



# Venerable Drupön Khenpo Lodrö Namgyal

## Instructions on the Three Principal Aspects of the Path

Presented at Karma Theksum Tashi Chöling in Hamburg, December 2009.

This article of teachings that Drupön Khenpo Lodrö Namgyal generously imparted is dedicated in memory of His Eminence the Third Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, Karma Lodrö Chökyi Senge (1954-1992), to the long life of His Eminence the IVth Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, Lodrö Chökyi Nyima, His Holiness the XVIIth Gyalwa Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, and all prestigious Khenpos and Lamas of the Karma Kagyü Lineage, and to the preservation of the pure Lineage of Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye.

ནམ་ལྷ་མུན་པོ།

‘Namo Shakyamuna Ye’

Let me say *bkra-shis-bde-legs*, ‘greetings and auspicious goodness and blessings’ to everyone and welcome you. Please give rise to the motivation described in the following aspiration prayer while receiving the teachings on the three principal points of the path that leads to perfect and complete Buddhahood. The aspiration prayer is:

*“May all living beings who were once our mother and  
are as countless in number as space is vast in extent attain enlightenment.  
May we listen to the Dharma, contemplate, and meditate the teachings  
so that we will be able to help them attain this goal.”*

### Talk One

#### Introduction

When he explained what path means, Acharya Nagarjuna taught that there are six classes of beings who are like tourists wandering through the six realms of conditioned existence (*samsara* in Sanskrit, *‘khor-ba* in Tibetan). Beings of the six classes (*‘gro-ba-rigs-drug*) continuously take on new existences in the one or other realm. They are: gods, jealous gods, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings. It is possible to embark on a path that leads into one of the first three higher realms of existence in this list or into one of the last three lower realms. Nagarjuna described four ways to wander (*‘gro-ba*, ‘to migrate, to go’). They are: from a low state of being to a lower state of being, from a low state to a high state, from a high state to a low state, and from a high state to a higher state, examples for the last being to become a buddha or to achieve a better human existence than the present one. The best way to go is upwards.

The path can also be referred to as *karma*, the Sanskrit term that was translated into Tibetan as *lās*, which means ‘(existence-forming actions through the law of) cause and result.’ It is due to our actions that we attain a better or worse existence than the one we have now. We attain a better existence by engaging in wholesome activities and a worse existence if we carry out negative and harmful actions. Depending on our actions, we stay in the corresponding realm of existence for as long as the lifespan there lasts. It does happen that on account of our past

negative actions we take birth in a lower realm, but due to our present beneficial actions, we rise from the lower state to a higher one. Acharya Nagarjuna taught that from among the four ways to lead our lives, instead of heading for a lower realm and working our way up again, the best way to go is to take the path of Dharma and attain Buddhahood in this life.

The path of Dharma consists of the three vehicles (*theg-pa-gsum* in Tibetan, *yana* in Sanskrit, ‘path, practice, way of life’). The three yanas are the Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. What is the difference between the three yanas and worldly ways? Practitioners of the three yanas directly tread the path to Buddhahood, which isn’t possible by following worldly ways. The most important difference between the three yanas and worldly ways is that there is no danger for practitioners to fall into lower states of existence, which can happen to persons involved in worldly ways.

“Path” in the context here doesn’t mean an outer path that leads from one location to another, rather, *lam*, ‘path,’ in this context means *lās-bsags*, ‘accumulating karma,’ either good or bad. Good karma is accumulated by means of body, speech, and mind. When we engage in beneficial activities with our body, speech, and mind, we will be accumulating merit (*bsö-d-nams-kyi-tshogs*). When we engage in harmful activities with our body, speech, and mind, we won’t be accumulating merit but will be on a path that leads downwards. At this point, we have to ask about the motivation, because what is considered good and bad karma depend on our motivation. It’s crucial to distinguish between a good motivation and a bad motivation. (At this point, Venerable Drupön Khenpo often imparted the instructions in English.)

*Karma* means ‘actions’ of body, speech, and mind. How do we distinguish between negative karma and positive karma? To understand this, we have to look at the two truths (*bden-gnyis*), the relative or conventional truth (*kun-rdzob-kyi-bden-pa*) and the absolute or ultimate truth (*dön-dam-pa’i-bden-pa*). When our actions accord with the true nature, the ultimate truth, then they are positive. When our actions go against the true nature, then they are negative.

*Translator:* “What do you mean by ‘nature’?”

*Drupön Khenpo:* In accordance with the relative and ultimate truths. I’m thinking that if our actions go 100 percent against the nature, the law of interdependence, they are 100 percent negative. If our actions go 75 percent against the nature, they are 25 percent not negative.

There are three categories of virtuous activities, of body, of speech, and of mind. There are two categories of activities, defiled and undefiled. There are two categories of undefiled virtuous actions. An action that goes 50 percent against the nature can still be an undefiled virtuous action; an action that goes 25 percent against the nature can be an undefiled virtuous action. The best virtuous action is 100 percent in accordance with the nature. That way there are two categories of undefiled virtuous actions, one that only leads to liberation and one that leads to complete and perfect Buddhahood. So, there are beneficial defiled actions and harmful defiled actions. For karma, the motivation makes the difference. The question comes up, what is a good motivation and what is a bad motivation?

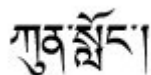
Acharya Nagarguna also taught that the right view is the basis for having the right motivation to carry out good actions. There are different levels or degrees of having a wrong view. Being attached and clinging to concerns of this life doesn’t accord with the fundamental true nature of every appearance and experience and is also discordant with the relative truth. That isn’t Dharma. Nagarjuna explained that persons who are attached to their life don’t believe in karma, don’t believe in impermanence, and don’t believe that actions lead to future existences. Therefore it’s important to contemplate impermanence and karma.

When we realize that every form of existence in samsara entails suffering and that we will experience suffering in every future life, we will have a view that is 50 percent right. Why only half right? Because, although we have realized that samsara entails suffering, we still cling to the assumption that things are real and that they truly exist. When we realize that the true nature of all things is emptiness, we will have a view that is 75 percent right and will only have a view that is 25 percent in discord with the true nature. When we have a view that is 100 percent right, we will be on the right path that leads to complete and perfect Buddhahood.

What is the right path that leads to complete and perfect Buddhahood? The right path consists of three points, the first point being to arouse renunciation, the second being to cultivate Bodhicitta, and the third being to gain the right view.

## **Renunciation – Nges-‘byung**

It’s not easy to renounce attachment to the entirety of samsara, but we can start where we are and renounce our attachment to this life. We are more closely in accord with the Dharma if we renounce concerns for this life and will then gradually be more and more able to renounce the entirety of samsara. As we proceed on the path, we will increase *Bodhicitta* (‘the mind of awakening’) and the right view more fully, which are the second and third aspects of the path.



We need to have the right motivation, *kun-slong*, in order to take the upward-leading path. We will then be able to accumulate good karma by engaging in the right activities of body, speech, and mind and will attain Buddhahood. It’s important to remember that our good karma depends on our good motivation, i.e., virtuous and non-virtuous actions are based on our motivation, which I want to speak about in more detail.

What distinguishes the right view from the wrong view? The right view accords with our mind’s fundamental nature. To have the right view, we need to reverse having the wrong view. We do this by giving up attachment. The four things we need to stop being attached and clinging to are: clinging to pleasures of this life (*tshe-bde’i-‘dzing-pa*), clinging to samsara (*‘khor-ba-la-‘dzing-pa*), clinging to a self (*bdag-la-‘dzin-pa*), and clinging to the belief in a true identity of things (*ngo-bo-bden-pa-la-‘dzin-pa*). We overcome our clinging and win the right view by developing discriminating wisdom-awareness (*so-sor-rtog-pa’i-shes-rab*).

It seems that our attachment to this life and to samsara is a natural trait of our mind. We learned everything else we know, yet we never learned to be attached to our life and to samsara and never read books about it. We are automatically attached to this life and to samsara and therefore think that attachment is our mind’s true nature. We have to do many things (e.g., study and meditate) to overcome our attachment that has so strongly become lodged in our mind. We have to create something new and correct to overcome our wrong view. Since clinging isn’t our true nature, the Buddha taught us the opposite, namely, to renounce our attachment to this life and to samsara, to renounce nirvana of self-liberation, and to learn that emptiness is the true nature of our mind.

The Buddha taught that we need to differentiate. For example, since there is so much ice in Iceland, it seems as though ice is the nature of water for people living there. Ice isn’t the nature of water, rather, water is the nature of ice. It’s the same with our thoughts and our view of things. Lacking the ability to differentiate (*so-sor-rtog-pa*), attachment and clinging are

born in our mind. By developing and cultivating discriminating wisdom-awareness (*shes-rab*), our mind's true nature will automatically unfold. Just like we have to make a fire to melt ice into water, we have to differentiate so that we are able to renounce our attachment to concerns of this life and to samsara. Then our true nature, which is always within us, will unfold and manifest purely.

We need to engage in the practice of analytical reasoning to overcome being attached to this life. This means we have to have a discussion with our attachment. But we first have to become acquainted with our attachment, otherwise we won't know who we are having a conversation with. Therefore we need to know what being attached to this life means. Do you have any idea?

*Student:* "Sure."

*Drupön Khenpo:* Can you share with us what being attached to this life means?

*Same student:* "What you said was very interesting. I've been talking to myself in this direction. The problem is that it's hard practicing what I know and not reacting according to my habits."

*Drupön Khenpo:* Yes. Being attached to this life means thinking that happiness only comes from outer material things and at the same time assuming that we only need to wish or exert a little effort to get what we want. By only thinking like this and by thinking that things start with our birth and end when we die, we fail to acknowledge the karmic connection between our past and future lives and therefore don't relate with them. Our wrong view blocks us from seeing the connection between our past life, our present life, and our future life. From both the relative and ultimate point of view, this is being 100 percent in opposition to the true nature.

*Student:* "May I ask a question?"

*Drupön Khenpo:* Yes, please do.

*Question:* "It's hard for me to understand what it means that we should meditate having a precious human life while at the same time it's said that we shouldn't be attached to this life."

*Drupön Khenpo:* We shouldn't think that renouncing pleasures of this life means that we won't experience happiness anymore. On the contrary. Not being attached to this life enables us to have genuine happiness. There's a big difference. Only wanting to have joy in this life isn't healthy. Attachment isn't wholesome and creates many problems. Being attached to this life is being imbalanced. Genuine happiness means having a balanced mind and thus not falling into an extreme. Then we have the perfect view. There are shortcomings to this life, but there's also a meaningful purpose. Having the right view enables us to be balanced in that, without clinging to this life, we can use our life as a boat to cross over the ocean of samsara.

*Next question:* "For example, from early childhood on we learn that the purpose of life is to be happy and that we should enjoy life. It needn't be material, but we can have joy in living."

*Drupön Khenpo:* You have to be smart enough to enjoy life without being attached.

*Same student:* "I want to say that I appreciate suffering, which is also being attached to samsara. I think it's nice. I don't want to give it up."

*Drupön Khenpo:* That's why we're talking. When we are attached to this life, we think that all happiness and suffering is based 100 percent on material things. When we feel aversion against something, we exert much effort to eliminate it, and that's how we spend our life. We think it's everything. The Buddha tells us that it's not enough. Renouncing this life doesn't mean throwing everything away. Knowing what renunciation means, we see that suffering isn't always 100 percent wrong and happiness isn't 100 percent right. There's something wrong about happiness and there's something positive about suffering. Renouncing this life enables us to balance our attachment and aversion. By being attached to this life, our mind is very partial and biased. Being partial and biased, we separate happiness from suffering and



remain submerged in the attempt to eliminate things that cause us to suffer and to attain things that make us happy. This way we create aversion and attachment, which cause us to have hopes and fears. Our hopes and fears are our motivation and move us to act the way we do. Then our motivation is in opposition to the true nature and as a result everything goes wrong, also our actions. That's the reason our actions and our karma are negative. Right?

*Next question:* "Performing a wrong action as a child that doesn't have the view has a strong effect on when we are an adult. Is a child's wrong action due to a former life or is a child innocent?"

*Drupön Khenpo:* Because of a bad motivation?

*Same student:* "It's a child, so we don't know."

*Drupön Khenpo:* It depends on their tendencies. Some children are very quiet and gentle, which proves that there was a previous life. I think this also applies to us. As said, we didn't attend a class to learn how to be attached or aggravated. Nobody taught us, right? The child didn't take a class for this. These traits are naturally present in us.

If we ask why we are attached to this life and act like we do, it's because we think that suffering is 100 percent bad and happiness is 100 percent good. We think that these two feelings depend 100 percent on outer material things and persons and then blame them when things don't work out the way we want. We don't see that there's something else behind it. If we analyze, we can see that there is more to it. Of course, outer things are contributory conditions that make us feel good or bad, but the main cause for our feelings is something else. For example, one and the same object causes one person to feel happy and another person to feel unhappy. If outer things truly exist, they would have to make everyone feel alike. The same applies to persons. For example, one person can make somebody feel happy and that same person can cause somebody else much suffering. These examples illustrate that people and things outside of us cannot be the real cause for our happiness or suffering, rather, that there is something behind it. For example, somebody might become sick from eating butter, while eating butter helps other people grow and be healthy. Butter is a contributory condition, but it isn't enough to create happiness and suffering. It means that there is something behind it. What is it?

There are different answers to the above question. Every religion offers a different view and answer. Most religions teach that a god created everything. The Buddha taught that samsara is not created by a god, rather, that we create samara through our karma and that it's just a reflection of our mind. Our previous karma creates the world that we perceive and apprehend. The main cause for every appearance is our karma; outer persons and things are merely contributory conditions. The Buddha said that the realms of heaven and hell don't exist outside of us, but, just like images in a dream, they're only reflections of our mental activities. Everybody has different karma and therefore sees a different realm of samsara. That's why the Buddha said, "You are your own enemy - you are your own protector." This means to say that nothing exists outside of us, but everything is a projection of our own mind. If we create bad karma, we'll be born in a hell realm; if we create good karma, we'll be born in a high realm. Nobody sends us to heaven or hell. Our apperceptions are based on our view. That is why every one is an enemy to himself or herself and every one is a protector to himself or herself, i.e., we manifest a heaven or hell. If we see this, then we realize that this life is the result of our past life and our present life is the cause for our next life. When we have this view, we don't blame anybody else for any suffering we experience but can experience it as pleasant.

For example, we can become angry with somebody when we think that our suffering was caused by that person. Anger is a problem of the mind, in which case we create suffering that never ends. We create negative karma by heaping suffering on suffering when we are angry. When we have physical suffering and add mental suffering to it, we create negative karma that causes suffering in our next life. By adding mental suffering to our physical suffering, we are adding suffering to suffering and are also adding suffering on to our next life. So, our suffering never ends.

*Translator:* “The worse-case scenario.”

*Drupön Khenpo:* If we have the right view and know that the suffering we experience when we are sick is the result of our past karma, our mind is very open and we can accept it. Karma has many levels. When our karma is very intensive and strong, there won’t be much of a solution. We need to see how strong our karma is, whether it is 100 percent, or 75 percent, or 50 percent, or 25 percent-strong. If it is 75 percent-strong, we know that there must be a 25 percent-solution. Then our mind is very open and we try the treatment. If it is 50 percent-strong, we know that there must be a 50 percent-solution. If it’s only 25 percent-strong, we know that there’s a 75 percent-solution. Then we try. If it doesn’t work, we don’t get upset but know, “Oh, there’s no solution. It means my karma is too strong, so I have to accept my situation.” Then our mind is very open and we feel relieved.

*Next question:* “Isn’t it sometimes okay to be angry in certain circumstances? I noticed that if I’m angry with people, without jumping at them, I get new insight on how to handle the situation.”

*Drupön Khenpo:* I want to ask you if you thought it was good to be angry?”

*Same student:* “Yes.”

*Drupön Khenpo:* We can’t say that it’s good to be angry, but in some cases it can be helpful. For example, nobody will say that an airplane crash is good, but people learn from an airplane crash. It moves people to carry out detailed examinations to find out why it happened. Examining the crash enables them to build better ones and, although a crash isn’t good, it is the reason better airplanes are being built. In the same way, of course anger is bad. But if it happened that we were angry, it’s good to realize that it wasn’t good. We can learn something if we consciously know that our anger wasn’t good. So, that’s the good aspect.

*Same student:* “I experience that I see the situation more clearly if I allow myself to be angry, instead of pretending that I’m not angry.”

*Drupön Khenpo:* That’s true, yes. Then you can see the situation clearly, right? It’s the same with investigating why an airplane crashed.

*Next question (summarized):* “I always have a problem with distinguishing between negative and positive karma, because I wonder how Dharma can then be a protection. For me, speaking about negative and positive karma is thinking in terms of black and white.”

*Drupön Khenpo:* White can create more and more white. Black can create more and more black. White can create black and black can also create white. Everything depends on the motivation. Since everything depends on conditions, black doesn’t truly exist. Right? For example, bad karma creates suffering. We can learn something if we deal with suffering wisely. We can’t say something bad is good, unless we make it good with our knowledge. Bad doesn’t truly exist, but it can change and be made good through conditions. That’s why we need knowledge. If we have knowledge, we can create white from black and more white from white. That’s the point. If we don’t have knowledge, of course we can create black from black and black from white.

*Next question (summarized slightly):* “My uncle suffered a stroke and is paralyzed. Even though it was difficult in the beginning, it helped him be more conscious. Now he says, ‘Oh, I

don't have to work so much anymore. I can spend more time with my family and friends.' His sickness helped him create good karma, otherwise he would have kept on working as much as he did and would have continued ignoring his wife, family, and friends. It's as though his life has just begun. So, although it's terrible, his stroke seems to have been good in that way."

*Drupön Khenpo:* Yes, but it's difficult to say. For example, if a very lazy person who never takes a bath falls into mud, he has to take a shower. Sometimes we do something wrong, something dirty, which helps awaken our mind and think about virtue. We think, "Oh, I did very wrong." This helps us turn our mind towards the Dharma, but it also depends on our karma. If we have a strong habitual tendency in our mindstream for virtuous actions, then having done something wrong is the outer condition and, depending on how strong our past positive karma is, it triggers our mind to turn towards the right direction. After having done something wrong, there's the danger that we could become worse and worse. So, if our positive karma is strong enough, realizing that we did something bad enables us to stand up and turn our mind away from doing more bad. There are many things to take into consideration. Looking at the life of Jetsün Milarepa, he committed many bad actions when he was young; he then practiced the Dharma and attained Buddhahood in that very life. It's not the case that his negative actions were the source of his realization. He had accumulated much positive karma in his former life. Therefore he had the tendency to continue practicing in his life and thus he became the great yogi-saint.

*Next question (summarized):* "How will our karma manifest in the future? Is there a ticket to the future?"

*Drupön Khenpo:* Yes, I will speak about this and we can board the train. If we know about karma, i.e., if we have the blessing of knowing about cause and effect, then we will be inspired and encouraged to make best use of the opportunity to create virtuous karma for our next life. We can even see the quality of suffering as well as of happiness in that we recognize that we need to be free of attachment to happiness and suffering. Why? There's even a defect to happiness. Being attached to happiness causes us to have aversion against those things that don't make us happy, which in turn causes us to create negative karma. In that case, we turned white into black. So happiness entails a positive as well as a negative aspect. If we enjoy pleasant things without being attached to them, we won't remain stuck by continuing to be a servant to pleasures of life. Instead, we will be able to make use of pleasant situations and circumstances on the path to a better next life. That's what we mean when we say that being free of attachment to this life makes us balanced. We won't have aversion for suffering and won't be attached to happiness and will then be able to turn black to white or white to more white. I think that's the ticket for the future.

Not being attached to this life enables us to see that suffering has qualities and happiness has defects. This helps us to not feel attachment or aversion and then we can be balanced. When our mind is balanced, we more easily become free of many conflicting emotions and can loosen the knot that keeps us bound. Our feelings of suffering and happiness need to be balanced. If we are too happy and are overly attached to it, we will get lost and can't make use of our life for the benefit of our next life. For example, being too absorbed and lost in all the happiness that beings living in the realm of the gods experience, they don't use the opportunity to turn their mind towards the Dharma; it will be too late when death comes. In the same way, due to the immense suffering that they experience, it's quite difficult for beings living in the lower realms of existence to engage in virtuous actions and to turn their mind towards the Dharma.

Life in the realm of human beings consists of a mixture of suffering and happiness and enables us to live a balanced life. Suffering reminds us to practice the Dharma and happiness



helps us to practice the Dharma, which is what living a balanced life means. That's why it's said that humans have more opportunities to engage in virtuous activities and to practice the Dharma. The very good opportunities that human beings have are being free of the eight unfavourable states of existence and having the ten favourable acquirements. Being free of the eight unfavourable states of existence means not being a hell being, a spirit, an animal, a god, a barbarian, not having wrong views, not born in a time devoid of Buddhas, and not being an imbecile. The ten favourable acquirements are being a healthy human being, being born in a central country where there are Lamas and teachers, having faculties intact, having faith in the Dharma, not having done extreme negative actions, a Buddha having come into the world, the Dharma being taught, all Dharma teachings being present, all present Dharma being followed, and there are beings who compassionately care for others.



Venerable Drupön Khenpo Lodrö Namgyal  
offering teachings at the Great Stupa of Awakening of Pullahari Monastery.

## Talk Two

Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye composed a treatise, entitled “*An Elucidation of the Treatise, ‘The Essence of the Three Principal Aspects of the Path’ by Je Tsongkapa.*” It is a detailed commentary to the root text that was written by Je Tsongkapa, in which he explains renunciation, the right view, and Bodhicitta. These three main aspects of the path that are explained in this text comply with the verse composed by Lhaje Gampopa, which has come to be known as *The Four Dharmas of Gampopa*. The lines of *The Four Dharmas of Gampopa* explain the three aspects of the path of the sacred Buddhadharma (*dam-pa ’i-chös*). They are:

སྤོ་ཆོས་སུ་འགྲོ་བར་བྱིན་གྱིས་བརྒྱབ་ཏུ་གསོལ།  
ཆོས་ལམ་དུ་འགྲོ་བར་བྱིན་གྱིས་བརྒྱབ་ཏུ་གསོལ།  
ལམ་འབྲུལ་པ་སེལ་བར་བྱིན་གྱིས་བརྒྱབ་ཏུ་གསོལ།  
འབྲུལ་པ་ཡེ་ཤེས་སུ་འཆར་བར་བྱིན་གྱིས་བརྒྱབ་ཏུ་གསོལ།

*‘Grant your blessings so that my mind turns towards the Dharma.  
Grant your blessings so that my Dharma may progress along the path.  
Grant your blessings so that the path may clarify confusion.  
Grant your blessings so that confusion may dawn as pristine wisdom.’*

The first line of this verse addresses the first principal aspect of the path, *nges-’byung*, ‘renunciation.’ Having wholeheartedly given rise to renunciation, the second line tells us about the second main aspect of the path and is, “Grant your blessing so that my Dharma may progress along the path.” The third line is a short description of the reason we practice the path, and the fourth tells us of the result of having practiced the path. What do we renounce when we take the first line to heart?

To be able to practice the Dharma correctly, we need to renounce attachment to worldly ways. It is the basis for entering and practicing the path of Dharma. We won’t be able to enter the path of Dharma as long as we have attachment. So, we need to know why it’s very important to renounce attachment to this life and to have the right view so that we practice the path correctly, which Lhaje Gampopa addressed in the second line, “Grant your blessings so that my Dharma may progress along the path.” The purpose of practicing the path is to overcome our confusion and delusions, *’khrul-pa*, which is the theme of the third line in *The Four Dharmas of Gampopa*. But we need to relinquish our attachment to deceptive worldly delusions to have the genuine aspiration, which is the reason Gampopa wrote, “Grant your blessings so that my mind turns towards the Dharma.” This line means to say that having the wish to attain liberation by renouncing our attachment to this life and thus relinquishing the veils that we create with our mental, verbal, and physical activities should be our only wish.

The method to renounce our attachment to this life to enter the path of Dharma is contemplating that we have a precious human birth, death and impermanence, karma, and the

defects of samsara. The basis for treading the path of courageous compassion is being fully aware of the fact that everything that arises is impermanent, that everyone who is born dies, and furthermore acknowledging the law of karma. Being attached to this life indicates that we haven't really understood that everything is impermanent and that every appearance results from causes and conditions. We contemplate impermanence and death, karma, and the defects of samsara so that we overcome our attachment to this life. When we have understood that all phenomena (*dharma* in Sanskrit, *chös* in Tibetan) are impermanent and that they change, we better understand that our life is the journey to our next life. We are attached to this life because we don't know that we had a previous life and will have a next life and we don't know that anything we experience is due to our *karma*, our 'existence-forming actions.'

We are attached to this life because sometimes we forget that everything is impermanent. What is the shortcoming of having attachment? It makes our mind imbalanced and thus we have attachment and aversion. Having attachment means that we are attached to things that we think make our life pleasant and therefore we have aversion against anything we think is unpleasant and hinders us from having a good life. And so we are fettered by hopes and fears. The source of our hopes and fears is attachment to this life. Knowing that attachment is the source of our hopes and fears that cause us to be unhappy inspires us to seek a method to overcome our attachment. The method to become free of attachment is contemplating impermanence (*mi-rtag-pa*), gaining certainty that we had a previous life and will have a next life, and gaining certainty of the unfailing truth of cause and effect. When we are free of attachment by having contemplated the preliminary instructions, we are automatically free of hopes and fears. So, there are many benefits of engaging in the preliminary practices. By contemplating them well and being certain that many qualities will unfold when we have renounced samsara, we will give rise to the wish to attain liberation and will be eager to seek a method to accomplish this goal. Therefore, wholeheartedly giving rise to genuine renunciation is a very important step.

Looking at our attachment, we are attached to our body, to our possessions, and to people we know. Having contemplated that all appearances and experiences are impermanent, that we will die, and that we will have a next life, our attachment to our body, to our possessions, and to people we know diminishes and eventually ceases. Why are we attached to our body, to our possessions, and to our friends in this life? Because we want to be happy. Having contemplated karma, we know that our present life is a result of the actions we carried out in our last life and that any actions we carry out in this life will lead to a pleasant or unpleasant next life. No source outside ourselves is responsible for our situation, rather, everything we experience is a result of our former actions. Wanting to have a good next life, we realize that we have to engage in wholesome activities in this life and thus our life becomes meaningful – it becomes the journey to our next life. But where will our journey take us? The journey to our next life can lead to a hell realm, it can lead to the realm of the hungry ghosts, or to the animal realm, or to the human realm, or to the realm of the jealous gods, or to one of the realms of the gods, or to the Pure Realm, or to liberation, or to Buddhahood. There are many options. Our destination depends on how we make use of our life, and so we realize that our life is very precious. By knowing that our actions determine our destination, we realize that we have to be very careful, that we shouldn't misuse our life, but that we should use it meaningfully.

Death is a transition to our next life. It's up to us to use our present life well so that our transition is good. That is why our life is very important and precious. Thus, without being attached, we can take delight in our life. Not being attached to our life and being delighted that we have a precious life are quite different.

How do we avoid the danger of being born in a lower state of existence and make preparations to attain a good life? By abandoning non-virtuous actions and by engaging in virtuous deeds. We will attain a higher existence or a better human life than we have now in our next life if we engage in virtuous activities now.

Having contemplated impermanence and karma well and thus having given up attachment to this life, there is the danger of doing good with the sole intention of being born in a higher realm of existence in our next life, e.g., as a universal monarch among human beings or as a divine being in a realm of the gods. Such goals aren't bad, but they mean we are still attached to samsara and therefore we won't attain liberation or Buddhahood. To have the best aspiration, namely, to attain enlightenment, we need to take the next step to attain this goal, which is becoming free of attachment altogether. To do so, we have to renounce the entirety of samsara, which, as we saw, is '*khor-ba* in Tibetan and means 'cyclic existence' (i.e., the six realms of conditioned existence). So, we first have to renounce this life, which is only partial renunciation as long as we are still attached to a next life within samsara. Having relinquished attachment to this life, we have to expand our renunciation, otherwise we remain in the rounds of conditioned existence that is marked by suffering and pain. For example, giving up our attachment for one country and travelling to another country we are attracted to it isn't what having renunciation means. Giving up attachment for this life while having the intention of attaining a higher existence in a next life is the same as giving up attachment for India and being attached to America, in which case we are still bound in samsara. To be able to fully renounce samsara, we need to understand suffering more deeply.

When the Buddha turned the Wheel of Dharma the first time and taught the Four Noble Truths, the first thing he said on that occasion was, "Suffering should be known." As it is, we think that the feeling of mental and physical pain is the only suffering there is. But the Buddha spoke about deeper levels of suffering. He spoke about suffering of suffering (*sdug-bsngäl-gyi-sdug-bsngäl*), suffering of change (*'gyur-ba'i-sdug-bsngäl*), and all-pervasive suffering of conditionality (*khyab-pa-'du-byed-kyi-sdug-bsngäl*). He taught that our feelings and ideas of happiness aren't genuine happiness, but they actually connote the suffering of change. So, to give up being attached to this life, we need to contemplate the suffering of change. Being aware of the suffering of change enables us to overcome our attachment to this life. By contemplating impermanence well, we can feel the truth of the suffering of change deeply within ourselves and know what the Buddha meant when he said, "Suffering should be known."

If we contemplate death well, we can feel that our body ends when we die and that our mind is just leaving our body at that time. Then we feel like a guest is leaving the guesthouse and don't think that the guest is leaving together with the guesthouse. Feeling that death is occurring is experiencing the suffering of change. Furthermore, acknowledging the suffering that arises due to death enables us to appreciate our life. It inspires us to make best use of the possibilities that we presently have to attain a good next life. That is why we appreciate suffering. It awakens our appreciation that it is possible to attain Buddhahood, just like Jetsün Milarepa. By ignoring the truth of the suffering of change, we lose the chance to attain liberation, the chance to attain Buddhahood, and the chance to attain a better next life. But, being born in a higher realm of cyclic existence doesn't make it easier to practice the path. That's why the Buddha taught that we should meditate.

By contemplating karma well, we can see that our body isn't just a guesthouse, but that it's like the Titanic sinking in the ocean of samsara. Since we don't want to freeze in the cold

water, we know that there's no time to sleep, that we have to be awake and cross the ocean as soon as possible.

If we are aware of impermanence, then we see that our friends and relatives are just like the people who wander around in the cities during the day and who return to their homes at night. It's similar. So, it's healthier to overcome attachment to them. If we are aware of karma, we realize that people don't come together haphazardly and therefore we don't treat them like business partners. Being free of attachment, we can see all sentient beings as our friends and partners on our spiritual journey to awakening. Due to appreciating everyone, we can accumulate merit by practicing generosity, morality, patience, and so forth. The Buddha wasn't trying to frighten us when he saw that we are entangled in many accidents, but he was trying to set us on the right course.

If we contemplate impermanence well, we will see that our possessions are like honey that people simply take away from bees after they have finished making it with so much effort. We are like bees that have no possibility to enjoy the honey we made. This is what we are doing and it is our situation. By realizing the relationship between cause and effect, we will see that any wealth we used to practice generosity is like a universal credit card that is always at our disposal, too.

*Translator to Drupön Khenpo:* "You should have gone to the UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen last weekend."

*Drupön Khenpo:* We can see that being attached to our wealth goes against the true nature of reality. The truth is that we will die and will then leave everything behind. Although we know that we will die, we collect more and more things and in that way are going against the true nature. We need to combine our contemplation on death with our knowledge of cause and effect.

When we realize that it's useless being attached to our body, to our friends and relations, and to our possessions, we will have a healthy attitude and will be delighted about our body, our friends, and our possessions. We will have no problem using our wealth and practicing generosity now. Being generous is a mental virtue and not a physical virtue. If we were generous, we will be very happy not to leave anything behind when our body and mind separate, and in that way we made preparations to experience happiness in our next life.

Just contemplating death might frighten us. That's why we should contemplate death in connection with karma. Our mind doesn't end when it separates from our body. Certainly, we will leave our body, the people we know and like, and our possessions behind when we die, but we take the impressions that are anchored in our mind with us when we die, for example, the impression of being generous. The same with our relationships. We take the aversion we feel for our enemies and the loving kindness and compassion we feel for people with us when we die. So it's important to have a healthy relationship with everyone because it can be the cause for our experience of happiness in our next life.

We might feel a sense of sadness when we think that our body is like a guesthouse, that people we know are like people we see in the city during the day, and that our possessions are like honey that we made with much effort and that is taken from us. If we are afraid of feeling such sadness, we lose the opportunity to develop and mature. There's no reason to be afraid of having this kind of sadness. Being willing to look at our sadness helps us abandon our attachment and helps us see the possibilities that are available to us. Facing our sadness actually brings tremendous happiness. So, if we fear being sad, we lose the opportunity to feel happy and joyful. We feel genuine sadness by knowing suffering of change, and there's

nothing wrong with that. We have to know. Whether we are afraid or not, we will die and nobody can change this. Having contemplated impermanence and death well, we know that we have no choice and that death is a transition. Then we realize that we have no reason to be afraid of dying and death. It's reasonable that the only thing we need to fear is not being able to make use of the transition because we aren't prepared or we made wrong preparations. Having bad karma is a wrong preparation, which is what we should be afraid of. That's why the Buddha taught us what death means and what we have to do. To become free of attachment to this life, we have to think about suffering of change in a broader sense.

Contemplating impermanence and death helps us gain certainty that our notion of samsaric happiness isn't genuine happiness, but that it entails suffering. For example, when we are hungry and eat food, we feel happy. We think that food is the source of our happiness and therefore become attached to it. If food were the real source of genuine happiness, we would become happier the more we eat. But, we have a problem if we eat too much and then our happiness turns into suffering. That's why it's said that samsaric happiness is just the suffering of change. Let me illustrate this: Because we forgot that we were hungry when we feel happy about having had what we considered a delicious meal, we think that food is the true source of genuine happiness. Actually, we have to eat, but when we are happy after having had a good meal, we forget that we had to eat because we suffered. It's the same when we suffer from an itch. After having scratched it, we are relieved of the irritation and pain, i.e., when we are happy, we forget that we suffered before we scratched the itch. Somebody who is addicted to drugs has to take drugs, but he forgets that he suffered before he took the drug. It's the same for all kinds of happiness in conditioned existence. Conditioned happiness is based on suffering and changes into suffering again. Anything that is a coming together of causes and conditions changes, which is why every worldly appearance and experience is impermanent and subject to change. We contemplate impermanence and death so that we realize that all things that come together change. Knowing that any samsaric happiness we experience or wish to have is unreliable and changes enables us to realize that any happiness that is based on conditionality brings suffering.

We can see that our suffering is the result of being attached to this life and due to our conflicting emotions (like craving, anger, jealousy, greed, etc.) evolves into actions of body, speech, and mind, either virtuous or non-virtuous. Having contemplated karma, we know that our actions are based on misinterpreting what genuine happiness is and, due to misinterpreting temporary happiness, we struggle to attain happiness that is transitory and unreliable. Failing to realize that actions lead to results, we don't understand that our happiness is the result of good actions that we carried out. Being ignorant of karma, we misinterpret any happiness we experience as genuine happiness. We have sympathy for things that make us feel happy and think they are the source of genuine happiness; we feel aversion against anything or anyone that makes us feel unhappy. Being attached to what we think causes us to be happy by assuming it is genuine and rejecting what we think causes us suffering, we exert much effort to keep or get whatever we think makes us happy and to eliminate anything that we think causes us to suffer. While struggling to be happy, we perpetuate suffering. If we have the truth of karma in mind (that our actions lead to corresponding results and that our next life is determined by our actions), then we will be less anxious to have transitory happiness and will be less upset about impediments that obstruct us from having anything we know is impermanent and doesn't last.

We contemplate karma so that we know that our actions determine our experiences, that virtuous actions lead to pleasant results and non-virtuous actions lead to unpleasant results. There's no need to elaborate that by engaging in non-virtuous actions, we create the cause to



be born in lower states of existence (e.g., as a hell being or hungry ghost). By engaging in virtuous activities, we create the cause to be born in a higher state of existence (e.g., as a universal monarch or as a divine being in one of the exquisite realms of the gods). But higher states of existence also entail suffering because, when karma is spent, beings born there fall and experience the suffering of change. If we acknowledge that we are deluded about the source of suffering, we will have realized all-pervasive suffering (*khyab-pa-'du-byed-kyi-sdug-bsngäl*) and then the wish will be born in our mind to truly become free of suffering and attain genuine happiness. Having renounced samsara and given rise to the wish for liberation, we realize that we need to overcome our delusion (*'khrul-pa*) about the way things appear and the way things really are. To do so, we need to practice the path so that we become free of the four extreme suppositions (*mtha'-bzhi*) that things truly exist, don't exist, both, and neither.

Having contemplated the preliminary practices well and thus having renounced samsara and given rise to the wish to attain perfect fruition, we need to cultivate *Bodhicitta* ('the mind of awakening'), which Lhaje Gampopa addressed in the second line of *The Four Dharmas of Gampopa*, "Grant your blessings so that my Dharma may progress along the path."

In *The Precious Ornament of Liberation*, Lhaje Gampopa wrote that the practice of the path to liberation consists of purifying the veils that obscure our true nature and accumulating merit and wisdom. We accumulate merit by engaging in wholesome and beneficial activities that accord with our true nature and we accumulate wisdom by realizing our true nature and the true nature of appearances. We do this by practicing the six *paramitas* (*phar-phyin-drug*, 'the six transcendent virtues'). The six paramitas (in Tibetan and Sanskrit respectively) are: 1) *shyin-pa* (*dana*, 'generosity'), 2) *tsul-khrims* (*shila*, 'ethics'), 3) *bzöd-pa* (*kshanti*, 'forebearance, patience'), 4) *brtsong-'grüis* (*virya*, 'diligence, joyful endeavour'), 5) *bsam-gtän* (*dyana*, 'meditative concentration'), and 6) *shes-rab* (*prajna*, 'discriminating wisdom-awareness'). If you have any questions, please ask.

*Student*: "Why don't most very rich people engage in beneficial activities? Why do they disrespect the environment and ignore the poor and needy? If they have the good karma to have attained a good incarnation, why do they act badly?"

*Drupön Khenpo*: It isn't the case that somebody automatically becomes a completely good person because of having the merit to have a good life. It's not that easy. Just because somebody is rich doesn't mean he is completely virtuous, which only a Buddha is. Somebody who is generous can become a universal monarch, which doesn't mean he has accumulated complete merit and is perfect. Such persons have merit, but they create negative karma because they lack perfect knowledge. That's why it's said that as long as we haven't realized emptiness, we are in danger of falling down in every moment and we have the possibility of rising in every moment. Therefore Lamas of the past told us that we have to be aware of every moment - we have to be aware of impermanence every moment. Because of impermanence, we have two chances, to rise or to fall. This doesn't mean that we are finished after we have done something good. We also have negativities. If we compare, then our positive karma is nothing in comparison to our negative karma.

*Next question*: "As far as I understood, every action has a virtuous and a non-virtuous side. I have many responsibilities and have to make many decisions in my job, which give me the chance to accumulate positive karma as well as negative karma. Does somebody who doesn't live in the city but in a place that is more secluded have better possibilities not to accumulate negative karma?"

*Drupön Khenpo*: It depends on how strong the motivation and view is. If they are strong enough, you can avoid negativities and make use of opportunities to do good. If your

motivation isn't strong enough, it would be good to do a short retreat to gain strength. Then it's possible to do something good in the city. If your strength weakens again, you can recharge by doing a retreat again. You can recharge at home by doing a practice every evening and every morning. If something goes wrong, you should regret and make the pledge in the evening to do better the next day. We can't immediately be perfect, right? So, we have to try. You can come to the Dharma center every weekend and recharge.

## Talk Three

### The Right View - *Yang-dag-pa'i-lta-ba*

Having renounced samsara and aroused the wish to attain liberation, the question arises, is it possible and how do we go about it? First we have to know how samsara is created. Samsara is born from our conflicting emotions and karma, so the question is, can we relinquish our conflicting emotions and karma? We create karma based on our conflicting emotions.

Conflicting emotions, *nyön-mongs* in Tibetan, *klesha* in Sanskrit, is also translated as 'disturbed, troubled, disturbing and negative emotions, afflictions, delusions.' There are different kinds of conflicting emotions, the three main ones being greed, aggravation, and ignorance. So we ask, is it possible to abandon these three main afflictions that are the cause of further conflicting emotions that we have? This leads to the question, is it possible to overcome ignorance, which is the basis of the other two? If it's possible to overcome ignorance (*ma-rig-pa*), then it's possible to relinquish all conflicting emotions.

Ignorance principally means to cling to the supposition that there is an independently existing self. The question arises, is clinging to a truly existing self justified? Is it wrong? We would have to examine whether what we call "self" (*nga*, 'I, me') really exists or not. If a self doesn't really exist, it can be overcome; if it really exists, it can't be overcome. It's the same as asking whether it's possible to give up our idea that a rope we see in a dark room and think is a snake really is a snake or not. As long as we think that the rope we perceive in the dark room is a snake, we won't lose our fear of a snake.

There are two phenomena that we can be attached to. They are outer appearances that we perceive and the experience of a self. The Buddha taught that all appearances and experiences of a self are empty of inherent, independent existence and therefore no phenomenon or experience has a true self. We don't perceive things this way, though. We apperceive things as though they are independent and true existents. We also apprehend the self as an independent and true existent, which it is not. We don't apprehend the fundamental and natural state (*gnäs-lugs*) of appearances, rather, we think that outer appearances and what we call "self" exist of their own accord and independently. The Buddha referred to this misconception as being ignorant or not knowing the true nature of phenomena, i.e., how things really are and how they appear. He taught that the true nature of all things is emptiness (*stong-pa-nyid*), i.e., lack of independent, inherent existence. We don't perceive and apperceive the empty nature of appearances, though. How can we realize emptiness of all appearances and experiences?

To realize emptiness, we use our discriminating intelligence with which we renounced samsara by having contemplated impermanence and death, karma, and the defects of samsara and with which we gave rise to the wish for liberation. We continue developing our intelligence (*shes-rab*, 'discriminating wisdom-awareness') to win the right view of how

things are and how they appear by investigating *rten-'brel*, 'dependent origination.' If we know that every phenomenon arises in dependence on causes and conditions, i.e., in dependence on our karma, and that all appearances and experiences are thus empty of a self-existing identity, we will be able to realize emptiness, *stong-pa-nyid*.

We win the right view by engaging in analytical reasoning and examining appearances and experiences to realize the true nature (*rang-bzhin*) of the way things really are (*gnäs-lugs*). If we investigate, we find that phenomena have no own nature (*rang-bzhin-med-pa*) and are therefore empty of what we call "a self." Having examined and found that the true nature of all appearances and experiences is emptiness, we realize that there is no phenomenon that is an independent existent because everything arises in dependence on causes and conditions, i.e., on karma.

The six classes of beings (*'gro-ba-rigs-drug*) continuously take on new existences in one of the six realms of cyclic existence due to their karma. Presently, we are human beings, but we can be born as an animal or, due to positive karma that we accumulated, we can be born in one of the realms of the gods. Since this is the case, human beings, animals, and beings living in one of the other realms of samsara don't have a true and lasting nature that exists of its own accord and therefore they aren't self-existing entities. For example, when we look in a mirror, we see the reflection of our face. Just as the image in the mirror isn't self-existent but depends on causes and conditions to appear, all experiences and forms of existence in samsara depend on many factors. Our manifestation as a human being also depends on many causes and conditions that we created and that are our karma. For example, having realized that the reflection of our face in the mirror of our mind depends on many factors, we would never say that the image we perceive in the mirror is a truly existent entity. This applies to what we call "self," which is born from our previous karma. By examining the connection between cause and effect closely, we discover that every appearance and experience is empty of an own nature, i.e., all phenomena are empty of a truly existing self.

The many phenomena that appear in the world seem to be real, e.g., fire that has the characteristic of being hot and burning, water that has the characteristic of being cool and moist, etc. We think that fire and water are self-existing entities and have self-existing characteristics. If we investigate, we will discover that fire and water aren't independent self-existents but depend on many causes and conditions to appear. Fire can only burn if there is wood. Thinking fire is self-existent is a misconception, just like taking dream-appearances as real while dreaming. When we wake up, we realize that appearances we thought were real while dreaming weren't real. For example, there was a Mahasiddha in Tibet who displayed his miraculous power to people by walking through a boulder. The people were astounded and said, "Oh, this Mahasiddha is showing us his miraculous power." He told them, "No, no. I'm just doing what is real. You are showing miraculous power by making things that don't truly exist real. I'm just doing what is true." In the life story of Jetsün Milarepa we read that a *Geshe* (a spiritual master holding a high academic degree) tried to debate with him. The *Geshe* asked Milarepa, "Is the boulder an impediment or not?" Milarepa answered, "No" and walked through the boulder. The *Geshe* was astounded and commented, "Okay, but does space present a hindrance or not?" Milarepa replied, "Yes," sat in the lotus posture in the sky, and said to the *Geshe*, "Look!"

These stories don't comply with our usual way of thinking. We think that a boulder and space have an own nature and cling to our concepts as real. Our thoughts are only imaginations (*kun-rtag*). When we have relinquished our judgemental thought patterns that determine our actions and experiences, we realize that a boulder and space aren't different and experience

them free of our habitual thought patterns. We misinterpret and think phenomena that we perceive with our sense faculties and apperceive with our mental consciousness, our mind (*sems*), are real. But all appearances and experiences in the six realms of cyclic existence are merely reflections of our own mind and manifest due to our habitual patterns and actions, our karma. His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa told a story that illustrates this quite well. People living in a remote village in Bhutan had never seen a mirror. There was an old man who lived with his son and daughter-in-law. The father died. One day the son went into the forest to collect wood and saw a sparkling object on the ground. He thought it was something special, picked it up, looked, and, since he had never seen a mirror, he thought he saw the face of his deceased father, who he must have resembled. He thought that the object must have been a present from a god and looked at it whenever he wanted to remember his father. He kept it a secret, but one time his wife saw him looking at it and thought that he must have a girlfriend. She became more and more suspicious, got hold of the object, looked into it, and saw the face of a woman. Since she had never seen a mirror either, she didn't recognize her own reflection and thought, "Oh, he has a girlfriend. That's why he was always looking at this secretly." The couple got involved in a fight and divorced. This story shows that we don't realize that appearances are merely reflections of our previous karma and that we make them real with our emotional and mental fixations.

In that way, all appearances are empty of being true existents, nevertheless, they appear to be real because of our habitual emotional and conceptual patterns. It isn't easy to relinquish our habitual misconceptions and emotional fixations. To do so, we need to ascertain (*ngäs-shes*) the true nature of all appearances and experiences by abiding in single-pointed concentration (*samadhi* in Sanskrit, *ting-nge-'dzin* in Tibetan) and by developing discriminating wisdom-awareness (*prajna* in Sanskrit, *shes-rab*). So, the path consists of developing discriminating wisdom-awareness together with abiding in the stability of mind. Furthermore, our way of life needs to accord with the true nature of our mind. Living in accord with our mind's true nature is the practice of ethical conduct (*shila* in Sanskrit, *tshul-khrims* in Tibetan). These are the three practices of the path to liberation.

Having gained certainty of the way things really are, namely, empty of true existence, we have confidence that we can dispel our conflicting emotions and know that, since our experiences depend on our karma, we can overcome our actions that cause suffering in the realms of conditioned existence. Having confidence, we do our best to attain liberation from samsara by engaging in the three practices of the path, which are conducting our lives ethically, abiding in the sublime absorption of single-pointed concentration, and increasing our discriminating wisdom-awareness.

A fault can arise when practicing the path, namely, we might have the wish to attain liberation for ourselves only. We might have overcome our conflicting emotions and realized that all things arise in dependence on other things and therefore are empty of an own nature, but we wouldn't be practicing Mahayana and couldn't attain complete Buddhahood without having developed and perfected Bodhicitta, selfless awareness of the needs of others.





His Eminence the Fourth Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche conferring initiation  
at Karma Samten Ling Monastery in Kathmandu.

## **Bodhicitta – *Byang-chub-kyi-sems***

Bodhicitta is the Sanskrit term that was translated into Tibetan as *byang-chub-kyi-sems* and means ‘the courageous heart of a Bodhisattva to work for the benefit of all living beings’ or ‘the heart of awakening.’

There are two aspects of Bodhicitta, relative and absolute (*kun-rdzob-byang-chub-kyi-sems* and *dön-dam-byang-chub-kyi-sems*). There are two levels of relative Bodhicitta, the level of aspiration (*smön-sems*) and the level of application (*jug-sems*). Bodhicitta of aspiration means first having empathy for every living being and aspiring to help them become free of suffering. Having this wish is the prerequisite for secondly wishing that every living being have happiness and joy and aspiring to help them attain this goal. How do we give rise to

Bodhicitta of aspiration? We arouse the outstanding wish when we commence our formal meditation practice by reciting *The Refuge Prayer*, which is:

*‘Until I awaken, I take refuge in  
the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Supreme Assembly.  
Through the goodness of generosity and other virtues  
may I awaken fully in order to help all beings.’*

Merely reciting *The Refuge Prayer* isn’t sufficient to attain the goal. We should ask, how can I arouse and develop genuine Bodhicitta from the depth of my heart?

Having Bodhicitta of application is putting Bodhicitta of aspiration into practice by thinking, “I take upon myself all the suffering of every living being and, without omitting anyone, I give all my happiness and joy to everyone.” Although it isn’t possible to actually put our heartfelt wish into practice, we are confident that in the future we will have the ability if we do what we can to progress along the path to compassionate awakening.

The sincere wish that all living beings have happiness and its causes is based on the intense wish that everyone be free of suffering and its causes. Having such an outstanding attitude is what having compassion (*snying-rje*) and love (*byams-pa*) mean. How do we develop sincere loving kindness and compassion?

We develop genuine loving kindness and compassion by seeing the suffering that living beings endure and by caring. How can we cultivate and increase our concern for all living beings? We develop empathy for all living beings by thinking that everyone was once our dear father or mother. How can this be? By acknowledging that we had countless lives since time that is without a beginning, we understand that every living being at one time was our father or mother who cared for us. Another method to develop genuine loving kindness and compassion for all living beings is understanding that it’s only possible to attain the all-encompassing qualities that a buddha has in dependence on others. In that way, we understand that every living being is the source for developing wonderful qualities of worth that we aspire to have.

Combining our efforts to develop and increase Bodhicitta together with attaining wisdom of the true nature of phenomena enables us to accumulate merit and wisdom (*bsöd-nams-ye-shes-bsags*) and to attain the state of perfect Buddhahood (*sangs-rgyäs-kyi-go-’phang-thob*). The state of perfect Buddhahood means attainment of the *Dharmakaya* (*chös-sku*, ‘a buddha’s truth body’), the *Sambhogakaya* (*longs-spyöd-kyi-sku*, ‘a buddha’s emanation body of enjoyment’), and the *Nirmanakaya* (*sprul-sku*, ‘a buddha’s manifestation body’).

It is my wish that you reflect, meditate, and integrate the teachings on the three principal aspects of the path in your lives and that you awaken to genuine compassionate care and loving concern for all living beings and for our world by fully realizing the levels and grounds of Buddhahood. Thank you very much.



## **Dedication Prayers**

Through this goodness may omniscience be attained and thereby may every mental defilement be overcome. May beings be liberated from the ocean of samsara that is troubled by waves of birth, old age, sickness, and death.

By this virtue may I quickly attain the state of Guru Buddha and then lead every being without exception to that same state. May I give rise to precious and supreme Bodhicitta and may Bodhicitta that has already arisen in my mind never decline but increase more and more.

May the life of the Glorious Lama remain steadfast and firm. May peace and happiness fully arise for beings as limitless in number as space is vast in extent. Having accumulated merit and purified negativities, may I and all living beings without exception swiftly establish the levels and grounds of Buddhahood.

### **The Long Life Prayer for H.H. the XVIIth Gyalwa Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje**

Naturally arising Dharmakaya, unchanging and ever-present,  
Karmapa, you appear as the form kayas' magical illusions.  
May your three secret vajras remain stable in the realms  
And your infinite, spontaneous activity blaze in glory.

### **The Elixir of Immortality - A Long Life Prayer for His Eminence Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, Lodrö Chökyi Nyima**

Om Svasti Siddham.

Noble Lama, you are the great treasury of the compassion and blessings  
of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the three sources and wisdom Dakinis.  
May White Tara, the Wish-fulfilling Wheel, who imparts the splendour of immortality,  
and the deities with the power of life,  
bring to fulfilment these virtuous prayers for your long life!  
Simply to see you in the youthful resplendence of your major and minor marks of perfection  
liberates us.  
Simply to hear your soothing, melodious voice, with its sixty qualities, liberates us.  
Simply to think of you, sovereign of love and knowledge, and refuge of beings, liberates us.  
May Amitayus, the Buddha of Limitless Life, create all that is auspicious for you!

While never moving from Dharmadhatu's expanse,  
you remain the protector of all Buddhist teachings and their essence, the Practice Lineage.  
Out of the breadth of your realisation of the ultimate and relative,  
the thousand-fold radiance of your wisdom blazes.  
Its luminous warmth, inconceivably deep and tranquil,  
completely burns away the thickness of the two obscurations,  
and the brilliance of your inexhaustible, compassionate activity shines forth.  
Supreme and precious sun who illuminates the practice instructions,  
may you remain forever in your vajra form!

In the line of the Jewel Rosary for the transmission of meaning,  
of the impeccable Karma Kamtsang teachings,  
may you, the naturally present glory of the flawless expanse of totality,  
remain for a hundred aeons upon your Dharma throne!

Firmly rooted in the ground of your discipline, the three types of Buddhist training,  
is the wish-fulfilling tree of your mind of Awakening.  
It is laden with the fruit of your Vajrayana practice.  
On your throne for the teaching of the Three Yanas, may you remain long!

Your expedient and ultimate instructions, like cool, refreshing streams of nectar,  
extinguish the torment of all beings.  
May you fill the three levels of existence with the brilliance of all the traditions,  
and may you live long as the Lord of beings and the Buddhist doctrine!  
The essence of the final cycle of the Buddha's teaching is profound and true.  
Free from conceptual extremes, it is the great Middle Way.  
It is not refuted by the three means of analysis but is realised directly.  
May you, the embodiment of this extraordinary truth, live long!

The essential truth does not reject projections of the conceptual mind.  
The key point of naturalness is freedom from intellectual analysis of conditioned phenomena.  
Intrinsic wisdom is effortless.  
This is the great result, which you, the perfect embodiment of enlightened form and wisdom,  
directly reveal to your students, through your undiminishing, deep, vast radiance and  
melodious words.  
Great embodiment of the right capacities to bring others to spiritual maturity and liberation,  
may you remain forever for a hundred aeons on your vajra throne!

You are Ananda, Vairocana, Taranatha, Jamgon Lodrö Chökyi Senge, and others.  
As the culmination of your previous aspirations, and your path as a Bodhisattva,  
you are now the youthful epitome of them all, a sacred being.  
May you, the essence of the three sources and deities with the power of life, live long!  
May the thunder of Dharma resound throughout the three levels of existence!  
May the ancient tradition of the ultimate meaning swirl powerfully like the Ganges River!  
Through our noble intentions and words of aspirations, with the power of truth, like that of the  
sages,  
may the brilliance of the fulfilment of these wishes bring liberation throughout all the worlds!

(This prayer of aspiration for the long life of Jamgon Lodrö Chökyi Nyima Tenpey Dronme,  
the fourth incarnation of Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye, has been adapted from *The Prayer  
for the Swift Rebirth of H.E. the Third Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche* by His Holiness the  
Seventeenth Gyalwa Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, at the request of Tenzin Dorjee, Jamgon  
Kongtrul Rinpoche's General Secretary. May all virtue and goodness blossom! Translated by  
Ingrid McLeod.)



In the order presented in this article, photo of His Eminence the Fourth Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche offering a reading transmission in the Gompa of Lava Kagyü Thekchen Ling Monastery and Retreat Center that is situated in the district of Darjeeling, India, taken by Lena Fong in 2004. Photo of Venerable Drupön Khenpo Lodrö Namgyal offering teachings in the Gompa of Pullahari Monastery, Kathmandu, Nepal, and photo of Drupön Khenpo offering teachings at the Great Stupa of Awakening at Pullahari Monastery in 2007 taken by Ani Karen and kindly offered for this article by Lena. Photo of His Eminence the Fourth Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche conferring initiation at Karma Samten Ling in Kathmandu in 2008 courtesy of Lee Chin Yun of Puli-Nantou, Taiwan. Photo of butterlamp offerings at Pullahari Monastery after Losar in 2004 also taken and graciously offered by Lena. Original Tibetan script kindly offered by Khenpo Karma Namgyal of Karma Lekshey Ling Institute in Kathmandu. Thank you, dear friends, for your unfailing friendship! Special thanks to Julia Feichter from Hamburg for having provided the recording of the teachings. When Drupön Khenpo didn't teach in English, in reliance on the very good simultaneous translation of Tibetan into German by Professor Klaus-Dieter Mathes, these teachings were transcribed, translated into English, edited, and arranged by Gaby Hollmann, solely responsible for any mistakes. Everyone specified here has copyright for their contribution. This article is made available for personal use only by Karma Theksum Tashi Chöling in Hamburg, by Karma Chang Chub Choephel Ling in Heidelberg, and by Karma Sherab Ling in Münster; it may not be reproduced or published anywhere without prior consent from all those acknowledged here with gratitude for their altruistic generosity. All rights reserved. Hamburg and Munich, 2010.