

Monday, February 15

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

REVIEWING VOWS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONCLUDING PRACTICES

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

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

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

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

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

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

DEDICATION

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

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

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

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

becomes enlightened. Their body becomes rupakaya and their mind becomes dharmakaya. You can think that all sentient beings become enlightened as Vajrasattva or as the deity that you practice.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“And, most important of all, may we be able to actualize Lama Tsong Khapa’s complete, pure path to enlightenment, which unifies sutra and tantra, in this very lifetime without even a second’s delay.

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

MULTIPLYING MANTRAS

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

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

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

Tuesday, February 16

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

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

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

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

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

CONCLUDING PRACTICES

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

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

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

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

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

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

DEDICATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wednesday, February 17 (A)

MORNING: FIRST SESSION
(*LO-SAR*; TIBETAN NEW YEAR)

COMBINED *JOR-CHÖ/LAMA CHÖPA PUJA*

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

TAKING THE BODHISATTVA AND TANTRIC VOWS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So, my advertisement has finished!

THE MEANING OF THE PROSTRATION VERSE MUDRAS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now my second advertisement has finished!

REJOICING

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

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

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

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

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

BLESSING AND OFFERING FOOD

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

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

Please enjoy the food; please enjoy the extraordinary bliss.

MAITREYA BUDDHA MANTRA

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

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

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

Wednesday, February 17 (B)

EVENING: FINAL SESSION

LIGHT OFFERING PRACTICE

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

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

Not that I checked, but when Princess Diana died, the woman for whom the whole world cried, I thought that if she had practiced White Tara or another of the long-life deities every day—even just recited the mantra twenty-one times—she probably would have escaped from the obstacle. She would not have died in the car crash; she would have lived longer. This is just a thought that came to me. This kind of untimely death can often be eliminated if one practices the meditation-recitation of one of the long-life buddhas. Your virtue becomes stronger through benefiting other sentient beings, making offerings to the Triple Gem,

generating strong compassion or bodhicitta, meditating on emptiness or rejoicing, and you collect a lot of merit. Even if there are obstacles to your life, making your virtue stronger can pacify the obstacles that could result in your sudden death in a car accident or something similar.

Daily practice—whether you recite the mantras of these buddhas, do sadhanas or whatever—generally takes care of your life. Such continuous practice somehow prevents the many problems that can arise. One way in which these practices stop the experience of these problems is through purifying negative karma. Even though you are not aware of its effect on your mind, your daily practice purifies the heavy problems that arise from negative karma—and of course, every problem or difficulty that happens comes from negative karma. Even if you don't do anything special, your daily practice can purify your negative karma, and once that negative karma is purified you are free from those problems or difficulties of this life. Doing these daily practices continuously and well takes care of many things, whether you are talking about health, a long life or success in your work. This becomes the answer, the solution. We look outside and pay a lot of money to try to find the solution to so many problems, but these problems will not even happen if we do these daily practices well. You won't then need to have operations or go to see psychologists. Of course, having karma and delusions does give these people their jobs—it is perhaps its one benefit!

Collecting merit through creating virtue in our daily life, through doing daily practice, is actually the best way to take care of our life, to take care of everything. It is the answer to all our problems. And our daily practice can save us many thousands of dollars in expenses. Even a daily practice of reciting one mala of OM MANI PADME HUM can save us from some very expensive problems; it can save us from so much worry and even from falling into debt.

I will just quickly read the introduction to the light offering practice text. Some people will be familiar with it, but many others may not.

“It is said in *The Ten Wheel Sutra of the Essence of Earth (Kshitigarbha)*, ‘All comfort, happiness and peace in this world come from making offerings to the Rare Sublime Ones (the Triple Gem). Therefore, those who want comfort, happiness and peace should always try to make offerings

to the Rare Sublime Ones.’

“In general, all goodness in samsara and nirvana comes from making offerings to the Triple Gem, but specifically, different kinds of offerings bring you different benefits. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, the fourth of the thousand buddhas of this fortunate eon, whose holy mind was enriched with the ten powers, announced in the *Tune of Brahma Sutra Clarifying Karma* that making light offerings brings you ten benefits:

1. You become like a light in the world. (This refers to great holy beings, such as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, Shantideva, Lama Atisha, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and so forth, who are like lights for many sentient beings. Basically, because you eliminate the darkness of ignorance of so many sentient beings, you become like a light in the world.)
2. You achieve (when born human) the clairvoyance of the pure flesh eye. (With this clairvoyance your eyes can see very far.)
3. You achieve the devas’ eye. (There are five types of clairvoyance of the pure eye. Another way of enumerating these, however, gives six types of clairvoyance, the sixth being uncontaminated clairvoyance, with cessation of the defilements. Buddha has this sixth type of clairvoyance, but I’m a little unclear as to whether higher bodhisattvas also have it. If this type of clairvoyance refers to cessation of both the subtle and gross defilements, only buddhas possess it. But if it refers to cessation of just the disturbing-thought obscurations, the higher bodhisattvas—those on the eighth, ninth and tenth bhumis—should also have it. I don’t remember at the moment whether this clairvoyance also involves cessation of the subtle defilements.)
4. You receive the wisdom of knowing what is virtue and what is non-virtue.
5. You are able to eliminate the darkness of ignorance, the concept of inherent existence.
6. You receive the illumination of wisdom; even in samsara you never experience darkness. (Being in a place where there is no light—or in a place where the lights keep going out!—is a result of non-virtuous karma, because it is unpleasant. At the moment we have sunlight during the day and electric light at

night; these are also benefits of our having made light offerings to holy objects, such as buddha, in the past.)

7. You receive great enjoyments and wealth.
8. You are reborn in the deva or human realm.
9. You quickly become liberated.
10. You quickly attain enlightenment.”

These are the ten benefits of making light offerings.

It seems that any offering we make, even ringing a bell or beating a drum, generally has these ten benefits. When we ring a bell, if we think of Buddha and make an offering of the sound of the bell, we receive ten benefits. When we beat a drum, if we think that we are making an offering to Buddha each time before or while we beat it, we receive ten benefits. It seems that we receive ten benefits from each of the various types of offering if we make them to Buddha. The ultimate benefits are liberation from samsara and enlightenment.

“Devas or human beings who accumulate the merit of making one light offering—or even a handful of flowers—will see the fully enlightened buddha, Maitreya.

“The *Sutra of Arya Maitreya* says, “Those who offer a thousand lights or a thousand blue utpali flowers or make the pinnacle of a stupa or a holy form will be reborn when Maitreya Buddha shows the deed of gaining enlightenment and will receive his first Dharma Teaching.

“It is also said that those who offer even one flower or rejoice at the merit of others who offer will achieve buddhahood. This means that even if you doesn’t get enlightened during the time of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s teaching, during Maitreya Buddha’s teaching your mind will ripen and you will gain liberation.

“Offering light, in particular, is a special door of dependent arising for quickly completing the accumulation of merit and receiving great blessings. It is said in the second chapter of the root tantra of Chakrasamvara, who is a manifestation of Shakyamuni Buddha, “If you want sublime realizations, offer hundreds of lights.

“If you want to know the detailed results of making offerings to holy objects or of offering service to the buddha or other holy objects, you should study *The Sutra of the One Who Looks with a Compassionate Eye*

(*Avalokiteshvara*), *The Sutra of Sogyal*, where Buddha gave instruction to King Sogyal”—not ‘Sangyal’—“or the *Könchog Tala*.

“The text, *Immortal Drum Sound Mantra*, says, “If you devote yourself to the Inconceivable One, the results will similarly be inconceivable.” In the same way, *The Sutra of the One Who Looks with a Compassionate Eye* says, “Since the dharmas (i.e., the qualities) of the Buddha Gone As It Is (tathagata) are limitless, making offering to the tathagata brings limitless, infinite, inconceivable, incomparable, unimaginable, numberless benefits.

“*The Small Quotation (Lung-ten-tseg)* sutra says, “It is possible for the moon and stars to fall to earth, for mountains and forests to rise up into the sky and for the water of the great oceans to completely dry up, but it is not possible for the great sage (the buddha) to tell a lie. Keep this in mind and generate strong devotion to and faith in the root of all happiness and goodness—actions and their results (karma) and the blessings of the Three Precious Rare Sublime Ones. While you have this body and possessions—which are as if borrowed for a year, a month or a few days—night and day, all the time, attend to the practice of taking the essence of this human life, whose short duration is like a flash of lightning, by planting as many seeds as possible in the special field of merit.”

HOW TO MAKE OFFERINGS

The text then goes on to talk about what to do when you actually light the candles. After these instructions, the meditation begins.

Of course, many of you are familiar with this from the lam-rim teachings, but I’ll go through it for those who are not. As soon as you turn on the electric light or light the candle, before you offer the light, you must bless it with the mantra OM AH HUM. After that, think that the interferers abiding in the light offerings are dispelled—after you bless the light offering with OM AH HUM, the particular types of interferers that abide in the various kinds of offering cannot possess your mental continuum. For example, a particular interferer called *Tse-bu chig-pa* abides in light offerings and, as far as I remember, causes drowsiness and sleep during teachings. If you do not bless the light offering, this particular interferer can possess your mental continuum and cause drowsiness or sleep when you listen to teachings, read Dharma texts or meditate. It interferes

when you try to do some Dharma practice.

Similarly, other offerings have particular interferers that abide in them and can create certain obstacles for you. For example, when you offer flowers, if you don't bless them immediately by reciting OM AH HUM, the interferer that possesses your mental continuum causes very strong attachment, desire, to arise and makes your life very uncontrolled. Because you are totally overwhelmed by attachment, you have no control, no freedom. This then causes many obstacles to your Dharma practice, to your living in vows. You have no control, no freedom.

If possible, say OM AH HUM as soon as you light the candle. Then, whether or not you have an altar, offer the light to the *Guru Puja* merit field by thinking that they are all in essence the guru. After that, offer the light to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha of the ten directions by thinking that they are all the guru. After that, offer the light to all the statues, stupas and scriptures in the ten directions by thinking that they are all the guru. With the one light you make offering to every single holy object and thus create numberless causes of enlightenment, as well as numberless causes of liberation, good rebirth and all other happiness. By meditating in this way, you create numberless causes of all these types of happiness, even if what you offer is just one light. If you offer one hundred candles and do this meditation while you are lighting them, when you have finished lighting them, they have already been offered; you have already done the meditation. Even if you don't have time to do extensive blessings and offerings after you have lit the one hundred candles, you have already done the offering practice, so it is very convenient.

It is the same when you offer water bowls. Recite OM AH HUM while offering the water, then think that this nectar generates infinite bliss in the holy minds of the *Guru Puja* merit field. If it is difficult to think of the entire *Guru Puja* merit field, simply think of your root guru and think that he embodies all Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and all statues, stupas and scriptures of the ten directions as well. By the time you have finished filling the set of bowls, you have already made offering to them all. You can meditate in this way each time you offer water. Or when you offer food or water, think of it as nectar and offer it to all the many pictures and statues in the gompas or the meditation room. The essence of all these hundreds or thousands of pictures and statues is your root guru, so think that by this offering, you have increased the infinite bliss in his holy mind.

By the time you finish filling the set of water bowls—whether it is a set of twenty, one hundred, five hundred or a thousand bowls—you have already offered them. Of course, if you have time, you can then do the extensive blessing and offer them again with this extensive meditation of offering.

THE LIGHT OFFERING MEDITATION

We will now do the meditation. First of all, make charity of all the lights inside and outside the gompa to every hell being, hungry ghost and animal. At the house where I am staying there are also around 250 water bowls and more than 3,000 light offerings, which are offered day and night, inside and outside the house. We can also offer those.

Now make charity of all these offerings to every human being, asura, sura and intermediate state being. Make charity to all sentient beings. With the water bowls, we are not just offering empty bowls without the water that they contain. Make charity of all the bowls here and those at the house to all sentient beings.

Now think, “In order to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, I am going to make offerings together with all the sentient beings.” Think that you are making the offerings either together with all sentient beings or on behalf of all sentient beings. If before making the offerings you first think that you have given them to all sentient beings, if you think that the offerings belong to all sentient beings, it helps stop you from thinking that the offerings are yours; it helps you be less egocentric. Therefore, generate a motivation like this.

[The light offering practice is done.]

Friday, February 19

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

MAKING VAJRASATTVA RETREAT POWERFUL—THE POWER OF REGRET

Since there are people who are coming to do the Vajrasattva retreat for a short time, sometimes for just a few days, it might be nice to have a page on the power of regret to give them. The main thing that makes the Vajrasattva practice powerful purification is reflecting on all the negative karma, degenerated samaya vows and downfalls that we have done in this life and in past lives. I think I have already seen one page on how to generate the thought of regret; it was available one or two days after I had explained that power.

Since the whole thing cannot be explained every time a new person comes to join the retreat, there needs to be a sheet on how to generate the thought of regret. It can be put together from those few days I talked about, then given to everyone who comes to join the retreat for a few days or for the rest of the time. In this way even if no other explanation is given, the person is aware of the specific things to be purified—unless, of course, the person doesn't have past lives. I think that if there are no past lives, there is no negative karma and also there is no good karma. There's no karma. Well, *if* there are no past lives, it means that nothing exists....

Reflecting on our negative karma is the main meditation during the Vajrasattva sessions. The most important meditation is to review and recognize our negative karmas, so that they get purified. It would be very helpful to compile a page from the explanations of the power of regret given in those two or three days at the beginning of the retreat, with perhaps the addition of material from some other times. Also, if there is some meditation on generating the thought of regret in Lama Yeshe's commentary, you could also have a separate page with that. You could have several different pages. In one session you can do the meditation in

one way; in another session you can do it in another way. This would be very helpful for the people who were not here during the explanations and for those who come later. Even if people do the retreat for only a few days, that few days of retreat then becomes very powerful purification.

WHAT IS A NON-VIRTUOUS ACTION?

Of the four powers, the most important is the power of regret. The strength of the thought of regret you generate determines how much negative karma gets purified.

First, start by defining negative karma, or non-virtuous action. What is a non-virtuous action? The shortest definition of a non-virtuous action is “any action that results only in suffering.” To make the definition clearer, we can say “any action motivated by non-virtuous thought.” And what is non-virtuous thought? Basically, it is ignorance, particularly ignorance of karma, or anger or attachment.

What attitude dominates our lives? It is not anger but attachment. Most of the time we live our life with an attitude of attachment, the attachment that clings to this life. We live our life with the thought of the eight worldly dharmas. We are attached not just to our own happiness but to our happiness in this life. It is not just that we have the thought of seeking a good reputation, material rewards, praise and comfort—we can seek these out of a good heart, out of a wish to benefit others. Here it is the thought of seeking these things for our own happiness in this life, for example, seeking a good reputation or power, not to benefit others but for our own happiness, comes from attachment clinging to this life.

If we are seeking a good reputation or power in order to benefit other sentient beings, it becomes Dharma. If this is our motivation in seeking a good reputation, wealth or power, it becomes Dharma, especially if we use our reputation, wealth and power to benefit others. Otherwise, we are just collecting additional suffering. If our attitude is one of clinging to this life, all these things just bring us additional suffering.

One way of putting it is that if we have realized the three principal paths (renunciation of samsara, bodhicitta and right view), our reputation in the world does not become harmful to us; it becomes beneficial to other sentient beings. If we have realizations, our good reputation becomes very worthwhile. It cannot damage our mind or harm us. It is

only beneficial for others; it enables us to benefit others.

Many years ago at Kopan I used to spend a lot of time teaching courses—both Nick and Marcel were there for those courses. I think that one time I spent ten days on the thought of the eight worldly dharmas. In those early times, because I was trying to practice just a tiny bit of Dharma, my mind was very scared of having a reputation. Now, of course, it is not like before—I have totally degenerated! At that time, I would spend weeks talking about the hells and weeks talking about the thought of the eight worldly dharmas, accompanied by the hells, like ice cream with a cherry on top—the eight worldly dharmas are like the ice cream and the hells are like the cherry!

I first saw the text *Opening the Door of Dharma: Training the Mind at the Very Beginning* when I stayed a long time at Lawudo to supervise the building of the monastery. *Opening the Door of Dharma*, which has many stories of the Kadampa geshe, is basically about what Dharma is and how to practice Dharma. [Rinpoche's teachings on this text are published by Wisdom Publications in *The Door to Satisfaction*.] I hadn't seen the text before that visit to Lawudo. I was supposed to be watching the workers, checking whether they were just wasting time chatting or cutting the stones to build the temple. Instead, I spent most of the time in the cave and I would go out just before sunset to pay them their money. Giving wages to the workers felt very strange to me, because I was more accustomed to receiving money from other people as offerings. I knew that some of the people I paid didn't actually work that day or didn't do a full day's work. I was the secretary, I was the bookkeeper—I was everything. (This was not the case all the time but on one of the times I visited Lawudo.) I kept the money in a small plastic suitcase, and with paying the workers every day, it would go down, down, down. And when it got right down, somebody would appear and it would go up again. I did that job for a little while.

Anyway, compared to then, I have now become totally lazy; at that time I was able to do many things. What I couldn't do was read texts and watch the workers at the same time. The only time I could see the workers was when I went for pee-pee, and many times they would be sitting around chatting, not working. But what could I say? I found it difficult to scold them. Somebody else might have been able to scold them, but to me, scolding just seemed very strange.

After reading *Opening the Door of Dharma* for months, I checked back on my life. I was in Buxa for eight years, and during all those years I didn't really study Dharma. I spent most of my time playing or washing in the river. It was so hot that many monks would go to wash in the nearby river. At night we would wash under a tap, but during the day we would go to the river to wash, mainly because it was unbelievably hot. All the monks put their red and yellow robes on the bushes and would swim in just their shorts. When you looked down on the river from the mountain, the robes on the bushes would look like flowers. During those years I took teachings, memorized texts and did some debating, but it was like a child playing. After reading this text, I could not see that anything I had done had become Dharma.

I was born in Solu Khumbu but left for Tibet when I was ten or eleven years old. I then lived in Tibet at a place called Pagri for three years. I memorized every morning then went to puja. I spent that three years of my life doing pujas at the houses of benefactors. In the morning I memorized texts or the prayers that had to be recited at Domo Geshe's monastery, where I was ordained and where I had to do my examination. There were two volumes of texts to be memorized; I memorized one but I didn't get to memorize the other. At the time I did my examination, Tibet had already been overtaken by the Chinese Communists. After reading *Opening the Door of Dharma*, I looked back at this period and could not find anything that had become Dharma. Looking back at my whole life, I could not find anything that had become Dharma.

Because the mind is a dependent arising, which means that it exists in dependence upon causes and conditions, the mind can be transformed this way or that. Because the mind is a causative phenomenon, it is possible to have realizations; because the mind is a dependent arising and not independent, it is possible to have realizations, though having realizations was not my experience.

Through reading *Opening the Door of Dharma*, my mind became scared when people brought me offerings. In Solu Khumbu the Sherpas often brought offerings to the cave. They would fill with corn (or whatever else they had) the brass container from which they usually drank *chang* or ate food. Because of having read the text, I was scared to receive these offerings. Even though, unfortunately, having realizations was not my experience, it does show that if one does practice, the mind can

change. If one does practice, one can have realizations. Even that immediate small change of mind can be used as a logical proof that it is possible to achieve enlightenment.

However, to return to the point, if you have realizations, it is very worthwhile to have a good reputation in the world because you can then benefit others.

This just happened as side talk, as Geshe Sopa often says during his teachings.

A non-virtuous action is any action that brings only a suffering result, and especially it is any action done with ignorance of karma, anger or, in particular, the attachment that clings to this life. The reason that I say “in particular” is because as ordinary beings, we live our life mostly with attachment. Every action we do with this motivation of attachment, clinging to the happiness of this life, becomes a non-virtue. This applies not only to the actions of this life but to those we have done during beginningless rebirths.

THINKING ABOUT NON-VIRTUE

Think now about the ten non-virtuous actions. From those ten actions, how many have we committed today? This week? This month? This year? This life? And how many times have we committed the ten non-virtuous actions during our beginningless past lives?

Now think about the times we have broken our pratimoksha, bodhisattva and tantric vows. We have degenerated our samaya vows in this life, and even though there are some that we haven't degenerated in this life, we have degenerated them many times in past lives.

Then think about the very heavy negative karma created in relation to the virtuous friend. Think of the samaya you have broken with the guru. This has happened many times in this life, but this is not the first time we have broken our samaya. We have broken it many times in our past lives.

More specific details about all these non-virtues and their results might come later in the teachings. So far I'm just introducing the basic outline so that you can recognize what needs to be purified.

THINKING ABOUT DEATH

Then think about death. Today, in this world, many people your age died. Many healthy people, who did not have cancer or any other sickness, died suddenly in car accidents or in other ways. They were very healthy, but suddenly they died today. And there are many people in this world dying right now and heading for the lower realms. Even though they received a human body, they didn't meet the Dharma—or they met the Dharma, but didn't get to practice. Many people are dying right now and facing the lower realms.

GENERATING BODHICITTA

Think, “What is happening to these other people could happen to me today—it could happen even during this session. Death can happen at any moment. So, before my death happens, I must purify completely all my negativities. I can't stand for even one second not to have purified the causes of eons and eons of suffering in the lower realms and the obstacles to actualizing the path to enlightenment and to my liberating and enlightening all sentient beings. I must purify right now without even a second's delay.

“Just as my present-life mother has been my mother and kind to me numberless times, every sentient being has been my mother and kind to me numberless times. My present-life mother kindly gave me this precious human body, which allows me to practice Dharma, and she has done the same thing numberless times in past lives. Just like this, every sentient being has been my mother and numberless times has given me a precious human body with which to practice Dharma. Each sentient being has been so kind to me; they are so precious in my life.

“When I was in the womb of my present-life mother and when I was a baby, my mother was also kind in saving me from dangers to my life hundreds of times every day. Every day for many years she protected my life from hundreds of dangers. And she had been kind in protecting my life from danger numberless times in past lives. Every sentient being has also been my mother and protected my life from hundreds of dangers numberless times during beginningless past lives. Each sentient being has been so kind to me; they are so precious in my life.

“My present-life mother also led me in the path of the world; she educated me. And she has been kind in this way numberless times during my beginningless past lives. Just like this, every sentient being has also been kind to me by being my mother and giving me an education numberless times. Each sentient being has been so kind to me; they are so precious in my life.

“My present-life mother also bore many hardships to ensure my happiness and well-being, to ensure my survival. In being my mother, she bore many hardships. She created much negative karma in order to take care of me, and as a result has experienced much suffering—I obliged her to create negative karma; she has had to experience the suffering results. For my happiness and well-being, for my very survival, she bore hardships numberless times during my beginningless past lives. Exactly like my present-life mother, every sentient being has been my mother and borne much hardship numberless times during beginningless past lives. Each sentient being has been so kind to me; they are the most precious one in my life.

“Therefore, I must repay their kindness. The best way to repay their kindness is to free them from suffering and its causes and bring them to enlightenment. This is the best way to repay their kindness.

“To do this, I first need to practice Dharma myself. I need to have realizations of the lam-rim so that I can reveal Dharma to the sentient beings and cause them to practice Dharma. This is the best way to repay the kindness of my kind mother sentient beings. Even though my kind mother sentient beings want happiness very much, they are devoid of happiness. Even when they have temporary happiness, they are devoid of the ultimate happiness of liberation from samsara. And even when they have liberation from samsara, they are devoid of the peerless happiness of enlightenment. Therefore, I must cause them to have all happiness and the cause of happiness. No matter how much they don’t want to suffer, my kind mother sentient beings constantly suffer. They keep themselves busy constantly creating the cause of suffering. I must free them from all suffering and its causes. And this work of freeing them from all suffering and of bringing them all happiness, including full enlightenment, I must do by myself *alone*.”

Take the complete responsibility for this upon yourself. Generate this special attitude of voluntarily doing this work for sentient beings.

“I will free every hell being from their suffering and bring them to enlightenment by myself *alone*. I will free every hungry ghost from their suffering and bring them to enlightenment by myself *alone*. I will free every animal from their suffering and bring them to enlightenment by myself *alone*. I will free every human being from their suffering and bring them to enlightenment by myself *alone*. I will free every asura and sura from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment by myself *alone*. I will free every intermediate state being from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment by myself *alone*.

“There is no other means of accomplishing this work for others except by first achieving full enlightenment myself. I need to have omniscient mind, which directly knows all the levels of mind, wishes, karma and intelligence of every sentient being, as well as all the various methods that are suitable for them. Therefore, I need to actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment. Therefore, I need to purify my defilements, negative karma, downfalls and degenerated samaya vows. Therefore, I am going to practice the meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva...for one minute!”

VISUALIZATION DURING MANTRA RECITATION

Especially for the third purification, the instantaneous purification, when Vajrasattva sends strong nectar-beams it might be useful to think that your body becomes in the nature of light. This makes it easy to generate strong faith that you have actually purified the negative karma, downfalls and degenerated samaya vows.

It is also mentioned that as you recite the Vajrasattva mantra, all the sentient beings you have visualized on a moon disk at your heart are also reciting the Vajrasattva mantra at the same time. As you are purifying them, they are also reciting the mantra.

Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche also gave some advice about this particular visualization. Once I asked Rinpoche how to make effective the *po-wa* meditation, in which you visualize transferring the consciousness of a dead or dying person to a pure land. Rinpoche said that you will be able to do po-wa meditation more effectively for others if, when you do the Vajrasattva meditation, you visualize all sentient beings on a moon disk at your heart, then visualize purifying them with nectar beams emitted

from Vajrasattva. This meditation helps you transfer another sentient being's consciousness to a pure land by doing the po-wa meditation. When you do Vajrasattva practice in your daily life, visualize all sentient beings on a moon disk at your heart, and as you do the meditation of purifying yourself, also purify them. This is Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche's special advice.

There are many people, especially in the West, interested in hospice work. As I have been suggesting for some years, po-wa is a very important method of helping someone who has died. It is a very important service that saves other beings from the lower realms. In some pure lands, the sentient being definitely becomes enlightened. In other pure lands, the sentient being doesn't become enlightened, but it is impossible for them to again be reborn in the lower realms.

It would have been nice to have had the Medicine Buddha celebration today, but it's been scheduled for tomorrow. Unfortunately, rain has been forecast for tomorrow. However, now let's do some more prayers—Four-armed Mahakala, the praise and tea offering to Palden Lhamo and perhaps Six-armed Mahakala.

PRACTICES FOR SOMEONE WHO HAS DIED

It came out very beneficial to recite one mala of OM MANI PADME HUM dedicated for Arthur B., who died recently in Boston. Visualize the Thousand-armed Buddha of Compassion. Nectar beams emitted by the Buddha of Compassion purify, in particular, Arthur B. of all the negative karma he collected in this life and during beginningless past lives. You can also think that all sentient beings are purified of all their negative karma as well.

Make a strong request to the Buddha of Compassion that no matter in which realm the consciousness of Arthur Biotti may be, may it immediately be transferred to a pure land where he can become enlightened or be reborn in perfect human body and soon achieve enlightenment by meeting a perfectly qualified Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings. [The retreat group recites together one mala of *manis*.]

According to my divination, recitation of *King of Prayers* also came out very beneficial for this person. [The group recites *King of Prayers*.]

Put yourself in the place of this person who has died. If it was you who had died this morning, how would it be? At the time of death and especially after death, you need so much help from others. If it was you who had died this morning and you knew that a group of people were praying for you, you would be so happy to have such incredible support. Even after death, such practice is very beneficial for the person who has died, and it is also beneficial as a practice that will enable you to benefit sentient beings like all the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three times do.

When I was in Madison last year, I got translations of some of the eight prayers that are commonly recited in Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism as dedications for yourself and others, one of which is *King of Prayers*. I don't know who did the translation, but it is excellent. One is a prayer to be born in the Blissful Realm, the pure land. I thought that it would be good to alternate *King of Prayers* and the *Prayer to be Reborn in the Land of Bliss*. It is not necessary to do all eight prayers one after another, but I thought it might be nice to have a change and do different dedication prayers. It is especially good to do *Prayer to be Reborn in the Land of Bliss* (*De-wa-chen gyi mon-lam. .*). Then we know how to pray for all the important things.

As I mentioned at another time, when I was in Madison studying with Geshe Sopa Rinpoche last year, from time to time Geshe-la would receive requests for prayers from people. Geshe-la would call everybody there—all the other geshe and lamas—to do prayers. I thought it was extremely good that Geshe-la, when requested, took such precise care of people who had died and needed help. Geshe-la specifically decided to do prayers in the gumpa room together with all the geshe and lamas there. Geshe Tengye, an old geshe who is one of Geshe-la's disciples, led the prayers. Even though this *Prayer to be Reborn in the Land of Bliss* was not new to me, because he led the prayer, I somehow found it very effective and beneficial for my mind. It is actually a common prayer. I had thought to translate it into English and make it available so that students also get the chance to recite this prayer, but it seems that somebody has already translated it. I don't know who did the translation, but it's translated extremely well. I have a copy of the English translation, and I think it is very good to recite this to pray for yourself and for others. [See the *FPMT Prayer Book*.]

I think that is all. Thank you.

Sunday, February 21 (A)

AFTERNOON: VAJRASATTVA SESSION

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Is there one question? [Silence.] ...half a question?

Judy Lin: I'm wondering if the Vajrasattva meditation can purify the most subtle obscurations?

Rinpoche: Yes, it can help to purify subtle obscurations. Vajrasattva meditation purifies subtle obscurations, but not by itself alone. By purifying the obstacles, negative karma, Vajrasattva practice allows us to actualize the realizations of the path to enlightenment; it helps us to actualize the remedy of the path, which is what ceases the subtle defilements.

Ven. Michel: If we don't finish the number of mantras, may we continue reciting the Vajrasattva mantra after the retreat but on the basis of another deity instead of Heruka?

Rinpoche: There is no problem with doing that. Since the meditation has to do with visualizing Vajrasattva on your crown, it doesn't matter what deity you generate yourself as or whether you change the deity. It won't bring any obstacles.

For example, when you do the Vajrayogini sadhana, you recite some Vajrasattva mantras at that time, and the same applies when you do the practices of Heruka and Yamantaka. With each sadhana that you do, you can count the Vajrasattva mantras that you recite. There is no problem; it won't become an obstacle.

Merci beaucoup!

Ven. Paloma: Rinpoche, I would like to know what it means to disturb the mind of the guru.

Rinpoche: I'm speechless! It means to displease the mind. That's all. Finished.

Julia Hengst: Rinpoche, two reasons are explained as to why we can purify negative karmas—because they are impermanent and because they are dependent arisings. I'm wondering why are we able to purify negative karmas because they are dependent arisings?

Rinpoche: Your question itself is the answer. It's the same as washing ourselves. When our body is dirty, we can clean it with soap and water. How do the soap and water clean our body of the dirt? Or, when our clothes are dirty, we can clean them with soap and water. With one set of causes and conditions, our body or our clothes become dirty; with another set of causes and conditions—water, soap and so forth—our body or our clothes can be cleaned. The imprint, the seed of delusions left on our mental continuum, is the main cause for the arising of delusions. When we meet the objects of our delusions (the conditions), since we do not practice Dharma, since we do not practice mindfulness and do not apply the necessary antidotes, we have no protection against the arising of delusions. Because the seed of delusions has not been removed, delusions arise and again leave negative imprints on our mental continuum, and motivate negative karma as well. It transforms our actions into negative karma. Each time a delusion arises it leaves an imprint; it obscures the mind. The negative karma also obscures the mind.

Here, in the case of Vajrasattva, we purify the negative karmas and defilements with a different set of causes and conditions—meditating on Vajrasattva, emptiness or bodhicitta, generating compassion, reciting mantras and so forth. The Vajrasattva mantra has power because of the qualities of Vajrasattva. Vajrasattva, a manifestation of the holy mind of all the buddhas, the absolute guru, is bound by infinite compassion and manifested especially to purify the minds of sentient beings. Because Vajrasattva especially took this aspect for purification, it is very powerful in purifying defilements. Even though reciting any buddha's name can purify, the Vajrasattva mantra is recited in particular because Vajrasattva manifested specifically to purify defilements. Purification is the main function of Vajrasattva. Due to the power of compassion and the power of this deity's aspect, which is manifested particularly to perform the function of purification, Vajrasattva is able to purify if you do the meditation-recitation.

Basically, as you mentioned, negative karma is a causative phenomenon. Therefore, it is not independent; it is a dependent arising. Not only

is negative karma a dependent arising, but it is also a causative phenomenon, so you can purify it. In dependence upon one set of causes and conditions, negative karma is created. In dependence upon another set of causes and conditions, it can be purified. That's all.

And your own faith is another factor. How much negative karma you purify depends on how much faith you can generate that you have purified the negative karma. When we do Vajrasattva meditation-recitation, generating faith that we have purified our negative karma and defilements also has power.

Bethanne Lai: Could Rinpoche explain how we're supposed to visualize the environment as the mandala.

Rinpoche: How do you visualize the place as the Vajrasattva mandala? When your room or the place you live becomes very disturbing, how do you visualize it as the mandala? Is that the question?

Bethanne: The commentary says that we are supposed to practice seeing the environment as the mandala of the deity and all objects as pure rather than ordinary. I don't really know what it means or how to do it. How do I visualize the mandala?

Rinpoche: When you take a great Vajrasattva initiation, there is visualization of the mandala. I had a picture of the Vajrasattva mandala for a long time. I think an old monastery in Solu Khumbu had a Vajrasattva mandala on its ceiling, and for a long time I had a picture of it on the cover of my book. Now I have lost it. It was like the usual mandala of the deity, with Vajrasattva in the center. There are small differences in mandalas according to whether the deity is Guhyasamaja, Yamantaka, Heruka Chakrasamvara or whatever, but the general design is the same.

Now, in relation to you, you can visualize the mandala of any deity whose great initiation you have received, whether it is Heruka, Yamantaka, Hevajra or another deity. Even though in relation to your present practice you are doing a Vajrasattva retreat, in relation to visualizing the mandala, you can visualize that deity's mandala.

What was your other question? Was it about visualizing things as pure?

Bethanne: I read somewhere that to see things as ordinary breaks a tantric vow. How are we supposed to stop seeing things as ordinary?

Rinpoche: It is mentioned that we should think that every thought that arises is the dharmakaya, every sound we hear is the holy speech of the deity or mantra and every form that appears is the holy body of the deity. It is like this with the holy body, holy speech and holy mind. This is called the yoga that utilizes the three in the path to enlightenment, or, in Tibetan, *ku-sum kyi näl-jor*. When you do this yoga, your mind becomes pure, from being an impure mind that projects the impure. Projecting the impure has two aspects, appearance and belief. Things appear to you as ordinary, and you then believe that they are ordinary.

Generally, there are two ways to look at things as pure, which includes looking at the place as a mandala, your body and the bodies of others as the deity's holy body, and food and drink as nectar. One way is to look at the essence of everything as bliss and voidness. The other way is to also see things with a pure appearance. It is not necessary to change everything into another form; you don't have to transform everything into a pure aspect. For example, in the mandala there are cemeteries with zombies, guardians, corpses and skeletons—you don't visualize them as the deity. Even though you stop the appearance of the place as ordinary and the concept that believes it is ordinary and visualize the mandala, it is not necessary to visualize all the beings in the cemeteries as the deity.

In the case of the cemeteries, the meaning of practicing pure appearance is that the essence of everything is the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness, even though it appears as corpses, trees, guardians and so forth. Since everything is a manifestation of the deity's holy mind, the dharmakaya, it is pure. This is how you look at it as pure.

I think that even looking at the essence of everything as wisdom and bliss, the deity's holy mind, the dharmakaya, helps a lot. It is one way of looking at things as pure.

For example, in the practice of guru devotion according to the sutra Mahayana, there is no instruction to stop the ordinary appearance of the guru and there is no mention of visualizing the guru as the deity. This is mentioned only in the guru yoga practice of tantra. The teachings of Mahayana sutra mention that you use quotations and logical reasoning, supported by your own particular experiences (if you have any), to see the essence of the guru as buddha. And you see the holy mind of the guru as the dharmakaya. By looking at the guru as buddha, you then see the guru as buddha, as pure, even though his appearance is ordinary. The

appearance of the guru doesn't change into the pure form of the deity's holy body. When by looking at the guru as buddha, you see the guru as buddha, the appearance of the guru doesn't change. This is the main point.

In tantra, on top of that, even the external appearance is pure. Tantric guru yoga practice is done on the basis of the sutra practice. First you use logical reasoning and personal experiences to prove to your mind, which sees the guru as ordinary, that the guru in essence is buddha. This is the foundation. On this basis you then see the guru in the aspect of the deity by looking at the guru in the deity's aspect. Before you visualize the guru as inseparable from the deity, you must have the foundation of the sutra practice of guru devotion. This is the foundation when you do *Lama Chöpa*, six-session yoga or any other guru yoga practice in which you generate the deity. You have to establish the mind of guru devotion in place of the mind that projects ordinary appearances and concepts of the guru, especially in relation to the mind of the guru. By using quotations, reasoning and your own experiences, you have to prove that the essence, or the mind, of the virtuous friend is dharmakaya.

What I'm trying to explain is that even though the external aspect of the guru doesn't change into the deity's aspect when you see that the essence of the guru is dharmakaya, it is an important foundation for that realization. It is very important in the practice of seeing the virtuous friend as pure.

Ven. Ailsa Cameron: Rinpoche, in the visualization of Vajrasattva and the consort is there also a mantra garland around the seed syllable at the heart of the consort?

Rinpoche: I have never thought about that! I have never dreamt about it! I think you can visualize that. You can visualize as many mantra garlands as possible—at the father's heart, at the mother's heart, at the daughter's heart, at the son's heart....

So far I have not seen any commentary that says to visualize the mantra at the mother's heart. It usually says at the father's heart. But if you would really like to visualize the mantra also at the mother's heart, I don't think that there should be any problem from doing that. Maybe it would be helpful to have more nectars flowing down.

Todd Ring: If there is awareness that thought and consciousness are not separate, does that suppress the causative power of karmic appearances or purify them? And can one practice that way?

Rinpoche: Does it make karma cease to function? What do you mean by “not separate”?

Todd: Thought and consciousness are both empty and non-dual, so aren't they therefore not separate? And if one remains in the awareness of this...

Rinpoche: Remaining in the awareness that all phenomena—not only thought and consciousness—are empty, or non-dual, makes negative karma unable to function and good karma able to function. Everything is empty, not just thought and consciousness. If you look at the numberless phenomena as empty, like space, if you can keep your mind in that state, it is only negative karma that is unable to function; good karma functions. It is similar to the what was mentioned before about dependent arising.

Todd: I don't understand how negative karma is unable to function but good karma is still functional.

Rinpoche: To understand that, you need to know more about what emptiness means. It will then become more clear how that can enable good karma to function.

Negative karma is made unable to function by the power of that meditation on the very nature of phenomena. Positive karma is made functional because you collect inconceivable merit when you do that meditation. Meditating on emptiness is the most powerful way to cease the delusions, or defilements. The wisdom that realizes emptiness is actually the only thing that can directly cease the delusions, especially the very root of all delusions, ignorance, the concept of inherent existence. The wisdom that realizes emptiness is the most powerful agent in purifying negative karma.

Negative karma is the obstacle to many things—happiness, success in business, health, longevity, harmonious relationships, realizations. Negative karma is the obstacle to our achieving enlightenment and our benefiting and enlightening others. So, the wisdom that realizes emptiness purifies negative karma. Not only that, but it collects inconceivable merit, inconceivable good karma. This wisdom is very powerful, like an

atomic bomb. It is the most powerful means of purifying negative karma. And because you purify negative karma, the past good karma you have collected is strengthened and ripened. For example, if you are eating the wrong diet or something poisonous and you are also taking medicine, the medicine becomes more powerful and works better when you reduce your intake of the wrong food or the poison. Similarly, by meditating on emptiness, you purify more negative karma and at the same time collect inconceivable merit, so your past merit is then experienced. You are then able to have realizations of the path to enlightenment.

Does this make it a little clearer? Anyway, you can think and meditate more on this point, and an understanding of it will then gradually come.

Ven. Michel: On the crown of Vajrasattva, do we visualize Akshobhya alone or with the consort?

Rinpoche: The question from the very famous venerable from Nalanda is, “When you initiate the Vajrasattva on your crown and the surplus water becomes Akshobhya, should you visualize Akshobhya in the aspect of father and mother embraced?” I don’t remember seeing a commentary that specifies the aspect of Akshobhya, but I think that it should be okay to visualize father and mother.

There is a general explanation that shows the purpose of visualizing one of the five types of buddhas on the crown. Even though I’ve been using the term “*Dhyani* Buddha” for numberless years and many people have become familiar with the term, I don’t really know what *Dhyani* means in this context. After all these years, I’m still not sure what it means.

The Tibetan term is *rig-nga*, which could be translated as “five types of buddhas.” The word *rig* can mean “type” or “race,” as in Mahayana race. Mahayana race has nothing to do with the body; it has to do with the mind. Those who have the realization of bodhicitta are of the Mahayana race, or type. Sometimes *rig* is translated as “family,” but you can’t really talk about the Mahayana family; it should be the Mahayana race or Mahayana type. Of course, as far as the words are concerned, it doesn’t really matter. Whatever label you use, once its meaning is explained and people understand the meaning, the label itself doesn’t matter very much. Once the meaning of the term is known, it doesn’t really matter if the term is not precise.

This applies to some translations of Tibetan terms. Take “emptiness,” for example. In tantric sadhanas, before we generate something pure, a deity or a mandala, we purify in emptiness the ordinary object, our body or the place. At that time we use the words *tong-pa-nyi du-gyur*, not simply *tong-pa gyur*, which means “it becomes empty.” In Tibetan, the extra word *nyi*, which means “only,” is added after *tong-pa*, which means “emptiness.” Adding *nyi* makes the emptiness specific; it is not just ordinary emptiness but a specific emptiness. The Tibetan term, with the addition of the extra word *nyi*, becomes something special, something specific. The addition of *nyi* makes it clear that you are not just visualizing empty space or saying that something doesn’t exist there. If you don’t add *nyi* to *tong-pa*, you are referring to ordinary emptiness, which is like space or the absence of form. By adding *nyi* after *tong-pa*, however, you know that you are not simply visualizing that a substantial phenomena becomes non-existent, which is ordinary emptiness. The *nyi* makes the emptiness something particular, something special; it cuts the concept of ordinary emptiness. The *nyi* specifies that the type of emptiness is the emptiness of inherent existence.

The English word “emptiness” is not a precise translation of the Tibetan term *tong-pa-nyi*, where *tong-pa* means emptiness and *nyi* means only. Every single word of the Tibetan has not been translated—the *nyi* has been left out. However, for quite a number of years now, the term “emptiness” has been used to mean the absence of inherent existence, and people have become familiar with this use. In some contexts, the English word “emptiness” refers to the absence of inherent existence; in other contexts, it does not necessarily have this meaning. The Tibetan term *tong-pa-nyi*, however, always refers to the absence of inherent existence. There is no danger of being misled and thinking of ordinary emptiness from the side of the words; this can only happen if someone doesn’t understand the meaning of the words.

You can say that all the buddhas are manifestations of the one, Buddha Vajradhara, who is of the sixth type, or race. Or you can say that all the buddhas are manifestations of the three, the holy body of Vairocana, the holy speech of Amitabha, the holy mind of Akshobhya. Or you can say that all the buddhas are manifestations of the five Dhyani Buddhas.

Saying this has reminded me that the essence of the hundred syllable

Vajrasattva mantra is the one hundred types, or races, of peaceful and wrathful deities—*shi-tro tam-pa rig-gya* in Tibetan. There is a way of counting one hundred types of deities (*rig-gya*), five types of deities (*rig-nga*) and one type of deity (*rig-chig*), which refers to Vajradhara. The HUM in the center signifies the sixth type (*rig-drug-pa*), or race, Vajradhara. The hundred syllables signify the hundred types of peaceful and wrathful deities.

The five Dhyani Buddhas are manifestations coming from Buddha Vajradhara, so in that sense *rig* could perhaps be translated as “lineage.”

Basically, a king’s race has to do with the children born from that king; it has to do with the blood lines. There are many such races in India. Here, the term *rig*, or “race,” has to do with the mind.

However, according to Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche’s explanation, *rig*, or “type,” refers to the sentient beings. Rather than referring to the Dhyani Buddhas, it refers to the types of sentient beings. For the type of sentient being whose main delusion is attachment, Amitabha manifests in order to purify their strong attachment. Akshobhya manifests to pacify the anger of those sentient beings whose main delusion is anger. In a similar way, each of the five Dhyani Buddhas acts as a particular remedy to one of the five main delusions. In this case, the “types” in the expression “the five types of the Victorious Ones”—*gyal-wa rig-nga* in Tibetan—is related to the types of sentient beings in terms of their delusions, and each of the five Dhyani Buddhas manifests in order to purify those types of sentient beings. As I mentioned before, for the “type” of sentient being who has strong attachment, Amitabha Buddha manifests to purify their delusions, particularly their attachment. So, in this context, “five types” seems a more suitable translation of *rig-nga* than “five lineages.” How you translate the term *rig-nga* depends on its context.

After some time, before the retreat finishes—or maybe after the retreat finishes—I thought to go through the commentary on the extensive Vajrasattva practice from the long version of the Yamantaka or the Heruka sadhana. In his Vajrasattva commentary, I think Lama Yeshe might have explained the elaborate visualizations from the long Heruka sadhana.

Invoking the wisdom beings and initiating the deity are not done for the deity but for our own mind. Initiating the deity is done to purify our

own delusions, because a buddha has nothing to purify. If there were something to purify, the being would not be a buddha, but as in the *Jor-chö* bath offering we're doing every morning, the reason we still do the meditation is to purify our own mind, as well as to generate strong faith. It is for this purpose that we invoke the wisdom being.

We might have the idea, "Oh, this is just a visualization. It comes from my own imagination, so how can it purify my mind?" To stop such thoughts, which are obstacles to having strong faith, we invoke the wisdom beings and so forth. We can then develop faith and feel that it is the real Vajrasattva that is purifying us.

The water that comes out of the crown transforms into one of the five types of buddhas. This is to show the particular type of buddha, from the five types, in the essence of which one becomes enlightened. It also helps to generate faith in the existence of this buddha.

Another explanation of the buddha on the crown is also given. Even after they become enlightened, buddhas still respect their guru, because they become enlightened in dependence upon the kindness of their guru. The buddha on the crown signifies that the deity still pays homage, or respect, to the guru even after becoming enlightened. Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo gave this explanation in the Cittamani Tara commentary, and there are some other commentaries that explain it this way, too.

Again some obstacles happened so that I didn't get to read the text [that Rinpoche has brought with him several times]. I thought to read you some fantastic stories, something really exciting that would make you levitate five feet in the air! Maybe next time. . .

DEDICATION

"Due to the merits of the three times collected by myself and others, which are empty, may the I, which is empty, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's or Guru Vajrasattva's enlightenment, which is also empty, and lead all sentient beings, who are also empty, to that enlightenment, which is also empty, by myself alone—which is *not* empty! That's the only one that is not empty! Everything else is empty, except me. No, that one is the most empty of all!" I'm joking!

Sunday, February 21 (B)

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

MOTIVATION FOR THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS PRACTICE

I'm always very happy to lead others in the motivation—but not to do the practice myself!

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

“If I were now in the lower realms, in a hell realm, how would it be? I would be completely overwhelmed by the heaviest suffering of samsara. Besides this, I would have no opportunity to practice Dharma.

“Not only is death definite but it could happen at any moment. It could happen today; it could even happen right now. So, before death comes, I must purify all my defilements, negative karmas and downfalls without even a second's delay.

“Having all these defilements, negative karmas and downfalls is billions of times more harmful than having taken a deadly poison. Even though taking the poison can cause my death, that alone cannot cause me to be reborn in the lower realms and suffer there for many eons. But if I die with these defilements, negative karmas and downfalls on my mind-stream, I can be reborn in the lower realms and experience suffering there for many eons. Therefore, I must purify all these negativities right now without even a second's delay.

“To bring all happiness, up to enlightenment, to all sentient beings, I'm going to do prostrations while reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas and the *Confession of Downfalls*.”

In your heart, feel that you are making each prostration for the benefit of every hell being, to free them from suffering and bring them to

enlightenment; for the benefit of every hungry ghost; for the benefit of every animal; for the benefit of every human being; for the benefit of every asura; for the benefit of every sura; for the benefit of every intermediate state being. You are doing every single prostration for them.

GENERAL CONFESSION

Next is the general confession. [Rinpoche reads *General Confession* up to "...have created the ten negative actions by means of body, speech and mind..."]

Think of how the ten non-virtuous actions appear to you. If they appear to you as not merely labeled by your mind, as real ten non-virtuous actions that exist from there, think that that is a hallucination, that is the object to be refuted. Those ten non-virtuous actions are totally non-existent right there. Reflecting on the emptiness of each negative karma is the most powerful way to purify negative karma. While you are listing the various negative karmas and regretting them, at the same time purify them in emptiness. It is extremely powerful to do this as you go through the various negative karmas.

"I have engaged in the five heinous actions..."—meditate that they are empty—"...the five parallel heinous actions..."—empty—"...I've transgressed the vows of individual liberation..."—empty—"...contradicted, transgressed the bodhisattva vows..."—empty—"...broke the tantric commitments..."—they become empty. Here it would be better to use "vows" than "commitments," because the word "commitment" is used more to refer to prayers. We are referring to the samaya vows taken during initiations, and reciting prayers is just one part of this.

"I've been disrespectful to my kind parents and spiritual master..."—that becomes empty—"...and spiritual friends, the vajra brothers and sisters..."—empty. "I've committed actions harmful to the Three Jewels..."—empty—"...avoided the holy Dharma..."—empty.

There is a mistake here [in the *FPMT Prayer Book*]. It says "stolen from the sangha," but it should say "criticized the sangha." Stealing from the sangha doesn't happen much and perhaps only applies to lay people. Criticizing the sangha, however, is what happens most, and it applies to both lay and sangha.

"...criticized the sangha..."—again, it becomes empty—"...harmed

living beings. . .”—empty. “These and many other destructive actions I’ve done. . .”—empty—“...have caused others to do...”—empty—“...have rejoiced in others doing...”—empty.

“In short, I’ve created many obstacles to my own high rebirth and liberation and have planted countless seeds for further wandering in cyclic existence and miserable states of being. Now, in the presence of spiritual masters...I promise to refrain from doing these negatives actions again in the future...” As I mentioned in relation to the Vajrasattva practice, think, “From now on, I will abstain altogether from those that I can, and will abstain for a day, a night, an hour, a minute or at least a few seconds from those that are difficult to abstain from.”

At the end, feel that you have completely purified everything, and dedicate the merits. “I dedicate the merits of having done prostrations, made offerings, confessed, rejoiced, requested the gurus to turn the Dharma wheel and to have stable lives to achieve enlightenment in order to enlighten all sentient beings.”

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

Generate a strong thought of regret and an intense thought of impermanence. From the bottom of your heart, think that death will happen and that it could happen right now. What would happen then?

Think, “I must achieve full enlightenment in order to offer extensive benefit to all other sentient beings, who are the source of all my past, present and future happiness. I must free them all from all their sufferings and bring them all happiness, including full enlightenment. This is why I am doing the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation.”

CONCLUDING PRACTICES

From the holy mouth of Guru Vajrasattva: “Son of the race, all your defilements, negative karmas and degenerated samaya vows are completely purified.” Think that your mind has become completely pure, exactly as Guru Vajrasattva said.

Make a vow to abstain from now on from those vices that you can abstain from and to abstain from the difficult ones for one day, one hour, one minute or at least a few seconds.

“In emptiness there is no creator, no I; there is no action of creating negative karma; and there is no negative karma created. Nothing exists in the slightest from its own side. Everything is totally empty. Everything is totally empty of existing from its own side.”

While your mind is contemplating in this way, looking at all phenomena as totally empty, dedicate the merits.

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

Monday, February 22 (A)

MORNING: FIRST SESSION

CONCLUSION OF THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS PRACTICE

The power of the mantra, the power of the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas and the beams emitted by them completely purify all the defilements, negative karma and downfalls. All the negativities collected during beginningless rebirths have been completely purified. Your mental continuum becomes completely pure.

“In emptiness there is no I, there is no action of creating negative karma, there is no negative karma created.”

Dedicate all the merit collected from having done prostrations, made offerings, confessed, rejoiced and requested the gurus to turn the Dharma wheel and to have stable lives, to your achievement of enlightenment so that you can then bring all happiness, including enlightenment, to all sentient beings.

COMBINED *JOR-CHÖ/LAMA CHÖPA* PRACTICE

The supreme mandala

After you have recited the verse for taking refuge and generating bodhicitta (*sang-gye chö-dang...*) three times, a replica of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, the central figure in the refuge merit field, descends to your crown and absorbs within you. You become enlightened in the essence of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. You then send beams from the pores of your body with a Guru Shakyamuni Buddha on the tip of each beam. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha descends to the crown of each sentient being and purifies them. Every sentient being becomes enlightened in the aspect of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha; their mind becomes dharmakaya and their body becomes rupakaya.

You then rejoice, “How wonderful it is that I have enlightened all sentient beings.” When you think about whether or not they have actually become enlightened, however, you find that they are not enlightened, and this has simply been your visualization. Why aren’t they enlightened? Because they still have discriminating thoughts of anger and attachment and are suffering. You then think, “Therefore, I must generate the four immeasurable thoughts.”

The four immeasurable thoughts

If you can, do tong-len practice along with the four immeasurable thoughts. With the first verse, immeasurable equanimity, take in all the sufferings, all the problems, caused by discriminating thoughts of anger and attachment as well as the anger and attachment themselves in the form of pollution. Take this pollution into your heart and use it to destroy your own self-cherishing thought, or ego. Your self-cherishing thought becomes completely non-existent.

With the next verse, immeasurable loving kindness, do the practice of giving. Think that you give away your body (which you can think of as a wish-fulfilling gem), your merits of the three times and all your possessions.

With the third verse, immeasurable compassion, again take from sentient beings their suffering and its causes.

And finally, with immeasurable joy, again do the practice of giving.

In this way, besides collecting infinite merit by generating each of the immeasurable thoughts, you collect infinite merit by doing the tong-len meditation. Each time you do the practice of taking the sufferings of sentient beings, you collect infinite merit. Each time you give your body, you collect infinite merit; each time you give your merits of the three times, you collect infinite merit; and each time you give your possessions, you collect infinite merit.

Generating special bodhicitta

Next comes the generation of special bodhicitta to practice tantra. Here we need to generate very strongly this special motivation of bodhicitta.

Think, “For one hell being, who has been my kind mother numberless

times and is the source of all my past, present and future happiness, to suffer in the hell realms for even one second is unbearable for my mind. It is like they are suffering for many eons. I need to lead them to full enlightenment immediately. And there are numberless hell beings, who are the same in that they have all been my kind mothers and are the source of all my past, present and future happiness. Their suffering in the hell realm even for one second is unbearable for my mind, as if they are suffering for eons. Therefore, I must enlighten them without even a second's delay."

By thinking in the same way about the sentient beings in each realm, generate strong compassion and bodhicitta, the thought that seeks enlightenment for the sake of others, that seeks to accomplish work for others.

After all this, think, "I *must* achieve enlightenment for them without even a second's delay, in the quickest possible way." Generate this thought of seeking enlightenment, of seeking to accomplish work for other beings, after you have meditated on the sentient beings in each realm or at the very end, after you have meditated on the beings in all the realms.

It is very important to generate this intense thought of bodhicitta at the beginning as the motivation for the whole practice of guru yoga. As mentioned in the verses on special bodhicitta, this is your only reason for practicing guru yoga. After you have generated this thought of achieving enlightenment yourself in order to accomplish work for others, recite the verses. Only after feeling the meaning in your heart, only after transforming your heart into this thought, do you recite the words of the prayer.

Meditating on the three kayas

After this, those who have received a great initiation of Highest Yoga Tantra and know how to meditate on the three kayas can do that meditation here. This meditation purifies ordinary death, ordinary intermediate state and ordinary rebirth; ripens the mind in the path-time dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya; and plants the seed of the result-time dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. This meditation is called "utilizing the three kayas." In other words, on the basis of death,

intermediate state and rebirth, you visualize what you are going to achieve in the future, the result-time three kayas, and that itself becomes the actual path to achieving the three kayas.

Even these essential points that I have mentioned come from secret teachings, but in any case, the secrecy has already gone. . . .

So at this point, those who have received a Highest Yoga Tantra initiation can meditate on the three kayas. When reciting sadhanas, we usually stop at the meditation on the three kayas and meditate for a little while on the dharmakaya. Many of my gurus, especially His Holiness Song Rinpoche, have emphasized this very much. Whether or not everyone knows the meditation, stop there for a little while. I guess it gives other people the chance to meditate. If possible, also stop for a while after you become the sambhogakaya. Perhaps this is to make sure that you practice divine pride during the rest of the sadhana. You then meditate on the nirmanakaya. These are the key points in practice of the generation stage of Highest Yoga Tantra.

Integrating the three deities

Those who know the meditation can do the self-generation from the Yamantaka sadhana. *Guru Puja* is a very special practice because of its integration of Yamantaka, Guhyasamaja and Chakrasamvara. It is the quickest path to enlightenment, quicker than the Highest Yoga Tantra path in general. The general Highest Yoga Tantra path exists in all four traditions, but practicing the integration of these three deities comes only in Lama Tsong Khapa's tradition. In *Guru Puja* you begin by generating yourself as Yamantaka, the body mandala in the second merit field is from the Guhyasamaja practice and the extensive offerings are from the Chakrasamvara practice. This is the integration of the three deities.

After you have made the request, which is known as "Putting the Stake," the guru enters your heart. Like driving in a stake to hold up a tent by hitting it many times, fervently make this request to the guru three times—make it from the depths of your heart. After the guru enters your heart, recite the Guhyasamaja, Yamantaka and Chakrasamvara mantras. Reciting these mantras is also a practice of the integration of the three deities. This particular explanation comes from Geshe Senge. Of the twenty-five or so gurus that I have, Geshe Senge is the one

from whom I have received almost all the teachings on Most Secret Hayagriva.

Now meditate briefly on the three kayas.

Monday, February 22 (B)

MORNING: SECOND SESSION

CONCLUSION OF THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS PRACTICE

Due to the power of the holy names of the Thirty-five Buddhas and the beams emitted by them, you are purified of all defilements, negative karma and downfalls collected from beginningless rebirths until now.

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

“I dedicate all the merits collected through having done prostrations, made offerings, confessed, rejoiced, and requested the gurus to have stable lives and to turn the Dharma wheel, to my achieving enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings.”

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

Think, “Even in one day I collect so many defilements, negative karmas, downfalls and degenerated samaya vows. And I have collected an unbelievable number of negative karmas in this life. On top of all this, I have collected an unbelievable number of negative karmas during my beginningless rebirths. The thought of reincarnating again in samsara, especially of entering again into the sufferings of the lower realms, is unbearable. Besides the fact that it is the most unbearable suffering, I’ve already experienced it numberless times during beginningless rebirths. I can’t stand for even one second not to purify all these defilements, negative karmas and degenerated samaya vows.”

Feel in your heart that you are going to die during this hour. Think, “Before my death comes, I must purify. Without even a second’s delay, I must purify all these defilements, negative karmas and degenerated samaya vows.”

Then think, “Just like me, all sentient beings—the source of all my

past, present and future happiness—have suffered numberless times during beginningless rebirths in samsara, especially in the lower realms, and have collected numberless times all these negative karmas. I must liberate them from all their suffering and its causes and bring them to enlightenment as quickly as possible. To do this, I must achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. Therefore, I'm going to purify all my defilements, negative karmas, downfalls and degenerated samaya vows by doing the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation.”

CONCLUDING PRACTICES

Now practice the power of not committing negative karma again, by thinking, “From now on I will abstain from all the negative karmas that I can abstain from and I will abstain from those that are extremely difficult to abstain from for one day, one hour, one minute or at least a few seconds.”

Guru Vajrasattva is extremely pleased by this promise and absorbs within you. Your body, speech and mind become inseparable from Vajrasattva's holy body, holy speech and holy mind.

“Until I achieve enlightenment may I never transgress my samaya vows. May I lead all sentient beings to Guru Vajrasattva's enlightenment by myself achieving that enlightenment.”

Monday, February 22 (c)

MORNING: THIRD SESSION

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

Think of all your non-virtuous actions—all actions you've done motivated by attachment clinging to this life, ignorance and anger; all actions that result in only suffering. Think of all the actions that became negative karma. Think especially of the actions done out of the attachment that clings to the pleasures of this life, to a good reputation and so forth.

Think of all the ten non-virtues—killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, slander, gossip, harsh speech (which means saying words that hurt another person), covetousness, ill will and heresy—you have committed in this life and numberless times in your past lives.

Think of the times that you have broken the pratimoksha, bodhisattva and tantric vows in this life, and even if you haven't broken them in this life, you have broken them numberless times in your past lives.

Then think of the heaviest negative karmas, those created in relation to the guru through harming the guru's holy body, not following his advice, disturbing his holy mind, generating non-devotional thoughts, criticizing or giving up the guru. Even if you haven't done some of these things in this life, you have done them numberless times in your past lives.

“These negativities are obstacles that not only block my achievement of the realizations of the path to liberation and to enlightenment but also prevent my bringing every happiness to all sentient beings. On top of this, they cause me to be reborn again and again in samsara, especially the lower realms, where I have to suffer for an inconceivable number of eons. So, this is the only chance that I have to free myself from all these defilements and from the sufferings of samsara, especially the sufferings of the lower realms. This is my only opportunity to escape; this is my only opportunity to purify.

“Since death could come within this minute, I must purify all these negativities without even a second’s delay. I must free all sentient beings, the source of all my past, present and future happiness, from all their sufferings and bring them to enlightenment. Therefore, I myself must achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. It is for this reason that I am going to practice the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation.”

Those who are not familiar with the visualization of Vajrasattva can read the description in the text. Otherwise, just start to recite the mantra.

CONCLUDING PRACTICES

From the holy mouth of Guru Vajrasattva come the words, “Son of the race, all defilements, negative karma and degenerated samaya vows you have collected during beginningless rebirths have now been completely purified.”

Think that what Guru Vajrasattva says has actually happened. All your negativities have been completely purified. There is not the slightest trace of defilement left on your mental continuum. Your mental continuum is completely pure.

To make your confession perfect and most powerful, now apply the last of the four remedial powers, the power of not committing negative actions again. Think, “From now on I’ll abstain from all the vices that I can abstain from, and I’ll abstain from those that are extremely difficult for me to abstain from for one day, one hour, one minute or at least a few seconds.”

Your vow to abstain from negative karmas pleases Guru Vajrasattva, who melts into light and absorbs within you. Your own body, speech and mind become inseparable from Guru Vajrasattva’s vajra holy body, vajra holy speech and vajra holy mind.

Those who haven’t received a Highest Yoga Tantra initiation can visualize that the light absorbs at the point between their eyebrows. Those who have received such an initiation can visualize that the light absorbs through their crown and can then meditate on the guru entering their heart.

“In emptiness there is no I, no creator; there is no action of creating negative karma; there is no negative karma created.” As well as this, all

phenomena are totally non-existent, are empty from their own side. While the mind is contemplating the state of emptiness, while the mind is looking at everything as empty, dedicate the merits.

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

DEDICATION

Please dedicate the merit for bodhicitta, the source of all happiness and success for you and all other sentient beings, to be generated within your own mind, in the minds of the members of your family and in the minds of all sentient beings. And may the bodhicitta that has been generated be increased.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may any sentient being who just hears me, touches me, remembers me, thinks about me or talks about me, never be reborn in the lower realms from that time. May they immediately be liberated from all disease, spirit harm, negative karma and obscurations. May they achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible by actualizing the whole path, especially bodhicitta.

“Due to all the merits collected by me and others, may I immediately be able to heal all sentient beings who are sick, especially those who can’t be cured by other means. May I be able to cure the heavy diseases of those who have been possessed by spirits and become crazy and uncontrolled, those who are in a coma and so forth. Just by seeing me, touching me, hearing my voice or remembering me, may any sentient being who is dying immediately be free from all fear, attachment and so forth and generate incredible joy in their heart. May that sentient being be born in a pure land where they can become enlightened.”

FOOD OFFERING

We will now make the food offering. Think that all the food in the kitchen is transformed into nectar in a jeweled container and that the Guru Puja merit field and the numberless buddhas in all the directions

receive numberless offerings. [OM AH HUM 3x, *La-ma sang-gye...*]

Meditating that the essence of all the beings in merit field is your root virtuous friend, offer nectar to all of them. Your offering with this guru yoga mind generates infinite bliss within them. Next, meditating that their essence is the root virtuous friend, offer unceasing nectar to all Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in the ten directions. Your offering generates infinite bliss within them. Now, meditating that their essence is the root virtuous friend, offer unceasing nectar to all the statues, stupas and scriptures in the ten directions. Think that this offering generates infinite bliss within them.

Also make charity of unceasing nectar to every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal, every human being, every asura, every sura and every intermediate state being. They all fully enjoy the nectar and are liberated from all their suffering; they all become enlightened in the aspect of the deity that you practice.

“Due to all the past, present and future merit collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings and due to all the numberless merits collected by making offerings to all the numberless buddhas in the ten directions; the numberless merits collected by making offerings to the *Guru Puja* merit field; the numberless merits collected by making offerings to all the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in the ten directions; the numberless merits collected by making offerings to all the statues; the numberless merits collected by making offerings to all the stupas; the numberless merits collected by making offerings to all the scriptures; the numberless merits collected by making charity to all the sentient beings; and the numberless merits from generating the motivation of bodhicitta”—I left this out; it should have been done before the food offering—“may I, the members of my family, all students and benefactors of this organization, especially those who sacrifice their lives doing service for others, and all the rest of the sentient beings never be separated from the guru-Triple Gem and always collect merit by making offerings to the guru-Triple Gem. May they receive the blessing of the guru-Triple Gem and generate all the realizations from guru devotion up to enlightenment, especially bodhicitta and clear light from Highest Yoga Tantra. May all these realizations be actualized in my own mind and in the minds of all sentient beings without even a second’s delay.

“Due to these non-existent merits of the three times”—here you

should understand that “non-existent” means “not inherently existent” — “may the non-existent I achieve non-existent Vajrasattva’s enlightenment and lead the non-existent sentient beings to that non-existent enlightenment by my non-existent self.”

Please enjoy the empty food.

Tuesday, February 23

AMITAYUS INITIATION

REASONS FOR GIVING LONG LIFE INITIATION

Today we're going to do the long life initiation of Buddha Amitayus. I think we've been doing too much meditation on impermanence and death, especially on the imminence of death! You think of impending death but I make your life longer! It's a good deal! By thinking of impermanence and death, your life gets longer instead of shorter. You believe your life is going to be short, and that makes it longer. . . .

Some time ago I thought to give a long-life initiation near the end of the Vajrasattva retreat, because doing it would be worthwhile. Since all of you are trying to practice Dharma and make your lives meaningful by benefiting others, it is worthwhile for you to have long lives and therefore to do a long-life initiation. However, Venerable Marcel has not been well for the last few days and, according to my divinations, there are some obstacles, so the long life initiation is needed immediately. This is why it is happening now. Also, it might benefit others, especially those who are in a similar situation with obstacles to their life. This initiation has the power to eliminate life obstacles not because I have the necessary qualities to give the initiation but because of both the compassion and blessings of Buddha Amitayus and your own faith and concentration.

There are many methods of prolonging life—right now, however, I need to prolong my nose! [Rinpoche blows his nose.]

This is the first time I have done a Vajrasattva group retreat, and because of my laziness and other obstacles I myself haven't attended all the sessions. Also, in the middle of March I have to go to India for a couple of weeks as I have been given the responsibility of organizing a meeting of Gelug lamas. When I come back, I will rejoin the retreat for the remaining month. However, my feeling is that all of you have been trying very hard, and it seems that the practice has been effective. Everyone

seems to be doing the Vajrasattva retreat as perfectly as possible, and my feeling is that it is being very beneficial. You are not just fulfilling the mantra count but doing the many other practices that make the retreat most effective and most powerful. For this reason, it is extremely worthwhile for all of you to have long lives.

VENERABLE MARCEL'S QUALITIES

Venerable Marcel is one of the people in the FPMT who is like gold. Bearing many hardships, he has offered service to Lama Yeshe and this organization for a long, long time. No matter how hard or complicated things were, no matter how many obstacles he encountered in doing what Lama asked, Marcel was like a rock. With a brave heart he continued to offer service for many years during Lama's time, and then after Lama's time. After all that service I then gave him the burden of building the 500-foot statue of Maitreya Buddha, the future Buddha—after *all* that, I gave Marcel that big mountain to carry. So he has to have a long life! He has to live long; he has to live until that statue is finished and then until all the FPMT students have become enlightened.

MOTIVATION

At this time we have found a perfect human body, which is qualified by eight freedoms and ten riches, or endowments. Once found, this perfect human body has great meaning, and it will be extremely difficult to find such a body again. So, at this time we have achieved this perfect human body and also we have met the precious teachings of the Buddha, which are extremely difficult to meet, and we are being guided by not just a virtuous friend who reveals the unmistakable path, who shows virtue, who leads us in a virtuous path—which is the only way to achieve happiness—who leads us to liberation from samsara, not just that, but by a Mahayana virtuous friend, who guides us to enlightenment, the great liberation, the non-abiding sorrowless state. A virtuous friend who shows us the unmistakable path, the Mahayana path—not only the unmistakable path but the complete path to enlightenment—such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama and our other lamas. We have met not just one, but many.

And then, from your own side, by having learned the Dharma, you

have the wisdom to see what is right to practice and what is wrong, to be abandoned. Therefore, you should think, “At this time I *must* do *pure* holy Dharma, and I must do it right now, because it is uncertain when my death will occur; there’s no certainty at all. It is not definite which will come first, tomorrow or the next life. I have to die—that’s definite. At the moment, I am not beyond death; I have not overcome death. With this present level of mind, I have not overcome death, therefore it is definite that I will experience death.”

After death, you don’t become non-existent, like Theravadins believe—those who follow, of the four schools of Buddhist philosophy, the first school, *Che-tra-mra-wa*. They believe that after achieving arhatship, the sorrowless state, the continuity of consciousness ceases at that time; the aggregates, including the consciousness, cease. That’s what those lower schools believe—that when you achieve liberation, the aggregates, the consciousness, cease. However, it’s not like that.

I also heard that there is a Western philosophy that says that after a person has died, the person’s soul hangs around, like a cloud hanging around in the sky, floating around up there somewhere. I’m not sure whether they call it the consciousness or the soul—maybe the soul—but after death, it floats around like a cloud. Have you heard this? I think some people believe it, which means they believe that something exists after death. I don’t think it’s a very popular belief, but some people hold it.

However, you need to take rebirth after death. And there is no third destination; there are only two—rebirth as either a happy migratory being or a suffering migratory being. If you reincarnate, get reborn, as a suffering transmigratory being, you find yourself as either a hell being—experiencing the heaviest sufferings of hot and cold—a preta—experiencing the heaviest sufferings of hunger and thirst—or an animal, whose major suffering is being extremely foolish, very ignorant, and being tortured by getting killed for meat, skin and so forth, which even happens to animals who live among humans. However, being eaten by enemies—people and other animals—they experience unimaginable suffering, day and night; all the time.

Even if you are able to receive the body of a happy migratory being, it’s still suffering in nature, with rebirth, old age, sicknesses, death and so forth. In the six realms of samsara—including even the form and formless realms, the highest realms of samsara—from the lowest hot hell—the

unbearable hell realm, the very bottom hell, which has the heaviest suffering of all the hells—up to the highest formless realm, the tip of samsara—there is not even one single second’s experience of happiness that is not suffering; there is no pleasure that is not suffering.

Wherever in the desire, form or formless realms you reincarnate, it is all only suffering in nature. At the moment, because through meditation we haven’t realized how all these realms—desire, form and formless—are totally suffering in nature, because our minds are ignorant of this—not only ignorant, not knowing, but also hallucinating, looking at them as pleasurable—we look at samsara, at these desire, form and formless realms—as the *Guru Puja* mentions—as a beautiful park, as something whose nature is happiness, as something to enjoy, as something that is worth being attached to, as good, as beautiful. However, in reality, it is only suffering in nature. We have been born in these desire, form and formless realms numberless times; since beginningless time, we have experienced numberless rebirths in these realms; there’s nothing new.

Therefore, think, “This time, I *must* liberate myself from all these suffering samsaric realms. But just liberating myself alone is not sufficient. Sentient beings equaling the sky—due to ignorance and life changes, birth and death—do not recognize that we have all been each other’s father and mother in the past. In reality, there is not one single sentient being who has not been my own father and mother in the past, who has not been kind, who has not helped me in the past. They are so very precious.”

You can also think—if you think that friends are more important than parents, more precious than parents—that there is not one sentient being who has not been your friend in the past.

However, “These kind mother sentient beings need to be liberated from all these oceans of samsaric sufferings, but at the moment, I don’t have the capacity to liberate them completely from all these oceans of samsaric suffering. Who does have that capacity? Who has the power to do that? *Only* the fully enlightened one; no one else. Only the fully enlightened being. Therefore, I *must* achieve full enlightenment at this time. For that purpose, I’m going to take the long life initiation of Buddha Amitayus, according to the tradition of the victorious ones who achieved the One Mother, and by taking this initiation I am going to accomplish extensive work for *all* sentient beings.”

Generate the strong thought of bodhicitta like this—you are going to

take the initiation for the benefit of all sentient beings and after that are going to do extensive work for sentient beings, to make your own life as productive, as beneficial as possible, for others. In other words, you are taking this initiation for others. Your having a long life is for the benefit of others.

RECHUNGPA'S TALE

There's a story about Milarepa's disciple, his heart son Rechungpa. Once Rechungpa went to India, where he took the very profound teachings of the "Dakini with no body"—I don't know what that is—in the presence of Drillbupa, the incarnation of Guru Marpa's son, Tarma Dode.

About the time that Rechungpa was due to return to Tibet, Lama Drillbupa advised him, "Today, go into the city where the people gather." Accordingly, Rechungpa went into the center of the city, where people gather. There he saw a yogi with a bluish body, probably a bit like Milarepa's, which had turned green because of all the nettles Milarepa ate. Anyway, this yogi had a blue holy body and was holding a horn in his hand. He stared at Rechungpa with very big eyes and said, "Oh, little Tibetan man—you are so beautiful, youthful and attractive, but you have only seven days to live." Then the yogi disappeared.

Rechungpa was very unhappy, very disturbed by this, so he quickly went to see Drillbupa and told him what had happened. Drillbupa said, "I already knew that you have only seven days to live, but I sent you into the city to hear it from someone else so that you would have faith in that prediction." Then Drillbupa said, "But you don't need to be afraid. I have a method. In western India there is a sandalwood devi forest where Machig Drubpa'i Lhamo, the Queen who has achieved the One Mother lives."

Usually "One Mother" refers to the wisdom Prajnaparamita mother. That's probably what it means here. The real meaning of "One Mother" is the wisdom realizing emptiness. Of the gone beyond wisdom of the scriptures, the gone beyond wisdom of path and the gone beyond wisdom of the result, the result is the complete one. The wisdom realizing emptiness that is the complete one is Buddha's wisdom. Buddhas, bodhisattvas and arhats, both solitary realizers (*pratyekabuddhas*) and hearer-listeners (*shravakas*), are all born from the wisdom gone beyond.

Therefore, that wisdom is called the Mother. That is the actual meaning. Then that manifests as this deity. That is the interpretive meaning. The Queen, who lived in this forest, had achieved the One Mother and gained the realization of immortality, so even though she had been alive for hundreds of thousands of years, she still looked as young and beautiful as a sixteen year-old girl.

Drillbupa told Rechungpa to go there and take long life instructions, so he went there and offered her many gold coins, and received the long life instructions. At that time, Rechungpa was forty years old, and that initiation enabled him to live to the age of eighty-four.

However, after receiving this initiation, Rechungpa went to Tibet, where he met Milarepa, who said to him, “Show me some profound teachings that I don’t have, that here in Tibet we don’t have.” Then Rechungpa offered this instruction, the Amitayus long life initiation, as a present to his guru, Milarepa. Milarepa, in turn, gave it to Tagpo Lharje, Gampopa, Milarepa’s unequaled heart son. The lineage of this initiation passed down from there, and I received it from His Holiness Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche at Kopan Monastery, when Rinpoche gave us the *Rinjung Gyatsa* or *Sukha Gyatsa*, those sets of hundreds of initiations. I have also received it from His Holiness the Dalai Lama and from other lamas. In this way, the blessing of the lineage of this initiation has continued without interruption.

THE INITIATION

[Initiation continues with bodhisattva vows and instruction on the four black and the four white actions. See *Liberation*, p. 717. The four black actions to be abandoned are: trying to dupe your abbot, ordination master and so forth with lies; feeling distress when others do something virtuous; saying unpleasant things to bodhisattvas out of hostility; and acting deceitfully, without any altruism. The four white actions to be cultivated are: vigilantly abandoning deliberate lies; keeping honest intentions towards sentient beings and not deceiving them; developing the attitude that bodhisattvas are teachers and giving them due praise; and causing the sentient beings who are maturing under your care to uphold bodhicitta.]

Now purify yourself in emptiness. Observe how the self appears to

you—whether it appears to you as not merely labeled by mind or as merely labeled by mind. There are four schools of Buddhist philosophy. The fourth is the Madhyamika school, which has two divisions. The second of these is the Prasangika school. If the I appears to you as not merely labeled by the mind, that is the object to be refuted according to the view of the Madhyamika Prasangika school. This is a very subtle hallucination, a very subtle object to be refuted, an extremely subtle object to be refuted. That's why realizing the Prasangika school's view of emptiness is very subtle. It is subtle because the object to be refuted is very subtle, not gross. It's not even like the object to be refuted according to the view of the Svatantrika school, the other division of the Madhyamika.

Appearing to you as not merely labeled by the mind, that extremely subtle one is there, something is left there—that's the object to be refuted according to the view of the Prasangika school. That means it is a hallucination. So, while your mind one-pointedly concentrates on the hallucination, that it is a hallucination, at the same time think of the meaning of its being a hallucination—that it is *totally* non-existent, totally non-existent right there. Not even an atom of it exists. [Long meditation on emptiness.]

Then, the wisdom seeing emptiness manifests as the deity, Buddha Amitayus, the victorious one who has infinite, inconceivable life, wisdom—red in color, one face and two arms, holding a vase filled with the nectar of immortality, legs in the vajra posture, adorned with the holy marks and signs, in the aspect of the complete enjoyment body, the sambhogakaya, adorned with jewel ornaments and scarves. Visualize OM at his crown, AH at his throat and HUM at his heart.

[Initiation continues...concludes with Rinpoche placing the vase on everybody's head.]

Wednesday, February 24

EVENING: LIGHT OFFERINGS AT THE LMB
KSHITIGARBHA STATUE

THE PRACTICE OF OFFERING LIGHT

I would like to explain why we are doing this light offering practice here tonight.

Shelly Wang is the chairperson of the FPMT Foundation in Taiwan, the purpose of which is to help and support the three FPMT centers—Jinsiu Farlin in Taipei, Heruka Center in Kaohsiung and Shakyamuni Center in Taichung. I requested Shelly only this year to take responsibility for the Taiwan Foundation. However, she has not been well recently, so there was a need for a method to improve her well-being, to protect her life.

Making extensive light offerings to collect great merit is one such method. Another method is throwing a dog party! Organizing a party for dogs—making charity of food to dogs. So, there are human parties and there are dog parties! Maybe there are also cat parties and mouse parties too! Actually, we should throw the mouse party before the cat party—otherwise the mice may not live long enough to enjoy it! So, first the mouse party, then the cat party! Anyway, I'm joking! After the mouse party the cats might enjoy themselves more!

There are many methods for lengthening life, of which making extensive offerings to holy objects, collecting merit in that way, is one. It becomes the cause for having a long life when you make these offerings for that particular purpose and dedicate the merit for her and her family. The merit can also be dedicated to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Buddha of Compassion, and all other holy beings, the sangha, and all the benefactors who serve the sangha and the teachings of the Buddha—to help the benefactors spread and preserve the teachings. Finally, the merit can also be dedicated to sentient beings.

Now we are going to follow the normal process, the *usual* process [see Appendix 2].

[Taking refuge: *La-ma sang-gye la-ma chö...* x3]

[Generating bodhicitta: *Dag-dang zhän-dön...* x3]

[Purifying the place: *Tam-chä du-ni...*]

Visualize the ground of this entire place as being made of lapis lazuli, very blissful in nature and very springy, like a rubber mattress; not at all hard; very soft—when you step on it you feel great bliss throughout your whole body. Everywhere you look, whatever you see is extremely beautiful. There are many huge water ponds, full of gorgeous, precious, highly scented flowers with enormous petals. The entire landscape is dotted with wish-granting trees, wish-fulfilling trees—you get whatever you pray for—all success and enjoyment. Due to the power of the wish-fulfilling tree, you receive whatever you desire. The place itself is also covered with various flowers and the air is full of beautiful scented smells. Also visualize dakinis in space, making flowers rain from the sky. There are many lovely birds, all making the sound of Dharma—talking Dharma; singing Dharma. There is no ugliness, only perfect beauty, like Amitabha’s pure land. Having visualized all this, offer it to the merit field. You have to make the place clean and beautiful before inviting your guru or before receiving a king.

Making an offering like this to the merit field creates the karma to be born in a pure land in future lives, in a place where there are many sense enjoyments and beautiful places to enjoy.

Next bless the offerings by reciting the clouds of offerings mantra. Why is it called “clouds of offerings”? Because when you recite this mantra, numberless buddhas receive skies of offerings, clouds of offerings—which means they receive vast numbers of offerings, inconceivable offerings. By the power of this mantra, not only are the offerings blessed, but also each buddha receives numberless offerings.

[Offering prayer: *Lha-dang mi-yi...*]

But don’t offer only the lights that we’ve arranged here. Think that numberless buddhas in all directions receive numberless light offerings. You

can also visualize the *Guru Puja* merit field in the sky in front of you and think that each guru receives skies of light offerings. The mantra has the power to generate numberless offerings.

Then the final prayer, expressing the words of the truth, has the power to ensure that the merit field actually receives the numberless offerings that you have visualized. The final prayer has this power.

[Multiplying mantra: OM NAMO BHAGAVATE... (x3, with music)]

[Words of truth: *Kön-chog sum-gyi...*]

[Invocation: *Ma-lu sem-chen...* (Cymbals at end of the invocation)]

Then do the seven-limb practice. With the prostration limb, put your palms together to the merit field and visualize your body like a mountain range...you can visualize yourself as the Thousand-arm-eye Compassionate Buddha or another deity—not necessarily only the Compassionate Buddha, but the Compassionate Buddha is easy because he has a thousand arms, so it's easy to visualize covering much ground, as much ground as possible. However, you can also visualize yourself as another deity or in your ordinary human body. Visualizing your body like a mountain range, lie down and cover the whole ground; visualize yourself lying down from all directions towards the merit field—from the four directions, the four corners—doing prostrations to the merit field. If you are not doing physical prostrations, visualize yourself making prostrations while physically just putting your two palms together at your heart. This is the meditation you can do when you recite the prostration limb of the seven-limb practice in your normal practice. As many bodies as you can visualize, that much merit do you get. For example, if you visualize yourself doing prostrations in a billion bodies, you get the same amount of merit as if you had actually done a billion prostrations. The amount of merit you collect depends on how many bodies you can visualize.

[Seven-limb prayer, prostrations: *Go-sum gu-pa'i...*]

[Seven-limb prayer, offering: *Ngo-sham yi-trul...*]

Here we now make the extensive offerings.

Visualize that numberless buddhas in all directions receive numberless light offerings. Each member of the *Guru Puja* merit field receives skies of light offerings, numberless light offerings. Or you can think that the Kshitigarbha statue here is the guru, is all the gurus, is all Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Not only that, but this statue is also all statues, stupas and scriptures. It is everything. Thinking in this way, make numberless light offerings. In this way, you make offerings to all gurus, all Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, all ten directions statues, stupas and scriptures—by visualizing Kshitigarbha as the embodiment of all this and making offerings to him.

By making offerings with the guru yoga mind, you collect the most extensive merit. You meditate that each buddha is in essence your root virtuous friend and receives infinite bliss in his mind through the offerings you make.

Also, when you make offerings to the *Guru Puja* merit field, meditate that each guru is in essence your root virtuous friend. Generate infinite bliss in each one's mind as you make the numberless light offerings, as each one receives them. Those are the offerings we visualized during the blessing, just before.

I left out sharing the offerings with all sentient beings at the beginning, then making offerings.

Make charity of all these offerings. Make charity of every light offering to every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal, every human being, every sura, every asura and every intermediate state being. Think, "I am making these light offerings on behalf of all sentient beings—Shelly and her whole family and all the rest of the sentient beings. I'm making light offerings in order to achieve enlightenment for them, for all sentient beings."

If you do it this way, it benefits everybody, all people—people who are sick, in poverty and homeless, people who have no job, no means of living, all people who have many difficulties in their lives. Everybody gets the merit of making light offerings on behalf of all sentient beings; every human being, all people, get merit in this way, even though from their own side they don't know it. They all get merit from our dedicating like this, our doing it for them.

Visualize that the whole sky is filled with numberless light offerings—the actual lights that we're offering here, and also skies of numberless

light offerings that you visualize—like the vast night sky filled with stars, or like when you look out of an airplane as it comes in to land in a big city and the whole ground is covered with numberless lights. Offer all these lights to all the holy objects in India—all the holy objects that are in the holy places of Buddha, such as Bodhgaya, where one thousand buddhas descend and show the holy deed of attaining enlightenment, in all the monasteries in India, in individual people's houses—offer these lights to all the holy objects in India by meditating that the essence of each holy object is your own root virtuous friend and that because of these offerings, infinite bliss is generated within each one. At the same time, prostrate to all these holy objects with the palms of your hands pressed together at your heart.

Also, please include in your offering the more than three thousand light offerings and the more than two hundred and fifty water bowls at the Aptos house where I stay, which appear as nectar to the buddhas, as well as all the water bowls here in the LMB gomba, in the retreat room and outside, which appear as nectar to the buddhas, and all the water bowl offerings and lights in the Memorial Shrine. You can also offer all the offerings that are in our three Taiwan centers. In each of their gompas are hundreds of sets of offerings, so you can also include those together with all the others. Also, at Kopan Monastery there are many light, flower and water offerings in various rooms and you can offer all these as well.

Every time you offer all the holy objects found in different countries, offer them all together. This way, by offering each light, as there are an inconceivable number of offerings, you make an inconceivable number of offerings each time; you create many, many thousands of causes not only of enlightenment but also of liberation from samsara and good future rebirths—and by the way, you create infinite causes for success in this life as well, to receive whatever happiness you wish.

Now offer all the lights here and all the rest of the offerings that I mentioned just before, all this water that is nectar, to every single holy object in Tibet, by meditating that in essence they are your root virtuous friend, including the Shakyamuni Buddha statue in the Jokhang—which was blessed by Lord Buddha himself and is the most precious statue in Tibet—and the stupa that we built in Sera Monastery. At the same time, prostrate to all these holy objects with your two palms pressed together,

meditating with the guru yoga mind. Don't make these offerings just once—make them as many times as possible.

Now make all these light offerings and all the other offerings as well to every single holy object in Nepal, including the Swayambhunath stupa—the original, most precious holy object in Nepal—and the Boudhanath stupa—which fulfills the wishes of any sentient beings who circumambulates or prays, makes offerings or prostrates to it; the stupa that encompasses all Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Due to the family members who built the Boudhanath stupa, the Dharma was able to spread throughout Tibet and be preserved there, as a result of which numberless beings in Tibet became enlightened by actualizing the realizations of the path to enlightenment. Furthermore, the Buddhadharma was able to spread outside of Tibet, especially to the West, where previously it has been dark from the time Guru Shakyamuni Buddha first taught until recently. Lately, the light of Dharma has been spreading all over the world, as a result of which, every year, many tens of thousands of people have been able to find meaning and answers in their lives and have been able to follow the path to enlightenment. All that is due to the Boudhanath stupa.

Make offerings to these great stupas and all the rest of the holy objects in Nepal, and also put your palms together and prostrate to them with guru yoga mind.

By prostrating to just one holy object we immediately achieve eight or ten benefits, the last of which is enlightenment. Even putting our palms together to a painting or a statue of buddha has ten benefits. The eight benefits are that we immediately create the cause:

1. To achieve a perfect body in our next life;
2. To have perfect people around us in our next life, so that all our wishes get fulfilled;
3. To be able to live in morality in this and future lives, which is the basis of all happiness, liberation and enlightenment; all realizations;
4. To be able to have devotion, which is the foundation of all realizations;
5. To have courage, a brave heart, to do things among people, to do difficult work for others;

6. To be born as a deva or a human in our next life;
7. To achieve the arya path, the right seeing path, the path of meditation, and the path of no more learning—the Lesser Vehicle arya path and the Mahayana Paramitayana and Tantrayana arya paths. The Mahayana tantra arya path is where we become free from suffering death and rebirth, including old age and sicknesses.
8. The final benefit, as I mentioned, is enlightenment itself.

These are the eight benefits of putting our palms together to a painting or a statue of Buddha. The ten benefits contain all these. Therefore, it's very important in our daily life that whenever we see holy objects, we take the opportunity of putting our palms together and prostrating. In everyday life, whenever you see holy objects, please take that opportunity to find happiness for yourself and to benefit all sentient beings.

Now make all these light and other offerings to all the holy objects in Nepal, meditating that the essence of each is your own root virtuous friend.

Next make all these offerings to all holy objects in all other Buddhist countries and throughout the rest of the world—Sri Lanka, Burma, mainland China, Taiwan, Thailand and so forth; then the United States, New York! In the subways! I'm joking... There are many buddhas in the subways, at the beach, maybe on the beaches in Florida! I'm joking... Also prostrate to them.

Next make all these offerings to all Buddha, Dharma and Sangha of the ten directions, meditating that in essence they are your root virtuous friend, and generate great bliss each time you make the offerings. Also prostrate to them.

Now make all these offerings to all the statues, stupas and scriptures of the ten directions, meditating that in essence they are your root virtuous friend, and each time you make the offerings, generate infinite bliss within them.

Next make all these offerings to all gurus—His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche, Denma Lochö Rinpoche, who are in India. Then, those who have made a Dharma connection with Ribur Rinpoche, make all these offerings to him. Those who have received teachings from Geshe Sopa Rinpoche, and also if you have teachers in

Nepal, you can make offerings to all these gurus as many times as possible. Also prostrate to them.

Now there's just one left; only one! Actually, there are three! In particular, make offerings to the Thousand-armed Compassionate Buddha, who is inseparable from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the seven Medicine Buddhas for success—by making offerings to the Thousand-armed Compassionate Buddha and the Medicine Buddhas you collect the merit of having made offerings to all buddhas. Also make offerings to Kshitigarbha, who does infinite work for all sentient beings, who fulfills the wishes of all sentient beings—by making all these offerings, you yourself can become like that. Prostrate and offer as many times as possible. Also, Kshitigarbha is inseparable from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. When you practice Kshitigarbha, when you make prayers to him, you should meditate in this way—that he is inseparable from His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Now we can do the short prayer that I put together many years ago in Taiwan, when we started to make many light offerings, when I began this tradition in Taiwan.

[The light offering prayer: “These actually arranged and mentally visualized light offerings...wisdom spontaneously arise.” (x3)]

DEDICATION

“Due to these infinite merits, may whatever sufferings sentient beings experience ripen on me.” We give all the merits, including their results, to all sentient beings.

Again, give all the merits and their results, including enlightenment, to every single hell being, every single hungry ghost, every single animal, every single human, every single asura, every single sura and every single intermediate state being.

Through this dedication, we have received numberless merits, so again we dedicate—“Due to all these infinite merits, whatever sufferings sentient beings experience, may they ripen on me. May whatever happiness, merit and virtue that I have collected be received by each hell being, preta, animal, human, sura, asura and intermediate state being. Through this dedication, may whatever sufferings the migratory beings

have ripen on me...”—oh, I’m repeating myself, aren’t I? Anyway, it’s OK—that’s more merit collected!

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

“Due to the infinite merits I have collected tonight, all those collected in the past and those I will collect in the future, as well as the merits of the three times collected by all buddhas, bodhisattvas and other sentient beings, may Shelly and the rest of her family members have long and healthy lives, may all their wishes succeed immediately according to the holy Dharma, may they be able to actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment, especially bodhicitta, in this very lifetime and may the rest of their lives be most meaningful.”

I don’t want to keep you here any longer, otherwise you’ll get enlightened too quickly—enlightened quickly by freezing! [It’s getting cold.] Therefore, I think we’ll do the last dedication. Usually it is good to do more extensive dedications—the ones that come after those we’ve just done—but now we’ll just finish up with *Ge-wa di-yi...*

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings—which are inherently existent!—may I—who is inherently existent!—achieve inherently existent enlightenment and lead all the inherently existent sentient beings to that inherently existent enlightenment by the non-inherently existent me!... *alone!*”

I almost forgot the most important point—*alone!* Anyway, I said “inherently existent” all through that last dedication, but as long as you get the idea in your mind that it means non-existent, the purpose is fulfilled—even though I used the term “inherently existent,” it became the same as saying non-inherently existent; in the heart it became the same.

[*Ge-wa di-yi...*]

We can do the multiplying mantras at the end of the next Vajrasattva session, otherwise we’d do them here at this time.

Thank you so much for doing the practice together. I’m sorry it’s gotten cold, but since we’ve been bearing a little hardship for the sake of

Dharma practice, maybe it's OK!

[Shelly thanks Rinpoche for the light offering.] No, no—I just wanted people to freeze!

[Some discussion about the gong used to call people to sessions...first part inaudible.]

Again, ringing the gong is to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. Thinking that all Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and all statues, stupas and scriptures in the ten directions are in essence the guru, ring the gong as an offering. Each ring becomes the cause of enlightenment for yourself and all other sentient beings. That's what it means.

So, just one more. [Rinpoche rings the gong loudly.]

Thursday, February 25

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

EXTENSIVE DEDICATION

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

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may all the father and mother sentient beings have happiness; may the three lower realms be empty forever; and may all the bodhisattvas’ prayers be accomplished immediately. May I be able to cause all this by myself alone.

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

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

Dedicate specifically that the people whose names were mentioned before immediately recover from their heavy sicknesses and have the most meaningful life through meeting the Dharma, the lam-rim, and especially through actualizing bodhicitta in this very lifetime.

“May those who have cancer and AIDS immediately be healed. May those who are in a coma immediately come out of their coma. May all those who have heavy diseases that are difficult to cure or have no cure, such as arthritis, leprosy and so forth, immediately be cured. May those who suffer a lot of pain because of bone disease immediately be healed. May those who are blind be able to see, those who are deaf be able to hear and those who are lame be able to walk. May those who have obstacles to their Dharma practice immediately be free of those obstacles. May those who are unable to correctly devote themselves to the virtuous friend because they have much anger, heresy and negative thoughts arising be able to change their minds immediately. Instead of creating the heaviest obstacles to their happiness and to their achieving realizations and enlightenment and thus being able to benefit all sentient beings, may they have the stable devotion that sees the guru as buddha. May they immediately be able to purify all their heavy negative karma and do only actions that please the holy mind of the virtuous friend.

“May those who are unable to find a guru be able to find a perfectly qualified Mahayana guru. May those who need teachings be able to meet unmistakable Mahayana teachings, which reveal the complete path.

“May all those who have difficulties in their lives, who are constantly tortured by problems because of their uncontrolled delusions of anger or attachment, be able to have the realization of renunciation of this life and of samsara. May they realize that samsara is suffering in nature. In this way, may they be able to find peace and happiness in their heart and be free from all delusions, especially strong attachment, to which they have become addicted during beginningless past lives. May all those with problems, whether with their relationship or with drugs or alcohol, immediately be able to change their attitude and develop renunciation of samsara by realizing that samsara is suffering in nature. May they immediately be able to realize that samsaric pleasures are only suffering in nature. May they also immediately be able to realize the nature of pervasive compounding suffering. In that way may they be able to find peace and happiness. May that also lead them to see the suffering of others and to generate compassion for all living beings and then bodhicitta.

“May everyone receive perfect happiness. May I become wishing-fulfilling for all sentient beings, not only in this life but from life to life in all my future lifetimes. Like a wish-fulfilling gem, may I bring all

sentient beings all happiness, up to enlightenment, from life to life in all my lifetimes.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, which appear to your mind to be real but are false, may the I, which appears real but is false, achieve Vajrasattva’s enlightenment, which appears real but is false, and lead all sentient beings, who appear to your mind to be real but are false, to that enlightenment, which appears to your mind to be real but is false, by myself alone, who appears real but is false.”

When I say that phenomena are “false,” I mean that they are deceptive. Here “false” relates to their appearance. In our view phenomena appear to be real, in the sense of existing from their own side, or independently. Phenomena appear to be real, but this is a false appearance. This term “false” is similar to the term “no” in the *Heart Sutra*, where it says that there is no eye, no nose, no tongue, no sleep, no food, no bathroom, no toilet.... I simply applied the word “false” instead of “no” to the real phenomena that appear to us. We can use the word “false” as a weapon against the real phenomena that appear to us.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may any members of my family who have passed away, those who rely upon me, all those—both living and dead—whose names have been given to me and for whom I have promised to pray, and the numberless sentient beings who are now suffering unimaginably in the lower realms immediately be liberated from all those sufferings and reincarnate in a pure land where they can become enlightened, or achieve perfect human rebirths in their future lifetimes. May they achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible by meeting a perfectly qualified Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me and by others, may just my hearing that somebody is sick cause that sentient being to immediately recover from that sickness. And may just my hearing that somebody has died cause that sentient being to never ever be born in the lower realms, or if already born there, immediately be liberated from the lower realms and be born in a pure land where they can become enlightened. Or if that sentient being has been reborn as a human but with no opportunity to practice Dharma, may they be able to receive a perfect human body and achieve enlightenment quickly.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I, the members of my family, all students and benefactors of this organization—especially the directors and others who sacrifice their lives by bearing many hardships in offering service to others and the teaching of the Buddha through this organization—and those whose names were given to me, who rely upon me and for whom I promised to pray all have long lives. May all our wishes be accomplished immediately according to the holy Dharma. Most importantly, may we be able to actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment, especially bodhicitta and clear light, in this very lifetime, without even a second’s delay.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may all the meditation centers be able to spread the teaching of Lama Tsong Khapa in the minds of all sentient beings by receiving everything they need. May the hospices, leprosy project, schools and all our other social service projects become wish-fulfilling for all sentient beings, causing them every happiness, including enlightenment, and pacifying immediately their sufferings of body and mind. May all the projects of this organization, including those here at Land of Medicine Buddha and the 500-foot Maitreya Buddha statue, be completed immediately by receiving everything they need. May all these statues and projects cause the generation of loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta in the minds of all sentient beings. Due to that, may all sentient beings never experience anything undesirable, such as war, famine, disease, earthquake or danger from fire, water, wind and so forth. In short, may all the centers, statues and projects cause all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“May all the virtuous friends—including Lama Yeshe’s incarnation, Lama Ösel Rinpoche—have stable lives, and may all their holy wishes be accomplished immediately. May everything Lama in his past life intended for the benefit of others be actualized in this life without any obstacles.”

Even though the sangha are already included in the dedication for the FPMT students, dedicate again specifically for all the FPMT sangha. “May all the sangha be able to complete their lives in pure vows and in this way be able to benefit the whole world. In this life may they be able to complete all the scriptural understanding and realizations and receive all the necessary conditions for that to happen. May nothing become an

obstacle and everything become a support for them to live a pure life in their vows and to have realizations of the path to enlightenment.

“May all the countries in the whole world be guided by Dharma leaders. May everyone have perfect happiness through having loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta. May everyone live their life without harming but only benefiting each other. May the teachings of the Buddha, especially those of Lama Tsong Khapa, spread in all directions and flourish.”

[After recitation of the multiplying mantras:] “Due to the blessings of the eminent buddhas and bodhisattvas, due to unbetraying dependent arising, and due to my special attitude, may all my pure prayers be accomplished immediately.”

Thank you very much. Good night. I thought I might have missed the chocolates—I just came to get the chocolates [tsog was offered].

30

Friday, February 26

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

Now I'm going to do my last job for the day...

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

Because we finished very early tonight, we will start tomorrow morning at three o'clock! I'm joking! Good night.

Saturday, February 27

WEEKEND TEACHING

Good afternoon! Good evening!

GETTING THE BEST FROM YOUR LIFE

What makes your life most beautiful, most satisfying, most fulfilling, most worthwhile, most beneficial and most happy? I mean inner happiness, not just excited, hallucinated happiness. What brings Dharma happiness, the happiness that has completion, the happiness that can continue, increase and develop fully? The happiness that is not suffering, that is worth trying for because it never turns into suffering? The happiness that is not suffering in nature and that does not become the suffering of pain? Dharma happiness, the happiness that is worth devoting your life to attaining because it does not interfere with the happiness of others or limit your capacity to benefit others? The happiness that makes your actions only of benefit to others without discrimination?

Well, so far I've been doing a lot of advertising but I haven't mentioned the product! So, what is it? It's living in the bush—going into the redwoods and living in the bush! No, I'm joking! So, what is it that brings all that happiness? It's cherishing sentient beings; living your life cherishing sentient beings. Not that I actually do this myself, but intellectually, it's what I think. Cherish sentient beings first; put enlightenment second.

SENTIENT BEINGS COME FIRST

Why do I say put enlightenment second? For example, when you go into the kitchen, you're looking for food, not the container. Your motivation is not to get a plate but delicious food. You go into the kitchen with food on your mind. But although your main motivation is to get food, you do

need something to put it on—unless you can carry soup in your hands! Anyway, I'm joking again.

Of course, enlightenment is extremely important, because without it you cannot work perfectly for sentient beings. You cannot be a perfect guide, knowing, seeing directly, every sentient being's mind, level of karma, intelligence, wishes and characteristics, as well as the various methods that suit their individual dispositions. But what should be in your heart is sentient beings as the reason for your attaining enlightenment. The first priority in your heart should be the happiness of sentient beings. Sentient beings in your heart. What should be the first thing in your heart, in your life, the goal of your life? Sentient beings.

At present, who is the most precious person in your life, in your heart? It is yourself, or if not yourself, then your greatest object of attachment. I don't think you hold your object of anger most precious; it's your object of attachment, that particular person. So that's how you should hold sentient beings, feel them to be most precious.

No matter how much you help the person to whom you are most attached, no matter how kind you are to that person, all you want is for that person to be happy. If that person receives help, achieves happiness, you're satisfied. That's your goal, you don't want anything in return. You don't need that person to respect you, to praise you or to do something good for you in return; you don't have any such expectation. Your attitude is such that you are simply satisfied by that person's receiving happiness or help. What do you call it, unconditional love? Anyway, that kind of attitude, whether it's all sentient beings or one sentient being.

First in your heart, your first priority, at least intellectually, should be all sentient beings. Then, enlightenment is the method. As in the example above, to enjoy food you need a plate on which to serve it. When you're looking for lunch, you're not looking for the plate, your main aim is the food. So here, what we're really looking for is the happiness of sentient beings.

Although you might be thinking, "I'm working for enlightenment, practicing Dharma, doing retreat to attain enlightenment," sometimes you can make the mistake of leaving one particular sentient being out. Even though your enlightenment depends upon that sentient being's kindness, you leave that sentient being out, give that sentient being up as an object of compassion or loving kindness. That sentient being becomes

the object of your anger. You say, “I’m meditating to reach enlightenment,” but you use that sentient being who gives you enlightenment as an object of anger—to hurt, to give harm. You treat that person as useless, as worse than garbage.

If you have that kind of attitude, it’s not sure that your thought of seeking enlightenment is actual bodhicitta or not. Even though you use the term “enlightenment,” perhaps it’s just your self-centered mind wanting to attain the highest possible level of happiness for yourself. The essence, the very heart of your attitude, what’s really deep within, is the wish to experience the highest happiness yourself. It’s possible for this to happen.

Generally speaking, as much as you think it is important to attain enlightenment, equally you should be thinking that other sentient beings are important, precious, so precious, the most precious thing in your life. Such thoughts should always accompany your thoughts of enlightenment.

In the process of developing bodhicitta we often use the seven techniques of Mahayana cause and effect. On the basis of renunciation of this life and renunciation of samsara, we equalize ourselves with and exchange ourselves for others. With effort, we generate the feeling of the preciousness of other sentient beings and then the need to achieve enlightenment ourselves in order to accomplish the aims of others, to fulfill others’ wishes for happiness. This is the usual process.

The mistake is to think of attaining enlightenment but not taking care of sentient beings, giving them up. Who gives you enlightenment? Upon whose kindness do you depend in order to achieve it? And then you don’t take care of them, renounce them, pay them no attention? Instead of treating sentient beings with kindness, compassion and patience, you use them as objects of anger, to give rise to delusions.

Because parents cherish their children most in their lives, if you harm the children you also harm their parents. In general, parents cherish the health, well-being and long lives of their children more than their own. Therefore, if you cherish sentient beings, you are naturally serving and pleasing the numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas. Your serving and benefiting sentient beings makes numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas happy. Perhaps not in every case, but generally speaking, by making sentient beings happy, you also make the buddhas and bodhisattvas happy. Generally, this can be said, but I wouldn’t say that this is true in every

situation. To think that it is, could lead you to make big mistakes in your life.

However, offering service to sentient beings is the best offering of service to the buddhas and bodhisattvas; making offerings to sentient beings is the best way of making offerings to the buddhas and bodhisattvas; serving sentient beings is the best offering you can make to the buddhas and bodhisattvas. This doesn't mean that you should stop making offerings to the buddhas and bodhisattvas: "Oh, I'm serving sentient beings, I don't need to do other practices"—like prostrations, mandala offerings, other offerings, the seven-limb practice and so forth—practices that are recommended for attaining realizations on the path to enlightenment. That, too, is mistaken.

EASY MERIT

Actually, because of the power of the object, the easiest way of creating good karma, the easiest way of attaining enlightenment is with holy objects—Buddha, Dharma and Sangha; statues, stupas and scriptures. In our normal daily life, we need to generate bodhicitta motivation for our actions—doing our jobs, walking, sitting, sleeping and so forth—to become the cause of enlightenment. Even for these actions to become the cause of our own liberation, we need to generate renunciation of samsara. And for them to become simply the cause of happiness in future lives, samsaric happiness, even for that we need renunciation of this life; we have to create pure, Dharma actions with a mind detached from the happiness of this life. Forget about renunciation of samsara and bodhicitta, even to have the constant thought of renunciation of this life, to maintain a pure mind, twenty-four hours a day is not easy.

But because of the power of the holy object, such as statues of buddha, stupas and scriptures, buddha's kindness and compassion for us sentient beings and the inconceivable qualities that buddha has attained, just by circumambulating or prostrating or making offerings to these symbolic holy objects, we can immediately create the causes for enlightenment, liberation and better rebirths. Even if our mind is not one of the three principal paths—I don't mean the actual realization, but even if it's not one of the artificial three principal paths, the motivation generated through the effort of thinking about the benefits of achieving enlightenment and

wanting to attain it, or of meditating on how the nature of samsara is suffering and arousing detachment—even if our mind has no Dharma motivation at all and is completely non-virtuous, even with that attitude, because of buddha’s incredible compassion for us sentient beings and his inconceivable qualities, by doing those actions we can create the good karma, the merit, for liberation and enlightenment and, by the way, good rebirths in hundreds or thousands of future lives, and experience all happiness and success in this life too.

However, the purpose of collecting such extensive merit by making offerings to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, statues, stupas and scriptures is to be able to dedicate it to the happiness and well-being of other sentient beings. You create this powerful merit, this strong karma, and then dedicate it, use it, to accomplish the aims of numberless other sentient beings, to bring happiness to other sentient beings—the happiness of this life, of future lives, of liberation from samsara and the highest, full enlightenment.

ENLIGHTENMENT COMES FROM SENTIENT BEINGS

As Shantideva said in the *Bodhicharyavatara*, “Since we achieve the Dharma by depending equally on the buddhas and sentient beings, why shouldn’t we respect sentient beings as much as we respect the buddhas?” [Chapter 6, verse 113.]

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha gave teachings on patience, giving us the opportunity to practice patience. He taught us how to follow the path to enlightenment, how to eradicate our defilements, and how to liberate ourselves from the suffering of samsara by revealing the path, by revealing the teachings. Therefore, we think he is so precious, so kind. However, sentient beings are equally so. Even though it was the Buddha who revealed the teachings, without the existence of sentient beings, without that sentient being who is angry at you, how can you learn to be patient, how can you realize the perfection of patience? Without that being you cannot complete the paramita of patience, you cannot attain enlightenment.

Even through this example, you can see how it is equal. Buddha gives you enlightenment by revealing the path, by giving teachings, by showing you how to practice patience. Similarly, the sentient being who is

angry at you gives you enlightenment by giving you the opportunity of putting these teachings of the Buddha into practice. Therefore, just as the Buddha is kind and precious, so too is that sentient being.

The same thing applies to the entire path to enlightenment taught by the Buddha. Actualizing this path depends on the kindness of sentient beings. Without the existence of suffering sentient beings there is no way to generate loving kindness and compassion, no way to actualize bodhicitta, no way to progress along the path. There's no way to actualize the Mahayana path, to complete it, to eliminate all the defilements and achieve all the qualities of cessation, to attain all realizations without depending on the kindness of sentient beings. No way.

Similarly, the Buddha showed the path to liberation, including the three higher trainings of morality, concentration and wisdom. When you achieve liberation from samsara by following that path, you do so by depending on the Buddha. However, without the existence of the obscured, suffering sentient beings, there is no way to accomplish the three higher trainings—no way to practice morality; no way to achieve shamatha, calm abiding, perfect concentration; and no way to attain great insight by realizing emptiness through analysis and then unifying it with shamatha, producing the extremely refined rapturous ecstasy through which that great insight is derived. Thus, without depending on the existence of sentient beings, you cannot actualize the path and attain liberation from samsara even for yourself.

Similarly, you cannot receive even good rebirths or happiness in future lives without depending on the existence of the suffering, obscured sentient beings. Why not? Because even though the Buddha has taught the practice of morality—the cause of happiness in future lives, including upper rebirths—without the base, the existence of suffering sentient beings, there's no way to practice it. It is on the basis of sentient beings that we make vows not to kill, steal, engage in sexual misconduct, lie and so forth. Sentient beings are the foundation of our vows not to give this harm or that. Without the existence of sentient beings, we cannot engage in these practices, the cause of happiness. Without the existence of sentient beings, we have no way to achieve any happiness whatsoever, no way to experience the slightest comfort in our daily lives, any enjoyment or sense pleasure up to the highest enlightenment. Every single happiness we ever experience comes to us through the kindness of

sentient beings; depends upon them.

Since all happiness comes from virtue and the virtue we create is the holy action of the Buddha, we depend on the Buddha for whatever happiness we experience, achieve, receive. Similarly, all our happiness also depends on the kindness of sentient beings. That's why Shantideva asks in the *Bodhicharyavatara*, "Why don't we respect sentient beings in the same way we respect the Buddha? Why don't we treat sentient beings in the same way that we treat the Buddha?" Whatever benefit, whatever realizations we derive from the Buddha, we derive the same complete benefit from all sentient beings, from each sentient being. The inconceivable benefits we get by making just one light offering, one water bowl offering, one hand prostration to a statue of the Buddha, whichever aspect is taken, we get the same benefits from sentient beings.

I mentioned the eight benefits of making extensive light offerings when we did them the other night—the eighth is enlightenment. [February 17. Actually, Rinpoche mentioned ten.] You also receive these eight important benefits the moment you put your palms together to a statue or painting of the Buddha, including achieving the path of the *arya* beings, the actual path that eradicates your gross delusions, or defilements, and through which you attain liberation from samsara. And then with bodhicitta you can eliminate also the subtle defilements and reach enlightenment. Even if the buddha to whom you press your palms together is merely visualized and there's no actual physical holy object such as a statue, painting or picture, you still derive these eight benefits [see pp. 224 and 309 for the list]. All this is through the kindness of sentient beings.

Even though the immediate source of these benefits of prostrating to the holy object is the buddha, when you trace the evolution back you will find that their actual source is sentient beings, that you received these eight benefits through the kindness of each sentient being. The root of all the temporary and ultimate happiness you get from the holy objects—statues, stupas or paintings or pictures of buddha—is sentient beings. The inconceivable skies of benefit that you gain by circumambulating, prostrating, putting your palms together, or making offerings to these holy objects derives from sentient beings. Sentient beings are the root of all this happiness, all this good karma.

REBIRTH IN THE LOWER REALMS

During each session of this Vajrasattva retreat we purify vast amounts of negative karma. First of all, think just how heavy one single complete negative karma is. For example, gossiping, ill will, stealing, sexual misconduct, killing and so forth. Leave aside the ripening aspect result, rebirth in the lower realms, such as the hell realms, or the hungry ghost realms, where the heaviest hunger and thirst are experienced for tens of thousands of years.

For us humans, it's not sufficient that we get enough food to fill our stomachs. We have to like it as well. It's not sufficient that the food we get fills our stomachs and is enough to live on. It should also be something we enjoy.

Compare the lives of us humans with those of the hungry ghosts, who can't find even a damp patch of ground let alone even a spoonful of water for hundreds or thousands of years. Pretas can't find a scrap of food for hundreds of thousands of years. Forget about their filling their stomachs every day, they can't even do it over a lifetime. Imagine what an incredible shock it would be for us if something happened and we had to go without food or water for a week; nothing to eat; nothing to drink. Of course, in the case of nyung-nä, it's different. It's only a day without food and drink and you know you're going to eat the next morning. But we'd find it terrible to have to experience this not under nyung-nä conditions. If our food and drink stopped for a day for reasons other than Dharma practice, we'd freak out. Our bodies would freak out, our minds would freak out. Everything would freak out...even our houses would freak out! Anyway, I'm comparing us to hungry ghosts because I myself am quite fussy about food. However, the hungry ghosts have unbearably heavy sufferings like that.

So, as I often mention, as it says in the teachings, the heat of the fire when the world comes to an end is sixty or seventy times greater than that of all the fires of our human world put together, but one tiny spark from the hell realm is seven times hotter than that. When the world ends, there's all this wind and fire that destroy everything. For example, when a volcano erupts and lava, that liquid fire, pours out, it melts everything in its path; even the rocks it touches melt. Normally, humans' fire cannot melt rocks, but lava does. So the end of the world fire is like

that—everything, even huge rocky mountains, gets burned. So, one tiny spark in the hell realm is seven times hotter than the world-ending fire.

Similarly, the energy of the cold hells is beyond compare with anything we know. The combined energy of the ice and cold of our world is great pleasure compared to that of the cold hells.

Also, even when you discover one new wrinkle on your body, you get so shocked; your mind is terrified. One more gray hair; one more wrinkle. It's such a shock. Therefore, there's no question that after having had this human body you couldn't stand reincarnating as an animal. Having been born human, it would be unbearable to see your consciousness migrate into an animal body. For example, how would you feel if your body gradually turned into that of a cat? Starting with your face; slowly your face becoming that of a cat. Even though you keep many cats around, you like cats, could you bear it? Not your whole body—just your head. Or perhaps starting from the tail? Or your body gradually turning into that of a snake? You couldn't stand it. But it's exactly the same—your consciousness leaves this body and migrates into the next. It's the same mental continuum, the same continuity of mind. It's your mind that migrates into the body of a snake, cockroach, mouse or cat. Exactly the same consciousness, the same mind; the one you have now.

So if you can't stand discovering one more wrinkle, one gray hair, your mind gets so freaked out, how will you be able to bear being reborn into an animal body, your body becoming that of an animal? There's no way. Even as a human being, *while* you are a human being, not having an animal body, if something changes, something decays, you can't stand it. You need so many instruments to repair the damage, so many chemicals to color it, so much effort and expense to re-shape, uplift and so forth.

Imagine that you're born a cat or a dog, eating the same food, drinking the same water every day from that same container, the same thing from the same shop day after day. Even if you visualize yourself like that, a pet living with people, compared to other animals, those who live in the wild, you're actually very rich, very well-off. But even that you can't stand, can't bear.

OTHER SUFFERING RESULTS

To conclude what I'm saying, the ripening aspect result of one single

complete negative karma is rebirth in the lower realms, such as I've just been describing. However, there are three other types of suffering result, which we experience later, when we're finally, once again, born human. One is the possessed result, the unhealthy or fearful environment into which you're born. Even though you're born human, you find yourself in a place that endangers your life, that is filthy, dirty, full of excrement and garbage, where people cheat each other, where resources are scarce, there's no food or other means of living, where there's constant drought, nothing grows, there's much fighting, many wars—dreadful places like that.

Then there's the result similar to the cause where what you did to others in the past, the harm you gave them, comes back to harm you in return. Even though you are born human, you receive harm similar to that which you inflicted upon others in the past.

And finally, there's the result similar to the cause where you engage in the same negative actions again. You create the same negative karma—gossiping, killing, sexual misconduct, ill will, slander and so forth—over and over again. No matter how much trouble you get into by doing these things, getting punished, imprisoned, fined or penalized, you can't stop yourself from creating these negative actions. Even though you think they're bad and that you should stop, you find it difficult to do so; your mind is very uncontrolled.

So again, you create the same negative karma in that life, and that again brings the four suffering results, one of which is creating that same negative karma yet again. That complete action, too, has the four suffering results, including that of doing it again, and so it goes, on and on, like that. If you don't purify a negative karma created today—such as gossiping, ill will, sexual misconduct and so forth—it will go on and on, and you will keep creating the result similar to the cause, bringing the four suffering results. One of these is again creating the result similar to the cause, which itself brings the four suffering results, and in this way your samsara becomes endless. There's no end to your suffering, no end at all. Your suffering becomes endless.

Here we are talking about just one negative karma done today. We are not talking about all of today's negative karma, yesterday's negative karma, this year's negative karma, this life's negative karma, previous lives' negative karma. We are not talking about all that. We are just talking about one negative karma done today, such as gossiping or sexual

misconduct. Just one negative karma. If it is not purified, it makes suffering endless; the suffering goes on and on.

Therefore, by doing Vajrasattva practice or even the Thirty-five Buddhas just once—not taking into account all the other different practices but simply considering doing Vajrasattva meditation or reciting the powerful names of the Thirty-five Buddhas just once—you can purify not only having to experience rebirth in the lower realms but also the worst of the four results—that really bad one, the terrifying one, the one that is the worst of all, worse even than rebirth in hell—the result of engaging in the same negative actions again and again. These practices have the power to purify that. Of the three suffering results that you experience in the human realm, that of creating the same negative karma over and over again is the worst because it makes your suffering endless. It is more terrifying than rebirth in hell because once you have experienced one rebirth in hell, it's over; that karma has finished. Hell suffering is not endless. You don't experience it continuously. When that hell karma finishes, the suffering of hell stops; the vision, the karmic appearance of hell, ceases.

Much more terrifying than that is the result similar to the cause where you engage in the same negative karma over and over again. That is the most terrifying of the four karmic results because it ensures that without end, you will be reborn again and again in the lower realms, as well as later having to experience all the other sufferings of the human realm. Therefore, the bad habit is worse than the suffering of hell. Putting it another way, it's like that.

THE FOUR REMEDIAL POWERS

What I'm saying here is that by doing the practice of confession with the four remedial powers [*nyen-po tob-zhi*], you can stop each of the four suffering results. By practicing the power of dependence [*ten gyi tob*], you purify the possessed result, finding yourself in a suffering environment. Here, by taking refuge, depending on Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, you purify the negative karma you have created with those holy objects. By generating bodhicitta, depending on sentient beings, you purify the negative karma you have created with them.

Then, the power of feeling regret for the negative actions [*nam-pa*

siin-jin-pa'i tob] purifies the result similar to the cause in experience.

The power that I translate as “the remedy of always enjoying,” which in Tibetan is *nyen-po kun-tu chö-pa'i tob*—I think the meaning might be that by purifying negative karma, you get to enjoy happiness all the time, but I’m not completely sure—this is the remedy to the ripening aspect result, rebirth in the lower realms.

Finally, the power of determining not to commit those negative actions again [*nye-pa lä-lar dog-pa'i tob*] is the remedy for the suffering result similar to the cause where you continuously create those negative karmas again and again, which, as I explained, is much more terrifying, much worse than the suffering of hell itself.

The reason I’m going into all this in detail is so that you can understand, feel the kindness of sentient beings and therefore cherish them more than you do.

Through just one practice—reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas’ names or doing the Vajrasattva meditation with the four remedial powers—you can avoid having to experience incredible unbearable suffering; you can purify so much negative karma. For example, one of today’s negative karmas, such as gossiping—through these practices you can either stop its four suffering results from arising altogether, or if you can’t stop them completely, at least you can lighten or shorten their effect. Instead of having to undergo hundreds of thousands of lifetimes of inconceivable suffering for eons in the lower realms, perhaps you can experience the result in this life as some kind of trouble, such as illness or *lung* [wind disease].

It’s a strange thing about *lung*. I don’t think I’ve ever heard Theravadins talk about it, but as soon as you encounter Tibetan Buddhism, you come to know about *lung*. First, you’re introduced to Tibetan Buddhism, second, to *lung*—that very famous *lung*! I’m also not sure that Zen practitioners talk about *lung*; so far I haven’t heard them do so. Anyway, after doing those purifying practices, instead of causing you to experience eons of suffering in the lower realms, your negative karma can manifest in this life as *lung*.

Frequently, Dharma practitioners who live their lives with a good heart, dedicated to others—or even those who haven’t met Buddhism but have good hearts, strong compassion and loving kindness and dedicate their lives to others—purify much negative karma. Through their

dedicated attitude and the service they offer others, they purify so much.

Sometimes you will find that meditators who practice strongly, who lead pure lives of renunciation, experience many sicknesses and problems, one after another. Of course, whether these experiences become a problem to them or not depends on how they think. Something that appears as a problem to others might not be a problem for them. It depends on how they look at the situation. Cancer or other serious illnesses can be taken as a very positive sign, because it means that the person will not have to experience many hundreds of thousands of lifetimes of heavy suffering results in the lower realms for incredible lengths of time from just one negative karma. That karma manifests as an illness in this life and finishes in that way. In such cases, it's a very positive, very good thing that happened.

Such heavy karmas can also finish simply by manifesting as other people criticizing you. The teachings talk about this as being one of the benefits of bodhicitta. Due to the power of bodhicitta, the good heart, instead of having to experience heavy suffering in either the human realm or the lower realms for incredible lengths of time, certain heavy negative karmas can get purified by manifesting as people criticizing or blaming you in this life. They finish as simply as that. Or they manifest as other experiences in this life such as migraine headaches, toothaches, nightmares, fearful dreams—things like that can finish heavy negative karmas that would otherwise have to be experienced as unbearable sufferings for great lengths of time.

Therefore, the teachings advise us that when problems like this arise, we should see them as positive and recognize them as signs of the power of our practice—that they are the manifestations of negative karma that is finishing much more lightly than it could have—and see them as positive.

Even if by practicing the remedy of vowing not to commit negative actions again—the antidote to the result similar to the cause of creating the same negative karmas again and again—with Vajrasattva or the Thirty-five Buddhas, you could avoid having to experience the four suffering results of just one negative karma, that would still be incredible peace. You would stop the constant suffering that arises from continuously creating the result similar to the cause, which brings suffering without end. You wouldn't have to go through it again. The absence of that karma and suffering is peace—peace forever. By purifying these negative

karmas you stop having to experience the suffering result that happens again and again. So the everlasting peace and happiness that you experience in all your future lives from purifying these negative karmas comes from Vajrasattva or the Thirty-five Buddhas.

PURIFICATION COMES FROM SENTIENT BEINGS

How does it come about that Vajrasattva's mantra has such power; that reciting even the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas has such power? It happens due to sentient beings. Just as crops come from a field, these purifying abilities come from sentient beings. The Thirty-five Buddhas became enlightened by depending on sentient beings. How did they become enlightened? By depending on sentient beings. Similarly, Vajrasattva came about because of sentient beings, through the existence of suffering sentient beings.

So far I've been talking about just one negative karma, but by practicing Vajrasattva or the Thirty-five Buddhas, by reciting their names and doing prostrations, we can purify all the countless negative karmas created today, this week, this month, this year, this life; with Vajrasattva or the Thirty-five Buddhas we can purify all our past lives' negative karmas.

To get an appreciation for this, first we should understand how terrifying all the results of just one negative karma are. How much suffering it brings from life to life, and how unbelievable it is to be able to purify all that with Vajrasattva or the Thirty-five Buddhas; how much unbelievable peace and happiness it brings. We should also understand what an emergency it is that we purify all this; that we should purify it without even a second's delay. Whether the negative karma be gossiping or ill will or sexual misconduct or telling lies or whatever, it is urgent to purify it without delaying even a moment. That's just one, but through these practices we can purify all the negative karma we have created not only in this life but in all previous lives as well.

That we have the opportunity to do all this purification with Vajrasattva or the Thirty-five Buddhas is due to the kindness of all sentient beings—those around us now, at home or wherever we are, and all the rest of the sentient beings. Vajrasattva and the Thirty-five Buddhas became enlightened through the kindness of each sentient being. That's one thing. That's how each of us has received this opportunity to purify ourselves.

Lama Atisha explained that the Thirty-five Buddhas' names are so powerful because in the past, when they were bodhisattvas, they made many dedication prayers to be able to benefit sentient beings by purifying their negative karma. One of them made specific dedications to be able to purify this kind of negative karma, another made specific dedications to be able to purify that kind of negative karma, and so forth. As bodhisattvas, they made many prayers to be able to benefit sentient beings, including us, who are reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas' names right now. They made prayers that when they became buddhas, sentient beings would be able to purify those various specific negative karmas by reciting their names.

A buddha has many good qualities, such as the ten powers, one of which is the power of prayer. So because a buddha has achieved the power of prayer, whatever prayers were made in the past are actualized. Therefore, when we recite the Thirty-five Buddhas' names, they have the power to purify all those negative karmas. How does it happen that these Buddhas names have all that power, that by reciting their names we can purify so much negative karma? Because originally, with bodhicitta, they made many prayers, generated the great intention to benefit sentient beings in this way. That will, that intention, has power. Then, when they became buddhas, they achieved the quality of possessing the ten powers, one of which is the power of prayer, and that's what gives power to their names. Now, when we recite their names, it affects our minds. That's how it works. The reason their names have so much power is because it came from their bodhicitta.

However, their bodhicitta was generated in dependence upon sentient beings—each and every sentient being. Therefore, by reciting each buddha's name, we can purify all these different negative karmas that we always engage in; the negative karma that we create in this life and have created in our previous lives. That we can purify as much as we want, that we have the opportunity to do this, is basically due to sentient beings, the kindness of each sentient being. So like that, the evolution goes down to the root, sentient beings. It comes from there.

As I've mentioned before, if you generate compassion for one sentient being, whether it's an insect or a human, you achieve enlightenment from that sentient being. The stronger the compassion for that sentient being you can generate, the quicker you reach enlightenment. No matter

how much Highest Yoga Tantra you practice, how much you meditate on the generation stage, the completion stage, if you don't have compassion, if you don't generate compassion for that sentient being, that insect or that human, you cannot attain enlightenment. And the stronger your compassion, the quicker you get enlightened. That's why sentient beings are so precious—because you can derive so much from them. Each sentient being is extremely precious to your life.

All the good qualities of Sangha—those of the bodhisattvas, such as the six paramitas, bodhicitta; those of the arhats, their psychic powers; the realizations of the dakas and dakinis, the wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness; the qualities of the Dharma protectors, their ability to accomplish the four actions and so forth—all this is a result of the kindness of sentient beings. All this is achieved by depending on the kindness of sentient beings.

All the good qualities of Dharma—all the benefits of renunciation, bodhicitta, emptiness, the ten bhumis, the five paths, the qualities of the path, from guru devotion up to the goal, enlightenment—derive from sentient beings, depend on the kindness of sentient beings.

And all the good qualities of Buddha—the state of omniscient mind, complete compassion, perfect power, the skies of good qualities of the Buddha's holy body, speech and mind—are achieved in dependence upon the kindness of sentient beings. It comes from sentient beings; every single sentient being. By depending on the kindness of each and every one.

THE POWER OF COMPASSION

For example, a story about one of the Vajrayogini lineage lamas, the monk Getsul Tsimbulwa, illustrates the power of compassion. In West Bengal there's a place called Odi. It's near Buxa, where the refugee monks from Sera, Ganden and Drepung monasteries who wanted to continue their studies lived for eight or nine years after fleeing Tibet. I lived there for about eight years. Not continuously, but on and off. There's a season that people from Bombay go to Odi on pilgrimage; thousands of them. There are many caves in the rocky mountains there and it can be quite dangerous; you have to hold on to chains as you walk along. You hear sounds or experience other signs, depending on how pure your mind is.

So, Getsul Tsimbulwa's guru, the great yogi Ngagpa Chöpawa, who was a layman, was on his way to Odi to practice the final stage of tantra that you do just before you get enlightened. It is called "entering the deeds of tantra," where I think that from ordinary people's point of view you appear to be crazy. Not crazy, but looking crazy. So, you do that before becoming enlightened—entering the deeds of tantra. He came to a river, and on the bank was a woman whose whole body was covered with leprosy sores, with pus oozing out everywhere. She asked him to carry her on his back to the other side of the river, but he ignored her and went on his way.

A bit later, his disciple Getsul Tsimbulwa came by, and as soon as he saw this poor woman—ravaged by leprosy, pus everywhere, something that most people would be too scared to go near, let alone touch—he felt unbearable compassion for her, and without any thought of how dirty she was, immediately picked her up, put her on his back and started across the river. However, when he reached the middle of the river, suddenly he saw her as the female deity Dorje Pagmo, Vajrayogini, who then took him to her pure land in his ordinary body, without his first having to die.

If you are born in the Vajrayogini pure land, it is definite, one hundred percent certain, that you will become enlightened in that lifetime. If you don't get enlightened as a human, the quickest way to do so is to go to a pure land such as that of Heruka or Vajrayogini. So, she wasn't an ordinary being, but because of his impure karma, Getsul Tsimbulwa saw her as an ordinary sentient being; sick, covered by leprosy sores. Nevertheless, filled with unbearable compassion, with no thought of dirtiness, he sacrificed his life to carry her across the river, and during that short time, his negative, impure karma was completely purified. Because of that compassion and his sacrificing his life for that living being, in the short time it took him to carry her half-way across the river, the negative karma that projected her in an ordinary appearance instead of in her true nature as Vajrayogini, that blocked him from seeing her as an enlightened being, was completely purified.

Therefore, in the middle of the river, because of his unbearable compassion for her, the negative karma that projected the impure view was purified. Since there was no longer any impure view, the impure appearance of a sick woman disappeared and he was able to go to Vajrayogini's pure

land and get enlightened there. The teacher, Ngagpa Chöpawa, the yogi, didn't do that, but his disciple did.

That shows how precious sentient beings are, in that you can derive infinite benefit from them and achieve every single happiness, and the stronger the compassion you can generate, the more quickly do you gain realizations and attain enlightenment.

Similarly, even though Maitreya Buddha generated bodhicitta much earlier than Guru Shakyamuni Buddha did, because Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's compassion and bodhicitta were stronger, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha became enlightened before Maitreya Buddha. What happened was, in a previous life they were members of the same family. One day, they were at Namo Buddha, in Nepal, when they came across a family of five tigers, a mother and her cubs, who were starving to death. They continued on their journey home, but because of the unbearable compassion Guru Shakyamuni Buddha felt for the tigers, he came back later and sacrificed his body so that they could live. He and Maitreya Buddha were both bodhisattvas at the time, and Maitreya Buddha also felt compassion, but didn't give up his life for the tigers. But because his bodhicitta was stronger, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha did, and as a result he became enlightened before Maitreya Buddha.

Therefore, it seems that in our lives, of all the billions of different Dharma practices that we could do, of all the many different forms of practice that there are, the most important is that of compassion for sentient beings.

THE BEST THING IN LIFE

As I said at the beginning of this talk, the best thing you can do with your life is to cherish sentient beings. Every day, whatever your circumstances, whether you are happy or unhappy, up or down, any time anywhere, cherish sentient beings. It can happen that when you are unhappy, you give sentient beings up, and only when you are happy do you think of others. Well, it can also happen that when you are happy you give them up too, but anyway, no matter whether you're happy or unhappy, whatever circumstances you find yourself in, keep as your only goal in life the welfare of sentient beings. Continuously, every day, all the time, always think how precious they are, how they are most precious.

Even Buddha, Dharma and Sangha come from sentient beings—the Thirty-five Buddhas, Vajrasattva. Therefore, sentient beings are the most precious thing in your life.

If you live your life with this attitude, even if you don't do three year retreats or study Dharma extensively, you will have happiness now and in the future. With this attitude, your future will always be good, the best. Living your life with this attitude, think that every sentient being, every person, you meet is most precious—at home, at work, at your Dharma center, feel that every person you see is the most precious one in your life. In this way you will not only experience happiness now but will also experience the best possible future, and at the time of death will feel no regrets—only happiness and joy. Even though your life might have started with suffering, it will end with joy.

With the thought of cherishing others, serving them comes naturally, without difficulty. You will serve others happily, voluntarily, enjoyably. With this thought, serving others will become the best, most enjoyable thing you can do in your life. In that way, even though you might be doing exactly the same things that you were doing before, even though your job or your actions haven't changed, because your attitude is different, everything you do brings you happiness, fulfillment and joy. Before, when you did things with ego, self-centered mind, you didn't enjoy life and encountered many problems. The same job, the same work—in a meditation center or in a city office—but there were always problems with other people, dissatisfaction with your work, a lot of unhappiness. But now, with this change of attitude, thinking that everyone is the most precious thing in your life, serving them comes naturally—not as a burden but as a joy. Serving others becomes enjoyment, not a job. You are giving something to others, so you feel happiness, satisfaction, fulfillment and joy.

Actually, like last week, I brought the book that I wanted to teach from, but again I got distracted. What I've been saying was supposed to be the motivation for the teaching, but somehow I got distracted and the motivation became the whole thing! Anyway, I'll stop here.

DEDICATION

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, which appear to be real, from there, but which are empty, may the I, which appears to be real but which is empty, achieve Vajrasattva’s enlightenment, which appears to be real but is empty, and lead all sentient beings, who appear to be real but are totally empty, to that enlightenment, which appears to be real but is empty, by myself, alone, which appears to be real but is also totally empty, non-existent from there.”

The difference between this non-existence and ordinary non-existence is the “from there, from its own side.”

Tonight’s session starts at nine o’clock! I’m joking.

Sunday, February 28

AFTERNOON: MEDICINE BUDDHA PUJA

[This teaching was given prior to Rinpoche's conducting a jang-wa ceremony at the Memorial Shrine on the FPMT property at Soquel. It was attended by Vajrasattva retreat sangha but not the lay students.]

JANG-WA

First we are going to do a Medicine Buddha puja. There are long and middle-length versions of this—we are going to do the middle-length version. After that, we will do the actual *jang-wa*, the purification of the family members who have passed away, which involves liberating them. You can do this practice with many different deities, aspects of buddha, but here today we are going to do it with the Medicine Buddha.

If there are actually ashes, hair or bone of the deceased person, parts of the dead person's body, the purification is done with the female enlightened being, the deity Vajrayogini. Again there are different versions of the Vajrayogini sadhana—long and short. Here, we'll do the short one. In that way, later, when the ashes have been purified and consecrated, buddha's wisdom having been invoked into the hair, bone or whatever there is, those ashes become the same as holy objects—statues of the buddha, stupas and so forth; they become objects of respect.

THE BENEFITS OF BLESSED ASHES

Traditionally what's done is that you take the blessed ashes up a very high mountain and cast them into the air. In that way, the blessed ashes bless the air, and whoever that air then touches—people, animals, insects—gets liberated. Those beings get liberated because the air has been blessed by the ashes. Liberated from what? Liberated from having to reincarnate in the suffering realms—the hell, hungry ghost and animal realms. They

get liberated because their minds get purified; their negative karma—the negative imprints left on their minds by past negative actions, actions done with negative thoughts—is purified. The negative karma they have created and collected on their minds is what causes them to reincarnate in the suffering realms. Therefore, by purifying their negative karma, purifying their mind, they get liberated from the lower realms and receive good rebirths. Depending on their karma and on the person who does the puja—that person’s qualities and the karma of the person who passed away—depending on both, they can be born instead in a pure land or receive a higher rebirth, such as a human, or a worldly god in the deva realm.

That’s one of the ways in which the consecrated ashes are used. Another way of using the ashes after they have been purified, consecrated and blessed is to put them into an ocean or a river. Because the ashes have been purified and blessed, putting them in the ocean blesses the entire ocean and that water then blesses or purifies all the beings who live in the ocean; purifies their minds, their negative karma. Thus, all those beings living in the water get liberated from the lower realms; they don’t reincarnate in the hell, hungry ghost or animal realms. It causes them to receive good rebirths. Also, anybody who touches the water, including human beings, gets purified as well.

A third way the blessed ashes can be used, made beneficial for the person who passed away, another very practical method, is to sponsor or make stupas or statues of the buddha out of them. Usually in Tibet, Nepal and India, after the ashes have been purified, blessed, they make statues of, for example, Mitukpa. You can also make Medicine Buddha statues. Mitukpa, the Immovable Buddha, is in the same aspect as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, but blue in color and holding a vajra in his left hand, which is in the mudra of concentration, like Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s. Mitukpa is a very, very powerful buddha, so making statues of him is extremely helpful to purify the person who passed away, to purify that person’s negative karma and for that person to have a good rebirth. Also, the family members who sponsor the making of that statue collect inconceivable merit as well. You can also make stupas from those ashes.

The last time we did a celebration here was at the opening of this temple, when the large Medicine Buddha thangka was brought here and we made offerings to that holy object.

I would like to repeat again the benefits of making holy objects, as explained by the Buddha. In his teachings, the Buddha explained infinite, unbelievable benefits of making holy objects, but here I'll give just the essence of what he said.

THE BENEFITS OF JANG-WA

First of all, however, *jang-wa* is a Tibetan term that means purification. The teachings given by the Buddha himself are divided into two types—sutra and tantra. The jang-wa purification practice is from the tantras.

Usually, if somebody dies with a non-virtuous thought, with a negative thought at the time of death—with anger, ignorance or desire, attachment clinging to this life—if the person's very last thought in this life is non-devotion to guru, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha; not compassion for other living beings; not wisdom meditating on the ultimate nature, emptiness; not the detached, pure mind of renunciation of the circling suffering realm, samsara; if there's no pure mind, no virtuous thought, after death that person gets reborn in the intermediate state of the hell realm, the intermediate state of the hungry ghost realm or the intermediate state of the animal realm. If a person dies with a non-virtuous thought, with a negative thought, that person reincarnates in the lower realms, in the suffering realms. The person doesn't reincarnate in the higher realms—the deva or human realms.

But if this purification practice of jang-wa that was taught by Buddha in the tantras is done, it is said in the teachings that even if the person died with a non-virtuous thought, an impure mind, a negative thought, and has already reincarnated in the intermediate state on his way to the hell, hungry ghost or animal realms, that person can still change his rebirth; he doesn't have to reincarnate in the hell, hungry ghost or animal realms. That person's mind can still be directed towards the higher realms. The person's rebirth can change. Instead of being born in the lower realms, the person can reincarnate in the human or deva realms or even in a pure land, depending on the person's karma and the qualities of the person who performs the puja. It is a very powerful, practical method of helping family members or friends who have passed away—deceased people whom you want to help avoid heavy sufferings and have an easy life, a good rebirth, a better life. Doing jang-wa for those people has that practical benefit.

THE BENEFITS OF MAKING HOLY OBJECTS

As I mentioned, family members who sponsor the making of a statue or stupa using the deceased person's ashes, hair, bone or whatever has great benefit. When King Sogyal asked Lord Buddha about the benefits of making holy objects, he explained that equal to that number of atoms that the statue or stupa contains, according to its size, as many millions or billions of atoms it contains, for that many lifetimes the person who sponsored or made that holy object will be born as a king in the "deva human" realm, where the enjoyments are millions of times greater than the most developed human wealth. Then, of course, if in all those coming future lives as a king that person meets the Dharma, the spiritual path, the Buddhadharmā, he or she can use all that wealth and power to benefit many other sentient beings.

The next benefit is that as many atoms the stupa or statue has, that many causes to achieve perfect concentration, meditation, shamatha, calm abiding are created. In order to achieve perfect concentration, you have to achieve the nine levels of meditative stabilization. Only then can you achieve perfect concentration, meditation. Otherwise, you can't really develop perfect meditation free from attachment-scattering and sinking, the two main obstacles that interfere with your realizing perfect concentration. After achieving these nine levels and thus perfect concentration, you experience extremely refined rapturous ecstasy, bliss of body and mind. Then, after that, you achieve fully characterized shamatha, calm abiding—that level of meditation. Then, on the basis of that, you realize the ultimate nature of the I, the aggregates—the association of body and mind, the base on which I is labeled, the base of the self, the me—you realize the ultimate nature of the base, the aggregates; the very nature of all phenomena—emptiness.

Without realizing emptiness, you cannot be liberated; there's no way to escape, to be totally liberated, forever, from the whole entire round of samsaric suffering—the suffering of death, the suffering of rebirth, the suffering of old age, the suffering of sickness and all the other problems we experience between death and rebirth. You cannot be free from all the sufferings of the human and deva realms—the sura and asura realms, the realms of those worldly gods—or of the three lower realms—the hell, hungry ghost and animal realms. Why? Because all these sufferings come

from karma, are caused by karma. Karma is motivated by delusion. All delusions, wrong concepts, the hallucinating mind, come from the root, ignorance—the unknowing mind.

WHERE ARE YOU?

If you look for the I, if you look for the self, where is it? You cannot find the I from the ends of your hair down to the tips of your toes. You cannot find the I, the self. Where is the me? Where is the I? You cannot find it anywhere from the ends of your hair down to the tips of your toes. Nowhere can you find your I. Even if you look for it, you cannot find it. The real I that you always believe to be there, that you always hold on to; believing that there really exists such a real I as it appears to you, that there is a real I in your body, that always walks, sits, sleeps, works and so forth; comes, goes, does all the activities. Actually, if you look for it, try to discover where that real I that appears to you, that you constantly hold on to, is located, you cannot find it anywhere from the ends of your hairs down to the tips of your toes.

Your body is not the I; your mind is not the I. Even the association of your body and mind is not the I; together, even the collection of body and mind is not this real I. Therefore, nothing is the real I. None of this is the real I, and you cannot find any such real I. None of these are the real I. Neither body nor mind, nor even the collection of them together is the real I. If you look for it, you cannot find it anywhere from the ends of your hair down to the tips of your toes. You cannot find it on this base—the association of body and mind. You cannot find the real I in which you believe, which appears to you and which you always hold on to, that you cherish as the most important thing there is—“I’m the *most* important of all living beings; I’m more important than all the buddhas and bodhisattvas and all other living beings.”

If you look for this real I that you hold on to in everyday life—every minute, every second—you cannot find it. It is not *there*; it exists nowhere, neither on the base—the association of body and mind—nor anywhere else. This real I, or, in Western psychological terminology, this emotional I, doesn’t exist anywhere, neither on the base—the association of body and mind—nor anywhere else. Since it cannot be found anywhere, it is totally non-existent. When you look for it, you cannot find it anywhere.

But, because the base—the aggregates, the association of body and mind—exists, the I exists. There is a body, there is a mind and there is an association of this body and mind—these things exist. Because of their existence, the mind that sees these aggregates—the base, the association of body and mind—invents the label “I,” the merely imputed I. This is the I that exists; the self that exists is this one, dependent on the base, the association of body and mind, and on the mind that merely imputes the I. That exists, that I exists; the merely imputed I exists.

The merely imputed I that exists is not only *like* a hallucination, it *is* a hallucination. Again, because of the aggregates, the mind merely imputes the I; the I exists by way of being merely imputed. But this merely imputed I that exists cannot be found on its base, the association of body and mind; you cannot find even this merely labeled I, which normally exists, on the base, the association of body and mind. However, the merely imputed I exists—it exists in the world, in this temple, right now. You, your self or the I, the merely imputed one, exists now; it exists in this world, in America, in this temple now. It exists in this Memorial Shrine. The merely labeled I is in this temple now, but it is not, you cannot find it, on this collection of body and mind. You cannot find the I, the merely labeled I there.

Besides not being able to find the emotional I, the real I, you can't find even the merely labeled I on the aggregates. You can find the merely labeled I in this temple; it's in this temple right now—on the cushion, where the aggregates are sitting. The body is sitting on the cushion—is the merely labeled I there or not? Yes, it is on the cushion; yes, it is on the chair—but is it on the base, the collection of body and mind? No, you cannot find it *there*—on there, there is no merely labeled I. Where you find the aggregates, the collection of body and mind, there you find the I, the merely labeled I—but there is no merely labeled I on the collection of body and mind, the base. There's a huge difference—like that between earth and sky—between the merely labeled I and the I that appears to us, the I in which we normally believe.

WHAT IS IGNORANCE?

What is ignorance? The point I'm trying to make, to introduce here, is what is ignorance, the root of all delusions, the root of all karma, the root

of all suffering? I'm trying to give you an idea of what this ignorance is.

Think how a movie camera imprints a negative film with images of people, mountains, houses and so forth and then later, when the film is developed with chemicals, what the camera has imprinted on the film appears on photographic paper or can be projected on a movie screen. Like that, while there is no I on the base, the association of body and mind, past ignorance—the concept of the inherently existent I, the concept of the real I, the I that exists from its own side, as not merely labeled by the mind—past ignorance—the wrong concept that apprehends the I, aggregates, all phenomena, subject, action, object, everything, as inherently existent, as real, as existing from their own side—has left negative imprints on our mental continuum. Then, these negative imprints left on our mind by past ignorance project the hallucination of inherent existence. The moment our mind merely imputes the I, merely imputes the body, merely imputes the mind, merely imputes this and that, these negative imprints left by the past ignorance project the hallucination of inherent existence on to that merely labeled I, that merely labeled body, that merely labeled mind, that merely labeled this and that.

But, right after our mind merely labels the I, it doesn't appear *back* to us as merely labeled by the mind. Even though the I, the self, is merely labeled by the mind, when it appears back to us, it does not appear as merely labeled by mind. It appears as if it exists from its own side, as if it has nothing to do with our mind, as if it never came from our mind. It appears as something *totally* existent from its own side. There are many wrong views there. However, the I merely labeled by our mind doesn't appear back to us as merely labeled by the mind. It appears back to us as *not* merely labeled by the mind. That's a hallucination. That is projected by the negative imprint left on our mental continuum by past ignorance, the concept of the inherently existent I, inherently existent aggregates and so forth. That inherently existent I, the I that appears to us as not merely labeled by mind, is a projection of the negative imprint left on our mental continuum by past ignorance, the wrong concept of holding the I as inherently existent.

When the merely labeled I, the I that is merely labeled by our mind, appears back to us, it doesn't appear as merely labeled by our mind—it appears back to us as not merely labeled by our mind. Then, we immediately allow our mind to believe that that appearance is correct, that that

view is one hundred per cent true. We allow our mind to believe that the I that appears to us as not merely labeled by the mind is something *real*, that it exists from *there*. We let our mind believe, hold, apprehend, that that view of the I, the way the I appears, is true. We let our mind hold on to this I that doesn't exist, this real I (real in the sense of existing from its own side) that is not *there*.

This concept that holds on to the I that doesn't exist, the real I that exists nowhere, is what is called ignorance, and this is the way in which we create our own ignorance. Nobody else creates our ignorance; we create it for ourselves. We create our own ignorance, the root of all suffering. We create our own suffering. That's why Lord Buddha explained that we are our own worst enemies, but similarly, we are our own guides, our own liberators.

THE ANTIDOTE TO IGNORANCE

The antidote to this ignorance, the method of eradicating this root of all suffering, is the wisdom realizing the emptiness of the object of ignorance, the wisdom realizing that the object that ignorance holds on to is totally non-existent. This realization, this wisdom realizing emptiness, is the only thing that can directly cut the root of all the suffering, ignorance. Only through this wisdom can we be completely liberated from the entire round of suffering its cause—karma and delusion.

Thus, as I was saying before, on the basis of shamatha, you realize emptiness, you achieve great insight. You do analysis on emptiness on the basis of shamatha, which was derived from rapturous ecstasy, through that concentration. That's what is called great insight. That leads to wisdom, to the third path, the path of right-seeing. That is the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, the wisdom that actually ceases the delusions. Developing the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness is what actually ceases the imprints, the defilements, the delusions. That is how you are able to achieve total liberation from all suffering and its causes and achieve ultimate happiness.

There are five paths to nirvana, liberation from samsara—the paths of merit, conjunction, right-seeing, meditation and no more learning. During the second path you need to have the realization of the unification of shamatha and great insight. That leads to the third, the path of

right-seeing. From there you start to cease the delusions, and on the path of meditation, you can cease whatever delusions are left over; you completely cease all delusions. Then you achieve the fifth path, no more learning. This is according to the Hinayana path; this is the Lesser Vehicle path. These are the five Lesser Vehicle paths to liberation.

There are also five Mahayana paths, which lead to enlightenment. They have the same names. There are the Mahayana paths of merit and conjunction, where again you need the realization of the unification of great insight and shamatha. This also leads to the Mahayana path of right-seeing and to the Mahayana paths of meditation and no more learning—enlightenment. Here, with the thought of bodhicitta, method, you are able to cease even the subtle defilements and thus to achieve full enlightenment.

Therefore, as many atoms a statue or stupa has, by making or sponsoring that holy object—the bigger the better—you collect that many causes of perfect concentration.

MORE BENEFITS OF MAKING HOLY OBJECTS

The next benefit is that, as many atoms as a statue or stupa has, that many causes to achieve the arya path are created by the person who makes or sponsors that holy object. As I just mentioned, there are five [Hinayana] paths to achieve liberation from samsara and there are five [Mahayana] paths to achieve enlightenment for the sake of sentient beings. The arya path means the third, fourth and fifth paths—the right-seeing path and the paths of meditation and no more learning. All these are arya paths, and the person who makes or sponsors a statue or stupa creates as many causes to achieve the arya path as there are atoms in that holy object; collects that quantity of merit to achieve the path that actually ceases defilements.

The final benefit is enlightenment. As many atoms as a statue or stupa has, that many causes of enlightenment are created by the person who sponsors or makes that holy object. The benefit of attaining enlightenment is that after you attain it, you liberate and enlighten numberless other sentient beings from *all* their oceans of samsaric suffering and their cause. You liberate everyone, all suffering beings, from all their suffering and its cause and bring them to enlightenment.

Making or sponsoring holy objects has all these unbelievable benefits. Therefore, if you dedicate all the merits of making holy objects to the person who died, that person also gets the incredible benefit of receiving a good rebirth. This is, therefore, a very practical way to benefit the family members and the person who passed away.

THE BENEFITS OF THE MEDICINE BUDDHA MANTRA

Now I would like to mention the benefits of the Medicine Buddha mantra so that you can understand the benefits of the Medicine Buddha practice.

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha asked his attendant Kungawo [Ananda], “Do you have any doubts about the Buddha’s explanation of the benefits of reciting the Medicine Buddha’s name and mantra?” Kungawo replied, “I have no doubts whatsoever about what the Buddha explained regarding the power, qualities and benefits of reciting the name and mantra of the Medicine Buddha. The Buddha has inconceivable qualities, therefore, I have no doubts.”

The Buddha also said, “When even animals hear the Medicine Buddha’s name, they don’t get reborn in the hell, hungry ghost or animal realms.”

If we recite the Medicine Buddha’s name and mantra, we receive the benefit of all the prayers that the Medicine Buddha made for us in the past—prayers for all happiness, all good things, the success of our Dharma practice, realizations, whatever; all happiness, temporary and ultimate. We receive whatever the Medicine Buddha prayed for us sentient beings to receive.

Not only that. Whatever prayers we ourselves make are actualized. Simply by our reciting the Medicine Buddha’s name and mantra, our prayers become successful. Why? How does this happen? In the past, when the Medicine Buddha was a bodhisattva, with bodhicitta, with unbearable compassion for us sentient beings, with compassion that encompasses all sentient beings, he made countless prayers for the benefit of us sentient beings. He made prayers to pacify our many problems; prayers for us to achieve all temporary and ultimate happiness. The Medicine Buddha made many, many prayers for the welfare of sentient beings in the time of the five degenerations. That time has come; that is

our time. Therefore, all the prayers that the Medicine Buddha made in the past will now be answered.

When the Medicine Buddha achieved enlightenment, he gained the many qualities of a buddha, such as the eighteen unmixed Dharmas, the four fearlessness and the ten powers. One of the ten powers is the power of prayer, which is a quality possessed only by a buddha. With a buddha's power of prayer, whatever prayers were made in the past are actualized, come true. All prayers made in the past succeed. Therefore, by reciting the name and the mantra of the Medicine Buddha, we receive the benefits of whatever prayers the Medicine Buddha made in the past, and whatever we pray for becomes successful as well.

If we recite the Medicine Buddha's name and mantra, we will constantly be protected by the Medicine Buddha and the protectors in his entourage. His entourage will always protect us, and if we are practicing healing, giving people medical treatment, the medicine goddesses will always help us make the right diagnosis—correctly identify the patient's symptoms—and give the right treatment.

Therefore, if we do a Medicine Buddha puja before doing jang-wa for a deceased person, the jang-wa becomes very successful, very powerful.

Once in Taiwan there was a person who was in a coma. He wasn't necessarily a Buddhist, but Geshe Lama Konchog sent a Medicine Buddha picture to be put above his pillow, next to his bed. Geshe-la also did a Medicine Buddha puja that night. After the Medicine Buddha picture was put next to this person's bed and the puja was done, he awoke from his coma.

There's another story about someone else who became very sick with some heavy disease and found he could not move his body, could not get up. He was alone in the house, his medicine was in the bathroom, and he was unable to get up off his bed to fetch it. He was lying there thinking how to get his medicine from the bathroom when he suddenly remembered the Medicine Buddha statue that was on the table next to his bed, next to his pillow. When he turned his head to look at the medicine Buddha statue, he saw that it was holding the medicine that had been in the bathroom. His medicine was in the Medicine Buddha's hand. Since the statue was right there next to his pillow, he was able to reach and take his medicine.

Some time later, the day that this person was going to die, he was

able to put his palms together at his heart. He was not particularly Buddhist or a Dharma student or anything like that, but as he was actually passing away, he put his palms together at his heart and died very peacefully. Even though he was not especially Buddhist and didn't do strong prayers or anything else like that in his life, at the time of death, he was guided by the Medicine Buddha.

It also seems that recently I heard another story...I don't remember...something to do with somebody else recovering from a coma through the Medicine Buddha.

There is a whole sutra describing the unbelievable benefits of the Medicine Buddha. I think they read it frequently in Chinese temples. However, I'm just very briefly giving you the essence, to arouse your trust in and devotion to the Medicine Buddha, to encourage you to do the practice—the meditation and recitation of the name and mantra of the Medicine Buddha—every day.

The Medicine Buddha practice is such an unbelievably easy way to be liberated from suffering; such an easy way to go to the pure land; such an easy way to fulfill all your wishes, to have realizations on the path to enlightenment. Praying to and relying on the Medicine Buddha, which is a very blessed, very powerful practice in such degenerate times, has all these benefits. The Medicine Buddha is a very precious deity to pray to. It is guaranteed that if you recite his name and mantra every day, you will never again get reborn in the lower realms, in the hell, hungry ghost or animal realms. Besides your succeeding in whatever you wish, your negative karma gets purified as well. Therefore, it is a great loss if you don't get to recite it every day.

Now we're going to rush through the puja like an Indian express train!

There are two types of purification of the ashes that we have to do, and then there are also the [deceased people's] names written there, so it might be difficult for everyone to follow what's going on. But you don't need to waste your time. You can sit there and do your prayers for as long as you want to stay. Those who want to read the text, do the puja together, can do that. Otherwise you can chant mantras, do prayers, as you like. It may take some time, so there's no obligation to wait until the end. You can leave whenever you like.

MOTIVATION

“The kind mother sentient beings, who are the source of all my past, present and future happiness, are the most precious thing in my life. I find it so unbearable that they have to suffer in the hell realms, where suffering for even one second is like suffering for many eons. Their suffering is so unbearable for me that I must enlighten them, liberate them from suffering, bring them to enlightenment as quickly as possible. Therefore, I must achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“Each of the numberless hungry ghosts suffering the sufferings of the preta realm is the source of all my past, present and future happiness and is so precious in my life. Their suffering in the hungry ghost realm for even one second is like suffering for eons. Their suffering is so unbearable for my mind. Therefore, I must liberate them from the suffering of the hungry ghost realm and samsaric suffering in general and bring them to enlightenment as quickly as possible. For their sake, I must achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“There are numberless animals, each of whom is the source of all my past, present and future happiness. They are so precious in my life. Their experiencing the sufferings of the animal realm, where suffering for even one second is like suffering for eons, is so unbearable for my mind. I must liberate them from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment as quickly as possible. Therefore, I must achieve enlightenment for them as quickly as possible.

“Numberless human beings, who are the source of all my past, present and future happiness, are so precious, the most kind and precious thing in my life. Their suffering in samsara, experiencing all the human suffering, for even one second is like suffering for eons. Their suffering for eons is so unbearable for my mind. Therefore, I must liberate them from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment as quickly as possible. For that, I must achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“Each of the numberless suras and asuras is the source of all my past, present and future happiness. They are so kind. Their suffering in samsara for even one second is like they are suffering for eons. It is so unbearable for my mind. I must liberate them from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment as quickly as possible. Therefore, I must achieve enlightenment for them as quickly as possible.

“Each of the numberless intermediate state beings is the source of all my past, present and future happiness. Their suffering in samsara, experiencing the suffering of the intermediate state realm, for even a second is like they are suffering for eons. It is so unbearable for my mind. I must liberate them as quickly as possible from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment. Therefore, I must achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“For all these purposes I am going to do the Medicine Buddha puja—prostration, offering, requesting and so forth. I am going to do the graduated practices of the Medicine Buddha puja.

“Also, the previous generations of my family who have passed away and all the deceased people whose names are written here, including the main ones, whose ashes are here, whose names are written there, are the principals, and then all the rest of the others who have passed away—numberless beings born and suffering in the hell realm, born and suffering in the hungry ghost realm, born and suffering in the animal realm—to liberate them as quickly as possible, I’m going to do this Medicine Buddha puja—for everyone, all those people whose names are here and then all the rest.”

[Puja starts.]

DEDICATION

This puja is also for all those who are still living; the rest of your family who are still alive, so dedicate the Medicine Buddha puja to their long life and health and, most importantly, their having a meaningful life by actualizing the lam-rim, the steps of the path to enlightenment—especially bodhicitta, the good heart, the ultimate good heart—and being able to make their life most beneficial for other sentient beings—which actually means most beneficial for themselves as well.

Also dedicate for your family members and all the students and benefactors of this organization, including those who built this temple, who sponsored this temple, who gave the money to build this temple, and to Venerable Paul and all the organizers of the temple, who built it for the benefit of many sentient beings, both living and dead.

Dedicate to those who have sacrificed their lives and borne much

hardship offering service to others and the teachings of the Buddha through this organization.

“May every one of those living beings who rely upon me, for whom I promised to pray and whose names were given to me have long lives and good health, may all their wishes succeed immediately according to the holy Dharma and, most importantly, may they to actualize the lam-rim path in this very lifetime.

“May the business of the husband of the benefactor of our Taichung Center succeed immediately and be free from all obstacles and difficulties. May all the businesses they have be even more successful than they wish and may all the wealth that they receive be most meaningful, most beneficial for all sentient beings and the teaching of the Buddha.

“May the business of the benefactor who sponsors our translator training center in Dharamsala, which has been having difficulties recently, become most successful and may the wealth he receives be most beneficial for sentient beings and the teachings of the Buddha.

“May all our meditation centers be able to spread the teaching of Lama Tsong Khapa in the minds of all sentient beings.” Dedicate for our centers to receive whatever they need to be successful.

Also dedicate for the social service centers, all those various projects, the schools and so forth, to be most beneficial, successful, and to receive all the needs for that to happen.

“May all the projects of this organization, including all the projects at Land of Medicine Buddha—the 100,000 Medicine Buddhas temple and the 100,000 stupas project—and all the hospices, succeed immediately by receiving all they need to do so.

“May the 500-foot Maitreya Buddha statue succeed, be completed as quickly as possible, by receiving all the needs.”

Also dedicate for the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Buddha of Compassion, and for all other holy beings, all our virtuous friends, to have stable lives and for all their holy wishes to succeed immediately.

Dedicate for Lama Ösel Rinpoche to have a long life, to be able to complete his studies and, like Lama Tsong Khapa, to be able to benefit sentient beings like the sky, through showing the same qualities that Lama Tsong Khapa possessed.

Dedicate this Medicine Buddha puja to all those people who have

cancer and AIDS, those very heavy diseases for which there is no cure, to those who are comatose, to those who are suffering greatly from illness.

Dedicate this Medicine Buddha puja to all those who have life obstacles, those who are dying today—there are many people dying in this world, even today, even now—dedicate this Medicine Buddha puja to all of them.

And to all those people who do good things for others, who serve others, dedicate this Medicine Buddha puja to their success.

[Puja continues.]

REJOICING

Rejoice in your own past, present and future merits. Without merit, good karma, we can't achieve any happiness, any success in business, in Dharma practice, in anything. We can't have any happiness, can't achieve any happiness without merit—including the happiness of enlightenment and realizations. Merit is so precious; merit is so precious. Think, "I have created numberless merits in the past, numberless merits in the present time and will create numberless merits in the future—how wonderful it is! How happy I am!" You can think one way or the other. Like this, rejoice in your own merits of the three times, feeling happiness again and again by thinking of the merits, the numberless merits—how wonderful they are. Think this again and again, how wonderful it is. Feel happiness in your heart.

By rejoicing in your own past, present and future merits, your skies of merits of the three times are increased—all your merit is doubled. In this way, the Medicine Buddha puja becomes very, very powerful, and then when we dedicate all these merits to others, it becomes really very effective for both yourself and others.

[Puja continues.]

Remember all the offerings down there outside the LMB gompas, those inside the gompas, the offerings made here at the temple, all the water bowls—thinking of them as nectar and offering them to the Medicine Buddha—all the lights...you can also offer the almost three hundred

water, *nectar* offerings and the just under four thousand light offerings at the Aptos house. When we make all those offerings to the Medicine Buddha, meditate that the Medicine Buddha is inseparable from your guru, your virtuous friend, as well as His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Rely upon the Medicine Buddha with all your heart. Think that whatever prayers you have made in the past, “May I and all sentient beings receive immediately whatever I have prayed for. May it succeed immediately.” Then, if there is anybody for whom you would like to pray, think of that person, or if there is any particular project whose success you want, pray also for that.

[Puja continues.]

Now rejoice in others’ merits, the merits of all sentient beings, including the bodhisattvas and buddhas. They have collected vast merit in the past and present and will collect vast merit in the future, and through this they have received much happiness. Then sentient beings receive much happiness from them, including ultimate happiness. Bodhisattvas use all their merits to complete the path and to serve us sentient beings, to benefit us sentient beings. Rejoice in all these merits of the three times, thinking, “How wonderful it is!”—think again and again, “How wonderful it is!” Each time we rejoice like this, “How wonderful it is!” feeling happiness at others’ merits, we again collect skies of merits, each time.

[Puja continues.]

Dedicate for the Buddha of Compassion, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, to have a stable life and for his and all other holy beings’ holy wishes to succeed immediately.

Tuesday, March 2 (A)

MORNING: FIRST SESSION (DAY OF MIRACLES)

EIGHT MAHAYANA PRECEPTS

The explanation of the benefits of taking the Mahayana Reviving and Purifying Vow, or the Eight Mahayana Precepts, has two divisions: the shortcomings of degenerating the vows and the benefits of protecting the vows. The second division, the actual explanation of the benefits of protecting the vows, also has two divisions: the individual benefits of protecting the eight precepts and the elaborate general benefits of protecting the eight precepts. The explanation of the specific benefits of each precept was given before [see Chapter 4, Monday, February 8]. Today I will be explaining the general benefits of protecting the vows.

GENERAL BENEFITS OF THE EIGHT MAHAYANA PRECEPTS

1. The first benefit of the protecting the vows is that, like the earth, it becomes the basis of all virtues.
2. The second benefit is that it enables one to abandon the eight states which have no freedom to practice Dharma and to receive the freedoms and richnesses.
3. The third benefit of keeping the precepts is that it closes the door of the suffering transmigratory beings and allows one to achieve a deva or human body.
4. The fourth benefit is that one becomes endowed with all good qualities.
5. The fifth benefit of protecting the vows is that it is superior to the practice of charity.
6. The sixth benefit is that it is superior to making offerings to the buddhas.
7. The seventh benefit of protecting the vows is that one is

reborn as a close disciple of Maitreya Buddha.

8. The eighth benefit is that in all future lifetimes one will achieve deva or human bodies and will become a foe destroyer, or arhat. The Tibetan term for arhat is *dra-chom-pa*, which means “one who has destroyed the enemy.” The enemy here is the obscurations. There are two types of obscurations: the disturbing-thought obscurations, the gross defilements (*nyön-drib*), which mainly interfere with the achievement of liberation from samsara for oneself, and the subtle obscurations (*she-drib*), which mainly interfere with the achievement of full enlightenment. Therefore, the term *dra-chom-pa*, or arhat, can refer to one who has destroyed either level of obscuration. When used alone it generally refers to the one who has destroyed just the gross defilements, the disturbing-thought obscurations. The final benefit is that one will achieve peerless full enlightenment. Here the term *dra-chom-pa*, the one who has destroyed the enemy, is referring to the being who has become a peerless buddha—someone who, besides having destroyed the disturbing-thought obscurations, has destroyed even the subtle obscurations, the obscurations to the fully knowing mind. It is these obscurations to knowledge that interfere with the achievement of full enlightenment for the sake of sentient beings.

We shall now discuss the eight general benefits of protecting the precepts in more detail.

1. Protecting the vows is the basis of virtue

Just as the earth, the ground, is the basis for all sentient beings, as well as for all enjoyments such as trees, plants and crops, morality is the basis for all virtue. It is in dependence upon the cause of having protected morality that one achieves the state of a deva or a human, particularly a human body that has the eight freedoms and ten richnesses. Having such a perfect human body, one then meets a holy virtuous friend and is able to enjoy the three practices of listening, reflecting and meditating. One is then able to collect the two types of merit and achieve the perfect bodies

of a buddha. Such a perfect body enable us to live in the four Mahayana Dharma wheels. And as Lama Tsong Khapa emphasizes in *The Hymns of the Experience of the Path to Enlightenment*, unless we have such a perfect body with the eight ripening qualities, we can't really make any significant progress in achieving realizations of the path to enlightenment.

Achieving a perfect body also includes birth in a pure land of buddha, especially in one of the pure lands where you can become enlightened, such as Shambhala or the pure lands of Heruka or Vajrayogini. According to my root virtuous friend, His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche, you can also become enlightened in the Amitabha pure land. According to Denma Lochö Rinpoche and Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche, however, you cannot practice tantra in the Amitabha pure land, so you have to be born back into a human world where the tantric teachings exist, such as into the Southern Continent, where we have been born. As a beginner in the practice of tantra, you need a body that is composed of three substances received from the father (marrow, sperm and bone) and three received from the mother (flesh, skin and blood). You need such a body to practice tantra in order to achieve enlightenment in that life. We are talking here especially in relation to the practice of the completion stage. Therefore, you need to reincarnate back into a human world where the teachings of Highest Yoga Tantra exist. According to His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche, in Amitabha pure land you can also practice tantra and become enlightened.

2. One abandons the eight states without freedom and achieves the freedoms and riches

Protecting the vows enables one to abandon the eight states, or circumstances, that have no freedom to practice Dharma and to receive the eight freedoms and ten riches. Why is this? Because the cause of these eighteen qualities, the eight freedoms and ten riches, is protecting morality.

3. One closes the door of suffering rebirths and achieves a deva or human body

Protecting the morality of the eight limbs, the Reviving and Purifying Ordination, closes the door to the rebirth of a suffering transmigratory

being and causes rebirth in a deva or human body.

There is the story related to this. In the past there was a world called Adorned with Jewels, and in that world was a Tathagata called Sangye Legtong, who turned the Dharma wheel and inspired all the people to practice the morality of the eight limbs, the Reviving and Purifying Ordination. In that way, Sangye Legtong led some people to the states of devas and humans; some to arhatship as solitary realizers or hearers; some on the path of the bodhisattva; and others to the state of peerless enlightenment.

At that time, a wheel-turning king called Sojong Pagpa (Reviving and Purifying Transcendent One) took the Eight Mahayana Precepts from this Buddha, Sangye Legtong. After taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts, King Sojong Pagpa flew up high in the sky. (Wheel-turning kings can fly in the sky, though I am not sure whether or not they need a vehicle to do this. It is said that they fly around Mount Meru and the continents.) He then made a law that the human beings of the four continents should take the Eight Mahayana Precepts on the special dates.

The “special dates” are the eighth, fifteenth and thirtieth of the Tibetan calendar. Maitreya Buddha’s teachings also mention the fourteenth as a special date. It seems generally that people can create more merit on these days and that any negative karma created then is heavier. But I haven’t heard a particular explanation as to why these days are regarded as special. I have yet to hear a satisfying explanation about this.

When the human beings of the four continents protect the eight limbs, the Reviving and Purifying Ordination, they close the door to reincarnation in the lower realms—in the hell, hungry ghost or animal realms—and open the door to higher rebirths. Like a main road that allows many people to come through, taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts allows so many people to achieve higher rebirths. It is also explained that many of the human beings of the four continents who die will be able to be reborn as human beings again and as desire realm gods in the realms of the Four Great Kings, the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods, the Strifeless, the Joyful, the Delighting in Emanation and the Mastery over Transformations. There are deva realms belonging to the desire realm, form realm and formless realm. Here we are talking about the deva realms of the desire realm.

Also, in the bodhisattva scriptures, Buddha explains, “Innumerable

eons ago, the tathagata, Sangye Jigtob (Buddha Glorious Powerful One), came in the world and led many sentient beings to take the ordination of the eight limbs, or the Eight Mahayana Precepts. Some of those people became bodhisattvas; some became pratyekabuddhas; some achieved the stages of continual entrance [stream enterer], returning [once returner] and non-returning, and arhatship; some achieved the Dharma eye without dust (I'm not sure what this means); and at the very least, they achieved the state of a deva or human being. They then became enlightened." It is explained in the teachings of the Buddha that all those beings became enlightened and then, like Buddha, passed away in the sorrowless state.

Previously, after the teaching of the Buddha had existed for an inconceivable number of years, the teaching was about to degenerate, when a Dharma king came into that world. A Dharma king is one who acts in accordance with the Dharma; he lives his life and makes the policies to guide his people in accordance with the Dharma. When this Dharma king was checking through the Buddha's teachings, he saw the benefits of taking the eight limbs, the Reviving and Purifying Ordination. He then collected together all the gelongs and brahmins. (The term *ge-long* means virtue beggar, with virtue referring to nirvana, or liberation. Some translators mistakenly relate the term to the begging of food because they only translate *long* (beggar) and leave out the most important thing, that which is begged for, *ge* (virtue). Gelong—beggar of virtue or beggar of liberation—is a very rich name. The term *ge-tsul* has a similar meaning—abiding in the path to liberation.)

Anyway, the Dharma king then said to all the gelongs and brahmins he had gathered, "Does anyone understand the method of living in the eight limbs, which was taught by Buddha? You should learn the ceremony, then give it to me. And if you don't find it, I will punish you."

Everybody gathered together and asked each other, "Do you know anything about this method of taking the eight precepts?" No one seemed to know even the name of the practice. However, scared of being punished by the king, they scattered in all directions to look for it. They looked in bedrooms, they looked in toilets, but they couldn't find it anywhere.

Finally one old woman said, "When I was a little girl my father practiced the morality of the eight limbs, the Reviving and Purifying

Ordination. Inside a pillar at our home, there is a sutra with the method of the eight limbs of reviving and purifying as taught by Buddha.” When they looked at the pillar in the old woman’s house, they found inside it a hole covered by a square piece of wood. Hidden inside, they found a small text containing the method of the eight limbs and its benefits.

All the gelongs and brahmins brought this text to the king. With prostrations they offered it to him. The king was extremely pleased and gave a huge offering to the gelongs and brahmins. He also gave a great many things to the old woman.

The king and his entourage then made a law that the vow of the eight limbs should be practiced on the special days. All the people then protected the eight limbs of reviving and purifying on the special days. Because these human beings protected morality in this way, the population of the deva realms increased—I guess the deva realms became like Calcutta or Chicago! All the devas were very happy.

In the country ruled by that religious king the rains always came at the right time when needed for the crops and did not come when there was no need. Also, all contagious diseases, wars and fighting were pacified. The people living in that world also closed the door to rebirth in the lower realms. As soon as they died they were born in the deva realm the Strifeless (Tab-trel), which is free of fighting, or Ganden, the Joyful Realm. In this way, they received infinite benefit.

4. One is endowed with all good qualities

The sutra *Living in Pure Morality* says, “One who lives in morality meets the buddha when he descends.” Living in pure morality creates the cause to meet buddha when he descends into the world. “Living in morality is the best of all ornaments. Living in morality is applying the best perfume; it gives a natural fragrance. Living in morality is the cooling water that eliminates the suffering of heat. Living in morality brings praise from the whole world.”

I’m not sure of the precise meaning of the next sentence. It could be “Living in morality pleases the holy beings” or “Living in morality makes the transmigratory being holy.” I am not quite sure.

Like this, infinite benefits are explained.

5. *Protecting vows is superior to the practice of charity*

Living in morality collects more merit than making charity. Why does living in these vows bring greater good fortune, greater merit, than making charity? It is said that a person who keeps the Eight Mahayana Precepts for just one day collects far greater merit than someone who makes charity to others day and night for hundreds of years. This is a point that encourages us to take the vows. Even though making charity is regarded in the world as something very generous and very good, in terms of creating merit, living in the morality of the Reviving and Purifying Ordination for even one day creates far greater merit.

There is a reference here to Lobpon Ignyen, or Vasubandhu, the great pandit who wrote the *Abhidharmakosha*. There are six great Indian pandits, who wrote the basic scriptures that are commentaries to the teachings of the Buddha. Many Tibetan lamas later wrote commentaries to these basic scriptures. Lobpon Ignyen said, “The fortune of a person who protects morality for one day is more exalted than that of a person who with devotion makes charity for one hundred years.”

6. *Protecting vows is superior to making offerings to the buddhas*

The *King of Concentration Sutra* explains, “The merit from making offerings of all the possessions of humans and devas, for eons equal in number to the sand grains of the Ganges River, to buddhas equal in number to the sand grains of the River Ganges, cannot be compared to the merit from protecting the morality of the eight limbs for one day during the time when the holy Dharma is degenerating.” Since the River Ganges is so long and wide, the number of sand grains in it is unbelievable. Yet the merit from having made offering to an unbelievable number of buddhas for an unbelievable number of eons cannot be compared to the merit from keeping the Eight Mahayana Precepts for one day. The merit of living in these vows for one day when the Buddha’s teachings have degenerated, which is our current time, is hundreds, thousands, millions, billions, trillions of times greater than having made all the human and deva offerings to that many Buddhas for that many eons.

7. One will be reborn as a close disciple of Maitreya Buddha

If you listen with devotion to Dharma teachings during the period when the teachings of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha exist and if you protect the morality of the eight limbs, you will be born as a close disciple of Maitreya Buddha. Maitreya Buddha himself said this.

8. One will achieve the body of a deva or human, then become an arhat

Maitreya Buddha also said, “In all lifetimes one will achieve the supreme body of a deva or a human, and one will gradually become an arhat.”

As I mentioned before, arhat, or foe destroyer, can refer to someone who has destroyed the disturbing-thought obscurations or to someone who has also destroyed the subtle defilements, a buddha.

MOTIVATION FOR TAKING THE PRECEPTS

“At this time, I am free from all obstacles and have every opportunity to practice Dharma. It is not sufficient that I simply avoid being born in the lower realms and take rebirth in a deva or human realm. Even my achieving liberation from samsara is not sufficient. I must achieve enlightenment in order to liberate the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless humans, the numberless asuras and the numberless suras—the source of all my past, present and future happiness—and bring them to full enlightenment. Therefore, I am going to take the Eight Mahayana Precepts.”

THE DEFINITION OF SUNRISE

As Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo and various other teachers explain, sunrise refers to the very beginning of the day, when a whitish color first appears in the east. Even though the rest of the sky is dark, that white color in the east signals the dawn.

Another way of defining sunrise is to say that it is when it starts to be light in the place where you are. The time of sunrise depends on whether you define sunrise in relation to the world as a whole or to the place where you are. The way you define sunrise makes a difference in terms of

when you can eat on the following morning. You should act in accordance with your original intention.

PRAYER OF THE PRECEPTS

When you say "...in order to eliminate famine, in order to eliminate sickness. .," think that you are taking the vows so that no sentient being needs to experience famine or sickness. Remember all the sick people in hospitals and in their homes, all the people dying from cancer, AIDS and other sicknesses. Also think of the people who are dying in wars and of the people who are doing the killing. Think that you are taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts in order to stop all harm to other sentient beings.

Usually when a lama gives the Eight Mahayana Precepts, at the end of the third repetition of the prayer for taking the precepts, the lama says, "*Tap yin-no*" and the disciples reply, "*Leg-so*." Other ceremonies have this written at the end, but it doesn't matter.

Make a strong determination that you have received pure precepts in the presence of the lama that you visualized as Shakyamuni Buddha and of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas gathered like a cloud around the lama.

THE DEFINITION OF NOON

In defining noon you can follow either according to 12 o'clock on a clock or according to noon by the sun. There is still a tradition of judging time by the shadow cast by the sun when getsul and gelong ordinations are given. A gelong takes a four-inch piece of stick outside, plants it in the ground, then measures the shadow. An inch is *kang-pa*, in Tibetan. They then come back and inform the rest of the sangha and the people taking the vows of the specific time the vows were taken. The place where the vows were received and from which abbot are also mentioned. This practice is still done, but these days, when there is no sunlight because the ordination is being done at night or the day is overcast and there is no shadow, the time by the clock—which minute of which hour—is also mentioned. But if the day is clear, the stick is always used.

HISTORY OF TAKING PRECEPTS WITHIN THE FPMT

I don't remember whether or not we took the Eight Mahayana Precepts during the very first Kopan course, which went for five or seven days, but we did take them during the second course and certainly from the time of the third course. The tradition started during the second week of the third course. Around that time I also used to fast after lunch, without having taken the Eight Mahayana precepts. I fasted for quite a long time while I was in Lawudo and at Kopan.

The thought just came to me that taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts, now a common practice within the FPMT organization, started at Kopan in those early times. So many people who attended the Kopan courses have had the opportunity to collect this extensive merit, the cause to achieve so much happiness, not only in this life but in all the coming future lives up to enlightenment. They have had the opportunity to receive so much happiness and so much benefit, as we have just listed. All the people from that time up to now who have done courses and taken the Eight Mahayana Precepts within the organization, at Kopan or at any of the other centers, have received unbelievable benefit. Without talking about other practices, just the practice of the Eight Mahayana Precepts started from Kopan and has now spread to be practiced in centers in various parts of the world.

Even this practice alone has been of unbelievable benefit to those people and to the people who are still coming to attend courses at the centers. Starting from the early times at Kopan, so many people have received and will receive unbelievable benefit, up to enlightenment—and after enlightenment the benefit of liberating all sentient beings. The thought of this just came to my mind. Taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts is an unbelievably worthwhile thing to do. Of course, it takes time for people to understand the reasons for doing the practice. The first two weeks of the one-month course provides the basis for understanding the reasons for doing the practice, and the final two weeks are spent doing the actual practice, the essential practice of protecting karma by living in the vows, which has all these infinite benefits.

This all happened due to the kindness of the gurus. I think it was His Holiness Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche who first inspired both taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts and doing nyung-nä, when he explained the

importance of these two practices. Due to that inspiration received from the gurus, the courses were organized to include the Eight Mahayana Precepts and the practice became common. That many people have had the opportunity of doing this practice is a cause for rejoicing. It is the most worthwhile thing to do in your life, for yourself and for other sentient beings, and the best gift you can give to other sentient beings.

Talking about this has reminded me of something that happened at Chenrezig Institute a long time ago. I'm not sure whether the person concerned is still involved with the center or even with the Dharma. At that time, one-month courses, similar to the Kopan courses, were given at Chenrezig Institute, with the Eight Mahayana Precepts being taken during the last two weeks. If I was teaching, the whole course would be a suffering course—a course on suffering and a suffering course. The course would be on the subject of suffering and it would be a suffering course because people would get angry because they couldn't understand what I was saying and also suffer in many other ways during that time. Then everyone would take the Eight Mahayana Precepts during the last two weeks.

At the end of the course, this particular student said, "During the first two weeks you beat people with the lower realms, during the last two weeks you beat them with the ordination, and at the end, you ask them for money!" Since Chenrezig Institute had no other source of income, the money for building and improving the facilities had to come from the people who did the courses, so at the end of each course, someone would introduce the center activities and ask for donations. When I mentioned rejoicing in the fact that the practice of the Eight Mahayana Precepts had started at Kopan, the thought of what this student said just came into my mind.

DEDICATION

"Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I, the members of my family, all the students and benefactors of this organization, as well as all other sentient beings, be able to complete the paramita of morality by keeping our morality purely and without pride.

"May bodhicitta be actualized without even a second's delay within

my mind and the minds of all sentient beings. May that which has been generated increase.”

The news has come over the internet that His Holiness the Dalai Lama has taken the aspect of having some health problems. The doctors are still checking, but it seems to be pneumonia or something like that. Appointments have been cancelled for the past few days, but I'm not sure if the losar teachings will be cancelled. So, dedicate the merits for His Holiness's health.

While I was in Taiwan recently, I heard that the Tibetan Government had requested a prediction from a protector, and the protector's advice was that this year many millions of OM MANI PADME HUMS, the Most Secret Hayagriva mantra and the Padmasambhava mantra should be recited. I'm not sure whether the mantra of Miyöwa [Achala], a deity for eliminating obstacles, is also to be recited. From time to time news comes from Dharamsala that every Tibetan should recite a certain number of mantras. A representative in each Tibetan settlement collects the number of mantras people have recited and notifies Dharamsala of the total number. Just before I left Taiwan a representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Taiwan came to the center with some sheets of information on the latest advice from the protector. I think that this year there are some obstacles for His Holiness.

Therefore, dedicate the merit from all the practices done during the Vajrasattva retreat, including the Eight Mahayana Precepts, to His Holiness's immediately showing the aspect of returning to good health. “May His Holiness have a stable life and may all his holy wishes be accomplished immediately.”

The wishes and prayers of one bodhisattva include the happiness of all us sentient beings, so when we pray for a bodhisattva's wishes to be fulfilled, our prayer includes the achievement of all our own happiness and that of all sentient beings. Praying for the wishes of a bodhisattva such as His Holiness to be accomplished is the same as praying for the happiness of all sentient beings to be achieved.

“May all obstacles and cause of displeasure be ceased. May the political leaders in mainland China develop unbelievable devotion to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and do exactly what His Holiness wishes, not only in relation to the freedom of Tibet but in relation to everything.” If this happened, millions of people in mainland China would have so

much peace and happiness. If there is complete freedom, the Dharma could be strongly established in Tibet, and also spread to mainland China, where after all their suffering, many millions of people are now hungry for peace and happiness, hungry for Dharma. Dedicate the merit in this way.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may all the father and mother sentient beings have happiness; may the three lower realms be empty forever; may all the bodhisattvas’ prayers be accomplished immediately; and may I be able to cause all this by myself alone.

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

Give all the merits from having taken the precepts, as well as all the past, present and future merits, and all the resultant happiness, up to enlightenment, to all sentient beings—to every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal, every human being, every asura, every sura and every intermediate state being. You can also offer the merits to the arhats and to the bodhisattvas for them to actualize the rest of the path to enlightenment. Think that they receive everything they need and that it causes them to actualize the path to enlightenment, to actualize method and wisdom. Think that they cease all their defilements and achieve enlightenment.

By doing this, we have collected numberless merits: “Due to these numberless merits, may all the sufferings that sentient beings experience ripen upon me, and may all my happiness ripen upon all other sentient beings.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings—which are projected as real by my own mind, by my own ignorance—may the I—which is also projected as real by my mind, by my ignorance—achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment—which is also projected as real by my mind, by my ignorance—and lead all sentient beings—who are also projected as real by my mind, by my ignorance—to that enlightenment—which is also projected as real by my mind, by my ignorance—by myself alone—

which is also projected as real by my own mind, by my ignorance, because of the negative imprint left on the mind.

“As Manjughosha and Samantabhadra realize, and as the three time buddhas and bodhisattvas dedicate their merits, I dedicate my merits in that way to enlighten all sentient beings.”

Tuesday, March 2 (B)

EVENING SESSION: LIBERATING ANIMALS

ANIMAL LIBERATION

I will explain how we usually do the practice of liberating animals so that if, in the future, you want to save the lives of animals, you will know how to do it in the most effective way—not just for yourself or for somebody else who is sick or has life obstacles to have a long life, but for the practice to be really beneficial for the animals. [See Appendix 3 for the actual practice and additional instructions.]

Amitabha Buddhist Center in Singapore and Cham Tse Ling Center in Hong Kong have been saving the lives of animals for many years. One Cham Tse Ling student takes responsibility for arranging everything related to liberating the animals. The centers in Taiwan also do this practice quite often. For quite a number of years, whenever I have visited the Taiwanese centers, there has always been an animal liberation. Saving the lives of animals is a very common practice among Chinese Buddhists and happens often at Chinese monasteries and temples.

In Hong Kong a hundred people or more—students from the center as well as other people—will go to a reservoir quite a few miles out of the city, do all the practices set up for liberating animals, then return to the city for lunch in a restaurant. First the animals have a party, then the people have a party! Because there were quite a lot of new people this last time I was there, I tried to talk a little about reincarnation and then bodhicitta. I tried to introduce how the animals had been our mother and kind to us, so that all the people would get a strong feeling that there was no barrier between them and the animals. I wanted everyone to feel that the animals were very precious and kind to them, rather than just seeing them as beings with a lower rebirth and quite separate from them. I wanted the people to feel in their hearts that the animals were as precious as their own lives and to develop a strong thought to help them, to free

them from their suffering. I wanted them somehow to generate some thought of loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta, the thought to achieve enlightenment for them. So, all of this takes some time, and of course people get very hungry. When I did this recently in Hong Kong, some of the very new people couldn't understand and couldn't bear it, so they left.

One time there were some fishermen at the same place we were liberating the animals. I thought that if we paid money to the fishermen not to catch fish for that one day, we would save the lives of the fish that they would have caught. Of course, the fish wouldn't have blessed water poured on them to purify their negative karma or be taken to circumambulate the holy objects [which is what is done in the formal practice], but at least the fish that would otherwise have been caught would have a chance to have longer lives. Of course, there is no guarantee of this, as even if they don't get caught by humans for food, they are surrounded in the water by enemies that want to eat them. Generally speaking, however, some of the fish might have longer lives if they are not caught that day by fishermen.

The students in Hong Kong try to do this by buying a whole boat load of huge fish and big lobsters. There are many of one type of fish with a hard, strong tail by which you can hold them. Once when we did an animal liberation for Geshe Lama Konchog's long life, there were many thousands of these fish in the boat. I had the idea to set up the altar in a small boat and then have the big boat with all the fish inside it go around the small one, but it seems it was too difficult to arrange. Anyway, it didn't happen.

The time before that, we set up an altar with Buddha's relics on the large boat. I normally carry quite a lot of relics with me, many more than the basic ones I have brought here tonight. I don't put them on an altar against a wall, because you cannot circumambulate them there. I put them on a small table in the center of my room so that, if you remember, you can circumambulate them when you come into and go out of the room. Or you can sometimes circumambulate the relics while you are chanting your commitments or mantras rather than sitting down to do them. In that way, you create many causes of enlightenment with your body. You accomplish incredible purification and accumulate unbelievable merit. If there are ten thousand holy objects on the table, each time

you circumambulate you use your body to create ten thousand causes of enlightenment, as well as ten thousand causes of liberation from samsara, good rebirth, and all other types of happiness. If you circumambulate while you are reciting the prayers and mantras of your commitments, you not only get your prayers done but also create unbelievable merit with your body.

Anyway, we set up the altar on the boat, and everybody carried the various animals, including turtles, around the altar, and then released them into the water as soon as possible. This turtle is a very humble one. [Rinpoche is looking at the turtle lamp on his table.] It is a very enlightening turtle. It illuminates all sentient beings; it eliminates the darkness of all sentient beings!

During this recent visit, however, we had many types of animals to release, including frogs and birds, so everybody carried the animals in their containers around the altar with all the Buddha's relics. Because there were many animals and it might be difficult for some of them to survive for a long time, the general idea was that as soon as people arrived they should take the animals around the altar twenty or thirty times or as many times as possible. It is good to set up the altar with as many tsa-tsas and stupas as possible. The centers in Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan have many stupas because they are made in a factory in Taiwan. In Singapore, the students set up a table with many small stupas on it, then use that as the altar to circumambulate.

Quite a number of years ago I described how to set up the altar for an animal liberation. The idea is to have five levels, one on top of another, with a large table as the bottom level. On the very top there should be a statue of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, a lam-rim or *Prajnaparamita* text and a stupa, as normally advised in lam-rim teachings for setting up an altar. Place as many tsa-tsas and statues as possible on the other levels. You can use pictures of buddhas if you don't have tsa-tsas or statues. On the bottom level set up sets of eight offerings, with flowers in vases on the corners. You arrange the offerings to the guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha for the benefit of the animals; it's like a puja for the animals. This gives you the idea of how to set up the altar. This is how you can arrange an altar at the beach or near the water where you are going to liberate the animals.

Liberating animals is sometimes combined with a picnic. First you

liberate the animals, then you have a picnic. It happens like this in Hong Kong. Parents often bring their children along, and it's a very good thing for the children to do because they are trying to do something to benefit the animals. People also bring their friends. It is a way of involving other people in doing something to generate some compassion and to collect merit. It's a social gathering, but liberating the animals enables everyone to sincerely do an action from their heart for others.

The animals are carried around the altar as many times as possible at the very beginning, before the chanting of the prayers and mantras, in case some of the animals die. Some of the fish might die because they are piled up on top of each other and cannot breathe. If the circumambulations are done immediately, even if some of the animals die during the explanation or prayers, they have already purified negative karma and created many causes of enlightenment, liberation from samsara and good rebirth. One circumambulation of holy objects can create the cause to receive hundreds or thousands of good rebirths. This is because karma is expandable—more expandable than external phenomena. One small seed can produce a large tree with tens of thousands of branches, flowers and seeds, but karma increases even more than this.

Therefore, if the circumambulations have been done, you don't need to feel much regret if some of the animals die while you are reciting the mantras, blessing the water or doing the prayers.

After all the prayers are finished, everybody chants the mantras, then the water is passed around and everybody blesses it. After all the different mantras have been recited and the water blessed with them, you sprinkle the blessed water over the birds and other animals. In Hong Kong and Taiwan, there are usually huge sacks of small shell-fish, and buckets of blessed water are poured over the sacks to purify all of them. The blessed water is sprinkled into the containers holding the fish. Of course, the water then touches the bodies of the fish and purifies their negative karma. Once, in Taiwan, the animals were brought in huge trucks. There is a man who voluntarily helps anyone who wants to liberate animals. He brings a special truck, which has tanks of water, oxygen for the fish to breathe and all the necessary equipment. That makes it possible to liberate large fish.

At the end, when all the prayers and mantras are finished, you again take the animals round the altar, and then liberate them. One of the best

ways to benefit the animals, to liberate them, is to bless water with powerful mantras, then purify the animals by sprinkling or pouring the water on them. These mantras have a lot of power, even if you don't have any realization of bodhicitta, emptiness and so forth. Buddha explained the power and benefit of these mantras. You recite the mantras with strong faith and think that you have purified all the negative karmas of these animals. This is a very practical way of helping to liberate the animals. How? By purifying their negative karmas. What do you liberate them from? From the sufferings of the lower realms. If they purify their negative karmas, they won't have to reincarnate again and again in the lower realms.

THE BENEFITS OF CIRCUMAMBULATIONS

Another good way to liberate the animals is by helping them circumambulate holy objects. There is a story about a pig that circumambulated a stupa—it might have been Boudhanath Stupa in Nepal, but I'm not sure. Once, a dog was chasing a pig, and as the pig was running away, it circumambulated the stupa. The pig did not have any kind of virtuous motivation. It had no idea that the stupa was a holy object and that it could be purified and liberated by circumambulating it. The pig had never registered for a meditation course! Because of the kindness of the dog that chased it, the pig did one circumambulation of the stupa, and after the pig died, it was born in the higher realm of Tushita. This is why carrying the animals in circumambulations of holy objects is a practical way to help them.

SHRIJATA'S TALE

And those of you who have heard the lam-rim teachings many times will have heard the story of Shrijata, who only began to practice Dharma after he was eighty years old but became an arhat in that life. When he was eighty years old, Shrijata was living at home with his family, but all the children made fun of him. Every day they would tease him. One day the old man got completely fed up with their teasing and thought, "Oh, it would be so peaceful to leave home and go live in the monastery."

So Shrijata left home and went to the nearby monastery, the abbot of which was Shariputra, one of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's heart disciples.

When Shariputra, an arhat who excelled in wisdom, checked whether or not the old man had the karma to become a monk, he could not find any. Shariputra told the old man, “Normally in a monastery you study or if you cannot study, you serve the other monks by cleaning and so forth. If you became a monk you could neither study nor work because you are too old.” Shariputra refused to ordain the old man as a monk.

Shrijata man got terribly upset about this. He laid his head on the threshold of the monastery and cried. He then went to a nearby park and again cried and cried. At that time Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was in India. Buddha’s holy mind sees all sentient beings all the time, so whenever a sentient being’s karma ripens so that they are receptive to guidance from Buddha, he immediately appears to them in whatever form fits their mind and guides them. This is a particular quality of Buddha; this is how Buddha works for sentient beings. When a sentient being’s karma is ripe to receive help, Buddha does not delay for even one second.

Buddha immediately appeared in front of Shrijata and asked him what was wrong. The old man explained how the abbot of the monastery hadn’t accepted that he become a monk. Buddha then said, “Because I have completed the two types of merit, the merit of wisdom and the merit of method, I can see that you have the karma to become a monk.” Because Buddha had completed the two types of merits, which means he had purified the two obscurations, Buddha had omniscient mind and could see all the subtle karmas. In other words, the old man’s karma to become a monk was a subtle karma that only a Buddha could see. Buddha explained that an arhat could not see this subtle karma because he had not finished the work of collecting the two types of merits so had not achieved omniscient mind.

Buddha explained to Shrijata that he had created the karma an inconceivable length of time ago when he was a fly and there was some cow dung around a stupa. One explanation is that the cow dung was floating on some water; the fly landed on the cow dung and did a circumambulation when the water went around the stupa. The other explanation is that the fly followed the smell of cow dung lying around a stupa and thus had the good fortune to complete a circumambulation. The fly had no idea that the stupa was a holy object or that circumambulating it would become a cause of enlightenment. The fly had no intention of doing a circumambulation. It was acting totally out of attachment to the

smell of the cow dung. Its motivation was completely non-virtuous. Due to the power of the object, however, the circumambulation became virtue. Buddha explained that that small virtue of circumambulating the stupa created the cause for Shrijata to become a monk.

When Buddha checked to see who had a karmic connection with the old man and could look after him, it turned out to be Maudgalyayana, an arhat who excelled in psychic powers. Of Buddha's two heart disciples, Shariputra excelled in wisdom and Maudgalyayana in psychic powers. Buddha then offered the old man to his disciple, Maudgalyayana, who was the abbot of a monastery.

After Shrijata became a monk, the young monks in the monastery also teased him. Every day they would make fun of the old man. One day he again got completely fed up with their teasing and ran away from the monastery. He decided that he would jump into the river. At that time Maudgalyayana went looking for the old man. When he couldn't find him in the monastery, he used his psychic powers to check Shrijata's whereabouts and discovered that the old man had just jumped into the river. Using his psychic powers, Maudgalyayana immediately appeared there and dragged the old man from the river. Shrijata was shocked, because he hadn't explained to his teacher what he was going to do. He could not speak for a while. In complete shock, he just stood there with his mouth open.

When Shrijata explained everything to Maudgalyayana, Maudgalyayana said, "The reason you ran away from the monastery and jumped into the river is that you lack renunciation of samsara." Maudgalyayana asked the old man to hold onto a corner of his robes and then flew up into the sky with him.

They flew on and on until they came to a huge mountain of bones in the ocean. After they landed on the mountain, the old man asked his teacher, "Whose bones are these?" Maudgalyayana replied, "Oh, these are the bones from your past life." The old man had previously been born as the largest animal in the ocean, as a whale. As soon as Shrijata heard his teacher say this, he generated renunciation of samsara. He realized that samsara is suffering in nature and that nothing is definite in samsara. His hair stood up on end and he generated renunciation of samsara.

He then entered the path and became an arya being in that life. Even though he began to practice Dharma only after he was eighty years old,

he was able to achieve the arya path, overcome the cycle of death and rebirth and completely free himself from the sufferings of samsara. An arhat achieves total liberation from all suffering and its cause, including the seeds of delusion. He abides in that state for a number of eons until buddha sees that it is the right time to persuade his mind to enter the Mahayana path. Buddha then sends light beams from his hand and recites a certain verse to the arhat. The arhat then enters the Mahayana path, and by actualizing the arya Mahayana path gradually ceases the subtle defilements. When all the subtle defilements are totally ceased, he completes the path and becomes enlightened; he can then enlighten numberless other sentient beings.

This old man's ability to enlighten numberless sentient beings came about through his being enlightened, which came about through his entering the Mahayana path, which came about through his becoming an arhat after entering the path to liberation, which came about through his becoming a monk. And he was able to become a monk because of the very subtle karma he created as a fly. With no idea that a stupa was a holy object that could purify the mind, just with attachment, this fly followed the smell of cow dung around a stupa and incidentally completed a circumambulation. Everything started from that small good karma. Everything—all the realizations of the five paths to liberation and of the Mahayana path and enlightenment—started from that tiny good karma created by the fly. This shows the power of holy objects such as statues, stupas and scriptures in bringing realizations. They are very beneficial in purifying the mind and in bringing all happiness, up to enlightenment.

THE POWER OF THE OBJECT

Therefore, if you carry a container with a hundred worms around a stupa or another holy object, each time you go around you are giving enlightenment to one hundred animals. You are giving the greatest gift to those one hundred animals. If there are one thousand worms in this small packet, each time you take them around you are giving enlightenment to one thousand mother sentient beings. You are giving enlightenment to one thousand of your mother sentient beings. You are also giving them liberation from samsara; you are ending their samsaric suffering, the continuity of which has no beginning. The most terrifying aspect of samsaric

suffering is that it has no beginning—you are giving liberation from this beginningless samsara to one thousand of your mother sentient beings. You are also giving them good rebirths; you are giving good rebirths for hundreds or thousands of lifetimes to one thousand of your mother sentient beings.

I mentioned before that if there are one thousand tsa-tsas or pictures of buddha on the altar, each time you take the animals around the altar you are giving one thousand causes of enlightenment to each one of those mother sentient beings. In the same way, if there are one thousand pictures or statues of buddha or stupas, you are giving one thousand causes of liberation from samsara to each of those mother sentient beings. The same applies to good rebirths in future lives. It is good to purify the animals with blessed water, but it is also very good to bring them to circumambulate holy objects. You do not just liberate them from the lower realms, but bring them to enlightenment, by enabling them to create the cause of enlightenment. It's really fantastic.

I once stayed in Big Sur, that very famous place in America, which to some Westerners, and perhaps some Easterners as well, is like a pure land. Ants were coming into the kitchen to eat food. The idea came to me at that time to make worthwhile their coming into the house, so I told the people staying there to collect the ants and put them in a plastic bag. We then held three tsa-tsas in one hand and moved the plastic bag with the ants around the tsa-tsas, so that they performed circumambulations. After doing this a few times, we put them outside with some food. By doing this, you make the ants' coming into your house worthwhile for them. They purify negative karma and create many causes of enlightenment, liberation and good rebirths in future lives. Many human beings on this earth, no matter how long they live, never have any opportunity to see a statue of buddha or a stupa; they don't even have the karma to see a holy object of buddha, let alone create the cause of enlightenment by circumambulating or doing prostrations to such an object. Even if they live for a hundred years, they have no karma to collect merit through the power of holy objects.

WORMS AND CRICKETS

We have here tonight hundreds of worms and crickets. The worms come

from a sewer, from a fragrant blissful sewer into which all the toilet water runs. These worms and crickets were also human beings, just like us, before, but because they didn't practice Dharma, their delusions and negative karmas caused their consciousness to migrate to their present suffering body. It looks as if there is no connection between us and them, between our body and life and their body and life. There seems to be as little connection as there is between us and the rocks and trees around us. However, we have also collected so many times the negative karma—through sexual misconduct, for example—to be born in dirty places. That these worms have been born in a sewer or septic tank is the result of attachment. Worms are also born in the feces of the gut as a result of attachment. This is specifically mentioned in the texts. It is also mentioned that attachment to sex causes rebirth in the womb.

We have also created similar karma to these crickets numberless times in our past lives. It is just that at the moment, our good karma has ripened and we have this human body, while they have the body of a cricket; we are humans and they are animals. But we cannot be sure about our next life. At any time we could be like them. After our breath stops, at any time we could be reborn as one of those tiny worms that live in a sewer. If we had to live in a sewer, in a septic tank, we couldn't stand it for even one minute. We might talk about our body being that of a tiny worm like this, but we don't talk about being in such a dirty place. It is similar with the crickets. We could be born like this at any time because we have created the same negative karmas numberless times and have not purified them.

Therefore, we can understand our need of Vajrasattva practice and how extremely fortunate we are to have allowed ourselves to do Vajrasattva practice in this life and at this time.

A MOTHER'S KINDNESS

All these hundreds and hundreds of worms and crickets, all other sentient beings in the lower realms and all sentient beings elsewhere have been our own mother numberless times, just as our present life mother has been our mother numberless times. Our present mother gave us this precious human body, which allows us to practice Dharma, Buddha's unmistakable path to happiness, to liberation and to enlightenment. This

precious human body gives us all these opportunities. This is not the first time that our present life mother has been kind in giving us a precious human body with which to practice Dharma. She has been kind in this way numberless times during beginningless rebirths.

In the same way, all these worms and crickets, all other sentient beings in the lower realms and all sentient beings elsewhere have also been our mother numberless times. (When I say “these worms and crickets,” specifically concentrate on the hundreds of tiny worms and crickets that are there in this bag.) And besides having been our own mother, numberless times they have been kind in giving us a precious human body, which allows us to practice Dharma.

Think, “I could never finish repaying this first kindness of the mother in giving me numberless times a human body with which to practice Dharma. Even if I were to sacrifice my life over and over, equal in number to the atoms of this earth, for my present mother, for each of these worms and crickets and for each of the other sentient beings, I could never finish repaying their kindness.

“My present life’s mother was also kind in saving my life from danger hundreds of times every day. If she had not looked after me when I was a baby or hired someone else to look after me, I wouldn’t have lasted five minutes. As a baby, I knew nothing. I had a human body but I was no different from a worm. Within five minutes of being left alone my life would have been in danger. I would have fallen down or swallowed something harmful or been attacked by animals. So many things could have endangered my life. My present mother was kind in protecting my life from hundreds of dangers every day, and she has done the same thing numberless times during my beginningless rebirths. In the same way, these worms and crickets, all other sentient beings in the lower realms and all other sentient beings elsewhere have also been my mother and protected my life from hundreds of dangers every day.

“Even if I were to sacrifice my life over and over, equal in number to the atoms of this earth, for my present mother, for each of these worms and crickets, for each of the other sentient beings in the lower realms and for each of the other sentient beings, I could never finish repaying even their kindness in protecting me from dangers to my life.

“If all the medicines my present life’s mother gave me during beginningless rebirths when I was sick were piled up, they would fill the whole

sky; there wouldn't be any empty space left. And if all the clothing my present mother gave me in this and past lives to protect my body from heat and cold was collected together, there wouldn't be any space left. Each of the worms and crickets here, each of the other beings in the three lower realms and each of the other sentient beings have also given me clothing to protect me from suffering. If all the clothing that each of these beings has given me during beginningless rebirths was collected together, there wouldn't be any empty space left. My present life's mother has also given me food. Not only in this life but during beginningless rebirths, she has been my mother and fed me with milk from her breast. If just the milk that my present life's mother has fed me in past lives was collected together, it would fill the whole sky; there wouldn't be any empty space left. Numberless times in my past lives she has given me food and drink. And each of these worms and crickets has done the same thing. Numberless times they have protected me from hunger and thirst by giving me food and drink. If all that food and drink were collected, there wouldn't be any space left.

"I can never finish repaying this kindness. Even if I were to sacrifice my own life over and over, equal in number to the atoms of this earth, for my present mother, for each of these worms and crickets, for each of the other sentient beings in the lower realms and for each of the other sentient beings, I could never finish repaying even their kindness in giving me food and drink.

"My present life mother also gave me an education and taught me the ways of the world. She gave me the opportunity to learn to read and write, which is why I can now read Dharma books. This is not the first time she gave me an education for the sake of my own happiness; she has done this numberless times during beginningless past lives. And it is the same with all these worms and the crickets, the other beings of the lower realms and all other sentient beings. Every one of them has been kind to me in giving me an education numberless times in past lives.

"Even if I were to sacrifice my life again and again, equal in number to the atoms of this earth, to repay this kindness, I could never finish repaying it.

"My present life mother has also borne many hardships to ensure my well-being and happiness. Starting with the nine months I was in her womb, my mother has borne so many hardships. She then had to go

through great pain when I was born, and endured many hardships after that. Day and night, she had to bear so many hardships to take care of me. Because of my crying, she could not even have one good night's sleep.

“For my happiness and well-being, she also created much negative karma through generating discriminating thoughts of anger and attachment, and as a result she will have to experience much suffering. Because of me, she was obliged to generate all these delusions, which caused her to engage in much negative karma, because of which she will again have to experience all those sufferings. She has borne many hardships for me numberless times in my past lives. In the same way, these worms and crickets, all other beings in the lower realms and all other sentient beings elsewhere have also borne many hardships for me, for my happiness, numberless times. They have all suffered greatly for my happiness. When they were my parents, they totally sacrificed their lives for me, cherishing me more than their own life. They worked hard for many years to earn the money they needed to take care of me, to give me food and everything else I needed. All these sentient beings suffered greatly for me, and I allowed them to suffer like this.

“Even if I were to sacrifice my life again and again, equal in number to the atoms of this earth, for each of these sentient beings, including my present life's mother and each of these worms and crickets, I could never finish repaying their kindness in bearing hardships for my happiness and well-being. I could never finish repaying them for this kindness.

“At this time, I have received a perfect human body and have met the Buddhadharmā. I know enough Dharma to understand what is right and to be practiced and what is wrong and to be abandoned. I have met the leader of the blind, the virtuous friend. Therefore, if I want to repay their kindness, I have every opportunity to do so. Because they want happiness and do not want suffering, they need to be liberated from all their suffering and its causes, karma and delusion. Therefore, the best way to repay their kindness is to liberate them from all their suffering and its causes. At this time, I have the opportunity to repay their kindness in this way.

“Sentient beings lack a leader of the blind, a virtuous friend, and are completely possessed by the Mara of the delusions—ignorance, anger and attachment. They are tormented by the three types of sickness, or

suffering, of samsara—the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering. It’s as if every movement they make is a step towards the lower realms. It’s as if every action of their body, speech and mind is non-virtuous. Because their mind is completely controlled by delusions, such as attachment and so forth, every action they do becomes a cause to be born in the lower realms. They are like a blind person whose every step is leading them towards a cliff.

“It is now my turn to repay their kindness. To do that I need to practice Dharma—to listen to, reflect and meditate on the path to enlightenment. How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were to have happiness, including enlightenment, and the causes of happiness. I must cause them to have happiness and its cause.” Think of your present life’s mother, of these worms and crickets, of all other beings in the lower realms and of all the rest of the sentient beings.

“How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were to be free from all suffering and its causes. I will free them from all their suffering and its causes.” Think of your present life’s mother, of all these worms and crickets, who have been your mother and been most kind, of all the other beings in the lower realms; and of all other sentient beings elsewhere.

“And I must do all this work of freeing them from all their suffering and bringing them all happiness, including enlightenment, by myself *alone*. I must do it by myself alone.” Again, think of your present life’s mother, of all these worms and crickets, of all the other beings in the lower realms and of all other sentient beings elsewhere.

“At the moment, I cannot even guide myself, let alone others. Who can guide them? Who has all the qualities and power necessary to guide sentient beings perfectly? Only the omniscient one, only buddha. The only one who can work perfectly for sentient beings, liberating them from all their suffering and bringing them to enlightenment, is buddha. Therefore, first I myself must achieve full enlightenment.”

We can use this general motivation for both the animal liberation and the light offering. Think, “For the same reason, to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, I am also going to make the light offering.”

SPECIFIC MOTIVATION FOR ANIMAL LIBERATION AND LIGHT OFFERING

We will now make some specific motivations for doing these practices of liberating animals and offering lights.

“We are liberating these animals and offerings these lights for the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Buddha of Compassion. May His Holiness immediately show the aspect of being healed from pneumonia and show the aspect of perfect health.

“May the lives of all the other virtuous friends be stable and may all their holy wishes be accomplished immediately.

“May Lama Ösel Rinpoche also have a stable life and be healthy. Like Lama Tsong Khapa, may he bring benefit as extensive as the sky to all sentient beings, by having the same qualities that Lama Tsong Khapa had.

“May all the holy beings from the different traditions who came to benefit other sentient beings also have stable lives, and may all their holy wishes be accomplished immediately.

“May all the members of the sangha have stable lives. May all their wishes to practice Dharma be accomplished immediately. May they be able to listen, reflect and meditate; may they be able to live in pure morality; and may they complete the scriptural understanding and actualization of the path in this life.

“In particular, may the FPMT sangha have long lives and receive all the support and other conditions necessary for them to practice Dharma. May they always have a happy, courageous mind that is inspired to live in pure vows. May they always be free from loneliness and any other emotional thoughts that torture the mind. May they regard their vows not as a prison but as a source of enjoyment. May they enjoy achieving enlightenment, liberation from samsara and good rebirths in their future lives. May they enjoy living in their vows and studying the Dharma.

“May all the benefactors who financially support the teachings of the Buddha, the sangha and Dharma facilities, have long lives. May all their wishes to offer service to other sentient beings, to the teachings of the Buddha and to the sangha be accomplished immediately. In particular, may all the benefactors of the FPMT be healthy and have long lives. May all their wishes for success in business and so forth be accomplished immediately in accordance with the holy Dharma.

“May all the students in this organization, especially those who sacrifice

their lives and bear many hardships in offering service to others and to the teachings of Buddha through this organization, be healthy and have long lives. May all their wishes that accord with the holy Dharma be accomplished immediately.

“Most importantly, may these practices of liberating animals and making light offerings enable us to actualize the steps of the path to enlightenment in this very lifetime.

“Also, may the specific wishes of those who are offering the lights be actualized, especially the wishes of the students from Mexico, who initiated this light offering. May the retreat center in Mexico be wish-fulfilling for all sentient beings. By receiving all the necessary support, may the retreat center be able to immediately pacify the sufferings of body and mind of all sentient beings and spread the complete teachings of Lama Tsong Khapa in the minds of all sentient beings. In this way may it become most beneficial for all sentient beings. May the retreat center be able to spread the Dharma, particularly Lama Tsong Khapa’s teaching, in the minds of all the students who come to that center and in the minds of all the Mexican sentient beings and be able to liberate numberless sentient beings.

“In the same way, may all the projects here at Land of Medicine Buddha and at all the other centers around here be accomplished immediately. May all the rest of the FPMT projects be accomplished immediately by receiving all the necessary support. May the 500-foot Maitreya Buddha statue be completed immediately by receiving all the necessary support. May all the meditation centers be most beneficial for all sentient beings, spreading the complete teachings of Lama Tsong Khapa in the minds of all sentient beings, by receiving all the necessary support.

“May all these projects, centers and statues cause loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta to be generated in the minds of all sentient beings. Because of that, may no sentient being experience war, famine, earthquake, dangers from fire or water or anything else undesirable. May all these projects, centers and statues cause all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“May the liberation of these animals and the offering of all these lights prevent the occurrence of a third world war, with the killing of many millions of people.” Dedicate also for this.

“May all countries be guided by religious leaders, by Dharma leaders. In this way, may everyone live their life with loving kindness, compassion

and bodhicitta. May people think only of benefiting and never of harming each other. May everyone enjoy the perfect happiness of Dharma.”

It is for these reasons that we are liberating animals and offering lights.

MEANS OF PROLONGING LIFE

Liberating animals is one method for curing sickness, especially cancer. One should save the lives of a hundred animals (or as many as possible) every week or, if that is not possible, every month. If you have cancer, this is extremely important, because it is one way of prolonging your life. Causing others to have longer lives affects your own life; it prolongs your life.

Another way to cure cancer is through reciting the mantras of specific deities with which you have a karmic connection. This is like taking specific medicines to kill germs. Certain deities have manifested to protect sentient beings from the harms of nagas—beings who can become conditions for sicknesses, including cancer. Harm from nagas—*nyen* in Tibetan—is one condition in the development of cancer. In other words, besides the cause of cancer, karma, there are harmful beings that can become conditions for cancer. There is an association between cancer and harm from nagas. The Vajrapani-Hayagriva-Garuda deity, for example, specifically manifests to protect sentient beings from naga harm, as well as harmful spirits such as landlords [*shi-dag*] and so forth. The reason why meditating on these particular deities or reciting their mantras is able to heal cancer, even terminal cancer, is that the sickness is associated with harm from nagas. This is why these particular aspects are able to be effective.

Pujas and many other practices can be done to prolong life, but liberating animals and serving other sentient beings are especially effective. Helping sick people by giving them food, drink, clothing, shelter or medicine is also a cause of long life. One way of prolonging life is by creating good karma, which is the cause of long life. Another way is by reciting the mantras of the particular deities that protect against naga harm and so forth.

I have personal experience of about six people who completely recovered from cancer through practicing meditation. Every one of them had terminal cancer and had been told by their doctors that they had only

two or three months to live.

My very first experience was with a Canadian woman called Ann, a very successful fashion consultant. She made a thousand dollars an hour selling her ideas to people in the fashion business. When I was in Australia many years ago, I received a message from Karuna about Ann, and I advised her to recite Vajrapani mantras and to liberate animals. I didn't send any blessed pills or anything like that. I simply advised her to visualize Vajrapani above her crown and nectar beams being emitted by Vajrapani to purify her, and to liberate a hundred animals or the number of animals equal to her years of age. Basically, she did just these two practices and after some time completely recovered from the cancer.

Ann was in the hospital when she received my message, and the doctors advised her to stay there. However, she said, "I want to go. I have to do these things." After two or three months, I think, when she returned to the hospital for a checkup, the doctors could not find any sign of the cancer. They were very surprised. This was the first time they had seen anyone cured of cancer by meditation. The doctors said that they wanted to write a book about her case, but she replied, "No, you don't need to write a book. I will write the book."

Many TV reporters wanted to interview her, but she didn't know how to explain how meditation could cure cancer. At that time she had not actually met the Dharma; she had just started to take an interest and hang around a Dharma center because of a friend. Anyway, that's all that she did, and so far, after many years, the cancer has not come back. She was the first person in my experience to completely recover from cancer through meditation.

She came to Kopan to thank me for giving her the rest of her life. When she came to see me, I made a deal with her. I told her to go to Bodhgaya to take the Kalachakra initiation from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I'm not sure whether that happened, but later, in Delhi, she did introduce His Holiness when His Holiness gave a teaching there.

Think that you are liberating these animals and offering these lights for all those people who have passed away to have good rebirths and to achieve enlightenment. And for those people who have cancer or another sickness to be healed and to have long and meaningful lives. The purpose of having a long life is to have a meaningful life, a life that is beneficial for others.

LIGHT OFFERING CEREMONY

First we take refuge [*La-ma sang-gye la-ma chö... x3*]. Next, we generate bodhicitta, the altruistic mind to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings [*Dag-dang zhen-dön... x3*]. [See also Appendix 2 and Chapter 28, Wednesday, February 24.]

Now we purify the place. We bless the place by visualizing it as a pure land of buddha, as an offering to the buddhas and bodhisattvas that we will invoke [*Tam-chä du-ni...]*.

Now, we bless the offerings. This mantra has the power to bless not only all the offerings here—all the lights, the water, the flowers—inside and outside, but offerings in other places. Also bless all the water offerings, which appear as nectar to the buddhas, inside and outside the FPMT Memorial Shrine. Also bless all the offerings in the house where I'm staying. There are nearly 300 water bowls there and more than 4,000 lights, as well as flower offerings—think that they are all multiplied. Also bless all the light and water offerings at Kopan Monastery. Also bless the many hundreds of offerings in the gumpa in the Taipei center in Taiwan, as well as those in the Taichung and Kaohsiung centers. We will bless them all together then offer them [*Lha-dang mi-yi...]*.

While you are reciting the mantra, play all the musical instruments that you have, including gongs, and think that you are offering music to the buddhas. In this way, you create the cause of enlightenment [OM NAMO BHAGAWATE... x3]. There is no pop music!

This mantra has the power to cause each of the numberless buddhas in all ten directions to receive clouds of offerings. The next prayer, *The Words of Truth*, causes the buddhas to actually receive the numberless offerings that you have visualized. Visualize that each buddha in the ten directions and each being in the *Guru Puja* merit field receives skies of light and nectar offerings [*Kön-chog sum-gyi den-pa dang...]*.

Visualize the *Guru Puja* merit field and do the invocation [*Ma-lu sem-chen...]*.

Since you have done the *Guru Puja* this morning, you have already done the seven-limb practice. There are usually a series of prayers to be done when you liberate animals—the four immeasurables, the seven-limb practice, mandala offering, lam-rim prayer and recitation of the various

mantras. Some animals, such as frogs and pigeons can hear, but I'm not sure whether fish can hear. It might be difficult for some animals to hear the prayers and mantras, but the recitation plants the seed of enlightenment in the minds of those that can, so there is an added advantage for them. Because it takes a long time to recite them, I will omit those prayers this time.

Now we will just do the meditation of making the extensive offerings. [Rinpoche paused for meditation after each of these offerings.]

Think of all the lights and water offerings here, inside and outside the gomba and of those at the FPMT Memorial Shrine, the Aptos house, and all the other places that I mentioned. Now think that we share all these offerings with all sentient beings. We give all these offerings to each hell being, each hungry ghost, each animal, each human being, each asura, each sura and each intermediate state being. We give them all to all sentient beings.

We then make offering to the Guru-Triple Gem together with the sentient beings or on their behalf. In this way, every sentient being collects the merit. If there were one million light and water offerings here, every sentient being would get one million causes of enlightenment. If we make the offering on their behalf, every sentient being gets that merit. That is incredible! Because of a shortage of merit, people have a lot of difficulties in their lives—they can't find jobs to support themselves, their business fails or they can't pay their debts. They even reach the point of wanting to commit suicide by jumping off a bridge or a building. Think, "I'm going to make all these offerings on behalf of all sentient beings." You can also think that you are making the offerings to achieve enlightenment yourself in order to enlighten all sentient beings.

First offer all these offerings here. Don't think that you are offering water. Always think that you are offering nectar. Think how all these water offerings appear to the buddhas as pure nectar. Offer all the nectar and lights here in the Land of Medicine Buddha gomba, at the FPMT Memorial Shrine, at the Aptos house and at all the other places. With your palms together in prostration, offer all the lights and nectar to the *Guru Puja* merit field, meditating that the essence of each being in the merit field is your root virtuous friend. Your offerings generate infinite bliss in the mind of each of these holy beings. Offer not just once but many times—ten or eleven or twenty-one times or whatever.

Next, offer all these offerings to all the holy objects here in the gumpa and elsewhere at LMB, meditating that their essence is the root virtuous friend. Each time you make offerings, infinite bliss is generated within them. First prostrate by putting your palms together, then make the offerings as many times as possible.

Next we offer all the offerings here at Land of Medicine Buddha, at the Aptos house, at Kopan and in all the centers in Taiwan to all the holy objects in India. First prostrate to them, meditating that each of these holy objects is your own root virtuous friend, then make offerings as many times as possible. Offer all the lights here inside and outside the gumpa.

Next, with the guru yoga mind, we offer all these offerings to every single holy object in Tibet. First prostrate by putting your palms together. Think especially of the most precious Guru Shakyamuni Buddha statue blessed by Buddha himself in the Lhasa Temple. Also think of the large stupa that we built recently at Sera Monastery in Tibet.

With your palms together, prostrate and offer all these offerings to all the holy objects in Nepal, including the most precious stupa at Swayambhunath. Swayambhunath Stupa contains a crystal stupa that is a manifestation of the dharmakaya. It is not man-made but spontaneously appeared from the ocean. It was brought from mainland China as predicted by Buddha. Also prostrate and make offerings to Boudhanath Stupa. Due to the family who built Boudhanath Stupa, the Buddhadharma was able to spread in Tibet and was preserved there for many years. Because of this, many beings became enlightened through actualizing the Mahayana path, and now Buddhism has spread throughout the whole world. Many thousands of people outside Tibet, even in the West, have been able to find meaning, satisfaction and peace in their lives. All these opportunities to follow the path to enlightenment have come from Boudhanath Stupa. Think of all the other holy objects in Nepal, and with guru yoga mind, prostrate and make offerings to them.

By putting your palms together in this simple prostration, you immediately achieve eight benefits, as I mentioned the other day [Chapter 31, Saturday, February 27].

1. You achieve a perfect human body in your next life.
2. You are surrounded by perfect helpers so that all your wishes to practice Dharma and to benefit others are fulfilled.
3. You are able to live in pure morality.

4. You are able to have devotion. Thus, you can achieve realizations of the path to enlightenment. (Both devotion and morality are extremely important foundations for achieving realizations.)
5. You have the courage to teach and so forth in public.
6. You are born as a human being or a deva in your next life.
7. You are able to develop the wisdom that directly perceives emptiness and thus achieve the arya path. This is what ceases all the defilements, the disturbing-thought obscurations and the subtle obscurations. It is only by achieving the arya path that you can overcome completely all the sufferings of samsara, including rebirth, old age, sickness and death.
8. After this, you then achieve the eighth benefit, enlightenment.

Another sutra mentions ten benefits of putting the palms together to a statue or even a picture of buddha, a stupa or a text [see light offering practice, Chapter 20, Wednesday, February 17].

Therefore, it is extremely important to prostrate even when we are making offerings. According to the number of holy objects in that country, by simply putting our hands together we create that many causes of enlightenment, that many causes of liberation and that many causes of good rebirth in our next life. The powerful merit we create also takes care of everything—health, wealth, success, long life—in this life, by the way. It takes care of this life; becomes the solution for the problems of this life.

With the guru yoga mind, now prostrate and make offerings to all the holy objects in other Buddhist countries and in the rest of the world.

Now prostrate and make offerings to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Buddha of Compassion. Those who have a Dharma connection should also prostrate and make offerings to Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche and Denma Lochö Rinpoche. Prostrate and make offerings to any other virtuous friend that you have in India. Think that they generate bliss within their holy minds.

Do the same with any virtuous friend that you have in Nepal. Prostrate to His Holiness Chobgye Trichen Rinpoche, Trulshig Rinpoche and any other virtuous friend with whom you have a connection, then make offerings.

Those who have a Dharma connection with Ribur Rinpoche or

Geshe Sopa Rinpoche should also prostrate and make offerings to them.

Now, with the guru yoga mind, prostrate to all the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in the ten directions and make all these offerings to them.

By meditating that their essence is the root virtuous friend, prostrate to all the holy objects in the ten directions, to all the statues, stupas and scriptures of buddha. Then make offerings to them as many times as possible.

Next, to develop compassion, prostrate and make offerings to the Thousand-armed Buddha of Compassion; to have success, prostrate and make offerings to the seven Medicine Buddhas; and to be able to offer infinite benefit to all sentient beings, prostrate and make offerings to Kshitigarbha. Visualizing these deities as His Holiness the Dalai Lama, make offerings to them as many times as possible.

We have collected skies of merit many times. By generating the motivation of bodhicitta, we collected skies of merit. By making offerings to all the buddhas in the ten direction and to the merit field during the blessing of the offerings, we collected skies of merit. We collected skies of merit each time we made offerings to the merit field; to the holy objects in each country; to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in the ten directions; to all the statues, stupas and scriptures; to all the virtuous friends. And by offering to the Thousand-armed Buddha of Compassion and the seven Medicine Buddhas, we collected the same merit as if we had made offerings to all the buddhas.

We have collected infinite merit over and over again by making the offerings in this way. Now give all the infinite merit we have just collected, as well as all the other merit we have collected today and all our past, present and future merit, to all sentient beings. Make charity of all this merit and all the happiness, including enlightenment, that results from this merit to all sentient beings.

Give this merit and its results, including enlightenment, specifically to every single hell being, to every single hungry ghost, to every single animal, to every single human being, to every single asura, to every single sura and to every single intermediate state being.

Offer the merit and its results also to all the arhats and bodhisattvas so that they can complete the path to enlightenment. Also offer the merit to all the gurus, as a condition to help them benefit others.

RINPOCHE'S OFFERINGS ON SPECIAL DAYS

For about the past five years, I have made offerings to the monasteries. My plan was to make offerings on every special day of Buddha. There are actually seven of these special days, but the birth, enlightenment and passing away in the sorrowless state are combined on one day. On those special days of Buddha and on solar and lunar eclipses, I make offerings mainly to the monasteries of my gurus, the teachers with whom I have a Dharma connection. During this period [the first two weeks of losar], I'm not sure exactly when the offerings are being made, since the first fifteen days of the Tibetan year are special days. Some offerings will definitely have been made today, the fifteenth [day of the first Tibetan month]. The three major monasteries of Sera, Ganden and Drepung each has two, three or four thousands of monks, and each of these monks receives a tea, bread and money offering at morning puja.

There is also a public fund, to which many people have made donations, to make food offerings to the monks of Sera Je College (not to the whole of Sera Monastery, just to Sera Je). Lunch is offered every day to the more than two thousand Sera Je monks. This offering of one meal has been happening for some time. Although donations have been made by many people, most of the money basically came from one or two major Taiwanese benefactors.

On every special day, a meal, tea and money are offered to the monks of Trulshig Rinpoche's monastery [in Nepal]. The two Tantric Colleges do *Drug-chu-ma* and Kalarupa pujas and receive tea and money offerings. And there is Kopan Monastery, of course. During this period the monks and nuns receive a food and money offering on at least one day. In the past they received offerings on a few days, but I'm not sure whether this practice has been continued. Tea, bread and money offerings are also given to the monks of His Holiness Chobgye Trichen Rinpoche's monastery and His Holiness Sakya Trizin's two monasteries. I have taken initiations from His Holiness Sakya Trizin. Different monasteries are requested to do different pujas. The Sakya monasteries are generally asked to do Hevajra or Vajrayogini self-initiations and the Gelug monasteries are mostly requested to do Medicine Buddha puja. I think one or two of the monasteries might do the Sixteen Arhats puja.

Also, for the past five years, the monks at Nalanda Monastery receive

a food offering on auspicious days. I think they have ice cream—and maybe chocolate!

On every special day of Buddha, Marcel and I together offer white-wash, saffron, a decorated canopy and the umbrella on top to the Boudhanath Stupa. We also offer flowers in each direction. This has been happening for the past few years.

I have also started to make offerings to a small stupa at the back of the main Swayambhunath Stupa. It is said to have been the first stupa at Swayambhunath. The large stupa happened because people made many prayers at this small stupa.

There is also the Mön-lam festival in Nepal. For the past two years it has happened at Kopan, but this year Lama Lhundrub didn't accept to hold it there, so it will happen at the Gelug monastery in Boudha. It is attended by more than two thousands monks, as well as nuns, and they are given lunch, tea throughout the whole day and a money offering. The money offering might be one hundred rupees or ten rupees for each monk or nun—it's not the same each time. The monks are requested to dedicate for the FPMT centers and students and for those people who are sick or who have died and for whom I have been asked to pray. Many Medicine Buddha pujas are done, as they might help bring about the success of the various centers and projects. This is in addition to the pujas the monasteries already do for the Maitreya Project. Even though all these pujas are also dedicated towards the success of the Maitreya Project, separate pujas for the success of the Maitreya Project are also done in various monasteries.

The reason I'm telling you all this is that these are also your merits. You can also dedicate all these merits to having realizations and to achieving enlightenment. At the times that these pujas are being done in all these monasteries, you can also dedicate all these merits.

I make these offerings to the monks in the monasteries of my gurus because it creates much more merit. If, by thinking of the guru, you offer a cup of tea, a glass of water or even a candy to one of the pores of your guru, you collect more merit than if you had made offerings to all the numberless past, present and future buddhas and to all the statues, stupas and scriptures in the ten directions. This applies to making offerings to your guru's family (wife, husband or children), friends, neighbors, or even animals (cat, dog or horse). The merit of making offerings to all the

numberless past, present and future buddhas is small when compared to the merit of offering even a glass of water to one of the guru's pores with thought of the guru. The monks in these monasteries have the same gurus. Even Kopan has three hundred monks and there are many thousands of monks in the other monasteries, all of whom have His Holiness the Dalai Lama as their guru and many of whom are also disciples of my other gurus.

I'm just telling you this so that you know how to collect extensive merit. Let's say that there is a monastery with a thousand monks and all of those monks are disciples of one of your gurus—His Holiness the Dalai Lama, for example. Even if you have only one rupee, if you offer that rupee to all those monks by thinking of your guru, as I mentioned before, in dependence upon each monk, you collect more merit than having made offerings to all the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and all the statues, stupas and scriptures in the ten directions. Even if what you have to offer is just one teabag, but you offer that teabag with thought of your guru to a monastery with a thousand monks who are disciples of your guru, you collect unbelievable merit. (Of course, there is also more merit because you are offering to ordained people.) You don't have to make a huge offering. Even if you offer only one rupee, you can still collect unbelievable merit.

So far, these offerings haven't been publicized, but I thought to do so in the future as other people might want to participate in making these extensive offerings. The offerings to all these monasteries can then happen every year. People who want to participate will later be given the opportunity to collect merit through making continuous offerings. My idea is to set up funds so that these offerings can be continued forever, or as long as the monasteries exist. [See *Mandala* magazine, May-June, 1999.]

DEDICATION

Thinking that all these merits are also yours, now dedicate the merits.

We collected numberless merits by dedicating all the merits to all sentient beings. Now dedicate these merits in the following way: "May any suffering sentient beings have ripen upon me. May any happiness and merit I have ripen upon all sentient beings." (By dedicating like this, we also collect numberless merits.)

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may all the father and mother sentient beings have happiness, may the three lower realms be empty forever, may all the bodhisattvas’ prayers be accomplished immediately and may I be able to cause all this by myself alone.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may the Buddha of Compassion, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and all other virtuous friends have stable lives, and may all their holy wishes be accomplished immediately.

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

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings—which exist, but are totally non-existent from their own side—may I—who exist, but am totally non-existent from my own side—achieve Vajrasattva’s enlightenment—which exists, but is totally non-existent from its own side—and lead all sentient beings—who exist, but are totally non-existent from their own side—to that enlightenment—which exists, but is totally non-existent from its own side—by myself alone—who also exists, but is totally non-existent from its own side.”

Dedicate for all those people whose names were mentioned before. Dedicate also for all those whose names I have received and for whom I have promised to pray, for those who rely upon me and for those who have died.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may all those people whose names were read out or have been given to me and who have died, as well as the numberless beings who have died and been born in the lower realms, immediately be liberated from all those sufferings and reincarnate in a pure land where they can become enlightened or receive a perfect human body in all their future lifetimes and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible by meeting a Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings.

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

bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, whenever I hear that somebody is sick, may just my hearing of it cause that sentient being to be healed immediately. Whenever I hear that somebody has died, may just my hearing of it cause that sentient being not to be reborn in the lower realms, or if born there, immediately be liberated from the lower realms and achieve enlightenment quickly, through being born in a pure land or through receiving a perfect human body and meeting a Mahayana guru and the Mahayana teachings. If that sentient being has been born human but has no opportunity to practice Dharma, may they receive a perfect human body.”

Dedicate for all the sick people whose names were mentioned before. “May they immediately be healed of their cancer or other sicknesses. May they be free from whatever problem they have and make the rest of their life most beneficial by actualizing the steps of the path to enlightenment, especially bodhicitta, in this very lifetime.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, may all the requests made by the people who offered these lights be accomplished immediately.

“May I, the members of my family, all the students and benefactors of this organization and all other sentient beings meet only perfectly qualified Mahayana gurus in all our lifetimes. From our side may we be able to see them only as enlightened beings and do only actions that are most pleasing to the holy mind of the virtuous friend. May we be able to immediately fulfill all their holy wishes.

“Whatever kind of life I experience—happy or suffering, healthy or unhealthy, gain or loss, rich or poor, living or even dying, even rebirth in a hell realm—may all these experiences and every action I do from now on be most beneficial for all sentient beings, causing them to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. May whatever happens in my life be most beneficial for all sentient beings. Even if I receive criticism from people, may it be most beneficial for sentient beings. Even if I receive praise from others, may it be most beneficial for sentient beings. If I am healthy or even if I have a sickness such as cancer, may it be most beneficial for all sentient beings.”

As I mentioned before, also dedicate for the success of all the centers and projects, especially the building of the Maitreya statue. “May all the students and benefactors have long lives and good health and may all

their wishes be accomplished immediately in accordance with the holy Dharma. May they actualize the lam-rim path in this very lifetime.

“May the general teachings of Buddha, and also the teachings of Lama Tsong Khapa, spread in all directions and flourish, and may I be able to cause this by myself alone.”

We will read the dedication prayer for the light offerings one time. [“These actually arranged and mentally created light offerings....”]

Recite the multiplying mantras to multiply each merit 100,000 times. [Recitation of multiplying mantras.]

Now recite the Buddha’s name that actualizes all the prayers that we have done and also multiplies each merit 100,000 times.

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

CREATING MERIT FOR THE ANIMALS

We can now do some circumambulations with the worms and crickets. If it is okay to keep them overnight, they can also be taken on more circumambulations tomorrow. We will take them around the outside of the building instead of inside the gumpa because we then circumambulate the many thangkas and statues in the gumpa. We will also include the prayer wheel in the circumambulation. This is much better, because the animals then get to circumambulate many more holy objects.

We will do this just three times, because you have to do one more session. Then, if it is okay to keep the animals overnight, anybody who would like to take them on more circumambulations can do so in the break-times tomorrow. They can stay here until tomorrow afternoon or evening. I don’t know how long they can stay here, but the more circumambulations they do the better. In this way they get a lot of benefit and you get a lot of benefit. You all get the benefit together.

Thank you so much, thank you very much.

We will chant mantras as we go around.

RINPOCHE’S HOLY RELICS

This is a relic of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. His Holiness the Dalai

Lama gave it to us to put in the Maitreya Buddha statue. All together I have eight, but I've got only three or four here. As you go around, you can pray.

This is a relic of Lama Atisha. If you have heard a lam-rim teaching from the very beginning, you will know the life story of Lama Atisha, and why Lama Atisha is so important to us. After there was some corruption of the Buddhadharma in Tibet, people were confused as to how one person could practice sutra and tantra to achieve enlightenment. There were a lot of misunderstandings, especially about tantric practice. People thought that if they practiced sutra they could not practice tantra and vice versa.

The Dharma king of Tibet, Lhalama Yeshe Ö, wanted to invite Lama Atisha to spread the Dharma and make the Buddhism in Tibet pure, so he went to look for gold. Near Nepal an irreligious king captured Lhalama Yeshe Ö and put him in prison. The king's nephew, Jangchub Ö, then offered the irreligious king all the gold that Lhalama Yeshe Ö had collected and requested him to free Lhalama Yeshe Ö. However, the irreligious king refused the gold, saying that when the gold was piled up he was still lacking gold equal to the size of the Dharma king's head.

When Jangchub Ö told his uncle, who was still in prison, what had happened, Lhalama Yeshe Ö said, "Don't give even one handful of gold to this irreligious king. Send all of the gold to India. Offer it to Lama Atisha and invite Lama Atisha to Tibet to spread the Dharma. I will sacrifice my life and die in prison. I will give up my life so that Lama Atisha can be invited to Tibet to spread the Dharma."

The king then died in prison. All the gold was sent to India with a group of translators, who invited Lama Atisha to Tibet. When Lama Atisha came to Tibet, he met King Jangchub Ö, who explained all the problems to Lama Atisha. Lama Atisha then wrote *Lamp of the Path to Enlightenment*, which integrates all the teachings of Buddha, both Mahayana sutra and Mahayana tantra, as a graduated practice that one person can follow to achieve enlightenment. From that time the confusion was completely eliminated and the Buddhism in Tibet became pure.

What is called "lam-rim" started from when Lama Atisha wrote *Lamp of the Path to Enlightenment*, and this teaching has also spread to other parts of the world, including the West. By integrating the entire teaching of Buddha into one person's practice to achieve enlightenment, the lam-rim

gives everyone the opportunity of meditating on and experiencing the path to enlightenment. We, as well as many other people in the West, have this incredible opportunity because of Lama Atisha's kindness. These are Lama Atisha's relics, given to me by His Holiness Sakya Jigdrol [Dagchen] Rinpoche, who lives in Seattle. He said that he received these relics from the Sakya storehouse of relics in Tibet. When you circumambulate, you can look at the relics and pray.

This is a statue of Maitreya Buddha, given to me by Denma Lochö Rinpoche. It is many hundreds of years old and is one of the holy objects from a Tibetan monastery. I have another very old and very beautiful Maitreya statue, a tsa-tsa with mantras around it, but I didn't bring it here. The tsa-tsa was made by Tsawa Khenpo, for whom Lama Tsong Khapa wrote *The Three Principles of the Path*. His monastery was built four years before Ganden Monastery, which is Lama Tsong Khapa's monastery. This lama built a Maitreya Buddha statue that was several stories high, and the Maitreya tsa-tsa came out of that large statue. I'm telling you the story of the Maitreya tsa-tsa, but it's not here; it's at the Aptos house!

This small stupa was given by Lama Atisha to Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo, the great translator.

Inside here are the relics of three past Buddhas. I received them from Doctor Wangdu, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's doctor, in Dharamsala, and he got them from the Tibetan government storehouse of relics. They are many thousands of years old. Many relics of Buddha and of the ancient yogis are kept in the Tibetan government storehouse.

There is also a relic of the past Buddha's tooth. A monk brought three pieces of Buddha's tooth from Tibet. They came from Gyalwa Ensapa, a disciple of one of Lama Tsong Khapa's direct disciples, who became enlightened within one lifetime, like Milarepa. His holy body was gilded, but the Chinese communists destroyed it. All the relics were thrown away, but one family secretly took the relic of Buddha's tooth. They kept it and would burn and crush it to use as medicine when anyone in the family was sick. A monk brought three pieces from Tibet. He offered one to Chobgye Trichen Rinpoche, and Rinpoche put it in the crown of the three-story Maitreya Buddha statue that Rinpoche had built in Boudhanath. He was going to offer another relic to His Holiness Sakya Trizin.

There are also relics of Lama Atisha and many precious relics of

ancient yogis from inside the famous statue of Shakyamuni Buddha in Lhasa.

This Tara statue belonged to the Lawudo Lama, who is said to be my past life. It is the devotional object that he always carried with him, and this is why the face and hands are worn away.

That's the end of my advertisement....

HOW TO CIRCUMAMBULATE

Before you circumambulate, first generate the motivation. Think that you are leading all sentient beings in the circumambulations. Visualize that beams emitted by the holy objects purify you and all the sentient beings. Then think that you all receive all good qualities.

When you do circumambulations, you can dedicate the first circumambulation to all sentient beings, but especially the hell beings. When you finish the circumambulation, think that you have purified all sentient beings and give all the merit to them. They all become enlightened, especially the hell beings. Dedicate the second round to all sentient beings, but especially the pretas. When you have finished the circumambulation, dedicate all the merits to all sentient beings, but especially to the pretas. They all become enlightened. Do the same for all the animals, humans, asuras, suras and intermediate state beings.

You can then circumambulate for your gurus, dedicating for them to have long lives and for all their wishes to be fulfilled. You can do another circumambulation and dedicate it for the teachings to exist a long time. In this way you can dedicate nine circumambulations, the first seven being for the beings in the six realms plus those in the intermediate state, the eighth being for the gurus and the ninth for the teachings. This is just one idea of how you can make circumambulation very effective, very beneficial.

When we circumambulate, our mouth should be reciting holy prayers or powerful mantras and our mind should be feeling devotion. As well as prostration of body, there are prostration of speech (praising Buddha) and prostration of mind (generating devotion). In a similar way, there are circumambulations of body, speech, and mind. While your body is walking around the holy objects, your speech is reciting praises or mantras and your mind is feeling devotion.

Generate the motivation for the circumambulations by thinking, “The purpose of my life is to free all sentient beings from all their sufferings and bring them to enlightenment; therefore, I must achieve enlightenment. It is for this reason, for the benefit of all sentient beings, that I am going to do these circumambulations. Each circumambulation is for every single sentient being.”

[Then everybody followed Rinpoche on several circumambulations of the gompa and prayer wheel.]

Thursday, March 4

EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

PLAYING CYMBALS

[Rinpoche arrives just in time for Palden Lhamo puja.] I couldn't stand not playing the cymbals!

My style of playing cymbals doesn't follow any particular tradition. It's just my own tradition. Ven. Michel plays according to the tradition of Shekar Monastery in Tibet, a branch of Sera Me Monastery. (Sera Monastery has two main colleges, Sera Me and Sera Je.) I don't know what the situation is now, but before, when Tibet was independent, Shekar Monastery had about five hundred monks. In Tsang, on the way to Tashilhunpo Monastery, it is situated on a very high rocky mountain, which is supposed to be Tara. The monastery is supposed to be situated on Tara's chest.

I went to Tibet on pilgrimage twice in the 1980s, but I don't remember seeing Shekar Monastery at that time. I remember it, however, from the very first time I went to Tibet, when I was a small child. I went with my two alphabet teachers (both of whom were my uncles), a nun and a Tibetan man. When you looked up at the monastery from down below, you thought, how could anyone possibly get up there? The monastery was situated high up on a very high rocky mountain. From below, you had to go round the mountain and then climb up on a road that had been made by putting big logs through the rocks. Grass had grown from the rocks to cover the road. But once you reached the place, you found that the monastery was very clean and neat, with many young monks. This is the impression I had many years ago when I saw it. Apart from that first impression, I don't remember very much. I remember going up there and how clean and neat it was inside, but that's all. For the rest, I think I might have fallen asleep.

Each Gelug monastery usually has a debating college, and they mainly study the five major sutra texts—Vinaya; Pramanavarttika; Madhyamaka, which is about the two truths; Abhisamayalamkara, which is about the five paths to enlightenment; and Abhidharmakosha. There is also a tantric college for the study of rituals. Every day they do many pujas, some of which are wrathful pujas, and they also do religious dance, perform mandalas, and other things. The *umdze*, or leader of the pujas, of Shekar Monastery, now lives in Thamo Nunnery, a Gelugpa nunnery down below Lawudo in Solu Khumbu. He leads the protector pujas and the nuns lead the Vajrayogini self-initiations.

Many years ago the *umdze* came down to Kathmandu, so I asked Tubten Pende to learn the way his monastery played the cymbals and to use that style for the Mahakala practice at Nalanda. That was the idea. My own way of playing the cymbals just came from ego....

[Rinpoche plays the cymbals.]

I hope Palden Lhamo is not disturbed—I made a lot of noise.

MAITREYA PRAYERS

These are very good translations of the prayers. I don't know who did it, probably somebody from Madison. Geshe Sopa Rinpoche translated one of the prayers to Maitreya Buddha at Amitabha Buddhist Centre the last time Geshe-la was in Singapore, but I'm not sure whether this is the same translation. Geshe-la did not translate *Prayer for a Statue of Maitreya* but another short prayer, *Prayer for Spontaneous Bliss*. *Prayer for a Statue of Maitreya* is a dedication for the sentient beings who build an eminent statue of Maitreya Buddha, Loving One, or who create the necessary conditions for building such a statue to enjoy the Buddhadharmas at the holy feet of Maitreya Buddha.

The translation of *Prayer to be Reborn in the Land of Bliss*, which is a prayer to be born in the blissful field, has been done extremely well. I didn't check it carefully, but it appears to be a good translation. I thought it would be good to alternate the reciting of *King of Prayers* with *Prayer to be Reborn in the Land of Bliss*. These prayers have different presentations, different tastes, and this can be very helpful for the mind. Reciting these prayers is especially helpful for those who don't know how to dedicate because they contain all the important things that we should request to

happen. You can recite *Prayer to be Reborn in the Land of Bliss* and there is another short Maitreya Buddha prayer that can also be done. [See the *FPMT Prayer Book* for all these prayers.]

SPREADING THE DHARMA IN RUSSIA AND MONGOLIA

There is a dedication for a Russian student, Andrey, who translated for Alex Berzin when he went a few times to Russia to teach Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism. I think he is also the one who translated *Transforming Problems* into Russian. Andrey invited me to Russia quite a number of years ago, but so far I haven't made it. I last saw him during Geshe Sopa's two-month course last year.

After the last time we talked, Andrey went back to set up a retreat center in Russia. People in Russia and Mongolia like very much to do retreat; they think retreat is the best thing to do in life. People in Russia and Mongolia think that doing retreat is the best Dharma. In addition to a center in the city, we discussed having a retreat center. There was a plan for me to go to Russia this year, but after Andrey returned, the whole Russian economy collapsed, and he said that now was not a good time to come. That was his view.

There is another Dharma group in Russia, led by Trinley, a Tibetan monk. Trinley is the only Tibetan who came to the West as a lay person, spent a few years translating in the West, and then became a monk. Normally it's the other way around. He is the only Tibetan who spent a few years in the West and was then inspired to become a monk. He translated for a few years at Dorje Chang Institute and Mahamudra Centre in New Zealand, then went back to Dharamsala to become an ascetic monk. Trinley was the translator at Dorje Chang Institute after Lama Chödak, who became more famous in New Zealand than the geshe for whom he translated. The translator became more famous than the teacher!

After becoming a monk, Trinley continued to translate in New Zealand for two or three years. Once he told me that his main meditation was practicing the antidotes to the delusions. In his daily life, whenever delusions arose or there was a danger of their arising, he would apply their opponents. He would use the lam-rim meditations to stop the arising of delusions.

On returning to Dharamsala, Trinley became an ascetic and lived for five years on the mountain. His Holiness then sent him to Russia to teach Dharma. I think His Holiness sent him to Russia because he is a very simple monk who isn't interested in material comfort and is very dedicated to helping others. I think that the simple style of life in Russia would suit Trinley.

Trinley has been teaching the lam-rim to a Dharma group in Russia, and this group has been inviting me to Russia for the past three years. They have sent letters to me a few times, and recently, when the whole group came to Germany when His Holiness the Dalai Lama was teaching there, because they are eager, they again invited me to come to Russia. They also asked if the group could be part of FPMT. Trinley took some initiations from me when I was at Mahamudra Centre.

I have been thinking how to help Russia and Mongolia with their economic problems. My idea is to spread as much as possible the practices of reciting *manis* and of taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts. During the teachings people could be invited to recite OM MANI PADME HUM as much as possible to develop their compassion and to take the Eight Mahayana Precepts and thus practice pure morality. This would affect the country so that the economy could be developed.

Anyone, young or old, can immediately do these practices, so the practices can spread from this.

I've been thinking about starting a monastery in Mongolia. Establishing a pure monastery with young, new monks might help the country. A youth group in Mongolia and two monasteries have invited me to Mongolia. The youth group wrote to say that one million Mongolians have converted to the Christian religion because so many Christian priests have come there. The priests have built hospitals and schools, and many people in Mongolia have become Christians. When I read this, I felt responsible to help Mongolia. The Christian religion is needed in the world for the many people who have the karma to be guided from suffering to happiness only through that means. The Christian explanation of God as the creator is the only explanation that suits some people. However, even though Christianity is good, it doesn't teach the complete path to liberation or to enlightenment. Besides not having the complete path of tantra, Christianity does not have complete teachings on renunciation, bodhicitta or emptiness. And since Mongolia

is a Buddhist country and has always been a Buddhist country, I felt responsible to help.

My plan is to go to mainland China and then to Mongolia after Geshe Sopa Rinpoche's teachings this summer. There have been two lam-rim groups in mainland China, one in Chengdu and the other in Nanjing, for the past few years, and they have been very anxiously awaiting a visit. So I plan to visit them, then Mongolia and perhaps make a short visit to Russia.

I would like to start a city center in Mongolia where Dharma could be taught in English. Young people in Mongolia are very keen to learn English, so if they are taught Dharma in English they can learn Dharma and English together. They get what they want, which is to learn English, and we get what we want, which is for them to learn Dharma. That's the deal! The Western monks and nuns could also teach Dharma to the old people in the city.

Since there is a lot of interest in retreat, I was also thinking to organize the recitation of one hundred million OM MANI PADME HUMS once every year in Mongolia. People could gather together and recite the mantras in a retreat. This might be financially difficult for people, so I am thinking to set up a fund to make it easy for people to come every year to recite one hundred million manis. I am hoping to establish similar annual group retreats in perhaps ten different countries. It is a very common practice in Tibet and Nepal, especially in very high mountains. In Tsun, where Geshe Lama Konchog came from, they do this practice every year. When Geshe Lama Konchog lived there, the local people did such retreats many times. People would come from all the surrounding villages; everyone would bring whatever food they could and pool it together. During the retreat, everyone would take the Eight Mahayana Precepts then recite manis.

The guru of Dodrub Rinpoche, a reincarnate lama whose past life was Tsechu Rinpoche, brought incredible benefit to Nepal. He was the head of the Buddhists in Nepal. This lama made statues in Tibet, then he came to Nepal, where he lived in Helambu and Tsun and spread extensively the practice of Chenrezig, especially recitation of the mantra OM MANI PADME HUM. In those early times, Dodrub Rinpoche's guru made it the law in various areas of Nepal that people were not to kill animals. This lama did so much to spread the nyung-nä practice and the recitation of the mantra

of the Buddha of Compassion and brought incredible benefit to Nepal. Even though it is not the law of Nepal, there is still a law that prohibits the killing of animals in mountain areas such as Solu Khumbu and Tsun. If the Nepalese officials hear that some Sherpas have gone into the forest to hunt animals, they search for those people and punish them. Some years ago I heard of some Nepalese who were captured and punished by the officials for killing animals.

The great lamas of the past established very good moral law in these mountain areas, but I think the country has now become much more degenerate. It is not like it was before. It seems that more and more Sherpas are killing animals and selling the meat as a business. The Sherpas don't usually kill the animals themselves but hire Tibetans to do it. There are certain Tibetans who spend their whole life working as butchers. The Sherpas hire these people to do the killing, but it is the same as doing the killing themselves. More and more people are now engaging in this business.

We once tried to recite one hundred million manis at Lawudo. Many Western students and some local Sherpas participated. We recited a lot of mantras but didn't reach the total, so I asked everyone to continue reciting the mantras at home.

I would like to organize a group recitation of one hundred million manis every year in about ten different places, including Mongolia. We would need funding to make it easy for people to come and do the practice, otherwise, it might be difficult for them to spare that much time. By doing such a retreat, many people will be liberated, saved from the lower realms. We usually liberate animals, but organizing a retreat like this would help to liberate human beings from the lower realms and samsara. It's a way to bring them to enlightenment. Taking the Eight Mahayana Precepts and reciting manis are such simple practices, but they bring benefit as extensive as the sky. They result in skies of benefit but are very simple to practice.

Perhaps we can pray for the success of this idea of organizing such retreats in ten different countries. I thought one retreat could happen at Chenrezig Institute in Australia, but I am not sure. It might be difficult. People could recite the mantras individually, but it might not be so easy for them to recite the mantras in a group for a long time.

In Tsun, at the end of the recitation of the one hundred million

manis, Geshe Lama Konchog used to arrange a celebration with religious dances, and people would come from all over to attend the celebration.

Anyway, this is just some news!

What I was actually going to mention is that Andrey has been very, very sick. He has been translating Dharma texts into Russian and is planning to translate *Lam-rim chen-mo*. I don't know of how much benefit I can be there, but he's very keen for me to come to Russia to do something. However, he has been very sick and is going to have a heart operation. I'm not sure of the date of the operation, but he has asked me to pray for him. If my divination is correct, there is no danger to his life, and the operation will be successful.

Please dedicate the merits you have created today to Andrey and to all the other people whose names were mentioned before. May they immediately recover and then fulfill the purpose of being healthy, which is to make their life beneficial at least for themselves and at best for others, by actualizing the realizations of the lam-rim, especially bodhicitta.

People put unbelievable effort into being healthy; they will try billions of things, every single thing they can think of, to be healthy. But when, after all that effort, they become healthy, what do they then do with their lives? What is the purpose of putting all that effort into trying billions of methods to become healthy? The purpose is not clear. When they think of the purpose of life, they are confused.

We, however, are unbelievably fortunate because we have met Dharma and because after meeting the Dharma, we have generated devotion to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and have practiced loving kindness and compassion for others. Therefore, even if we only have one hour left to live, there is so much that we can do. And the best thing to do if we have only an hour, or just a few minutes, to live, is *tong-len* practice, the practice of taking and giving. This is the best way to die, the best way to end our life, and the best way to go to a pure land. Even if you have only one minute left, you can do the bodhicitta practice of *tong-len*. There are many other practices you can do, but the best one is bodhicitta.

Without talking about days, weeks, months or years of life, there is so much that we can do even if we have just one hour left to live—or even one minute. Compared to other people, we are extremely fortunate, because we have met the Dharma. The healthier we are and the longer

we live the better it is, because our life always has meaning. Since we have devotion to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, every single second of our life is worthwhile.

If these people whose names have been mentioned don't have the karma to recover, may they be born in a pure land where they can become enlightened or receive a perfect human body in all their future lifetimes and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible by meeting perfectly qualified Mahayana gurus and the Mahayana teachings.

DEDICATION

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may those sick people whose names have just been mentioned and all other sentient beings who are sick or likely to become sick immediately be liberated from all their sicknesses, and may sentient beings never ever experience sickness at all.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may just my hearing that any sentient being is sick cause that sentient being to recover immediately. May just my hearing that any sentient being has died cause that sentient being never to be reborn in the lower realms; and if they are already in the lower realms, may it cause them to immediately be liberated from the lower realms and reincarnate in a pure land where they can become enlightened, or to receive a perfect human rebirth in all their future lifetimes and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible through meeting perfectly qualified Mahayana gurus and the Mahayana teachings.

“May those who are living or who have died, including the students and benefactors of this organization, who sacrifice their lives in the service of others through this organization, and all the rest of sentient beings, have Lama Tsong Khapa as our direct guru in all our future lifetimes. May we never be separated from the unmistakable path that is highly admired by the buddhas. May we all actualize as quickly as possible within our minds the complete path—the three principal paths and the two stages of Highest Yoga Tantra—as Lama Tsong Khapa did.”

Good night.