

KADAMPA TEACHINGS

By

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for free distribution

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Introduction

It has been said that while we have control over our own higher existence and have the power of what we perform and what we discard, we must take the full essence of it. We must take full control.

At present, we have met with spiritual masters or spiritual guides from whom we can obtain all the necessary positive qualities, yet we do not practice the Dharma. If we were to practice, we would have attained all the necessary positive conditions and we would be freed from all negative and discordant conditions.

At the present time, our body and state of mind are not really threatened by terrible diseases and we have the intelligence and wisdom to investigate what is wrong and what is right. Therefore, we must recognise and understand that if we use this opportunity for trivial purposes, such as worldly pursuits, it will be a great loss. It will be a very great mistake.

So, for the remainder of our life, we must try to do our best to integrate our mind throughout the day and night with the Dharma. Governed by an attitude of Dharma thoughts, we should pray to continue on like this. By gaining such control over our mind, we can then take full advantage of this body and mind and make full use of it, so that, after death and on leaving this body, we will not fall into the lower realms where there will be no opportunity to have this freedom.

It is definite. We all know that we are going to die. There is no doubt about that. But we do not know when it is going to happen! And, no matter how wealthy you are in this life, at the time of death, we will lose it all. We have to leave everything behind.

This lifetime is very short but the lifetimes to come will be much longer. If we are well prepared and ready for the next life, we can remain confident and comfortable with the idea. Since we understand that we go beyond this life, the preparation for that journey is Dharma practice.

Therefore, we should set our motivation for listening to this Dharma teaching and for contemplating on it, so that it will be aimed at benefiting that long journey rather than this very short stay.

Dharma is the one method that can be of benefit to oneself as well as to all other sentient beings. When we talk about benefiting oneself as well as other sentient beings, it does not mean merely providing food, clothing or shelter. The actual benefits are created by giving the causes for providing the conditions to achieve the state of higher rebirth. Ultimately, we are aiming for everlasting happiness, liberation and enlightenment.

If you do not have the wish to be of benefit to other sentient beings, then even though you have the wish to achieve Buddhahood, this type of practice will not be a Mahayana practice. If we do not aim to reach enlightenment for the sake of benefiting others, this is considered to be the practice of the Solitary Realizers.

So, therefore, whatever level of practice we undertake, even if it is just to recite your level of mantra, it should be aimed at achieving

Buddhahood for the sake of benefiting all other sentient beings. With this kind of attitude and this kind of motivation, it will become the cause to achieve Buddhahood.

Of course, temporarily, we do need to achieve the highest states of rebirth and self-liberation but that is not the final goal. The final goal is the fully enlightened state - to be able to benefit all sentient beings. Without fearing the suffering of the lower realms and of samsara generally, there is no way that we can generate the full length of great compassion. This is like, for instance, if we have experienced a severe disease and then we meet someone who has the same disease, we immediately feel sympathy and compassion towards them.

Even if we are unable to generate and practice pure and direct renunciation, at least, we must try to generate a creative form of renunciation. We must try our best to generate that form of renunciation.

At the present time, we have delusions which we do not have to put any effort into generating. They just spontaneously happen. However, if we could just spontaneously generate renunciation like that, we would have entered the path. An example of this would be having the spontaneous realisation of recognizing that all sentient beings are our mothers. Whenever we see people or even tiny creatures, that spontaneous feeling would be there - that is my mother!

However, if we have yet to generate that kind of understanding because of this or that, this is not a spontaneous realization. Rather, it is a creative form of understanding.

In other words, if we do not have a correct understanding of the existence of past and future lives, then it would be very difficult to be able to generate the realization of recognizing that all sentient beings are one's mother.

If we had doubts about whether past and future lives actually exist, there would be no place for meditation on this subject and, in such a case, where there is only belief in this life then, of course, there could only be one mother.

Do we possess the potential to lead sentient beings temporarily into the states of gods and humans then, ultimately, to the state of liberation and enlightenment? No, because if we were to examine our situation at present, we do not have that potential or the capacity to do so. The fully enlightened beings, the Buddhas, however, do have this capability and potential because they have an understanding of the mentality of each and every sentient being, what interests that being has and what level they have attained and so forth. With this kind of knowledge and understanding, they are then able to help accordingly by performing at different levels of manifestations.

If a being could be benefited by an emanation or a manifestation in the form of a king, then the Buddhas would do so, and if manifestations of demons and spirits would benefit them, then the Buddhas would manifest as such. Their main responsibility and interest is to be of benefit to all sentient beings.

If we were able to achieve the state of full enlightenment or the omniscient state, we would then be able to liberate all sentient beings

into the state of Buddhahood just as the Buddhas do through the rays of light emanating from their bodies.

So, it is from these reasons that we come to know just how *urgently* we need to achieve the state of Buddhahood - without which we cannot fully benefit others.

Buddhahood is not achieved without creating causes and conditions for such, so we must accumulate the right causes and conditions to be able to achieve enlightenment. Therefore, whatever virtue we accumulate - whether great or very tiny - must be dedicated towards this goal. This act is similiar to when you earn some money, whether a large or small amount, depositing it into a bank. Similarly, whatever amount of virtue we accumulate, we deposit into the bank of achieving Buddhahood.

By keeping this as your main project, then whatever practise or meditation you undertake will become hopeful and meaningful.

It is necessary to now and again explain this short form of motivation because the practice of motivation contains the entire path of the three scopes. To be able to generate the right motivation is better than having direct visions of meditational deities.

Some of you might feel that I am only talking about the initial motivation which we have known for a long time, but just understanding the information alone is not good enough - we must integrate this information with the mind.

It is said that the holy Dharma should be explained one hundred times. This is the system that all the Lamas follow - of explaining the importance of the initial motivation. From my side, although I do not know much, I also follow the tradition of the Lamas.

Day One

The word 'Kadam', literally, means 'Bound by Command'. The label 'Kadampa' is given to those practitioners who consider that even one syllable of the teachings of the Buddha to be an actual beneficial instruction that will lead them onto the Path.

Kadampa Masters are those practitioners who know how to carry out, in the form of practice, every single syllable of the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma.

These practitioners hide all their qualities and express all of their faults rather than expressing others' faults. They hide their qualities inside like a butter lamp hidden inside a vase. They not only do not express their qualities but they do not reveal the excellent teachings that they have realized.

But, in our case, we are completely opposite to the Kadampas. If we have limited qualities, we expose them and, if we have faults, we try to hide them! Therefore the way we do things is against the Kadampa precepts. For instance, if we see faults in others we would like to put them into the newspapers. This is not a Kadampa tradition! And, if we know something, we expose it to everybody. We also expose all our qualities. This, also, is not a Kadampa tradition.

The founder of the Kadampa tradition was Atisha's disciple Dromtoenpa (1008-64) who is also known as 'Geshe'. However, he was not a gentleman like our present day geshe who wear proper robes. He was a very simple man with hair on his head and he sat on animal skins. He wore a blue cloth belt with six rounds at the navel. However, Dromtoenpa's inner qualities were very great.

Dromtoenpa was extremely skillful in the practice of guru devotion. Initially, he became devoted to one particular lama and received teachings from him. This lama appeared as an ordinary nomad and not as a monk. While serving his guru, Dromtoenpa would sit amongst the goats and sheep and when he needed milk, he would sit on a small stool. However, while he was serving his guru, he would happily act as a stool so that his guru's wife could get milk from the goats. After milking the animal, he would place the scriptures he was studying on a table in front of him and then place a container on his back with the milk in it and shake it around to make butter. At the same time he would rub animal skins with his feet to make leather. As well as all this, he spun wool with his hands!

But, no matter how busy we are, we cannot do four jobs at the same time. Many of you come and say that you are too busy to do your practices - that there is not enough time! But compared to Dromtoenpa, you are not busy at all! It is only because you do not want to do what you should do, that you make the excuse of busy-ness.

Dromtoenpa later approached Atisha and asked him: "How well am I practicing during this lifetime?" Lama Atisha replied : "While you

are serving your lama, you practised well, but other than that, you do not practice at all!”

Atisha was an incredible master who possessed the lineages of the Lam-rim that existed in India and he was able to bring them to Tibet by entrusting them to Dromtoenpa. The lineages that Atisha brought were:

- (1) *The Lineage of Extensive Deeds* as given by Maitreya, and
- (2) *The Lineage of Profound View* as given by Manjushri.

From these three lineages of the Lam-rim, Dromtoenpa created the three Kadampa traditions, which are:

The Kadampa Classical Tradition: This was the tradition that was handed down from Potowa to Sharawa and was concerned with the stages of the path via the great classics.

The Kadampa Lam-rim Tradition: This lineage was passed from Gampopa to Neuzurpa and was a shorter version of the Lam-rim.

The Kadampa Tradition of Oral Instruction: This came from Geshe Chaen Ngawa to Zhoenu Oe. This is based on the instructions of the gurus on such teachings as the *Twelve Links*.

Dromtoenpa was Atisha’s heart disciple who called him ‘my son’. Atisha was indefinite in a sense because he would manifest as Avalokiteshvara.

Those who follow the practices of the Kadampa tradition mainly follow the six philosophical scriptures of the Classical Tradition. Those

who do not rely on the philosophical studies text follow the middle and short Lam-rim practices of Tsongkhapa. Tsongkhapa received the three lineages from Namkha Gyeltsaen of Lhodrag and from Choekyab Zangpo of Dragor and combined them into one.

Those who do not study the philosophies or the middle or short Lam-rim mainly rely on the direct instructions of the lama and take *The Easy Path* or *The Swift Path* where they undertake the practices of the *Instruction Lineage* or *The Lineage of Oral Instruction*.

This collection is not the complete Kadampa teachings. They are scattered instructions which have been collected and put together.

Initially, in the instructions, we pay homage to all of the holy gurus. The reason for this is that if we may have some small qualities and knowledge, it is only due to the kindness and activities of the Buddhas. However, we are unable to have direct visions and contact with them so, in order to receive these qualities and knowledge, we have to rely on a middleman. This middleman is the guru. He should be seen as the Buddha appearing in ordinary form.

Although the heat of the sun is very hot, it cannot turn into fire. But, if you held a magnifying glass between the sun and straw, it would burn and cause fire. That magnifying glass is like the middleman.

The very hot sun is like the Buddhas and the magnifying glass is like the guru or spiritual master. By the power of the guru, we can receive the method to be able to burn all the delusions on our mental

continuum. (This burning of delusions with the wisdom fires is very elaborately explained in the Madhyamikan teachings.)

Therefore, there is no one who is more kind than one's own spiritual master. The Kadampa Master pays homage first to their guru's guru. So even when we undertake the Refuge practice, we first take refuge in the guru. The first refuge is not taken in the Buddhas.

If we could actually see the Buddhas and take teachings directly from them, we would not need to go for refuge to the lama or the gurus. We would then take refuge in the Buddhas. The time for us to be able to see the Buddhas has passed; we do not have the fortune now to see the Buddhas directly.

It is in relationship to how well we act that we need to have a guru who is in ordinary form. When we talk about the guru appearing in ordinary form, it means that ordinary form may show aspects of possessing a deluded mind, of being sick, of old age. All of these ordinary things happen to him. The guru needs to show this kind of form, otherwise there would be no point appearing in the form of ordinariness.

From our side however, we should generate the thought that, although the guru has an ordinary appearance, in reality, he is Shakyamuni Buddha. If we are able to do this, we will receive all the benefits of having seen a Buddha. If we are able to recognize and see the ordinary gurus in the form of Action Buddhas, that will leave an imprint on our mind for the future. It will give cause to have direct contact with the Buddhas and to be able to receive teachings directly from them.

From the guru's side, whether he is actually a Buddha or not, is not the point. The point is from *our* side to see him in the nature of the Buddha. That is what is important.

If you are unable to see the guru in this way and can only see him as an ordinary person - maybe from one point of view, you have no choice. Maybe, you do not have the right understanding of guru devotion.

The Lam-rim teachings on guru devotion are explained elaborately and are clarified very well. It is also well explained in sutric, tantric and vinaya teachings.

There are some who say that, on the Hinayana path, guru devotional practice is not mentioned but this is only due to a lack of understanding and a lack of study. In the Vinaya, it says that you need to see the guru in the form of the Buddhas.

The Hinayana, or Theravadin path, says that if you make offerings to the guru, it will be equal to making offerings to the Buddhas. If you criticise the guru that is also equal to criticising the Buddhas.

In the Hinayana or Theravadin Path, they mention four or five levels of gurus or spiritual masters. The one who taught you the alphabet is also to be considered a spiritual master. And then, of course, you also have to consider the spiritual master who gave you your ordination.

So the necessity of relying on the guru and of guru devotional practice is mentioned in both the Hinayana and Mahayana teachings. It is not something in which some paths are lacking.

The sutras give examples of how to practice guru devotion. For example, there is a story about a bodhisattva who was always crying and how he practiced guru devotion. Examples such as these are given in all the three levels of prajnaparamita sutras - the extensive, the middle and the short form.

In the Hinayana sutra known as the Paluchi (sic), they give an example of how the Bodhisattva Losang practiced guru devotion. Losang not only saw his own guru as a Buddha, but he also saw all sentient beings in the form of Buddhas.

There are cautions to be put forward when considering this matter. For instance, if the guru from his own side does not consider himself to be a Buddha, should he actually be considered to be a Buddha? There have been enquiries made about this and it is considered that it is only from our side that we should consider the guru to be a Buddha. Others' point of view is that they do not consider that to be so.

The main point here is to develop and generate a pure vision for oneself alone. It is not our responsibility to check with others whether they are having pure visions or not. Doing that is not our task nor our responsibility.

However, there are others who do not follow this tradition. Their lamas or teachers hesitate to talk about the topic of guru devotion because they feel uncomfortable about it. They feel that it is a subject which is not suitable to talk about. But this is not the case because guru devotion and seeing the guru as the Buddha is the very first step. From my side, I always express this very heavily.

The reason why the lamas who give teachings sit on a high throne is not because that person is very highly qualified and so on, and it is not from this point of view that the thrones are prepared.

Actually, it is not the right thing to talk from a high throne, because the listener could very well be a highly realized bodhisattva or practitioner! From my side, to sit on such a high throne to talk is not a correct thing to do. However, what the person is speaking about, the Dharma, is very precious and holy. So it is from that point of view - the Dharma - that the thrones are prepared. It is not for the person teaching the Dharma.

In the past, in India, there were no thrones when the five hundred Arhats were trying to collect all the teachings and put them together. So they collected their robes, folded them and put them all together to make a special seat from which to teach. So whoever was clarifying the discourse sat on that. All of this is clearly explained in the Lam-rim Chenmo.

In the Lam-rim Chenmo, there are many disciplines that even the teacher needs to follow. There are also many disciplines that the listener needs to follow. So there are many disciplines that need to be followed to discuss the Lam-rim.

From the explainer's side, if he is very proudly talking or has an impure motivation, it is then incorrect to have discussions on this subject. Also if, from the mouth of the person who is giving the teaching and explaining the holy Dharma, comes the topic of leaving money, then that is totally wrong. Therefore the person who gives Dharma teachings has to have very pure motivation.

The first line, “I pay homage respectfully to all the holy gurus,” is very important for us to hear. As Lama Tsong Khapa said: “The auspicious method is created by having a proper relationship with the guru, who shows the complete path.” This is done by making offering to him of pure and proper practice. This point is very heavily stressed by Lama Tsong Khapa.

The second line says: “When Atisha came to Tibet, he was like a god because he brought this pure tradition. His three disciples - Dromtoenpa, Potowa and Sharawa questioned him on various points such as: What is more important for an individual undertaking the practice to achieve buddhahood - the scriptures and the commentaries or the lama’s instruction?”

Lama Atisha replied: “The lama’s instruction is more important than the scriptures and the commentaries”. How could that be so? It is because these sorts of doubts arise that people nowadays say there is no need to go to listen to the teachings from a lama because you can study from books. By relying on books alone, one cannot achieve buddhahood.

Other queries are, for instance: “Why are the oral instructions more important than the scriptures and the commentaries?”

By relying on the three doctrines of spiritual collections, of course, one can become very learned and a very good philosopher. But, in terms of practice, if there was no oral instructions from a lama, then the Dharma and the lama would become separate; they would not be able to unite. This would be like going to the supermarket and

counting how many articles there are for sale but not buying anything. It would be just a waste of time.

So when we talk about the Dharma, the important thing is to put whatever you learn into practice, to integrate your mind with the Dharma.

The three disciples then asked, if by receiving the oral instructions, they were to preserve the three moral conducts, the three precepts, and turn the body - the three doors - towards creating virtue, whether that alone would be sufficient or not.

Lama Atisha's reply was: "That alone is not sufficient because, even though you are preserving the three moralities and turn your three doors to creating virtue, if you do not have the wish to get out of the three realms of existence, then these actions will only become causes to take rebirth in samsara again."

This is true, because even if we do preserve the three moralities purely and try to create virtue as much as we can, if we do not have the wish to get out of cyclic existence - to maintain the thought of renunciation - then all that we do will not become the cause to achieve liberation.

THE THREE LEVELS OF SUFFERING

The three levels of renunciation can be related to the three levels of suffering. The three levels of suffering are known as;

- the suffering of change;
- the suffering of suffering;
- all pervasive suffering

It has been said that even animals generate renunciation towards the suffering of suffering. But we are human beings so we must understand that changeable sufferings are still sufferings.

When we come to the suffering of change, we are then able to see the existence of gods and humans in the form of suffering. However, at present, this is difficult for us to accept, isn't it?

If the happiness of samsara is actual happiness, then we should *always* remain happy. But that is not so. In the next moment, it changes into suffering. For example, when you first entered into this hall, you sat down and were very relaxed, comfortable and happy to be here. After a while, you thought about going back home and you started looking at your watch, waiting for the session to finish. Later on, you began to feel discomfort in your bottoms and knees from sitting. Therefore, the initial comfort and satisfaction did not remain because it had been changed into suffering.

The very holy practitioners generate a much stronger renunciation towards the pleasures of the god realm than they do towards the

sufferings of the hell realms. This is because, even though they are experiencing great pleasure now, when those gods have finished the karma to be there, they will fall directly down to the hell realms. They will then have to remain there for a long period of time. Therefore, the practitioners contemplate the disadvantages of being in the god realm.

Even non-Buddhists try to generate renunciation to the causes of changeable suffering. We, being Buddhists, have to be better than those non-Buddhists! The extraordinary quality of Buddhists is the renunciation that leads to the cessation of all pervasive suffering.

If you do not study these things, it will be extremely difficult to study the Lam-rim.

At the moment, we are discussing the renunciation of samsara, but some of you may not know what we mean by 'samsara'. There are those who think that samsara is the true realm and that we are travelling within this true realm. Actually, there is no such place as samsara. Samsara is one's own aggregates. When we talk about oceans of suffering in samsara, we are not referring to a particular big ocean or this place *in* samsara. We are referring to one's own aggregates - this is the ocean of suffering.

When we can extinguish the continuum of the aggregates of suffering, then we will be free from samsara.

If you were to ask: "Is it possible to extinguish the continuum of the aggregates of suffering?" The answer is yes. It is possible because

there is logical proof of how to accomplish and achieve liberation. The definition of 'liberation' is being able to eradicate the aggregates of suffering. Another logical reason for understanding that the aggregates of suffering can be extinguished is due to the force of the antidotes. The antidotes become effective by practicing the three trainings and by generating the wisdom of realizing selflessness. These are the direct antidotes to eliminating the aggregates of suffering.

We must be able to recognize the objects from which we generate renunciation and, to do this, we must relate to the three levels of feelings - pleasure, pain and neutral feelings. The feeling of pain is the suffering of change. The feeling of happiness is also the suffering of change. There are non-Buddhists who generate renunciation towards neutral feelings. There are non-Buddhists who have reached all the levels such as understanding infinite space and infinite consciousness and so forth, but this is only due to their having renounced the neutral feeling within samsara. Therefore it is most important to renounce the all pervasive form of suffering.

DEDICATION

So, as we said before, if we do not renounce samsara and we are just preserving the three levels of precepts and training the three doors towards accumulating virtue, this will not become the causes for you to achieve enlightenment. On the other hand, if you do not dedicate such merits towards them being a cause for the achievement of buddhahood or enlightenment, then due to wrong realizations or influences, this merit can easily be eliminated or finished.

If you were to drop your wallet or camera on the street, there would be a big possibility of it getting lost. Similarly, if you do not dedicate the merit that you have accumulated, these virtues are easily eaten away by anger and the like. The moment that you generate anger, all your virtues will be taken away. So the wallet of virtue has been completely emptied.

Another thing to be aware of is - no matter how many holy instructions you practice, or how strongly you meditate, or whatever form of practice you undertake - if you are unable to reverse your thoughts from worldly concerns, none of that will benefit you in the future.

MODESTY

In our case, we do a certain amount of practice and then we like to show off what we do! If you do this kind of thing, then you are under the influence of the Eight Worldly Dharmas.

There was an example given from the past where a practitioner was performing a meditation when somebody asked him: "What are you doing here? What are you meditating on?" He replied: "I am meditating on patience." The other person then said: "Oh, if you are meditating on patience then you eat shit." Then this meditator got very angry and said "No! YOU eat shit!" So this shows that he was not actually meditating on patience at all, he was just trying to impress.

When we practice we should not generate the feeling "Oh, I am a great practitioner and I am doing my daily practices all the time!" If you are attached to these kinds of nice words, then this just becomes part of the Eight Worldly Dharmas.

SECRECY

There are three things that we need to keep secret and they are:

- to keep secret one's own qualities;
- to keep secret others' faults; and
- to keep secret important decisions or matters.

If somebody does some kind of great thing and then expresses it to everybody, then this great, great thing actually becomes an obstacle. You will not be able to accomplish what you want to accomplish. So we must understand that we need to keep these things secret!

THE THREE RELIANCES

There are three things that we must rely upon:

- whenever we talk to others, we need to be aware of the other person's feelings and reactions;
- we need to appreciate others' suggestions; but
- most of all, we need to integrate our mind with the Dharma.

These are the Kadampa practices!

Day Two

MOTIVATION

At present, we have achieved this perfect human rebirth and it is extremely difficult to find. Not only this, but we have also met with the holy Dharma of the Buddha's teachings and that, too, is extremely difficult to find.

On top of all this, we are free from the eight discordant conditions, or the negative conditions, and we possess the ten richnesses or the ten endowments. Therefore, whatever remaining part of life that we have left should not be wasted on trivial activities. We should take the essence of this life as expressed in the Lam-rim teachings and try to generate that motivation accordingly.

When we talk about taking the essence of life or the advantages of this life, we should not aim solely for the attainment of higher rebirths as a god or human being in the future. Nor should we be attached to the pleasures of samsara. Instead, we should be aiming at freeing all the sad, beautiful sentient beings from the sorrowful existence of samsara.

So it is with this motivation in mind - "Now I must achieve enlightened buddhahood. I will try my best to achieve this so as to be able to benefit all sentient beings". And so it is with this motivation

that I am now going to listen to these teachings, then contemplate on the meaning and meditate on them. I will combine listening, contemplation and meditation.

On listening to Dharma teachings, we need to generate the wisdom of hearing. And then without losing the wisdom that arises from hearing, we need to generate the wisdom that arises from contemplation. And without losing the wisdom that arises from contemplation, we need to integrate that wisdom into our mental continuum by generating the wisdom arising from meditation. We must combine and integrate these three practices.

We also need to combine that accumulation of merit with the purifying of negativities by engaging in the actual practices. These three should also be combined. If we are able to follow and combine meditation in this kind of manner, we will achieve clear and precise meditation.

In our case, however, we have been generating infinite thoughts and concepts during the day and then, in the evening, when we try to sit and meditate, either we cannot remember the techniques and topics for the meditation, or we cannot contemplate or get a deep understanding of the meaning of the topic of meditation. No matter how hard we try, we always lose the actual points of the meditation.

Some of you may have taken the Refuge precepts, lay vows, bodhisattva vows, tantric vows or even ordination vows. Maybe some have not taken any of these, but you still have a strong interest in engaging in the practices.

It is said that, even if one cannot engage in deep and profound meditation but is still able to keep the precepts and advices of the samayas purely, then it was said by the Buddha himself that, within seven or eight lifetimes, we will be able to achieve Buddhahood.

So even though we may not be able to engage in profound meditation or practices, just by guarding our three doors and creating virtue is the very least we can do. We have control over our body, speech and mind, so at least we can try that. If we try our best to influence our three doors towards creating virtue, then slowly, in due course, we will be able to influence and lead our three doors towards creating virtue all day.

We should investigate whether our body, speech and mind are more under the influence of negative or positive forces. At this present stage, we will probably find that our three doors are almost entirely influenced by negative thoughts. But, if we are able to slowly influence the virtuous thoughts to remove the negative thoughts, then, day by day and week by week, we will be able to take the essence, or to take advantage of our human existence.

The subject that we are discussing now are the Kadampa teachings and what they explain is how to lead our body, speech and mind towards creating virtue. This is the aim of the teachings.

The Kadampa teachings, or precepts (all the Buddha's teachings are known as precepts) are instructions. Whether they become actual precepts, or instructions, depends entirely on us. If we find that by applying this method our mind becomes subdued, then these instructions have become precepts.

DEATH AND IMPERMANENCE

As we discussed yesterday, no matter how skillful we become at expounding the teachings, at investigating and meditating, if we are unable to transform our thinking pattern from the eight worldly concerns, what we do cannot become pure Dharma practice. Unless we realize the importance of death and impermanence, we are only preparing to live this very life.

When we talk about the practice of thinking about death and impermanence, it is not enough to have the thought, “I am going to die.” That thought alone is not the practice. Even animals think that way.

We are living our life due to the kindness of the Triple Gem, otherwise, we would not have even one second’s control over our life. The power of our death is possessed by others, not by oneself. But when one attains the Bodhisattva stages - the Arya bhumis - then, we have control over our death. It is good that we are still alive, but we must also realize that we have no control over our lives.

When impermanence and death calls you, there is no choice but to follow. There is nowhere to hide nor can we run away. If you do not think very strongly upon the practices of death and impermanence, our practice will always be mixed up with worldly activities and concerns.

Although we do not have control over our life, we still have the belief that “I am not going to die today!” While we have this kind of conviction, we just plan to live our life for today and the only concern

will be for the preparation of food and the provision of shelter. These concerns will come first. Next, we think about taking care of ourself and of making money.

THE EIGHT WORLDLY DHARMAS

Even if we do try to accumulate virtue, that virtue will not be stored and safeguarded because we leave nine doors wide open! These doors are the doors to the eight worldly dharmas plus the door of anger. Therefore, no matter how much virtue we may accumulate, it can be very easily destroyed - and the next day you are left without any virtue at all!

Since we are planning to live forever, when somebody praises us, we feel extremely happy. We do not like being criticised or despised. Actually, when we are praised, we lose a lot because we then become obliged to those people and want to give them money or presents. Therefore whatever we received has been lost. On top of this, when we are praised, we feel very special and generate pride and if we are criticised or despised, we generate anger!

Therefore, it is said that we should not like being praised, because we will generate pride and this gives rise to accumulating non-virtue. Rather, we should consider all of these praises and nice words as just being echos. It is said that we should not like praise, we should be happy when we are criticised.

Whenever the bodhisattvas are criticised, they feel great joy because then they are made aware of their faults and so eliminate them. But,

when we receive criticism, our reaction is shown straight away on our face. It suddenly becomes black. But, when someone praises us, we smile with very wide open mouths. Actually the other person is not asking to see our teeth but we open our mouths so wide that we show all our teeth to them!

If we lose something or are robbed, we feel very sad but we are very happy if we win money from gambling. We then tell all our friends “Oh, I won some money gambling, let’s have a party!” But if we lose money from gambling, we cry.

This only happens because we do not understand the instructions on the disadvantages of the eight worldly dharmas. Even if we cannot practice avoiding them, we can, at least, pray to be able to avoid them in the future.

It is said that, if we are offered others’ possessions, we should not feel happy about it because this then becomes a kind of loan and, in due course, we will have to repay it. Later, we will not only have to repay that gift, but we will also have to repay very heavy interest. So when you are given things, it is like having them in the form of a loan - so you should not be happy about it.

On the other hand, if our things are stolen or taken by force, we should feel happy because then we have given the loan to others!

Similarly, when we feel sick, we feel very sad and depressed and so we become unable to cope with life. But we feel very happy when we are healthy and our situation is very comfortable.

These points will come later, but practitioners should feel happy at being terribly sick or when our situations are not going smoothly. This is because obstacles, sickness, enemies and interferences induce us to create more virtue.

When our situation is luxurious and comfortable, there are no problems, but when the situation is not going smoothly, we should feel very joyful and happy because then, we can really practice. In such a case, we do not need to go to the Pure Lands because wherever we are becomes a Pure Land.

Many people are able to practice Dharma more when faced with bad conditions or negative circumstances. For instance, when faced with enemies, we are given the best opportunity to practice patience.

We do not need to explain all the eight worldly dharmas here in detail. From this example, we can relate to the other seven.

For instance, if we have wealth, we feel happy. But, in the precepts, it says this should not be the case because, if we are wealthy, we can then generate miserliness because we are never content with what we have. Also, we could only have the wish to be able to accumulate more wealth.

If we are able to equalize or suppress the eight worldly dharmas by applying the respective antidotes, we will really be practicing Dharma. When we encounter difficulties such as sicknesses and interferences, we can actually purify negative obscurations, negative karmas. To be given the opportunity to purify negative karmas should make us feel happy!

SELFLESSNESS

It has also been said that, when we feel happy, we must dedicate this sort of luxurious situation to other sentient beings in the form of giving and taking. Others will then reflect and think that all these experiences that you are going through - joyfully - are due to the kindness of the Triple Gem. This has been expressed in different prayers such as “May this joy fill space and may other sentient beings enjoy it.”

Dharma practice is where we must counteract our delusions.

We should be able to take control of any situation and apply the antidote, otherwise we let emotional states and negative thoughts such as attachment and anger arise. In this case, we are not following Dharma practice - we are wasting our time.

When the disciple Drom asked Lama Atisha, “What is the most supreme part of Dharma practice?” Lama Atisha replied, “**The most supreme part** is the realization of selflessness.”

In our case, we are not trying to realize selflessness - we are trying to prove self-existence and so we become a yogi of samsara!

There is a text that talks about the self-grasping attitude and how boastful it is. It says:

“No matter how hard the practitioner tries to reject and negate me, they are unable. On top of that, I provide them with lots of benefits leading them up to the peak of cyclic existence and then down to the bottom of the deepest hell.

I protect these beings when they feel hungry and cold and when they go through all the different experiences. I am with them all the time and yet they are trying to eliminate me.

There are only a few who can actually destroy me. They are like a star during the daytime."

Because we cling to this self-grasping attitude, we cannot become one of the super-learned ones. And if you want to become a super-learned one, you must generate the wisdom to generate selflessness.

The supreme of all efforts is to subdue one's mind. We see many scriptures and we hear many teachers saying that we must apply antidotes towards delusions to try to eliminate them. If we are able to apply an antidote rightaway, we will become very diligent towards our practice.

It is said that **the supreme of all the qualities** is to benefit others. Here when we talk about benefiting others, it does not refer to the kind of benefit we provide to others. The benefit here refers to the bodhicitta thought. When we generate bodhicitta, we achieve great qualities.

All the instructions or precepts are to constantly watch one's mind. Be constantly aware of one's mind because our mind is very unstable. Samsara is like the cemetery and our mind is like the zombie - the being who returns from the dead, who just wanders round and around.

So to constantly watch our mind, whether it is under the influence of virtue or non-virtue is **the supreme instruction** amongst all the instructions or precepts. In our case, we normally do not watch our faults, we only watch others' faults. We need to reverse this point. We should not watch others' faults, we should watch what our own mind is doing.

The supreme antidote amongst all the antidotes is the understanding or realization of the lack of inherent existence.

The supreme behaviour amongst all the conducts is to go against all worldly conducts. This is because the Dharma and the worldly way of life are totally separate. When we talk about worldly beings, we mean those who are totally concerned with this life's purposes. They are those who only seek food, clothing and shelter and try to subdue enemies and accumulate more friends. These are considered to be worldly beings. If our life is similar to theirs, we are against Dharma practice.

As I said previously, the boundaries of the Dharma are for practitioners. The non-practitioners are those who are mainly concerned only for this life's pleasure and happiness. They are the worldly beings. Those who are more concerned for their future lifetimes are considered to be the Dharma practitioners.

The supreme realization or attainment is the reduction of the delusions. This can be seen as seeing the deity directly or achieving some kind of telepathic power, etc. But these are not considered to be realizations. The actual realization is the minimization or the eradication of the delusions. This is considered to be the sublime realization.

The sign of being an accomplished siddha is by becoming less attached, or less desirous. But if we want more and more, then we are not showing signs of being a practitioner.

The supreme amongst all the generosities is non-attachment. When we talk about generosity, it is not something that the poor cannot do and that only the rich can do. There are many levels of generosity - the generosity of Dharma, etc. There is the special generosity of the Chod practitioners. If they are really practicing, this is the best form of generosity because they are actually giving their physical bodies.

The practice that you are doing does not necessarily need to be the exclusive Chod practice because, even from the point of view of Vajrayogini's practice, you have ways of accumulating merit through giving your body in the form of tsog offerings.

Actually, the generosity of giving the physical body is considered to be one of the best forms of the practice of generosity because, among all of our belongings, we consider it to be the most precious. Because we consider this body to be so precious - by giving it, it is considered to be the most precious form of generosity.

The most supreme morality amongst all moral conduct is to calm one's mind. In our present state, our minds are very gross and rough. When we are able to pacify and remove the delusions from our minds, our minds will become very flexible and peaceful.

The most supreme patience, amongst all the patiences, is to regard oneself as very low. If one regards oneself the lowest amongst all the sentient

beings, then that is the best practice of patience. It is as Dromtoenpa has said - below him, there is only water. The rest of the beings are above him. When one is able to regard oneself as the lowest of all, one is then able to practice patience in the most supreme form.

There are emotional thoughts such as pride, hatred and jealousy and so forth. These faults are within the category of anger. When these thoughts arise, there is no place for us to practice patience.

When we have pride, we think of ourselves as the greatest one, therefore, there is no space for us to practice patience.

Jealousy is in regard to others' good qualities. We develop jealousy with reference to others' possessions, improvements or well being, etc. and through this type of thinking, it is difficult to practice patience.

If one is able to consider oneself the lowest one, there is no way one can generate pride or jealousy, etc. and one is then able to practice patience.

The most supreme effort, amongst all effort, is to give up the activities of this life. If we cling to this life's activities, we do not have the wish to strive for creating virtue. We do not generate any effort to create virtue. Therefore, we need to give up the activities of this life.

The supreme meditation amongst all meditations, is on non-pretention. In the text, this is called 'uncreated form.' The single-pointed concentration mind is called 'samadhi.' If the mind is wandering, there are so many things arising that one is unable to concentrate single-

pointedly. But, in the text, it does not mention samadhi so clearly. The term for supreme meditation is 'without pretention.' This refers to having a single-pointed type of mind because, if the mind is scattered, one is unable to focus on the object in point.

The highest wisdom, amongst all wisdom, is not grasping or clinging to the 'I' and the mind.

The supreme spiritual master, amongst all spiritual masters, is someone who points out your faults and then tells you to avoid them. If this kind of instruction is forthcoming, this constitutes the supreme spiritual master amongst all. If the spiritual master tells you immediately, without hesitation, your faults, then that is regarded as being the supreme master.

The supreme instruction or precepts, above all precepts, is the instruction that shows and expresses all your faults. If the instructions contain that kind of information, then it is considered to be the most supreme instruction or precept.

The instruction or the teachings should be hitting the nest of delusions directly. How do we have a nest of delusions? We have all these different levels of delusions like a poisonous snake. So if the instruction or precept is hitting them directly to destroy them, then this is considered to be the supreme instruction.

The supreme friend, amongst all friends, is mindfulness and introspection. Maybe you all know what we mean by 'mindfulness and introspection,' but it is still very important to define it clearly.

You have to view introspection and mindfulness in the form of one being the cause and the other being the result. If you just look from the gross point of view, it seems you have to have mindfulness first and introspection later. But it is not like that. You have to perform the practice of introspection first and mindfulness later.

Introspection identifies and recognizes the object. For example, the cup is an introspection. The one who holds that cup is **mindfulness** because mindfulness has to hold introspection.

If the handler holding the cup lets go, it drops. Similarly, if mindfulness does not hold onto introspection, then you lose introspection. Therefore, introspection is given to the hand of mindfulness. Mindfulness has to hold tightly onto introspection otherwise, if you become distracted, you will lose or drop introspection. Then again, introspection itself has to check whether mindfulness is still holding on to it or not. This is like a hand holding a cup. The cup itself has to investigate or watch whether the hand is still holding it or not. You have to understand this.

So generally, mindfulness is the mindfulness and introspection is the kind of thought that investigates, that watches constantly.

But, even if it is introspection, it does not necessarily need to be the investigating type of thought. Introspection first identifies the object, then hands it over into the hands of mindfulness and later watches or investigates whether the mindfulness is still holding that object or not. For example, initially the teacher teaches the scriptures to the disciple. Then the teacher asks the students to study - either

memorizing or practicing handwriting, or whatever - but later the teacher has to check whether the disciple is actually doing it or not.

When the teacher checks and the disciple is doing things correctly, then he/she does not have to check again, because the disciple is doing well. Later, the teacher watches from a distance. If he/she then sees the student is not studying well and has fallen asleep, then the teacher has to come and push the student to do what is required.

The function of introspection and mindfulness is something like this. If we have delusions in our continuum, but we have mindfulness and introspection, then these are the most supreme of friends.

This introspection is part of wisdom. Initially, introspection needs to identify the object and then hands it over to mindfulness. Mindfulness is not to forget the object. But then, if one is a meditator on concentration, just merely not forgetting the object alone is not sufficient. It is not only not forgetting the object, it is mindfulness to hold the object quite tightly.

To accomplish concentration, mindfulness is very useful - almost indispensable. In our case, when we first hear the teachings, we are able to recognize the meaning. This is considered to be introspection. When we return to our homes, then again introspection has to check if what we heard is still in our mind or not. If mindfulness is not holding and you are not remembering anything, that means that the mindfulness did not do a good job! Therefore you should not lose these two friends - mindfulness and introspection. For the Dharma practitioner, mindfulness and introspection are the supreme friends.

The inducement for us to engage in virtue, or to practice Dharma, is **the supreme inducement** and these are the sicknesses, diseases, enemies and the interferers or obstacles. These are like the manager who manages our practice.

There are many obstacles and some of you may not know what is meant by 'obstacles' and 'interferers'. There are the interferences from spirits. These are spirits who constantly come to harm us. At the end of the Heart Sutra are the pacifiers to the 84,000 obstacles. If you ask: "What are the 84,000 obstacles?" then you do not know anything!

There are 1080 interferers who reside in space. Then there are 360 male interferers and 360 female interferers. As well as 360 neutral interferers. Then there is another level of spirit interferers called 'Don.' They are the kind of spirits who do not harm us, but if we harm them, they will come and take revenge.

Actual practitioners feel happy when they become sick. Normally these practitioners pray to have the negativities of all sentient beings ripen onto oneself. They pray that all virtues and happiness may ripen on others. When they become sick, they feel that they have succeeded in their prayers.

We always pray, during the Lama Chopa practice, to receive all the sufferings and negativities of sentient beings and we dedicate our virtues and wellbeing to other sentient beings. Therefore the practitioners feel happy because they are able to represent the sickness of all sentient beings and they are successful in their practices. In some cases, when you see that the bodhisattvas are sick, we feel

compassion towards them. This is the wrong compassion! We cannot feel sorry for the bodhisattvas.

It is said that all of these interferences, obstacles and sicknesses are the best conditions to induce oneself to create virtue because, when we have these difficulties, it harms the self-grasping attitude. When we are sick, the self-grasping attitude is sick. These sicknesses harm these thoughts and induce us to create virtue.

Therefore, these destructive conditions are the most supreme means or conditions to create virtue and the worst enemies are the virtuous friends because they are the teachers. Therefore, when we follow the Mahayana Path or practices, whatever difficulties we face, we should learn to bear them. To train in these thoughts and in this way is very important. It is also a very high level of training.

The most skillful means, amongst all means, is to stop quarrelling. If one is quarrelling, then one is not being skillful.

The supreme benefit, amongst all benefits, is to inspire others to engage in Dharma practice. Advising others to follow practices correctly and purely, even though you cannot practice purely and correctly yourself, by inspiring others to do so is the best way of benefiting others.

Not practicing oneself or not allowing others to practice are the negative friends. This way, oneself is not following the practices and also one is disturbing or not allowing another to follow Dharma practice. These are considered to be harmful activities.

The supreme benefit for oneself, amongst all the benefits, is to guide or direct one's mind to the spiritual practices. If one is able to transform one's thoughts into Dharma practice, then that is the supreme benefit for oneself.

Dromtoenpa asked Atisha: "What is the final mode of all phenomena?"

The reply was that the final mode of all phenomena is emptiness - the essence of emptiness and compassion. This is like worldly medicine. There is one kind of medicine that cures all diseases. It has that potential. Like the example of that medicine, if one realizes the meaning of emptiness of all phenomena, then one is able to eradicate all the sicknesses of all the delusions.

Then, again, Dromtoenpa asked Atisha: "In that case, there are some who say they have realized emptiness but they have not reduced their delusions of attachment and anger. How come?"

The reply that Atisha gave was that only their mouths realized emptiness!

If one realizes the supreme emptiness - the excellent emptiness - directly, then one's body, speech and mind becomes very soft, like cotton wool. It would be like the soup that is made from tsampa, with a lot of butter in it. When you drink it, it is so smooth. When we realize emptiness, then one's three doors become very smooth.

Quoting from Aryadeva, it says: "Thus, having doubt over the mode of existence of all phenomena, will damage cyclic existence. Just by having reasonable doubt towards the subject of emptiness acts as an

antidote and damages cyclic existence.” Instead, if one’s three poisonous delusions are increasing intensely, then it means that really only the mouth has realized emptiness - not the mind. This also means that one is not even having reasonable doubt towards emptiness.

However, if one realizes emptiness without having any faults, then one is able to enter into the right path and can then damage the emotional states of thoughts. If one is able to realize emptiness without any faults - that the essence of all Dharma practices are included within the practice of the six perfections - then, with this realization, one is able to practice generosity and so forth without having many hardships.

One would then have stainless morality because one would not have clinging and attachment towards the objects.

One would also have stainless samadhi which is free from clinging to natural existence and so forth.

With this realization, one would have a faultless practice of patience because, when one realizes emptiness, the person towards whom you are practicing patience would be seen by you as empty of inherent existence. So you could never generate anger towards them.

Similarly, you would have the stainless or faultless perfection of effort.

We will stop here, but if you have any questions that will make great laughter, then you can ask one or two!

Now even if you do not have any questions, you can burst into great laughter.

Day Three

MOTIVATION

Generate motivation by thinking that having found this perfect human rebirth once, it is very difficult to achieve again. Then, by taking the essence of this rebirth in order to liberate and free entire sentient beings from the three levels of suffering, we will listen to the teachings with that feeling.

The subject that we are going to discuss now is based on the collections of scattered Kadampa instructions.

As we discussed in an earlier session, if one has the wisdom realizing emptiness, then the rest of the six perfections are included in that practice.

Generally, the practice of bodhicitta, the altruistic attitude and the compassionate attitude are also Mahayana practices, but without the help of the wisdom realizing emptiness, one is unable to reach enlightenment - buddhahood.

So, no matter how much virtue one is able to create with the practice of bodhicitta and compassionate attitude, if we are lacking the wisdom eye, it is like a blind person. For example, if you had a group of blind people, with the help of a person who was not blind, they could be led wherever they wished to go.

Similarly, with relation to the wisdom eye and the perfection of wisdom. All the virtues that we accumulate through the other perfections, we are able to transmute into being the causes for enlightenment. Otherwise, no matter how much virtue we accumulate through the help of the five perfections and the other methods, if we lack this wisdom eye, one is unable to transform these virtues into the causes for enlightenment.

Therefore, even in the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* - in the wisdom chapter - it says that all the branches that we are taught by the Capable One, the Buddha, are for the sake of generating wisdom. This has a very deep level of meaning.

So, this is the short explanation of how one is able to combine the other forms of perfections - if one had the wisdom.

Lama Atisha was asked: "In that case, having a mere realization of emptiness, will it lead to buddhahood?" The reply was: "There is nothing - such as the sounds that we hear, or the objects that appear to us, etc., - that are not created by the mind."

It is exactly like that. We are in samsara because it has been created by the mind. When we go beyond samsara, that step has also been created by the mind.

If sentient beings are motivated by ignorance - whether we create virtue or not - it produces the different levels of the world systems. So the entire universe that we live in, came into being due to the accumulation of the collective karma of sentient beings. It did

not come into being due to a number of powerful human beings.

Due to cognizing the nature of the mind and cognizing the emptiness of the mind, then one is able to create and produce the different levels of Pure Lands.

So whether it is samsara - cyclic existence or the state beyond, nirvana - it is all created by the mind.

When we talk about the mind, it, in itself, is also lacking inherent existence. It is in the nature of emptiness. This mind does not exist inherently from its own side.

The subtle mind is in the nature of clarity, luminosity. If one is able to recognize this mind and identify it, then, through that identification, one will strive to reach the state of enlightenment.

At the present time, one is unable to utilize that subtle luminosity of mind because we are under the control of ignorance and the different forms of winds. Therefore, we are circling in samsara.

Awareness of the mind itself as being in the form and nature of emptiness and then cognizing the non-duality of these two, is the understanding of emptiness. So, what it is saying here is that the nature of mind itself is in the form of emptiness, or rather, the ultimate view is cognizing or realizing the emptiness of the mind.

If one is able to identify 'correct view,' then that is something else but, normally, what we have is a kind of mixture. Mainly, we have wrong views concerning supreme views and so forth. Then the twenty different levels of tantric views and collections become entirely wrong views. So, most of the time, we are dominated by wrong views.

In our case, due to having these wrong views or, from our side, seeing the objects wrongly, we are kept in samsara. Whereas, if one was able to see things in a correct way, without being influenced by mistaken views, we could get out of samsara.

Seeing the nature of the mind as emptiness and cognizing that, is the realization of emptiness. Then, holding that kind of understanding constantly is considered to be a meditation.

With this kind of understanding, and without distraction and contemplating it, is the meditation. Then, from that basis, the performing of different activities in the form of illusions is considered to be noble conduct.

In our case, normally, without having the realization of emptiness, we cannot accumulate the illusory way of virtue. Once we are able to understand that way, we are able to accumulate virtue in the form of illusion.

Generally, I know the way of purification that we undertake and the accumulations of virtue are in the nature of illusion, but the main thing is that we are unable to cognize that aspect. We are unable to understand that these are illusions.

It is said that if one is already carrying out this kind of practice, then one could perform them even in a dream. Then, if one could carry out the practices in a dream, that would also influence us at the time of death.

If one is then able to perform these practices at the time of death, one is able to perform them during the intermediate state, or the bardo state.

If one is able to perform these practices in the intermediate state, it is definite that one will achieve the supreme attainments of the supreme siddhis.

The next occasion was when Atisha was in Narthang with his three disciples. They requested him to give teachings on valid cognition.

It is said that, in terms of these studies on valid cognition, there are so many different levels, such as the cognition presented by the non-Buddhists. But, since there are infinite concepts and superstitions generated from that, there is no point to waste one's time on this type of matter because one's life is too short.

As we discussed in the last session, for the pure practitioner to receive praise etc., it becomes an obstacle to their practice. If one is required to perform certain activities to help them, then we feel that we are capable of something and we develop pride in ourselves. This creates a danger of reducing or minimising the degrees of practice that one is undertaking. Then this becomes an obstacle to the practice.

Therefore, it is said that the nice words of praise are objects to be given up like something which you do not want and would like to throw far away.

The essential practices of bodhicitta and the meditation on compassion are to provide everlasting happiness to sentient beings' minds.

If one is able to meditate on the thought of loving kindness and bodhicitta at length and dedicating to sentient beings, one is able to achieve the supreme siddhis or the supreme realizations. These kinds of realizations must be achieved by relying upon sentient beings because they are said to be much more precious than those of the wish-fulfilling jewel.

It is said, to try to accumulate the true levels of virtue, such as wisdom and merit, for the sake of infinite sentient beings - these are the essential practices.

Having accumulated the true levels of merits, then one must dedicate this virtue towards the attainment of enlightenment.

All of these existences which appear to us, appear as though they inherently existed - as if they truly existed from their own side. But the reality is that they do not exist in the way that they appear to us. One must recognize these existences as being like a dream, like an illusion, although they appear to us as if they inherently or truly do exist.

The true meaning is not the same as these objects appear to us. For example, we can see food in a dream but on taking that food, our stomachs will not be filled. So similarly, although these different

existences appear to be inherently existing, they do not exist in the way they appear to us. Therefore, one must recognize their very nature and how they lack true existence.

Basically the existence within samsara and beyond is just merely labelled on the valid basis of designation. It is through that combination that things are able to exist.

But, in our case, we grasp in a totally different way. We grasp at things as concretely existing from their own side and from their own right. It is due to this kind of grasping that we constantly circle in samsara.

There are many people who come to consult me when they have different kinds of problems - "What kind of karma did I have?" and "Did I create it?" etc. They are constantly contemplating this kind of suffering. They are not trying to use the methods to destroy the causes of these sufferings.

Since beginningless time, our mind is under the influence of ignorance and delusions, so our mind always cognizes the object in a totally different way - in an opposite way. Then, through that, we create or generate attachment and hatred, etc. It is through that, that we create non-virtue and negative karma and therefore our problems.

The karma that we are going through now is within us and the self-grasping attitude itself. This is the creator of all these karmas.

Although the self does not exist inherently, we cling and cherish that concept and through that, karmas are being accumulated. Then, we constantly have to go through experiencing different levels of suffering.

Although we do not know that these are mistaken views and we do not directly foresee the wisdoms and antidotes to them, the holy scriptures do mention that the direct antidote for these wrong conceptions is the wisdom realizing selflessness. Occasionally, we now and then recite these holy scriptures. Now, we even have day and night recitations of the Heart Sutra. These are meant as antidotes to destroy the wrong kinds of misconceptions. These are very good things to do.

Still, our minds generate attachment and hatred but, with the understanding of the meaning of the Heart Sutra, attachment and anger are eliminated. Since this is due to a lack of understanding of the direct meaning, even though our mouths recite the Heart Sutra, our minds keep generating attachment and hatred. In our case, we must still pray and keep on reciting to be able to realize the direct meaning of the Heart Sutra in order to stop the wrong concepts.

When Atisha travelled to Tibet, he firstly visited the upper part of Tibet called Ngari. He resided there for two years. Here, the great translator Rinchen Zangpo, Gyatsoen Senge and Chaen Ngawa took teachings from him. Chaen Ngawa and his followers took teachings for two months. They then made a promise that Atisha and the entourage could only be in Tibet for two months and that it was time for them to return back to India.

When Atisha was about to leave Narthang, Chaen Ngawa requested some final advice because he was returning to India. Atisha then replied: "Whatever teachings I have given in the past - is that not sufficient?"

Since they pushed so much, Atisha gave this final advice, starting from the word “Amaho” which can be understood in two ways: (1) that he was overjoyed and expressed this word, and (2) that he was discouraged because whatever teaching he had given, had become insufficient.

This advice was meant for all the followers of the Lama: “Most of you have very high understanding and very clear attitude and thoughts...”

Next, Lama Atisha was being very modest by saying: “To those of you who have good memories and very clear thoughts, a person such as I, who is less learned and less intelligent, cannot advise you.” In our case, if we are able to know even one percent of Lama Atisha’s qualities, we would feel like jumping for joy. We would say: “I have realized this and that! I am this and that!” We would express all these labels and more.

Lama Atisha, having possessed such great qualities, was being very modest by saying, “To advise you would not be sufficient. You are the virtuous friends, you are the Dharma friends and you are as dear as my own heart.” Normally when you talk about ‘heart,’ this is not talking about the heart which pumps blood. The heart referred to one’s own life. This is what we cherish most - our own life. Therefore, this is referring to the Dharma friends who are as dear as one’s own heart. We are children from ordinary beings, but here ‘child’ does not mean that one is very young or childlike, with a limited way of thinking.

The actual instruction is: “Until you achieve enlightenment, you need virtuous friends and you need the guru.” Therefore you must rely on

the guru. Until you realise the nature of the mode of existence, you need to hear and listen to the instructions of the lama.

It says that just by knowing the Dharma will not lead you to enlightenment. Just to know Dharma alone is not good enough, one must practice it.

Then, it says to give up and avoid the objects that are harmful, temporarily. We should keep away from those objects which are causing us to generate attachment and hatred with our mental continuum.

Atisha says: “Always remain in the place where your virtue is constantly increasing.” One must chose that place. It is said that until one is able to reach the state where one can control the mind, one should reside and remain in isolated places. This is because until one reaches control over the mind, external conditions are able to distract us and cause us to generate emotional thoughts, etc. So when one is able to control the mind, these external conditions and objects are unable to cause harm to us.

It is said that one must keep away from the five sensual objects. Whenever the five sense objects are around and distracting, the mind is ready to jump towards them. Therefore, keep away from these distractions.

It is also said in the thirty-seven practices that, until one gains control over one’s mind, one should remain in isolation. That is one of the practices of the Sons of the Conquerer.

Due to having distractions to our mind, we are generating emotional thoughts and due to having generated emotional thoughts, we are creating karma. This, then, is how one is kept circling again and again.

If one is a practitioner from the depths of one's heart, it is said that one must give up the friends who cause us to generate delusions. Instead, one must rely on virtuous friends and guard one's own mind. If you do not rely on virtuous friends and do not guard your mind, you will generate delusions in the mind.

Generally, there is no end to our work until we die. There is always something to do. Therefore, dedicate the virtue day and night and always investigate and analyse your own mind.

The Venerable Dromtoenpa had a disciple called (Sangpochene?) whom he requested to perform the Vajrayogini practice. Vajrayogini requested him to stay in the place called (Parmadup?) to perform some Dharma courses and teachings there.

He refused and said that he would like to visit some holy places in India and that he would like to make some offerings at Bodhgaya and other places. He also said that he would like to perform some Chod practices in the cemeteries.

She then said: "You do not need to go to these places if you want to do Chod practice. You can practice Chod at the place of your conceptual thoughts - the place of your superstitious thoughts. You practice Chod within the superstitious place of samsara and there you have the eight worldly resurrected beings.

“You do not necessarily have to go to Bodhgaya to make offerings. Within this isolated body, you have the Dharmakaya mind. If you want to make offerings, you can just make an offering to the Dharmakaya mind.”

“You do not necessarily need to go to India because, within the channels of your body, there are infinite dakinies and dakas residing there. So you can make tsog offerings to them.”

The main point here is to investigate one’s mind. There are so many different levels of investigating the mind. Even by devoting oneself to the guru, mentally, there are so many different levels.

There are many levels of seeing the guru or of relying on the guru in the form of Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya and Dharmakaya.

In our case, when we generate bodhicitta, at the same time, we also achieve the realization of the Simple Mahayana Path of Accumulation. So when one surpasses this realization and attains the Great Path of the Mahayana Path of Accumulation, one then achieves the realization known as the Four Legs of Miraculous Power.

It is said that, when one achieves the realization known as the meditative stabilization of the stream of doctrine, then this realization of the power of the Miraculous Leg is attained. Then from that, without one having to work, one can levitate and go and visit other Buddha Lands and receive Dharma teachings from those lands.

It is also said that, when we reach that realization then, from the statues that we have, we can also hear teachings. Initially, the statues

were made by ourselves but when one's mind is trained and we achieve these realizations, then, we can directly receive teachings from them.

Then, through progress, one simply attains the realization of the first Bhumi, where one can see the Sambhogakaya - the enjoyment bodies of the Buddha - directly.

By performing the tantric practices and then completing the generation stages, we are then able to see the celestial mansion and the form of dakas and dakinis.

This all totally depends on how purified our minds are and how one is able to cleanse one's mind. Through that, different visions appear.

Therefore, investigate one's mind, try to avoid negative thinking and try to adopt positive thinking. Through this, one can improve the visions. If we do not investigate and guard our mind, our mind is like a wild elephant and we will not know where it is going.

It is said that the instructions, the precepts, we spoke of in the earlier session, should be practiced according to the instructions given by the lamas. It is said that it is very difficult to follow accordingly the advice of the lamas, but these instructions are from the Buddha. If one is able to follow the Buddha's instructions, it means that one's realizations will be quite high. But in our case, it is important to follow as much as we can, to do as the lamas say. We must reduce as much as we can, what the lamas say *not* to do.

In order to follow the complete instructions correctly, we need to reach a certain level of realization. It is said that if one follows the

practices respectfully, without taking too long, one is able to experience a result.

If one practices Dharma from one's heart, the other things, like food, clothing and shelter will come naturally. If one is practising sincerely from the depths of one's heart, we will not need to worry about these things.

But in our case, because we are neither in the group of 'practitioners' nor in the group of 'worldly beings', we are in the middle, pretending to be a practitioner. If you are doing that, then you will be facing starvation!

When the practitioners are about their business, they face many obstacles and difficulties. Generally, when we are about our business, we make a profit. Therefore, we could be taking something which has not been given. This could be considered 'white' not 'black.' The 'black' is like stealing or against the country's laws.

There are so many people who, after meeting with the Dharma, their lives become a disaster! Their businesses become unsuccessful and there can be different problems within the family, and so forth. The cause of these problems is not the Dharma, but because of their own bad karma. This is because the Dharma has become too powerful and the ripening result of negative karma is ripening earlier than it normally would have done. If it is happening the other way around, it is due to there being no negative karma created from the person's side. Then you can blame that too, on the Dharma!

Since worldly life and spiritual life are totally different, it can happen that when one is trying to perform spiritual practice, there can be some misfortune happening to the worldly life. This does not mean that one is losing something, but that one is doing something good for the previous life's karma to ripen.

The disasters that can happen to the businessman are not something uncommon these days. These things happened even in the Buddha's time. There was a man who consulted Buddha about his business because it was not successful. What has happened? Buddha recommended reciting the mantra known as the Norbu Sangpo mantra, and to make offerings to the particular deity. Through this, the business will become successful.

Generally, the wealth deities like Dzambhala and Vaishravana are heavily relied upon by all businessmen. If, when they become successful and wealthy, they make generous contributions to beggars and those who are in need, then they will continue to help. However, if they become more and more miserly, then the wealth gods will think they are not doing the right thing and they will stop helping them. If the wealth gods are helping to increase sentient beings' miserliness, that means that they are helping them create more negative karma. So this means that they are actually causing these people to take rebirth in the preta realm in the future.

If you are practicing generosity, then the wealth gods will continue to support you. Normally people keep their wealth vases on Tara's statue, but you need to make offerings to those vases. Otherwise, nothing will come out!

Also, you should, now and then, recite the mantra. If you neither make offerings nor recite the mantra nor practice generosity, even if you have a house full of wealth vases, nothing will ever come out!

Vaishravana says by not practicing generosity and by only taking the wealth - "I am not happy with this type of person."

It is traditional that you need to make offerings to the wealth vases by offering the first portion and that needs to be very fresh. You need to recite the mantras. Then things will happen according to your wishes.

However, if you keep the wealth vase in a dark place and you do not make offerings or recite the mantra or practice generosity then you would say: "Oh, such-and-such a lama made a wealth vase for me but nothing is happening!" There is then danger of developing wrong faith towards that lama. You could even lose faith in the lama who made the vase.

There are also rituals in relation to these particular wealth deities, which state the need for fresh offerings in the proper vessel - not broken, not cracked; the making of water offerings now and then; apologizing for doing wrong things, like taking wealth without practicing any generosity, etc; apologizing for not doing the meditation and recitation correctly; and apologizing for all the offerings which were not quite right for the level of practice that one is performing.

With relation to the Dharma centres, now and then, it is good to make offerings such as the three sweets and the three whites, to recite the mantras and to make requests to support them.

It is quite sad that Dzambhala and Vaishravana do not help the Dharma centres. (Much laughter). It is not that they are not helping. It is, maybe, because of the way we recite the mantras or the way we make offerings. Maybe they are not done correctly. This is just some side-talk.

The next advice says that whatever gifts or offerings that you receive from friends will never bring satisfaction. Therefore, we should practice less desire for these objects.

We should always try to avoid pride and high feelings. Lama Atisha and other highly realized beings always avoided pride and considered themselves to be very low. They were always very modest.

If you have been too successful, even in relationship to the Dharma centres by being too materially successful, then this is also one of the obstacles to Dharma practice. It is not necessary to be materially successful.

This is because if Dharma centres became very rich, they can use money to have a shop or other such activities. Then there is the need to employ many people and to ask for many volunteers to help out. By so doing, many people are wasting a lot of time.

All the praises and offerings and the traditional welcoming and so forth are like the rope of the maras, so you should avoid performing all these kinds of activities.

This is like clearing away all the stone obstacles. If there are stones on the path, then they become obstacles and you need to remove them.

Day Four

It is said that this life's comforts, pleasure and the accumulation of friends are all very short moments. If you are engaging in these kinds of activities, they become great obstacles to our Dharma practices. We regard these pleasures as being long term but, compared to the period of time we have to experience the hell realms or other existences, this is a very short moment. Being attracted to these pleasures causes them to become great obstacles for us, therefore we should turn our back towards them.

It also says that our future lifetimes will be much longer than this lifetime, therefore the treasure will be collected. Here 'treasure' refers to the Dharma practice which we need to undertake so that it becomes treasure to benefit the long future life to come.

One must strive for the treasure of the Aryas because, in this life, we are accumulating possessions and fame - all for this body, all of which will not be accompanying us in future lives. It is said that, since we can not take them with us to the future, there is no reason to cling to them.

If we see someone else's situation as being worse than ours, then we should develop loving compassion towards them. One should not neglect those sentient beings who are worse off than us. Instead, one should care for them.

It is recommended that we avoid holding partial attitudes towards others, including one's nation and religion.

We should not generate jealousy towards those who have higher qualities than ourselves. Instead, we should respect them and try to take the special beneficial qualities that we need from them.

One should not investigate or search for others' faults, unless we are given the position of a spy! Because then, you would have no choice, you would have to do it or you would not get any salary. Always search for one's own faults, as if one is searching for something, even if one is not gaining any salary by doing it. The benefit from this would be more than that of gaining a salary.

So here it says: "Do not contemplate or think about one's own virtue; rather, one must think of others' virtue." It is referring here to expressing one's own accumulations of virtue in order to generate pride. These sorts of things should not be done. But to rejoice over one's own virtue, that is alright. To be able to rejoice in your virtue is something to be thought about.

Next, Shakyamuni says to have the recognition that all sentient beings are one's parents. One is not only to have the recognition, but one should not lose that recognition. If one is able to have that recognition, the problems within the family, within different countries, within the communities, etc., would not arise. One must recognise all sentient beings as being one's parents and love them as dearly as a mother loves an only son.

It is said that one must always react cheerfully towards other sentient beings. One should not exhibit hatred; instead, we should always generate loving thoughts.

Whatever type of conversation one is participating in, one should limit one's views so as not to cause misunderstandings.

One should not perform activities or jobs which do not produce many benefits, because this would be a great waste of time and we would not gain much from doing it. Also, by doing that, one would lose time which could be used to practice the Dharma.

We should not have strong desire. We should not deceive others with the intention of so doing. One should always be mindful when talking to others.

Whatever happiness or suffering one is experiencing in this life is due to one having created the karma in a previous life. Therefore, one should not place blame onto others. It is better to collect others' kindnesses and try to generate the thought of repaying the kindnesses of the guru and so forth.

Until or unless one is able to subdue one's own continuum, it is hard for us to subdue others' mental continuum. Without having the clairvoyance to know another's mind, one is unable to benefit them by fully ripening their mental continuum. Therefore, to achieve the state of clairvoyance, one must exert effort to practice.

One should not accumulate negative karma by accumulating more possessions. This is because after leaving this life, one is unable to carry those possessions into the next life. These possessions would then be used by others. Also, one would gain negative karma by collecting them. If one is rich and has more than one needs, then that person is like a slave to those possessions and has to look after them. That way, one can not really enjoy them. However, if one has limited possessions, then one is more able to use one's life in a more meaningful way.

Possessions and wealth do not have any essence, therefore we should not be distracted by them. We should be using those possessions to accrue merit through generosity.

To acquire beauty in this life and to have happiness in the future, we must preserve our ethics and morality purely and all the time.

When we talk about acquiring 'beauty' in this life, this does not mean that you will have a beautiful body. If one is preserving morality purely, naturally, one becomes a beauty amongst the scholars. While we are keeping the precepts purely, one will have the qualities of a beauty amongst the scholars or learned ones.

It is said that, during this degenerative period, it is the time to examine anger and hatred. Although it is the time for spreading anger and hatred within the continuum of all, as a practitioner, we must try to control and avoid anger and hatred. One must put on the armour of patience to be protected from generating this hatred and anger. This is like when one goes to war; the armour protects from the weapons.

Similarly, the armour protects one from criticisms and harsh words from others which could provoke anger.

Due to falling under the influence of laziness, we remain in this type of situation. But from now on, we must ignite the fire of effort. When we talk about 'laziness,' this does not merely refer to silly beings who just hang around not doing anything. In our case, when there is something negative that we need to do, we are very active and energetic about doing it. But if we were to perform something virtuous, we are like a very tired old donkey who is being chased uphill.

We may not see this situation here in Singapore, but when you see a very tired donkey going uphill, no matter how much you beat him with a stick, he may even refuse to stand up! To try to move him uphill could result in his refusal to move even one step. To move him down hill will cause him to rush very fast and you will have to follow behind! This is like, in our case, in the accumulation of non-virtue, we rush like the donkey down the hill.

When we talk about the effort of igniting the fire, that does not mean that if we had a pain in the knee or pain in the bottom, it would be an effort to sit on our cushion. That kind of effort does not apply here.

The meaning of effort here is the delighted thought - the delighted attitude towards virtue. If you are delighted in doing something virtuous without worrying about the difficulty - that is right effort. No matter how long one does it, one should delight all the time that one is doing it. When that kind of thing is there, then that is called

'effort.' Otherwise, if you are not so delighted towards doing virtue, if you pretend to be making an effort, that is not 'effort' as meant here.

If this is done pretentiously, you do not even want to see the cushion. But if intent is there to do virtue, even though you are doing some job or activity, you will always be longing to be there on that cushion. This is the effort of doing something virtuous. Usually on seeing one's meditation cushion and you do not want to be there, that means that you do not know how to carry out the practice of effort properly.

Due to the destruction we have caused in past lifetimes, now is the time for us to develop samadhi or concentration. When we talk about the practice of 'samadhi,' even if it is only for a short time, we must have a correct way of performing that meditation. We must spend quality time.

Initially, one must spend only a short time doing the samadhi meditation; then, slowly one can extend the period of time. On the other hand, if one is trying to meditate on samadhi and if we pretend to be there for however long, since our concentration is flickering on and off, one would *not* have a samadhi meditation.

When one undertakes the samadhi meditation, it does not mean not to forget the object of meditation. Thus, not forgetting the object of meditation alone, is not called the samadhi meditation. By just staying in the state of mere remembrance of the object of meditation, there is danger of the arising of mental sinking. Then, there is the danger of leaving the object of meditation.

Whatever object one is focusing on, there should also be different degrees of mental strength focusing on that object. For example, if one hears bad news that a friend have passed away, at that moment one would have intense worry and intense suffering. Then if you are asked to eat food, you would refuse it. The only thing you are thinking about is the suffering caused by that news.

It is with this kind of mental strength - that kind of similiar feeling - which has to be generated during the samadhi meditation. By not losing or forgetting the object of meditation through relying on or employing mindfulness and introspection, we will remove and stop the arising of mental sinking and mental excitement.

It says here that due to having the wrong views, we are kept obscured from realizing the right views. Therefore, one must surpass the wrong views and go towards cognizing the right views. It also says that, since we are under the control and influence of the wrong views about emptiness and so forth, if we immediately jumped to the topic of emptiness, it would be very difficult for us to cognize the right view.

In the initial stages, we must try to spend some time identifying and recognizing the object of negation. So, in the search for the right view, one must follow the right reasoning towards finding it - the right nature of existence.

Here it says: "All friends who are in this muddy existence of samsara, where there is no happiness at all, must move towards the dry place of liberation." It says that one must meditate correctly upon the

instructions of the precepts of the guru. We must contemplate and meditate upon the sufferings of cyclic existence.

Here, the main point of what is being said is: by meditating correctly upon the instructions of the lama, one must then try to dry up the sufferings of the water of samsara.

So, listen to the friends who are integrating this instruction and precepts with their minds. You can listen to them.

Lama Atisha says that if these things are happening: “I am also delighted and feel joy that entire beings will also be happier. Although I, myself, am ignorant, it is alright for you to listen to these instructions on the precepts.”

While they were on their way to India, Nagtso the translator had promised to bring Lama Atisha back within two months. On their way to India, they could not pass through Nepal because of problems. Due to these obstacles, Lama Atisha stayed there and composed the short text called *The Lamp on the Path to Enlightenment*. He sent a messenger with this text to India saying that, due to the blockages and obstacles along the way, he could not come. He then sought permission as to whether it was alright for him to stay back or not. Also, at the same time, he was making a request.

Since Nagtso the translator had made a promise to the Abbot in India, he said: “This is the command that I received from the Abbot, so you must go on to India.” So he tried to almost drag Lama Atisha back to India.

Finally, the messenger arrived in India and passed on the short text to the Abbot. He was most overjoyed with the work that Atisha had been able to accomplish in composing these short texts. He praised him saying that, in the past in India, there were holy pandits who were unable to combine all these essential instructions into such a short text. The text combines the entire instructions of Tantra.

He said: “Not only the people in Tibet are overjoyed with your accomplishment, but we, who have stayed in India, are extremely happy. If you feel that you are benefiting more in Tibet, continue to reside there and compose a self commentary to that short text and send it to us.”

So, since they had received the permission for Lama Atisha to reside in Tibet, the translator said: “Well, now I am able to release my load, because I no longer have the responsibility to take him back to India!”

Next is the part where they have the permission and Atisha went to reside in the first place called Taperwa. While he was there, the instructions were given to the disciple called Sharawa.

The start of the instruction starts with paying homage to Mother Tara, then homage to all the Holy Lamas and Gurus. Then it says: “Sons of the Lineage, please pay attention to all of these words.”

Generally, the life span of the people of the degenerative times is very short. There is an infinite amount of knowledge to be learned. Even what life we have is indefinite. Therefore we must try very quickly to take the essence of life.

Since some of us do not know how we spend our lives, we must combine the entire path, starting from devoting oneself to the guru up to the end of calm abiding and special insight. We should put this together in a short form of daily practice and one must carry on in the form of glance meditation. That would be taking the essence of life. If this takes too long to do, as well as doing the guru devotion practice, then one must undertake a meditation on the *Three Principles of the Path*. If you condense the entire Lam Rim teachings and take these three as a route, then whenever it is possible you can add the additional practices. If one of these three is missing, then one's practice is incomplete.

On the basis of having these three principal aspects of the path then, whatever activities one is taking on, one's life will become meaningful. So, the three aspects of the path are short and they will seem acceptable to you, whereas the Lam Rim, the graduated path to enlightenment, seems quite long. If the entire instruction of the Lam Rim is difficult to fit into our minds, then concentrate on the *Three Principles of the Path*.

The reason for this is because there is less talk about the renunciation of the superior scope or the higher scope. Even mere renunciation can condense the two levels of renunciation of the smaller and middle scopes. When we practice renunciation, the part of the smaller and middle scopes are included in that practice.

The Mahayana practice comprises bodhicitta and meditations on emptiness and then the dedication. Normally, if the practice is conjoined with these three, then it is Mahayana practice. These practices are the entire Mahayana Path and they are the meanings of

what we need to practice. If you do not know what you are going to practice, then there will be difficulties.

It says that as a practitioner, if one is keeping all of the possessions which are the worldly person's views, they will become obstacles. It is said that if you are doing the same as the worldly people do, then you should not call yourself a bhikkhu. Even by being in a monastery, if you are still performing similar activities as the worldly people, then you should not call yourself a monk.

One should not relate one's mind to this life's worldly desires. If you are performing your practice and suddenly you generate the thought: "Oh, I had better stop the practice because I should do some business first," then that is called wrong thought.

If you are mainly attracted to this life's pleasure and if you still have harmful intention, etc., then you should not call yourself a bhikkhu or monk.

By residing and being in a monastery, if you are still carrying on with the worldly way of life and you are still attracted to how the worldly people gossip and so forth, you should not call yourself as someone who is residing in a monastery. If you want to call yourself as such, one must avoid all this.

If you cannot bear even the slightest harm which arises from others and if you cannot provide even the slightest benefit to others, then you should not call yourself a bhikkhu bodhisattva. If you are doing this, then it becomes a great lie to the worldly people. With these

ways, although you are able to deceive worldly beings, you are unable to deceive those who have the wisdom eye.

So when these kinds of thoughts arise, we must recollect the precepts that we have taken in the presence of the gurus and deities.

If you are facing difficulties along these lines, you should have considered this carefully before you took the bodhisattva vows. Because now it is too late for you to say that is too hard for you to practice and so forth.

If you have taken the precepts and are committed to follow the precepts, if it is hard for you to practice, that means that you are deceiving the deities and the lama.

As for stopping the clinging and attachment towards one's relatives and friends, etc., these precepts are only taken during ordination ceremonies. These things are quite difficult to give up.

By performing all of these activities, one is able to eliminate the aspirations to the worldly pleasures. Through this, one is then able to create the proper conditions to generate bodhicitta. While one is in the monastery and leading that life, one should not recollect the worldly activities.

Since we are beginners and do not have that much experience with the spiritual path, we have a lot of interactions with relatives and so forth. Therefore it is very easy for us to be attracted to the relatives.

So if one is unable to apply the powerful antidotes, then leading the monastic life becomes useless. If one is not applying the antidote, then life is the same as the birds and the animals who are residing nearby to the monastery. These things are mainly referring to the bhikkhus and the novice monks and nuns.

One should not postpone one's practices saying, "It is quite hard to practice now, I will do it later." One should not generate this kind of thought. It is said that if a blind person drops a precious jewel from his hand, it would be extremely hard for him to find it again.

It is said that when one undertakes the Dharma practices, one should not count the months or the years; rather one should be reflecting on how much realization or how much influence towards virtue one has gained.

One must always investigate and analyse one's own mind. So one should not create suffering for oneself. One should not deceive oneself. Also, one should not cheat oneself. We should never deceive the lamas or the gods. Also, we should not create the causes to lose oneself completely nor to lose others completely.

In the case where this life's activities are degenerating, it is like you are losing something in this life, you should not worry about it because it is something that is necessary. It has to be lost. For example, if there is a heap of filth in front of oneself, that is something that we must immediately clean up. Also, if somebody else wants to help you to clean it up, why should you not be happy?

Similarly what superstitious thoughts or wrong concepts we may have must be cleansed by applying whatever antidote is applicable. If lamas and gurus can help you to clean up, why should you not be happy? One should not differentiate between the objects to whom you are being generous.

Although there is a difference from the object's side, one should train one's thought towards generating bodhicitta. There is no difference.

One should not generate hatred towards those from whom we receive harm. If you do this, then when are you going to practice patience? While the opportunity is there to practice patience, when somebody is directly causing harm - this is the right time to practice patience. If you lose that opportunity, then later there may not be another opportunity. Anyway, you cannot practice patience in relation to your lama or the Buddhas. And we all talk about the need for patience. Yet when somebody harms us, we are unable to practice it.

Also, we cannot buy patience from the shopping centre! If you could buy patience from the shopping centres, then already everybody would have bought it and we would not even have that opportunity, because it would have all been sold.

We have only gone half-way through! There are sixty pages and we have only gone through eleven pages! (Much laughter). Would you like to continue, or would you like to have question and answer? We will continue on.

It is said that when delusions are arising, that is the time for you to apply the antidotes. If you are unable to do this, then the delusions will win the power. If they win, we will not be able to practice the Dharma.

If this is happening, then the purpose of practicing Dharma will not be fulfilled. Then your mindfulness towards bodhicitta will also decrease. There would not be a minute of time that we could profit from, we would always be the loser.

If this is what is happening, then a great obstacle is being created towards the generation of bodhicitta. If bodhicitta is interfered with in this way, by forgetting to benefit others, even to help oneself will be difficult. The only destination one will be going to is to the hell realms.

If this is happening, then listening to the Dharma teachings will also be a waste of time and energy.

At the time of death, one should not cause the generation of dissatisfaction in the minds of the gurus and the gods.

Also, one should not create thoughts of despair and doubt towards those who are faithful practitioners.

One must, now and then, compare one's state of mind to the quotations in the scriptures. If we do not do this, and yet we feel that we are practicing then, in fact, the Dharma and the person have never met.

If one is not seeing the signs of being trained in bodhicitta or rather one is seeing the signs of taking birth in the hell realms, then even if one is moaning at that time, it will not help much.

One should have the courage to lead one's life according to the Dharma instructions. One should make one's situation such that one does not need to go with an empty hand to one's death.

Living in a monastery, if one is unable to give up the activities of this life, then the purpose of having met with the Dharma and the spiritual path will not be fulfilled.

If our practice is not balanced, then it is equal to the worldly way of doing things. If it is happening this way, then Dharma practice just comes merely from the mouth. It then becomes mainly conditioned to search for food and so forth. It then becomes a pretend Dharma practice.

Therefore, one should avoid negative friends. One should not reside in one place. It should be indefinite. One should not stay in one place, accumulating contaminations.

Always follow according to the Dharma. Whatever practices one performs should become a direct antidote to delusions. If one is able to perform this way, then it becomes correct Dharma.

Upon generating qualities upon one's mental continuum, one should not generate pride. If this is happening, one is under the domination of the demons.

By residing in isolated places, one must subdue oneself. One must also practice being more content and less desirous. One should not look upon one's own qualities or investigate others' faults.

One should fear and should not generate superstitious thought. We should be a kind-hearted person and not be distracted by wrong paths and views.

One should always regard oneself as the lowest. We should not make the laws for oneself.

One should always offer the victory to others and we should avoid or give up desire.

~ THE END ~

Dedication

By the merits of printing this book:

May all spiritual teachers teaching true paths to enlightenment especially His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama - Tenzin Gyatso, Lama Ribur Rinpoche, Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Lama Osel Rinpoche and Khen Rinpoche Geshe Lhundrup have long and healthy lives and continue to benefit sentient beings.

May all the wishes, prayers and aspirations of all our sponsors and benefactors and their loved ones be fulfilled in accordance with the Holy Dharma. May all their obstacles be pacified and may they have good health and success always.

May all sentient beings have happiness and its causes.

May all sentient beings be free of suffering and its causes.

May all sentient beings not be separated from sorrowless bliss.

May all sentient beings abide in equanimity, free of bias, attachment and anger.

May whoever sees, touches, reads, remembers, talks or thinks about this book never be reborn in unfortunate circumstances, receive only rebirths in situations conducive to the perfect practice of Dharma, meet a perfectly qualified spiritual guide, quickly develop bodhicitta and immediately attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

Acknowledgements

Amitabha Buddhist Centre gratefully thanks all kind and generous sponsors whose contribution to the printing of this book made it possible to benefit all sentient beings and to spread the precious Dharma. May all wishes and aspirations of our sponsors/benefactors be fulfilled immediately, according to the Holy Dharma.

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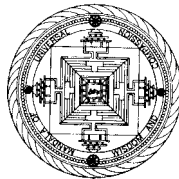
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Amitabha Buddhist Centre

Amitabha Buddhist Centre (ABC) is a centre for the study and practice of Mahayana Buddhism from the Tibetan Vajrayana Tradition. Founded in 1986 by our Spiritual Guide, *Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche*, a wise and deeply compassionate Tibetan Master, the centre strives to offer the pure liberation teachings of Je Tsong Khapa, the 15th century founder of the Gelug lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. To that end, we offer courses in Lam-rim, or the graduated path to enlightenment, Buddhist philosophy, thought transformation and the practice of tantra.

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At ABC, we provide a range of courses from beginners' meditation and introductory Buddhist talks to the intermediate level Lam-rim, or the graduated path to enlightenment, to the study of more advanced Buddhist philosophical subjects. Teachings are conducted in English or Tibetan (translated to English).

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Bearing in mind that Buddhism is a living tradition, teachings to be studied and put into practice, ABC organises a variety of meditation retreats. These include one-day retreats and Nyung Nay retreats – an intensive two-day fasting practice with prayers to Avalokiteshvara (*Kwan Yin*) as a way of immersing our minds in compassion.

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In keeping with the Mahayana spirit of love and compassion, ABC complements its teaching programmes with social and welfare activities to nurture true caring and concern for others. ABC also provides chanting

services for the sick and deceased, and schedules visits to homes for the less fortunate. Our resident teachers also offer advice to people with Dharma questions and spiritual problems.

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ABC is deeply committed to share the benefits of the Dharma with others and will make available various titles to ABC members, the public and overseas readers as funds permit.

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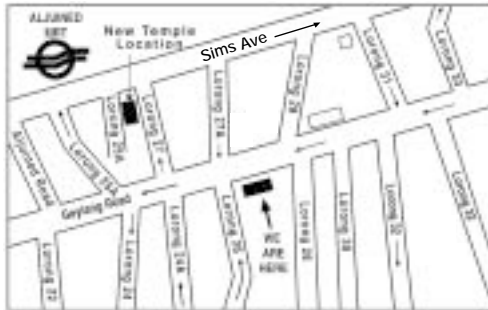
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1. One's light karmic misgivings will dissolve, while heavy ones lighten.
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3. One will always be free from the suffering of hatred and vengeance.
4. One will be unharmed by yaksas, evil spirits and wild beasts.
5. One's mind will be at peace, free from harm and nightmares.
6. One's complexion will be radiant.
7. One will be full of auspicious energy.
8. One who practices the Dharma wholeheartedly will have adequate living necessities.
9. One's family will be harmonious and be blessed with fortune and wisdom.
10. One who practices what one preaches will be respected and loved by all.
11. One who is dull-minded will gain wisdom.
12. One who is ill will gain health.
13. One who is poor will gain wealth.
14. One who is female will be born male in future lives if one wishes to.
15. One will be free of being reborn in the negative realms.
16. One will be able to help others grow in wisdom and gain great merit in doing so.
17. One will always be able to learn the Dharma, till one's wisdom and spiritual penetrations are fully grown and becomes a Buddha.

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The Buddhadharma is the true source of happiness for all sentient beings. Books like the one in your hand show you how to put the teachings into practice and integrate them into your life, whereby you get the happiness you seek. Therefore, anything containing Dharma teachings or the names of your teachers is more precious than other material objects and should be treated with respect. To avoid creating the karma of not meeting the Dharma again in future lives, please do not put books (or other holy objects) on the floor or underneath other stuff, step over or sit upon them, or use them for mundane purposes such as propping up wobbly tables. They should be kept in a clean, high place, separate from worldly writings, and wrapped in cloth when being carried around. These are but a few considerations.

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