoche laughs] we need to accumulate merit, to create good karma. That especially means practicing morality. Even if we can't take all the eight precepts, due to health and so forth, even if we can't take all eight, we should take even seven, six, even five, whatever number, as many as possible to take, to practice. It becomes so crucial, it becomes the unbelievably important answer, the solution.

LABELING PHENOMENA

I just want to mention tomorrow's meditation, then I'll stop there. I'm not going to go like last night. But, I think that last night can cover all those past week's teachings. [Rinpoche laughs] Anyway, yesterday's long teaching becomes a double teaching on the basis of the great Geshe Pende's teachings. Anyway, it becomes double. From tomorrow, I think it is very good maybe each day to practice strong mindfulness, not only during meditation, but especially, also in break times, on the three principal aspects of the path. Then it becomes real research or real, deep analysis. So, especially during the break time.

I often give, the same example. A person who comes here but has not been introduced, "This is Kopan," a person who is not introduced, somebody telling him, "This is Kopan." He comes from this tent or from there, but he doesn't know that this is Kopan. Until that person is introduced by somebody, "This is Kopan," he has the appearance of the buildings, the mountains, the hill, all these things, but he doesn't have the appearance that "This is Kopan." That is because the person hasn't labeled it; his own mind has not labeled this is Kopan and

believed in that. That is because he has not been introduced by somebody else. It has not been taught by somebody else that this is Kopan.

So there's no appearance that this is Kopan. Even if the person has the appearance of the hill and the monastery, there is no appearance of this "Kopan," and that person doesn't see that this is Kopan at that time. The minute that person is introduced by somebody else, "This is Kopan," then his own mind makes up the label "Kopan" and then believes in that.

Then, after the belief, there's the appearance. By believing in that, as a result, then there's an appearance of Kopan. Only after that, then he sees this as Kopan. So, you see now, having the appearance of Kopan and seeing Kopan, "This is Kopan," so you can see now where it came from. This came from that person's own mind by labeling it, by believing in that.

In the same way, before, when we were a child, before knowing the alphabet, before we were taught the letter W, [Rinpoche writes a W in the air with his finger] before we were taught that by others, before we were introduced that by somebody, "That is a W," there was no thought. We didn't have the thought at that time, labeling that shape W and believing in that. Because we didn't have this, there was no appearance of W. We saw the design, the shape, but we didn't have the appearance that this is W, and we didn't see that this is W at that time. What we saw was just a design, a shape, like this.

But from the day somebody taught us, "This is W," then our mind has looked forward to that label, our mind has made up the label W and believed in that. Your mind makes up the label and we believe in that. Then, as a result, there's appearance of W. Then, after that appearance of W, we see that this is W.

Before seeing that this is a W, there's a whole creation, there's a whole evolution that has come before that—what makes it to see that this is W. So what we're seeing as this W, it came from our own mind. What we see and the label—"This is W"—it came from our own mind.

Through this analysis it is clear. Through this analysis, we can check our own experiences and see how it happened, how we see before we are taught and how we see afterward. After we are taught, and our mind labels in the same way, we believe in that. By examining our own experiences, now, it is clear that all these things that we see, including W and so forth, come from our own mind. Therefore, this is the reality. This is the reality, but in our own view, there is the appearance.

In our own perception there is a W that it didn't come from our own mind; it has nothing to do with our own concept of "W." A real W, nothing to do with our own concept, nothing has come from our own mind. This is the false view. This is false. This W is false. "W" comes from our own perception. The real W has nothing to do with our own concept, that never came from our own mind, this is false. This doesn't exist at all there; it's empty of existing like that. But the W which comes from our own mind, which is labeled by our own mind, that exists. It exists, one can see it, one can read it. So, now, like this, the whole alphabet starting from the A down to the Z, all this we see in our own perception, it all comes from our own mind.

MIND TRAINING: OUR ENEMY IS OUR BEST FRIEND

Similarly, when our mind interprets a friend, the way the friend thinks of us, the way the friend looks at us, our own mind interpreting, "That friend doesn't love me." The minute our own mind interprets it like that, labels it in that way—"she doesn't love me, she wants to hurt me"—

the minute we make up this label, this interpretation, we aren't practicing patience. Instead of practicing patience, we're generating anger. And with an angry mind we label it, "This is bad." Having made up the label that "this is bad" there is now the appearance "bad." We have the appearance of harm, of bad. There is a person who performs an action, and then we make up the label, "this person is bad," and there's the appearance of bad.

This is the view of the anger. Again all this has come from our own mind. All this appearance—harmful and bad—is the appearance of the anger. We make up the label "enemy" and by believing in that, we have the appearance that it's an enemy. All this has come from our own mind. From which mind? From the angry mind.

We have labeled that person our enemy because he thinks of us this way, he looks at us this way, seeing us as his enemy, and maybe he does have the thought to hurt us. But in the next hour, or next minute, we can practice patience with this person. In the next minute we can practice patience with this person by thinking of the benefits we can receive due to that person having anger towards us. We can see that because of the anger of that person we can complete the path, the paramita of patience, and we can achieve full enlightenment, which has infinite qualities. Because of this person we can free all sentient beings from all the sufferings and can lead all beings to full enlightenment.

In fact, completing the paramita of patience, this training, can only be done if somebody has anger towards us. If somebody doesn't have anger to us, completing this path can never ever happen. That means ultimately us freeing all sentient beings from all the sufferings and leading them to full enlightenment doesn't happen. We can't do any of this, we can't achieve perfect work for all sentient beings. Therefore the anger of this other person becomes extremely precious. Somebody having anger towards us becomes so precious, like jewels, like a wish-granting jewel. It's like we have found a wish-granting jewel, a jewel that fulfills all our wishes. Somebody having anger to us becomes so precious, so precious. This is an incredible moment to develop our mind. There is an incredible need, it is so crucial that somebody has anger towards us; it's so crucial, so urgent, so important for our practice. It becomes so precious for us. Not precious for that person, but precious for us, for our mind training.

This person becomes unbelievably kind, so precious, much more precious than the whole sky filled with gold, or billions of dollars or wish-granting jewels. This much value, this much value of material things is nothing, nothing at all compared to all this infinite benefit that we can achieve from this person having anger towards us. Ultimately, that anger of other person can bring us the benefit that we are able to liberate every sentient being from all the oceans of samsaric suffering and to bring them to full enlightenment. All this benefit which we receive by the kindness of this person with anger comes from our own mind training. All this benefit, all this infinite benefit, we cannot get, all this infinite profit or benefit we cannot achieve, even if we have skies filled with billions of dollars of gold or wish-granting jewels. Just from this we cannot achieve all this profit, this benefit. But, even if we don't have even one dollar or one tiny piece of gold, if we practice the path, if we train our own mind on the path to enlightenment, then we can achieve all this infinite profit or benefit. In the view of patience, now this person becomes the most kind, the most helpful, the best friend. We become best friends. That person is the most helpful in developing our own mind on the path to enlightenment, to exhaust our own anger.

In the view of patience, we see this person as positive, not negative; as friend, not enemy. We see him as the opposite [to what our normal mind would see him]. I just brought this up, but anyway, what I was saying, both "enemy" and "friend" come from our own mind. This is the same thing; they come from our own mind, because of our mind's labeling.

THE MERELY-LABELED I

In the same way, our own mind even labels the self, the I, “me.” Our own mind labels that thing over there to be a table, but the parts of the table are not its essence, the “I” of the table. Even the whole table, even the collections of all the parts, is not the “I.” Just like this, this is exactly the same, the body is not I, not “me.” Our own mind makes up the label “I,” and the reason is similar. Using this as an example, relating this to the aggregates, it is clear our own mind makes up the label, “I.” The body is not I, the mind is not I. Even the association of both, the whole body and mind aggregates combined is not I. Nothing is I. It’s clear. As there is no I on this table, as there’s no self, I, me, on this table, there’s no I, self, me, on these aggregates. There is nowhere it exists. It is exactly the same.

I started the talk by saying we even label “I” on this table. If you miss that point, then it doesn’t help when I start the meditation that way. Therefore, be clear it’s exactly the same. It’s clear that nothing of this is I, there is no I *at all* that exists on these aggregates. The mind, relating to the aggregates, makes up the label “I.” Because of that, then there’s appearance of I. Our own mind makes up the label “I” and believes in that. Because of that, then there is the appearance of I. First of all, now it’s clear, that the I, the appearance of I, comes from our own mind. The appearance of I comes from our own mind. It doesn’t come from outside. It doesn’t come from somewhere else. It comes from our own mind, by making up the label and believing in that. So you see, even this, the appearance of I, first we should see that the appearance of I comes from our own mind.

Just to clarify, the second point is that even though the I is merely labeled, merely imputed by our own mind, when it appears it doesn’t appear as merely labeled by the mind. The I appearing to us, although being merely labeled by the mind, as if it is what exists. That I is the truth, that what exists. After our own mind merely imputes, “I,” when it appears to our own mind, it is appearing as not merely labeled, which means there’s something from its own side. There’s something there from its own side., existing from its own side, it appears like this. However, this is false. This is the false I. This is the hallucination, this is the object to be refuted, this is what doesn’t exist, what is empty. This is what we have to realize as empty, that which is empty.

Just a few examples. At least one meditation session, meditate on this, how everything, including the I, the aggregates, the body and mind, everything—all the sense objects: forms, sounds, smells, taste, tangible objects—how these all come from the mind. Then, try to realize that whatever you are looking at—people, places, flowers, even kaka—whatever you see—ugly things, beautiful things, clean things, dirty things—whatever you see, whatever you look at, these all come from your mind. Whatever you are looking at, whatever you are seeing, it all comes from your mind. Whatever sounds you are hearing, it all comes from your own mind. Whatever taste you are experiencing is something that comes from your own mind. If you are tasting something, it comes from your mind. You’re not tasting something that comes from the outside, or which exists from its own side.

In other words, whatever tangibles, whatever you are experiencing with the body, is something that comes from your own mind, not something that comes from outside. Not something that came from the outside, without depending on your mind, without merely labeling. As I mentioned, with friend and enemy it is the same thing. How you see people, the people you are looking at, that comes from your mind. Even the sky, the clouds, all that you see, where you’re looking at, comes from your mind. It comes from your own mind by merely labeling.

This is especially important to recognize, to practice, in break times. It's important to practice very intensively while you are eating, drinking, talking, walking, even going to the bathroom. However, especially in break time, practice by remembering the reasons, the evolution, that causes all this, that causes what you see, what is appearing. It comes from your own mind, from your own mind by labeling the thought. Do very strong concentration of this. Do this mindfulness, especially in break time, constantly being mindful that everything you experience, including the I—everything that has appearance of being in this life—is that which comes from your own mind. It comes from nowhere, but it comes from your own mind.

So this helps. This meditation, this practice of mindfulness during this meditation session and at break time, practicing mindfulness, helps. This itself becomes the practice of patience. In this way, even if somebody is angry at us, if somebody complains to us, there's nothing to blame. There's nothing to blame on the outside. We find nothing to blame outside because everything comes from the mind. All these appearances we experience are by our own mind labeling. So, naturally, it becomes a practice of patience. That very profound meditation doesn't give any opportunity for anger to arise, because we don't blame, there's nothing to blame outside. And then also, this meditation also helps us to understand dependent arising, which means it helps us to realize emptiness.

This meditation also helps us to develop compassion, because this is the reality, this is the evolution, how we discover it, how we see it. The animals, insects, even the human beings, all these sentient beings—even though this is the reality, that whatever we see, we hear, we touch, we taste, everything, all this, everything comes from our own mind and what we see in our own view is by the merely labeling the mind—they're not aware, they don't see this way. And they believe that everything comes from outside, that everything is something real coming from outside, that nothing has to do with their own concept, nothing to do with their mind. Nothing to do with their concept, with their mind, but everything came from outside and on top of that, everything is something real, not merely labeled by the mind. So here it becomes even deeper, that they are suffering this hallucination, that sentient beings are trapped in the hallucination. Their lives are completely hallucinated, believing the false as a reality. Like this, it becomes a fundamental problem of their life, suffering. Therefore, when we meditate like this, when we look at other beings and see how they are hallucinated, it becomes a cause to develop compassion. So, this meditation helps us develop the three principal aspects of the path.

I'll stop here.

Due to all the past, present and future merits accumulated by me, by bodhisattvas, by sentient beings, may all the sentient beings who touch me, who remember me, who think about me, who talk about me, may all those sentient beings never to be reborn in the lower realms from now on, and may they be liberated immediately from all the delusions, the three times' negative karma, obscurations, and may they fully achieve enlightenment.

Due to all these three times' merits accumulated by me, by bodhisattvas and sentient beings, may all the father-mother sentient beings have happiness, may all the three lower realms be empty forever and may all the bodhisattvas' prayers succeed immediately. May I be able to cause this by myself alone.

[Chanting, dedication prayers]

Now, the last dedication: Due to all the past, present, and future merits accumulated by myself, by bodhisattvas and sentient beings, due to all this merit, which is merely labeled by the mind,

may I, which is merely labeled by the mind, achieve perfect, complete enlightenment, which is merely labeled by the mind, and lead all sentient beings, who are merely labeled by the mind, to that enlightenment by myself alone.

Lecture Two: December 2, 1994

THE EMPTINESS OF TIME

[Question precedes lecture]

Beginningless time? I see, you want to know about beginningless time. [Rinpoche laughs]

Beginningless time. In what sense, beginningless time? Beginningless—beginningless time you are sitting there? [Rinpoche laughs] You are sitting on the Kopan gompa floor, the beginningless time of that?

How do I explain? Is there past, present? Do you accept past, present, future? Is there past, present, future? Okay. So you accept past, yes? When did the past begin? When did the past begin?

Student: At the beginning.

Rinpoche: So it had a beginning. The past had a beginning. Where did it begin? When did the past start?

Student: At the end.

Rinpoche: At the end of what?

[Response inaudible] [Rinpoche laughs]

If there is always past and present, there is always present, there is always past. So if there is always present, there is always past, so there is the future. Did the past occur? Yes, the past is existing, as is a future. If there is a past, there is always a future? Yes? Do you accept that? Okay. So, any phenomenon that has past, it has future. Your being at Kopan, your existence at Kopan. Let's see. When are you leaving? December 28th. Okay [Rinpoche laughs] December 28th.

Let's say you are leaving December 28th in the early morning. Early in the morning, right? So the last of your time, the last of your existence, your being at Kopan, that has passed just before you leave, just before your holy body departs, leaves this mountain, leave this monastery or whatever, leaves this place. That's the very last of your existence at Kopan. So that has past and present. The very last minute you're existing at Kopan. Does that have future? Does that existence, does that have future? You have future, but what I'm saying is that's not the question. The question is, does your existence, your being at Kopan, does that have future? You know, the last minute of your being at Kopan. That is existent. That is existent, yeah? So does that also have a future? What is that future?

I am saying, still you are existing at Kopan. Still you are at Kopan. While your body's away from Kopan, are you still at Kopan? [Rinpoche laughs] Yeah, I am planning to come to that topic. So anyway, the last minute of your being at Kopan, right? So that's the last minute, then that means after a minute you're not at Kopan, yeah? Because your body is away from Kopan. So that

doesn't have future, that existence. There is no continuation of that existence. So it has no future. That existence has no future. [Rinpoche laughs]

So the reason is that if things had a past, they don't necessarily have a future. A particular phenomena which had past, does not necessarily have a future. Not necessarily. Agreed?

[Response inaudible]

What? You are thinking of a word, you are thinking of a word for that? You are looking for a word for that. Not beginningless. It's like this. Without the mind labeling, without the mind labeling "beginningless," beginningless time does not exist. So therefore, "beginningless" is not just labeled by the mind, but it's *merely* labeled by the mind.

Student: So past, present, and future are merely labeled by the mind?

Rinpoche: Oh, yes, yes. So, it doesn't make sense. The point is, it doesn't matter. What is coming to the point is that it's empty. Past, present and future is empty. Empty of the way we think. They're empty, empty of the way we believe, the way we apprehend, as something real appearing from there, from its own side.

THE POWER & BENEFITS OF BODHICITTA

I am not sure but my guess is, if you have the attitude, the motivation of the shepherd, if you have that attitude, generally in daily life you give the first priority to others, then you yourself go last. I would say living our life with this attitude itself, in reality, has the power of great purification and accumulating extensive merit, and that makes us reach enlightenment quicker. In reality, the stronger we have this thought, we become enlightened quicker than other sentient beings who do not change their attitude into bodhicitta. We become enlightened quicker than them. In reality we become enlightened before them because we have changed our attitude earlier than others. What I would say is that with this attitude, in reality, the success is there. Because we changed our attitude into bodhicitta earlier than other people did then we become enlightened first. In reality I think I would say it works. [Rinpoche laughs]

I would say that is similar to when we do tong-len, taking other sentient beings' sufferings on ourselves and giving our own happiness, merit, our body and belongings to other sentient beings. When we have bodhicitta, we feel so kind toward mother sentient beings, we feel they are so precious, we feel it unbearable that they are suffering like that.

I'll put it this way. Due to strong guru devotion, this positive mind, the effect of this strong guru devotion is receiving a strong blessing within our own heart. Then due to receiving this blessing of the guru within our heart, as well as having done some positive action that pleases the holy mind of the virtuous friend, depending on such things, when these things happen, we see how the mind works. Even if we don't have such courage, such a brave heart as to voluntarily reincarnate in hell, we feel it so unbearable that sentient beings are suffering in hell, we feel so unbearable that voluntarily, willingly, from our own heart, right now we want to be born in hell and suffer in their place. We want to take on their experience of suffering in hell fully, experience the hell beings' immeasurable sufferings, experience them on ourselves.

Right this minute, this second, we want to be born in hell and experience their suffering, experience their unbearable suffering. And at the same time we feel it unbearable that they're suffering, and during that time our heart becomes unpressable. Unpressable? We cannot press it

down. We cannot control it; we cannot press it down. It's so unbearable, so unbearable. This compassion. And very bravely, we wish so strongly, "Right at this minute, right at this second, if I can be in the hell and take all their sufferings, and experience all their sufferings, I would rejoice and say, 'How wonderful it all is.'" This strong determination, this decision willingly, happily, comes from our own heart.

This kind of thought purifies so many, so many unquestionable eons of negative karma. Even, possibly, even just for this thought arising, for this brave attitude, this strong unbearable compassion cherishing other sentient beings arising for even a few minutes, for even few seconds—not developing extra realizations but just experiencing such strong compassion arising for a very short time—it can purify eons of negative karma and accumulate inconceivable merit. Because of that, our time in samsara becomes shorter for that many eons, or that much duration. Our duration to be in samsara decreases, it becomes shorter. The duration experiencing the self in samsara becomes shorter. In other words, we become that much closer to enlightenment.

This is mentioned in the *Bodhicaryavatara*. I'll just make it simple, not keeping very tightly with the verses, the way it is in Tibetan.

By depending on bodhicitta you get liberated in a short time
From the unbearable, unceasing very heavy negative karmas.
Like you become free from the great dangers by relying on a hero.
Why don't mindful people rely upon this, bodhicitta?

What this says is that by having bodhicitta, by generating bodhicitta towards other sentient beings, we get liberated from even the heaviest negative karma—from even that negative karma which we have to experience for so many eons in the lower realms, such as the narak, the hell realms, and then even after that, when we are born in the human realm, we continue to again and again experience those problems, which are the result of the past karma, for incredible length of time, a length of time which is unceasing, which cannot be finished very easily. Even from all this we get liberated. Such powerful negative karma gets purified by practicing bodhicitta in a short time. That suffering which we have to experience from such heavy negative karma, suffering which would last for innumerable numbers of eons, for an incredible length of time, that gets purified in such short time.

Just like a criminal who has done something very dangerous, some very heavy act, by relying upon a very powerful person, a hero, someone who had very strong influence or someone who has great power, by depending on that person the criminal—even if he has done the heaviest thing in the world—might, in that minute, be free from all those punishment, say, from a lifetime sentence or whatever heavy punishment, or even execution. That person becomes free by relying upon that powerful person. Immediately the person became free from all these dangers.

The great bodhisattva, Shantideva, says, "Those who have mind," in other words, those who are thoughtful, who are conscientious, who want to be careful, "why don't they rely upon bodhicitta?" The next verse I don't remember. Anyway, I'm using the example of the thought that we want to be born in hell and experience or take on all the hell beings' sufferings, and let them to be free. I'm using this as an example. That thought of bodhicitta, first letting all other sentient beings be enlightened, is similar to this. Like the shepherd. First the sheep, and then we ourselves. I am just mentioning the psychology, how it works. In reality it becomes the same.

DEVELOP FAMILIARITY WITH THE WHOLE PATH IN EVERY MEDITATION

[Student asks question (inaudible)]

I think normally what I advise is first to become familiar with the whole subject from beginning to end. I think that it is important to know that from beginning to end. For example, a text such as *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*. There are many complete lam-rim texts, some are shorter, some are more elaborate. The most extensive one is Lama Tsongkhapa's, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*. There are also other texts, very extensive ones. Now there is more and more happening, more and more coming, more and more getting translated into English. Whichever text you follow, for example, *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, one of the elaborate ones, first make yourself familiar with the whole subject in this way. Even if you are meditating on the first meditation, guru devotion, or even the preliminary practices, or the meditation on the eight freedoms and ten richnesses of a perfect human rebirth, by knowing the rest of the subject, the whole path, through to the end, I think it gives deeper feeling. Even if you meditate on the beginning of the path, the perfect human rebirth, with this much deeper feeling, you can connect from there, you can make the meditation deeper even though it's a meditation from the beginning of the path. So, having the background, knowing all the rest of the subject, makes a stronger feeling.

Usually the advice is to first become familiar with the entire path. What is the Japanese kung fu? Karate, huh? What? [Student replies] Karate, yes. So anyway, kung fu or karate. First we see that there is somebody who is famous, who is well trained. Then we practice, practice, practice, and then after some time, we think we have enough training that we can possibly, maybe, defeat that well-trained person. We have done much training and now we feel, maybe, we can match, can compete with this person. So like that, first we generate a familiarity with all the path, from beginning to the end. We become familiar with the whole subject, going from beginning to end, back and forth, and then we may feel, "Now if I really try to meditate, it seems that I can have the realization. I can achieve the realization." We get some feeling from your own experience, some confident feeling, "If I really try, really put effort into it, then I can have the realization." It's like example that I gave before. We have enough training, enough skills and now we have confidence that we can now defeat that well-trained, famous person.

EFFORTFUL EXPERIENCE AND EFFORTLESS EXPERIENCE

Then, at that time, we starts to recognize that all the previous practices, what we have been doing, is effortful experience, all beneficial, working together. There is no spontaneous, naturally rising devotion, seeing the virtuous friend as a buddha. Without thinking of the reasons, the quotations, day and night, there is no spontaneously, naturally rising very strong and stable devotion. Only when we remember the quotations, what the Buddha said, what Buddha explained, what Vajradhara explained, their promise to guide ourselves and all sentient beings, those stories, quotations, and so forth, only after remembering and then thinking about the reasons, the logic, then devotion arises. Only then do we see the virtuous friend as a buddha. When we don't remember the quotations and the reasoning, then no true, strong devotion arises.

Similarly, the thought of something like impermanence only arises with effort, by thinking of the reasons, by reflecting on impermanence, by doing the nine-round death meditation, doing the meditation on the aspect of dying or death—visualizing that we are dying and contemplating what happens with the mind, what happens to the body, what's happening with the surrounding people, what's happening with possessions, thinking body being carried to the cemetery, the body put on the firewood and burned, or put in the coffin then brought to the graveyard and so forth—only by thinking of the reasons, then the thought of impermanence arises. Only then do we see that the appearance of this life is very short, very short. Therefore, all the work that we do

for this life doesn't make sense; it has no meaning. It's nonsense, the work for this life; it has no meaning, like child's play, like babies' play. No meaning. Only by thinking of these reasons, then we understand impermanence and then we feel that what is most important in our heart is to achieve happiness beyond this life. Then somebody who has a more developed good heart, more compassion, more loving kindness, then the important thing is to work for other sentient beings.

These experiences are happening. We see that the appearance of this life is very short and realize that the work done for this life, to achieve the happiness of this life, is meaningless. Discovering this, seeing that this is meaningless, we generate anger towards the enemy and try to destroy the enemy, our attachment and desire towards our relatives and friends, having discriminating thoughts toward all these activities, the works that are done for our own happiness, for the happiness of this life. The work we do for this and the discriminating thoughts that arise because of it, are completely meaningless. When we don't think of the reasons—impermanence and death, how that actual time of death is uncertain and it can happen any time, all these reasons—when we don't think of the reasons, this experience is not there, this experience doesn't happen. Only when we think of the reasons then this experience comes.

Similarly, by thinking of all the reasons why sentient beings are so kind, so precious, and how they are suffering, only then are we able to generate the thoughts of loving kindness and compassion. But when we don't think of the reasons, the thought is not very strong; it doesn't arise spontaneously, very strongly, arising from the heart, day and night. The thoughts of loving kindness and compassion towards others, the thought of causing all sentient beings happiness by ourselves and freeing all sentient beings from suffering and its causes by ourselves, this is not spontaneous. When we *do not* think of the reasons why they are kind and so precious and how they are suffering, compassion and the thought of loving kindness then arise. We only experience these by thinking of the reasons. This is called "effortful experience."

To achieve bodhicitta we need to develop the special attitude, the attitude to do all these works by ourselves *alone*. To work for other sentient beings by ourselves, this is an additional thing that wasn't there during the great compassion and loving kindness—to do it by ourselves alone. To do the works for other sentient beings by ourselves, and *on top of that*, alone. The "alone," wasn't there during those times. So this special attitude, the bodhicitta, the thought to achieve enlightenment ourselves in order to benefit other sentient beings, feeling these things only when we think of the reasons, this goes step by step like this. Through this, we generate the cause, practicing the preliminary meditations which are the cause of bodhicitta. Only after going through this, we feel inspired to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. But when we don't think of the reasons, when we don't meditate on those paths, when we don't think of those reasons then the thought to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings doesn't arise. Only by thinking of the reason, then we feel this, then the thought to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings arises. All of these experiences are called "effortful experience."

This generally leads, directs, guides the mind towards the realizations, to the path to enlightenment. You should do this for some time every day. My idea is that even when you are not attending a particular place for a meditation course, a retreat or whatever, but just generally in daily life, while you are working in the day time, then whatever time each day you can make, whatever length of time—an hour or a half hour, or even fifteen minutes—whatever time you can make, it needs to be used to meditate on the lam-rim. The first thing to do in order to generate *effortless* experience is to produce the *effortful* experience by meditating, even if you haven't memorized the outlines of the lam-rim.

Normally, after having studied the commentary, lam-rim practitioners memorize the outline of the lam-rim, then they use the outline to hold onto as a guideline, a structure, like a map for travelling to different countries. You make a guideline like an architect makes a sketch for a building. On the basis of that, then you expand on it. By memorizing the outline of whatever text, like Pabongka Rinpoche's *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* or Lama Tsongkhapa's *Lam-rim Chen-mo*, then you meditate on the basis of that outline. You put together those different commentaries of the lam-rim that you have studied. Any subject that is very effective, that you find is very effective—let's say, bodhicitta—you put there. Then, that makes it very effective for your own mind to quickly generate the realization of bodhicitta. And the same thing with emptiness, the same thing with renunciation. If you don't use an outline, then you can use one of the short lam-rim texts, like *Essential Nectar*, or like this lam-rim called *Happy Path*, that short one. Normally, those short lam-rim texts are memorized and then you meditate on that.

Even if we haven't memorized the texts or we're unable to memorize them, whatever, we can still use them. We can read them. If we haven't memorized them we can just read them in whatever time we have. The most important thing is this, though. When we read a newspaper, it's just, generally, to understand what's happening in the world, just to learn, you know, but here—and this is important—when we read Dharma books, the way to read the Dharma books is to relate them to ourselves, relating them to our own mind. This way the whole teaching is used, and it becomes like taking medicine that cures the disease. With this way of reading Dharma books, of studying and listening to Dharma, doesn't turn our mind outward but rather turns it inward one itself. This method is used to benefit our own mind. Relating to our own life, to our own mind, it becomes beneficial to our own mind. Then we can change, we can transform this mind. This way, we can develop our own mind on the path to enlightenment. That's the main thing. So, it's in that way that we read Dharma books, general Dharma books and especially here when we meditate on the lam-rim by reading lam-rim texts.

Whatever we don't finish in one meditation session, if there is time, we can do it in the evening or otherwise the next day. Then whatever is left, we can do the next subjects on the next day. We can do it a few times like this until we become very familiar with the subject, until we have basically covered the three principle aspects of the path a few times, three or four times, like this. Meditating like this can produce effortful experience.

As I mentioned before, when we have the thought, "If I really try hard, it seems that I might have a realization," when we feel this, when there is some confidence like this, then in Tibetan this is called *nyemo [unclear]chupa*, meaning that we have some confidence that we can actualize the path. Put it this way, now it's time to produce the *effortless* experience of the path. *That* is the actual realization.

Generally speaking, it is very difficult to actualize this effortless experience and the realization. Feeling the realization, the effortless experience that all sentient beings are our own mother and have been our own mother numberless times, these two realizations are generally speaking more difficult to actualize.

Since guru devotion is the root of the path to enlightenment, until we have this realization, there is still discrimination in our own mind; there is the discriminating mind that sees a gap, a separation between our own virtuous friend, from whom we have received Dharma contact on the basis of recognition guru-disciple, a gap between this and the numberless buddhas, the numberless buddhas complete. We need to work to transform our mind until this thought is completely changed into not just a feeling but a very stable seeing, from our own side, that the virtuous friend is all the buddhas, and all the buddhas are the virtuous friend; that they are

inseparable. Seeing this oneness, this inseparability, with devotion, even if this experience happens for just few hours and then disappears, or even for just a few minutes very strongly—that's still good, it's positive. It's a good sign of receiving the blessing of the guru in our own mental continuum, but it's not like this stable experience, this strong devotion, seeing it this strong and stable way. When we have stable devotion like this, spontaneously arising day and night, at that time then we have the realization of guru devotion, the effortless experience of guru devotion. This is not complete, though; it's not the end, the final realization of renunciation, of samsara, of bodhicitta, of emptiness. Even when we have achieved the realization, we need to stabilize it. To do this we don't need to think so much about the reasons and quotations, not so much like before, but still a little bit is needed to stabilize it.

We should stay on one meditation subject each day. First as much as we can on guru devotion until we have this stable realization, then after that, meditating as much as we can on the perfect human body, the usefulness of the eight freedoms and the ten richnesses, then the difficulty of finding such a perfect human body again, then the nine-round meditation on impermanence and death—on the aspect of death by thinking of the three reasons that death is definite, the actual time of death is uncertain and at the time death nothing can benefit except only the holy Dharma, and then, because of this, the only conclusion is to practice Dharma in this life. Then, after meditating on impermanence and death, meditating on the combined sufferings of the lower realms and on karma.

TRAINING ON THE LOWER SCOPE

However by training the mind in the graduated path of the lower capable being, our mind is completely transformed. Before, and now, we have the thought that working for the happiness of future lives, obtaining the happiness of future lives is not so important. We don't care so much; we don't feel it's so important. At the bottom of our heart, what we feel is that between the two—the happiness of this life and the happiness of future lives—the happiness of this life is the most important, even though in reality, in the long run, we [logically know] that future lives' happiness is so crucial, so important, much more important than the happiness and comfort of the very short duration of this life. Meditating like this completely transforms the mind from this attitude into the attitude feeling that this life is very short and that the works for the happiness of this life are not important. We begin seeing that this is meaningless. As I mentioned before, doing work for this life with this discriminating thought, with anger and attachment, doing activities that harm the enemy or help through attachment to relatives and friends and so forth, all these things have no meaning. And then we don't care even when somebody praises us and when somebody criticizes us; neither bothers us. We don't mind, it doesn't bother us whether somebody praises or criticizes us, whether somebody gives us a present or doesn't give us a present. Either way, our mind is not troubled. We don't feel any of these things are important.

Whatever happens, whether material things are given to us or not, it doesn't bother us; it's not important to our mind. Even if somebody praises us or doesn't praise us, it's not important. Our mind is detached. This mind is free; it's a healthy mind. And so even if in our heart we still don't feel that other sentient beings are more precious than us and that other sentient beings' happiness is more important than ours—even though we don't feel that at this time in our own heart, at least we are thinking about our future lives' happiness as more important. We are feeling that the happiness of future lives is more important than of this life; we have this in the heart. "In this life, whether there is comfort or no comfort, it is not important. Whatever happens is no big deal. Whether the happiness of this life happens or doesn't happen, it's not a big deal." Feeling it's not important to our mind, this is very good. When we feel like this—not seeking the happiness for this life, detached from the happiness of this life—our attitude has completely

changed. It is not saying that we can't experience the happiness in this life, it's not saying that, but that we are detached. The problem is being attached. Being attached is a nonvirtuous thought, so then any activity we do with body, speech and mind everything becomes negative karma, which results only in suffering. Nothing becomes Dharma.

Whether we have a good reputation and receive praise or not, whether we receive materials or not, whether we experience comfort or not—whether we have any of these things or not, it doesn't matter because the mind is free, the mind is detached. What we are seeking is only the happiness beyond this life. So the attitude is completely transformed into this and it's stable. This is the realization of the graduated path of lower capable being. Until we achieve this realization we continue the meditations. The first meditation we do is on guru devotion, then the other meditations on this small scope path. In the same day if we can do another meditation besides guru devotion, then we should do the graduated path of lower capable being, especially, the most important one here is impermanence and death. That's the main one and it is very good to do, related to the karma and lower realms.

Without relating it to the karma, just thinking about death itself, just reflecting on death, doesn't have much meaning. But it's important if we relate it with the karma, because then it makes us think about the rebirth, of the body of the happy migratory being and body of suffering migratory being and, since we have to migrate, what one we will have. After thinking about and reflecting on death the conclusion is that it causes us to abandon negative karma and practice virtuous actions. We abandon negative karma, such as the basic example, the ten nonvirtuous actions and so forth, and create good karma, to live in morality, to protect our morality by living in the ten virtuous ways and so forth.

In this way we not only purify past negative karma that we have already created, we also stop creating new negative karma, the cause of the lower realms. And by creating good karma through practicing morality and so forth, we create the cause of the body of the happy migratory being. Not only this, we also develop the fundamental path of the liberation from samsara, the three higher trainings, the higher training of morality, of concentration and of wisdom. Then by practicing bodhicitta we can achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. All these practices are happening, we are engaging in all these practices, persuaded by reflecting on impermanence and death.

So in this way, by doing these practices, we are able to stop rebirth in the lower realms and we are able to receive the body of happy migratory being, able to achieve liberation from samsara and able to achieve full enlightenment for the sake of all kind mother sentient beings. We are able to cease all obscurations, both the disturbing-thought obscurations and the subtle obscurations, and we are able to complete the qualities of cessation and able to complete the qualities of realization. All these things that happen, all these are the benefits of meditating on impermanence and death; they are the results of remembering impermanence and death. In this way it becomes meaningful to think of death, of impermanence and death. Then it has meaning. As I mentioned before, after we train our mind in the graduated path of the lower capable being, after our attitude is completely transformed into this, after the mind is completely detached to the happiness of this life and only seeking the happiness of future lives, even after we have achieved this realization, then we still need to stabilize.

TRAINING ON THE MEDIUM SCOPE

Then we work to renounce all samsara, the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm. We can't find the least attraction in any of the realms, not just the desire realm or the form realm

but even the formless realm. The formless realm is the highest realm in samsara and it has four levels. The last one is the *tip of samsara*, so including even this, the highest point in samsara, the *tip of samsara*, including even this we can find not even the slightest attraction, not even in a dream. With all of this samsara, the desire realm, form realm, formless realm, including the very last one, tip of the samsara, we can't find any attraction for even one second, even in a dream.

We realize that all samsara is like being in the center of a fire, like we are caught in the center of a fire or being in a nest of the poisonous snakes. Like we are sitting on the tip of a needle, the whole samsara is only in the nature of suffering. We are completely renounced, detached from all of this samsara, feeling like being caught in the center of a fire, like being in a prison, that it's only in the nature of suffering. Then, day and night, as Lama Tsongkhapa explained, the wish, the strong determination spontaneously arises to be free, to be liberated from the whole entire samsara. This spontaneously arises, without effort, without the need to think much about the reasons why, about the evolution of samsara and how the samsara is only in the nature of suffering, but naturally, spontaneously arising very strongly day and night—this is the realization of the renunciation of the samsara. Then again we need to stabilize it. Even if we have achieved this realization, we still have to stabilize it.

Until we achieve this realization, we have to meditate on the truth of suffering and the truth of the cause of suffering, how samsara is in the nature of suffering, particularly the suffering realms and the general suffering of samsara.

TRAINING ON THE GREAT SCOPE

If there is a mother who has a beloved child who fell down into a hole where there is fire, when the mother hears this, when the mother discovers this, whatever she doing—if she is eating, walking, whatever she is doing—spontaneously, constantly, the thought that rises is a feeling which is unbearable, that her beloved child has fallen in the fire and she wants to save that child by herself. Feeling like this, how the mother feels with her beloved child, if we are able to feel the same thing, if we are able to feel like this, exactly the same as this towards every sentient being that we see, to all those beings whose minds are obscured and suffering, experiencing suffering of samsara, without putting effort into thinking so much about the reasons—if we are able to naturally have that unbearable feeling to free all sentient beings from all the suffering by ourselves, at that time we have realization of the great compassion. We are similar to the mother who goes down herself, no matter how difficult it is, to save her child by herself alone from the suffering, from being caught in the fire. She takes the whole responsibility on herself, doing all these things by herself alone. If we have this special attitude to free all sentient beings from all the suffering and to cause them happiness, to lead them to enlightenment by ourselves alone, if we have this feeling without effort, without the need to think of the reasons, arising spontaneously day and night, then at that time we have realization of the special attitude of bodhicitta.

Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo has explained it similarly, as spontaneously generating the thought to achieve enlightenment, without effort, so strongly arising, spontaneously day and night arising by seeing each sentient being, the thought to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. Like the realization of the renunciation of samsara, our own samsara, day and night constantly, the strong wish to be free from samsara. Now *here*, day, night, however we constantly have the thought seeking to work for other sentient beings, to free them from all the suffering and to lead them to happiness. There is the thought, there is bodhicitta, the thought to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, arising constantly without effort. At that time, then, we have achieved the realization of bodhicitta. Until our own mind reaches this level, until our own mind is completely

transformed into this experience, the realization of bodhicitta, no matter how many years it takes, we have to do all the meditations, meditating on the common path, having guru devotion and the three principle aspects of path to enlightenment. No matter how many years it takes, how many lifetimes, how many eons it takes, we have to plan to meditate on the path, to meditate on the lam-rim until we achieve these realizations.

TRAINING ON THE TANTRIC PATH

It is on the basis of this common path that we practice the higher tantra in order to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. By receiving the four initiations, which have the full characteristics, from the perfectly qualified right vajra master, this causes our own mind to be ripened to meditate on the Maha-anuttara Yoga tantra path. We meditate on the generation stage, which has two levels, the gross and subtle generation stages and then on the completion stage, the graduated completion stage, which has five stages. One way of counting them is the (1) isolation of body, (2) isolation of speech, (3) isolation of mind, (4) clear light and (5) the illusory body and the unification. If a person is able to actualize the clear light in this life, which is the direct cause of the holy mind dharmakaya, then that meditator can achieve enlightenment in this body in this one brief lifetime of these degenerated times. Within some number of years that meditator, that practitioner of the Maha-anuttara Yoga Tantra path, who has actualized the clear light, can achieve enlightenment.

We complete the generation stage that is preliminary to the graduated completion path, and then by completing this completion path we achieve full enlightenment, the unification of the holy body and holy mind, that which is no more learning. Then after having achieved this enlightenment, which has seven qualities, the limbs, which is the state of Vajradhara, by having achieved this then until every single numberless sentient being is brought to enlightenment, we manifest spontaneously without any effort, with holy body, holy speech and holy mind, in billions of billions, numberless, forms, according to the karma, to the level of mind of the sentient beings perceiving them, and then we lead them from suffering to happiness, then to liberation, then to enlightenment. Not only the actions of the holy mind, but also doing the actions of the body and speech—even with this body, we are doing the actions of holy mind and the holy speech. It's the same thing with the speech: the speech can also do the function of the body as there are many manifestations of the holy speech. This is not like our current body, speech and mind. Our body cannot do the function of the mind; our mind cannot do the function of the body; it is very limited. It's not like this.

Generally in life the first meditation to train in, until we achieve the realization, is guru devotion. Then, on top of that, if we have time to practice another meditation on the same day, we can do the graduated path of the lower capable being. Then, if we can still meditate, on the basis of those two, the other thing to establish is one-pointed concentration, either with tantra practice such as generation stage or the completion state, or *tum-mo*, using the *tum-mo* fire as the object to achieve one-pointed concentration, shamatha, calm abiding, either the actual one or the similar one. Or, we can do this with the generation stage.

In this way, by relating to tantra practice, with one effort two achievements are possible. One effort, at one time, and we have the possibility to have two achievements, two realizations. One is the realization of the generation stage from the Maha-anuttara Yoga Tantra path. The other is shamatha, calm abiding, either the actual one or the similar one, whichever way one achieves one-pointed concentration. It's the same thing with the Six Yogas of Naropa, where there is the possibility to achieve all the realizations, or at least one—trying to achieve one-pointed concentration, calm abiding, or the other meditation is emptiness. We can try to have the

realization of emptiness without relating to the tantra path, without combining it with the tantra path, or the other way is to meditate on emptiness by combining it with the tantra path. My root guru, His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche, explained that doing the meditation on emptiness, when we do that sadhana of the deity, when we do the practice of the generation stage by doing the sadhana, when we meditates on the dharmakaya, then at that time we meditate on emptiness. So in this way it is integrated with meditating on emptiness. The time when spending to meditate on emptiness is integrated with the practice of tantra like this.

This is how to guide our own mind on the path to enlightenment, how to develop our own mind in the lam-rim. First we begin by becoming familiar with the all of the lam-rim subjects and the outline, as I mentioned before.

The question at the beginning, as Robert mentioned, about dividing lam-rim subject in the retreat, that doesn't matter. [Rinpoche laughs] In the past, many years ago, after the course, doing the lam-rim retreat, the whole lam-rim meditation was completed within three days. The whole lam-rim meditation, the graduated path of the lower capable being, the middle capable being and the higher capable being, the whole meditation was completed within three days. Then again, you carry on like this during the one-month retreat. It was carried on like that. In this way, people had a choice depending on how much time they had. Even if somebody only had three days he or she could complete the whole path's outline, leaving an imprint of the whole path to enlightenment by doing three days of retreat. It can be done like this, or the graduated path of the lower capable being in one week, then the next week the graduated path of the middle capable being and on the third week the graduated path of higher capable being. It can also be done like this. Or you can even do one month on the graduated path of the lower capable being, another month on the graduated path of the middle capable being and the last month on the graduated path of high capable being. You can also do it like this. This can be planned. You can do it either way, depending on how much time you have for retreat.

The last thing, as Manjushri, who is embodiment of all the buddhas' wisdom, advised Lama Tsongkhapa, is to the question of how to quickly achieve enlightenment. Manjushri explained integrating the practice like this. Accumulating merit, which means mandala offerings and so forth, then the practice of purifying the obstacles, reciting the Vajrasattva mantra so forth, then one-pointedly requesting to guru in order to receive blessings. With this, then mind training on the lam-rim, which is the actual body of the practice. The three others are often seen as the preliminaries. In this sense, it maybe not correct. It can be said this way also, that these three other practices and then the mind training on the lam-rim, this is the actual body of the practice. By integrating it like this, we achieve enlightenment quickly. This is what Manjushri, the buddha of wisdom, advised in answer to Lama Tsongkhapa's question. How to be successful in developing the mind on the path to enlightenment is contained in Manjushri's advice.

The whole rest of the path, from the beginning of the path, the perfect human body, up until enlightenment, actualizing the whole path, the whole success—all these practices depend on the very root, correctly devoting ourselves to the virtuous friend with our thoughts and actions. It all depends on knowing the teaching, knowing what the Buddha taught, what Lama Tsongkhapa taught, what those pandits, those yogis have explained, by knowing the teaching of how to correctly devote to the virtuous friend. The whole success, up to enlightenment, depends on this way, which is the root of the path to enlightenment.

So anyway, I'll stop here.

[Chanting]

Due to all the past, present and future merits accumulated by myself, by bodhisattvas and sentient beings, may the bodhicitta be generated within my own mind and in the mind of all sentient beings without delay, not even a second. Those who have it, may it be developed.

Due to all the past, present and future merits accumulated by myself, the buddhas, bodhisattvas and sentient beings, due to all these merits, may myself, my family and all sentient beings in all lifetimes be able to meet only perfectly qualified Mahayana virtuous friends, and may each of us from their own side be able to see only enlightened beings, those virtuous friends, and then do only actions that are the most pleasing to the holy mind of the virtuous friend, and be able to fulfill the holy wishes of the virtuous friend immediately and by myself alone.

Due to all the three times' merits accumulated by myself, by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and sentient beings, may all the father, mother sentient beings have happiness. May the three lower realms be empty and may all the bodhisattvas' prayers succeed immediately. May I be able to cause all these by myself alone.

As the three times' buddhas and bodhisattvas have dedicated their merits and as the bodhisattvas Samantabhadra and Manjugosha have realized, I dedicate all the merits, past, present and future, all the merits, in the best way, to quickly enlighten all sentient beings.

Due to all the past, present and future merits accumulated by myself, by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and sentient beings, while these merits are existing at the same time they are empty. Due to these merits may the I, which while it is existing is empty, that which is empty, achieve enlightenment, which while it is existing is empty, for the benefit of all sentient beings, who while existing are empty, by myself alone.

Lecture Three: December 3, 1994

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

[Chanting]

So last night, responding to a question, I was trying to explain how to generate effortless experience. There was the question of how to meditate on the lam-rim, the steps of the path to enlightenment, on the basis of the teachings of Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo and the different gurus, according to their instructions.

The purpose of our life, our survival each day, each hour, each minute, each second, is to free others, to pacify, to eliminate the sufferings of all other the kind mother sentient beings, to eliminate the sufferings of all the kind mother sentient beings and to lead them to happiness, to obtain happiness for them. This is the purpose of our life, the reason for living, for our survival each day, each hour, each minute, each second; it is infinite. It is not a narrow reason; it is infinite, like the limitless sky. This is how important the purpose of our living is. This is the fundamental reason. In other words, this is the purpose of each breath, breathing in and breathing out. Now we can understand, living our life with this attitude, with this view, gives it meaning. Living our life with this attitude gives meaning to everything, changing how we see what we are doing: eating, walking, sitting, sleeping, working, doing our job, studying Dharma. We see living our daily life with this attitude and it gives meaning to everything.

So much money has been spent on us, since kindergarten or however long, from childhood, from the time of learning the alphabet, for that many years, so much energy has been spent and so many expenses have piled up getting us all this education—kindergarten, primary school, high school, college, university, all these things. Then, after we found a job, we have had to earn and spend so much money. However, that money that has been collected after many years of preparation and education, that money and that life have been sacrificed. See how much money and effort we have spent, we have sacrificed, into that. After finding a job and earning a living, we have had to spend so much of that for shelter, for taking care of ourselves, for protection, for living, for survival, and so much on clothes, on food, spending so much on these things. Then for health care, we have had to spend so much, an unbelievable amount, on sicknesses and diseases and expenses for their treatment, operations and so forth.

Trying to live even one day longer, even one hour longer, we need to put so much effort into surviving, to being healthy, doing everything that we know how to have the best health, knowing what is healthy food, what is not healthy food, what are the yin and the yang! [Rinpoche laughs] We have to spend many hours running in the mountains. Or under the very hot sun running or jiggling. Is that the one? [Rinpoche laughs] Joggling? Anyway, whatever it's called. We have to do everything we know how to, everything we've heard of, to ensure our good health.

Living our life with the attitude of living for other mother sentient beings gives meaning to all this, to all the expenses and having all this comfort and enjoyment. It gives meaning. Otherwise, living life without this attitude of benefiting other sentient beings, without understanding what really is the meaning of life, the purpose of living—without the attitude of eliminating the sufferings of sentient beings and obtaining happiness for them—without knowing the ultimate goal of life, then all these things become completely meaningless. Empty.

There is no meaning, these things are empty, because all of this time, all this life we have had so far, all these expenses, all the time and effort we have put into getting and education—no matter

how much education we have—doesn't give meaning to our life. Without knowing what's really the meaning of life, the ultimate goal of life, without the attitude to obtain benefit, happiness, for other sentient beings, without this, no matter how much education we have doesn't give meaning to our life. No matter how much education we have, how much understanding or knowledge collected like a computer, like a machine collecting many things, there is no meaning. It doesn't matter how much money we have, even if we become the richest person in the world, even if we achieve our goal of being a millionaire. When people see on TV and in the newspapers that we are a millionaire, they talk about us. If we become the wealthiest person in the world and gain a reputation that everyone knows, where young and old, even children, know our name—we have such a reputation that the whole world knows us—without knowing reality, the true goal of the life, without living our life with this attitude of obtaining benefit and happiness for others, our attitude becomes one following the ego, the self-cherishing thought. Becoming the wealthiest person in the world, the most famous, somebody that everyone knows, none of these things gives meaning to our life. In the reality own life is empty, completely empty.

For example, I have seen the movie about the feelings of Elvis Presley. [Rinpoche laughs] It showed how he knew he was going to die after six months or after one year. Maybe six months. Many times it happens even to us ordinary people that we have some intuitive feeling that we are going to die within a year or something, some feeling, "I may not live." When he was doing his last song, the people around in the audience, they were so excited, and how do you call, ecstatic. The people in the audience became ecstatic, while he himself was singing the song and expressing the words, expressing the feeling that he may not live long in the song. While he was singing the song he was crying; tears were coming from the ears. [Rinpoche laughs] Tears were coming from the ears, tears were coming from the eyes. That might be a different tear. While he was singing, tears coming from the ears, his eyes. I don't know why the ear came. [Rinpoche laughs] Somehow it crowded in, the idea of the ear. Anyway, so you see, there must be a reason why, when he was expressing that he felt he was going to die soon tears were coming from the eyes. There must be some reason.

For example, Lama Yeshe, whose kindness is incomparable, more than all the past, present and future buddhas, towards myself and other students. For example, the external appearance was that Lama passed away due to heart things, due to heart sickness. However, there was no personal regret. There was no regret; there was no personal regret regarding his own life. There was no regret. Before going to America for the operation, when Lama was staying at a farmhouse just outside Delhi to have quiet time, Lama mentioned to me he wouldn't mind even if the operation didn't succeed. We were trying to get observations done, checking from His Holiness the Dalai Lama and from other sources, when to do the operation and so forth so that it could be successful without danger. Lama expressed that he wouldn't mind, even if the operation didn't succeed, that he had served others enough. That he had had a chance to serve, and so he had no regret; he had had enough opportunity to serve others. "Therefore I don't have regrets."

Lama actually said about the length of his life, "There is still another ten years that I can live, another ten years, but that depends on my students." That's what Lama mentioned to me, one evening, that he could live another ten years, the length of his life itself could be ten more years, but it depended on his students. However the point that I'm expressing is that in regards to his own life there was not one single regret. only satisfaction, only things to rejoice in.

Many of my gurus took cancer. In Lama's case it was the heart. The external appearance, what the doctors said, was heart disease, but this is because this was used as practice, to develop the mind on the path to enlightenment. Not lam-rim, not the three principal aspects of the path.

These were already established in his mental continuum, in his holy mind, a long time ago, even while Lama was studying in Tibet, in the monastery. Renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness were already established in Tibet. Lama was using the heart disease to take the opportunity to actualize the completion stage of the Highest Yoga Tantra path, the completion path such as the clear light and illusory body, which makes it possible to achieve enlightenment in that life, within some number of years to achieve full enlightenment on that body.

Many of my gurus other than Lama took cancer. Even in the ordinary appearance, the external appearance, they knew everything, the whole procedure, before passing away, before actually experiencing the passing away—using the ordinary term, death—the whole passing away, they knew how it was going to be. All these experiences were used on the path to achieve enlightenment quickly by applying the experience of the completion state, of clear light, of the illusory body and the unification of these two, the very highest path of the Maha-anuttara Yoga Tantra.

They had not one single regret, not one tiny doubt or regret regarding their own life, how their own life had been, not one single doubt about what was going to happen, the procedures, in the future at the death time, after death and in the next life. They clearly know before what was going to happen. They used these conditions to leave the old body and to take new body in the most suitable situation, the perfect family that has good samaya, or a karmic connection. This was the motivation, as it was already planned in the other life. Then, after passing away maybe some went to the pure land of deity that they had practiced before coming back to the world to benefit sentient beings by being born where there are suffering sentient beings, and where the time, the karma has ripened to benefit them. Then, they reincarnated in that world, in that country, in that beneficial place. By taking a new body again, they can again benefit by being an example to others, this method being the most benefit to the numberless sentient beings.

Even without using the example of many of my gurus who have passed away through taking certain cancer or different sicknesses, we can even use ordinary people as examples. There are many people who don't feel upset, even though they get cancer and so forth. Even though they know that they're going to die soon they don't have sadness in the heart. They don't have regrets, worries or fears even if they have a life-threatening disease and they know that they're going to die soon. There are many ordinary people in the world like this.

Some years ago when I was in Adelaide, I was trying to do a retreat but my retreat was actually watching TV and listening to the radio. There was one student who was doing radio work, listening to maybe sixty or seventy people talk, interviewing people or discussing problems of people in the city, what can be done, all these things. I found this interesting because they talked about all the different problems people have in a city. Some problems they discussed for two days, but many discussions just lasted one day.

One of the discussions was that there was no more space left in the graveyards, the places had run out. There was a shortage of places to put the bodies. There was some discussion, and she interviewed the person who was in charge of the cemetery, who was looking after the land. While she was interviewing different people, time to time some Dharma words get slipped out. "Meditation," she said, "is to think of death as a very important thing in the life," something like that. That is a very important point, something that she just let slip out. The other person didn't know what to say. There was a short silence since the other person didn't know what to say. There was a break; there was kind of a short silence.

At that time a recession was happening in Australia. Many childcare centers were unable to run, things like that. That discussion took maybe two days, discussing how parents don't know how to bring up their children, how to guide their children, not knowing what is right and what is wrong, what is to be practiced and what is to be abandoned. I think a lot of the discussion had been that they're becoming very violent, very wild, becoming difficult, even for the government.

Anyway the point I'm making is this. Her friend, a researcher or something, the person who was doing work after her, was interviewing, responding to the people who were ringing to express their opinions. There was one lady who said that because there was a recession there was so much talk about how bad and difficult life and everything was, but that she was quite happy with her life. And she said, "Because I know where I'm going." She said, "Because I know where I'm going." [Rinpoche laughs] I think she meant when the death happened she knew where she was going very clearly before the death. Normally the interviewer asked questions for people to explain themselves but when she expressed this he didn't ask any questions. So I was very disappointed. He just kept quiet then he changed the subject.

So what I'm saying is that even among ordinary people there are many people who have no problems, even if they get a life-threatening disease. Most of the ordinary people don't want this life-threatening disease but for other people, for that individual person, her mind was happy, there was no regret, there was satisfied mind, even at the time of death.

As I mentioned, Elvis Presley, the most well-known person to the young and to the world, one person who achieved the greatest reputation, but he was feeling sad because he had not much life left to live. He saw that death was going to happen, that he was going to die soon. This shows that he felt his life had not been meaningful.

The purpose of living, or the ultimate goal of life, is to free all sentient beings from all the sufferings and to lead all of them into happiness, and *especially* to lead them into the peerless happiness, full enlightenment. It is living in regards to doing service for other sentient beings, causing them to obtain the happiness of this life, the comfort of this life. Those who are sick are given medicine; those who are starving or who don't have a means of living are given food and money. Giving money to those who are poor, obtaining the happiness of this life, the comfort of this life for others, we should do this as much as one can. We should do the service, obtaining the comfort and happiness of this life for others. But now what is more important? If we compare this first one, we should do as much as one can. There is great need to help others in this life. But there is also the causing other sentient beings to have long-term happiness, the happiness *beyond* this life, the happiness of all the coming future lives, not just this life's happiness and comfort which is only a few years, or a few months or a few days, which is very short time. Causing others to have long-term happiness, the happiness of all coming future lives, this service becomes more important compared to the first service.

Now, more important than this second service that we do for other sentient beings, more important than this, is causing other sentient beings to be liberated from the whole, entire suffering of samsara, the cycle of death and rebirth and all the problems in between, by ceasing completely karma and delusions, including the seed of the delusion. To cause all sentient beings to cease completely the whole, entire suffering of samsara, so that they never have to experience the suffering of samsara again, forever, this service becomes more important than even the second one. Just only causing the happiness of future lives, this is still temporary happiness. Now here this is the ultimate happiness.

But even more important than this third one, a more important service than even the third one, is the leading all sentient beings on the steps of the path to enlightenment, causing them to complete the two types of merit, the merit of wisdom and the merit of fortune. It's more important to cause them to complete the two types of merit by completing the path to cease even the subtle obscurations, not only the disturbing-thought obscurations, the gross ones, but also the subtle obscurations, the subtle mistakes of the mind. They need to cease these subtle obscurations to bring about a state that is perfected in all the qualities of cessation and in all the qualities of the realizations. To lead them, to bring them into this peerless happiness, full enlightenment, this great liberation, now *this* one becomes the most important thing. This one became the most important service among all these services that we can do towards other sentient beings. For the success of this work for other sentient beings, to lead them into full enlightenment, which is the cessation of all the mistakes of mind and the attainment of all the qualities of the realizations, to be able to decide on this perfect work for other sentient beings, then first we should achieve full enlightenment ourselves. For that we should actualize the graduated path of the higher capable being.

THE FOUR HARMONIOUS BROTHERS

As Lama Atisha explained that one who wishes... [Short gap in the recording. Rinpoche is undoubtedly telling the start of the story of the four harmonious brothers, where an ancient land (Kashi, what is now Varanasi) suddenly becomes very peaceful and prosperous and neither the king nor his ministers can understand why, each deciding he was the cause.] ...so the whole environment changed, things developed very much.

So the king thought, "I did it. All these progress, all the development in the country happened because of me." Then another minister thought, "I did it, I caused all the development in the country." Then somebody suggested to the king that there was a sage with clairvoyance who could tell who caused the sudden development of the country. They all agreed and went to see the sage, and the saint told the king why the country had developed so much. The sage said, "It's not because of the king or the ministers, none of you. It's because there are four brothers, animals, in the forest. There is an elephant, a monkey, a rabbit and a bird." I think the bird was embodiment of Shakyamuni Buddha and the other three animals were embodiments of his attendants, his disciples, called Ananda, Maudgalyayana and Shariputra.² The bird advised them to each take a responsibility and so the elephant spread the practice of the five precepts to the other elephants, the monkey spread it to all other monkeys, causing them to practice the five precepts, the rabbit caused the other rabbits to take five precepts and the bird caused the other birds to take the five precepts. The saint told the ministers this, saying, "The reason why there has been a big change in the country, why the country has become so well developed—the plants, seeds and all these things—is because the four brother animals who live in the forest live in precepts. It is because of this."

In the teachings it is explained that if we keep this drawing of the four brother animals, the four harmonious brothers, at home it brings harmony and it helps to develop virtue, to practice morality, to create much good karma. That's why this drawing of the four harmonious brothers is done in the Tibetan monasteries. Many times we can see it outside of the door of the temple where the Wheel of Life is also drawn, the drawing that shows all of samsara, the suffering, cause of suffering and then the solution, the achievement the sorrowless state, then the path, the true path, the true cessation of the suffering. The Wheel of Life introduces the suffering and also

² In other teachings Rinpoche elaborates, saying Shakyamuni was the bird, Ananda the rabbit, Maudgalyayana the elephant and Shariputra the monkey.

what we can do, showing that there is a solution. There is also often this drawing of the four harmonious friends there to help develop virtue. If it is kept in the home or at office, due to the story of what happened, it helps to bring harmony among the people working there. There is an incredible benefit to the country, to the world, to that area, to that country. It's a great blessing. It becomes a source of happiness and peace to that country, to that area for those sentient beings, to change the environment, to make it better. It benefits the environment so much, and not only for human beings but even for the nagas, even for devas, for other beings who are in this world, who live in that area; they also get a lot of benefit, a lot of peace and happiness, from those who are living in the ordination.

I heard that there is so much difficulty in the life in Russia in these recent years, so many difficulties with the means of living and so forth. I haven't been there recently, although there have been several invitations a few years ago, but not in recent years. What I thought was that to teach lam-rim at many different places, in many cities or places, and then while the teaching is going on there is an organized group meditation on the lam-rim at the same place. At the same time taking the eight Mahayana precepts could be emphasized, causing as many people as possible to take the eight Mahayana precept and then especially to recite the Compassionate Buddha's mantra, to spread this as much as possible. Reciting the Compassionate Buddha's mantra, OM MANI PADME HUM, develops compassion in the minds of many people, many sentient beings. By putting this emphasis, this can definitely change the environment; it can definitely develop the economy, help the crops and plants grow well, all these things. It is able to stop the recession. By creating the inner cause, the good karma, if there is inner cause then you can have the outer cause to develop country. If there is no inner cause there wouldn't be an outer cause to develop the country. There is no way. Then if possible one monastery could be established from the very beginning, starting as very pure, from the very beginning of the monastery. That would be a great blessing. Anyway, as I explained before, that could help that country a lot.

So far I didn't get to go but I asked one of the elder students, a member of the Sangha who has had the chance to extensively study the Dharma, the different philosophical texts, an American monk called George Churinoff. I think through the generations, he has some connection, something to do with Russia. I think he looks like a Russian, he himself looks more Russian than American. [Rinpoche laughs] So I asked him to go there to teach Dharma. The people liked it very much. They enjoyed the teaching very much. Maybe they enjoyed the clarity, the clear explanation. Some people send me letter saying how beneficial they found the clear explanations. So again there is plan. I could not go, but I think there is plan, hoping that he can go again to give more teachings.

ACTUALIZING THE PATH DEPENDS ON ALL THREE SCOPES

To actualize the path depends on the graduated path of the middle capable being, and that depends on actualizing the greater path of lower capable being. Like Lama Atisha explained, a capable being seeking only the happiness of samsara for himself with the method is called the least capable being. The way I have translated this is not very strict. The way it is written in Tibetan, word by word, what it is saying is that this is a person whose attitude is detached, who has renounced this life. What it is saying is that even if he has comfort, enjoyment, happiness, he is still detached. Even if he has the comfort, enjoyment, happiness of this life the mind is detached, renounced. This is the attitude.

The preliminary for this is knowing karma, having faith in karma. In order to achieve the aim, the happiness of samsara, the happiness of future lives, the method is abandoning the ten

nonvirtues and living in the ten virtuous actions of morality. Somebody who does this should be known as the least capable being.

What he is implying is that the “least capable being” means that no matter how much education that person has—he may be able to speak hundreds of different languages, have so much education, so many degrees—no matter how much wealth the person or how much fame or comfort he has, any happiness of this life, any enjoyment he is able to achieve, he is not considered any of these capable beings, since he doesn’t have renunciation of this life, his mind isn’t detached from this life. No matter how much other success the person has achieved in this life, from a Dharma point of view, in reality it’s ordinary. In the world ordinary people think that all other rich people, the business people, all those different famous people, these people are the successful people in the world. But the person who makes millions of dollars profit every day by having so many companies, from a Dharma point of view is just an ordinary capable being. He doesn’t even come into the category of any of the three levels of capable beings.

He is similar to a tiger who uses her skillful means, or by using her politics, to catch other animals for her own happiness. He is no different from the mouse who in knowing ways to harm others or to collect materials, or the cat who can catch a mouse so skillfully without making any noise at all, for his own living, for his own happiness. Even the ants, the tiniest insects like ants, if there is any food left, like some sugar or some food left about without being covered tightly, they find it so easily. They come to the place where there is food, and soon all the food is covered in ants. Even ants have so many skills to achieve their own means of living. All these are ordinary capable beings, even the millionaire, all their capacity is only to achieve the comfort of this life, so they are all ordinary capable beings.

To succeed in attaining all three levels of the path—the graduated path of the lower, medium and higher capable being—depends on the root of the path, correctly devoting to the virtuous friend.

This is another emphasis from last night on how to meditate on the lam-rim, how to practice Dharma. The most effective way to practice Dharma, the most successful way, is on the basis of correctly devoting to the virtuous friend. Practicing dharma on the basis of correctly devoting to the virtuous friend is the way to practice Dharma successfully. Then it has success. This way, there is no obstacle to continuing Dharma practice and to completing Dharma practice, to actualizing whole path. On the basis of correctly devoting to the virtuous friend, that’s practicing Dharma. If one’s own practicing Dharma, one is practicing Dharma, we try to practice Dharma but it’s not based on correctly devoting to the virtuous friend, even though we might be practicing Dharma all the time, and we can understand from the outline of the shortcomings making mistakes of correcting devoting to the virtuous friend—there are eight shortcomings outlined—we can’t succeed. Even if we practice tantra we can’t achieve sublime realization. That means if we make mistakes in devoting to the virtuous friend and we are practicing very high tantra we cannot achieve sublime realization, we can’t have success.

Then next outline, even with much effort we try to practice the meaning of the tantra day and night, day and night, by not sleeping, by not talking, by not meeting people, by living in a solitude place, bearing so many hardships, day and night we practicing tantra but in reality it’s like achieving hell, it’s like achieving hell. Why? What the outline is saying, it’s because we didn’t change, we didn’t really think about the most important point where success comes from, right up to enlightenment. We didn’t know that success comes from correctly devoting to the virtuous friend. The thought of mistakes arising towards the virtuous friend is the opposite to success. The thought of mistakes arising towards the virtuous friend is left if nothing changes. If nothing

changes it's always there, nothing is done, nothing changes, the mistakes didn't change. Then while we are making the mistake, at the same time we are doing so much practice, even highest tantra practice with so much effort, with many hardships.

This is because the virtuous friend we received Dharma contact from is the most powerful object. He is the most powerful object even if from the side of the virtuous friend he's an ordinary sentient being, because of the relationship we have established with him, with recognition of guru-disciple when we have received even one stanza of teaching, or even one verse of teaching, even three or four syllables of a mantra or an oral transmission—due to having received this Dharma contact, the minute, the second we have established this Dharma contact, it created the power, the power has been actualized and that person becomes the most powerful influence in our life. It happens the minute, the second, we have the recognition of the guru-disciple relationship, even with receiving the oral transmission of two or three syllables of a mantra, the Dharma connection is established. That creates the power, that makes the person more powerful than all the past, present and future three times' numberless buddhas. There is no question of being more powerful than all the bodhisattvas and other powerful objects, there is no question. By having established the Dharma contact between that person and us, by making this, depending this and the power that comes in existence, that the person becomes the most powerful being, the most powerful object—not to every other sentient being, but to us because we have established this contact with that person.

Like a battery needs a positive and negative polarity to create a charge and light a bulb, the power comes from the Dharma connection we make with the virtuous friend. Only when the positive and negative terminals are connected can we have light; only by having this connection with a virtuous friend can we have Dharma success.

[Break in recording] "... a person who wishes to cease completely the sufferings of others by realizing the suffering experience belongs to one's own mental continuum." Maybe it's easier to understand "experienced by one's own mental continuum is called a sublime capable being."

What this is saying is that we attain the graduated path of the higher capable being of sublime capable being on the basis of having trained well in the graduated path of the lower capable being in general and graduated path of the middle capable being in general. In other words, we attain the general renunciation of this life and the general renunciation of the whole of samsara. Then, by realizing how we are tormented by the three types of suffering of samsara, we see that the numberless other sentient beings are also similarly constantly experiencing the suffering of samsara, experiencing oceans of the samsaric sufferings. We then wish to cease all the sufferings. We then generate the precious sublime thought to achieve enlightenment which is similar, with that thought, with this bodhicitta then we practice, following the bodhisattva's deeds, the bodhisattva's conduct. This is higher capable being.

In other words, we have the attitude having completely abandoned the thought working for the self. There is no thought of working for the self at all; we only have the thought to work for other sentient beings. We have the aim to achieve full enlightenment for others, and for the success of that we follow the bodhisattva's conduct, the six paramitas.

In order to become a higher capable being we should actualize the graduated path of the middle capable being.

Then Lama Atisha explained a person who has left samsara behind, who has turned his back on samsara, engaging in actions changed from the negative and seeking only peace for himself,

seeking only his own peace. This is called a middle capable being. This is a practitioner whose attitude is detached from the whole of samsara—from the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm, from the lowest realm of the hell, what is called the unbearable suffering state, and from the highest state in samsara, the fourth level of the formless realm, called the tip of the samsara. He finds no attraction to any of these, to the pleasure, to the happiness of samsara, from the lowest realm of the hell to the tip of the samsara. To all these realms of pleasure, he doesn't find any attraction at all even for one second, even in a dream. His aim is to achieve liberation from samsara, the blissful state of peace for himself, just for himself.

THE VARIOUS VOWS

For the success of this we need to live in morality, with the pratimoksha vows, the vows that are the path to achieve liberation for ourselves, the pratimoksha vows, the five lay precepts and the complete *upasika* vows, the five lay precepts, the eight precepts, the near-abiding, which means living in the eight precepts then we become closer to liberation, which is called *nyen-ne* in Tibetan. Living in these eight precepts brings us closer to liberation, to the complete cessation of the whole entire samsara.

Then there are the thirty-six vows, ordination of renunciation and the full monk's ordination. There are the male and female thirty-six vows, the ordination, the full monk's vows, but for the female beings there is another set of vows between, which is for checking, before taking the full ordination, what is called *gelongma* or *bhikshuni* vows. After the thirty-six precepts, there is another vow of ordination called *gelongma*.

There are seven types of pratimoksha ordination to achieve liberation for the self. For the success of achieving liberation for self we engage in this path of morality, the path to liberation. This is what Lama Atisha says in the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, how we can change from doing negative actions by living in this whatever number of vows we can take. By living in whatever number of vows, that means [we cease] the number of negative karmas harming ourselves and harming other sentient beings. If we are living in the five precepts, the five lay vows, then we have stopped, we have made five less negative karmas, which harm ourselves and which harm all the other sentient beings.

That means, if we are a lay person and we have taken the five precepts, they are taken until the death time, and they have five merits, so there are five merits accumulating all the time. Even if we are living in a coma for many years we are constantly accumulating the five merits, constantly, every minute, every second, we are collecting the five merits, the good karma, the cause of happiness, the cause of the body of a happy migratory being, the cause of the liberation, the cause of ultimate happiness. While we are eating, while we are sleeping, we are constantly, *all the time*, accumulating the five good karmas, the five merits.

Now, at the same thing, if we are a lay person who has taken the eight precepts, it's the same thing, all the time we are accumulating the eight merits constantly. And the same thing for somebody who has taken the thirty-six vows, even more constantly, every minute constantly accumulating the thirty-six merits.

A person who is living in full ordination, with 253 vows, one who is living in the fully-ordained vows, who is living in full ordination, that monk's ordination, that person is called a virtuous beggar, a *gelong*, a virtuous beggar. That's not a beggar of food. It's very easy to think that's the meaning if we don't know, that it means begging for food. But it means begging for nirvana, a *gelong*, a beggar, one who is seeking liberation, begging for liberation, the ultimate happiness, the

beggar of liberation. It has the complete opposite meaning to begging for food. A person who has taken the 253 vows, the precepts, from the second those vows are taken, from then until the death time, as I mentioned before, even if he suddenly falls into a coma or even while he is sleeping every day, during all those many hours of sleeping or while he is eating, walking, talking and so forth—he is constantly every second, every second collecting the 253 merits. Even if all that person does is just eating, making kaka and sleeping and he doesn't do prostrations or study the Dharma, not reading Dharma books, not doing specific performed practice, he is still collecting merit. That person who has taken the vows and lives in the vows, even though he does nothing else, not doing any particular performed practice, just eating, sleeping and making kaka, that person still constantly makes profit, good karma, the 253 merits, constantly. Therefore in reality he is actually very rich in good karma, in merit, even if he doesn't do any other activities, just by living in these vows.

It's similar with the bhikshuni or gelongma vows for the nuns. There are about 360, or 363, or 366—I'm not sure, I don't remember exactly, but there are a bigger number of vows, there are much more vows. It's the same with the merit as I mentioned for the fully-ordained monks who doesn't perform any practice other than having taken and is living these vows, it's the same thing with a full bhikshuni, she is constantly accumulating that much merit in every second.

Usually people who don't know karma, even if they think they are Buddhist but they don't know karma, they haven't studied karma, many people criticize the Sangha because they think that their connotation of service to others means to mix with other people, to live in the city, to work in hospitals as nurses and the like, that kind of work. Even if they believe they are Buddhist they have no understanding of karma, the teachings on karma, and because of that lack of understanding, they can't see the importance of living in the precepts, in morality; they can't see how important it is living in the vows, living in the precepts, being an ordained person. They can't see that the Sanghas' life is important, and think that they are just lazy. Many who don't know just think that they're lazy, just living, just eating, just sleeping, making kaka, making pipi, just living in a monastery or in an isolated place. They can't see how that is doing service for others, living in an isolated place, living in a monastery or nunnery, living in the vows by living in the right environment, a protected environment that helps their practice, that helps develop the mind on the path and being away from a disturbing environment, a dangerous environment, an environment dangerous to their own practice, and so they are able to protect their karma or morality.

Somebody like that is developing his or her mind on the path, month by month, year by year, by being in such a conducive place, developing mind on the path month by month, year by year, but this isn't seen by many other people who don't know what karma is, who don't know what exactly the teaching of the Buddha is, the benefit of the teaching of the Buddha towards sentient beings, from where all sentient beings' happiness comes, from the teaching of Buddha. It all comes from the two types of teachings of Buddha: the scriptural understanding and the other one, the realizations. Living in morality is the path of the teaching that is the attainment the realization one of the three higher trainings: the higher training of morality, the higher training of concentration and the higher training of wisdom. Of the two types of teachings of Buddha, this belongs to the realizations.

For us ordinary beings who do not have realizations of calm abiding or great insight, the teaching we have is morality. Morality is only realization we can attain from the scriptural understanding and the realizations.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MORALITY

Many people, even if they consider themselves Buddhist, haven't studied the Dharma well and can't see the importance of living in the precepts, of living in morality, abstaining from negative karmas, from harming ourselves and harming other sentient beings through the ten nonvirtues. All those negative karmas are the opposite to the precepts, whereas the precepts are the practical means, the source of happiness for ourselves, for our own current life and all the coming future lives, as well as for our own ultimate happiness. Morality is the basic source of not only this life's happiness and peace, but all the future lives' happiness and peace, and especially our own ultimate liberation, enlightenment.

By living in morality, abstaining from that many negative karmas that harm other sentient beings, numberless other sentient beings don't receive harm from us, they don't receive that many harms equaling the number of precepts we take. Depending on the number of precepts we are living in, abstaining from that many harmful negative actions, karmas, all other sentient beings don't receive those harms. And so the harms they receive from us become that much less, the greater number of the precepts we live in. The more precepts we live in, the less harm that the rest of the numberless other sentient beings receive from us. That itself is peace and happiness; the numberless of other sentient beings receive that much peace and happiness from us. This is what we are offering. This is what we are giving them.

That is a very logical, a very practical service we are giving them; it is the basic source of all sentient beings' happiness. Living in morality, abstaining from those numbers of negative karmas is the basic source of all sentient beings' happiness.

[Break in recording]

WITH POWERFUL OBJECTS, WE EXPERIENCE THE RESULT IN THIS LIFE

[...] Depending on the action and the recipient of the action, it could become the very heaviest karma. Even a very service or a small respect done [to a powerful object such as our parents or guru] could become very powerful positive karma which we can start to experience quickly in this life. But, similar to the vastness of the result of a positive action to a powerful object, the suffering result of negative karma, a small misdeed done towards a most powerful object brings great suffering, starting from our parents of this life, to ordained people, the Sangha, up to the arhats, the bodhisattvas, then the buddhas up to the guru.

Starting from the parents of this life it's the same. A small disrespect done to them becomes very heavy karma and we have to experience the problems in this life. Similarly, any small good things done, small services towards our parents up to the guru, we will start to experience result as happiness in this life. We create the karma in this life and we see the result in this life.

Therefore, even if we practice tantra with so many hardships—not seeing anybody, not talking, doing so many disciplines—even if we practice tantra, but we fail to observe the root of the path to enlightenment, correctly devoting to the virtuous friend, because of the mistakes we make, the arising of thoughts of mistakes to the virtuous friend not having been recognized not changed, this becomes the greatest obstacle to success; it becomes a very heavy negative karma. It is like we are taking some medicine but at the same time taking a very powerful poison that completely cancels the medicine. At the same time as taking some medicine, we have taken so much powerful poison that we have to experience it results, going through pain or death or the danger of death. We have to go through this because the poison that we have taken is so powerful, and we have taken a lot and it is a very powerful one. Even if we are taking medicine it can't be effective; it can't really stop the whole problem, whole danger.

That's why it says that even when we attempt to practice tantra it is like achieving hell. On the one hand we are studying Dharma so hard, learning so much Dharma, or trying to do so much retreat or so much practice but, on the other hand, we have not recognized the mistakes that we are doing that hurt us, not correctly devoting to the virtuous friend and so nothing changes. This means we are creating the heaviest obstacle all the time and so we can't really succeed in that practice; we can't achieve the realization.

Sooner or later we meet some heavy problems, lot of damage to the mind, there's so much *lung* [wind disease]. There is a lot of damage to the mind. Even if we start retreat, in the middle of the retreat the mind becomes much worse—instead of getting better the mind become worse and worse, with less and less devotion, less and less compassion. Even the little experience of compassion or devotion we had before is all gone. We are unable to complete the retreat due to health or due to mental damage, or we are unable to continue holding the vows. We meet very heavy obstacles and are unable to develop the mind on the path to enlightenment. Many problems arise as a result, even in this life.

The most successful way to practice Dharma is on the basis of correctly devoting to the virtuous friend, practicing Dharma not according to what we like but according to what we are instructed to do or according to the holy mind of the virtuous friend. Without being based on the holy mind wishes or the instructions of the virtuous friend when we practice Dharma according to what we like then obstacles arise if according to what we like is the opposite to the instructions or the wishes of the virtuous friend.

THE NEED TO PRACTICE DHARMA BETWEEN SESSIONS

As I mentioned last night, the other really effective thing is to remember what we have done in our meditation session while we are doing our daily business. Whether we are doing meditations to have effortless experience or we are doing effortful experience by remembering quotations and reasons, then the rest of the day life, if there is no connection, we are not making it meaningful. We do meditation on the lam-rim for one hour or half an hour but the rest of our day has nothing to do with the lam-rim meditation of the morning, with what we meditated on during the session, if the rest of the day's life if it is the opposite to the lam-rim meditation, if we fail to take the essence into the rest of the day, we are not making it meaningful. The rest of the day's life becomes empty, meaningless, by doing meaningless actions, meaningless work. Because the motivation for what we do in the rest of the day is not related to the morning lam-rim meditation and it is not a bodhicitta motivation, or right view, or one of renunciation, it therefore becomes ignorance, anger, attachment, clinging to this life. That means that the rest of the day's activities become meaningless. While eating, sleeping, doing our job, talking, whatever we do, all this becomes meaningless because the motivation is nonvirtue: ignorance, anger or attachment clinging to this life.

Whatever meditation we have done that day in morning, if the morning meditation is impermanence, the rest of the day's working life, the active life, our break-time's life, the experience that we generated in the morning during that one hour or half hour session will continue. We try to keep the experience we have generated in the morning, that experience, that thought; we try to keep it for the rest of the day. In this way, that itself becomes our motivation. If it is the thought of impermanence then the motivation becomes renunciation to this life. So this way, whether we are talking, whether we are working, doing our job, studying Dharma, going to sleep—all these activities—for the rest of the day's life activities, they become Dharma. They become pure Dharma because they are all done with a mind which is in this same experience, that death can happen anytime, that the appearance of this life is very short.

By keeping the mind, by keeping that experience which we generated during the meditation session, on impermanence and death, then the rest of the day's life activities become pure Dharma. How many hours of job we do all becomes Dharma. If the morning meditation is compassionate loving bodhicitta, then we try to keep that experience we generated towards other sentient beings, we try to live our life by keeping that experience. Then the rest of the day's life activities become the cause for enlightenment. They become the cause for the happiness of all sentient beings.

If the meditation in the morning was emptiness then we try to hold the experience, to look at the I as empty. We have to look at the aggregates as empty; we have to look at the form as empty. We have to look at the form which exists, is merely labeled by mind but appears not merely labeled by the mind, which is the object to be refuted, which is the hallucination. In the morning we look at all these things as hallucinations, or we meditate that they are all empty, if that was our morning meditation, and we try to hold the experience we had in the morning, by continuing that experience even in the break time, while we are doing our job, working, talking to people, eating, sleeping and so forth—by continuing that same awareness for the rest of the day, experiencing what we generated in the morning. As much as we are able to do that many Dharma activities during the rest of the day, in the break time, they all become Dharma, become the direct remedy to cut the root of samsara, to eliminate the root of delusions, ignorance, the concept of inherently existence.

If the morning meditation was guru devotion, then we try to keep the devotion that we generated during the session, we try to hold that experience, we try to live the rest of the break-

time life with that experience. In this way it also helps everything we do very much with our body, speech and mind to not become the opposite to guru yoga. What we do in the break time with our body, speech and mind all becomes guru yoga, so it helps. With the guru yoga mind, with devotion, the mind that transform into devotion from the thought of mistakes, whatever we do becomes service, becomes guru yoga practice. Then the rest of the day we constantly take the essence, even in the break time's life, all the time we take the essence, day and night. As Lama Tsongkhapa explained in *The Songs of Experience* of the lam-rim, as it is mentioned there "one should take essence all day and night." The meaning is like this.

From the strong, intensive preliminary practices, purifying and accumulating merit, from those two then we put more effort into purification, purifying the obstacle to realizations. From those two we mainly put effort into purification. If there is no obstacle then we are able to achieve realizations; if there is an obstacle then the mind can't be changed, the mind can't be developed.

Among the meditators in Dharamsala, quite a number who have a lot of experience not only in lam-rim but also the tantric path have already passed away. One older meditator who achieved not only the three principal aspects of the path, calm abiding, and the generation and completion stages of tantra, such as the clear light and illusory body, was Gen Jampa Wangdu, the chief disciple of Geshe Rabten and a close friend of Lama and myself. Before he passed away, I took some advice and I took the lineage of the oral transmission of "taking the essence," the pill retreat where if a meditator lives in a solitary place where it is very difficult to collect food, he or she can live on pills, to save time and also to have a clear mind, to more quickly achieve shamatha, calm abiding. According to this great meditator Gen Jampa Wangdu, from his own experience, this is his advice. That is similar to what he used to explain with the meaning of "taking the essence" in the whole day and the whole night. In this way day and night, the whole of our life becomes fruitful, meaningful.

I'll stop here.

[Tibetan prayers and mandala offering]

DEDICATION

Due to all the merit accumulated in the past, present and future by me and three times' merits accumulated by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and sentient beings, may bodhicitta be developed in my mind and in the mind of the all sentient beings without delay even a second and that which has been developed, may it be increased.

[Tibetan prayer]

Due to all the three times' merits accumulated by myself, by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and sentient beings, may I, my family, also students and all the sentient beings be able to meet only perfectly qualified Mahayana virtuous friends in all lifetimes and from my own side and from each sentient being's side may we be able to see only enlightened beings and to do only actions which are the most pleasing to the holy mind of the virtuous friend and to be able to fulfill the holy wishes immediately by myself and by each of the sentient beings.

Due to all the three times' merits accumulated by my, by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and sentient beings, may all the father mother sentient beings have happiness, may all the three lower realms be empty forever, may all the bodhisattvas' prayers succeed immediately and may I be able to cause all this by myself alone. As the bodhisattvas, the three times' buddhas and bodhisattvas

dedicate their merits and as Manjugosha and Samantabhadra actually realized how to dedicate, may all my merit be dedicated in best way to fully enlighten all sentient beings.

Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by myself, by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and sentient beings, due to all this merits, that which is empty from its own side like space—not space but like space, empty like space—may the I who is empty from its own side, like space, achieve Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, which is empty from its own side, empty like space, to lead all sentient beings, who are empty from their own side, who are empty like space, to that enlightenment as quickly as possible by myself alone.

Then dedicate to actualize in this very lifetime, to complete Lama Tsongkhapa’s pure path unified through tantra in the mind of one’s own family and in the mind of all the students and then to be able to spread in the mind of all sentient beings.

[Tibetan prayers]

Lecture Four: December 3, 1994

THE MERIT OF LIVING IN VOWS

As it’s mentioned in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* by Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo, we can become a soldier, which is in effect making a vow to kill and to harm others, or we can make a vow to do the opposite, to not commit the ten nonvirtuous actions. Similarly, we can decide to lead our life as a wine-seller, or we can make the decision to make a vow to abstain from committing the ten nonvirtues. If we make the decision to lead our life as in these examples, we constantly collect negative karma, constantly. It doesn’t mean as a soldier we are constantly killing day and night, but until we change from that vow, from that commitment to do negative activity, to live our life in that way, our negative karma is constantly increasing. So the negative side is like this.

Now the positive side. As I mentioned those past nights, when we make vow to abandon nonvirtues, even if it’s not all ten nonvirtues, we take those vows until death. Whether it’s just one precept, like abstaining from killing, or two precepts or more, from the second the vow is taken until death, we are constantly accumulating merit, day and night, even during our sleep, as I mentioned before, even if we were to fall into a coma that lasted for years. Until death, every second, by living in one vow, we collect one merit continuously, even during sleep. For how many hours we sleep we continuously accumulate that one merit. Even if we fall into a coma, we become a vegetable, unable to function at all for many years, we continuously collect that one merit. If we have taken two precepts, every second we continuously collect two merits. So like this. Somebody who has taken the full monk’s vows, the 253 precepts, from that second until death, even during sleep, even if that person becomes unconscious or in a coma, constantly while he is walking, sleeping and so forth, he constantly collects the 253 merits, until death time.

As I mentioned yesterday, even if that person doesn’t perform particular practices—doing the preliminary practices, studying the Dharma or doing meditation—even if he doesn’t perform any practices like this, even if all the person does is sleep, eat and make kaka, since the vow is taken and he lives in the vow, in reality that person constantly, every second, day and night, collects the 253 merits. And it’s the same thing we a person taking the full bhikshuni vows. With her 360 or more merits, she constantly collects that number of merits every second until death, even if she doesn’t do any other practice than that.

Knowing this, that we constantly collect so much merit just by taking the vow even if we are unable to do any extra practices, that's something that we can enjoy. We can relax and enjoy our life by knowing this benefit. By knowing this benefit, we can lead our life with such satisfaction.

As I mentioned, a person who doesn't live in any vow but who makes millions of dollars, he makes charity of one rupee to a beggar, and another person who lives in a vow—even just one precept—also makes charity of one rupee to that beggar. The material charity, the quantity, is the same but for the first one who doesn't live in the vow, the merit is so small, like a handful of dirt. For the person who is living in even one vow, the merit he is able to collect from that act is like the rest of the earth, like the rest of the whole earth, like that many number of atoms. The first one's benefit is like the number of atoms in a handful of dirt, very little merit, very little compared to the person who is living in even one vow. How much merit that person gained, having given one rupee—the amount is the same—but by living in the vow, there is a huge difference regarding the amount of merit collected by these two different people, one living in the vow and one not living in the vow.

As I mentioned from the sutra, *The Heap of the Jewels*, a person living in ordination, with renunciation, living in the vow, makes a tiny offering to a stupa of a light of wax the size of a tiny hair and butter the size of a mustard seed. That person's merit is far greater than three galaxies of sentient beings, each of them by creating unimaginable merit having reincarnated as wheel-turning kings, making offerings of oceans of butter and Mt. Merus of wax, the great mountains of the wax, to stupas. This second one is many sentient beings, three galaxies full of sentient beings turned into universe wheel-turning kinds, and for each the quantity of offerings they are making is so huge, unbelievably huge, to holy objects to stupas, but even though they collect vast amounts of merit, that merit is small compared to that one person living in the vow with renunciation who makes one tiny offering to one stupa.

What the sutra is saying is that by living in the vow, even when we make a tiny offering, because of the power of our own body living in the vow, the merit increases so much becoming inconceivable. The amount of merit becomes inconceivable. This is the unbelievable advantage in our everyday life, whenever we make charity to other sentient beings, whenever we accumulate good karma with relation to sentient beings, whenever we make any offering—flowers, incense, light, water, food offerings, doing circumambulations, prostrations and so forth—whatever offering and so forth we make towards holy objects, we accumulate unbelievable merit.

Then is no question for those who are living in the higher vows, even if they seldom do this practice of making offering or making charity towards the sentient beings, even if it's not done every day, even if it's rarely done, each time they do it, they collect unbelievable merit, like the sky. Even if the person does it very rarely, because he is living in the higher vows, the merit he accumulates is like the sky, [so much more than] somebody not living in the vows but working so hard day and night, making offerings, trying to create good karma, with sentient beings or with holy objects.

The third thing is, just doing the practice of purification is not enough. Put it this way. I often say it this way. Dharma is the only solution; Dharma is the only ultimate solution. For peace and happiness, Dharma is the only ultimate solution. It's the only answer for the success, for the happiness this life, for the happiness of future lives, and no question for the long-term happiness of future lives and then ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara and the peerless happiness, full enlightenment, there's no question. All temporary and ultimate happiness comes from the inner cause, good karma. All this comes from the inner cause, the very first cause, our own and each living being's positive attitude, positive intention.

KARMA: WITHOUT THE CAUSE THE RESULT CANNOT BE EXPERIENCED

In Tibetan, positive intention is called *sem-pa*. From the fifty-one mental factors, it's one of them. There are five omnipresent mental factors that always accompany the six principal consciousness. There are different schools, and some have a different way of counting, like the Mind Only school, which says there are seven or eight consciousnesses, but generally speaking, there are said to be six principal consciousnesses. For each of the six principal consciousness, there are five omnipresent mental factors, in Tibetan called *kon-dun nga*, "always accompanying." They function to [enhance to experience of the object] and focused on the same object as the principal consciousness, they are similar in five ways: similar object, similar aspect, similar time, similar substances and similar nature. I think it might be like that.

From these five mental factors that always accompany the principle consciousness, one of them is *sem-pa*, intention. So positive intention is virtuous karma. Our own positive attitude or positive intention is the karma, the positive karma, the virtuous karma. So, all happiness, all temporal and ultimate happiness, each individual sentient being's temporal and ultimate happiness, all comes from each individual's sentient being's positive attitude or intention, that which is called "karma," the positive actions of the body and mind.

As I mentioned the other night, without the inner cause we can't achieve the outer cause, we can't have the outer cause; we can't have the condition. Generally it can be said, without inner cause, which is our own mind, that cause of happiness that is our own mind, we can't experience even the external conditions for happiness. Because we don't have the inner cause, that means we haven't created the reason to have the outer cause or the condition. We haven't created the reason for this to happen, to actualize the outer cause, the condition.

As I often mention, for somebody who has a sickness he might not be cured, even if he went to the best hospital where there was the most qualified doctor, and that doctor knows his sickness and is able to diagnosis it without mistake, and even if the doctor has the correct medicine and knows what treatment is to be given. Even though generally speaking the treatment should work perfectly each time, in the general view, in the common people's view or judgment, as long as these conditions are gathered, the treatment should always work perfectly. But even though that is the common understanding in reality many times, many times, it doesn't happen that way. The disease gets worse or the patient even dies. So many times the opposite to common understanding happens.

And the same thing, even in business, somebody has studied economy or how to do business well at university or college, and has a degree. After studying all these subjects, no matter how smart that person is, knowing the world situation, the business situation or this country and that country, no matter how intelligence or smart, no matter how clever and having all this education, when he actually goes into business with the most amazing business plans, the result is completely contradictory to what everybody expects. Everybody is sure he is going to be successful but many times the result is exactly the opposite.

Maybe I'll give this example. Quite a number of years ago, I think in France, there was a woman whose husband was so bad to her that she couldn't handle it anymore and she became so sad she wanted to die. What happened was she jumped out of [an upper-story] window to commit suicide. But at that moment the husband came home. He was entering through the door and she

fell on her husband's body. I don't remember whether the husband died or not. [Rinpoche laughs]

The point is, even though she wished to die, even though she wished to stop her life, the karma to die was not experienced at that time because she hadn't created the karma to die at that time. Even though she wished to do this, when she tried it turned out something else. She fell down but instead of falling to the ground she fell on her husband's body and she didn't die. She didn't succeed. She hadn't created the karma to die at that time. It's all to do with karma. Even though what she wished was to die, by jumping it only made her to survive.

It's the same thing with business or health, with the sickness of the person I mentioned. It shows that if we haven't created the karma to have success at that time, that karma can't ripen at that time. Instead, the karma we have created is to be unsuccessful, whether it's the treatment to be beneficial to cure the disease or the success in business. The karma we created was for the opposite and so the result is the problem, the unpleasant suffering and the cause of that is negative karma. This happens because the karma we created was negative karma which can only result in continuously getting sick or experiencing death, in the treatment not being benefiting. It doesn't benefit and then nothing works in business, everything gets stuck, then on top of that failure. This negative karma was created and that is experienced in that time.

One person might have wealth by stealing or another person might become wealthy by doing business with a restaurant or hotel that involves killing so many animals every day, like sea animals, those large animals, fish and so forth, many hundreds a day. They have become wealthy by stealing or by killing and selling so many other sentient beings. The cause of being wealthy is not just from that. It appears to be just from killing all those thousands of sea animals each day. It appears the wealth came from there; the wealth came from the business. For ordinary common people's view it appears like that, but in reality the wealth came from past good karma. The main cause of the wealth—the person's comfort and enjoyment—came from the inner cause, the positive intention, the good karma, either earlier in this life or in a past life. So many animals, many thousands killed each day, selling them, making food. This becomes a condition but not the cause. Stealing can be said to be a condition, but it's not the cause, it's not the cause of the person having enjoyment and comfort, the person having wealth. He is experiencing comfort and enjoyment now but the main cause is not the stealing. Even though it appears like that, in common people's view, who do not understand karma, even though it looks like there is no other cause, but in the reality that person having comfort and enjoyment all comes from the past, from the inner cause, the positive intention, the good karma.

While such people are experiencing the result of past good karma, living on past good karma, at the same time they are creating so much negative karma every day, thousands and thousands of negative actions, by killing the large and small sea animals. Always creating negative karma every day while using the past good karma, living on the past good karma—they don't create any additional good karma. People like this, engaging in so much killing and so forth, might be able to live for a long time, seventy or eighty years, but that is the result of another different karma; that is the result of past good karma. Their long life didn't come from the negative karma, the killing of hundreds and thousands of other sentient beings every day, it didn't come from that. It came from another karma, a past good karma.

If that person's mind doesn't change, if his actions don't change, in some ways living a long life is a bad sign. The longer he lives, the more he uses this precious human body to create more and more negative karma, which means even if he is able to live for so many years, all those negative karmas are being collected, meaning he will have to experience the results in the lower realm, one

after another, one rebirth after another in the lower realms, for eons and eons. This is what awaits him, even though he may be physically very healthy for many years, not having much sickness.

TWO SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS: PURIFICATION AND CREATING POSITIVE KARMA

On the other hand, we might hear of a very strong Dharma practitioner, somebody who has completely renounced this life, a pure Dharma practitioner doing so much practice of very powerful purification, but who experiences many sicknesses in this life. She is experiencing many problems in the life, many sicknesses, one after another, many catastrophes—externally it looks kind of bad. But actually the mind is in great peace because she has renounced this life. Her mind is free from attachment, clinging to this life, so even with these problems happening, there is great peace in the mind. Externally it looks like she is having many problems, but what's happening in reality is due to strong Dharma practice, with strong compassion doing service to the guru or the Sangha or to other sentient beings, with a renounced mind, so much heavy negative karma created in the past is being purified.

From beginningless rebirths we have accumulated so much heavy negative karma, but with of such strong practice, it becomes very powerful purification, destroying that heavy negative karma which would otherwise cause us to reincarnate in the lower realm and experience those sufferings, one after another, for so many eons. They are purified by manifesting into some problems in this life, some sicknesses—headaches or toothaches—but these problems in this life finish all those heavy karmas, so they don't have to be experienced as heavy suffering in the life after this. Instead, the future life has incredible freedom. Even if we don't become enlightened in this life, we finish all those heavy karmas which are the cause to be reborn in the lower realms for many eons and to experience those unimaginable sufferings. That is all finished by experiencing some problems in this life.

Even if we don't become enlightened in this life, by reincarnating in the pure land of a buddha where we can practice tantra, we can then become enlightened. In the next life, we can take a much better rebirth and with much more success in actualizing the realization to the path to enlightenment; we have much more success and it is much easier. Life to life, it gets easier and easier; we are more and more able to develop the mind on path to enlightenment. Like this, we are able to achieve enlightenment quickly. There is this aspect of experiencing karma, where the Dharma practitioner experiences all these problems, but it is only a good sign. It's only success, incredible success.

On other hand, the person who creates unbelievable negative karma every day, hundreds and thousands of negative acts, might have nothing happen at once; he might have a healthy, strong body and live a long time, for many years, but all that negative karma is being collected and stored up in the mental continuum to be experienced for so many eons in the lower realms.

This might sound like a little bit off the track to what I was talking before, a little bit off the track. [Rinpoche laughs] This is also similar to a good Dharma practitioner who experiences some very heavy pain just before death, or even near the time of death, experiencing some heavy sicknesses or some heavy problems. This is a good sign that, as I explained before. Some heavy negative karma was collected in the past, and before something very good happening, like reincarnating in a pure land and so forth, that little bit of karma is left to be experienced, to finish experiencing. So that is experienced just before death, manifesting in this something like some heavy pain or something. With that, the heavy suffering of the hell realm is finished. After that there is incredible freedom or reincarnate in a pure land of a buddha or so forth.

If a good Dharma practitioner experiences some heavy problem just before dying, that doesn't mean it's negative. For many good practitioners, when things like this happen, it's a positive sign that some very heavy suffering, some heavy negative karma, the cause to experience the heavy sufferings of the hot and cold hells, won't happen. It has been finished, so the person doesn't have to experience it. If, just before death, he experiences this, manifesting into this some heavy pain or feeling so cold or feeling so hot, like burning, this is a good sign, the result of the powerful Dharma practice.

Dharma is the ultimate solution to happiness, the only way. To stop experiencing past negative karma, the negative karma already accumulated stored up from the past on our own mental continuum, what we need to do is to purify. The solution is to purify, so that is one Dharma practice. That is what to do with the past negative karma already collected in our own mindstream.

However, just purification, just purifying past negative karma is not sufficient. Just this is not sufficient. We should attempt to not commit negative karma again. This is the second solution, to not commit negative karma again.

In order to have success in our life, there are two solutions. This is the way, even concerning not having AIDS, not having cancer—all these diseases, all these sicknesses—in order to have long life, whatever success or happiness, including this life and then in all the future lives, all the temporary and ultimate happiness. The solution is these two: purifying the past negative karma—that is one Dharma practice—then on top of that, to not commit negative karma again—that is another Dharma practice. These two practices take care of life. Our whole success comes from these two: purifying past negative karma and not committing the cause of the problem again, committing negative karma such as the ten nonvirtues and so forth. Negativities such as the ten nonvirtues are the basic cause of our life's problems, now and the future, in this life and in future lives. Therefore, the solution is to not commit them again.

Taking the precepts, taking vows, means the second Dharma practice, the second, very important Dharma practice. The solution to achieve the happiness of life is to stop creating the cause of the problem again, doing nonvirtuous actions. When we take the five precepts, that means we don't commit the five negative karmas again, the cause of the problems of life, now and in the future.

Without talking about the success, the happiness of future lives, even concerning the happiness, the success of this life—long life, health, being successful, everything like that—has to come from Dharma. Without dharma nothing happens, nothing works. Everything gets stuck. Nothing happens. Then what happens is only suffering, only problems. So Dharma practice involves purifying the past negative karma and stopping the creation of negative karma from then on by living in morality. In this way we can understand that Dharma practice is the only ultimate solution. It's the only solution for success.

Just one more. [Rinpoche laughs]

A GOOD INTENTION IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

For example, say we are able to find a job and then able to do the job and from that we are able to have comfort and enjoyment and so forth. To be able to make a living is a result of past good karma. But even if we have learned everything well in school, college or university—how to do

the job in a professional way like it's taught in school—that training is only external. How to do the job or how to sleep, how to walk, how to eat food, how to bathe, how to dress, how to do everything, however, there is another way how to do it and that is the inner one. That is the attitude, that which is not taught, that which education does not give us. That other aspect of how to do everything, how to live our life, is missing among the subjects taught in school, college or university. The external aspect how to do things is there, but even if we have learnt this external one well, knowing how to do everything in a very professional way, there is more than this. This is not the only answer; there is more. There is also the inner one, the attitude. There is the attitude to life, the attitude to doing our job, the attitude to sitting, walking, sleeping, talking, washing, all these things—the attitude to doing all our activities in our everyday life. This is the real one, what we do with the mind, what kind of attitude or intention we have. This is the main one that decides whether the action will become the cause of suffering or the cause of happiness. The motivation, the attitude, decides what our everyday life's action will be, transforming each action into the cause for suffering or happiness.

Our attitude determines how we live our life, how we do everything. If we do it with ignorance, anger or attachment clinging to this life then all these activities—doing our job and so forth—do not become the cause of happiness. Working, sitting, sleeping, washing and so forth—all these activities become the cause of suffering. How to do business, how to do service to others, how to do everything with the mind, we need to know this, this secrecy of the mind, how our whole activity becomes the cause of happiness or suffering depending on our own everyday life's attitude, whether it is done with a virtuous attitude or a nonvirtuous attitude. If we are not aware of our attitude, the main solution to how to live our life is missing. We have no understanding of the real way, the main way how to live our life, how depending on what attitude we have, we can stop all our problems. From the attitude we can achieve all the happiness and success up to enlightenment.

Whether or not we understand Dharma, what Dharma is, even if we don't believe the teachings, in reality without Dharma there is no happiness. So therefore, as I've mentioned before, taking precepts involves the Dharma practice that stops creating the cause of the problems again. By living in the vows, by living in the precepts, that itself also purifies. By bearing hardships, living in the precepts, in the vows, practice of morality, that itself purifies the path and it also becomes a powerful means of purifying past negative karma.

LIBERATION NEEDS REFUGE IN ALL THREE JEWELS

To not be reborn in the lower realms, we don't need to take refuge to all three Jewels: the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. By taking refuge in just the Dharma, like at time of death, even by just remembering the OM MANI PADME HUM MANTRA or *The Heart Sutra* prayer, even by remembering a text, if we die with the thought remembering just a text—even just *The Essence of Wisdom*, *The Heart Sutra* text—that has the power to stop being reborn in the lower realms. Even that has the power to protect us, to save us from the lower realm sufferings. When we are dying, if we die with the thought remembering even one ordained person, somebody we have faith in, somebody we have devotion and faith in, if we die with that thought remembering one ordained person, one member of the Sangha we have respect for, we don't get born in the lower realms.

There is the story of a snake who was caught in a fire, being burned in a fire. At that time, a fully ordained monk saved the snake by pouring water over it. The snake was very happy with the monk, and when it died, it died with thinking about the monk with gratitude and because of that was reincarnated as a human being. It was reincarnated as a human being and maybe even became a monk. So, you see, at the time of death, the power, the thought of remembering from

the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha even one object of refuge saves us from the unimaginable sufferings of the lower realms.

Now we can compare this with all the scientific knowledge there is. Even with all the knowledge of science, science in the sense of the common thing, Western science, no matter how much knowledge Western science has, when the day of it cannot help us. If we compare all the knowledge of science has, on the day we are dying, it cannot protect us from the unimaginable sufferings of lower realms. But just remembering even a mantra or a Dharma text we are saved. There have been many stories of somebody born in lower realms, in the hot hell, by remembering a prayer, a Dharma text, a Dharma sutra and so forth that he used to read during his previous human lifetime, while he is experiencing hell he suddenly remembers a text he used to read in the past, and he is immediately liberated from the hell realms and reincarnates in the human realm. There are many stories like this.

If we compare the power of science to the power of the refuge of even just remembering one ordained person we respect as we die, a thought that saves us from being born in the lower realm, there is no comparison.

The purpose is not *just* to not be reborn in the lower realms. The purpose here is to be completely free from the whole entire suffering of samsara and all the causes, karma and delusions. The purpose is to be free from the whole of samsara that is the path of the continuity of the contaminated, defiled aggregates that become the cause of future samsara, that create future samsara, which are only in the nature of suffering.

To be completely liberated from this, to completely cease the continuation of this samsara, these aggregates—for this, just taking refuge to the Buddha alone is not enough, just taking refuge in the Dharma alone is not enough, just taking refuge in the Sangha alone is not enough. We should rely on all three, on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Just like a severely sick person, in order to get well, has to rely upon the medicine and the treatment and for that has to rely on the doctor who gives the diagnosis, and then, after the doctor has prescribed the medicine and the treatment the sick person has to rely on the nurses who take care of him, following the doctor's advice, like this, to be free from the whole of samsara, we need to rely upon all three Jewels: the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

PRECEPTS CEREMONY MOTIVATION

Think, “I must be liberated from this samsara, these defiled aggregates that create the future samsara, that cause me to circle in the future samsara. I have continuously circled from one life to the next, on and on like this, experiencing the sufferings of the six realms. From one end of the six realms to the other, I have experienced the sufferings again and again, endlessly. As it does not have a beginning then it becomes endless. However, at this time I have received a perfect human body, I have met a virtuous friend who has revealed the unmistakable path to peace, to liberation and enlightenment and I have met with the Buddhadharma, so it is time. I must achieve the cessation of samsara, the great liberation, the full enlightenment for sentient beings. Therefore I'm going to take these precepts.”

If you are only taking refuge without taking precepts, think, “I'm going to only take the refuge upasika vow.” If, out of all the five precepts, you are going to take one or more, then think. “I'm going to take the upasika one vow, two vows, three vows, four vows, five vows ... ” like that. “...by relying upon the Buddha as a founder of refuge, the Dharma as the actual refuge and the Sangha as the helpers to actualize the refuge within my mind.” You should motivate like this.

Those who have taken higher ordination, the thirty-six vows or, higher than that, full ordination, if you then take the lower eight Mahayana precepts that is exceptional, but if you take the lower ordination of the pratimoksha, it is said by the lamas that it makes you lose the higher vows. Therefore, those who have taken higher ordination—the thirty-six vows or the full ordination—shouldn't repeat the prayer, shouldn't think you are taking the five precepts and so forth. You shouldn't think this way.

This time I didn't get to bring the Buddha's tooth, however there is a Guru Shakyamuni Buddha statue, so first make three prostrations to the founder of the present Buddhadharma, Shakyamuni Buddha. Those who are taking refuge and precepts make three prostrations.

Then, make three prostrations to the lama who gives the refuge precepts, three prostrations. Then, if you can, kneel down, like when you take the eight Mahayana precepts. Those who can kneel down, put your palms together at your heart, doing the mudra of prostration. Then repeat the ceremony prayer.

PRECEPTS CEREMONY

[Prayer]

[Rinpoche offers refuge. Students repeat.]

After “da” please mention your name.

[Students follow the preceptor.]

Now here we are taking refuge to Buddha.

Remember one who has a state of mind having ceased all the mistakes of the mind, all the obscurations, the two types of obscuration, having all the qualities of the realizations. You should remember the meaning of the Buddha. There is absolute Buddha and the conventional Buddha. The absolute Buddha is the holy mind, the dharmakaya. The dharmakaya is the general name, within that there is the transcendental wisdom dharmakaya, the omniscient mind, and the ultimate nature of that, the holy body, which is pure in nature, *sambhogakaya* in Sanskrit. The dharmakaya is the absolute Buddha and then the forms which the dharmakaya take—the sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya—are the conventional Buddha. We take refuge in both. Relying upon Buddha with the whole heart is millions of times more effective than a doctor, a physician, who can cure all diseases but only temporarily. With such devotion relying upon the Buddha, we recite this refuge prayer.

[Rinpoche recites the prayer]

Next, we take refuge in the Dharma. There is also the absolute Dharma and the conventional Dharma. The absolute Dharma refers to the true path and true cessation of suffering and the conventional Dharma refers to the scriptural understanding, the Tripitaka teaching, the lam-rim teachings—they are the conventional Dharma. Relying upon them is millions of times more effective than patients relying upon external medicine, which might be able to cure diseases, but only temporarily.

[Rinpoche recites the prayer]

Next, we take refuge in the Sangha. Relying upon the Sangha is millions of times more effective than patients relying upon the nurse because the Sangha helps us to be liberated from the entire suffering, all the causes, karma and delusions. The guidance we receive from the Sangha completely eliminates the causes of suffering by showing us how to practice the three higher trainings and advising us on the true path, the cessation of the sufferings. There is the absolute Sangha, those who have the realizations of the absolute Dharma, the true path, the true cessation of sufferings, and there is the conventional Sangha, those who do not have realizations but who are living in the pure vows. We take refuge in both conventional and absolute Sangha. Here it means anyone who is a Buddhist ordained being; they are conventional Sangha.

[Rinpoche recites the prayer]

So, please do the second repetition.

After “da” mention your name.

[Rinpoche recites the prayer]

So, please do the third repetition. At the end of the third repetition when I say *gyi nyen tau* loudly and I snap my fingers, at that time without a wandering mind, you must generate the thought that you have received the vows. If you are only taking refuge, then think you have only received the refuge vow; if you are taking precepts then think you have received the upasika one precept, upasika two precepts, three precepts, four precepts or five precepts, like that. You must generate the thought.

Lopan means a leader living with the disciples so from this time onwards, I become your *lopan*. *Lopan* means leader, leading the disciples on the path to liberation. How? By granting the vows, the pratimoksha vows which, by practicing, allows you to live in morality, which in turn leads you to liberation, to the complete cessation of entire suffering and its causes. So, that’s the meaning of the *lopan*, the virtuous friend, the preceptor.

[Rinpoche recites the prayer]

Then, when I say “*ta pa yi no*”—“This is the method,” you respond, “*lek-so*,” which means “yes.”

[Rinpoche recites the prayer]

Then after this, think, “As the past arhats transformed their minds, and with their body and speech abstained from those negative karmas, today I myself will also by transform my mind, and with my body and speech abstain from those negative karmas.” So, with this intention, please repeat the prayer of the precepts. Those who are not taking any precepts, only refuge, don’t need to repeat it, otherwise those who are taking precepts please repeat.

Due to the all the past, present and future merits accumulated by myself, my family, by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and sentient beings, may His Holiness the Dalai Lama's holy wishes succeed immediately. All these opportunities of granting and taking refuge and precepts, all these opportunities to practice Dharma have happened by the kindness of His Holiness Dalai Lama.

Then after that, in particular, also Lama's incarnation, Ösel Rinpoche. Also this came from Lama Yeshe's kindness, so due to these merits may his incarnation have a stable life and be of extensive benefit to all sentient beings, like Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and like Lama Tsongkhapa.

Due to the all the past, present and future merits accumulated by me, by my family, by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and all sentient beings, may all the father, mother sentient beings have happiness, may the three lower realms be empty forever, may all the bodhisattvas' prayers succeed immediately. May I be able cause all these by myself alone.

Then think, "I dedicate all the merits in the best way to quickly enlighten all sentient beings, in the same way as the three times' buddhas and bodhisattvas have dedicated their merit and also bodhisattva Samantabhadra and Manjughosha realized.

[Chanting]

Then dedicate the merits like this. Due to all three times' merits accumulated by me, by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and sentient beings, may I myself and all my family, all the students and all sentient beings in all the lifetimes always be able to live in pure morality.

THE HALLUCINATING MIND

[Short break in the recording] ...the way it apprehends the object. The wisdom we are talking about is the wisdom that perceives the object in a way completely opposed to this ignorance, not just any wisdom. It is the ultimate nature of phenomena, that which is emptiness, the absence of inherent existence, that things are devoid of, or empty of, existing from their own side.

According to our perception, according to our mind, the nature of phenomena that actually exists looks like it doesn't exist. The nature of the phenomena that exists, which is emptiness, according to our perception, according to our mind, looks like it doesn't exist. What exists looks like it doesn't exist. And according to our perception and according to our mind, what we have been believing, what we have been believing to exist actually doesn't exist. So it's completely the opposite to how it really is. So far, for me and for many of us, this is how it has been.

Then, we have to go back from here to the guru devotion, the subject! If we are arguing, debating, the thought of mistakes—I could see this; I have actually seen this and that mistake—there are so many examples. The hallucinatory mind actually sees so many things, but they are all mistaken. All these things—I, action and object, everything, which are all empty of existing from their own side—ignorance, the hallucinatory mind, actually sees everything as inherently existent, as real, as appearing from there.

Using as the logic that I actually see the object doesn't become the logic to prove that object exists. It doesn't prove that object exists, that as it appears is true in reality. Just saying "I actually see it," that doesn't become the logical reason to prove that object exists, that it is true as we see it, it is true as it appears. "Because I see it, because it appears to me, even the word I actually see," all this doesn't actually prove that what appears as true accords with reality. It doesn't prove that it exists, that it accords with reality. That reason doesn't cover this.

All these mistakes arise [from believing this.] Like the example I gave, if we use the logic that this is reality because this is how it appears to us or this is how we see it, then when a sick person hallucinates due to have been given an powerful drug, then that will also apply. While under the influence of the drug all sorts of things appear, but even though that sick person sees them, that does not prove they exist.

While the power of the drugs has not gone away, has not degenerated, some people see very frightening appearances and some people see very peaceful, very desirable appearances, such as seeing a mandala, depending on the person's karma, their state of mind. Somebody else can have very terrifying appearances like, by taking datura, by eating datura, seeing the whole earth, all the ground like worms, everything moving, all the ground.

I myself haven't taken datura yet. [Rinpoche laughs] But one student who went to Lawudo, who went to the mountain where I go sometimes to have a good sleep, one American, a very tall guy, spent maybe six months at Lawudo. He had a tent and he used to move around different spots around Lawudo, the mountain. One time he asked me whether he could put his tent on the roof of the rock, above the cave, so I said okay. There are dogs next to the cave and a dog a little bit below. At night time, when he was sleeping and he moved his head on the pillow, which was the same material as his sleeping bag, it made a noise. The dog was a little bit far down, I think it thought it was taking responsibility for the house and it was very sensitive to noise, so it heard the sound the pillow made. Each time the American moved his head, he made a noise and each time the dog barked. Because of that he couldn't get to sleep, but the dog's barking came from

the noise he was making. I don't think he realized he was disturbing the dog. [Rinpoche laughs] I think he didn't realize than side of the thing.

Anyway, he told me he got so angry he even had the thought to kill the dog. [Rinpoche laughs]

I think he wanted to move the dog's place far away, something like that, I am not sure. Anyway, my sister wanted to move it back. I don't remember exactly but he rubbed the dog's house, which was just piece of wood just like this, the dog's house. I think in order to not move the house, he rubbed the piece of wood on the dog's kaka. [Rinpoche laughs] No, he's a very nice guy!

Nobody had electricity up there. Now there is electricity in Namche Bazaar. I think in some parts there is electricity but at that time—quite a number of years ago when I was spending the whole summer building the monastery—at that time maybe the Australian government were trying to build a power station down below Lawudo. I think they started to build it but a flood came from the mountain. A lake burst and flowed down the mountain, washing away many houses and people. Many of those near the river were washed away. One time, a big mountain lake overflowed and washed away what they had built down there for the electricity. Anyway, nobody had electricity, but *he* had electricity in his tent. He used a solar panel. When there was good sunshine he put it outside the tent so at night he had electricity in the tent. Inside tent there was electricity; inside the tent was very pleasant. [Rinpoche laughs]

Anyway, not when he was on the roof of the cave but when he was living somewhere else, far from the cave, he found some datura growing there. So he cooked a pot of the datura. I didn't know this. After a few days he came down to tell me, only after he had gone through all the experiences. [Rinpoche laughs] He said that he had even died. I mean it was quite a number of days before, otherwise we wouldn't recognize him, we wouldn't know. Anyway, he took some datura and cooked it in a pot and after eating the datura he heard so many noises, like people talking. And the whole ground, all the dirt, started moving, you know, everything was alive, filled with creatures, all the dirt was moving. I think he had a very hard time. [Rinpoche laughs] I think he had a very hard time. His lips got cracked and his mouth became very dry. I think he had a very hard time. A very hard time, a very difficult time. Then maybe I think he met an Italian student who was retreating there—not at Lawudo but in next village, called Gandopa, where we used to get water from the stream. At that time there was an Italian student there in retreat and somehow he went to see him. I think that might have helped.

So anyway, the main thing is the datura, the main topic is that he had eaten the datura and he had this experience. That's the main point. With his hallucinating mind, he actually heard all these people talking—so many noises—and with his hallucinating mind, he actually saw all the dirt moving, become living beings. He saw it, but it was not true.

It's the same thing when we have a dream and we see things: having a wedding party, getting married, having many children, received millions of dollars and so forth—all these things. In the dream the hallucinatory mind actually sees these things but because we see these things doesn't prove that they exist. It doesn't mean they are true.

If they were true then all these things we see in the dream, the things our own hallucinating mind actually sees, after we wake up from the sleep, then there should be all these children, there should be millions of dollars. Whatever we saw in the dream should exist, we should see all those things even after we wake up from the sleep. If it can happen like this then it costs nothing. We just go to bed, we just go to sleep, and it nothing costs to have weddings or parties. We just go to

bed and that's it. We don't have to pay anything to buy a lottery ticket or anything to get millions of dollars. We just go to sleep then that's it. Then we have all these things even after we woke up from the sleep.

Now the conclusion is that now it becomes clear that this line of reasoning doesn't cover, doesn't prove that things exist. What we actually see, what actually appears to us, all this doesn't prove, this reason doesn't cover, doesn't prove that it exists, that it is like that in the reality.

Then also, by adding on top of this, there are many things we don't remember. We don't even remember how our own consciousness was conceived in our mother's womb. We don't remember that. All the experience in our mother's womb, being in mother's womb for nine months, we don't remember that. Even how we came most people don't remember. Most of us don't remember how we came out, even our time of birth. There are so many things in our life that that we did but we don't remember, that we experienced but we don't remember.

Then there is no question about the future. We can't see a hundred percent what's going to happen to us in the next hour. We can't tell. We can't see what's going to happen to us in the next hour. So there's no question about the future. The things that exist that we can't see is infinite.

THE BUDDHAS RETURN AS GURUS IN DEGENERATE TIMES

Buddha Vajradhara said, "In the future, in degenerate times I will manifest in a child's form, and various forms, and using various methods." Then also. "In the five degenerate times, I, who am called Vajrasattva, will take the form of a spiritual master. I will abide in an ordinary form, in the manner of an ordinary person, in the aspect of an ordinary person, in order to benefit sentient beings." Vajradhara explained this in the second chapter of the tantra teaching called *Gyutakpa*. In those teachings the Buddha showed us how he was going to guide us.

Now is the degenerate time, not only the five degenerate times but the over-degenerate time—the degenerate of degenerate time.

When Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was a bodhisattva, a wheel-turning king called Rim of the Spoke, he made five hundred prayers in the presence of his guru, the tathagata, Essence of the Jewel, Dechin Nyingpo. He made five hundred prayers to subdue the beings of the quarrelling time left out of the prayers of the rest of the one thousand buddhas. All the previous different times, each buddha made a vow, promising to guide sentient beings but the sentient beings of the quarrelling time are so difficult to subdue, so hard, so thick-skulled in mind, with such an extremely gross mind, so the quarrelling-time sentient beings were left out [of other buddhas' vows]. So Rim of the Spoke, the bodhisattva who was Guru Shakyamuni Buddha in a past life, made five hundred prayers in the presence of Buddha, the tathagata, Dechin Nyingpo, to guide those quarrelling-time sentient beings who are left out, who are so difficult to subdue, who were unable to be subdued by other buddhas.

So now, this is the quarrelling time. This present age is the quarrelling time. Therefore the Buddha has already promised, has already made a vow to guide us sentient beings in this difficult time.

The point is how many virtuous friends are here, we have visualized, they who guide us to enlightenment, by granting the three levels of vows—the pratimoksha, bodhisattva and tantric vows—then giving initiations, commentaries and instruction. They give us teachings, then give

oral transmissions, commentaries, and explain tantra. These virtuous friends do these Dharma activities for us, which definitely bring us to enlightenment. Through these activities, we are definitely brought to full enlightenment.

If these are not Buddha Vajradhara, if these are not the Buddha, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha who made a vow to guide us sentient beings of the quarrelling time, then there is nobody we point to who is. There is no one else to point to. If these virtuous friends are not Vajradhara who said those things, who promised to guide us sentient beings, in the degenerate time and the Guru Shakyamuni Buddha who made vow, who made so many prayers out of compassion, who made hundreds of prayers to guide sentient beings in the quarrelling time, then who else is?

INTEGRATING THE LAM-RIM IN DAILY LIFE

I'll continue with the talk I have been doing in regards how to meditate on the lam-rim. The evening before yesterday, I mentioned how to practice lam-rim, that whatever lam-rim meditation session we do in the morning, we should live the life, live the break-time life with that feeling or experience that is generated during the morning meditation session. By doing the meditation on the lam-rim, that experience or the transformation of the mind that was done in the morning, by doing the meditation on the lam-rim.

As we get up from the meditation seat, at the same time we stop that experience, we stop that mind which was transformed by doing analysis and by using the quotations and reasoning, the analytical meditations. As we get up from the meditation seat that experience also stops. As we stop sitting on the meditation cushion that transformation of mind or experience also stops. Then for the rest of the day and night our working life, or whatever we do, has no connection with the morning meditation session. It shouldn't be like that.

The one most important thing is for the rest of our life to integrate with that experience what we have generated, what the mind has transformed by doing the lam-rim meditation, mainly the analytical meditation. Except for the calm abiding, all the rest of the meditation, the main technique is analytical meditation. For example, by using the quotation and the reasoning, for our own mind we do not see our own... By saying this it is not saying that because I am teaching Dharma I am a buddha! It's not saying that.

GURU DEVOTION: THE HALLUCINATED MIND SEES THE GURU AS ORDINARY

So far, I didn't even get talk on the guru devotion but you have already heard the extensive explanations from *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, with the quotations and all these very effective reasonings on how to devote yourself to the virtuous friend with thoughts and actions. Whatever quotation there is, whatever explanation there is, whatever the reasoning, the very bottom reason is, whether the teacher from his side is a buddha or not, from your side, the disciple's, question yourself whether you want profit or loss, starting from success and happiness in future lives, starting from there, all the way to liberation from samsara and peerless happiness, full enlightenment, and bringing every suffering sentient being into the peerless happiness, full enlightenment by liberating each of them from all the sufferings, from all the obscurity. So this is the profit.

If that is what you want, then you need to develop on the path to enlightenment. Even the happiness this life comes from a positive attitude; it comes from a virtuous thought. Even the happiness in this life depends on the transformation of the mind into a positive attitude. The happiness *beyond* this life, liberation from samsara, full enlightenment, the whole realization of the

path, the bhūmis, if you wish to have all this profit and don't want to be failure, don't want to have a loss, then this is the way to practice correctly.

The Buddha explained how to practice Dharma in the sutra and tantra teachings such as *Don bo go pi dor* and so forth, as did Lama Tsongkhapa and those valid, highly attained great scholars, those pandits, yogis, with their experience having completed the path, having actualized the whole path. According to their experience, as it proved to their mind, according to that they explained how to practice Dharma, is by devoting ourselves to the virtuous friend we have established Dharma contact from. With the recognition of guru and disciple, we then practice, we correctly devote ourselves with thought and action. This is explained in the lam-rim, these valid teachings, the teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa and so forth as I mentioned before.

This is the very bottom reason. However many quotations there are or reasonings there are, in the lam-rim it states this is why we need to practice, why we need to look at the virtuous friend as a buddha, because as a disciple we don't want loss and we do want profit. That is the very bottom reason. If you miss out this point, many of the subjects become doubtful. If you miss out this point it becomes doubtful. For example, the thought can come that I am also teaching Dharma but I am not a buddha.

There is a short meditation on the essence of guru devotion. I don't remember it word by word but, according to one lama's technique, the essence is that the guru is a buddha because there is quotation which states that Buddha Vajradhara accepted that "I will manifest in the degenerate time in the future, as a young child and in a form of virtuous friend," and so forth. There are quotations like this.

The first one starts with this outline. With [faulty] reasoning, the negative thought, the thought of a mistake towards the virtuous friend, arises saying—it might be saying—"Among gurus there is somebody who is embodiment of the Buddha, but it's not saying that *everybody* is a buddha." The negative thought says that and then says, "Because, with this one I see this and this mistake, and with that one I see that and that mistake." By listening to this mistaken reasoning—"with this one I see this and this mistake, with that one I see that and that mistake"—with that delusion and having this and that mistake and actions and so forth, if we listen to this mistaken reasoning, if we follow that, then we find that everyone makes some mistakes. According to that thought, we find mistakes with everybody. It's question of big or small mistakes.

According to point of view of this negative thought, everyone has mistakes but it's question of big or small. So then it comes. According to this mistaken thought, that means nobody is the embodiment of a buddha or bodhisattva. Nobody is a buddha who is working for us. According to that mistaken thought, nobody is a buddha working for us, guiding us to enlightenment, liberating us from the lower realms, from the oceans of samsaric suffering, from all the obscurations, leading us to enlightenment. If we see the mistake according to this point of view of the mistaken thought, we see that nobody is a buddha guiding us from happiness to happiness, to enlightenment.

This mistaken thought says, "I actually see it, I actually see the mistakes," as we would in a normal conversation when we tell somebody we saw a person stealing something from a shop with our own eyes. We perceive the guru as having mistakes and then our mistaken thought says we actually see it. This is like a person with wind disease who sees a white-colored snow mountain and blue because of the disease, or who sees a snow mountain or conch shell as yellow because of bile disease. That person actually sees the blue of yellow but that does not mean it's true.

The hallucinatory mind sees things in the dream as real, like having a wedding and a big party, getting married, having children—four, five, ten children! We become extremely wealthy, with a jeweled palace, an extremely wealthy apartment or by doing the lottery or something we get millions of dollars. In the dream the hallucinatory mind actually sees this, actually sees all these things.

We can't accept things at face value. Even though phenomena are impermanent [we see them as permanent]. When we look at the I, even though the I is impermanent, like all causative phenomena, it appears permanent. It doesn't appear as impermanent to us; it appears permanent. When we do not practice, when we do not think about reality, we don't see that this is a causative phenomenon, and how all causative phenomena are in the nature of impermanence, both gross impermanence and subtle impermanence, and how they are changing not only second by second but even within a split-second, being under the control of causes and conditions.

When we do not meditate, when we do not practice mindfulness, looking at their nature in this way, even though they are impermanent phenomena they appear to us as permanent. All these objects we are seeing right here and now appear to us as permanent; they don't appear as impermanent. They don't appear to us as changing, especially that they are changing, decaying, even hour by hour. Even that is very gross but it doesn't appear to us in that way. Even that they are decaying minute by minute doesn't appear to us in that way. For many objects, even that they are decaying day by day doesn't appear to us. Even this very gross level of impermanence doesn't appear to us in that way. Things appear to us as permanent, so there's no question how we don't see that causative phenomena are decaying within every second, within each split-second. That is very subtle.

So, just right here, there are all these hallucinations that we have already have, see causative phenomena which are impermanent as permanent. For example, just the I, the I actually appears to us as permanent; it actually appears to us as permanent. All these things are actually appearing permanent.

On top of this, we see things as inherently existent where they are not. Everything that exists—the I, the action, the object, all those phenomena—exists by being is merely labeled by the mind. Because they are merely labeled by the mind, therefore everything is empty of existing from its own side. The I is empty of existing from its own side. The action is empty of existing from its own side. All objects, all phenomena are empty of existing from their own side. Everything is empty like space. They are not space but they are *like* space and *this* is reality; *this* is what they are. But, you see ... without saying “but,” I cancelled “but”! [Rinpoche laughs] I'll change it into “so.” *So*, not *one* single phenomenon has inherent existence. Not one single phenomenon has inherent existence. Normally, according to the point of view of ignorance, from beginningless rebirth until now, what we have been believing is that if anything exists it should be this way. This is the reality or nature, according to the point of view of the concept of inherent existence, the ignorance, according to *that* point of view, things appear as inherently existent and that is the nature, that is the reality. If something exists, it has to be this way. This is the nature of reality according to the point of view of ignorance, not according to wisdom.

That's why in the texts, things do not have nature. That's why in the philosophical texts it comes up so many times that things do not have nature. It means an inherently-existent nature, the nature according to the point of view of ignorance. So “things do not have nature,” means the nature that is the projection of the ignorant mind, the nature that is according to the point of

view of ignorance, which doesn't exist at all, which doesn't exist at all, anywhere, neither on that base nor anywhere.

From the point of view of wisdom, the nature of phenomena is the absence of the inherent existence. According to the point of view of wisdom, the nature of phenomena is the absence of the inherent existence. The absence of the inherent existence is the emptiness, that everything is empty, that everything is empty, that nothing exists from its own side. That no phenomenon has inherent existence. This emptiness is the ultimate nature of the phenomena; this is what wisdom realizes, the wisdom that is the remedy to that ignorance, the concept of inherent existence, the wisdom that is the remedy to the root of samsara, ignorance. This is the nature of phenomena, according to the point of view of wisdom and this is what exists.

This emptiness, being empty by nature, means being empty of having an inherently-existent nature. This is according to the point of view of wisdom. The way of perceiving the object is completely opposite, completely contradictory to ignorance. The way ignorance apprehends the object is completely opposite to the way wisdom does. Here, we are not talking about just any kind of wisdom, but about a particular wisdom. The way it perceives the object, the way it apprehends the object, is completely the opposite to ignorance, to the hallucinatory mind. The way ignorance apprehends the object is, even it is labeled by the mind, there should be something from its own side, otherwise how it can exist? There should be something from its own side, appearing that there is something existing from its own side, that is not merely labeled by the mind. There is something from its own side. The object appears like this, then the hallucinated mind believes this then mistakes arise. Believing what the hallucinated mind tells us, we think that what Buddha Vajradhara said and what Guru Shakyamuni Buddha promised, all this, becomes telling lies.

The other mistake that arises is that, according to this ordinary mind thought, according to this ordinary mistaken thought towards the virtuous friend, all these virtuous friends are ordinary beings, guiding us to enlightenment. They guide us to enlightenment but the buddhas, Buddha Vajradhara, all those who made vows, who promised, who said they would guide us sentient beings in these degenerate times are unable to guide us. The mistake that arises, what it becomes, is that these ordinary beings are bringing us to enlightenment whereas all those buddhas, Buddha Vajradhara, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and so forth, are unable to guide us, unable to bring us to enlightenment. The mistake arises that either they don't have the omniscient mind or that they don't have perfect power to reveal the method or they don't have compassion towards us sentient beings. This mistake arises, that they don't have all these qualities: omniscient mind, perfect power and the mind having completed the training in compassion towards us, towards all sentient beings. This mistake arises. It comes down to point that, according to our own ordinary mind, the point of view of us ordinary sentient beings, that the ordinary sentient beings are guiding us to enlightenment but the buddhas and bodhisattvas are not guiding us to enlightenment. According to the point of view of our own ordinary mind, the thought of this mistake towards the virtuous friend comes, this mistake arises.

This mistake also arises, which I think I've already mentioned. There definitely should be a buddha who gives me an initiation, who guides me to enlightenment by giving initiations, by giving the commentaries of tantra path, who guides me to enlightenment by giving instructions, who guides me to enlightenment by giving oral transmissions, who guides me to enlightenment by giving commentaries, who guides me to enlightenment by giving pratimoksha, bodhisattva and tantric vows. There definitely should be a buddha who does these actions. There has to be a buddha who does these activities for me and guides me to enlightenment in this way, there has to be. That the buddhas even guide animals; they even work for animals, those who do not have

the capacity to understand the Dharma, those who do not have a human body. The buddhas benefit, they work for, they guide even those other lower realms' sentient beings. Therefore they definitely have to guide us; there have to be buddhas who definitely guide us, especially because we have received a perfect human body and have the wisdom to understand the Dharma, doing listening, reflecting and meditation practice on the steps of path to enlightenment.

Therefore, on top of that we add this quotation from Sakya Pandita or Gyalwa Ensapa, I don't remember which one, "Until I get liberated, until I become free from the evil karmic obscurations, even if all the buddhas were to descend in front of me, even if all the buddhas without exception were actually to descend in front of me, I don't have the fortune, the opportunity to see them in their supreme holy body, adorned with the holy signs and exemplifications except the present view, the perception."

What this is saying is that until our very thick karmic obscurations are purified, until our mind becomes pure, there is no opportunity at all to see all these buddhas in the aspect of a buddha, the supreme holy body adorned with the thirty-two holy signs and the eighty holy exemplifications. "Except the present view" means the ordinary view. The present view is the ordinary view that we have. Why ordinary? Because this is the view of the ordinary mind, the mind that sees mistakes. Why? Because this is the view of our own present mind, which is ordinary and impure, which is an ordinary, impure, mistaken mind.

So what this says is that even if all these buddhas without exception were to come in front of our view how we would see them is as ordinary beings, as having mistakes. Because of our mistaken view, we can only see them as ordinary beings, which meaning having mistakes, having delusions, ignorance and attachment, having suffering, having the samsaric sufferings of birth, old age, sicknesses, death and mistakes in action.

The next thing is, as long as we follow the ordinary concepts, the thought of mistakes towards the virtuous friends, as long as we follow the ordinary mind, our own ordinary mind, we will never see in the guru in the aspect of a buddha, in the pure view, in aspect of a buddha, in the pure appearance. We will never see him in the aspect of a buddha, not having any mistakes, only qualities, we will never see in this way. We will always see only the ordinary mistaken aspect, only the ordinary being forever, as long as we follow the ordinary mind, the thought of mistakes.

THE GURU IS ONE WITH THE BUDDHAS

Then, to come back here and make the conclusion, we need to generate strong faith and determination that these are all Buddha Vajradhara or the Guru Shakyamuni Buddha who promised to guide sentient beings in the quarrelling time which includes ourselves. We need to relate all these quotations to each virtuous friend. We need to see that it's our own mind that apprehends as separate, that thinks of as separate, the virtuous friend and the buddhas, which thinks of them as separate, seeing the gap between the virtuous friend and the buddhas.

Then, to this mind which sees, which discriminates like this, this transforms into Guru Yoga, by looking at it this way, by seeing the oneness, that each of them, how many we have, each one of them are the numberless buddhas. When we see them in this way as the same, when we realize it this way, then any buddha we visualize, we think about, any buddha's name we hear, any painting, and statue of a buddha we see, what we understand, what comes, what we see, is that everything is the embodiment of the guru.

Even the heaviest negative karma that we have created, we can purify; it can get purified by doing prostrations, by making offerings to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, even to the holy objects: the statues, stupa and scriptures. All those negative karmas can be purified by depending on them, by making prostrations, by making offerings and so forth. With that, we accumulate infinite merit, extensive merit, inconceivable merit each time when we do a prostration or a circumambulation or we make an offering, even to the holy objects. Even the symbolic images, even the holy objects, the statues, stupas or scriptures, with all these we purify all the obscurations and accumulate extensive merit, planting so many seeds of liberation and enlightenment. We create so much cause of happiness, temporary and ultimate, including enlightenment. All this comes from the guru. The origin they came from is by the kindness of the guru. Every single merit that we accumulate comes from the guru; every single happiness and comfort that we experience have all been received from the guru. Why? Because all this happiness, enjoyment, every single comfort including enlightenment, all comes from good karma, from merit. And also, every single virtuous thought that arises within our mind, every single virtuous thought, every single virtuous action that we do are all a buddha's action.

There are two types of buddha's actions. One buddha's action is working in the mind of us sentient beings, the other is an action of a buddha possessed by a buddha's omniscient mind. The two types are like this. So every single virtuous thought that arises in our mind, all these are a buddha's action. Therefore, it becomes clearer that every single merit, every cause of happiness that we create, comes from a buddha.

As I mentioned before, when we look, we realize the oneness, that the guru is one with all the buddhas, and all the buddhas are one with the guru. By this reason then, all these came from the guru. All the merits are received by the kindness of the guru. Now, an even deeper reason than this, we can see how all happiness, every single merit—day to day life enjoyment and comfort, all happiness including enlightenment, everything—came from, was received by the kindness of the virtuous friend, of the guru. Even a deeper reason as a highly attained yogi, Tenzin Palden Yeshe, or Sangye Yeshe, maybe Sangye Yeshe, said, "Before the guru there was not even the name of what is called 'Buddha.' This is a way to understand how all the buddhas came from the guru." What this says is all these have come from the guru, all these are the manifestation of the guru, that's what is contained here.

For the same reason, in the Guru Puja, when we do refuge practice, taking refuge in the Guru comes first, before taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. That's why it comes first. Some teachers explained that the reason taking refuge in the guru comes first is in regards to the kindness, as it is explained in the lam-rim. Even though by quality it's equal, but by the kindness the guru is kinder than all the three times' buddhas in guiding us to enlightenment.

We can't see the Buddha but we can see the guru. We don't have the pure mind that can see the Buddha and can receive guidance from the Buddha directly. But even though our mind is impure we can see the guru, the guru as he has manifested in an ordinary form, having delusions, having mistakes in the actions, which are exactly according the level of the qualities our own mind which at present is impure, obscured, mistaken. In that aspect we can see the guru and receive teachings from him. When we see the guru, that is the aspect we can see. If the guru did not show having an ordinary aspect—which means having an ordinary, mistaken aspect, having delusions and making mistakes in the actions—we would not be able to see him. With this obscured, impure mind, this present mind, we could not see him, we don't have the karma to see and to receive guidance from him, and so there's no other way he can guide us, other than to show the ordinary aspect he does. Better than this and we can't see him and lower than this, like in the aspect of an animal, and we can't recognize him.

Therefore, *therefore*, except in this ordinary, mistaken aspect there is no other way to give us guidance, guiding us from all the oceans of samsaric suffering, all the causes, karma and delusion and guiding us to full enlightenment. Therefore showing us this ordinary, mistaken aspect and showing us the aspect making mistakes is so precious; it's valid, it's so precious for us. Doing this is extremely kind to us. Showing this aspect of making mistakes is so precious for us, like a wish-fulfilling gem. Through this, we can receive all the guidance. Only with this aspect, can we directly receive all the guidance.

This way of meditating on and thinking about seeing the apparent mistakes the virtuous friend makes becomes supportive to the path. Instead of seeing them as real mistakes and so being in danger of anger and heresy arising, it shows us the great kindness of the virtuous friend. Instead of causing us to create heaviest obstacles to developing our own mind on the path to enlightenment and heaviest negative karma, causing us to experience the suffering of the hells for an unimaginable length of time, for unimaginable eons, instead of this we use the seeing mistakes in the virtuous friend as a support to develop devotion, to develop the root of the path to enlightenment, guru devotion, to arise stronger. Of the two techniques for using the thought of seeing mistakes in the guru to develop devotion, this is Lama Tsongkhapa's technique.

Anyway, since I mentioned this, since we came to this subject, we'll just do a little bit of meditation.

Now, visualize all the virtuous friends there in front of you, and the Guru Puja merit field, as an example. Around Lama Losang Dorje Chang, visualize all the gurus there.

THE ABSOLUTE GURU IS THE DHARMAKAYA

Khedrup Sangye Yeshe mentions that the reason *Namo Gurubye*, taking refuge in the Guru, comes before taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and all those great yogis, is that there is not even the name "Buddha" before the Guru. Only through the Guru can we understand the absolute guru. The Guru has absolute Guru and conventional Guru, and we only do this by understanding the absolute Guru.

What is the absolute guru? We can say that it is the omniscient mind, the ultimate wisdom that is non-dual with emptiness, that which is the dharmakaya. This is something we cannot introduce exactly. We cannot introduce what is the dharmakaya. According to Highest Yoga Tantra, we cannot introduce then it becomes revealing a secrecy; that is the ultimate secrecy. What is exactly the dharmakaya according to tantra? We can explain it according to the Sutrayana but not according to Highest Yoga Tantra, then that becomes revealing the ultimate, that is the ultimate secrecy for those who don't have faith, devotion, who haven't received a Highest Yoga Tantra initiation.

The ultimate wisdom is the omniscient mind that is oneness with non-dual emptiness, that is pervasive, that is eternal, that has no beginning and no end, that covers all the existence. This is the dharmakaya; this is absolute Guru.

It looks a little bit similar to the Christian term "God," except that it doesn't have a clear explanation how it's eternal or a clear explanation how to achieve it. It doesn't have a clear explanation how we can become God because it's not clear what God is.

Anyway, this is the absolute Guru. According to our karma, without delaying even a second when our karma is ripened, when our mind is ripened, we receive guidance from the dharmakaya, from this absolute Guru. This happens without delaying even a second when our mind is ripened. This manifests in various forms according to our karma, to the level of our karma, according to quality of our mind, then like this it guides us and all sentient beings to enlightenment. This absolute guru manifests in an ordinary form, in the form of the conventional Guru, and it is through that ordinary form that we can see it and communicate with it. Then, it can reveal the Dharma and guide us to enlightenment. That's the conventional Guru.

All these gurus we think of as the absolute Guru, this dharmakaya. So, we need first meditate like this, after we have decided that all these are embodiments of the absolute Guru, the dharmakaya.

We have to understand that the present guru and all the past-life gurus who have guided us, who have cause to accumulate merit and practice the path, all these are just one; they are all in reality just being. We think how all these are manifestations of the dharmakaya, the absolute Guru. It's the same thing with all the future gurus. Until we become enlightened, it's always just one being. Think that they are all manifestations of the absolute Guru.

As I mentioned before, all happiness comes from good karma. All our own past, present and future happiness comes from good karma. And good karma is virtuous thought, which is the Buddha's action. I've already mentioned this before. This dharmakaya, this absolute Guru, this one is the creator, the performer; this one takes the various aspects of the Buddha or deities of the Maha-anuttara Tantra Yoga, the Anuttara Yoga Tantra, the Kriya Tantra and the Charya Tantra Yoga, all the one thousand buddhas of the fortunate eons, the Medicine Buddha, the Thirty-five Buddhas, all these. This one manifests into all these buddhas; it manifests into all the bodhisattva, the arhats, the dakas, the dakinis, the protectors—all the various aspects, this absolute Guru, this dharmakaya manifests into. All these male and female aspects of the Buddha, everything comes from the dharmakaya, the absolute Guru. Everything is the creation of the absolute Guru, the dharmakaya.

That's the reason *Namo Gurubye*, taking refuge in the Guru comes first, before taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Now, we can understand from this evolution where all the buddhas came from. All the buddhas are manifestations or creations of this original dharmakaya, this absolute Guru, that which is eternal, with no beginning and no end, which is pervasive.

Now we can understand the meaning of Kedrup Sangye's words, that before the Guru there is no Buddha. Now we can understand this. Before the absolute Guru, the dharmakaya, it's impossible to have the Buddha; it's impossible to see the Buddha.

All the past happiness, the happiness from beginningless rebirths, up to now, and from now on, up to enlightenment, all our happiness, we have received by the kindness of each guru. We can understand this only if we think the absolute Guru, the essence, the absolute Guru—then we can understand how all our happiness comes from each guru, only then can we understand, can we have that idea.

On the basis of this understanding, we can see that we have received all our past, present and future happiness, up to enlightenment, by kindness of each guru. Think this over and over. Think this over and over. "My three times' happiness has been received by kindness of the guru." You can count up to twenty-one times.

“I have received all my three times’ happiness by the kindness of each of the gurus. How kind the virtuous friends are.” So repeat this over and over, “how kind” on the basis of the breathing—all the three times’ happiness, our own three times’ happiness have been receive from the guru.

THINK ON THE KINDNESS OF THE GURU

Now next one. Think like this. Even if my doctor cures my cancer or AIDS, even if it’s cured it could come back after some time, even in this life. But anyway, even if it’s temporarily cured, I still think that that person is unbelievably precious, so kind, the most important, the most precious one, in my life because that person gave me all the rest of my life, all the remaining years of my life.

Each of the virtuous friends, by revealing the Dharma to me, ends all the problems of samsara. He ends each problem, each of the diseases and so forth. Each of the virtuous friends causes this to cease completely, to completely end each of the four hundred and twenty-four diseases. By revealing the Dharma to me, each of the virtuous friends causes this to completely finish, to completely end. Like this, death, rebirth, old age, sicknesses, each of the samsaric problems, if the virtuous friend causes these to completely cease, then even just one problem of samsara, like cancer or old age, that the virtuous friend causes to completely cease from now so I never have to experience it again, this is unbelievably kind. By revealing the Dharma that causes me to never experience at all even just one problem of samsara, like cancer or death or old age, that’s unbelievably kind.

So again, repeat over and over how kind each virtuous friend is, how kind he is. Repeat it over and over. How precious he is, how kind he is. Repeat it over and over. How precious, how kind to me, like this.

By revealing the Dharma to me, each of the virtuous friends causes all these oceans of samsaric sufferings to cease, each one, causes all the problems to completely cease, to never have to be experienced again. So again, meditate on the kindness, how precious each of the virtuous friends is, how precious, how kind to me. Repeat it over and over, twenty-one times or however many you like.

Now, the next one. Think like this. By revealing Dharma to me, by revealing the various means, by leading me to practice, each of the virtuous friends causes me to practice and actualizing the path within my mind. Even by giving me a few syllables of a mantra or a few Dharma words, even just giving an oral transmission by planting the imprint on my mental continuum which causes me, sooner or later, to actualize that path contained in that mantra or in that stanza of Dharma. And then that leads me to enlightenment. By actualizing the path, that ceases all the gross and subtle obscurations and completes all the qualities of realizations. This is what each of the virtuous friends does for me, even the one who only just gave me an oral transmission of a mantra or one stanza of teaching. By planting the imprint on my mental continuum that causes me sooner or later to actualize the path contained in that mantra or stanza then to achieve the path that leads me to enlightenment.

Think: Each of the virtuous friends guides me, by causing me to actualize path that ceases all the obscurations and completes all the qualities of realization within my mental continuum. Think how each of the virtuous friends is so precious and so unbelievably kind to me. Again repeat this over and over, twenty-one times or however. This ceases all the mistakes of my mind and causes me to complete all the qualities.

As I mentioned, this is one lama's particular meditations on guru devotion, but this middle part is not from there. I started from there. "I actually see mistakes," up to there, that is the lama's, that is according to that lama's meditation technique but after that I just slipped out. After that, the rest of the part of the meditation explanation is what is in that short meditation of that lama, that lama's technique. It is in the teaching, *Calling the Guru from Afar*, those meditations on the kindness of the Guru are in the Guru Puja and in *Calling the Guru from Afar*. It is there but I just put it like this to meditate on guru yoga in an effective way, not guru yoga but to transform our mind into guru yoga, into guru devotion.

SEEING THE GURU AS BUDDHA IS THE CORE OF GURU DEVOTION

Now the last thing according to that lama's meditation technique: If a lama doesn't explain to his disciples because of the reason that he himself is not Buddha, "I teach Dharma but I am not Buddha," then he doesn't explain guru devotion, to look at the Guru as Buddha, if he doesn't explain that to his disciples then they don't have protection, they don't have protection in the mind when negative thoughts arise, when heresy and anger arise. They don't have guidance, they don't have protection, like not having been given medicine for their sickness. That means they have no method to protect themselves from the negative thoughts of heresy, anger and so forth arising, the thought of mistakes towards the virtuous friend. That means the lama is throwing his disciples in the hell realm because he doesn't give protection to their minds. That is not exactly but it's the essence of what the lama mentioned.

I never thought of this question, I never thought this. I don't know why, it's somehow strange, but the thought never came to me, "Because I'm teaching Dharma I am not Buddha." It's not saying that I *am* Buddha because I never thought this; it's not saying that. Being a very ordinary sentient being, this thought never occurred to me. Then, so many years ago, maybe during a Kopan course in those early times, when I was coming a lot of time to give courses and to guide meditation, in those early times, one day, Dr Nick invited me upstairs to discuss something. I think maybe we were working on *The Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun*, I'm not sure, this original meditation course book that's *still* did not finished. He brought up this question, "Oh, I am also teaching Dharma but I am not Buddha." Only that, only he told me, otherwise that thought, never occurred.

This is the same thing as in the meditation on bodhicitta, the seven techniques of Mahayana cause-and-effect. There are two techniques to develop bodhicitta: exchanging oneself for others, and the seven techniques of Mahayana cause-and-effect. The foundation is that all sentient beings have been our own mother and incredibly kind to us. While we meditate on this, how other sentient beings have been our own mother and kind, we can also think, "I have also been a mother to all other sentient beings, and so I have been also been kind to other sentient beings." This thought that I have been a mother to all other sentient beings and so been kind to them, this thought doesn't help to actualize bodhicitta. The mind thinking like this doesn't help to actualize the realization of bodhicitta, to develop compassion and loving kindness to other sentient beings, it doesn't help. This doesn't help us to treat all the mistakes of the mind and complete all the qualities of realizations; it doesn't help us to free all sentient beings from all the sufferings and to lead them to enlightenment.

Even though we *have* been a mother to other sentient beings, the main point here is we are trying to think what is useful, what is beneficial for other sentient beings—useful and beneficial for us ourselves but especially for all sentient beings. If we don't know the point of the meditation, that we trying to think something meaningful, useful, not only for ourselves but for all sentient

beings, the meditation is lost. This is the main thing that we are trying to do everyday life. This is the main thing, the whole path to enlightenment.

It's the same thing here. "I am also teaching Dharma [but I am not a buddha]" bringing up that one is the same thing. We are losing the point, trying to think of something beneficial for our own mind, trying to think of something that develops our loving kindness and compassion, that is beneficial to our own mind, beneficial to free all sentient beings from all the sufferings and to bring all sentient beings into happiness. We are trying to think of something meaningful, beneficial, for the success of that. Therefore, those things are useless. They don't offer these benefits.

I don't know how I started the talk tonight, from the beginning. I think it went somewhere else. Just one or two things. One thing left to emphasize is how to make the lam-rim successful during our life, but then to do quite a number of oral transmissions of the preliminary practices. But anyway ... [Rinpoche laughs] It didn't happen yesterday, didn't happen for the last three nights, giving the oral transmission of the different preliminary practices: the Thirty-five Buddhas, Samayavajra, Dorje Khadro, Medicine Buddha, a few different practices that those of you who already have or who are new that you have to do, and also those of you who aren't thinking about it now but who might need it later. So anyway, this guru devotion meditation I have just mentioned, that has just happened, contains how to correctly devout to the virtuous friend with the thought that involves two things: firstly, looking at the [Guru as] Buddha and the result of that is seeing in that way and the second thing is remembering their kindness. This is how to correctly devout to the virtuous friend with thought. The action comes with three outlines.

Obtaining advice... [Break in recording] ... It seems like whenever he saw anything beautiful, like a garden, he immediately made a mandala offering, offered it to the merit field, to the Guru Triple Gem, who are incredible loving and compassionate to every single being. By going to see this lama everyone thinks, "I am very close," everyone thinks, "The lama is very close to me." Everyone has kind of the same feeling like this, very compassionate, very loving.

This lama, Je Drubkhang had a teacher, a virtuous friend call Atsara, who was maybe from India, I'm not sure. He lived in the forest, in the jungle. One day this guru was alone reading a Dharma text in the forest when Je Drubkhang saw him from afar, talking to himself. There was nobody but he was talking. He was alone but he was doing like this. [Rinpoche makes a thumbs-up sign.] Je Drubkhang didn't ask the guru immediately why he was doing this but later, after some time, when he found some convenient time, he asked to his guru why he was doing like this when he was alone.

The lama explained he had been reading Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's past-life stories, probably the Jataka tales. I think there were five stories probably, how in the past lives the bodhisattva practiced charity, morality, patience and perseverance and so forth, not just in one lifetime's story, but in different stories.

There was one story where Guru Shakyamuni Buddha made charity of his holy body. He had already made charity to other sentient beings of his limbs, his two legs and two arms, so just the main part of the body was [left]. The people in the Himalayan city or town—whatever—thinking the main part of his body was useless without arms or legs so they threw it in the garbage dump. They threw this main part in the garbage dump because they thought it was useless. But even after he had made charity of his limbs he was able to make charity of the main holy for many

thousands and thousands of ants that completely covered it. He made charity like this to the ants. So even this left-over body was useful.

So the lama was saying that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha in his past life was born as a son to a mother and he had made his life so worthwhile; he had dedicated his life completely. Even the piece that was left, he sacrificed for sentient beings, he made charity to sentient beings. So, he made his life so worthwhile. This [thumbs-up sign] is common in the West, but I don't know what it means in the East. In Chinese, it is good or bad? Good. In the East it means very good. [Rinpoche laughs] So this lama was saying it was a very worthwhile life, that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha made his path very worthwhile, he made being born a son very worthwhile. So as he was reading he was doing like this. So the lama told the story to Je Drubkhang. This lama always prayed to actualize bodhicitta, all the time concentrating on bodhicitta.

Another incredible, unbelievable lama was one who seemed to give everybody some sort of bliss just to hear or to be around. Whenever he ate, the story is, the main story is, he just went like that. [Rinpoche laughs] The main story is whenever he had a meal this lama didn't talk to other people at all because, [he was doing] especially personal tantra. There is a very secret, a very profound yoga of eating, you are meant to practice. With it, every bit of eating and drinking becomes the means of incredible purification, each time accumulating skies of merit, infinite merit, with the very profound meditation of Highest Yoga Tantra, Annutara Yoga Tantra. So to not waste his life, he doesn't talk; he eats with meditation. This is the main story that I wanted to bring out about this lama Je Drubkhang. I read a little of the teachings by this lama, so when I was in Tibet I wanted to go to see his hermitage but it was quite far, and it also looked like quite steep. Anyway, I didn't make it so far. [Rinpoche laughs]

Even if we haven't received an initiation into Highest Yoga Tantra and don't do those profound meditations, like the yoga of eating, at least one can, at least we can do such meditations. As I explained, while we are eating and drinking, we can visualize the Buddha in our heart, and then, even while eating, during that hour or two, each time we eat or drink something, we can make it most beneficial, meaningful, with bodhicitta towards all sentient beings.

DOING PRACTICES BASED ON GURU DEVOTION

The one I left out was this. I didn't remember it at that time. Controlling the mind was left out. I think probably the most difficult one was left out. [Rinpoche laughs] Because of that maybe I didn't remember.

This says, "Closing the door of the senses."

That means that in our daily life, whenever there is a situation where there is great danger of creating very heavy negative karma, by becoming angry and so forth, at those times, we should apply the meditation, trying to not let anger arise, trying to free ourselves from anger, trying to keep our own mind in a state of peace and happiness by applying meditation. It's just another word of saying controlling the mind. In daily life when we are in a situation of creating very negative karma, which will make us fall into the lower realms, by becoming angry and so forth, through strong delusion, then we need to immediately applying meditation, like taking medicine, by applying meditation, keeping the mind in the Dharma. That was what I left out.

Then the other thing I didn't get to mention. The other thing is the question Lama Tsongkhapa asked Manjushri on how to meditate on the lam-rim in everyday life, generally in the life. Manjushri advised, answered, the quick way to achieve enlightenment is to attempt the necessary

conditions to accumulate merit, then purifying the obstacles. Then we make a one-pointed requesting to the guru, and that connects us with the guru yoga. Then, with the guru yoga in mind we make a one-pointed request and that is in order to receive blessings. In other words, we do these preliminary practices in our everyday life, not just one time, not just a certain number of times and then completely. We don't practice and then nothing, and then stop. Not like that. With this practice, we meditate on the actual body of the meditation on the path, that which is the steps of the path, the lam-rim. This is what Buddha of Wisdom, Manjushri, who is the embodiment of all the buddhas' wisdom, answered to Lama Tsongkhapa's question on how to achieve enlightenment.

It's very important in everyday life to begin to practice the lam-rim, to meditate on the lam-rim on the basis of one of the guru yoga practices. So if you can do what was done during the course, this is an elaborate practice of guru yoga by adding many different practices: offering bath, an elaboration of the refuge practice, describing the visualizations, and motivation and offering bath, taken from *jor-chö*, the preparatory practice. Then there is the requesting prayer to all the lineage lamas, integrate that with the guru puja. Then also, at the end, after the guru descends onto your own crown, again make requests by looking at four kayas, and the integration.

Many meditators of lam-rim practice this way, those who have actualized the path, those who experimented in the path. Either the *jor-chö*, the preparatory practice or the Guru Puja combined like this. This is the extensive way to do it. And also adding the Samayavajra practice or Vajrasattva at the point of the confession. One day Vajrasattva and next day Samayavajra—some lamas do it like this.

When the seven-limb prayer is finished, when the dedication is done, before the requesting prayer, then do another mandala offering, then after the mandala make the very important request called "Requesting with Three Great Purposes." That is extremely good. Everything we need is contained there, specifying all the wrong concepts, from the first one, the wrong concept towards the virtuous friend, the thought of the mistake towards the virtuous friend, from there up to the subtle dualistic view: the appearance of the white path, the burning or increasing, of the red path, and then of the near-attainment, the dark path.

Then, the second part of this prayer is making request to generate all the right realizations, from guru devotion up to the unification of no-more-learning, the holy body and holy mind.

Then the third part is requesting the pacification of all the outer and inner obstacles. This has different commentaries. One way of explaining this is that "outer" means other people not giving you the opportunity to practice Dharma, being under the control of the kings or external powers, that your life is under the control of other people or things like that. That one is being unable to practice and this prayer is to pacify both these outer obstacles and inner obstacles, such as sicknesses and delusions. This is one way of explaining outer and inner obstacles, when you request to pacify them immediately.

So, everything you need is contained here. I find this request very effective for the mind and very important. I regard this as very important. Then after that, do the visualization meditation purifying the particular negative karma that you have accumulated, having broken samaya with the guru, the particular negative karma accumulated in relationship with the virtuous friend. Then do the visualization that those are purified and you receive the blessing. Then meditate that you and all sentient beings are under the guidance of the guru, having been purified and received the blessing and being under the guidance, under the protection of the guru. So this is the same.

REFUGE PRACTICE WITH THE GURU AND OFFERING BATH PRACTICE

This is also the same in the practice of refuge, whenever you do refuge, do the outline of these three: purification, receiving the blessings, which means you and all sentient beings being under the guidance and protection of the Triple Gem. These three are the outline how to do the meditation, how to meditate on refuge when you do the refuge practice, *Namo Gurubye* etc. In whichever language you recite it, this is how to meditate on refuge. Before that it involves perfecting the mind, perfecting in the three causes, then relying upon the Triple Gem. That comes in the motivation, after the visualization, then the motivation: renunciation, compassion, trust, having faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. With these three causes then rely upon the refuge: the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The three causes come in the motivation.

While you are reciting the refuge prayer, use these three outlines—purification, receiving the blessings which means the qualities, and you and all sentient beings being under the protection, under the guidance of the Guru Triple Gem. When you stop reciting refuge, at the conclusion, then feel that you and all sentient beings are now under the protection of the Guru Triple Gem.

The purpose of doing this in the morning is to become familiar, to get the knowledge of how to practice, how to meditate on the lam-rim, which contains Manjushri's advice, which contains all these. How to meditate on the lam-rim contains the explanation of what you should do, the preparation before meditation on the actual path, and how to meditate on the actual path, then the conclusion. The whole thing comes here, the answer to the question on how to meditate on the lam-rim. This mainly comes through familiarity. There is a practice like this to do. But of course, according to your own capacity or time, you can make this guru yoga practice any length. You can do it like this, complete with all the prayers, or you can make it shorter. So, there are many different versions you can do, many lengths you can do, according to your own capacity.

You can leave the bath offering. The bath offering is a substitute for the guru yoga practice, offering service to the guru: offering water, cleaning the holy body, putting on ointment, cleaning, offering the dress, doing all these services and then offering, which in Tibetan is called *ku-ti rim-to*. *Ku-ti* means "respect" and *rim-to* means "service." If there is a guru, then you actually do that. That is the main one. In your own daily life, if there is a guru then you have the opportunity to do this service. That's the main one but this is a substitute of that. This one is visualizing washing, offering bath and putting on ointment, offering dress and ornaments and so forth, depending on which merit field there is.

This is also another powerful purification. Like when we start to meditate or when we start to read Dharma texts, we very easily get tired. Whenever we begin to do something worthwhile, we very easy to get tired or get pain, especially we very easily very quickly fall asleep. Sooner or later sleep comes; the mind becomes very drowsy like the weather is not clear space but kind of foggy. The mind is kind of drowsy and unclear like that. This bath offering is a particular method to purify this unclear, foggy mind, which is due to pollution. This is not so much talking about pollution from a factory. [Rinpoche laughs] When I say pollution you might think pollution from a factory or something, but it's not talking about that. It's the pollution coming especially from your own mind. The bath offering is a special method to purify this obstacle, this pollution, this obscuration.

Anyway, when you are unable to do the whole practice, you can leave this out.

Then the very last one, the very last one, when the guru descend on one's own crown then making request, by looking at each kaya, then integration of all the Triple Gem, like this, so that can be left. So it becomes shorter. Anyway, so like this. So depending one ... even one is doing this guru yoga practice but still one ... if one cannot do all, then one can sort of ... one can that when one can do, one can do. Then when one doesn't do all, then can make shorter, like this different ways.

Even if you can't do this Guru Puja integrated with *Jor-chö* or just Guru Puja, one of the most important ones is the mandala offering, done after purifying the particular negative karma accumulated with the guru. That's very important. Then the requesting prayer to the lineage lamas, that one is extremely important, if it can be done.

If you can't do the guru yoga practice this way, then the short one is Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga.

For those who have taken Highest Yoga Tantra initiation there is the six-session guru yoga. If you can't do other prayers then you can integrate them into the six sessions. You can meditate on the lam-rim by integrating it with the six-session guru yoga that you have to recite three times in the day and three times at night, the six-session yoga prayer. That's another guru yoga practice.

If you can't do other guru yoga prayers, then before the guru absorbs into you, you can read the lam-rim prayer *The Foundation of All Good Qualities*, either that one written by Lama Tsongkhapa or the lam-rim prayer from end of the Guru Puja, the section on the graduated path to enlightenment that contains all the tantra at the end. Either that, or there are many other different lam-rim prayers you can recite different, you don't have always only do one. The main point is for at least one lam-rim prayer to get done, the direct meditation on the whole path to enlightenment. That's the main purpose, to at least recite one lam-rim prayer once a day.

So you can do the Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga. If you can't do the long one then do the Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga. For those who have a Highest Yoga Tantra initiation, you have the six-session guru yoga. Therefore if you can't do other prayers then you can integrate a lam-rim meditation on the basis of the preliminary the six session yoga. How to do that is before the guru absorbs into, you then one make the request, then do the mandala offering, then you can do the requesting prayer to the lineage lamas. If you can't do that, then do some more abbreviated requesting prayer. After that, do the direct meditation on the whole path to enlightenment by reading a lam-rim prayer mindfully. Then it becomes direct meditation on the whole path to enlightenment. Then you can do a more extensive analytical meditation, and then afterwards a fixed meditation.

You do a fixed meditation means that after, with an analytical meditation. This is what I wanted to say the other night. Your mind that discriminates, that sees the guru and the buddhas as separate, or in other words the guru and the deity that you practice everyday life. By doing an analytical meditation, by proving this mind, you are then able to transform this, you are able to see that they are one. You are able to see that they are one. That is the transformation. That time your mind becomes guru yoga. Then keeping the mind in that experience, holding that experience, holding that experience for some time, *that* is fixed meditation. Holding the mind in that experience, that's not possible. After the mind is transformed into the guru yoga, seeing there is no separate [guru and deity] after that immediately stop that experience, it's not like that. Keeping the mind in that experience, holding that experience for some time, without reasoning, that is fixed meditation.

It's the same with the perfect human body, with its usefulness, with the difficulties, with impermanence and death, with the lower realms' suffering, with refuge and karma, all those subjects including emptiness. When your mind is transformed into that experience with analytical meditation, then you keep it for a while, you keep that experience one pointedly.

By using the two techniques, analytical and fixed, as I mentioned the other night, you continue that experience in the break times. You also continue that experience in the break times and for the rest of the day. This way helps you have very quick realizations. Keeping the mind in that experience, in the lam-rim, in the Dharma not only causes everyday life's activities to become Dharma, the cause of happiness, but it helps you to actualize realizations quickly.

Today the emphasis is how to meditate on the lam-rim on the basis of guru yoga. What I'm saying is there are different ways, according to your own capacity. There are different ways you can do it.

Even if you can't do the Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga there is a very short practice. When I was in Taiwan, one or two years ago, I put together a practice where you just visualize Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, with the four immeasurables then the purpose of life which transforms the mind into Dharma, bodhicitta. Then the seven-limb practice, a short mandala then the requesting prayer, then you meditate by doing the lam-rim prayer. It becomes direct meditation on the whole path to enlightenment. So at least do something like this.

There can be guru yoga with other aspects of the Buddha; there can be guru yoga with the different deities. You can do the lam-rim meditation with guru yoga using deities like Tara and so forth, the different aspect of the Buddha.

THE ORAL TRANSMISSION OF THE LAM-RIM PRAYER: MOTIVATION

Maybe I'll do some oral transmissions, just before going to sleep.

The first one is the Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga, the oral transmission of the Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga combined with the lam-rim prayer, *The Foundation of All Good Qualities*, composed by Lama Tsongkhapa.

The purpose of my life is to free all sentient beings from all the sufferings and to lead to the peerless happiness, full enlightenment, therefore I must achieve enlightenment. Therefore I must actualize the steps of path to enlightenment, therefore I am going to take the oral transmission of the Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga.

There are particular special benefits of practicing the Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga, to eliminate obstacles, spirit harms, things caused by spirits and so forth. A particular benefit is to develop wisdom. There are a few particular benefits of specifically practicing this Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga, the guru yoga related to Lama Tsongkhapa.

Even hearing, even receiving the oral transmission of the mantra, receiving the oral transmission of Buddha's teachings, even a mantra, even one stanza of Buddhadharma, it has incredible benefit.

For example, in the past Buddha gave teachings to five hundred swans in the field, and in next life all the five hundred swans were born as human beings and they all become ordained and then they all achieved the arya path. In that life, they all became free from the suffering of

samsara, from rebirth, death, old age and sicknesses, by achieving the arya path. What happens in the next life is because all those incredible things that happened before, such as receiving a human body and so forth, and *that* is because of having heard the Buddhadharma, the words from the Buddha. Just by hearing the Dharma words.

There was a great pandit called Vasubandhu, in Tibetan Loben Yiknyen, who composed the *Abidharmakosha*, one of the main philosophical texts, which has a detailed description of the skandhas—the elements—as well as the Buddha’s explanation of the evolution of the world and human beings and all these things. Vasubandhu recited this text each day. There was a pigeon on the roof of the hermitage that used to hear the Dharma words. One day, after the pigeon had died, Vasubandhu checked where this pigeon had reincarnated and through his psychic power he saw that the pigeon was born as human being, in the same area, somewhere down in the valley. He had reincarnated to a family down there. So Vasubandhu, this great pandit, went down to see the family and asked the family if he could have the child. And the family offered the child to him. Then this child became a great pandit called is Lobpön Loden, a great scholar in the teaching he had heard when he was a pigeon in his past life. He wrote four commentaries on the teaching he heard when he was pigeon.

There are many stories like that, where even by hearing the Dharma words or an oral transmission, even if that person doesn’t understand the meaning, he receives incredible benefit, that is what he receives from that, and sooner or later he is able to actualize the path, not only able to understand the meaning of the the words but able to actualize the path that ceases the delusions, and through that to achieve enlightenment.

Therefore even hearing Dharma words, even an oral transmission has incredible benefit, the effect it has on our mind. It brings sentient beings to full enlightenment. Therefore it’s a great blessing. It’s very important, it’s very good to recite mantras even to the animals. Of course if there is an opportunity for people, for human beings as well, who can definitely hear, but even for the animals, when there is an animal nearby, to get the opportunity to recite the mantra. If they can hear it then they receive incredible benefit from that.

Maybe tomorrow we’ll do the Thirty-five Buddhas, then Samayavajra then Dorje Khadro, the burning offering that is a very powerful practice, a very powerful purification that Manjushri taught Lama Tsongkhapa. We’ll do the oral transmission of some of the preliminary practices. We’ll do it tomorrow. Then again some more emphasis on the lam-rim practice.

Did the mindfulness practice get done in break time? Huh? The hallucination, the object to be refuted. I didn’t get to mention much on that yet. Maybe tomorrow, on the basis of this, practice mindfulness very intensively, the hallucination, even though things are merely labeled by the mind, even though things exist being merely labeled by the mind, when things appear to us they do so not appearing that way, not merely labeled by the mind. This is the object to be refuted and this is hallucination which means that this doesn’t exist. On the basis of this then, maybe tomorrow, particularly meditate on the object of attachment. On the basis of this, this is the recognition, the awareness, then maybe, relating to the hallucination or object to be refuted, particularly remember the object of the attachment.

Maybe I’ll stop here. Maybe tomorrow afternoon, maybe tomorrow at the change time, [Rinpoche laughs] maybe a little bit of talk on this point. Then you can use that to practice mindfulness.

[Rinpoche chants in Tibetan]

DEDICATION

Due to all the past, present and future merits accumulated by myself, by the buddhas and bodhisattvas, by the sentient beings, may the bodhicitta, the source of all the happiness and success, be generated within my own mind and in the mind of all sentient beings without the delay of even a second. In those who haven't developed it, may it be developed.

[Chanting]

Due to all the past, present and future merits accumulated by myself, by the buddhas and bodhisattvas, by sentient beings, due to all these merits, may me myself, my family, all the students and all the sentient beings, in all the lifetimes, may we always meet the perfectly-qualified Mahayana virtuous friend and be able to see only enlightened beings. From each of the sentient being side, from my own side may we be able to do only actions most pleasing to the holy mind of the virtuous friend and be able to fulfill the holy wishes immediately, by each sentient being and by myself.

Due to all the past, present and future merits accumulated by myself, by the buddhas and bodhisattvas, by the sentient beings, may the father, mother sentient beings have happiness, may the three lower realms be empty forever, may the bodhisattvas' prayers succeed immediately. May I be able to cause all these by myself alone.

I will dedicate all the merits in the best way to quickly enlighten all sentient beings, as the three times' buddhas and bodhisattvas have dedicated their merits and as the bodhisattvas Manjughosha and Samantabhadra have realized.

[Chanting]

Due to all the past, present and future merits accumulated by myself, by the buddhas and bodhisattvas, by the sentient beings, all these merits while they exist they are empty, all these merits while they are exist they are empty. And may the I who, while it exists it is empty, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment, which, while it exists it is empty, and lead all sentient beings, who, while they exist, they are empty, to that enlightenment as quick as possible by myself alone.

I dedicate the merit to actualize, to complete the pure path of Lama Tsongkhapa, the unified sutra and tantra within my own mind, in the minds of all my family, then in the minds of all the students. May it be spread in the minds of all sentient beings, and be able to lead to them to enlightenment as quickly as possible.

[Chanting]

Lecture Five: December 4, 1994

BODHICITTA IS THE MAIN TRUNK OF THE DHARMA TREE

Meditating on the lam-rim is the answer to all problems. It is the solution for any kind of problem. Any subject of the lam-rim but especially bodhicitta is the one answer to all problems.

If we practice bodhicitta well we accumulate extensive merit and in this way, by having inner merit, it helps us to quickly actualize emptiness, even though bodhicitta is not the direct remedy or weapon to cut the root of samsara, ignorance, the concept of the inherently-existent I. Even though bodhicitta is not the actual weapon or the actual direct remedy to cut the root of samsara, ignorance, the concept of inherent existence or even the direct remedy for the delusions, but by practicing bodhicitta—this ultimate good heart to benefit towards all sentient beings that derives from compassion and loving kindness—we accumulate extensive merit that helps us quickly actualize, quickly realize emptiness.

For example, doing the meditation on taking and giving: taking other sentient beings' sufferings, their problems, and the causes, and then giving them our own happiness, giving them our own merits, all the results of happiness up to enlightenment, our own body, possessions, some the relatives, the family, everything that we own or possess, making charity, giving it to all sentient beings, by generating great loving kindness and taking all their problems and their causes, with the great compassion.

This special meditation powerfully develops bodhicitta, the exchange of ourselves for others. Each time we take the numberless other sentient beings' suffering and the causes, we accumulate merit like the infinite sky. Each time we do the practice of giving towards all sentient beings, we accumulate merit like the infinite sky. Each time we think we must achieve full enlightenment for the sake all the kind mother sentient beings equaling the infinite sky, therefore we are going to generate bodhicitta, each time we generate even the motivation like this, we accumulate merit like the infinite sky, merit equaling the sky.

It is said in the sutra teaching—I don't remember the exact title of the text—that somebody simply putting his palms together and generating bodhicitta, thinking "I am going to generate bodhicitta in order to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings," this merit is far greater than a world equaling number of sand grains of the River Ganga, the large very long, large river in India. The world equaling the number of sand grains the river Ganga, that much filled with seven different types of jewels and make offerings to buddhas, for the number of eons equaling the number of the sand grains of River Ganga. Even just having a bodhicitta motivation like this accumulates far greater merit than having made such extensive offering, for that length of time to so many buddhas.

As Lama Tsongkhapa explains in *The Hymns of the Experience of the Steps of Path to Enlightenment*,

The generation of the thought to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings (which means bodhicitta) is like the main trunk of the path of the greater vehicle, the path of the supreme vehicle.

Bodhicitta is like the main trunk of the tree, the tree that has so many thousands and thousands of branches, the main trunk from where all the branches come. Bodhicitta is like this, the main path of the sublime vehicle.

In other words, using the example of a tree where all the branches, flowers, leaves all these beautiful things come from the main trunk. Likewise, we generate all the other Mahayana realizations by depending on the basis of bodhicitta, the main path. For example, there is a main road to go to Kathmandu that everyone has use in order to go to different places. To be able to do things, to be able to fulfill their own wishes, everyone goes on this main road then through this they go to the city to fulfill all the different wishes for happiness. Whatever there is to do gets fulfilled like this. Bodhicitta is like this, the main path of the sublime supreme vehicle.

And on this basis, the next verse says,

It is the supporting foundation of all the great extensive deeds (which means the great extensive deeds of the bodhisattva, the six paramitas and so forth).

Bodhicitta is like mercury that turns everything into gold,
It's a treasury of merit containing the two types of merit.

For example, in order to build a monastery so that the Sangha would have a place where people could make offerings to them, their means of living, Nagarjuna did this special practice. He obtained this power with mercury, transforming much iron into gold. So Lama Tsongkhapa uses this as an example to get an idea of the benefits of the bodhicitta, the unimaginable benefit that bodhicitta has. With bodhicitta, we easily attain the two types of merit: the merit of wisdom and the merit of method or fortune. Accumulating these two types of merit with bodhicitta, the merit of wisdom or merit of fortune, all the merit leads directly towards enlightenment. Every single merit that is collected with bodhicitta becomes the cause of enlightenment, every single merit that we accumulate. So it's like how mercury can turn so many thousands, billions of [pieces of] iron into gold. With this method, with these skillful means, with this powerful material, all those thousands of billions of [pieces of] iron become so precious, so important, so valuable. So like that, with bodhicitta, every single merit becomes the cause of enlightenment, the cause to cease all the mistakes of mind and to actualize all the qualities of the realizations.

I saw this text many years ago when I was in Lawudo while I was building the monastery during summer time. When I was living there for about six months I was going over the Kangyur or the Tengyur. At that time we didn't have the Tengyur, I don't remember, two or three hundred volumes of the text, many commentaries, the tantra and sutra by those great pandits, yogis. By borrowing the texts from the monastery of the village where I was born, which is called Thangme, I saw this text with the method that Nagarjuna practiced for building monasteries, with all this gold, by made offering, serving the Sangha. But I didn't bother to read even the first page, I didn't bother, I didn't have the courage to read even the first page. Not because there were so many pages but I didn't have the courage even to read the first page. Because I thought if it was such an easy thing to do *everybody* would do this, [Rinpoche laughs] to take care, to build a monastery, to make offering to the Sangha and so forth. I didn't have courage to even look at the first page. I just turned the whole page and I didn't look at it at all, how it is. [Rinpoche laughs] I just thought if this is so easy everybody would do this. Because of that thought I didn't even read one line from it.

Then next line:

It's a treasury of merit containing the two types of merit.

“Treasury of fortune,” or “merit”—fortune, good luck, merit are the same. Ordinary people, common people in the world who do not talk about karma, who do not understand karma, who do not talk about need to have merit in order to have success, in order to obtain happiness, they don't use the term “merit” but say “good luck,” They don't know what they are talking about exactly but they are talking about merit, good karma. Because lack of Dharma wisdom, karma, the only term they have is “good luck.” In the everyday life, they say, “If I have good luck, this will happen.” I will find a job or pass an examination or get a degree, or win a lottery and so forth. Anyway, they use the term “good luck” and when people leave they wish them good luck. There is that expression when somebody leaves, “Have good luck.” But the problem is that they

don't understand, luck is something that is created by the mind. It comes from the mind; it is created by the mind. The thing that one can create the luck is our own mind. In everyday life, we create luck all the time.

In everyday life we create luck, bad luck or good luck. We are creating luck all the time but because of not having the understanding that we create luck all the time, it doesn't happen. There is incredible freedom to create good luck all the time. Even though there is incredible freedom, our lack of understanding what luck is, and that it comes from our own mind, we don't watch the mind, our attitude in the daily life. We don't guard the mind, keeping it in virtue, free from disturbing thought, from nonvirtue. This doesn't happen. Even though there is great freedom where we can create good luck all the time with our own mind, because of the lack of understanding Dharma, the lam-rim, particularly karma, continuously creating good luck doesn't happen. And we believe that luck is something that doesn't have cause. Luck is something inherent, luck is something inherently existent, that doesn't have causes and conditions, something existing from its own side.

ACTIONS WITHOUT A LAM-RIM MOTIVATION BECOME THE CAUSE OF SUFFERING

After Lama Tsongkhapa says, "It's a treasury of merit containing the two types of merit," he continues,

By recognizing this the hero, the heroes, the Buddha's sons
Should keep, this sublime thought as their heart practice.
I, the yogi, practiced this way.
I request you who are seeking the liberation also to practice this way.

As Tara advised a great lama from Sera Je, by practicing bodhicitta by practices such as tong-len, we accumulate extensive merit and due to this we can quickly actualize, realize emptiness.

For example, if we are not practicing the lam-rim, if our mind is not living in the lam-rim, with neither the renunciation of samsara nor bodhicitta and emptiness, that means our attitude to life is the self-cherishing thought. If there is no bodhicitta, that means the attitude of the life is ego, the self-cherishing thought, and ignorance and there is no practice of the right view, emptiness. Besides ego, the self-cherishing thought, the attitude of everyday life is ignorance, the concept of inherent existence. Then, since the attitude of everyday life is not renunciation, the attitude is attachment, particularly attachment to this life—not only attachment to future samsara but particularly attachment to this life.

We think like this now. Because we lack the practice of bodhicitta, our whole attitude to our everyday life is ego, the self-cherishing thought, and therefore no action, nothing, becomes the cause of enlightenment. Nothing becomes the cause of enlightenment except those who have refuge in the mind, who have faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. For those who have faith in the Buddha, there is the extra opportunity to create the cause of enlightenment, because by having faith in the Buddha, there is respect so they circumambulate, prostrate and make offerings, even to a statue of the Buddha, and every single one of these actions done towards even holy objects such as a statue of the Buddha becomes the cause of enlightenment. Even if the motivation is anger or attachment clinging to this life or ignorance, due to the power of the holy object these actions become the cause of enlightenment.

So for those who are Buddhist, who have faith in the Buddha, by doing these actions, like offering, prostrating, reflecting, circumambulating and so forth, towards even a statue of the

Buddha, even if the motivation is not pure, even if it's not virtue, not Dharma, the action still becomes the cause of enlightenment due to the power of the holy object. Otherwise there is no opportunity to accumulate merit, there is no opportunity for that action to become good karma or that action to become virtue, to be the cause of happiness.

Since the motivation is only ego, with no bodhicitta practice nothing becomes the cause of enlightenment. Since there is no practice of right view, mindfulness, no practice of mindfulness of emptiness or dependent arising or looking at appearances as hallucinations, there is no practice of mindfulness, nothing of this, the motivation is purely ignorance, the concept of inherent existent, so no action becomes the remedy to cut the root of samsara.

There is no renunciation. The attitude of everyday life has no renunciation, not living in the lam-rim, not even having renunciation to this life, the comfort and happiness of this life, and so no action becomes the cause of liberation from the whole of samsara, from the entire suffering and causes, karma and delusion. Not one single action in everyday life becomes the cause to achieve the ultimate happiness, liberation from the entire suffering of samsara and the cause, karma and delusion. There is not even the renunciation of this life, so the attitude of everyday life is only the attachment clinging to this life, and therefore no action becomes even Dharma, a virtuous, positive action. No action becomes a positive, virtuous one, the cause of happiness.

That means that starting from the moment we wake up in the morning, for the entire twenty-four hours of the day and night, our activity—walking, sitting, sleeping, talking, doing our job, all these things—nothing becomes the cause of happiness, nothing becomes Dharma. Nothing becomes virtue, therefore nothing becomes the cause of happiness.

That means how many hours we spend washing in the morning, every single activity that we do for one hour or two hours, all those one or two hours' actions—even washing—become only the cause of suffering. How many hours we spend getting dressed, how many hours we spend making up, fixing up the body, how many hours we spend in the bathroom, how many hours we spend taking refuge in the mirror [Rinpoche laughs] how many hours we spend sitting in this chair, by taking refuge in the the mirror, all those hours' activities completely become negative karma, only become the cause of suffering. Even the time when we are doing our job, eight hours, nine hours, how many hours we are doing our job, since the motivation, the attitude, for doing the job hasn't become even Dharma, the positive attitude or the free mind, the healthy mind, the mind detached from this life, but an attitude strongly clinging to the pleasure, comfort and enjoyment of this life—nothing else, just our own enjoyment and comfort of this life—even that time doing our job becomes pure nonvirtue, a pure nonvirtuous thought.

Nothing in those eight, nine or, ten hours of doing our job day and night becomes the cause of happiness because the motivation is not Dharma. Nothing becomes Dharma. The whole activity done with much exhaustion, with many hardships, having to bear heat and cold, tiredness and whatever, all these many hardships, all these activities become only the cause of suffering. Despite having to bear all these hardships, it only creates the cause of suffering. All these hardships we have to experience only create the cause of suffering, not to practice Dharma or not to purify negative karma, or not to create the happiness of future lives. Bearing all these hardships, heat and cold, hunger, thirst or exhaustion, all these things are not experienced to practice Dharma, to achieve happiness in future lives, to achieve liberation from samsara, to achieve enlightenment, they are not experienced for Dharma practice. As we are doing this course, taking the eight Mahayana precepts and so forth with a bodhicitta motivation, it's not like this. Doing all these various practices, always by reminding ourselves of the bodhicitta motivation, the purest motivation, it's not like that.

In one day, how many hours eating, how many drinking, how many hours sleeping, everything, every single action in that day becomes, in everyday life, without the lam-rim practice, without the Dharma attitude, every single action becomes only the cause of suffering. How many hours of sleep we have—eight hours, nine hours, ten hours—it doesn't matter how comfortable it is, it all becomes only the cause of suffering, that which results, which ripens in the aspect, the result of rebirth in the lower realms. .

In the same way, without the lam-rim practice, without the mind living in the lam-rim, how much wealth we have, how many material possessions we have, the *more* material possessions we have, there is that much more miserly attachment. How much wealth we have, how many material possessions we have, there is that much more attachment, miserliness or clinging. Depending on the amount of objects we have, we accumulate more negative karma. There is more miserliness or clinging, so there is more negative karma. Living without the lam-rim practice, the more wealth there is, the more negative karma there is.

Then, even when we go shopping, if we go shopping without the lam-rim practice, if we are motivated by the worldly mind, the nonvirtuous thought, just clinging to this life's comfort and happiness, going shopping becomes negative karma. Since this is the motivation for going the shopping, for every time we leave the house, for every action of driving a car or walking towards the shop, every single action becomes negative karma. Going there and coming back and besides that, when we do the shopping, buying the things, since the motivation is not Dharma, is only done with a worldly mind, with attachment clinging to this life, for the sake of comfort and happiness, this motivation is nonvirtue. Because of this, how many objects we buy, how many objects we decide to get, we actually get for ourselves, we accumulate negative karma, doing the nonvirtuous action of covertness from the ten nonvirtuous actions. We collect that many incidents of covertness, depending on how many material objects we decide to buy for our own comfort. There is not so much question for us, for that many items of shopping we have bought, each action of buying becomes negative karma, each action a separate act of covertness. That many nonvirtuous actions of covertness are basically because they are motivated by the thought of worldly dharma, attachment clinging to this life.

This is because there is the self-cherishing thought there inside the heart, like a king. This is the main one. Depending on that, then the attachment, clinging to this life, the worldly, nonvirtuous thought, the thought of worldly dharma, arises. And because of that then how many objects we decide to get, we buy or we collect, the actions all become that many incidents of covertness, of nonvirtue. From the ten nonvirtues, we collect that many actions of covertness.

So, without the lam-rim practice, when we come back home from shopping, we come back with a huge load of negative karma, of covertness, with huge piles of negative karma. This is the reality of how we live our life, what's happening in our life if we don't live our life with the lam-rim.

It's the same thing with maintaining our health, by juggling, running, jiggling [Rinpoche laughs] by running on the beach or in the city or the mountains. How many hours we go running, again if the motivation, is not lam-rim, if it's not even Dharma, if there is very strong ego, self-cherishing thought inside, if there is the attachment, clinging to this life's comfort and happiness, desiring to be healthy, the result is suffering. By strongly clinging this life's happiness, to comfort and happiness, the desire to be healthy, to not have sicknesses and so forth, the motivation is just a pure nonvirtuous thought, the thought of worldly dharma. Therefore, how many hours of running we do, by exercising the body we do not have some problems of the body, for the time

being, temporarily. At least, even if it becomes the condition for that, in reality all those actions, nothing become Dharma, which means nothing becomes the cause of happiness. Nothing becomes the cause of happiness beyond this life, nothing becomes the cause of liberation from samsara, nothing becomes the cause to achieve full enlightenment. It becomes the pure cause of the suffering. Each step we take, in all those hours running, becomes the pure cause of the suffering.

So all these, as Dromtönpa, Lama Atisha's translator in Tibet, who is the embodiment of the Compassionate Buddha, asked Atisha what the result of actions done with the motivation clinging to this life would be. Lama Atisha answered that the result of actions done with the attachment, clinging to this life, is rebirth in the hell, hungry ghost or animal realms.

SAYING THE TARA PRAYER WITH FOUR DIFFERENT MOTIVATIONS

As I often mention, as Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo explains, of four people reciting the Tara prayer, *The Praise to Twenty-one Taras*, one person who is reciting with a bodhicitta motivation. That person's action of reciting the Tara prayer becomes the cause of enlightenment. And a second person is reciting the Tara prayer with only the motivation to achieve liberation for himself, so that person's action of reciting the prayer does not become the cause of enlightenment but it becomes the cause to achieve liberation for himself. Then the next person, the third person is reciting the Tara prayer with the motivation to achieve the happiness of future lives. With only this motivation, that third person's action of reciting the Tara prayer does not become the cause of enlightenment, it does not become the cause to achieve liberation for himself, ultimate happiness, it only becomes the cause to achieve the happiness of future lives. The fourth person is reciting the Tara prayer with the motivation of worldly dharma, the thought clinging to this life, the motivation seeking only the happiness this life. This fourth person's action of reciting the Tara prayer does not become the cause of enlightenment, it does not become the cause to achieve liberation for himself, it does not even become the cause to achieve the happiness of future lives. That fourth person's action reciting the Tara prayer does not even become Dharma because the motivation is not Dharma. Because the motivation is not Dharma, the action is nonvirtue.

Even by reciting a mantra or Tara prayers, due to the power, due to the Buddha's true word, the blessings, even if it becomes a healing and we recover from our disease or our lifespan is extended, or our career or something in our live becomes successful, even if the recitation can help in these things, that doesn't mean our action of reciting prayer itself becomes Dharma. For example, person takes medicine with a pure nonvirtuous thought, with no other thought except the evil thought of worldly dharma, seeking, clinging only to the happiness of this life. With this pure nonvirtuous attitude, since it is the right medicine, it can cure the illness. Even if the motivation is nonvirtuous, since it is the right medicine, it can still heal the disease, but that doesn't mean the person's action of taking the medicine becomes the cause of happiness, virtue. The action itself becomes the cause of suffering, since the motivation is nonvirtuous.

Without the lam-rim, without living in the lam-rim practice in everyday life, without the practice of three principal aspects of the path, neither bodhicitta nor emptiness, nor even renunciation, life becomes totally nonvirtuous. Besides the problems we face, we can't find any satisfaction in what we do, in work, in relationships, in our life. If we look at the attitude we have in our whole life, in reality, that worldly attitude becomes an obstacle to happiness because it is nonvirtuous. Everything we do constantly interferes with our own temporary and ultimate happiness. Like a waterfall, we constantly create only the cause of suffering.

Therefore, without the lam-rim practice, even if we become a millionaire, even if we become the richest person in the world, our life is only suffering. Whatever class, whatever society we live in, without the lam-rim, even when we are at the beach it's suffering, it's a totally suffering life. Even if we are in a five-star hotel or a *ten*-star hotel, life is totally suffering. No matter who the person is, if there is no lam-rim, if that person doesn't practice lam-rim, life is always suffering, not only having to experience sickness and problems that are the results of past karma, but constantly creating the cause of future suffering. Whether he lives alone or with other people, the reality is like this.

EMPTINESS: SHOPPING WITH EMPTINESS

For example, when we go shopping, we can do the shopping with the mindfulness of emptiness, that the I is nothing else except what is merely labeled by the mind, therefore the I is empty. Therefore the I is empty of this real one, of existing from its own side. Similarly, the action of shopping is empty, the action is also what is merely labeled by our mind. Therefore our own action is also empty.

The object we are buying is also merely labeled by the mind. In our own perception, even though it appears *not* merely labeled by the mind, in reality that it is not true, it's a hallucination, it's an object to be refuted, it's a hallucination, it's empty. The buyer is empty, the action of buying is empty, the object is empty, so the whole thing is empty.

When shopping, we should either practice mindfulness or emptiness, looking at everything as empty or merely labeled by the mind. The practice of mindfulness is subtle dependent arising. The I that is doing the action of buying—the mind has made up the label “I” by relating to the aggregates. Relating to the aggregates, the mind just made up the label “I”. Then, the same thing with the action of buying. The aggregates' action of paying the money, because of that, the mind just made up the label “buying”. Then in the same way, whatever object one we are buying, by relating to the base our own mind simply made up the label “this and that”, the object.

We can practice the mindfulness of how all these things are merely labeled by the mind. With this awareness we then doing the shopping. The other very effective meditation we can do, as I mentioned some days ago, is to practice mindfulness, the very intention of the hallucination that which are hallucinations, especially in the break time—the I, the action, the object, everything, the six sense objects. We look at the I who is doing shopping, appearing not merely labeled by the mind, *that's* the hallucination. The action of buying appears our own perception as not merely labeled by the mind, and object we are buying appears to our own perception as an object not merely labeled by the mind. Again, by examining, by watching the I, the action, the object, the place, the people in the shop, the sellers, the whole thing—even though everything exists as merely labeled by the mind, in our own perception, all these things appear as not merely labeled by the mind, as something real from their own side. So, the practice of mindfulness is to always look at all these appearances as hallucinations.

THE BASE AND THE LABEL

From beginningless samsara, from the beginninglessness of our own rebirth, up to now, why we have been suffering, why we have got stuck in samsara, why we have had to experience the oceans of samsaric suffering, and why it has still not ended, that is because of this. That's the short version! I usually mention this a little bit. It is similar to what I mentioned some days ago.

Before the child is born, the parents already have an idea of the name. They have already decided the name of the child, they have already they labeled the child, like “Tony” or something like that, even before there is a base, the aggregates, the association of the body and mind. There is still no base, but their minds have already labeled the child; they have already decided the name, Tony. Their minds have already labeled the child at that time, even though Tony doesn’t yet exist. Their minds have already labeled “Tony” but at that time there are no aggregates. There is no base. Tony doesn’t exist at that time. And even when the aggregates are actualized, even when the base is there. if there is no mind labeling “Tony” Tony doesn’t exist. Even though there is the base, the aggregates, even though the aggregates, the association of body and mind, exist, if there is no it is the mind labeling “Tony” again Tony doesn’t exist.

So when does Tony come in existence? There is the base, the aggregates, and relating to the aggregates the mind makes up the label “Tony,” the parents’ minds or whoever make up the label “Tony”. The mind of the parents or whoever make up the label “Tony,” deciding on that. They generate the concept, they create the concept; it’s his name. The mind makes up the label “Tony,” deciding that label. In other words, the mind simply makes up the label and we believe in that.

Now you can see, just from this examination, how it’s possible there is Tony. Just from this you can get some idea how the mind makes up the label “Tony” and believe in that. Now you can see, you have some idea how it’s impossible that there is a Tony on the aggregates, there is a Tony there, there is a Tony there on the aggregates, on this association of body and mind. Even just from this analysis you can see how it’s impossible. There is no way is that Tony is there on the aggregates, on the base. Tony doesn’t exist at all on the aggregates, on the base; there is nothing there. “There” means on the aggregates, on the base. Just from this analysis, you can see that it’s just the mind making it up. Even from this idea, there is no Tony there on the aggregates. It *looks* like there’s a Tony there in the mind. It looks like that; it’s not exactly that but it looks like that, it looks like Tony is in the mind. It looks like that, but it’s not exactly that, it’s not exactly in the mind. When we think this way, it looks like Tony is in the mind. Like many people say, “Oh everything is in the mind.”

It is not saying that the object is in the mind. It is not saying that the object is in the mind but what it’s talking about is to do with the concept. It is to do with the concept, with what kind of concept we made up, what kind of idea we made up. Just from this analysis, it’s clear nothing is there. Tony is not there, on these aggregates, on the base. There is no Tony there.

Here, we are talking about the merely-labeled Tony. Even the merely-labeled Tony is not there. The Tony that exists is the merely-labeled one. The Tony that is appearing not merely labeled by mind is what doesn’t exist. The Tony that is merely labeled, *that* is what exists. But even this, even this is not there. Even the merely-labeled Tony, the Tony that exists, is not there, is not on the aggregates, is not on the base.

The Tony that exists, the merely labeled-one, even that is not there. Therefore, if we look for even the merely-labeled Tony on these aggregates we cannot find it anywhere. We cannot find it anywhere. Nowhere we can find it when look for it. That proves it’s not there. Even the merely-labeled Tony doesn’t exist on these aggregates.

Therefore, how is it possible that the Tony that is *not* merely labeled by the mind could exist on these aggregates? In other words, the real Tony, the real Tony *not* merely labeled by the mind, in the sense of existing from its own side. How is it possible? First of all, we went through the evolution of how Tony came in existence, how the mind just made up the idea, the concept, the

mind just made up the label and then believed in that. First we went through this, so it's clear how Tony came in existence.

Now, even this merely-labeled one, if we look for it on these aggregates we cannot find anywhere. There is no way that this exists, that it is there, that it exists on the aggregates. This completely contradictory to the reality of how Tony came into existence, completely the opposite to reality. This Tony appearing this way is totally a hallucination, totally empty.

If we search for this on the aggregates, when we do not examine it, it looks like it's there but but the minute we start examining it, cannot find it on these aggregates. So when we examine whether this real Tony really exists appearing from above the aggregates, it cannot be found anywhere, neither on these aggregates nor separate from them. Neither on these aggregates nor anywhere. It's a total hallucination, empty, it doesn't exist. This totally hallucination, empty, totally hallucination, empty, doesn't exist right there, right on that base. This is the hallucination; it is false because it is contradictory to reality, its appearance is contradictory to reality. Therefore this appearance is false.

EMPTINESS: WE SEE THINGS AS TRULY EXISTING DUE TO PAST IMPRINTS

But now, in the case of the merely-labeled Tony, it doesn't exist on the base, on the aggregates. We can't find it at all but where there is a base there is Tony. There is no Tony on the aggregates, on the base but where there are the aggregates there is Tony. The house, the room at the place where there are aggregates, where there are the aggregates there is Tony. What is that Tony? What is that Tony? That Tony is nothing except what is merely labeled by the mind. It's nothing except what is merely labeled by the mind.

So now you can see that after all this analysis in the reality what Tony is is extremely subtle, it's extremely subtle. Tony has never existed in the way we have believed Tony to exist. It's never been that Tony. That Tony doesn't exist. The way we have believed, apprehended Tony so far, *that* doesn't exist at all. That can't be found anywhere. After all this analysis, what Tony is, is completely something else. That is extremely subtle, extremely subtle. It's not that it doesn't exist but it's *like* it doesn't exist. The way Tony exists, what Tony is, is extremely subtle. It is not that it doesn't exist at all but it's *like* it doesn't exist.

The border between existing Tony and not-existing Tony, the borderline is so fine, it's like a knife edge, it is the sharpness of a blade. It's so fine. The borderline of existing Tony and not-existing Tony is so extremely subtle. So, it's extremely easy to fall into nihilism.

Aryadeva in the teachings explains that the heavy karma of fall into nihilism and believing nothing exists is as heavy or heavier—I'm not sure which—as having killed one hundred million human beings, something like that. In the *Four Hundred Stanzas*, the commentary by Aryadeva, it says if you fall in nihilism believing nothing exists it's a very heavy negative karma, as heavy or heavier—I am not sure which—as having killed one hundred million human beings.

What Tony is and how Tony exists is so subtle. It's not that it doesn't exist but it's *like* it doesn't exist. Like this, like this, like this... To make it short anyway, [Rinpoche laughs] I, action, object, all phenomena, all the rest of the phenomena, in reality it's like this, like how Tony is. What Tony is, is exactly same, like this is so subtle, empty of existing from their own side, not space but *like* space.

So, without using another example, just to finish with this one, with Tony, even though it's merely labeled by our own mind, we're not aware that it is merely labeled by our own mind. That is one thing. What this Tony is or what is merely labeled by the mind and why? We ask questions. We ask questions, why it has to appear something else, why it has to appear to us as not merely labeled by the mind. Why it appears as something real, existing from its own side, we ask why. Why it doesn't appear to us according to its reality, as merely labeled by mind, why?

It's because of the imprint left on our own mental continuum by past ignorance, by the past ignorance of the concept of inherent existence. The imprint that is left on the mental continuum by past ignorance, the concept of inherent existence, this imprint is projected onto the object, it decorates the object right after we perceive the Tony that is merely labeled by the mind and we believe in that. We believe in the imprint left on our own mental continuum by past ignorance, the projection of, the decoration of inherent existence on top of the merely-labeled Tony, on the mere name, Tony. The imprint left by ignorance projects the hallucination of inherent existence onto the merely-labeled Tony, the mere name.

Therefore, you see, after Tony is merely labeled by the mind, he appears to us completely opposite to the reality, the hallucination, as real, existing from its own side and not merely labeled by mind.

The conclusion is this. This is the biggest problem, the biggest mistake that we are making. Our biggest mistake is that we let our mind believe this is true, we let our mind apprehend that this is true. At that time we're creating the ignorance, not seeing the reality of Tony, not understanding the reality of Tony. Instead we are creating the ignorance, the concept of inherent existence. We let our mind apprehend that this is true. This is obscures, hinders, block us from seeing the ultimate nature of Tony, that how Tony existing is merely labeled by the mind, that Tony is empty of existing from his own side. We are blocked from seeing this. So now, this becomes the basis of delusion. We let our mind to believe it is true, we apprehend it as true. Instead of letting our mind apprehend this is a hallucination, we let our mind apprehend that which is not true as true.

This becomes the basis for anger to arise, and attachment and all the other delusions. This concept of an inherently-existent Tony, which doesn't exist in reality, becomes the basis, like opening a door for all the delusions. In other words, you can see now how the whole thing doesn't make sense. This whole thing we let our mind to believe is true but which is not true, on the basis of that, all the delusions arise, pride arises, jealousy arises, anger arises, attachment arises, all these things, all these expectations, all these wrong concepts arise on top of this. All these things don't make sense.

Just like this, the conclusion is that the I and all the rest of the phenomena, everything is merely labeled by the mind but the imprint left on the mental continuum by the ignorance projects, decorates—like we decorate a floor or a table by covering it with a the carpet on cover, like this brocade on the table—ignorance decorates inherent existence onto the merely-labeled I and all existence and so forth. We then let our mind believe in this decorated, projected hallucination of inherent existence, apprehending what is not true as true.

This is what we have been doing from beginningless rebirths; this is how we have let our mind believe things, how we use our mind, how we have been apprehending all phenomena, including the I, from beginningless rebirths until now. Because of this concept, apprehending that all these are true, including the I, that's why we have been experiencing the suffering of samsara from beginningless rebirths until now. It is because of instead of looking at what is a hallucination as a

hallucination, we let our mind apprehend it as true; we look at it as true. This is the basis of all the problems, all the sufferings of samsara. As long as we continue, as long as we don't change this, as long as we don't eliminate this, then the suffering of samsara becomes endless—death and rebirth and so forth—all the suffering becomes endless. This makes it endless, endless delusion and karma, endless suffering, endless samsara.

Therefore, we need to change. The most important practice, the most important meditation is, instead of letting our mind apprehend all these are true, that all these appear not merely labeled by mind true, we let our mind apprehend the opposite, that all these are hallucinations. We look at all these appearances as hallucinations. With this way of looking at things there is liberation, then there is the possibility to achieve liberation, the cessation of the entire suffering and its causes. When we look this way, when we let our own mind apprehend that all these are hallucinations, the understanding that comes in our own heart is emptiness; the meaning is emptiness, that all these are empty.

What we have to become familiar with, what we have to train our mind in, the most important meditation in everyday life is this one, to change the way we look at things, to let our mind look at everything, to apprehend everything as the opposite [to how they appear to us at present]. It is to looking at what is a hallucination as a hallucination. That itself becomes a meditation on emptiness. That leads straight into emptiness. By looking at all these hallucinations, that which are hallucinations, the perceptions, all these things the way appear not merely labeled by mind in our own view, this way it becomes a meditation on emptiness, bringing it straight into emptiness, leading us to make us see things as empty, seeing phenomena that are in reality empty as empty. Again, this way of thinking is the most important meditation. We just need to change the way of looking at the object, then it becomes a meditation on emptiness.

Normally, I think when we look at an object, what we don't think about is its emptiness. When we don't think about its emptiness what we see is the hallucination and when we see the hallucination usually we don't do any Dharma practice. What we normally do is worldly because we don't see the object as empty. Sometimes we think this way. It is extremely good to see how this is how problems arise and when we have problems in this life—relationship problems, times where there is gain or loss, all the ups and downs of life—when we experience these things, we can apply the emptiness meditation looking at life like this, like a hallucination. It becomes very effective, like an atomic bomb, immediately cutting away the problem.

Maybe I'll give more details tomorrow. Maybe I can mention a few more things.

These few words on emptiness are just some imitation. I am able to express them by the kindness of my virtuous friends, including my virtuous friend who taught me the alphabet, who let me recite many times the short text on the *Perfection of Wisdom*, the short one before the *Heart Sutra*. In my childhood, my alphabet teacher made me recite it many times for a long time. So from that, there may be some imprint left on the mind. Of course, to realize emptiness takes many lifetimes. It is said in the Lama 'Tsongkhapa's teachings on emptiness, this is Lama 'Tsongkhapa's expression in *The Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, if we have some faith that it is true, and of course we need to realize a lot of merit, and spend many lifetimes studying and accumulating merit, then maybe we can actualize it.

I'll stop here.

[Chanting]

Dedicate the merits may I generate bodhicitta in my own mind and in the mind of all sentient beings.

[Chanting]

Lecture Six: December 4, 1994

MEDICINE BUDDHA: WHY THE PRACTICE IS SO POWERFUL

We will do the meditation, the recitation of the Medicine Buddha, the granting of the blessing, the holy body, the holy speech and the holy mind of the Medicine Buddha.

The Medicine Buddha practice is not only for healing disease, not only for health. It is also very powerful for success. This experience is known doing the meditation of the Medicine Buddha, making prostrations, making offerings to the Medicine Buddha, by doing the meditation practice, the puja of the Medicine Buddha doing seven limb practice, the mandala offering, making requests and these things. There is a long version that is extremely beautiful, very inspiring, containing the purpose.

There are seven Medicine Buddhas, seven different aspects. Then, including Guru Shakyamuni Buddha that makes eight. This long version and the middle-length version both contain each of the Medicine Buddhas, with their particular main function, saving, protecting sentient beings from the different problems of life. The middle-length version, *The Wish-fulfilling Jewel*, is available in English, translated by an American student, called David Molk. I thought that it is very good and very important to do practices such as this more extensive prayer in places like Land of Medicine Buddha in America, places where a lot of activities are done for healing, for health, where lot of various activities are done, there is various educational courses for health besides time-to-time also lam-rim and other teachings. Reading the Medicine Buddha Sutra brings unbelievable benefits, doing, reciting or meditating on the Medicine Buddha, reciting the mantra, doing the recitation, the meditation on the Medicine Buddha. There are incredible benefits reading sutras and doing things like this, at least once a month, either the extensive or the middle-length version of the practice. The healing method, the healing activities to benefit others becomes more effective, more meaningful and it also become great purification. For anyone who participates, who does this practice, it becomes great purification and accumulates extensive merits. It helps to bring great success and to develop the mind on the path to enlightenment, and for the extensive service for the teaching of Buddha, for sentient beings, to be successful. So it is very powerful.

It's a very powerful practice for somebody to do for a living person and also even for those who have passed away. For both, it's extremely powerful. And for somebody who has already died or even somebody who has already been born in the lower realm, to purify those heavy negative karmas and to change, to receive the body of the happy migratory being, to receive a good rebirth.

This Medicine Buddha puja has a long version, a middle version even a very short version of the practice that is available in English, that I translated so many years ago in a small black book. The essence of the shortest Medicine Buddha meditation, the essence of that meditation comes during the initiation, the same visualization, the main body, visualizing the seven Medicine Buddhas above our own crown, then making requests to each Buddha, then nectar emitting, purifying us. Then after the purification each Buddha absorbs into the next one, and then that absorbs into the next one, and so on, like that. Using the visualization that will come during the initiation, it is very common that somebody who has very severe disease, by doing this Medicine

Buddha puja that person gets quickly recovered, gets well or that somebody who is going through a lot of pain or something, that ends quickly. Or somebody who is having a very difficult death easily and quickly passes away. These things have been common experiences.

Why it is so powerful to bringing success? It's because in the past the Medicine Buddhas made so much prayers for us sentient beings to be actualized in the degenerated time. Because of this that not only for healing but if we always do the meditation, if we recite the prayer to the Medicine Buddhas, it is also very powerful for success, for those who are living and those who are dying or dead. It is mentioned in the sutra of the Medicine Buddha, the Guru of Medicine, the Beams of Lapis Lazuli, the Buddha asked Kungawo [Ananda], the attendant, the one who serves, who always is with Buddha, "Do you believe what is expressed about the qualities of this tathagata?" Tathagata here refers to the Medicine Buddha. "Do you have faith, do you believe?" Then Kungawo replied to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha "Of the Dharma taught by Buddha, I don't have two points of mind," meaning he had no doubts. Why? The tathagatas means the buddhas, the conduct of the holy body, holy speech and holy mind is always pure, without mistakes. It's always completely pure, without any mistakes, any stains.

Then the Buddha replied to Kungawo, "Any sentient being whoever hears this tathagata's name in the ear, there is no opportunity at all to be born in the lower realm." What's the Buddha is saying in his explanation to Kungawo is whoever hears the Medicine Buddha's name in the ear will never get reborn in the lower realm: in hell, the hungry ghost realm or the animal realm. Like the benefits of reciting Chenrezig's, the Compassionate Buddha's, mantra, the Medicine Buddha mantra has also benefits like that.

THE MEDICINE BUDDHA: THE POWER OF THE MANTRA

By reciting the Medicine Buddha mantra you blow over sand grains, the body powder. The reason I mention the body powder is that I thought it's easier to put on. If it's sand sprinkled over the body, maybe people don't find it comfortable to sprinkle sand over the face, on the head. [Rinpoche laughs] To sprinkle grains of sand on the head or on the face, maybe people don't find it comfortable. I keep some black sesame seeds and some white powder. By doing various mantras, including Medicine Buddha, Namgyalma, the very long mantra and those powerful buddhas' mantras, by reciting them and then blowing over these substances, by reciting a number of those mantras, if somebody is dying, even if you can't go to the home or the hospital or whatever, the material that is blessed with those powerful mantras can be send to somebody who is dying or somebody who is already dead, to put over the body for purification.

The Medicine Buddha mantra is similar to the Compassionate Buddha mantra, OM MANI PADME HUM in having unbelievable benefits. By reciting, by blowing over the water, sand grains or powder, whatever then you sprinkle over the animal body or human body, even very old bones of somebody who died a long time ago, if you recite, you sprinkle those substances blessed with this mantra, wherever the consciousness is, because there was a connection before between the consciousness and this body, it can purify the consciousness. As there was relation before, it can affect it, to purify the sentient being, to have a good rebirth.

Even without substances, reciting a mala of this mantra or whatever—of course more is better—and blowing directly on the body, whether it's human body or animal, has incredible power to purify their negative karma, the cause of the lower realm.

Recently, I thought quite a few times that insects—flies, worms and so forth—that we happen to have crushed by stepping on, those dying or dead ones, by reciting such this powerful mantra,

like the Compassionate Buddha or the Medicine Buddha like this, there is so much benefit explained, it becomes great purification for that sentient being, purifying the negative karma, the cause of the lower realms. For example, these insects or animals to receive a deva or human body, to receive a good rebirth, before taking a human or deva rebirth, in the previous life when he was dying, there has to be some good condition ripening that causes him to have good rebirth in the next life, to be able to receive a body of happy migratory being, a deva or a human being. There should be some condition in the previous life during the death time.

Since things are dependent arisings, these things depend on causes and conditions. Before the result happens it has to have causes and conditions, which are the reasons, which become the reason to reincarnate, to receive the body of the happy migratory being.

It looks like so simple. One way it looks like hard to believe, it's so simple to find because just reciting a mantra, blowing on them and from that they are able to find good rebirth. One way it looks so simple, so easy, but if you think the power of mantra comes from the inconceivable qualities and powers of the Buddha, the power that the Buddha has, the power of compassion, how the holy mind is completely trained in compassion embracing all sentient beings without exception, without leaving even one from the numberless sentient beings. The Buddha has hundreds of thousands of times more compassion towards us and each sentient being than we have for ourselves. And similarly, the Buddha has hundreds of thousands of times more love towards us that we have for ourselves. Due to all these limitless, unimaginable qualities and powers that the Buddha has, this the mantra has such a powerful effect.

That power of the mantra also comes from the power of the person's mind who recites the mantra. This incredible effect, this benefit, they receive comes from the power of the mantra, combined with the power of that person's mind who recites it. Of course, if the person has more realizations, there is more power in whatever activity he does for other sentient beings, more benefit and greater purification. Whatever he does is more meaningful for other sentient beings. However, even though there may be no actual realization, the power of reciting the mantra depends on how much compassion and love that person has towards that sentient being and also how much devotion that person has, devotion in the mantra, to the Triple Gem, the Lama, the method, the instruction, the mantra given by the Lama, the spiritual master who reveals the method, who taught the method, the instruction—having devotion in all that.

How much effect the mantra can have depends on power of mantra, but it is also connected with the person who recites the mantra, that person's mind. Whether it is healing or even praying for others, doing pujas, doing a meditation practice for others to have success or a good rebirth, even praying for others' benefits, such as making rain or stopping danger such as floods and so forth—the various activities to do for the benefit of other sentient beings, even just praying—the best mind to have is bodhicitta. The perfectly qualified mind is having the bodhicitta realization, and also the wisdom realizing emptiness. Those who have these realizations are the best; they are the best ones to serve others, to do service for other sentient beings, without confusion, without problems, by having the realizations of the three principal aspects of the path. The more realization we have, there are not only more skills but also more wisdom, so when we are engaged, when we are involved in benefiting others, we can benefit others without problems. We can benefit others without problems to them and without problems to ourselves.

When there is a limitation in the method, in the skills we have, when there is limitation in the method and in wisdom, even if we are trying to help others many problems arise along with that. Especially when compassion, loving kindness is not there, when the thought of benefiting others, the sincere attitude is not there, trying to do something for others brings a lot of

problems, a lot of disharmony. Because of the selfish attitude we find we meet so problems without actually helping others.

Having these realizations, however, everything works. There is so much power, even doing those different practices, meditations, pujas, whatever, all these various activities, to benefit other sentient beings, to solve other sentient beings' problems, healing and so forth.

Then, even if we don't have these realizations, the other thing is if we are living in pure morality. As much as we are able to live a pure life, even if there is no realization of bodhicitta or the wisdom realize emptiness, when we attempt to benefit other beings, such as with healing, it will be successful

The last qualification is having faith in the instructions given by the Lama. That involves having faith to the Lama who reveals the method to us. The stronger the faith we have, the stronger there is in the method of healing, reciting the mantra or whatever. By having more devotion in the instructions, in the method, we receive that much power; the method becomes that much more powerful.

There is a story told by His Holiness Song Rinpoche, one of my gurus, from whom I have received many initiations and teachings, whose knowledge and qualities are limitless, like the ancient, fully-distinguished pandits, those great yogis.

His Holiness Song Rinpoche told the story of a Tibetan man who went to receive teachings from a lama. This person has a very big nose with lots of pockmarks, like the rough malas called raksha that the Indian sadhus wore. The beads weren't smooth very rough, with lots of bumps, so this kind of quality is called raksha.

Maybe the lama didn't have time to give teaching or whatever, but anyway when the man came to request the teaching, the lama told him, "Your nose is like a raksha." The other person believed that he had received the teaching. [Rinpoche laughs] After the lama said that, he thought he had received the mantra and so he kept reciting, "Your nose is like a raksha, your nose is like a raksha" over and over again. Then he became a great healer and he was able to cure many people. He cured many people from sicknesses by reciting this "Your nose is like a raksha" mantra. [Rinpoche laughs] So he became very famous, he became very famous healer.

After some time, I don't know, the lama had some problem with his throat, some infection, so his attendant told him there was a great healer in the area, a great healer in the area who was able to cure many people. So the lama has him come and when he was there, he recited, "Your nose is like a raksha." [Rinpoche laughs] Then the lama burst into laughter. He laughed and laughed. Then I think the infection or pus came out and he recovered. I think the lama remembered what he told that person in the past about his nose being like a raksha, and this is what the man recited.

Probably, according to Western science, it's very difficult to believe that by reciting "Your nose is like a raksha" you are able to cure a disease. But here, this is not according to Western science but to the logical reasoning or reality; this is science according to reality, science according to how phenomena function, being dependent arisings, by depending on causes and conditions. According to science, the science according to reality, that power comes from the mind, not so much the words themselves. How that person was able to cure many people and become a very famous healer was through the power of his mind, his faith, having a hundred percent faith that he had received the teaching, the mantra from the lama.

There were so many benefits, so many people's disease, sickness were healed due to that person's faith, his devotion. This came from the power of that person's mind. That is according to the science according to reality.

Recently, I thought that even reciting these powerful mantras to dead and dying insects and animals would definitely become conditions for them to have a good rebirth but there has to be some positive condition at the time of death for them in order to have good rebirth in the next life. The conditions that can happen are such as this. If you think that not every sentient being, every insect has the karma to have somebody recite the mantra and blow over their body so they can receive a good rebirth. For them to meet such conditions that while they are dying or after they are dead somebody prays for them and recites the mantra while blowing over their body, that is extremely rare. Think of the number of animals, worm, insects, sentient beings who die all the time and the number who have such a condition, somebody reciting a mantra for them, it is extremely rare. So you can understand from that point of view, it can definitely help them have a good rebirth, by purifying their karma.

So anyway, the Medicine Buddha meditation, at least this short meditation, which will come during the initiation, it's very good not only to pray for our own success or healing but also to use to help others. And especially it is excellent, one of the best things, one of the most effective things to do for a sentient being who is dying or dead, whether it's an animal or human being. One of the most effective things to do is the short meditation, where you visualize the seven Medicine Buddhas on the crown of that animal or that human being who is dying or who is dead, then you do the purification and make the request. The specific purpose [is to help] that particular sentient being who died or who is dying, and the particular request is that that being immediately reincarnates into the pure land of a buddha, such as Amitabha Buddha's pure land, especially those pure lands where you never return to samsara, you don't reincarnate into samsara, being under the control of karma and delusion, especially those pure lands. By directly receiving the teachings from the buddha of that pure land you actualize the complete tantra path there and become enlightened. Or to receive a perfect human body, and then from a young age to be able to meet the perfectly qualified Mahayana virtuous friend and be able to live in pure morality, and complete path. By receiving only a perfect human body, life to life, in this way, you then go on to achieve enlightenment soon.

Making this request to the Medicine Buddha, you think that he accepts the request and nectar flows from the heart of the Medicine Buddha from whom you are requesting, purifying this sentient being's negative karma. After that it absorbs to next Medicine Buddha. And so on like that.

So, the first thing is to do this practice. It is very effective.

THE MEDICINE BUDDHA INITIATION

Then after this, if you know how to do it you can do the special method of transferring the other sentient being's consciousness into the pure land of a buddha. If you have received the practice, if you have done the retreat and received the meditation to transfer your own consciousness into the pure land of that deity who lives there. There are different aspects of buddhas who have their own pure land to bring sentient beings quick way to achieve enlightenment. Kalachakra has Shambhala pure land; Amitabha has the pure blissful realm; then Tara has what's called *Yu lo gobi shingam* and Medicine Buddha also a pure land. The Highest Yoga Tantra deities, like Vajrayogini or Heruka, have pure lands.

If you have received this meditation technique, first you need to know that you are going to die, that now is the time to die, and you can't do anything to postpone life. There is nothing you can do; now it's time to die. You have tried everything to prolong the life but the signs of death constantly happen, which means now it's time to die, to leave, to prepare for death, rather than preparing for living.

If that's so there is a practice called *po-wa*, transferring the consciousness to pure land. If you have done a retreat of the practice received from a lama, and you are already well trained in this, with the signs of achievement then you use this at the right time where it does not become dangerous; you don't receive the negative karma of killing the deity.

At the right time you can use this to guide yourself, even if there are no other people, there is no lama to guide you, to do *po-wa* for you, or other people to do *po-wa* for you, to transfer, to guide your consciousness to the pure land. Even if there are no other Dharma friends to help you at that time, you are able to guide yourself at the time of death to reincarnate in that particular deity's pure land where you can practice tantra. Some of those pure lands there is the opportunity to practice tantra.

There are many other ordinary pure lands where there are unbelievable sense enjoyments. Then after being there an incredible length of time, when that karma is finished, you reincarnate in a place like the deva realm. From that you can again reincarnate, even in the lower realms. There are ordinary pure lands like that.

However, this method of transferring the consciousness to the pure land, by having done the retreat well, with the signs of achievement, you can use this method to do service for other sentient beings, those dead people, dead animals, not only to protect from the lower realms but by guiding the consciousness into the special pure lands where there is opportunity to practice tantra and in this way they become enlightened quickly.

With this practice, you can first pray to the Medicine Buddha, doing the meditation, then after that you can do *po-wa* and any other prayers and it becomes very powerful. It makes it very powerful; there is more success with the *po-wa* or whatever prayer you are doing, after having done the Medicine Buddha practice, the prayer to Medicine Buddha.

This method, this practice is extremely needed by people who want to do service for others, who want to help dying people, who want to do hospice work. It is needed to help yourself and especially to help others, to successfully do the work during those times when others are dying.

To do this Medicine Buddha practice, you must keep granting the blessing of this Medicine Buddha, the permission to practice, to meditate. There are graduated activities to be done by the lama and there are graduated activities to be done by the disciple. Doing the sadhana, then doing the self-generation, those parts of the practice, then the front generation and so forth. Then there are graduated activities to be done from the side of the disciple, washing—cleaning the mouth—then prostration and distributing the flowers. There are preliminaries like this to be done from the side of the disciple.

Then giving tormas to the interferers who interfere to grant to receive this Medicine Buddha initiation or this blessing. You can meditate that generating strong compassion towards other sentient beings is the purpose of taking the initiation or meditating on emptiness.

[Rinpoche Chants]

From the part of the graduated activity to do from the side of the disciple, the next one is here. Since this practice is Mahayana secret mantra, Vajrayana, it involves visualizing the lama who grants the initiation, not only the essence but also in the aspect of the Medicine Buddha. Then offer mandala, your own body, speech and mind, all the merits, everything, by transforming them into various offerings filling the whole sky, then decorating the whole entire universe. Then make offering and start cleaning.

[Rinpoche Chants]

WITH THE PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH WE CAN ACHIEVE THE THREE GREAT MEANINGS

At this time, we have received the three extremely rare qualities: we have the perfect human body, this precious human body qualified with eight freedoms and ten richnesses; we have met the virtuous friend who reveals the unmistakable path to liberation and full enlightenment; and we have met the Buddhadharma.

This perfect human body, qualified with the eighteen qualities, is so unbelievably precious. With this we can achieve the three great meanings. We can attain any happiness in future lives and even temporal happiness. We can attain the body of happy migratory being, a deva or a human body, and even be born in a pure land of a buddha. In the next life, we can achieve the perfect human body, the precious human body, again, having the eight ripened aspect qualities to be able to complete the Dharma practice, to be able to complete the path, to be able to do extensive benefit for sentient beings. We can even achieve these things and also the perfect body having the four wheels of the supreme vehicle, the Mahayana. If we wish to achieve this, we can even achieve this in next life.

We can achieve whatever happiness we wish in the future life. Then ultimate happiness, liberation, full enlightenment, we can achieve these. We can achieve these things even in each second, with this perfect human body. Whatever we wish we can achieve, we can create the cause. We can achieve these things by creating the cause, even in each second, in our daily life with this perfect human body. Even without talking about a day, we can achieve these things by creating the cause each hour, each minute, even each second.

With this perfect human body, we can achieve the three great meanings, therefore we *must* practice the Dharma. Since what we wish is happiness and what we don't wish is suffering, since that is the desire, and since no happiness comes from nonvirtue—only suffering comes from nonvirtue—and since happiness only comes from virtue, from good karma, the positive virtuous intention, therefore we must create the inner cause, which is our own mind, which is Dharma. Therefore, we *must* practice Dharma.

This perfect human body, which is highly meaningful, we cannot find again and again, since it depends on the cause, practicing morality, and even *that* is pure morality, and charity, and then creating the merit, which makes us join the result, the good rebirth. Especially practicing morality, the main cause of the rebirth of the happy migratory being, since this is extremely difficult even to accept, beside practicing it, living in it, even to accept it is difficult, so therefore there are so many obstacles to practice this purely. Because there are many obstacles in the mind, from the inside and from outside, therefore it is so difficult to be able to practice purely. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to find such a precious human body again. We have this now

just this one time. This is just the once. Therefore think, “I must practice Dharma in this life. I must practice Dharma in this life, in this body; I must achieve these things in this body. What is called liberation and enlightenment must be achieved in this body.”

Not only that, death will definitely happen but the actual time when it will happen is uncertain. It can happen at any time. Death can come at any time; it can occur to me at any time. In any minute it can happen. Therefore think, “I *must* practice Dharma, and not *just* that I must practice Dharma in this body, in this life but I *must* start it right now, without delaying even a second. Without delaying even a second.”

At the time of death, everything has to be left: our possessions, the surrounding people, friends, family and so forth, including this body that we cherished so much, that we cherished most among sentient beings, even this has to be left. Everything leaves us; we leave them. We have to be separated from all these; we have to leave all these things. Only the bare consciousness goes to the next life. Like when we pull a hair from butter, the butter doesn’t come with it, only the hair comes.

The only thing that benefits at the time of death is the holy Dharma. It is only the holy Dharma, nothing else. Therefore think, “I *must* only practice the holy Dharma. Therefore, I must only practice the holy Dharma.”

DOING EVERYTHING WITH RENUNCIATION AND BODHICITTA

As I mentioned yesterday night, for example, even when we go for shopping, without lam-rim, renunciation, bodhicitta, emptiness, without any of these, it becomes only suffering, it becomes only negative karma. We accumulate so much negative karma from ten nonvirtuous actions, as I mentioned the other night; so much covertness is accumulated from the home to the shop and from the shop to the home. Every action, every activity—walking or driving—from home to shop and from shop to home, everything becomes negative karma. We accumulate so much negative karma during those hours. In reality, everything becomes suffering. If we look at the reality of life, without the lam-rim it becomes only suffering.

For example, while we are doing the shopping, if we do the shopping with renunciation even with a mindfulness of impermanence and death, there is no danger to accumulate nonvirtue, covertness. By the worldly mind of attachment arising, all the actions become negative karma. Remembering impermanence and death cuts that; it gives no space in the mind for attachment, the thought of worldly dharma, to arise. Therefore the actions don’t become nonvirtue, they become holy Dharma.

I think that maybe living our life with renunciation and the thought of impermanence and death, maybe with this mind when we reach the shop there is nothing to buy. [Rinpoche laughs] Maybe there is nothing to buy; we don’t see any reason to buy anything. So, renunciation can help us save money! To not only save money but also to take the essence from this essenceless material such as money and so forth. Remembering renunciation, remembering impermanence and death, it helps us take essence out of the essenceless material such as money and so we not only don’t waste our money but we also only use it for Dharma practice. We only use it for what is meaningful; we only use it for Dharma practice. This is not becoming stingy, not just keeping our money out of stinginess; it’s not that. But with the mind of renunciation we only spend our money for what is meaningful, only for the Dharma. So, spending it for the Dharma helps us to save it, to not waste it.

Yesterday I got distracted from that. I was talking about emptiness, meditating on emptiness when we go shopping, how to apply the meditation on emptiness, and then I got distracted, like a wave of the water, taken away. So, with this again, there is no reason, no space, for desire, for attachment to arise. When we apply the meditation on emptiness, the practice of mindfulness and the hallucination, this is the most powerful one, seeing things as hallucinations. It becomes the remedy even to cut the root of samsara, ignorance.

While we are shopping we should apply the right view and especially bodhicitta, thinking our own purpose in life is to free all sentient beings from all the sufferings, to help them reach enlightenment and to bring them to happiness. This is the purpose of my life, to do service. So therefore we need a long life, we need to be healthy. In other words, we regard ourselves as a servant; we are a servant to all sentient beings, serving to bring happiness to all sentient beings. In order to serve them, we have to take care of ourselves, we have to take of ourselves, not for our own happiness but for the happiness of all sentient beings, for the benefit of all sentient beings.

When we have this attitude when we are doing the shopping, that means actually in our heart we are doing the shopping only for the sentient beings, only for the benefit of sentient beings. That way, we are protected, we are saved from so much covertness, from collecting so much negative karma, from the ten nonvirtues. Instead of collecting so much negative karma going from home and coming back again, where all our actions become negative karma, by apply bodhicitta even shopping becomes the cause of enlightenment, the cause to benefit all sentient beings.

With the bodhicitta motivation, everything becomes like this, from morning until night, for twenty-four hours a day. Before we get dressed, we remember the meaning of life, how our life is to free all sentient beings from suffering, to obtain happiness for all sentient beings, and to do this service we need to be healthy and have a long life. Then we get dressed. This is the same thing as I explained during a shopping trip, the attitude of seeing ourselves as servant, taking care of ourselves as a servant for the sentient beings.

In the same way, before we have breakfast, we can think like this. Then before going to work, the same, again we remember the meaning of life, thinking, “I am responsible for all sentient beings’ happiness. We should remember the meaning and also feel the responsibility, that we are responsible, we *do* have the responsibility of all sentient beings’ happiness. If we have compassion then no sentient being receives harm, but only peace and also they all receive help, they all get so much peace and happiness from us, from our compassion. If we don’t have compassion, then all sentient beings from life to life, either directly or indirectly, receive harm from us. With ego, without compassion, they only receive harm from us, directly or indirectly. From this one person, this *me*, numberless sentient beings receive harm directly or indirectly from life to life. Therefore, their happiness is in our hands. We have the responsibility whether they receive happiness or harm from us.

Remembering that we have the responsibility for all sentient beings’ happiness, we think that with this attitude we are going to do this service, the job what we want to do, for sentient beings. In that way, we complete change our attitude. Instead of thinking we are doing our job for our happiness, for our survival, for money, for our comfort and enjoyment—rather than thinking that way, we are doing it for the happiness of other sentient beings. We are doing service for the happiness of other sentient beings. That completely changes our attitude. Then, however many hours we do the job becomes Dharma, becomes pure Dharma unstained by ego, the self-centered mind. We also remember that the job we are doing brings so many comfort and enjoyment to others, to many hundreds of thousands of sentient beings. They receive so much

comfort and enjoyment from this job. Our work becomes a contribution to them; it is offered to all the enjoyment and comfort of all these sentient beings. The enjoyment and comfort of all the thousands, the hundreds of thousands of sentient beings come from our work; this is dependent on our effort, it comes from us. Even though there are many other people working together, it's collected, therefore we are also part of that offering that causes the comfort and enjoyment to other sentient beings. This is something we can think of, offering the happiness and comfort to others.

In particular, we can also remember that we are fulfilling the wishes of others for happiness. We should try to remember this from time to time, while we are working so that again and again the motivation can be the direct motivation and we can develop it into Dharma. And the most pure motivation is bodhicitta, by remember the meaning of life is the responsibility of working for other sentient beings' happiness. We ourselves are a servant. From time to time we should try to remember this because we still don't have the realization bodhicitta. Even if we are able to generate a positive motivation it doesn't last, it doesn't continue.

Then, in the same way, before going to bed our motivation should be to be able to offer service to sentient beings, and so we need a long and healthy life and therefore we are going to sleep.

And the same thing when we are going to have a bath, when we wash. In this way, all our activities are done as much as possible with a bodhicitta motivation. Therefore, because this is the motivation for working, for acting, to benefit all sentient beings, the many activities we do become pure Dharma, the cause of enlightenment, cause of happiness of all sentient beings. With this bodhicitta motivation, all the activities in our daily life, in one day of life, become the cause of the greatest success, to achieve peerless, full enlightenment, and even that is only for other sentient beings.

Then, as I mentioned last night, by living in the attitude, by leaving the mind in lam-rim, either renunciation or right view, and especially bodhicitta, then no matter how much wealth we have, with bodhicitta, with the thought of benefiting other sentient beings, everything becomes meaningful. With bodhicitta, having wealth has a purpose; it has meaning, it becomes meaningful. If we live our life in the lam-rim, with bodhicitta, then being a millionaire has meaning, because it's all to benefit others; the attitude we have in everything we do is to benefit other sentient beings, to free other sentient beings from suffering, to obtain happiness for other sentient beings. In this way, being wealthy has meaning; it is given meaning by this bodhicitta attitude. The bodhicitta attitude gives meaning to life.

THE DHARMA SAVES US FROM THE LOWER REALMS

At the time of death nothing benefits except the holy Dharma. Therefore think, "I must only practice nothing else but the holy Dharma." And especially from the three principal aspects of the path we should practice bodhicitta, which makes our life most meaningful.

After death not being reborn in the lower realms and receive a human or deva body, even that is not sufficient because only those arya beings who realize the renunciation of samsara are free from all suffering. With the realization of the renunciation of samsara, they see all samsara, even the deva or human body, like the hell realm, only in the nature of suffering, like being in the center of a fire. They don't find the slightest attraction in samsara for even one second. As I mentioned before, not even in dreams, they don't find attraction for the deva or human body even for one second. For those arya being especially, those who have the renunciation of samsara, this is how they see samsara, even the deva and human realms with all these perfections,

all these samsaric enjoyments and comfort. Everything including the body is only in the nature of suffering, like being in the center of a fire. This is what those who have realized the mind, the renunciation of samsara, have seen.

But we don't have such realizations. Our mind is completely occupied by delusion, hallucinated possessed by delusion, like having taken drugs and experiencing many hallucinations. Because the mind is possessed by delusion, by desire, the three poisons—ignorance, anger and attachment—and so forth, this is like having taken drugs. Even though the deva or human body and all the wealth, perfection, enjoyment and so forth are totally in the nature of suffering, because our mind is possessed by delusion, like having taken drug, there is a complete hallucination, as if nothing is wrong with it. As the Guru Puja says, we see the unbearable prison as beautiful garden. The deva and human body, all these perfections, all of samsara, all of this is only in the nature of suffering, like being in a prison or in the center of the fire, but because our mind is possessed by delusion, ignorance, desire, attachment and so forth, that obscures us from seeing reality, seeing that which is suffering as suffering. Like this, we look at samsara, which is only in the nature of suffering. as like a beautiful garden, we project it is like a beautiful garden, as happiness, as clean, as permanent. We see things as pure happiness, as inherently existent, as beautiful, all these things, by the mind being possessed by delusion and then projecting all these hallucinations.

With a mind possessed by delusion, we look at samsara this way, as permanent, inherently existent, clean, as pure happiness. And because of this we cling on it, and by clinging on it we continuously tie ourselves to the samsara. That's why from beginningless rebirths until now we have still not been liberated from samsara, from the oceans of suffering.

At this time for us to achieving liberation from this whole entire suffering of samsara for ourselves, that is not sufficient. Even doing the work for the self does not finish the qualities of cessation and realization.

MEDICINE BUDDHA INITIATION MOTIVATION: THE KINDNESS OF THE MOTHER

As I mentioned before, the purpose of life is to free all sentient beings from all the sufferings and to lead them in happiness to full enlightenment. This is the ultimate goal of our own life. This is the purpose of living or the ultimate goal of our own life. The need to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings not sufficient to achieve liberation from samsara for ourselves. This life's mother has been our own mother numberless times, numberless times, and numberless times she has been kind, giving her body to practice Dharma, giving us the opportunity to practice Dharma. This is not the first time; this is not the first time. She gave this precious human body to us and she gave opportunity to purify the cause of the suffering, to purify the negative karma already accumulated and to stop creating the cause of suffering again, and to achieve happiness, by accumulating merit, then to achieve the happiness of future lives, liberation and enlightenment. She has done this for us numberless times from beginningless rebirths.

Even the omniscient mind cannot see the beginning of this kindness, cannot see the beginning of this mother's kindness. She gave me this body to practice Dharma. Even the omniscient mind cannot see the beginning. In order to repay her kindness just for this to my present life's mother, even I sacrifice my life for eons equaling number of atoms of this earth, or drops of the ocean, this is nothing, I still can't repay the kindness of mother. Besides this, this present life's mother gave hundreds of lives each day, when I was in my mother's womb, and even after I was born from my mother's womb, during childhood, each day my mother gave hundreds of lives to me,

which means she saved me from hundreds of life's dangers, the many obstacles of life. Each day, she saved me from hundreds of life's danger.

If our own mother had had an abortion when we were in our mother's womb, then we wouldn't have this precious human body and have the incredible opportunity to practice Dharma and to help numberless sentient beings, to bring them to enlightenment. During our time as a baby and a child, if our mother didn't look after us or ask somebody to look us, hiring somebody else to look after us, even for five minutes if there wasn't somebody looking after us, our life would have been in danger from falling down or putting dangerous things in our mouth and swallow them. Being injured, being eaten by animals, being killed by vehicles or however, if a baby is not looked after for even five minutes, immediately there is great danger.

Even if we can't recognize how the mother has been kind to us, if we look at other parents we can see how other mothers look after, take care of their child, constantly have to look after them. Even if she has a short break, not looking for a moment, suddenly there is danger, within one minute, within five minutes, within a short time. As we see it happen to others, as we see with our own children, we see how the mother completely sacrifices her life, giving her whole energy, her time, her material things, everything, everything to that child. Like other mothers do to their children, our own mother did to us when we were young.

She saved us from hundreds of life's dangers each day. So, this life's mother has unbelievably kind and this isn't the first time she has been kind like this to us, but from beginningless rebirths. Even the omniscient mind cannot see the beginning of this kindness, how she saved me from hundreds of life's dangers each day. [Rinpoche laughs] Even the Buddha's omniscient mind cannot see the beginning of this kindness. To repay the kindness, even if we sacrifice our life for the many eons equaling the number of atoms of the earth, I cannot finish repaying the kindness; it is not enough, it is nothing.

Then, this life's mother led us in the path of the world, giving us an education, teaching us how to walk, how to speak, making us a human being, put us in the line of the human beings. She gave us an education by us sending college and university, all these things. Because of that, we have the opportunity to read Dharma books, to write. By having this education, we also are able to have comfort and enjoyment by doing a job. This help was given us by the mother. Even survival, by doing the job due to that education, that originally came from the parents' help. We think we have helped ourselves but in fact it has been our mother's help. This is not the first time. This not the first time that she has been kind, leading us on the path of the world. She has been kind to us numberless times from beginningless rebirths. Even the Buddha's omniscient mind cannot see this. We can't finish repaying the kindness, even if we sacrifice our lives for the number eons equaling the number of the atoms of the earth.

This life's mother is so precious, so kind. This life's mother bore so many hardships to obtain happiness for me. Starting from the womb, for those nine months in our mother's womb, whatever trouble there was, whatever pain, she bore so many hardships. Even after we were born from of mother's womb, she endured all that tiredness looking after us, working so many hours, doing jobs and then spending all this money collected to take care of me.

She was so patient with us, no matter how many problems we created, always making our clothes dirty with kaka and pipi and so forth. No matter how much we disturbed our mother, how often we left doors open, disturbing her, screaming, crying and so forth, not letting her even have a good sleep at night time, even in daytime not letting her rest, always bothering her, even with all that she still only thought of taking care of us.

In order to take care of us, she created so much negative karma, telling lies to other sentient beings, giving harm other sentient beings, collecting material things, earning a means of living for in order to take care of us. In order to collect money and so forth, our mother killed, told lies, stole and so forth. She created so much negative karma; she gave so much harm to others. And not only that, we caused our mother to get angry, to have delusion arise and create negative karma. We caused our mother to create so much negative karma.

This is not the first time that this life's mother has borne so many hardships for us. This is not the first time. This is not the first time she did this; she has done this numberless times from beginningless rebirths. And numberless times she has created so much negative karma for our happiness, to take care of us, by harming others. And we have caused her to create negative karma, to have delusions rise, numberless times. Numberless times we have done this to her. Because of this she has suffered so much, she has experienced so much the result of negative karma, in the lower realms. She has suffered so much in the lower realms from beginningless rebirths and also in the human realm, she has experience problems. She has suffered so much all due to us.

That unbelievable kindness is so precious. Even if we sacrificed our life for eons equaling the number of atoms of the earth we couldn't finish repaying the kindness of the mother, just for this kindness bearing hardship for us, how much she suffered for us, for our happiness.

We can see this if we look at how other parents look after their children, how the mother has to bear so many hardships and suffer so much, taking so much responsibility. Even the Buddha's omniscient mind cannot see the beginning of this kindness, the hardships she has borne for us. We can never finish repaying the kindness, even if we sacrifice our life for eons equaling the number of atoms of the earth.

She took care of us like her heart was outside of her. She took care of us like her heart was outside her body in her hand, like holding her heart in her hand. Like this, she cherished us the most. If there were a choice between us, he child, being healthier and her own life, she would rather die and allow her child to survive

This has happened so often, where a mother has given her life for her child. Even if we never knew our mother because she did this, besides that great kindness, we have been brought up by other people and their kindness, their sacrifice, the education that gave, came from this great kindness of our birth mother.

MEDICINE BUDDHA INITIATION MOTIVATION: ALL BEINGS HAVE BEEN KIND TO US IN FOUR WAYS

The main goal is to feel the kindness of all sentient beings, by realizing how all people have saved us and helped us all the time, whether this life's mother or other people who took care of us, who saved us from the many hundreds of life's danger each day, or led us in path of the world or bore hardships—by recognizing how unbelievably kind this is and this not the first time they have done this, they have done this numberless times from beginningless rebirths.

By thinking in this way, we realize how this life's mother and these people have been so precious, so kind. We have this feeling in our heart. They have been so precious, so precious, so unbelievably precious, more precious to us than we ourselves. We then use this as an example to

realize how *all* sentient beings have been our own mother and have been always kind, numberless times and how all of them, every one of them is so precious, so kind.

On the basis of this, we develop compassion, loving kindness and bodhicitta, the door of the Mahayana path to enlightenment. This is the main goal, the main reason why we meditate in this way. We have to understand this point.

Or if our mother passed away after giving us her body, we only had our father to take care of us, after our mother died or something the rest of the kindness was done only by our father.

Every sentient being has been our own mother and has been kind, giving us a human body to practice Dharma numberless times. Every sentient being has saved us from hundreds of life's dangers each day numberless times and led us on path of the world numberless times. Then each sentient being has borne so many hardships for us, giving us food when we were hungry, drink when we were thirsty, protecting us from heat and cold, giving us clothing and so forth. When we were sick, they gave us medicine. Like this, they protected us, saving us from many life's dangers. Every sentient being has been kind to us in these four ways numberless times.

So everyone is so precious and so kind, and therefore we must now repay their kindness. What they want is happiness, what they do not want is suffering, so we must liberate them from suffering and its causes and cause them to have them have happiness and causes of happiness. In order to do this, we ourselves must develop our own mind on the path to enlightenment by practicing Dharma. This is the best way to repay their kindness. We must repay their kindness and the best way to repay their kindness is to practice Dharma.

To make it short, we must cause all sentient beings to have happiness. All sentient beings who are currently devoid of temporary or ultimate happiness, we must cause them to have happiness. We must generate loving kindness, seeing the kind mother sentient beings with warmth, with love or beauty

Therefore we must think, "I must free all sentient beings from all their suffering. To cause happiness for their desire and to free them from suffering I must generate great love or beauty, the feeling of seeing all mother sentient beings as warm and kind, warm. Then I must generate compassion to free all sentient beings from all their suffering by myself."

Next think, "To work to free all sentient beings from all suffering, to lead them to happiness, especially to lead them to peerless happiness, full enlightenment, I will do this by myself. I will take the responsibility of doing this work for other sentient beings by myself. I will carry this responsibility by myself alone. I will do this work for other sentient beings by myself *alone*. To be able to do this perfectly, first I myself should achieve full enlightenment, the state of the omniscient mind. For that I must actualize the steps on path to enlightenment. For the success of this, to be able to do great benefit for sentient beings and for the teaching of the Buddha, I am going to take the Medicine Buddha initiation.

MEDICINE BUDDHA INITIATION

Now, make the request.

[Rinpoche leads the students in making the request]

Then visualize the guru inseparable from Medicine Buddha, and visualize the Medicine Buddha above the guru with the entourage of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas around. In their presence you are taking the bodhisattva vows, beginning with the refuge, confession, rejoicing, with these preliminaries.

In regards to taking the bodhisattva vows, for those who have taken them before there is no question. By taking them again, what has been degenerated becomes revived, pure, and what has not been degenerated gets increased. So take the bodhisattva vows, the entering vows, the wishing vows like this.

The entering vows have eighteen root falls and forty-six vices that you have to abstain from. The wishing vows involve avoiding the four black dharmas and practicing the four white dharmas: opening the heart towards sentient beings, to being cunning towards a virtuous friend, not hiding mistakes and then not feeling regret when you see other sentient beings practicing Dharma or accumulating merit. These are the basic practices.

If you cannot take the entering vows, you can take the bodhisattva wishing vows. If you can't do even that then at least you can generate the wish or make the decision: "I am going to practice more compassion, I am going to practice more compassion towards other sentient beings. I am going to attempt to benefit other sentient beings and not harm other sentient beings." Make the determination to attempt at least this. At least you can think, you can make decision like this, "I am going to practice bodhicitta by attempting to benefit others and attempt to not harm others." Even if you can't take the entering vows, and those who have not taken bodhisattva vows before, if you cannot take either, at least you can generate this thought.

[Making the request: Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

So, you rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, taking refuge.

[Making the request: Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

The next one: "I am confessing all negative karma, then everything is purified." Vow to abstain from committing again the ones which you can and the ones which are too difficult vow to abstain for even a few minutes, a day or one hour, even for a few minutes or a few seconds. Making the vow to not commit the negative karmas for even few seconds, that doesn't become telling a lie.

[Making the request: Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

The next one is rejoicing. You rejoice, you feel great happiness within your mind for your own three times' merits and three times' merits accumulated by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and sentient beings. You feel great happiness in the heart.

[Making the request: Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

Then, the next one. "In order to achieve enlightenment for sake of sentient beings, I am going to take the bodhisattva vows." Those who are taking the vows, whichever vow you are taking, think this. And those who cannot, those who are unable to take bodhisattva vows, at least generate the thought as I explained.

[Making the request: Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

At the end of the third repetition, without a wandering mind, think, “I must generate thought,” and those who are taking the bodhisattva vows, think, “In the presence of the Medicine Buddha and all the lineage lamas of this initiation and all the bodhisattvas, I have received the pure bodhisattva vows.

[Making the request: Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

Then, the particular request.

[Making the request: Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

Now, the preliminaries of the permission to practice is finished. Now, in order to receive the blessing that is the actual body, you must visualize this.

Yourself as an ordinary being. Above your crown on a lotus and moon disc, there is the Medicine Buddha, seated on your crown. Above are the other Medicine Buddhas. The main one is King of Lapis Light (Skt: *Bhaisajyaguru*; Tib: *Sangye Men-la*). The holy body is in the nature of light, lapis lazuli in color, one face, two arms, the left hand a begging bowl filled with nectar and the right hand holding the healing fruit *arura*. He is seated in the vajra posture.

Above him, on a lotus and moon disc, there is Delightful King of Clear Knowing (Skt: *Abhiyaraja*; Tib: *Ngon-kyen Gyal-Po*) a white one.³ I’m not going to describe all the mudras. Above that on a lotus and moon disc there is Melodious Ocean of Proclaimed Dharma (Skt: *Dharmakirtisagara*; Tib: *Cho-drag Gya-tso*) pink in color. Above this on a lotus and moon disc is Supreme Glory Free from Sorrow (Skt: *Asobottamasriraja*; Tib: *Nya-ngam Mi-cho*) light red in color. Above this on a lotus and moon is Stainless Excellent Gold (Skt: *Suvarnabhadravimala*; Tib: *Da-wa shen-pa Tse-shan*) gold in color. Above this on a lotus and moon disc there is King of Melodious Sound (Skt: *Svaragosaraja*; Tib: *Da-yang Gyal-po*) yellow in color. Above this there is King of Excellent Signs (Skt: *Suparikirti-tanamasruraja*; Tib: *Tsän-leg[??]*) gold in color.

³ In the sadhana the color is coral.

[Visualizing each Medicine Buddha above your head, you make offering and take refuge in each, one by one.] This is the main meditation. If you are doing the shortest Medicine Buddha practice, this is the very essence. Therefore, even if your whole body is not doing the prostration, you should put your palms together, and that is a prostration. You can visualize your own body, numberless your own bodies covering the whole ground and doing prostrations. You can do that also when you recite the word “prostrating.”

Then next one is offering. When you recite the word “offering,” at that time, each time then you remember offerings you have performed in your meditation room or in your house, whatever offering you have made, and from there remember at this time to make offerings to the Medicine Buddha. In this way, you accumulate unbelievable, inconceivable merits. The same thing can be done, you can do it now here.

[Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

Keep your palms together in the mudra of prostration, like this, when you recite the word “prostration” but also physically when you do the prostrations, besides the prostration of speech and mind.

[Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

Then make the offering.

[Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

Taking refuge.

Then the next one: “As you have promised, as you have done the prayers in the past, may it be ripened, may it be received by myself and all sentient beings in this second. I am requesting you to bless this to happen.” Usually when you do the practice here you remember whatever success you want to achieve for yourself and others, particular projects, somebody to recover from a disease or to have a good rebirth or whatever. You remember that in the heart and make the request for it to happen immediately.

[Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

Think he has accepted your request. Now *Tsän.Leg* melts in the light, absorbs into the next buddha *Da-yang Gyal-po*. Now make requests to *Da-yang Gyal-po*.

[Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

The next one is offering, taking refuge.

[Making the request: Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

So again whatever offerings performed here—your lights, all the lights, all the offerings—immediately make offerings to the *Da-yang Gyal-po*.

[Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

Think he has accepted your request. Now *Da-yang Gyal-po* melts in the light, absorbs into the next buddha *Da-wa shen-pa Tse-shan*. Now make requests to *Da-wa shen-pa Tse-shan*.

[Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

The next one is offering.

[Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

Now making the request

[Making the request: Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

Think he has accepted your request. Now *Da-wa shen-pa Tse-shan* melts in the light, absorbs into the next buddha *Nya-ngam Mi-cho*. Now make requests to *Nya-ngam Mi-cho*.

[Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

The next one is making offering.

[Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

Now making the request

[Making the request: Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

Think he has accepted your request. Now *Nya-ngam Mi-cho* melts in the light, absorbs into the next buddha *Cho-drag Gya-tso*. Now make requests to *Cho-drag Gya-tso*.

[Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

The next one is making offering.

[Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

Now making the request

[Making the request: Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

Think he has accepted your request. Now *Cho-drag Gya-tso* melts in the light, absorbs into the next buddha *Ngon-kyen Gyal-Po*. Now make requests to *Ngon-kyen Gyal-Po*.

[Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

The next one is making offering.

[Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

Now making the request

[Making the request: Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

Think he has accepted your request. Now *Ngon-kyen Gyal-Po* melts in the light, absorbs into the next buddha *Sangye Men-la*, the main Medicine Buddha. Now make requests to *Sangye Men-la*.

[Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

The next one is making offering.

[Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

Now making the request

[Making the request: Rinpoche says and the students repeat after him]

Even though there is no particular prayer, the most important thing to actualize in your own mind is to actualize the whole path to enlightenment, the whole lam-rim in this life as quickly as possible. That is the most important request, so you can think that in the heart.

Then the Medicine Buddha melts into light and enters through your crown channel, the channel that starts from your crown. Then all the disease, spirit harm, negative karma, obscuration, are all are pushed down, all are cleaned down, pushed down and they come out, in the form of dirty liquid, like liquid coal or smoke, coming out the anus and from the lower doors, under the feet, the heels. Then, strongly concentrate on your body, everything, being purified. Everything comes out in the form of dirty liquid.

Then, those who have received a great initiation in the past, either Kriya Tantra, like the Chenrezig Great initiation or Highest Yoga Tantra, like Kalachakra or the other Highest Yoga Tantra deity initiation, Yamantaka, Chakrasambhrava, Guyasamaja, Gyalwa Gyatso and so forth—any of the Highest Yoga Tantra deity great initiations, you can visualize yourself as the Medicine Buddha, otherwise it is not permitted to visualize like this.

Those who have received an initiation, you instantly manifest into Medicine Buddha. Yourself as Medicine Buddha then on the right side is the bodhisattva *Nyi-ma Tag-nam Che*, the holy body red in color, one face, two arms. Then the right hand mudra of granting sublime realizations, the left one holding the stem of a lotus, and at the heart, on the lotus there is a sun.

On the left side there is the bodhisattva *Da-wa Dam Nam-tse*, the holy body white in color, one face, two arms. The right hand is in the mudra of giving sublime realizations, stretched down. The left one holds the stem of a lotus at the heart. Above the lotus there is a moon disc. Adorned with the scarves and jewel ornaments, standing respectfully towards the main Medicine Buddha. Then visualize OM AH HUM.

Beams are emitted from the guru's heart, and the seven Medicine Buddhas and the innumerable numbers of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, invoked, absorb through your crown. Again from the guru's heart and front generation where the mandala was generated during preparation time, the front-generation Medicine Buddha, from the heart then Medicine Buddha, very huge like mountains, smallest like atoms, an uncountable number absorb through your crown and through your pores, your body and bless your mental continuum.

[Rinpoche chants]

Now, the permission of the blessing; the permission to recite the mantra.

Now at the guru's heart you visualize a moon disc, in the center a HUM, with the mantra around. Also, those who have visualized Medicine Buddha, at your heart there is also a moon disc and syllable HUM surrounded by the mantra. Due to strong devotion, by thinking the guru is actual Medicine Buddha a replica mantra comes out through the guru's holy mouth. Here, in the text it says the mantra comes from the HUM. The mantra comes from the HUM; it doesn't say to visualize around, it says the mantra comes from the HUM, through the guru's holy mouth, enters in your mouth and decorates around the heart, around the HUM on the moon disc, clockwise.

So please repeat the mantra with this visualization.

TADYATA OM BHEKHANDZYE BHEKHANDZYE MAHA BHEKHANDZYE RAJA SAMUDGATE SVAHA

By this we have receive the blessing of the mantra in the heart.

TADYATA OM BHEKHANDZYE BHEKHANDZYE MAHA BHEKHANDZYE RAJA SAMUDGATE SVAHA

The blessing of the mantra that you have received in your heart becomes inseparable with your mental continuum

TADYATA OM BHEKHANDZYE BHEKHANDZYE MAHA BHEKHANDZYE RAJA SAMUDGATE SVAHA

By the third repetition the blessing of the mantra which you have received in your heart becomes one, becomes inseparable with your mental continuum, becomes stabilized.

Now this is near heart mantra. There is another mantra, maybe this heart mantra but it doesn't specify it here.

The first one, near heart mantra, so maybe this last one is root mantra but it's not specified here. So according to first one, then maybe this should be heart mantra.

OM NAMO BAGHAWATE BHEGHANDZE GURU BHEDURYA PRABARAJA TATHAGATAYA
ARHATE SAMKYA SAM BUDDHAYA TAYATHA OM BHEGHANDZE RADZA SAMUDGATE SOHA 3X

Then, offering the flower to the guru.

[Rinpoche chants]

The flower you have offered is blessed with Garland's mantra, placed on your crown.

[Rinpoche chants]

So now repeat. In order to take the pledge, repeat this three times, saying "I, such and such, until I achieve enlightenment, am going to practice Medicine Buddha as the yidam," which means the mind seal, which means to be one with your own mind.

And you are also going to recite the mantra each day. Whatever number you are going to recite think, "That much I am going to recite," or whatever number you have been reciting before. You can make that vow whatever number you have been reciting in the past. However, decide to

recite five or ten or however number of times each day. Make that commitment. The more you recite the more powerful it becomes. When you do healing or some service benefiting others, it becomes more powerful, the more you recite the mantra.

[Students repeat after Rinpoche]

[Rinpoche chants]

Please mention your name.

[Rinpoche chants]

So the initiation is finished.

DEDICATION: THERE IS NO BETTER HEALING THAN THE LAM-RIM

The conclusion is this. Meditating on the lam-rim, practicing the lam-rim, developing the mind in the lam-rim, that itself is the preparation for death. That itself is how to live life, living and dying, living and dying, that's how to live life, living the lam-rim—especially bodhicitta—and how to die, how to make preparation for death. There is nothing, there is *no other thing*, that is better. There is no other instruction, there is no other something that is better than practicing the lam-rim. How to die, making preparation for death, even the answer to that question, there is no other answer. There is no other answer. The best answer is the lam-rim.

There is also no better healing service, for healing others, there is no better healing than teaching the lam-rim to others, causing others to understand the lam-rim, causing others to practice the lam-rim, because it is the lam-rim that purifies other sentient beings' past negative karma, which is cause of cancer, of AIDS, of comas, of arthritis, of all the diseases. Causing others to practice the lam-rim, they purify all the negative karmas of those actions already done, and it helps them to stop creating them again. So there is no better healing than teaching the lam-rim to others, helping others to practice the lam-rim. Even if we don't teach the lam-rim we can help create the facilities, creating the place, developing the facilities, bringing the teacher and the translator then *that* causes other sentient beings to practice the Dharma, the lam-rim, so that becomes ultimate healing.

And only by practicing and actualizing the lam-rim can we remove the cause of suffering, all the disturbing thoughts, the gross and subtle obscurations. All the mistakes of mind can be removed, can be ceased. Therefore, it becomes ultimate healing. It becomes the ultimate service to heal not only physical disease but all suffering, by healing all the causes, the obscurations.

Whether we directly teach the lam-rim to other sentient beings or inspire them by being an example or we create the condition, the facilities, only by teaching the lam-rim can they change their minds from the cause of the suffering into cause of happiness, liberation and enlightenment. Only by changing their minds can they change their actions and stop the cause of the suffering. They stop the negative karma that is the cause of suffering and they only create positive actions, the cause of happiness, liberation and enlightenment. So the benefit we are offering sentient beings becomes much more extensive than even ultimate healing, for them to never experience disease again. Not only this, the benefit we give sentient beings is like sky.

Therefore every day, on the basis of guru yoga we should recite the fundamental practice, one of the lam-rim prayers, whichever one we wish recite. And reciting this mindfully every day leaves an imprint of the whole path to enlightenment every day. That means every day we become

closer to the realization of the path to enlightenment, and that means every day you become closer to enlightenment. That means every day we become closer to freeing all sentient beings from all the suffering and leading them to enlightenment. So every day we come closer to this ultimate goal of our life. Every day we become closer to free all sentient beings from all the sufferings and leading them to enlightenment.

Besides doing the mind training in the lam-rim meditation, doing analytical or fixed meditation, the very fundamental one to mindfully do is the direct meditation by reciting a prayer of lam-rim, which has all essence of path. On top of this, we can then practice the special deity we have a karmic connection to, the prayer of that deity's graduated path, which is tantra, the graduated tantric path.

In this way, even if we don't get to meditate on the actual path extensively and to have realizations, if we don't get to meditate extensively on the tantra path of the deity, at least by reciting this prayer, which contains the graduated path of the deity, every day it leaves an imprint of tantric path, and that means that each day we become closer to the realization of tantric path. That means every day we become closer to the enlightenment of the deity. And in the same way, every day we become closer to bringing all sentient beings to enlightenment.

Reciting one lam-rim prayer mindfully becomes the direct meditation on the whole path. This is regarded as much more precious than reciting many hundreds of millions of mantras, doing extensive preliminary practices. Reading one lam-rim prayer mindfully that becomes the direct meditation, this is regarded as much more precious than even one actually meeting the Buddha, because even if we actually met the Buddha, still we would have to actualize the whole path to enlightenment in order to achieve enlightenment. We don't become enlightened just by seeing the Buddha.

Therefore, Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo says that reciting one lam-rim prayer is much more precious than even seeing the Buddha, than having clairvoyance and those common siddhis—not the omniscient mind [which is the uncommon siddhi] but the five types of clairvoyance, psychic power to able to fly, to show miracles and all those, having those psychic powers, then having one-pointed concentration that can last for eons. It is said in the lam-rim teaching, by a Kadampa Geshe that even just questioning how valuable the lam-rim is, this is much more worthwhile than having the achievement of all these siddhis. And it is said that we have achieved these common siddhis numberless times in the past; they are nothing new, but actualizing the three principal aspects of the path is a new experience.

This is some emphasis on how the lam-rim practice, the mind training in the lam-rim path, is so essential, how it is the whole answer for life.

Now we dedicate merits.

The lineage of this initiation, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and Manjushri.

[Rinpoche chants]

So from these lineage lamas up to root guru of this initiation, I firstly received from His Holiness Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche who is His Holiness Dalai Lama's guru, then secondly from Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche, and also I think from His Holiness Ling Rinpoche.

[Rinpoche chants]

Due to all the past, present and future merits accumulated by me, by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and sentient beings, may the bodhicitta that is the source of all happiness and success be generated within my own mind, in the mind of all sentient beings, and those who haven't, may it be developed.

[Rinpoche chants]

Due to all the three times' merits accumulated by me, by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and sentient beings, may all the father, mother sentient beings have happiness. May the three lower realms be empty forever. May all the bodhisattvas' prayers succeed immediately. May I be able to cause all this by myself alone.

[Rinpoche chants]

As three times' buddhas and bodhisattva have dedicated their merits, I will dedicate all my merits all quickly enlighten all sentient beings, as Bodhisattva Manjugosha, Samantabhadra actually realized.

[Rinpoche chants]

Due all these merits, may I be able to benefit extensively all sentient beings, like the Medicine Buddha, by having all the qualities from now on, in all the lifetimes. Any sentient being who touches me, who remembers me, who thinks about me, who talks about me, may everything become meaningful and since this time never be reborn in the lower realms and may they be immediately liberated from all disease, spirit harm, negative karma and obscuration. May they quickly become enlightened.

Due to all the past, present and future merits accumulated by myself, by the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and by the sentient beings, due to all these merits that are merely labeled by mind, may the I, who is merely labeled by mind, achieve the Medicine Buddha's enlightenment, which is merely labeled by mind, and lead all sentient beings, who are merely labeled by mind, to that enlightenment as quickly as possible by myself alone.