



# Venerable Drupön Khenpo Lodrö Namgyal

## Instructions on “*An Elucidation of the Treatise, ‘The Essence of the Three Principal Aspects of the Path’ by Je Tsongkapa*” composed by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye the Great

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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, of His Holiness the XVIIth Gyalwa Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, and of all prestigious Khenpos and Lamas of the Karma Kagyü Lineage, and to the preservation of the pure Lineage of Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye.

Venerable Drupön Khenpo Lodrö Namgyal completed his studies with highest distinctions at Nalanda Shri Institute for Higher Buddhist Studies at Rumtek Monastery, the Seat of His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa in Sikkim. Being the personal tutor of His Eminence the IVth Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, Drupön Khenpo Lodrö Namgyal is the director of Lava Kagyü Thekchen Ling Monastery Lava. He is also the main teacher for the Rigpe Dorje Study Program at Pullahari Monastery, the Seat of His Eminence Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche. The sacred Monastery of Pullahari is located in the foothills north of the Great Stupa of Boudhanath in Kathmandu, Nepal. In the secluded serenity with spacious views, the age-old tradition of prayers, rituals, training, and education of monks continues in the monastery and also in the Mahamudra Retreat Centre. In addition, residential programs for lay practitioners are offered at the Rigpe Dorje Institute every year, and the facilities for individual retreat are open throughout the year.

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‘Namo Shakyamuna Ye’

### Introduction

Let me greet and welcome you kindly to this seminar. Before beginning, please give rise to *Bodhicitta*, ‘the mind of awakening,’ i.e., the noble heartfelt wish to be able to liberate all living beings from the suffering of samsara and lead them to perfect awakening of Buddhahood by receiving and awakening to the Dharma teachings. Which teaching will we be looking at? The three outstanding aspects of the path of Dharma according to the text, *sNying-po-lam-gtso-rnam-gsum-‘di-rmäd-byung – The Essence of the Three Principal Aspects of the Path*. Who is the author of this root text? Je Tsongkapa. Why is this text special for us? Because Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye composed a commentary to the root text by Je Tsongkapa.

Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye was the incomparable 19th century scholar and master who initiated *Ris-med*. Rime became the non-sectarian movement that embraced the various Buddhist traditions in Tibet. He collected and compiled all authentic Dharma texts that were studied and practiced in Tibet and authored commentaries to texts that seemed incoherent or difficult to comprehend into his great collection of invaluable scriptures. His most precious

collection of scriptures is known as *mDzöd-chen-Ingā – The Five Great Treasures*. The commentary that he composed to the root text that we will be looking at together is entitled *An Elucidation of the Treatise, ‘The Essence of the Three Principal Aspects of the Path’* by Je Tsongkapa. It is included in the *gDam-ngag-mdzöd – The Treasury of Precious Key Instructions*, which is one of the five main sets of scriptures in *The Five Great Treasures*.

Eight great transmission lineages of Buddhism were brought to Tibet from India. They are referred to as “The Eight Chariots of the Practice Lineages.” Since Tsongkapa (who lived from 1357-1419 C.E.) belonged to the Kadam Tradition, which is one of the Eight Great Chariots of Transmission, Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye’s commentary to the root text by Tsongkapa is in the section of the Kadampa in *The Treasury of Precious Key Instructions*, the *gDam-ngag-mdzöd*.

Who are the Kadampa? The Kadam Tradition dates back to Jowo Palden Atisha, who was one of the most revered Indian saintly scholars of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. He was invited to bring the words of the Buddha to Greater Tibet after Buddhism had been disrupted there. He established a correct understanding of the Buddhist teachings in Tibet and assisted translators in their endeavour of rendering sacred Sanskrit texts into Tibetan faithfully. Jowo Atisha had many disciples and followers. His heart son, Dromtön Gyalwa Jungney, became the First Kadam Lineage-Holder and established the tradition in Tibet.

The Tibetan term for Kadam is *bka’-dams* and means the ‘Sacred Words of the Buddha.’ The cycle of teachings that Lord Buddha presented when he turned the Wheel of Dharma three times are graduated paths or vehicles of practice (*yana* in Sanskrit, *theg-pa* in Tibetan). The three yanas are instructions that followers practice in successive order to attain the same goal, which is great awakening. Followers of the Kadam Tradition take each word that the Buddha spoke to heart and regard every word as a guideline for their practice.

Why am I mentioning this? Because often people are biased when there is a discussion of the three vehicles (*theg-pa-gsum*). Even though they are referred to as “the smaller vehicle” (Hinayana, *theg-pa-dmān-pa*), “the great vehicle” (Mahayana, *theg-pa-chen-po*), and “the supreme vehicle” (Mantrayana, *theg-pa-gsang-sngags*), the one is not better and not higher than the other. Since the instructions presented in all vehicles are directed towards achieving the same goal and are very beneficial, every path is good. “Then,” we might ask, “why did the Buddha teach the three paths if they are one and the same?” Without being discriminative or judgmental, by presenting the three vehicles, the Buddha showed disciples how to gradually tread the path of Dharma according to their inclinations and capabilities. We might wonder, “Isn’t the one more profound than the other?” The teachings of each vehicle accord with its followers’ capacities, so this question can’t be answered easily; it depends upon individuals. Seeing a disciple of Hinayana has the skills to understand and practice those specific teachings, he doesn’t think that Mahayana is more profound; Hinayana is deeper for him than the others. He can understand and experience the Hinayana teachings that he practices on the path to liberation and would feel lost if he were instructed in the other vehicles. For example, nobody would say that Tibetan momos are better for human beings than milk. Momos are delicious dumplings consisting of different kinds of meat and vegetables that are wrapped in simple dough and cooked by being steamed over soup. Milk is better for a newborn and small baby, while a grownup would prefer nourishing momos that a baby can’t digest. Therefore, what is better for somebody depends upon the individual. In the same way, not one of the numerous teachings that Lord Buddha presented is better or more profound than the other. They are profound in dependence upon an individual’s ability to understand and benefit by studying and following that specific path.



When he was asked a similar question, if he thought Christianity is better than Buddhism, His Holiness the Dalai Lama responded, “I can’t say that Christianity is better or worse than Buddhism. All I can say is that the words of the Buddha are better for me. Christianity might be better for many people, while other people benefit by believing in Hinduism. Everybody has specific propensities and capabilities, therefore it’s not fair to generalize and say that one religion is better than all others. It would be wrong to think that everybody should follow it.”

The Buddha taught that every living being without exception has the potential and capacity to attain full awakening, i.e., Buddhahood. Some disciples understand and immediately realize this, while others need to learn and practice the Dharma step by step. The different teachings are therefore presented in gradual succession so that everyone can progress in their spiritual practice at a pace that is appropriate for them. The three principal aspects of the path are meant for individuals who need to be guided gradually.

Disciples who are able to traverse the path of Dharma step by step first need to awaken the wish to attain liberation (*nges-par-byung-ba*, also translated as ‘renunciation’) and concentrate their attention on entering the path to liberation. Having developed the wish firmly, it is secondly necessary to cultivate Bodhicitta (*byang-chub-kyi-sems* in Tibetan, ‘the mind of awakening’). After having established Bodhicitta, it is thirdly necessary to have the right view (*yang-dag-pa’i-lta-ba*). Having the right view means that by virtue of wisdom-awareness (*shes-rab*), disciples progressively win direct insight (*mngön-sum*) into the true nature of all things (*dharmata* in Sanskrit, *chös-nyid* in Tibetan) and thus realize pristine, timeless wisdom, *ye-shes*.

Because of the short time at our disposal during this seminar, we won’t be able to go through every word of the commentary that Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye composed to the root text, which is entitled *The Essence of the Three Principal Aspects of the Path* and was written by Je Tsongkapa. So, I will give a summary of the meaning of the commentary by referring to the verses of the root text.

### a) The Offering

In the Buddhist tradition, it is the custom when writing a treatise to begin with the title of the treatise, then to pay homage by composing an opening line or verse of offering, and to present a short description of the purpose for writing the text. The homage that Tsongkapa wrote in the root text is:

རྗེ་བརྩུན་བླ་མ་རྣམས་ལ་ཕྱག་འཚུལ་ལོ།།

/ rje-btsün-bla-ma-rnams-la-phyag-‘tshäl-lo //  
 ‘I pay homage to all revered and exalted Lamas.’

Why do great masters and scholars begin Buddhist texts and treatises they compose with a homage of veneration to the exemplary Lamas and teachers? This is done so that the author doesn’t encounter any hindrances while writing the text and so that in the future their work benefits others without any obstacles. How does this function?

Enthusiasm and fortitude arise in our mind when we pay homage to the exalted Lamas or masters we hold in highest esteem and revere in our heart. Through the virtue of receiving the blessings by paying homage, our obscurations are removed and our joyful enthusiasm to

achieve the result of Dharma practice without hindrances increases. This is very practical, because we need to remove hindrances and establish conducive conditions for anything we hope to accomplish. Venerating our Lamas and teachers by paying homage to them with devotion cleanses us of our obstacles and bad habits and enables us to develop new good qualities. By paying homage, we receive the blessings of our Lamas. This gives us the strength and joy we need in order to practice and accomplish the Dharma.

Formulating or pronouncing devotion by writing or reciting an offering line or verse when beginning to write a sacred text or when giving Dharma instructions serves two purposes. It ensures that the author of a text or a scholar imparting teachings will complete the work well and thus it directly benefits him or her. Secondly, paying homage benefits students in that it gives them the opportunity to supplicate the Lamas with devotion before concentrating their attention on the instructions that follow. By doing this, obstacles are cleansed and bad habits, which are impediments for correctly understanding the teachings, are removed. Thus, due to the blessings we receive by paying homage, we are able to practice the path of Dharma with joy and fortitude.

Seeing that it's possible to experience joy and fortitude through the elimination of hindrances and obstacles with other means, why is paying reverence said to be so decisive? Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye tells us in the commentary he composed that the best way to remove hindrances and obstacles is to cultivate reverent devotion. It removes the main hindrance to our study and practice, the main hindrance being conceit, arrogance, pride. As long as we don't rely on exemplary masters and teachers, we won't be able to progress in our spiritual pursuit. This is the reason Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye stated that reverent devotion is the extraordinary method to have the enthusiasm and fortitude we need for our practice. It is the outstanding method to be cleansed of our bad habits and obstacles and prevents them from arising again.

The presence and absence of pride distinguishes ordinary people from reliable and authentic persons. The characteristic of ordinary people is pride, *nga-rgyäl*. The characteristic of authentic, reliable, and honourable individuals is being free of arrogance and pride, *nga-rgyäl-bräl-ba*. Pride is the negative mental force that stops us from allowing new and better qualities of being to mature in us. It can be compared to a balloon that is thrown into water. An inflated balloon will always stay afloat and won't sink if it is thrown into a tub filled with water. In the same way, pride will always prevent us from becoming absorbed with beneficial qualities of worth. A better example for the inability to absorb and assimilate new good qualities due to being conceited and proud is being like a mountain peak when it rains. Rainwater, which symbolizes new good qualities, just flows down and away from the peak. By abandoning pride, we are like a valley in which the rainwater gathers. The first prerequisite for being an honourable person who can develop and mature is avoiding and abandoning conceit and pride, *nga-rgyäl-spang-ba*.

But what happens if a valley that absorbs the rainwater of good qualities is extremely deep? Not only the rainwater, but also the dirty water that inhabitants living in the surrounding villages and towns pour down the drain or into the nearby river flow into it. This illustrates what it means to demean ourselves by being polluted with bad qualities and is an example for being too discouraged and depressed to lead a good life, which helps nobody. We need to differentiate between being humble and feeling frustrated and depressed; it would be a grave error to think they are identical. Some people, who think they aren't proud, say, "I can't possibly accomplish anything. Everything is just too much for me." Being free of pride doesn't mean being a weakling. Thinking like this isn't being free of pride, rather, it's an

excuse for being lazy. Just as we shouldn't take being free of pride as cowardice, we shouldn't confuse pride with courage. We need courage and should think, "Yes, I have the potential and skill to awaken. Yes, I can. I have the same potential and am just as skilled as the great masters who had extraordinary qualities, such as Manjushri, Asanga, Chandrakirti, and so forth. I will make best use of my potential and capabilities." Thinking like this is what having courage means. So, let's not mistake these things, but distinguish between humility and cowardice and between being proud and being courageous.

We have great veneration for Bodhisattva Manjushri, who is the manifestation of wisdom, and bow to his qualities because we understand and see that we, too, have the fundamental capacity to develop the same qualities. We wouldn't bow to him if we were proud and felt discouraged. What use would it be to prostrate before Noble Manjushri if we thought that we were totally unskilled and could never attain the qualities that he has? We prostrate before him because we appreciate and acknowledge that we have the same potential and capacity as he has.

The Tibetan term *phyag-tshäl* (translated as 'homage') means 'dedicated veneration.' It consists of two words. *Phyag* denotes 'to remove' and in the homage it connotes removal of pride. *Tshäl* denotes 'to seek, to wish, to ask for' and in the offering line it connotes wishing to be able to realize qualities of worth. Therefore, two beneficial factors are addressed when expressing veneration in the homage; they are elimination of pride and awakening courage to tread the path. Without pride, but aware that we need to become better than we are, we take Bodhisattva Manjushri as our object of dedicated veneration. We realize that presently we don't have the extraordinary qualities of body, speech, and mind that he has and see the difference. Since he can set an example for us and we know that we have the ability to progress and become like him, we choose him as our object of veneration and model and don't choose somebody who is equal to us or less capable than we are.

Being free of the pride of thinking that it wasn't necessary to learn anymore, Je Tsongkapa took all reliable and authentic Gurus and masters as examples and developed the qualities they had by listening, contemplating, and meditating the Dharma that they taught him and that they lived by. He accomplished the goal in this way. Just as he accomplished the goal, we can look at the text that he composed and tell ourselves, "If Tsongkapa did it, so can I." We take those who have more qualities as examples, rejoice in them, allow that they inspire and encourage us to become free of pride, to awaken the courage to tread the path of Dharma, and to accomplish the goal without hindrances. This is the first step we take, having sincere and dedicated devotion and veneration for those who can guide us and following them.

## **b) The Intention and Commitment for Composing the Text**

The first verse of the root text is a short description of the reason for writing the text. Tsongkapa stated:

/ rgyäl-ba'i-gsung-rab-kun-gyi-snying-po'i-dön /  
 / rgyäl-sräs-dam-pa-rnams-kyis-bsngags-pa'i-lam /  
 / skäl-ldän-thar-'död-rnams-kyi-'jug-ngogs-de /  
 / ji-ltar-nüs-bzhin-bdag-gyis-bshäd-par-bya //

'For those who have the wish and merit to attain liberation, I will explain to the best of my ability the meaning of the essence of the Victorious One's ever most excellent speech, the saintly Bodhisattvas' praiseworthy path, and the entrance.'

Tsongkapa formulated his intention to complete this work when he wrote, “I will explain to the best of my ability.” In which way is his intention and pledge relevant for us? After we started something, due to hindrances or laziness, we might be satisfied or pleased with having accomplished half or a part of our initial intention. If we clearly know what we want to accomplish at the start and feel committed to finish what we need to do, then, regardless of hindrances that arise and pass, we will continue and accomplish our aim. For example, we have to focus our attention on a target if we want to hit it with the arrow of our bow. But the string of our bow may not be too loose when we shoot the arrow, otherwise it will simply fall to the ground. It’s not only necessary to identify a target, but we also need to have strength to shoot our arrow with our bow that is strung just right. In the same way, it’s necessary to finish the work that has to be done in order to accomplish a goal that we have in mind. Tsongkapa formulated his intention quite clearly in this verse. He shows us that he was very aware of the importance and relevance of the very great task of composing the text that we are looking at here and that he had the willpower to carry it out and complete.

Furthermore, Tsongkapa was very aware of the necessity to compose *The Essence of the Three Principal Aspects of the Path*. He knew that he had to inform all fortunate persons who had the wish and skill to attain liberation about the entrance, *‘jug-ngogs*, i.e., they needed to know about the port so that they could start the journey. And the port or entrance is having knowledge of the three main aspects of the path. The excellent and sublime words of the Victorious One are the source that inspire and enable disciples to enter the path by boarding the ship of courageous compassion.

The three principal aspects of the path were the way of the Buddha’s spiritual heirs, e.g., Bodhisattva Manjushri, Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, and so forth, and of the great human masters, e.g., Acharya Nagarjuna, Acharya Asanga, and so forth. Why did the Victorious One’s spiritual heirs revere the three main aspects of the path as highly as they did? Because they saw that the three main aspects of the path - the wish to attain liberation, Bodhicitta, and the right view - are the qualities of the uncorrupted path. They are the three characteristics of the genuine and reliable path in that they ensure that disciples won’t err, that the path is complete (i.e., that nothing is missing), and that the sequence of learning and practice aren’t mixed up. Again, the true and genuine path is the right path, is complete, and is in consecutive order. The wish to attain liberation, having Bodhicitta, and having the right view ensure that the path to liberation is reliable and true. Let me exemplify this.

Let us imagine that we want to eat an apple, but there would have to be an apple tree. So, we would first have to have a definite source to grow an apple tree. We would have to have a sapling that will grow into an apple tree. If we mix saplings up and don’t plant an apple tree sapling, one day we won’t be able to pick the apple that we wanted to eat. Yet, merely planting an apple tree sapling won’t guarantee that we will get an apple. So, secondly, we have to make sure that the sapling is provided with the many conditions it needs to grow into a tree, e.g., good earth, warmth, water, and so forth. Everything has to be complete so that nothing goes wrong. Thirdly, the conditions must be present in the right order, because, for example, the sapling would dry in the heat of the sun if it isn’t watered at the right time. If everything goes well, the sapling we planted, irrigated, and fertilized will grow into an apple tree and will bear fruits that we can pick, hold in our hands, and eat. The process of working to achieve perfect awakening is also like this. To attain perfect awakening, we first have to make sure that we aren’t on the wrong path. Secondly, we have to see to it that we have all conditions together so that we can practice correctly. Thirdly, we have to practice in the right order. When all three components are complete, we will be able to harvest the crop of perfect

and complete awakening. To ensure that our endeavours to achieve this aim aren't in vain, Tsongkapa wrote that we need to have the three main aspects of the path, which are the wish to attain liberation, Bodhicitta, and the right view. With joyful determination, he wanted to share his insight with us and therefore composed the text, entitled *The Essence of the Three Principal Aspects of the Path*.

We see in the above introductory verse that Tsongkapa was very aware of the fact that the three aspects of the path are indispensable necessities that everyone seeking liberation must have and therefore should know about. He was determined and happy to contribute to this cause by composing this text on the three supreme aspects of the path that leads to awakening for the sake of his disciples and future generations. With decisiveness and enthusiasm, he did so and completed the work. In the same way, if we realize the necessity and importance of the task, then there is nothing that can cause us to turn away from our very good intention.

Both points (being wholeheartedly dedicated to noble and most excellent scholars and masters who set an example for us and being decisive to achieve the qualities they have) determine whether the instructions in *The Essence of the Three Principal Aspects of the Path* bear fruits. An example for both points is having the wish to hit a target with our arrow. Firstly, hindrances have to be removed, so we have to take care that the conditions are good by having a good arrow. We won't be able to hit the target if our arrow is crooked, too light, or too heavy. The arrow will fall to the ground if it's crooked or too heavy, which is the simile for being overwhelmed by the impediments of past bad habits that are lodged in us and that hinder us from wishing and striving to attain new good qualities. The arrow will fly around haphazardly if it's made of paper, which is the simile for not having enough enthusiasm and willpower. The first line of homage, the offering, is the method to remove our pride so that we have the courage to develop new good qualities, comparable with a good arrow. But a good arrow won't hit the target unless we pull the string of our bow and shoot it, which can be compared with the determination described in the above verse.

Tsongkapa composed both points as teachings for us. We, too, can develop the qualities that those we venerate have by becoming free of pride through paying respect to them and, knowing that we can achieve the same qualities they have, by being courageous and decisively doing what we need to do to achieve this goal. Having realized the necessity and importance of wishing to achieve liberation, of having Bodhicitta, and of having the right view, we resolve to receive teachings on the three principal aspects of the path, to contemplate and to practice them. Having learned about the preparations we just looked at, we are encouraged and know that we will be able to perfect and complete our intention. If we follow Tsongkapa's advice, we will see that he practiced what he taught and therefore is reliable. The stages he went through to attain the qualities that he had are a guide for us to emulate him.

### **c) Urging Students to Listen**

Before presenting an explanation of the Buddha's teachings on the three main aspects of the path in the main body of his work, Je Tsongkapa urged his students to listen closely. He wrote:

/ gang-dag-srid-pa'i-bde-la-ma-chag-shin /  
/ däl-'byor-dön-yöd-bya-phyir-brtsön-pa-yis /  
/ rgyäl-ba-dgyes-pa'i-lam-la-yid-rtön-pa'i /  
/ skäl-ldän-de-dag-dang-ba'i-yid-kyis-nyön //



‘Those (of you) who don’t cling to worldly pleasures, (but who) strive to make best use of (your) precious human life (and) with enthusiasm rely on the path that delights the Victorious Ones, fortunate ones, listen with wholehearted joy.’

What does this verse tell us? It informs all persons who are fortunate enough to want to tread the path that they need two things when receiving teachings on the three main aspects of the path. The two things are: upright enthusiastic interest and confidence that the path leads to a good result. Persons who have enthusiastic interest and confidence are fortunate and will be able to learn the three main aspects of the path. Being interested and having genuine confidence, they need to begin treading the path by hearing the teachings and then contemplating and meditating them.

In the above verse, Tsongkapa tells us that we will be listening to the teachings correctly if we are wholeheartedly interested. This points to an incorrect way of receiving the teachings when listening, which are the three faults that can occur and that we should not have. The three faults are traditionally compared to three containers. The first fault is likened to a bowl turned upside-down. Nothing can flow into and be contained in a bowl that is turned upside-down, which is like the fault of not really being interested. We need to be interested in the teachings, be appreciative, and joyful when receiving them. So the second fault is compared to a bowl with holes in the bottom. Whatever is poured into such a bowl leaks out again, which is like the fault of forgetting the teachings. The error of forgetting the instructions means not really being interested and not having enough devotion and confidence. We might be interested and remember what we heard, but we might have an improper motivation and not act in accord with the teachings. So the third fault is compared to a container that is turned upright, has no holes in the bottom, but is filled with rubbish and poison. Pure water that is poured into such a bowl automatically becomes contaminated. We need to be free of an impure attitude and motivation, *kun-longs*. That is why Tsongkapa begins his exposition by encouraging us to be open for the path by listening to the teachings with wholehearted interest, devotion, and joy.

We saw that the three principal aspects of the path are the wish to attain liberation, Bodhicitta, and the right view. Therefore the main body of the text begins with an explanation of the first aspect of the path, which is arousing the wish to attain liberation.

## **1. Arousing the Wish to Attain Liberation - *Nges-par-‘byung-ba***

### **a) The Purpose**

It is necessary to know the reason it is good to have the wish to attain liberation so that we are interested in practicing the path. Je Tsongkapa wrote:

/ rnam-dag-nges-‘byung-med-par-srid-mthso-yi /  
/ bde-‘bräs-dön-gnyer-zhi-ba’i-thabs-med-la /  
/ srid-la-brkam-pa-yis-kyang-lüs-cän-rnams /  
/ kun-näs-‘ching-phyir-thog-mar-nges-‘byung-btsäl //

‘Other than (first) giving rise to the wish for liberation, there’s no other method for beings who have a body and are fully imprisoned in their thirst for worldly existence to become free from the ocean (of conditioned existence) and to find peace that is the fruit of bliss.’

This instruction means to say that all beings that have a body and that are submerged in their thirst for worldly pleasures first need to arouse the wish to become free. In this verse, Tsongkapa teaches us that it's very important and necessary to give rise to the wish to become free, otherwise the experience of worldly happiness will continue deluding us, *'krul-pa*. Whoever mistakes worldly happiness with the joy that can be experienced when free won't have the wish to develop and attain true and lasting joy, rather, his craving for worldly pleasures will increase more and more. Living beings who don't give rise to renunciation remain entrenched in the process of what can be called "addiction." An example for worldly pleasures that are wrongly taken to be reliable happiness is bait on the hook of a fishing pole. A fish believes that the bait it perceives on the hook will bring satisfaction, while in fact it is its doom. This example teaches us that we need to recognize that worldly pleasures are delusive and cause suffering. We will only have the wish to attain liberation and will seek genuine joy if we know that the true nature of delusory appearances is *sdug-bsngäl*, 'dissatisfaction, anguish, pain, suffering.' We will be determined and will diligently engage in the methods of practice to attain liberation if we are no longer enticed by delusory worldly pleasures. And so, the first step is seeing the need to give rise to the wish to become free. Having realized the necessity of giving rise to the wish for liberation, the second step is seeking and knowing the method to do this. Tsongkapa instructs us in the next verse.

### **b) Arousing the Right Wish for Liberation**

/ däl-'byor-rnged-dka-tshe-la-long-med-pa /  
/ yid-la-goms-päs-tshe-'di'i-snang-shäs-ldog //

'Don't waste (your) precious human life that is so difficult to find, but become accustomed to reversing (your) attachment to pleasures of this life.'

In this verse, Tsongkapa inspires us to arouse the right wish for liberation. We do this by understanding that, just like most living beings in the world, we are accustomed to only seeing any bad luck or unfortunate and unsatisfactory situation that we experience as suffering. We consider the moments or periods of time when we aren't suffering as pleasant. It's needless to say that it's natural that nobody wants to suffer. Being willing and making use of the opportunity to directly look at our wish to be free of suffering when we feel pain or suffer enable us to realize that the pleasant moments we experience between moments of feeling pain change and again manifest as suffering. Realizing this, we understand that pleasant experiences of happiness are actually *'gyur-ba'i-sdug-bsngäl*, 'suffering of change.' Our happiness that we cannot hold on to or keep is in fact suffering that we experience due to change. We understand why the Buddha taught the truth of suffering. He directed our attention to our fundamental drive to want to be free of misery and suffering when he taught us to realize that pleasure changes and therefore entails suffering when he turned the Wheel of Dharma the first time and spoke about the Four Noble Truths. Having understood the first two kinds of suffering, we can then understand that all conditioned existents are permeated by *khyab-pa-'du-byed-kyi-sdug-bsngäl*, 'all-pervading suffering of conditionality.' Those are the three kinds of suffering or problems that the Buddha spoke about and explained.

Since understanding the truth of suffering gives us the incentive to arouse the wish to attain liberation, the Buddha taught about suffering when he presented the teachings on the Four Noble Truths at Sarnath in India. When he taught the First Noble Truth, he stressed the importance of knowing suffering and said, "Suffering and pain should be identified and known." He wasn't referring to the direct suffering that living beings feel when they are hurt, because everyone experiences pain like that on their own and needn't be told about it. Rather,

the Buddha said that we should recognize suffering as suffering before it arises and we should know that the suffering we normally don't recognize is in fact suffering.

Looking at our life, we have three kinds of feelings. When we feel pain, we suffer. Furthermore, we experience some things as pleasant and nice and are neutral or indifferent about other things that we perceive and experience. It's not astonishing to know that physical or mental pain is suffering, but we won't have the right wish to attain liberation if we only think that having this kind of pain is suffering. Having the right wish to attain liberation can only be born in our mind if we recognize suffering in our pleasant feelings and in our feelings of indifference. And that is what the Buddha meant when he taught that we should recognize and identify suffering as suffering. How do we do this?

Presently, we identify unpleasant feelings as suffering and strive to eliminate them. Not aware that pleasant feelings and indifference also entail suffering, we long to always experience them and become addicted to our "wanting," i.e., to our longing to be happy. It doesn't function, though. For example, we feel uncomfortable when it's very hot outside and, yearning for refreshment, we jump into the swimming pool. Having stayed in the cool water for a while, we feel comfortable and think that the source of our satisfaction is the swimming pool. But we feel chilled and start shivering with cold if we stay in the water too long; then we feel dissatisfied again and yearn for warmth. We get out of the water, sit at the edge of the pool, and let the sun warm us. Having become warm, we feel satisfied and think that the sun is the source of our satisfaction. Depending on our feeling, we see either the sun or the pool as the source of our satisfaction and strive to experience the one or the other, without understanding and wanting to admit that passing happiness isn't really true happiness. The moment we jump into the pool, we don't see that the water in the pool isn't the source of lasting happiness, but is the cause for us to subsequently suffer from cold. The moment we get out of the pool and take a sunbath, we don't see that the sun isn't the source of lasting happiness, but is the subsequent cause for us to suffer from heat. We don't realize that the sun and the pool aren't the source of true satisfaction, comfort, and ease, but are *sdug-bsngäl-gyi-sdug-bsngäl*, 'suffering of suffering.'

Identifying suffering as suffering means recognizing that the source of assumed happiness and satisfaction isn't different than the source of suffering. Recognizing and identifying suffering as suffering means not mistaking, but knowing that we can't hold on to the passing happiness and comfort we feel, for example, when we are either in the swimming pool or in the sun, and that our satisfaction in the one situation or the other isn't true happiness and joy. Being free of the delusion as to the source of our satisfaction and happiness, we recognize suffering in the change that incessantly takes place. Not wanting or refusing to see this, our attitude and outlook is called "blindness," i.e., we blindly crave for and chase after whatever we happen to think is the source of happiness. If we have understood this principle in a few cases, then we can apply it to every other situation in life. By understanding that we can't hold on to a pleasant feeling we have because it is impermanent, we realized that in truth it is suffering.

Let's look at the example of a meal that we have and think is delicious. We enjoy the tasty food and are really happy when we have it. But if we keep on eating and eating, our pleasure of eating the tasty food gives us a stomach ache. And so, the suffering of change has once again become evident. If our belief were justified that the meal is the source of pleasure, our pleasure would increase more and more and as long as we continue eating and eating, but this isn't the case. If the refreshing water in the swimming pool were the true source of pleasure and joy, then we would feel happier and happier the longer we stay in the pool, but this isn't the case. If the warmth of the sun were the true source of happiness, then we would feel more

and more satisfied the longer we sit in the sun, but this isn't the case either. The point is realizing that pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral feelings connote suffering.

Why does a feeling seem pleasant? Only because we have a momentary unpleasant feeling. Whatever we consider pleasant reverses our feeling of dissatisfaction. Other than that, there's no valid basis to label our feeling of happiness or pleasure. For example, we scratch an itch that annoys us, but we would never think that scratching brings pleasure. We merely feel relieved of the pain of an itch when we scratch it. We wouldn't think that our hand is the source of our pleasure when we use it to scratch an itch. Rather, it's due to the insufficiency of an itch, i.e., its inability to make us feel content, that we are able to feel good by scratching it. This applies to other things, too. The water in the pool we jump into isn't the source of our pleasant feeling of being cooled on a hot summer day, rather, it's due to the sun's inability to make us feel happy that we are able to feel good by taking a dip in the pool.

In life, instead of seeing the insufficiency of a foregoing event, we make the mistake of thinking that the new and subsequent solution to an unpleasant feeling is the source of our happiness and pleasure. In our example, why do we feel that the water in the pool is refreshing? Because we suffered from the heat of the high sun and feel good by the subsequent cool water in the pool. When we suffer a chill by staying in the cold water too long, we feel satisfied by subsequently sitting in the sun. So, any pleasant worldly experience is the subsequent pleasant feeling of having experienced the insufficiency of a foregoing event. For example, we are content after we quenched our thirst or stilled our hunger. It wasn't the drink or food that caused us to feel pleased, rather, it was the momentary suffering of hunger and thirst that caused us to feel happy after having had food and drink.

We are used to assuming that worldly pleasures only result from the things that relieve us of our various physical shortcomings. The more we think that outer things are responsible for our feelings of pleasure and the more we are addicted to them, the more we distance ourselves from the source of true and reliable happiness and well-being. It's like drinking salt water; the more we drink, the thirstier we will become and thus we distance ourselves more and more from reliably quenching our thirst. Knowing that it's not the qualities of our fingers that relieve us of the pain of an itch, the wish to reliably rid ourselves of the itching pain will be born in our mind. If we think our hand is the source of ridding ourselves of the agony of an itch, we will continue scratching it and will only perpetuate more suffering and pain. So the joy we feel of treating our pain by scratching an itch that we have is delusory. When we realize this, we will seek reliable treatment by consulting a physician. Having understood this, we also won't think that food and drink are qualities of being for us. Instead, we will realize that thinking they are the source of satisfaction results from our hunger and thirst. Knowing this enables us to more easily understand that eating and drinking are delusory pleasures and thus we will seek reliable means to become free of our hunger and thirst.

With this in mind, we can see the Buddha's physical appearance differently and can understand that he was free of the suffering of hunger, thirst, heat, and cold. Then we realize that any suffering of hunger, thirst, heat, or cold that we experience is not our true nature, but that these feelings are passing feelings of suffering and pain that we have because of being deluded. Since we are endowed with the same qualities as the Buddha, we aren't destined to suffer, but to be free of suffering.

By recollecting our day in the evening, we recognize that the moments we experienced pleasant and unpleasant feelings continually alternated and we recognize that any feeling we had was not substantial and didn't last. We realize that it wasn't the water's fault that we were

chilled when we stayed in the swimming pool too long, but that it was due to having been affected by the heat of the high sun that changed into the suffering of feeling cold while in the pool. All alternating pleasant and unpleasant feelings are due to impermanence.

We might understand this and conclude, “Okay, I realize that I helped myself when unpleasant feelings arose and changed, and I tried my best to get through. Days and years pass and one day I’ll die. Then I won’t be hungry and thirsty and won’t suffer from heat and cold anymore. Why all this talk? I managed quite well. I was intelligent and turned on the heater when it was cold, took a swim in the pool when it was hot, ate when I was hungry, and had a drink when I was thirsty. What’s the problem?” We should know whether there’s a problem or not. If there’s no problem, this seminar is finished.

The Buddha spoke about impermanence and death to help us overcome our delusion. Dying occurs due to impermanence, which culminates at death. If death were the end, then our decision to just live through the day as best as possible would be justified and our efforts to eliminate our unpleasant feelings of hunger, thirst, heat, and cold would end when we die. Then there would be no problem. But if it’s not like that, if not everything ends when we die, but new appearances emerge at that time, we would have to reconsider the matter. The Buddha taught that death isn’t just the end of this life, but that it’s the beginning of a new life. Our body becomes a corpse when we die. Our mind doesn’t turn into a corpse when we die, though, rather, our mind gives rise to new appearances that lead to a next life after we have died. By acknowledging that death isn’t total annihilation, like a table that has burned to ashes, we appreciate that it is the beginning of another new appearance. When we understand that this life isn’t the last one we have, we realize that it isn’t the first one either. We understand that our present life began when our last life ended. And so, life and death are a continual process of living and dying and of being in the world.

Knowing that a past life led to this life, it’s conclusive that there’s a next life. We try to understand if it’s like this by asking, “Did I have a last life and will I have a next life?” We can logically deduce the answer by examining the present moment of our mind, our consciousness. Looking at the present moment of our mind, we investigate by asking, “How did it arise? Did it arise on account of my body?” If we investigated and know that the present moment of our mind did not arise from our physical body and understand that it arose from the previous fraction of an instant of our mind, then it’s logical that the last millisecond of our mind arose from a previous tiny fraction of an instant. If we follow this process back, we arrive at the moment we were conceived. Thinking the process through, we realize that the moment we were conceived wasn’t the beginning of our mind. Since our mind arises from a previous moment of mind, then it’s logical that our mind cannot have been created by our body, but from a previous moment of mind that existed before we were conceived. This isn’t saying that the present state of our mind doesn’t depend on our body. There’s no doubt that it does and that it is influenced by our body. The question is whether our mind can arise from our body, i.e., can our mind be newly created from our body? That’s the question.

If our mind originates from our body, the qualities of our mind would increase when our body grows and decrease when our body becomes weak. But, as we know, this doesn’t happen. For example, while developing the qualities of our mind by being absorbed in the study of a new topic of interest, it does happen that we forget to eat and lose weight. This shows that our mind’s capacity doesn’t depend on our physical strength. How, then, does our mind originate? Looking at a fruit tree, for example, it grows from a fruit tree sapling and ripens into a fruit tree if it is provided with the necessary conditions. In comparison, can physical matter create mind? If not, where does mind come from? Just like matter arises from matter, mind can only



originate from mind. So, our present state of mind must have arisen from a previous state of mind and not from physical matter; and the previous state of our mind must have originated from a former state of our mind, and so forth, i.e., mind arises from mind. This means to say that the first moment of our mind in this life has to have originated from a previous moment of mind.

If we investigated well and know that our present state of wakeful awareness (*sems*, i.e., mind or consciousness) cannot have arisen from dead matter, but originated from our previous state of wakeful awareness, it's logical and conclusive that our previous state of wakeful awareness originated from a former state of wakeful awareness. In this way, we have clarified that our present life isn't our first life, but originated from a last life, and that this life isn't our last life, but that we will have a next life. Since our mind doesn't originate from matter and our present mind is the continuation of previous moments of mind, our mind doesn't come to an end when our body ceases to be. Rather, after the death of our physical body, a next moment of consciousness follows.

Again, mind (*sems*) gives rise to mind (*sems*) in every moment of time, i.e., consciousness is born from consciousness. In other words, wakeful awareness arises from a previous moment of wakeful awareness. We see this through the power of habituation, of familiarization, of learning. Taking the Tibetan text I'm holding in my hands, it's only meaningful for people who can read Tibetan. Those persons who know Tibetan can read it and might understand what they are reading. Their understanding wasn't born from the signs on the paper, but from previously having become familiar with the script and the language, which goes back to former moments of having become familiar with the script and the language. Merely looking at the text doesn't enable us to enjoy reading and understanding the contents. Our present knowledge of a topic originated from having formerly become familiar with the topic. It's a long story that started at one point in our life. We received instructions from teachers and people we associated with, were nourished by our parents during that time, and were supported by our friends, just to name a few supportive conditions. Our present knowledge of a specific topic is the result of many previous moments in which we became familiar with the ability to understand this topic. If we go back to the beginning or early part of our present life, we will see that one moment of familiarization followed upon another. These reflections show us that body and mind are different.

Our body has a form, has a color, can be measured, while our wakeful mind has no form, no color, and can't be measured. Our mind isn't a tangible object, can't be seen, isn't limited, and can't be restricted or impeded. If we investigate the difference between our body and mind closely, we will easily understand that neither our physical limitations nor our physical death restrict our mind. We experience this every night when we sleep and when we dream. If we understand that while our body rests in sleep our mind is very active and vibrant during the dreaming stage of sleep, we understand that our mind doesn't end when our body has ceased to be. Therefore, death doesn't mean that both our body and mind come to an end when we die, rather, death is the separation of our mind from our body – it's the time the guest leaves the guesthouse.

Why are these instructions very important? So that we understand that life precedes life and is followed by life. If we acknowledge past and future lives, we will be able to understand that all our actions give rise to results and that our present situation is the result of our previous *karma*, 'actions' (*lās* in Tibetan). Understanding karma enables us to better understand that suffering is the mark of conditioned existence. If you have any questions, please ask.

*Question:* “It’s logical for me to think that the mind I have now is the mind I always had, but the mind I have now isn’t the same as the one I had as a newborn. The deductive process is shattered when I say that mind is created from matter at the moment of conception or is born from a nebulous unconscious state.”

*Drupön Khenpo:* Looking at one part of your question, that mind could have arisen from matter, the question is, from which matter? Do you think mind arose from the father’s seed and mother’s ovum?

*Same student:* “Matter has to be defined. It’s also said to be energy and the seed is also a form of energy.”

*Christoph (our translator):* “Now your question implies that the seed and ovum of the father and mother are connected with their mind.”

*Drupön Khenpo:* If this were the case, the child would have to be like the father, i.e., if the father is very intelligent and good, his child would be very intelligent and good and if the father is evil, his child would be evil. The child wouldn’t need to go to school if the father is very intelligent, because his intelligence would flow into the child through his seed.

*Same student:* “That’s not logical for explaining what is new, because the logic would be that it is a combination of both father and mother. It is the one and the other.”

*Drupön Khenpo:* In that case, if both father and mother are very intelligent, then their child would be double-intelligent, i.e., the child would have the qualities of both parents. It’s difficult.

*Same student:* “It’s not difficult for me. It’s a matter of combination. From a mathematical point of view, it can, but doesn’t have to be like that. I brought in the argument that the present mind doesn’t arise from the previous moment of mind because I don’t have the mind that I had when I was a child. Therefore, the same question arises for the parents. Thinking logically, not all genetic attributes manifest.”

*Christoph:* “You mean to say that a moment of mind would be a package of all qualities, i.e., a moment isn’t singular, but multiple. Is that what you want to say?”

*Same student:* “Yes.”

*Drupön Khenpo:* It’s difficult comprehending the process of how our mind arises because our mind consists of the habitual patterns that are created from many consciousnesses, for example, the five sense consciousnesses. How would it be possible for the five sense consciousnesses to arise from the mere presence of an ovum and seed, i.e., dead matter?

*Same student:* “That’s what I meant. If we follow it back to matter, there is a point where there is no matter, but only energy. And this energy is contained in the matrix. But the matrix has neither mind nor matter, but is another form. And mind can arise from this other form, from the information contained in matter.”

*Christoph:* “A basic state that contains both mind and matter?”

*Same student:* “Yes, information as mind. Mind as we have it is relative, because my mind isn’t the same as it was when I was a child.”

*Christoph:* “So, you purport that there is a basic state or substance of matter that contains and creates both mind and matter?”

*Same student:* “Yes.”

*Drupön Khenpo:* Considering the fact that our mind isn’t the same as it was when we were young, you argue that it could arise from something that is different than mind. That is your question now, right?

*Same student:* “Yes.”

*Drupön Khenpo:* That is where you might have misunderstood the teachings. I didn’t say that our present mind is identical with the mind we had as a child, rather, that our present moment of consciousness arises from our previous moment of consciousness. For example, our ability to read and comprehend the meaning of the sequence of letters printed in a newspaper wasn’t born the moment we looked at the newspaper, but is based on the fact that we became

familiarized with reading and understanding what we looked at and read. Our familiarization manifests in a present moment and also manifested in the previous moment of our mind. This means to say that our familiarization of certain things increases. A child hasn't become familiarized with the ability to read and understand a newspaper, but it became more and more familiarized as it grew up and learned. This doesn't mean that there was no starting-point in the life of a child, because, without having had to learn and without erring, a newborn directly grabs for its mother's breast. If we trace the process back, of becoming as familiar with things as we are now, we reach a point that causes us to believe that mind arose out of matter, or out of nothing, or haphazardly. If we assume that the one or the other assumption is right, the chain of familiarization would end there. The discussion in this seminar is that every moment of familiarization is based on the previous moment of familiarization and also leads to the next.

### **c) Reversing Attachment to Pleasures of Conditioned Existence**

/ lās-‘bräs-mi-bslu-‘khor-ba’i-sdug-bsngäl-rnams /  
/ yang-yang-bsam-na-phyi-ma’i-snang-shäs-ldog //

‘Again and again reflecting that samsara’s suffering is the inevitable fruit of actions reverses craving and attachment to subsequent pleasures.’

Being aware of the fortunate situation of having a precious human birth, contemplating impermanence and death is the first method of the path to arouse the wish for liberation. The second method is being aware of the purpose of giving rise to the wish for liberation by contemplating the consequences of our actions, i.e., karma. Acknowledging karma is based on realizing that everything in the world is impermanent and on accepting that we had past lives and will have future lives. Contemplating in this way encourages us to give rise to the wish for liberation.

We can't prove the law of karma or the existence of past and future lives that result from karma by means of deduction, because they aren't objects of knowledge that can be known through rational cognition. These truths are hidden, i.e., they can only be known by means of indications. What is referred to as “extremely hidden” can only be known by a fully enlightened One, a Buddha, who possesses direct insight of past and future lives and of karma. Therefore, we can only appreciate and acknowledge karma and past and future lives by trusting the words of the Buddha. Because they can't be refuted or proven by means of analytical reasoning, without the words of the Buddha we wouldn't know about karma or about past and future lives.

There are three kinds of knowledge that we can acquire. They are: direct perception, indirect cognition, and extremely hidden knowledge, which can't be cognized by means of direct or indirect cognizance. Objects of the senses are perceived directly, so we don't have to resort to analytical reasoning to prove that we perceive them. Hidden objects can't be known directly. For example, ordinary beings don't directly understand impermanence (the transient nature of all things), emptiness (the lack of substantial and inherent existence of all things), and so forth; ordinary beings have to rely on indications to know them, which is what indirect cognition means. Extremely hidden knowledge means knowing that good actions result in pleasure (even in the great satisfaction and happiness that beings living in the god realms experience) and that bad actions result in suffering (especially in the great suffering that beings living in hell realms experience). We can't perceive the realms of the gods or hell beings nor deduce their existence and therefore they are also extremely hidden. Knowledge

of karma is also an extremely hidden object of knowledge that we are able to think is plausible. By relying on the words of the Buddha, we can appreciate and acknowledge the law of karma. If we trust the Buddha's words about past and future lives and about karma, we can use our reasoning and examine in which way cause and result apply.

We believe the words of the Buddha, who teaches us that our actions have specific results that only a Buddha can know. But we can examine whether phenomena arise from self, other, both of them, or without a cause. By observing things in the world, we realize that nothing occurs haphazardly, but that there is always a related cause that gives rise to a corresponding result. We will never find that something is born from a cause totally different from it, rather, that things always arise from a related cause and specific conditions.

If we apply our general observation of things in the world to our mind, we will understand that our mind cannot arise from something that is totally different or other than it, i.e., from something that is not mind, but that our mind arises from a related cause. Since every moment of our mind arises from the foregoing moment of our mind, we can trace it back to the time our mind first entered our body. But we need to clarify how this first moment of mind in our body arose to understand that a former moment of mind always precedes and is followed by a later. Having understood that every result has a related cause, we realize that the first moment our mind entered our body was preceded by a cause that was related to the result, i.e., a moment of mind. This way we realize that our mind didn't arise suddenly when we were conceived, but that our mind is a continuation of our mind. This leads us back to a former life, because, as we saw, whenever there is a former cause, there's always a later result, which in turn becomes a cause for a following result. Therefore, if we observe occurrences in the world and compare them with the continuation of our mind from one moment to the next, we can understand that we had a past life and will have a next life.

There are many ways to reflect whether we had a previous life and in which form. It would be wonderful to speak about all of them in detail, but we don't have the time during this seminar. We can believe the Buddha who tells us that all of us had many lives and we can look at the advantages of believing him. By believing him, we extend our faith in the Buddha, yet, we can't come to a knowledgeable conclusion by simply believing what the Buddha said. By merely believing him, we can't come to a harmonious agreement with everything that can be known and then we have difficulties integrating his words in our life. Some people remember events from their past life and speak about them. It's only possible for them to remember those events because they experienced them, which is also evidence of a past life.

We can notice that most of us and the people we know have what it takes to become aggravated, to be greedy, to be ignorant or dull-witted, also to be proud and jealous. Usually we had to be trained and received an education to learn what we know and to have the capabilities that we have, but we have those traits without having had to learn them in this life. Since we can feel aggravated, be greedy, and be dumb, we must have become familiar with these traits in the past, otherwise it would be quite difficult to explain why we have them. Somebody could argue, "Okay, aggravation, greed, and ignorance are our nature, so we didn't have to learn them. These emotions are our nature, just like heat is the nature of fire. It's not possible to remove heat from fire. If it were possible, fire wouldn't be fire." Should we think that our conflicting emotions are just as much our nature as heat is the nature of fire, any attempt to remove them would be in vain and it would be impossible to ever become free of aggravation, greed, ignorance, and our other conflicting emotions.

An example for our body is a computer and the programs. Our computer would be useless without programs. The first moment of conception can be compared to a computer. It slowly uploads the programs after we turned it on. Uploading our computer can be compared to the time our body slowly grows through the care of our mother as well as other conditions. Aggravation, greed, ignorance, and the many conflicting emotions are present, but aren't evident when we were conceived; they start manifesting and become apparent when we start speaking. They weren't absent when we were conceived and took birth, just like the programs installed in our computer aren't missing when our computer is switched off and don't need to be installed anew every time it is switched on. The programs need to have been installed earlier so that our computer functions when we want to use it. In that way, claiming that our conflicting emotions arise suddenly, or on their own, or by chance, or without a cause can't stand the test. We have to have become accustomed to the conflicting emotions that we have for them to be present and for them to appear when specific conditions prevail.

Looking at our mind, we see that it has qualities of wakeful awareness. When we investigate, we usually don't make a distinction between mind and matter. The conventional ways of thinking are that mind is born from the combination of the five elements (earth, water, fire, air, and space), or from the connection of the seed of the father with the ovum of the mother, or of its own accord, or suddenly in material objects like stones, wood, and so forth. We can argue, "No, it's not that simple. Not just any material substance can create mind, because mind is created from a father's and a mother's mind and substances." Knowing that our father and mother have a mind causes us to think like this. In that case, we could ask, "What is the relationship between our father's seed and his mind and our mother's ovum and her mind? Are their minds their seed and ovum or are they mixed? Or does mind have the quality of matter that is inside the seed and ovum?" We can investigate further and ask questions like, "Why is this only the case for a seed and ovum? Do our parents' minds weaken and diminish when they render their seed and ovum to give birth to our mind? Why don't the limbs or physical organs of the parents have a mind?" We would have to examine and analyze all these complex possibilities if we think that there's no difference between mind and matter. Many complex assumptions come up when attempting to explain how a mind enters a body, and everyone can continue investigating as they please. We are free to think of it in less complicating ways by trusting and coming to know that our mind is our own continuum that arises from foregoing moments of our mind. Seeing it in this light is the basis for believing in past and future lives and for appreciating and accepting the law of karma, i.e., that our experiences originate from our own actions.

These reflections seem meaningless to somebody who thinks, "Fine if it's like that. Since the one thing arises from the other and my past life led to this one, I'll just go along with it. Why worry? What difference does it make?" Should there be only one kind of rebirth, there would be no reason to worry. But there are many kinds of existence. Rebirth is possible in pleasant and unpleasant states of existence, such as in one of the realms of the gods, in the realm of the jealous gods, as a human being, as a tormented animal, as a hungry ghost whose thirst and hunger is never stilled, or in one of the hell realms. That's why we contemplate these instructions. It wouldn't be a serious matter if our next life merely depended on our wish to have a pleasant next life, but the Buddha tells us that our actions determine in which of the six realms of existence we will be born. He taught that malevolent actions that we carry out and that hurt others cause us to be born in an unpleasant realm that is marked by suffering and pain and that benevolent actions that we carry out and that benefit others cause us to be born in a pleasant realm of existence, e.g., as a god or as a human being.



It doesn't suffice to just hear the Buddha's teachings, that a pleasant life is the result of having engaged in virtuous deeds and that an unpleasant life is the result of having engaged in non-virtuous actions. It's necessary to contemplate these teachings well and to manifest, i.e., to live, the fruits of having understood them. Yet, we won't be able to contemplate these instructions if we haven't heard or received them. The purpose of contemplating the teachings we have received is to know, for example, that we have to plant rice seedlings and not wheat seedlings if we want to have rice. Since we know that everything that arises and develops has a related cause and since we wish to have a pleasant life, we know that we can only have a good life if we engage in virtuous actions and refrain from engaging in non-virtuous actions. We know that nothing arises due to anything foreign to it or due to not being connected with a related cause, rather, that related causes give rise to corresponding results. Having contemplated and observed that everything arises from a related cause and depends on it, we gladly engage in beneficial activities (*lās-dge-ba*) that cause happiness and well-being (*bde-ba*) and gladly refrain from engaging in non-virtuous actions (*lās-mi-dge-ba*) that cause suffering (*sdug-bsngäl*).

If we look at the fundamental relationship between cause and effect (*rgyu-dang-'bräs-bu*), we understand that our pleasant and unpleasant experiences are the result of the benevolent and malevolent activities of our body, speech, and mind. We interact with others in dependence on our mind (i.e., our thoughts and intentions) and act by means of our body and speech. Verbal and physical activities aren't good or bad as such, rather, our thoughts move us to speak and act the way we do. Our thoughts are our driving force. Beneficial and harmful actions are based on our motivation, therefore we have to distinguish between beneficial and malevolent intentions. When we understand this, then we realize that some actions that we carried out are beneficial and good and some actions that we carried out are harmful and bad. But, how do we know whether we have a good or bad intention?

Bad intentions are thoughts of ill-will that are determined by attachment, *'död-chags*. There's a great variety of ways to be attached and they can be subsumed in three categories. The three categories of attachment are aggravation, greed, and ignorance or unawareness, *ma-rig-pa*. There's no need to discuss that any action carried out due to aggravation is bad and leads to painful results. But, why do actions based on greed and ignorance lead to unpleasant results? Let's look at ignorance first. There are two kinds. One is here and now not realizing the true nature of reality. Having this kind of fundamental ignorance can't be said to be either beneficial or harmful; depending on conditions, its results are indefinite. The other kind of ignorance is the inability to recognize the law of cause and effect; failing to recognize the connection between cause and effect is harmful. The same pertains to greed.

There are different ways of being greedy. One way is being greedy for objects directly perceived with the sense faculties, i.e., craving for pleasures for this life. Greed of this sort is harmful and bad because it causes us to neglect the results of our actions and to ignore long-term perspectives. Somebody might conclude, "Fine, I understand that there are past and future lives and that good actions lead to good results, so why shouldn't I do good and establish a mindset for myself that enables me to attain a life that is just as exquisite as that of a universal monarch?" Such an intention is directed towards a long-term perspective, a next life and not this life, nevertheless, it's craving to be born within the rounds of conditioned existence. Since it's uncertain whether this kind of greed will lead to a good or bad result, it's indefinite. Having greed of this kind can't be said to be harmful, because knowing that good actions lead to a good birth inspires an individual with such far-fetching ambitions to do good. Yet, the intention is based on greed and the result is transient, unstable, and illusory. Any good that is achieved by striving to have such a high rebirth is subject to loss. Such an

individual can attain a good next birth, the only problem is that it's unstable, entails eventual loss, and thus leads to suffering. Seen more deeply and subtly, anybody who does what is possible to attain a better birth, could direct his intention on attaining liberation. Wishing to attain a good next life and not liberation is described as having an inferior motivation.

So, there's a difference between our fundamental tendency to be ignorant and greedy. There is ignorance and greed that bring definite harm and there is ignorance and greed that lead to an indefinite result, e.g., our fundamental inability to directly see reality the way it is. This fundamental ignorance needn't lead to harmful results. Even though most people have this fundamental ignorance, they can do good by engaging in beneficial activities. The same for greed. The joy of wanting to attain a good rebirth for oneself by engaging in beneficial activities is good, but it is transient, unstable, and illusory. It isn't bad, but it's unstable because there is the possibility and likelihood of again becoming involved in harmful activities. It would be more becoming for such a person to think, "Yes, I want to become free from the cycle of suffering and will practice the path to attain liberation for myself."

What are negative intentions and desires? Next to ignoring and neglecting any perspectives other than enjoying life, a negative intention arises from ignorance or mental dullness of not wanting and therefore not being able to see the results of own actions. We can say that there's a harmful aspect of being ignorant of past and future lives in that such persons don't see the necessity and purpose of engaging in what is beneficial and good; therefore they don't make best use of their lives. So, being ignorant of the nature of reality, concentrating on attaining a good future life by doing good in this life, and having the wish to attain liberation for oneself aren't bad. But we should look at the reason such intentions lead to suffering.

We can know which actions cause suffering by looking at the laws of the country we live in. Actions that are in discord with the rules of a country are illegal and punishable by law and those that are in accord with the rules of a country are supported and honoured by the societies we live in. Therefore, good and bad actions are general rules about bringing happiness to others or causing others suffering and pain. Bad actions are the same as illegal actions and lead to experiencing the unpleasant consequences when punished by law.

It would be helpful to distinguish the four ways of clinging to better understand what good and bad actions are. The four ways of clinging are: clinging to worldly things; clinging to the wish to benefit oneself; clinging to attaining a good next life; and clinging to the pleasures of this life. All four ways of clinging are harmful and each leads to a different degree of negative results. For example, the other three ways of clinging are included if we cling to the pleasures of this life. If we are free of craving for pleasures of this life, we aren't automatically free of the other three. Therefore, the four ways of clinging are differentiated from coarse to more subtle. In short, the four ways of clinging don't harmonize with the interrelated connectedness of things and lead to different degrees of suffering. For example, we would be living 100 percent in opposition to the interrelated connectedness of things if we only strive to attain pleasures for our life and would experience 100 percent suffering as a result. Should we wish to become free of such craving, we would need to contemplate the transitory nature of all things. Having done so, we would realize that everything pleasant that we want to have now is impermanent. Knowing that having pleasures in this life isn't reliable, we automatically wish to create the conditions for a good next life and thus engage in good activities. Our actions will then be 25 percent in accord and 75 percent in discord with the connectedness of things. By dispelling hindrances and misconceptions, our ability to do good grows and our discordant actions diminish.

Now we have a better understanding of the relationship between harmful actions that evolve out of ignoring and denying the law of karma, i.e., that every cause leads to a corresponding result, which includes wanting to have pleasures for this life only as well as aggravation. These three factors belong together. We know that bad actions, which are carried out due to antipathy and resentment, cause suffering. How does aggravation arise? It arises from craving for pleasures in this life and feeling upset and irritated when anything impedes us from fulfilling our wish. If we didn't crave for things, we wouldn't have a reason to feel aggravated or upset when things go wrong. Why do we crave for and cling to things for this life? We think that only this life is important and worth living for. So, the cause of clinging to pleasant things in this life is lacking knowledge of former and future lives and denying the results of own actions. Why are greed and ignorance harmful? Because they pave the way for us to cause harm by feeling aggravated and angry about anything we think gets in our way. The other emotions, such as pride and jealousy, are also based on craving for a pleasant life.

In other words, ignoring former and later lives and denying the results of own actions stands 100 percent in opposition to the interconnected relationship between things. It causes 100 percent suffering that is a result of craving and being greedy for the direct experience of pleasant things in this life. Aggravation, anger, jealousy, pride, and the other conflicting emotions are born from craving for pleasant things in this life and evolve into actions of body, speech, and mind. This was a description of how bad actions, which are harmful and are defects, are born.

We have looked at the difference between beneficial and harmful actions. We saw that there are indefinite actions of body, speech, and mind. Actions have related harmful results, related beneficial results, or indefinite results, which means that it's uncertain whether the result of an action will be beneficial or harmful. We also looked at virtuous and non-virtuous actions of body, speech, and mind and saw that they are based on desire, which is determined by ignorance, or greed, or aggravation, or all three.

Looking at good actions now, they are based on good intentions. A good motivation or intention is characterized by being free of ignorance, greed, or aggravation and means having the opposite qualities of these negativities. As was the case for negative actions, for an action to be good means knowing that something precedes what follows and acknowledging and accepting the law of karma. Craving for pleasant things in this life isn't our goal when we have good intentions. Being free of wanting to have everything pleasant in this life and thus being free of craving and greed, we aren't aggravated by hindrances that would otherwise upset us. Furthermore, being free of ignorance, greed, and aggravation ensures that our verbal and physical actions will be wholesome and good. We saw that we become familiarized with thoughts and actions that we carry out and that they become habits. Even after we have died, our habits that have become lodged in us manifest to us as new appearances, which are related with the habits we accumulated.

The motivation makes the difference between good and bad actions. Our actions occur in reciprocity with our environment and the world. Our actions also depend on conditions, which are our body, our possessions, our friends, relations, and living beings in the world. It's necessary to differentiate between causes and conditions. Our body isn't good or bad, rather, our intentions determine whether we make good use of our body or not. The same with our possessions; they aren't good or bad, rather, our intentions determine whether we use them for a good purpose or not. It's the same with our friends, enemies, and associates; our relationship with them determines whether we act good or badly. These three - our body, possessions, and the people we associate with - aren't good or bad as such, rather, they are the contributory

conditions that cause us to act virtuously or non-virtuously. If we mentally, physically, and verbally relate to these three contributory conditions harmoniously and in mutual accord, beneficial results will follow; if we do so in discordance, unpleasant results will follow. In other words, if we relate to the three contributory conditions free of ignorance, greed, and aggravation, then pleasant results will ensue; if we relate to them with ignorance, greed, and aggravation, then unpleasant results will ensue. So, by ignoring former and later lives and by denying that related causes engender corresponding results, we will crave for and cling to our body, possessions, and people and will be dissatisfied, have problems, and have other negative emotions when negative conditions prevail.

We can say that due to ignoring past and future lives and due to denying that causes engender related results, we reject and try to eliminate all unpleasant and painful experiences we have and long to have everything that we think is pleasant and nice. We think that our body, possessions, and the people we know are responsible for our satisfaction or dissatisfaction and therefore we try to win control over them. Upset about anything or anyone that hinders us from attaining our wish to control them so that we feel happy and are satisfied, we act accordingly.

Our actions are based on misinterpreting what genuine happiness is and, due to taking temporary happiness wrongly, we struggle to attain happiness that is transitory and unreliable. Failing to realize that former actions lead to later results, we don't understand that every pleasant experience is the result of previous good actions. Rejecting karma and being ignorant of former and later lives, we misinterpret anything that we think is pleasant as genuine happiness and strive to attain it. We have sympathy for anything pleasant that we have and think is genuine and antipathy for anything unpleasant or painful that we feel or experience. Clinging to what we think is pleasant by assuming it is genuine and rejecting what we think is unpleasant or dissatisfactory, we exert much effort to keep whatever we have that we think is pleasant and to eliminate anything that is unpleasant or painful for us. We act accordingly and, struggling to achieve our goal, we cause harm. If we have the truth of karma in mind, that all our actions lead to corresponding results and that we had a past life and will have a next life, then, because of being less anxious to have a pleasant life now and because of being less upset about impediments that hinder us from having a pleasant life, we will be less greedy and aggravated. As a result, we will more easily be able to abide in a state of equanimity. Being free of ignorance, we understand that pleasant and unpleasant feelings aren't caused by an outer source, but are caused by our own actions. By understanding that we can't achieve happiness and can't eliminate any dissatisfaction and frustration we feel through inappropriate means, there's less danger of succumbing to greed and aggravation. When we understand that our present good situation is due to our former good actions, we will understand that it's useless and inappropriate to want to directly and immediately achieve happiness and have everything pleasant and nice.

Being free of ignorance, we are free of craving and greed. Being free of craving and greed, we are free of aggravation. Being free of aggravation, it will be easier for us to abide in equanimity.

The ability to remember the transient nature of all things is another advantage of understanding that related causes engender corresponding results and that something that comes later is preceded by something previous and related to it. Our greed, longing, and struggle for pleasant experiences diminish if we don't forget impermanence. Knowing that anything we accomplish or crave to have is impermanent and ends, we realize that any happiness we try to attain will actually bring suffering. So, being aware of impermanence

enables us to appreciate and acknowledge that we had a past life and will have a next life and that our actions are the cause for all our experiences. Having such awareness guards us from becoming entangled in greed that in turn leads to aggravation and suffering.

The same applies for unpleasant experiences and feelings. When we understand that our present situation is due to our former actions, we won't be upset and angry when we have bad experiences or suffer. Being aware that we created the causes for our own situation stops us from blaming other persons or outer things for anything unpleasant we experience. We can make good use of any suffering we experience by having empathy for other persons or beings who suffer. Acknowledging that we create our own situations can also inspire us to arouse the wish to become free of temporary suffering and attain lasting liberation. Furthermore, by acknowledging that we create our own suffering, we feel encouraged to make better use of our life by engaging in wholesome and beneficial activities.

The result of knowing that we have former and later lives and of acknowledging that our past actions led to our present situation is very helpful in that we stop misinterpreting unpleasant and pleasant things we encounter or go through by wrongly thinking and clinging to them as the source of lasting suffering or genuine happiness. By making good use of any situation, we loosen the grip we have on greed and aggravation and as a result are more balanced. And so, in this discussion we have briefly looked at karma.

#### **d) Wholeheartedly Aspiring to Attain Liberation**

We looked at the explanations on arousing the wish to attain liberation according to the text *The Essence of the Three Principal Aspects of the Path* by Je Tsongkapa and saw that we need to become free of the wish for pleasures in this life and the wrong assumption that it's possible to attain lasting happiness through worldly ways. In order to arouse the wish for liberation fully, it's necessary to contemplate that we will die, that everything is transient, and that we will experience the results of our actions after we have died. When we cling to the pleasures of this life, we cling to our body, our possessions, and our friends, relatives, and acquaintances. Knowing that we will part from them when we die, we realize that they can never be the source of lasting happiness. In which way do contemplating impermanence and death help us abandon clinging to pleasures of this life?

Contemplating death helps realize that we'll leave our body, our possessions, and the persons who are dear to us behind when we die and thus we realize that they can't offer lasting peace and happiness. No matter how strong and healthy our body is, no matter how much we owned or how many friends we have, we know that we can't prevent death from occurring and that they can't help us then. We developed many conflicting emotions by being overly attached to and concerned about our body, possessions, and friends and relations while we lived and need to be free of clinging to them when we die. Our mindset and the good we were able to accomplish by learning and practicing the Dharma during life enable us to be free of clinging when we die and therefore the Dharma is our only help then. We can conclude, "Okay, I'll do lots of good things now so that I attain a good rebirth." Engaging in good actions to achieve this aim is clinging to pleasures in conditioned existence, for example, wanting to experience the lush life of a universal monarch somewhere in the rounds of samsara. We should know that even the life of a universal monarch ends and he can't take all his possessions, his friends, and his servants with him when he dies. Another problem we should consider when having wishes of this kind is that our clinging to pleasures of conditioned existence and the ensuing emotions intensify while living the life of a universal monarch and become lodged in us as further habitual patterns. Beings living in any form of conditioned existence within the six



realms of samsara (from the lowest hell realm to the highest realm of the gods) suffer the consequences of their own actions, are controlled by others, and are forced to cope with new ordeals when their time in the respective realm is spent. By contemplating the defects of samsara, we realize that it's always pervaded by suffering and that it offers no possibility to experience lasting peace and happiness. We realize that everything in samsara is a problem.

When we realize that samsara isn't an island of lasting peace and happiness and think of our body, we have to admit that one day it will fall to the ground and then it will be finished. So, we know that our body isn't the source of lasting peace and happiness. We can argue, "All right. My insufficient body isn't that special, so it would be great if I had the body of a god." But a god also dies. Therefore, having a pleasant body of a god isn't the source of lasting happiness either. In fact, it's a source of misery. Why? Because we would develop extreme attachment to the plentiful riches that are experienced in the realms of the gods and, due to becoming more entrenched in delusive actions that are determined by greed, jealousy, and so forth while living the life of a highly situated individual, we would eventually suffer the results, which will be very painful.

The same applies to our possessions. We will have to leave whatever we collected behind when we die, so our belongings won't be of any use to us then. Having become attached to our belongings and thus having developed a miserly mindset, we paved the way to be born in the realm of the hungry ghosts in our next life. We see that our riches didn't benefit us in the least, but are the cause for taking on a rather unpleasant rebirth, such as that of a hungry ghost. The same applies to our friends and acquaintances. Although we know many nice people, we'll have to part from them and they won't be able to help us when we die. Having been attached to them during life, we became involved in many harmful activities and in the process made preparations to be born in a realm that is characterized by suffering.

We needn't talk ourselves into believing that all the exquisite things we accumulated entail suffering. If all the luxuries in the world made us happy and content, we could close our discussion. But the problem is that we're never satisfied with the things we have and therefore always want more. The process goes on and on. The longer we continue wanting more and more, the more discontent we become. Since lasting peace and happiness can't even be found in best worldly things, our thirst for a pleasant life will never be quenched. Furthermore, our dissatisfaction and frustration are continuous and will accompany us in every next life. As long as our actions are determined by our ignorance, this continual process will never end and so we will continue suffering. Why doesn't suffering end? Because our mind is not limited and isn't restricted like our body. Our body has spatial limitations; it grows, becomes old, sick, and ends. Mind doesn't grow old; it has no beginning and no end. That's why our suffering and frustration won't cease as long as we are ignorant and consequently we remain entrenched in our conflicting emotions on account of our greed for happiness and satisfaction.

As it is, we have three problems that we can't solve. Firstly, everything we have and wish for is unreliable and will never bring lasting peace and happiness. Secondly, we are always discontent and therefore never stop craving. Thirdly, our problems never end. If we ask where these three problems come from, they come from our physical susceptibility to pain. Where does our body come from? Our physical susceptibility to sickness and pain causes us to again and again become entangled in these three problems. Where does our sensitive body come from? It's the result of actions we carried out in a former life, motivated by our various conflicting emotions. Due to the law of cause and effect, our motivation and emotions create our body and these three problems. We are exposed to all three problems in every situation.

The higher we rise and the more pleasures we experience, the greater the risk of being more intensely attached to what we assume are the joys and pleasures of life. Based on our clinging to worldly pleasures, we engage in activities that cause us to fall into a lower realm of existence. Afterwards we take birth in a higher existence, experience pleasure, then fall again, and so forth. Conditioned existence is a never-ending cycle of rising and falling and rising and falling again. Impermanence is the characteristic of all states of conditioned existence. Having lived in one realm, we must die again. No matter where we take birth, lasting peace and happiness can never be found in any realm of conditioned existence. Every realm of samsara is created by our actions, which are based on our habitual conflicting emotions that move us to act the way we do. As a result, we must necessarily endure the resulting hardships. And so we see why conditioned existence is called “samsara” (*'khor-ba*), the unremitting, never-ending cycle of rising and falling and rising and falling, where no lasting peace and happiness can ever be found.

As long as we are subject to the results of our actions, which are based on our conflicting emotions that determine our motivation, we are controlled by something other than our true nature and experience suffering. When we realize this, we understand what the Buddha meant when he said, “Suffering is all-pervading and ever present.” The wish can arise in us to leave the incessant cycle of suffering, which we can by becoming free of being controlled by our conflicting emotions and the consequences of our actions. This is why the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths when he turned the Wheel of Dharma the first time and said, “Suffering and pain should be identified and known.”

Let’s assume that we understand the First Noble Truth and conclude, “Okay, I want to completely get out of this cycle of suffering.” Is this the wish for liberation? Yes and no, because we still have doubts and think, “Can I?” We might have the wish to be free of being controlled by our conflicting emotions and the results of our actions, but we are hesitant because we doubt whether it’s possible. Therefore, we don’t have the full wish for liberation. Asking ourselves whether we can leave samsara is an important question and deserves to be answered in depth.

We saw that our problem is being incessantly controlled by our conflicting emotions and the results of our actions, so it’s a matter of relinquishing the results of our conflicting emotions that cause us to act the way we do. Our actions are determined by our motivation that is based on our conflicting emotions. Since our emotions determine our motivation, they are the starting-point, i.e., they are the first impulse that moves us to act. So, stopping our conflicting emotions puts an end to acting the way we do. But, how do we do this? We looked at the conflicting emotions and saw that the three main ones are aggravation, greed, and ignorance, therefore we have to relinquish them. Can we? That is the actual question. Ignorance is the basis for the other two main conflicting emotions that cause us to act the way we do and that result in suffering. So the actual question should be whether it’s possible to become free of samsara by eliminating ignorance. Asking, “Am I really capable of ever ending suffering?” is the same as asking, “Can I eliminate ignorance?” We need to know what ignorance is so that we can relinquish it. One thing for sure, if our ignorance accords with reality, we couldn’t. It’s only possible to relinquish ignorance if it’s a mistake, an error. Since ignorance is a mistake, we can overcome it by first understanding what it is. Let me give an example.

Being in a badly lit room, we might see something that is striped, long, thin, and coiled and think what is lying on the floor is a snake. We would be terrified and totally frightened. If we want to overcome the suffering we experience by being as afraid as we would be, we would have to check and find out if it isn’t a rope. We would realize that our excitement and fear

were unfounded after we discovered that the object wasn't a snake, but a coiled rope and then we wouldn't be frightened anymore. Not examining the object we can't really identify and are so afraid of by just sitting in the dark and telling ourselves, "No, it's not a snake! No, it's not a snake! It's something else" won't help because, should the object be a snake, we would really be in trouble. This example shows that a misunderstanding can only be clarified if it is a misunderstanding, like the rope that isn't a snake. But, how does the misconception that a rope is a snake arise in the first place?

We have the misconception that the object we saw is a snake because we are afraid of snakes, have probably often thought about our fear of snakes, or might even have been frightened by having seen a real one, so we have the habit of being afraid of snakes. Secondly, there has to be something that resembles a snake. Thirdly, we couldn't see clearly because the room was too dark. Had the room been lit, we would have been able to recognize that the object we saw was a rope. These three conditions have to be present for anybody to be terrified and frightened in such a situation. Giving in to fear won't solve the problem. Someone who knows that the object is a rope can tell the frightened person, "Don't be afraid. Nothing will happen. It's only a rope." Maybe that isn't enough, so he would have to say, "Since the conditions are the way they are, maybe you are mistaken." The person who is frightened might have doubts and think, "Hm, although I'm still trembling with fear, maybe I'm mistaken." Thinking like this, the terrified person might become interested in finding out what the object could be. He would approach it with a lamp in his hand and check. He will only be able to overcome his fear by identifying the object. If he does, he will directly see for himself, will have eliminated his misconception, and will exclaim, "Oh, it's only a rope." By engaging in the gradual process of examination, the misconception of thinking that the rope is a snake is clarified and fear is dispelled. We overcome our ignorance in the same way.

Ignorance (*ma-rig-pa*), i.e., unawareness, is the basis for any suffering that is experienced. We saw that there are two kinds of ignorance. One is the inability or unwillingness to acknowledge the law of cause and effect, thus denying that one thing follows one thing and leads to another. The second kind of ignorance is the fundamental ignorance of not realizing reality, *de-kho-na-nyid*, 'the state of being just as it is' (also translated as 'thatness, suchness'). How do we misinterpret and what is our fundamental misconception of reality? Assuming that persons, things, and events are self-existing entities. The truth of reality is that nobody, nothing, and no event is a self-existing entity. Yet, we apperceive phenomena as though they have inherent existence, i.e., are entities that exist of their own accord. This is what ignorance or misinterpreting appearances is all about. If appearances have inherent existence and are self-existing entities, it would be impossible to dispel the belief that things exist from their own side because, in that case, they would accord with reality. But this is not the case. Then why do we assume that phenomena (*dharma* in Sanskrit, *chös* in Tibetan) are real? Just as illustrated in the example of mistaking a rope for a snake, firstly, we have the deeply ingrained habit of thinking that every phenomenon we perceive is self-existing, i.e., truly exists. Next to this habitual thought pattern, secondly, phenomena actually seem to exist from their own side. Thirdly, due to bad lighting, i.e., due to lacking discriminating wisdom-awareness (*prajna* in Sanskrit, *shes-rab* in Tibetan), we don't perceive phenomena clearly.

Making use of our discriminating intelligence (*so-sor-rtog-pa'i-shes-rab*), we examine phenomena and gradually realize the true nature (*rang-bzhin*) of the way things really are (*gnäs-lugs*). We find that phenomena have no own nature (*rang-bzhin-med-pa*) and are therefore empty of what is referred to as "a self." Thus we realize that - even though persons, appearances, and experiences (i.e., phenomena) seem to be independent existents - in truth they are empty of an independent self. Lacking an independent self is called "emptiness"

(*shunyata* in Sanskrit, *stong-pa-nyid* in Tibetan). Having examined and found that all phenomena have no own nature, we realize that we had misinterpreted appearances that we perceived on account of our ignorance. Should we have relinquished our ignorance, we will then have dispelled our conflicting emotions. As a result, our actions that cause suffering as well as our suffering will have ceased. That's why the Buddha taught the Second Noble Truth and tells us, "The source of suffering should be abandoned."

Inasmuch as we have been able to acknowledge that it is possible to relinquish the source of suffering as well as suffering, we will appreciate the fact that it is possible for all suffering to cease. By understanding the cause of suffering, we will realize that suffering can end. When we are aware of the possibility to become free of all suffering, the wish for liberation could arise in us and we might resolve, "Okay. Now I know that it's possible. The result is good. I can attain liberation. So, I have the wish and will do what I can."

Je Tsongkapa concluded the first chapter, "Arousing the Wish to Attain Liberation" of the treatise *The Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, with the following verse:

/ de-ltar-goms-päs-'khor-ba'i-phung-tshogs-la /  
/ yid-smön-skäd-cig-tsam-yang-mi-skye-zhin /  
/ nyön-mtshän-kun-tu-thar-pa-dön-gnyer-blo /  
/ byung-na-de-tshe-nges-'byung-skyes-pa-lags //

'In that way, having become familiarized with not for a single moment having craved or been desirous for anything in the unremitting cycle of suffering, but (both) day and night having uninterruptedly had the wish to attain liberation is the time (that this wish has fully) been born in (your) mind.'

This verse tells us that the time the wish for liberation has fully been born in our mind is when we no longer have desire or crave for anything in cyclic existence. Is having the wish for liberation enough to actually attain our goal? No, but it's the prerequisite. Having the sincere wish to attain liberation, we realize that we need to tread the path to liberation. So, having the wish causes us to be interested in taking and experiencing the path.

How do we practice the path (*lam*s)? Having given rise to the wish to attain liberation, we practice the path by developing discriminating wisdom-awareness (*shes-rab*), which enables us to have the right view and precisely know things as they are. It isn't sufficient to just know and feel assured that no phenomenon is as it seems to be, rather, to have the right view we need to directly see things as they are, i.e., empty of an own nature. It will only be possible for us to directly see things as they are if we become familiarized with emptiness. Becoming familiarized with emptiness is a quality that arises from being able to abide in single-pointed concentration (*samadhi* in Sanskrit, *ting-nge-'dzin* in Tibetan). It's only possible to gain knowledge of emptiness by cultivating discriminating wisdom-awareness with stabile concentration. Since the practice of the path consists of developing discriminating wisdom-awareness that is based on having gained stability of mind, our way of life must accord with stability of mind. Living in accord with stability of mind is the practice of ethical conduct (*shila* in Sanskrit, *tshul-khrims* in Tibetan, also translated as 'morality, discipline'). These are the three practices of the path to liberation.

Even if we have stable concentration because we are able to abide in single-pointed concentration, we won't attain liberation without having the view of emptiness (*stong-nyid-lta-ba*), which we win by developing discriminating intelligence. We can only ascertain

emptiness if we can abide in stability of mind together with developing knowledge of things as they are. How do we gain certainty that all phenomena lack independent existence? First we have to listen to the teachings to gain knowledge won by hearing the teachings (*thös-pa-läs-byung-ba'i-shes-rab*). Secondly, we have to reflect the teachings well and gain knowledge won by contemplating the teachings (*bsam-pa-läs-byung-ba'i-shes-rab*). Then we have to win knowledge by becoming familiarized with the teachings through the practice of meditation (*bsgom-pa-läs-byung-ba'i-shes-rab*). That is why it is said that in our practice we have to rely on *shes-rab* to learn, examine, and become familiarized with the teachings. We practice the path and gradually gain knowledge by hearing the words of the Buddha. We gradually gain certainty (*ngäs-shes*) by contemplating and precisely examining the words of the Buddha, and we gradually gain direct insight (*mngön-sum*) by meditating the words of the Buddha that we contemplated well.

Mipham Rinpoche (one of the greatest Tibetan scholars and masters of the last century and a student of Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye) wrote that “Direct insight of the true nature of reality cannot be won without first having gained certainty of the true nature of reality. How can certainty be won? By engaging in deduction, which means being fully dedicated to learning what reasoning actually is.” Shortly before he passed into Parinirvana, the Buddha told his monks, “Oh Bhikshus. Do not accept any of my words on faith, believing them just because I said them. Be like an analyst buying gold, who cuts, burns, and critically examines his product for authenticity.” So, there’s no way around it: If we want to ascertain emptiness, we have to exert effort, make use of our intelligence, and develop the art of analytical cognition, otherwise we won’t ever be able to have certainty. Which kind of analytical reasoning? There are many kinds, but the best analytical meditation that we can practice is studying *rten-'brel*. Let’s look at the right view before discussing Bodhicitta.





His Eminence the Fourth Jamgon Kongtrul on the throne in the Gompa at  
Lava Kagyü Thekchen Ling Monastery and Retreat Center.

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

What is valid reasoning of *rten-'brel*, 'dependent origination'? The Buddha tells us that we need to observe indications to realize that no phenomenon is self-existent and that all things are connected. What is the most obvious indication that no phenomenon has inherent existence? The mere fact that every appearance arises in dependence on other appearances is evidence for the fact that no phenomenon is a self-existing entity. So, two logical deductions can be won by understanding the interrelated connection between things; firstly, that every phenomenon arises and appears in dependence on a related cause and specific conditions. Secondly, that every appearance is labelled in relation to other things that have also been labelled. These two seem different.

There are adherents of a philosophical school which professes that every phenomenon is merely an appearance or projection of our mind, which is the reason they are called “Cittamatra” (*sems-tsam-pa*, ‘Mind Only’). To appreciate the very profound philosophy of Cittamatra, it’s necessary to understand in which way every appearance and projection is a result of our habitual thought patterns, i.e., our mindset. We looked at this in the earlier discussion, that every action is a cause of a related result. The Cittamatra explain dependent origination in great detail and tell us that here and now we merely apperceive the appearances of our habitual thought patterns that we created in the course of our lives. But they have only understood one aspect of dependent origination. Proponents of Madhyamaka (*dbu-ma*, the ‘Great Middle Way’) teach that we only apperceive phenomena in relation to other things, i.e., we identify and define an object we call “long” in dependence on and in relation to an object we identify and call “short.” And so, we label the relative appearance of phenomena and not their ultimate way of being.

Looking at dependent origination, we can observe that a seed grows into a sapling. The seed on its own doesn’t bring about the growth of a sapling. Many conditions are required for a seed to grow into a sapling. When the specific cause (in this case a seed) comes together with specific conditions (earth, moisture, warmth, time, etc.), it grows into a sapling. The seed isn’t a self-existing entity either, otherwise it wouldn’t have had to depend on many causes and conditions to have become a seed. The same for the sapling. It was at no time whatsoever a self-existing entity, otherwise it wouldn’t have had to depend on many causes and conditions to have become a sapling. This example illustrates what arising through dependence on many other things means. In the absence of the necessary conditions, a seed couldn’t grow into a sapling, i.e., a seed can only grow into a sapling if the necessary conditions are present. Specific conditions are needed, though, because a seed could not grow into a sapling if we use it to make *tsampa* that we eat. *Tsampa* is roasted flour, usually barley flour and sometimes wheat flour that is mixed with salty Tibetan butter.

Dependent origination isn’t only valid for outer things, but also for our innermost being, our life. Our life depends on a great number of conditions, on the coming together of the results of our actions, on our parents, on our habitual patterns, etc. We call the entire aggregation of all these aspects “self.” By investigating and finding that the pleasant life we have now is the result of many good actions that we carried out in our past life, we realize that we should take advantage of our good situation and engage in good actions to develop new good habits so that we don’t end up in the hungry ghost or animal realms. We wouldn’t always be an animal should we be born in the animal realm, because being born as an animal is the result of many causes and conditions and therefore doesn’t last. Wherever we are born in the cycle of conditioned existence, we will always be dependent on others and will never be independent.

So, we can understand that everything in the world is merely an appearance that arises in a process of interrelatedness with other things and that no self-existing entity can ever be found that doesn’t change. Although phenomena seem to be independent existents, every phenomenon arises due to interrelatedness with and in dependence on other things. Thinking that things are independent existents is only an idea and is merely based on concepts. The successive precision of causes and results that manifest is also nothing other than mere appearances that at no time or at any point ever existed independently. Every phenomenon arises in dependence on other things (*bzhän-dbang*) and nothing is ever born as an independent new creation. Due to the precision of cause and effect, we apperceive apparent phenomena and due to the force of our habitual thought patterns, we think they are self-existing entities. Since this is the case, everything is merely a concept, an idea.

How can we understand that it's only due to our thoughts that things we perceive seem to be self-existent and real? We can see this by looking at dreams, specifically at the fact that we don't realize that we are only dreaming while we dream. For example, we might dream of falling into a ditch, or of burning in a fire, or of being swept away by the strong current of a river and feel terrified and frightened. The suffering we experience while not aware of the fact that we are only dreaming is the same as the suffering we experience while awake. We could dream that we are planting a seed and are waiting for a sapling to grow, which will never happen. It's the same in life. Appearances in dreams no longer seem to be real when we realize that we are dreaming while we are dreaming. It's because of our thoughts that dream-appearances seem real. When we realize that dreams are only dreams while dreaming, all our thoughts that dream-appearances are real and effective cease. By realizing that we are dreaming while we are dreaming, we are free of the fear of being eaten by a tiger, for example, as well as free of craving to eat something tasty. Because we don't have those thoughts, we are in a state of equanimity.

In life, we can also abide in a state of equanimity by realizing that appearances only arise due to the force of our thoughts. We will then be able to experience the cool water in the swimming pool and the warm sun on a hot day in equality. The sun isn't conscious of its heat and the water isn't conscious of its coolness, but we felt the heat of the sun and the cold water because we thought our perceptions were real and therefore we took a swim and a sunbath. When we realize that we create our experiences with our thoughts, we can abide in the stability of our mind and experience all appearances in equanimity. When abiding in equanimity, free of hopes and fears, we will be able to see that all appearances are empty of an own existence and thus we will directly see emptiness.

There are many stories of Mahasiddhas who were able to abide in equanimity in very critical situations. For example, the King of Lahore tried to burn Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava, at the stakes. Instead of being burned, cool water moistened him. Guru Rinpoche was a Great Siddha who had attained direct realization of reality and, since he didn't apperceive and experience a difference between the appearance of fire and water, he was able to transform the burning flames into the cool and refreshing water of the lake that can be seen to this day and that is a favourite pilgrimage site for devotees from all over the world. It is situated in North India and is known as Rewalsar, 'Lotus Lake,' *Tso Pema* in Tibetan.

There's an incident in the life of Jetsün Milarepa that I want to tell. A *Geshe* (a spiritual master holding a high academic degree) looked him up with the intention of debating. The Geshe said to Milarepa, "That boulder, hm. What's the characteristic of a boulder? That boulder is an impediment." Milarepa answered, "It's not" and walked through it. The Geshe was astounded and commented, "But space isn't an impediment." Milarepa replied, "Space is an impediment" and sat in the lotus posture in the sky. These stories don't comply with our usual way of seeing things. We think that a boulder and space have an own nature and therefore a boulder hinders movement and space allows movement, while they are free of being like that. 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 equally. Therefore the Madhyamaka School explains dependent origination by teaching that we think things really exist in dependence on our thoughts and imputations.

The Madhyamaka Tradition addresses dependent origination by explaining that due to the force of our imagination (*kun-rtag*) and imputations (*kun-rtog*) we think that things are independent existents. They teach that we will never find anything that isn't anything other than our thoughts. We create thoughts when we think that things we perceive are independent

existents, so nothing can ever be found to have substantial existence that isn't created by our thoughts. The Madhyamaka School takes the explanation that every phenomenon is only mind, which the Cittamatra School explains in great detail, a step further by analyzing and showing that every phenomenon that we apperceive is the interaction between our imagination and thoughts.

Mahasiddha Saraha also tells us that phenomena seem to exist because of our thoughts. He presented the example of the surface of a lake stirred up by wind. The force of the wind, which isn't the characteristic of water, causes waves. In the same way, phenomena have no characteristic other than those we impute with the forceful wind of our thoughts, which cause us to believe that phenomena really exist.



Understanding and ascertaining that all experiences and appearances always were and always are by nature empty of substantial existence is having the right view (*yang-dag-lta-ba*). Whatever takes place and appears has two aspects that need to be distinguished. They are the two truths (*bden-gnyis*). The two truths are: the relative or conventional truth (*kun-rdzob-kyi-bden-pa*) and the absolute or ultimate truth (*dön-dam-pa'i-bden-pa*).

Why is it necessary to speak of two truths? Because our cognizing mind can apprehend in two ways, delusively and free of delusion. When our cognizing mind is deluded, appearances that we perceive are delusive; yet, we apperceive them as valid and true. If our cognizing mind is free of delusion, appearances that we perceive aren't delusive and we apperceive them as they appear. Let me exemplify: Spectators of a magic show perceive the appearance of an elephant as real, while the elephant isn't really there. Both ways of cognizing, i.e., apperceiving an elephant that is present and apperceiving its non-reality, pertain to the same object. This means to say that the apparent elephant is empty of being a real elephant and the elephant that isn't an elephant isn't impeded from appearing as a real elephant for spectators who are under



the spell of the magician's wand. We can look at this phenomenon through the lens of three people who apperceive differently, the magician who can befool an audience, a spectator who thinks he sees a real elephant, and somebody who happened to drop by and sees a stone. What do these three persons see? The spectator who was befooled sees an elephant. The person who wasn't deluded sees a stone. And the magician sees the elephant, but he knows that it isn't real. The meaning of this example is to know that because we are deluded by our emotions and thoughts, we apprehend appearances like the spectator who was befooled, saw an elephant, and thought it was real. Seeing a huge elephant so near is frightening. In the same way, influenced by our assumption that the things we apprehend in the world are real, we are frightened and suffer. Somebody who recognizes the true nature of things, i.e., that all appearances are emptiness, will not be frightened when perceiving phenomena. Just like the magician, he will perceive the elephant that clearly appears to him, but, knowing it's a delusion, he won't think that the elephant that clearly appears to him is real and thus won't become involved in delusive reactions that bring suffering. Nothing disappears or is removed from anyone who directly realizes the empty and true nature of appearances. When we don't think that appearances are true and real, they continue appearing, but we won't cling to them and they won't frighten us. As a result, we won't be greedy, jealous, etc. and won't become involved with conflicting emotions that cause suffering.

When we don't get what we wanted or are hindered from accomplishing an aim, we won't be disturbed, jealous, nor develop other disturbing emotions if we have realized that they don't truly exist. As a result, we won't become involved and entangled in activities that cause suffering and then won't experience suffering later. The chain of suffering is broken when we recognize the seeming appearance of appearances, which don't disappear, but continue appearing.

When we have realized emptiness of appearances, we see that things offer no proposition to accept or reject them. Being free of attachment and aversion is being in a state of equanimity. Wisdom is increased when appearances are perceived and their empty nature is apprehended. Having realized emptiness, we continue engaging in the six *paramitas* (*phar-phyin-drug*), which are the beneficial actions of generosity, ethical conduct, patience, joyful endeavour, concentration, and discriminating wisdom-awareness. In this way, we increase our wisdom and increase our good activities. So, having the right view and living in such a way is truly excellent.

It would be helpful to reflect and examine the words of the Buddha, who teaches us that delusive appearances and the fundamental nature of reality (*gnäs-lugs*), which is emptiness (*stong-pa-nyid*), aren't different and thus aren't mutually exclusive. Doubts can arise in our mind and we might think, "If the fundamental nature of all conventional appearances is emptiness, then how can they manifest so precisely and clearly? It seems to be such a contradiction." When we hear that nothing truly exists, we might be inclined to ask, "Yes, but how can something that doesn't really exist appear to be the result of a cause?" The Buddha would reply, "Since every conditioned appearance arises due to causes and results, nothing can inherently exist." We, in contrast, think, "If something arises as a result of a cause, it really exists."

For a Buddha, all appearances are appearances of the mind. He sees that by virtue of their force, but without real existence, all our habitual patterns that are stored in our mind reflect on the mirror of our mind as the six realms of conditioned existence. As long as we don't realize that all appearances are merely reflections of our past habits on the mirror of our mind and aren't real, we will continue being seduced by our attachment and aversion, will remain

entangled in our conflicting emotions, and will engage in activities that cause suffering. Looking at the reflections of our personal habits more closely, we first feel happiness or suffering when we perceive an appearance and feel sympathy or antipathy. Then, due to having attachment or aversion for reflections we see on the mirror of our mind, we act the way we do. In that way, we create new habits that in turn appear as reflections on the mirror of our mind. And so, the process of being and becoming continues.

Being trapped in the way we apperceive the world (which is nothing other than the reflection of our own past habitual patterns) can be compared with a projector that objectifies what is subjective on a screen. We experience suffering or happiness while watching the movie on our habitual patterns, become entangled in our attachment and aversion, act accordingly, and create new habits that we film with our camera and later project on a screen and watch. In this way, we are like a camera that continues filming the series of events we create and we are also like a projector that projects the movies on the screen, which we later see. In other words, we are both the camera that makes the movie of the events that we create and the projector that projects the film that we made and later watch. Our immediate state of mind is the product of our past actions that we carried out in dependence on our past habitual patterns, which can be compared with the movie we presently watch and see. Believing that the scenes in the series of the movie are real, we react to the new series, film our reactions, and watch the next series that is a continuation of the last. Again, we react, film our reactions, watch the movie that we project on the screen with our projector, react again in a process that continues unless it is interrupted. This example illustrates *samsara*, '*khora*'-ba, which means 'going around in circles' in an uninterrupted series that we create by delusively reacting the way we do to one delusion after the other.

Examining the movie we make more closely, our camera is our sense perceptions. But a camera is useless unless it's used to make a movie. Actors are also needed to make a movie. Who are the actors? Our aggravation, our greed, and our ignorance. When we are aggravated and angry, we are making a movie that we will later watch on what life is like in the hell realms. When we are greedy and thus miserly, we are making a movie on what it is like to live in the hungry ghost realm. When we are mentally dull or stupid, we are making a movie on living as an animal in the animal realm. For example, we can understand this because we feel like we are burning in a fire when we give in to aggravation and anger. If we then use harsh words that hurt somebody or if we beat that person up, he will become angry and in the heat of rage will fight with us. This illustrates that when we are angry, we are in the burning flames of a hell realm. In this moment, a new tendency is born in us, which is stored in our mind as a habitual pattern that we later see as the movie we made and project on the screen.

Our sense perceptions change the very moment we are struck with anger and rage. Then we apperceive everybody we know or meet as an evil spirit, or the soft fabric of our clothes as coarse and scratchy, and so forth. Actually, this state is very similar to what is described as living in a state of hell. Since impressions that we create in our life are stored as habits in our mind, by being angry now, we are paving the way to later watch the movie we made on life in a hell realm. The same with greed. Due to being overwhelmed by greed, we are continuously dissatisfied. This is so because we think that we could lose something we have or that something is missing in our life. Thus we are miserly and always want more. Being entrenched in the feeling that we lack something, we struggle to get and hoard what we think we need and have managed to get. Greed means having a poverty-stricken mentality. We will later be necessitated to see what it means to never get enough in the movie we made on how beings who live in the realm of the hungry ghosts experience their existence. What about mental dullness or stupidity? It's a state of not wanting to see that our actions determine our

experiences as well as denying past and future lives. Not wanting to see that we are responsible for our situation, we feel that we are being pushed around and are controlled by a source outside ourselves. In truth, though, we are reacting to our own conflicting emotions, are driven around by them, and are their slave. This is what animals living in the animal realm go through. We will project the movie we made with the camera of our sense faculties on a screen and will then see how animals experience being pushed around and controlled by others.

Let's imagine that we are free of bewilderment, aggravation, and greed and think that we are doing something beneficial and good. Who are the main actors in the movie we are now making and that will later be nice to watch? The main actors in the movie we make with the camera of our sense faculties are the agreeable mental states of being free of delusion, aggravation, and greed. The movie that will be projected on the screen will show the more pleasant sides of conditioned existence, either in the realm of human beings, in the realm of jealous gods, or in the realms of gods. But beings living there also suffer. The specific suffering that human beings living in the human realm experience is the suffering of birth, ageing, sickness, and death. It isn't as intense as the suffering experienced in the hell, hungry ghost, and animal realms. Jealous gods experience the specific suffering that they create by fighting and arguing with the gods. And the gods experience the specific suffering of falling from their pleasant state when their time is spent, which is called "the suffering of passing into another state," i.e., passing from a specific pleasant experience into a corresponding experience of misery and distress.

If we make a movie on freedom from bewilderment, aggravation, and greed, the main actors are freedom from bewilderment, aggravation, and greed. The side actors are called "actions carried out that make the others complete." Whether the movie is pleasant or unpleasant depends on the main actor, the main force that determines our next life. The side actors are the determining force for birth as an individual in the realm of human beings. As it is, most human beings have a certain degree of ethical behaviour, but they are continually desirous and greedy. We experience the suffering of birth, ageing, sickness, and death in the realm of human beings on account of our desires and greed. We all experience a certain degree of happiness as human beings, which is due to not being totally submerged in our conflicting emotions, the main actors. We saw that wholesome actions don't cause suffering. Why, then, do our various ways of experiencing happiness change into suffering? We can't say that our suffering is caused by our good actions, rather, that the side actors of conflicting emotions have mixed in with the main actor in the realm of human beings, which is greed. The jealous gods can also be said to be free of aggravation, greed, and ignorance and therefore their realm is a pleasant one. But, since the side actor, which is ill-will that is born from jealousy, mixed in, they quarrel and fight with the gods and therefore create their own suffering. It's only possible to be born as a god by having engaged in good actions, especially by having adhered to ethical conduct, which can't possibly be the cause of suffering. But gods do suffer because the side actor, which is pride, played an important part in the movie. And so, each movie on the three pleasant realms of existence is determined by the main actor, while the side actors are responsible for the specific ways that beings in those realms suffer.

In the above example, we looked at the experiences of beings living in the three miserable realms of existence (the hell, hungry ghost, and animal realms) and at the experiences of those living in the three more pleasant realms of existence (the realms of human beings, of jealous gods, and of gods). Birth in one of the three lower realms is caused by the force of aggravation, greed, and ignorance. Birth in one of the three higher realms is caused by freedom from the force of these conflicting states of mind. Who is the director of the movies?

The director is the belief that appearances are real, i.e., the director is unawareness (*ma-rig-pa*) of the fundamental nature of reality.

If we think about it, we will understand that primordial, pristine wisdom (*ye-shes*) means realizing that the fundamental nature (*gnäs-lugs*) of all appearances and experiences is emptiness (*stong-pa-nyid*). When we realize emptiness, we will understand that the delusive appearances and experiences of relative reality (*kun-rdzog-kyi-bden-pa*) that arise due to the unfailing truth of cause and result and ultimate reality (*dön-dam-pa'i-bden-pa*) don't stand in opposition to each other, but are like two sides of a coin. In dependence on light, electricity, a projector, a screen, etc., the many images in a movie that are projected on a screen cause us to believe that we are seeing real mountains, landscapes, people, cameras, and so forth, while in fact all images are merely a projection of one picture after another and none ever had true existence. We understand that the clear and precise appearance of images that seem to exist due to causes and results and their lack of true existence don't contradict each other. But, why do we become entangled in attachment and aversion? Because we think that our various experiences of happiness and suffering are real the moment they arise in us, i.e., because we accept happiness and reject suffering.

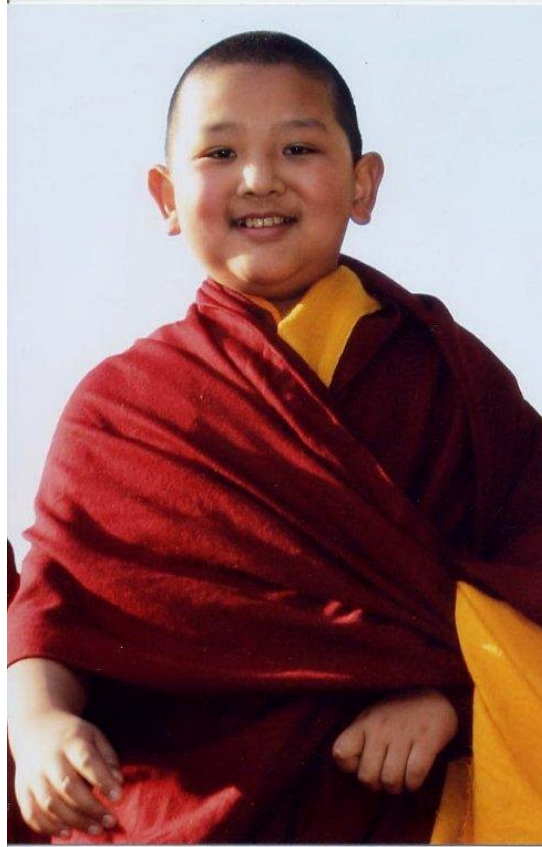
The Protector of Beings, His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa, sees that the six classes of beings living in the six realms of cyclic existence think that what they experience in the respective realm is real and, due to experiencing happiness or suffering, they have sympathy or antipathy. His Holiness exemplified this very precisely and spoke about an event that took place in a remote village in Bhutan. Nobody there had ever seen a mirror, that's how quaint the village was. There was an old man who lived with his son and daughter-in-law in that village. When the father died, everybody was very sad. The son continued working in the forest and one day saw a sparkling light in the bushes. He picked up the sparkling object, looked at it, and saw a face. Since he had never seen a mirror before, he didn't know that the picture of the face he saw was his own, rather, he thought it was a portrait of his deceased father. He was very grateful and thought, "What a fabulous present for me to see my beloved father again." He tucked the mirror in his pocket and took it out to look at whenever he was weary or felt sad. He was very happy when he saw what he thought was the picture of his father and, having looked at it a while, tucked the mirror away again. His wife noticed and wondered, "What's he up to?" She was concerned and asked him, "Show me what you are looking at." He replied, "No, no," and didn't show her what he had that made him so happy. She thought, "What's wrong with him? Does he have a girlfriend?" One day she found the mirror, looked into it, and, just as she had suspected, she saw the picture of a woman. She thought, "I knew it! He has a girlfriend!" The couple got involved in an argument. The man insisted that he was looking at his father's picture and his wife insisted that he was looking at a woman's picture. This story shows that we think that the impressions of our mind are real and don't realize that they are merely a reflection of our habitual patterns. Not recognizing that appearances don't really exist causes us to become involved and entangled in all events of the world.

We think that our suffering and happiness are due to the things and events that we perceive. We think that we are victims and don't realize that our suffering is the result of our past actions. We are like the man who became attached to the picture of his deceased father and was happy; he didn't realize that the picture was a reflection of his own face. His wife also didn't realize that the picture of the woman she saw in the mirror was the reflection of her own face; she thought it was that of another woman, felt aversion, became angry, and suffered. Not realizing the consequences of our own actions, we blame outer things for our suffering and think they are the source of our suffering. We can say that because everything



we experience is the unfailing result of our actions, everything that appears is empty of own existence. Just as the Buddha tells us, “Since all appearances are conditioned by causes and results, everything is empty of inherent existence.”

We can attain clarity of vision by merely observing the results of our actions. Then we gain certainty that nothing exists of its own accord and that everything is empty of inherent existence. Realizing that nothing exists of its own accord is exactly the opposite of assuming that appearances are real. Gaining certainty combined with awareness that is won by developing stability of mind will enable us to directly realize emptiness and is that which will allow us to directly realize the true nature of reality. Realization of the true nature of reality fully uproots our *ma-rig-pa*, ‘ignorance.’ Then we will no longer become involved with attachment, greed, and aggravation. By cultivating our superior intelligence (*shes-rab*) and thereby learning that nothing has inherent existence, i.e., that nothing has a “self,” our conflicting emotions will be relinquished. And that’s how liberation is attained. But the qualities of full and perfect Buddhahood will not manifest by just having attained knowledge of how things are, namely, empty of inherent existence. It’s necessary to cultivate Bodhicitta to relinquish subtlest unawareness of what can be known. Should our aim be attainment of perfect Buddhahood endowed with all qualities that manifest at Buddhahood at the beginning of our practice, it would be advisable to practice Bodhicitta and discriminating wisdom-awareness that realizes selflessness together. If we wish to attain complete and perfect Buddhahood replete with all qualities of enlightenment, we need the right view as well as Bodhicitta, the heartfelt wish to be able to help all living beings attain complete and perfect enlightenment.



### 3. Bodhicitta - *Byang-chub-kyi-sems*

What is Bodhicitta, the Sanskrit term that was translated into Tibetan as *byang-chub-kyi-sems*, ‘the courageous heart of a Bodhisattva’ or ‘the heart of awakening’? There are two aspects, relative and absolute (*kun-rdzob-byang-chub-kyi-sems* and *dön-dam-byang-chub-kyi-sems*). Relative Bodhicitta is experienced at two levels, the level of aspiration (*smön-sems*) and the level of application (*jug-sems*). Bodhicitta of application is based on Bodhicitta of aspiration, therefore I will explain it first.

Bodhicitta of aspiration is having the wish, “Yes, since Buddhahood is the state of being able to help all living beings, I want to attain Buddhahood.” This wish is a resolution and pledge to awaken to Buddhahood to be able to benefit others. Just pronouncing this prayer isn’t sufficient to develop Bodhicitta, though. We need to have the heartfelt aspiration, which is what having the courageous heart of a Bodhisattva means. How can such an outstanding wish arise in our mind?

Bodhicitta of aspiration means first having genuine 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 be completely filled with happiness and joy and aspiring to help them attain this goal. These are the two aspects of Bodhicitta of aspiration. Having such an outstanding attitude is what having compassion (*snying-rje*) and love (*byams-pa*) mean. They are referred to as “the profound kindness of rejoicing in the good of all living beings.”

We need a cause to have such profound kindness, of which there are two. One method is to remember all the good that others have done for us and to be very grateful to them. We

remember all they have done for us by recollecting that every living being was once our kind mother and therefore we are very grateful to everyone. We need to believe in past and future lives when we reflect that all living beings were once our parents. When thinking of past lives, there's no reason to stop at some point and to assume that everything started then, rather, one life follows upon another since time that is without a beginning - and we need parents to be born. If we acknowledge that we have lived countless lives, we realize that we have experienced every situation in the world and that there is no living being who wasn't our kind mother or father in one life or another. Having this in mind, we certainly have a reason to be very grateful to everyone. If we have thought about this well, we can feel that all living beings belong to one big family, that everyone could have been our father, our mother, our brother, our sister and thus we feel dearly connected with every living being. Even if somebody acts as an enemy in this life, nevertheless, we aren't disturbed, but feel that we belong to one big family. When we feel that all living beings belong to one family, we see everyone in this light and then don't give in to minor disturbances. Instead, we feel immense and sincere gratitude by remembering all the good we have experienced in all our lives. Our immense gratitude causes us to have unprejudiced kindness for all living beings, omitting none. The more gratitude we have, the more all-embracing our love and profound kindness will be. We will rejoice when we just see a living being.

The second method to develop all-embracing kindness of rejoicing in the good of all living beings is reflecting that any good qualities that we want to develop are due to others. They give us the chance to practice. Any bad qualities that we have (like greed, jealousy, miserliness, and so forth) only come from our own self-centered attitude. Self-cherishing causes us to develop negative qualities and cherishing others causes us to develop and increase our positive qualities. Therefore, when we realize this, we rejoice in all living beings. Anything we want to accomplish is due to others and anything we ruin is our own fault. What are good qualities? Generosity, ethical conduct, patience, and so forth. We can only practice and develop these qualities in relation to others and we are the ones who benefit. Furthermore, we can only engage in the practices of Mahayana, which are developing Bodhicitta and engaging in the practices of a Bodhisattva, in connection with others. Therefore, we can only develop any new qualities of worth because everyone is not only our family, but also our teacher.

Thinking that it is due to others that we are able to develop qualities of worth and any problems or difficulties we experience are due to our own actions, let us look at what Shantideva said about this in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*. He wrote, "There's no need to waste many words on this." He said this because it is obvious that ordinary beings seek to satisfy their own wants and rarely think of others. What good arises as a result of only trying to benefit oneself? Not much. If we look at the Buddha, who had wondrous qualities, he was never concerned about himself, but only about others and therefore he benefitted the world immensely. Cherishing others more than oneself is the ground for developing magnificent qualities of worth. On the other hand, cherishing ourselves more than others only brings dissatisfaction. That is what Shantideva meant when we wrote, "There's no need to waste many words on this."

We saw that there are two methods to develop profound kindness. One method is to remember that all living beings were once our mother and being very grateful to them for having been so good to us. The other method is to know that any good qualities we want to develop are due to the kindness of all living beings and any harm we experience is due to our self-cherishing attitude. Taking both methods to heart enables us to have profound kindness for all living beings. Feeling wholeheartedly connected with everyone moves us to ask why

they suffer and awakens our genuine and sincere empathy and love for them. Thus we have the sincere wish to help them become completely free of every kind of suffering and to have true peace and happiness. When we have this outstanding aspiration, we realize that we don't have the abilities to fulfil our wish at this time and need to work to have them. Knowing that only a Buddha, an Enlightened One, has such excellent qualities and abilities, we are inspired and feel encouraged to attain full and complete Buddhahood. This is how we gradually develop Bodhicitta of aspiration.

Next to Bodhicitta of aspiration, we need to develop Bodhicitta of application so that we experience Bodhicitta fully. We do this by engaging in the six beneficial activities of a Bodhisattva, which are generosity, ethical conduct, patience, joyful endeavour, concentration, and wisdom-awareness. Knowing that practicing the six paramitas leads to the goal, we resolve to make them a part of our life and, since practicing the six paramitas means developing Bodhicitta of application, we will be practicing the path to great awakening.

We have enthusiasm because we know that we are on the right path and, having made the resolution to tread the path, we are happy to practice the way of a Bodhisattva. Thus we are developing the quality of joyful endeavour, the fourth paramita. Having joyful endeavour, it's necessary to accumulate the merit of wisdom and compassion. We practice the path that accords with the two truths, the relative truth (the apparent reality of cause and effect) and the absolute truth (that apparent realities lack true existence). The goal of a Hinayana follower is realization of wisdom. Integrating the two truths by accumulating the merit of realizing both wisdom and compassion prevents Mahayana followers from falling into the extreme of the relative truth or into the extreme of the absolute truth. And so, there are two reasons to practice the six paramitas, to increase our compassion by engaging in good activities and to increase our wisdom by realizing the true nature of apparent realities. Practicing the first three paramitas of generosity, ethical conduct, and patience is developing good qualities. Practicing the fifth and sixth paramitas of concentration and wisdom-awareness is developing wisdom. We develop the fourth paramita of joyful endeavour when we practice the other five. Our practice is balanced when we accumulate merit by developing wisdom-awareness and compassion together. Having wisdom-awareness (*shes-rab*) means knowing things as they are and having compassion (*snying-rje*) means acknowledging the infallible law of cause and effect of apparent realities. Both practices support each other. Not engaging in analytical reasoning while practicing sitting meditation, wisdom naturally dawns within us and as a result our compassion naturally increases while we are involved with daily activities. Primordial, pristine wisdom (*ye-shes*) awakens within us when we practice in this manner and then subtlest unawareness, i.e., ignorance, is dispelled. And so, we increase our wisdom by resting in equanimity (*mnyam-gzhag*) during meditation sessions and increase our good qualities (*yön-tän*) by cultivating compassion after meditation sessions.

It is said that on the 8<sup>th</sup> level (called “immovable”) of the ten levels (*bhumi* in Sanskrit, *sa* in Tibetan), which a Bodhisattva proceeds through on the journey to complete and perfect Buddhahood, he begins to realize that there is no difference between resting in equipoise and engaging in beneficial activities in the world. Distinguishing the one from the other diminishes, eventually ceases, and, having realized that benefitting the self and benefitting others are one and the same, both practices become inseparable on the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi (“cloud of Dharma”). At that stage, a Bodhisattva has attained freedom from the complexities of the four extremes (*mtha'-bzhi-sprös-bräl*), which are existence, non-existence, both, and neither. Resting in equipoise on the 10<sup>th</sup> bhumi, a Bodhisattva has attained the *Dharmakaya* (*chös-sku*, ‘the truth body’) that benefits himself. Engaging in beneficial activities in the world out of compassion, he has attained the two bodies that benefit others, the *Sambhogakaya* (*longs-*

*spyöd-kyi-sku*, ‘the body of enjoyment’) and the *Nirmanakaya* (*sprul-sku*, ‘the manifested body’). Resting in equipoise while at the same time compassionately caring for others, a courageous Bodhisattva has attained complete and perfect awakening.

We see that for awakening to be ultimate and perfect, it’s necessary to have both wisdom that realizes the true nature of all things and compassionate interaction with all living beings. Our ignorance is relinquished when we have perfected wisdom that benefits us. As a result, our conflicting emotions are dispelled. Then we don’t become involved in actions and thus all causes to again be born into cyclic existence will have ceased. So, by increasing wisdom and by having relinquished all conflicting emotions, any inclination to be born into cyclic existence is exhausted and a noble *Shravaka* (*nyän-thös*, ‘Hearer’) and a noble *Pratyekabuddha* (*rang-sang-rgyäs*, ‘Solitary Enlightened One’) will have attained the state called “liberation” or “abiding in self-absorption of cessation.” Even though such accomplished Hinayana practitioners have reached their goal (*mthar-phyin*), their freedom isn’t complete awakening. They have extinguished the root of emotional fetters, so their future manifestation in the world will have ceased.

Our *skandhas*, ‘aggregates’ (*phung-po-nga*, the five aspects of living beings, which are the physical form, sensations, conceptions, mental formations, and consciousnesses) are the result of our past actions and therefore we are subject to suffering and pain. Having relinquished actions by no longer having conflicting emotions that are based on ignorance, birth into this world has ended and is the meaning of what is called “abiding in self-absorption of cessation.” When abiding in such a sublime state, an accomplished Hinayana practitioner’s coarse physical body is no longer seen. His subtle, unseen physical body rests in nirvana of cessation (*‘gog-pa’i-mya-ngän-läs-‘däs*) for many aeons, until the time comes to continue accumulating merit that is won by developing compassion. It is said that after having rested in self-absorption for many aeons, the Buddha radiates light from his heart to this individual. He wakes up and realizes “Oh, there’s still work to do.” He hears the Buddha tell him to enter the path of Mahayana and to manifest the form kayas for the benefit of others. It is said that such highly realized individuals are born as Bodhisattvas on the 7<sup>th</sup> bhumi (called “going far”). But most scholars say that, since they haven’t cultivated the heart of compassion for others, they have to start on the first path of accumulation from among the five Mahayana paths that lead to complete and perfect enlightenment.

We have briefly looked at arousing the wish to attain liberation, the right view, and Bodhicitta. If you have any questions, please ask.

## Questions & Answers

*Student:* “It’s a pity that the man who asked the long question isn’t here now. He said that matter creates mind. Wouldn’t it be more correct to say that mind creates matter? I just wanted to comment on this.”

*Drupon Khenpo:* That’s true. When we remember the example that our mind is like a projector that projects our life on a screen, we can say that mind creates the appearance of matter.

*Next question:* “Is it really like that, that all sentient beings have been our mothers and fathers before? Because if it were like that, then we would have to have a very strong connection with everybody. We have a stronger connection to some people and don’t have a strong connection to other people. Also, there are millions of people on this Earth. Have we been on Earth that

long? They are becoming more and more. There weren't so many people before, but now there are double and double. I mean, it's only an example, but we should think like that."

*Drupon Khenpo:* If we acknowledge a continuing sequence of countless lives since time that is without a beginning, which means we had very many lives, then we have lived a larger number of lives than the number of living beings on Earth. Acharya Nagarjuna said, "It's possible to count the enormous number of grains of sand pounded out of the entire Earth, but it's impossible to count the number of times one single sentient being was our mother." We wonder, "How can this be? Have I been living on Earth that long and have I lived so many lives?" We should try to imagine how the beginning was and when it took place. Presently, we have conflicting emotions and sensations that aren't our mind's true nature. They couldn't be removed if they were our mind's true nature. If our conflicting emotions, desires, hopes, and fears aren't our true nature, then they are adventitious and can be removed. But, how can we remove our mind's adventitious stains? We can think that in the beginning our mind was pure and clean and suddenly clouds appeared, obscuring our mind with conflicting emotions. Thinking like this is constructing the idea that we fell out of a paradise or out of a garden called "Eden." It would make every attempt to become free seem impossible. We would have to explain how what is termed "The Fall" in Christianity happened and how obscurations arose in the first place. Thinking that there was a paradise and wanting to return to it isn't the same as aspiring to experience perfect Buddhahood, which is only possible by purifying our mind of impurities. Just believing in "The Promised Land" doesn't ensure that adventitious stains that obscure our true nature won't arise again, rather, it simply keeps the chain reaction going. Since everything is transient, it's futile striving for a paradisiacal life, for instance, to be born into one of the many exquisite long-living godly realms because they end at one time or another. Striving for freedom from the suffering of conditioned existence would be unthinkable with such thoughts in mind.

The Buddha tells us that our mind is always and already immaculate and pure and that, at the same time, our adventitious stains (i.e., our conflicting emotions and desires that obscure our pure mind) arise. This has nothing to do with a beginning or an end. Having actual faith in the words of the Buddha, we won't feel necessitated to search for a fixed point that we could point to and say, "That's the time the chain reaction started! That's the beginning!" Our true nature and our conflicting emotions coexist. Since our true nature is timeless, we don't need to wonder about a beginning of our lives in samsara. If, once upon a time, there were a paradise, then we would be able to calculate when all the trouble began. Knowing that our adventitious stains coexist with our true nature, we can recognize our confusion and delusions and then needn't think about a beginning.

We have wandered in cyclic existence since time that is without a beginning. We have lived more lives than the number of living beings on Earth that can be seen and that can be counted. Just as Acharya Nagarjuna stated, "Every sentient being was our mother countless more times than there are grains of sand on Earth."

For example, gold is encrusted by a variety of impure substances when dug up from a mine. It's not the case that gold is mixed with debris and is created anew, rather, it's always pure and only needs to become cleansed of impurities that conceal it. In the same way, our mind's fundamental nature is always and already clear awareness and is not mixed with and therefore damaged and spoilt by the clouds of conflicting emotions that conceal it. Just as pure gold is won by removing the incrustations that cover it, we can remove our obscuring conflicting emotions and then our mind's true nature clearly unfolds and manifests.

*Same student:* "If we have had so many lives, somehow, we haven't advanced."

*Drupön Khenpo:* Since you indicated that it's frustrating not to have advanced along the path, I want to say that there's no reason to be frustrated. The fact that we haven't managed to proceed along the path isn't due to the path, rather, we haven't really tried. How do we know that we haven't really tried? By looking at our present life. How diligent are we in our present life? If we look closely, we can bring Guru Rinpoche's words to mind, who said, "If you want to know what you did in your past life, look at your body. If you want to know your future, look at your present actions." Our present mental and physical state of being is the result of our past actions. Even though we have studied the Dharma for the last 10 or 20 years, how much genuine compassion did we have during that time? Was it easy to have genuine compassion when we did? We might have tried, but it wasn't that easy to have genuine compassion. In contrast, how much effort did we exert to learn to be proud, ignorant, greedy, aggravated? This way we can recognize our preferences. We have become very familiarized with our desires that cause us suffering and anguish, but there is no doubt that we haven't done much to become familiarized with excellent qualities. How can we attain full awakening if we aren't happy to develop and strengthen our beneficial qualities? We have to do something about it by practicing. When we see that it's difficult, we realize how much we failed in the past. If we want to attain complete and perfect awakening in the future, we need to do more now. So, there's no reason to be frustrated. It's only an inventory.

If we are surprised that we haven't attained perfect awakening so far, then it would be good to look at Dharma texts, which speak about another kind of astonishment. We can read that it's hard to do slightest good and so easy to be emotional and do harm. Thinking about this, we can ask, "How did I even manage to attain a human birth?" That is why at the beginning of Dharma teachings we are told how rare and difficult it is to attain a human birth. We should be surprised that we somehow managed to attain a human birth and congratulate ourselves. If we are really surprised and appreciate that we have a precious human birth, then we will do our best to practice the Dharma.

*Next question:* "It's often said that we need a teacher to achieve Buddhahood. Who was the teacher of the first Buddha?"

*Drupön Khenpo:* We can say that the first Buddha is the Dharmakaya, i.e., Samantabhadra, *Kun-tu-bzang-po* in Tibetan, literally meaning 'All-Good.' If we think about it, though, we need to take into consideration that the incessant cycle of suffering has no beginning. Seeing there is no beginning, where would a first Buddha be? It's difficult to answer, because we could ask, "If there was a first Buddha, how could he have found the way to Buddhahood?" We could think about this question for a long time, but what use would it be? It is of paramount importance to ask whether we can attain Buddhahood and that is why we need to know whether our desires are our mind's fundamental nature or whether we have another fundamental nature that can be cleansed of our desires and conflicting emotions. It seems worth trying to awaken and manifest our immaculate true nature and thereby attain complete awakening. That is what we should concentrate on. It would be worth trying to find an answer to the question who the teacher of the first Buddha was if it were helpful. But since we have something beneficial to do, it would be better to ask why we are still scrambling around as second actors on stage.

## **Conclusion**

Let us imagine that we are offering any good that we have been able to give rise to by hearing and contemplating the teachings on the three principal aspects of the path for the benefit of all living beings, specifically that we awaken to perfect Buddhahood together with everyone by correctly practicing the path without any hindrances. Thank you very much.





The Eight Stupas and the Temple of Avalokiteshvara, *Mani Lhakhang*,  
Lava Kagyü Thekchen Ling Monastery and Retreat Center, situated in the district of Darjeeling.

### **Dedication Prayers**

Through this goodness may omniscience be attained and thereby may every enemy (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. Translated by Ingrid McLeod.)



Photo of His Eminence the Fourth Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche giving a Refuge Name to a disciple, photo of His Eminence in the Gompa of Lava Kagyü Thekchen Ling Monastery and Retreat Center, and photo of His Eminence in April 2004 also taken and offered for Venerable Drupon Khenpo Lodrö Namgyal's article by Lena Fong. Photos of Venerable Drupön Khenpo presenting teachings at Pullahari Monastery taken by Ani Karen in 2007 and kindly offered for this article by Lena. Photo of the wonderful Eight Stupas and Mani Lhakhang of Lava Kagyü Thekchen Ling Monastery and of the beautiful flower also taken and graciously offered by Lena. Special thanks to Maria Tsakiri for having recorded the teachings and to Hans Billing for having made them available to us. Wonderful thanks to Lama Dorothea Nett for having hosted this very special and precious event. Thank you so much, dear friends! In reliance on the fabulous simultaneous translation of Tibetan into German by Christoph Klonk, who we want to thank very, very much for his unfailing contribution, translated into English by Gaby Hollmann; the verses of the root text in the *gDam-ngag-mdzöd* that Drupön Khenpo referred to during this seminar were transliterated into Whiley, translated from Tibetan, and the article was also edited and arranged by Gaby Hollmann, solely responsible and apologizing for any mistakes. Everyone specified here has copyright for their contribution. This article is made available for personal use only by Karma Chang Chub Choephel Ling in Heidelberg, by Karma Sherab Ling in Münster, and by the Dharma Download Project of Khenpo Karma Namgyal at Karma Lekshey Ling Institute in Kathmandu; it may not be reproduced or published anywhere. All rights reserved, Heidelberg and Munich, 2010.