



## Venerable Lama Tenpa Gyamtso

### Teachings from a Shangpa Kagyü Lama

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Lama Dorothea Nett: Venerable Lama Tenpa Gyamtso has practiced the Golden Dharmas of Niguma in solitude for many years, twice for 5 years and once for 7 years. In between these retreats, Lama Tenpa Gyamtso visits his teachers in India and Tibet and his students in France and Heidelberg. He was the first Tibetan master I met - it was in the year 1982. At that time he was retreat master at Kagyü Ling, a Dharma center founded by Venerable Kalu Rinpoche at Chateaux du Plaige, Bourgogne, in France. At 5 o'clock in the morning there was the opportunity to practise calm abiding meditation together with him in his small cabin and those were unforgettable moments in my life. It is an exceptional honour and a great joy for us that he has returned to Karma Chang Chub Choephel Ling after his last visit eight years ago. We wish to welcome him and ask him to speak about the nature of mind and to offer meditation instructions to us.

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*“May the Buddha, the Dharma, and the noble Sangha  
be my refuge until I reach enlightenment.  
By the merit made from giving and the others  
may Buddhahood be reached for the sake of all living beings.” – The Refuge Prayer*

### Refuge & a Few Accounts of the Great Shangpa Kagyü Masters

Let me greet you kindly and tell you that I am very happy to meet you and to be here, a center that is dedicated to His Holiness the Seventeenth Gyalwa Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, and a place where Dharma students gather and practice together. Let us meditate the calm abiding

practice that you are familiar with and that you like to practice before beginning with the instructions. If you have not received instructions on how to meditate calm abiding, then I suggest that you focus your attention on your ingoing and outgoing breath.

Now that the Gyalwa Karmapa is residing in India, his activities are spreading throughout the world. I am extremely happy to see that his picture can be seen by members of the Sangha in the many centers. In *The Seven-Line Prayer* by Guru Rinpoche it is stated that the Sangha is very important. The Buddha is important - the Dharma is important - and the Sangha is important. I see that they are spreading in the name of the Seventeenth Gyalwa Karmapa and under his auspicious tutelage. The Sangha is very important, because it is due to the Sangha that followers and practitioners are inspired to develop deep trust and devotion, which enable them to engage in virtuous activities with enthusiasm and therefore to accumulate wisdom and merit.

When taking refuge, we take refuge in the Buddha, who is the Enlightened One, in the Dharma, his teachings, and in the Sangha, the spiritual community of practitioners. Whether someone is a Hinayana or Mahayan practitioner, all Buddhists take refuge in the Sangha. There are Sangha members who are devotees or lay practitioners. There are now more committed Sangha members who have taken ordination vows and are monks and nuns. There are exalted Sangha members who have accomplished high realizations. In any case, the Sangha consists of all these individuals. And so I am more than happy to see that the Gyalwa Karmapa's activities are reaching a growing community of Sangha members worldwide.

Gyalwa Karmapa's activities are those of Noble Chenrezig, the Bodhisattva of all-embracing compassion. Just like H.H. the Dalai Lama is the manifestation of Chenrezig's enlightened activities, the Gyalwa Karmapa is the manifestation of Noble Chenrezig, and they do not differ in the least. And therefore it is possible for us to have deepest devotion for the Gyalwa Karmapa, who is inseparably one with the Lord of Compassion. One newer beneficial display of the Gyalwa Karmapa's enlightened activity is that, according to his request at the Kagyü Mönlam a few years ago, no meat is served and eaten at the Karma Kagyü Monasteries in India. Many lay practitioners have given up eating meat altogether due to the Gyalwa Karmapa's recent request.

Some people may have doubts whether Ogyen Trinley Dorje is the true Karmapa, but these doubts are not justified, seeing that Tertön Chögyur Lingpa (who was one of the great treasure revealers of teachings concealed by Guru Rinpoche and who was a disciple of the Fourteenth Gyalwa Karmapa, Thegchog Dorje, and a contemporary of Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye the Great) had prophesied that the Seventeenth Gyalwa Karmapa would be deeply connected to His Eminence the Twelfth Tai Situpa, Pema Dönyö Nyingje Wangpo. This prophecy has come true. Furthermore, like a wish-fulfilling jewel, the Gyalwa Karmapa has renewed his link with his American disciples when he visited the United States this year. I am convinced that it will not be long and he will visit his European centers. I, too, am very happy to continue my connection with Karma Chang Chub Choephel Ling in Heidelberg and to see the Lamas again who I have known for many years.

It doesn't really matter if one is new to the Dharma or has been a disciple for many years, the decisive factor is taking, i.e., seeking refuge in the Three Jewels - the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha - and acknowledging and appreciating with heart-felt devotion and trust that they are one's only refuge. As mentioned earlier, all Buddhists share the act of taking refuge in the Three Jewels and this distinguishes a Buddhist from a non-Buddhist. Mahayana practitioners are differentiated into adherents of the vehicle of characteristics, called

Sutrayana, and adherents of the vehicle of results, called Vajrayana. Disciples of both vehicles take refuge in the Three Jewels, whereas Vajrayana practitioners also take refuge in Three Roots, which are the Lama, Yidams, and Protectors.

Buddhism almost vanished from Tibet around the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and that is why the great Indian Pandita Jowo Atisha (who lived from 985 until 1054 C.E.) came to Tibet and renewed and restored the Mahayana teachings there. He turned the Wheel of Dharma many times in Tibet and gave an immense number of teachings, but the most important practice that he taught was taking refuge. He offered many teachings about relative and ultimate *Bodhicitta* (“the mind of awakening”), but he never grew weary of teaching that the most important practice was taking refuge. Disciples realized the benefit of taking refuge, so it didn’t take long and Pandita Atisha became renowned as “The Refuge Lama.”

Mahasiddha Tangtong Gyalpo (whose name means “King of the empty plain” and who lived from about 1361 until 1485 C.E.) was an unprecedented child. Since there were no schools during those times, he received his education from his parents. They told him to learn the letters of the alphabet, but he wasn’t interested and responded, “What use are the letters of the alphabet? Refuge is important.”

Refuge is most important, followed by the meditation practice and recitation of the Mani-Mantra of ‘Phagpa Chenrezig. Taking refuge is vast and limitless and is the golden thread that runs through all practices of the Kagyüpas and Nyingmapas. It is also seen as extremely essential by every disciple of the Shangpa Kagyü Tradition. The Shangpa Lineage is based upon the instructions of the Indian Dakinis Niguma and Sukhasiddhi and was founded by their disciple, Mahasiddha Khyungpo Näljor (who lived from 990 until 1139). Mahasiddha Tangtong Gyalpo, also a patriarch of the Shangpa Tradition, had received the sacred transmissions directly, i.e., personally, in a vision from Dakini Sukhasiddhi.

Let me tell a story illustrating the benefit of taking refuge that Jowo Atisha recounted and that took place in India between Buddhists and heretics. There are various kinds of heretics, one being adherents of black magic who engage in a practice called “killing with ones breath.” Someone who becomes a victim of their ritual dies. Once there was a sorcerer who tried to kill a young boy by resorting to the practice of killing with his breath. The sorcerer had managed to kill his dog, but he couldn’t kill the little boy. This irritated the practitioner of black magic, so he asked the little boy, “Why can’t I kill you? Do you have extraordinary abilities?” The child answered, “I don’t do anything extraordinary. I only take refuge continuously.” This convinced the man who practiced black magic – he converted and took refuge.

Another story speaks about an entire community of people who suffered from a contagious disease. A man had immense compassion for everyone living in that district. He entered a house in which three persons had died of the epidemic. The compassionate man left and met three wandering yogis. He asked them to perform a *Puja* (“ceremonial ritual”) for the three deceased persons. The three yogis agreed, went to the house, made *Tormas* (“ritual cake offerings”), and recited the liturgy for the dead. After sunset, the evil spirit, whose entire body was covered with eyes and who was responsible for the epidemic, appeared and killed the three yogis. The compassionate man witnessed their death and thought, “Oh, now I have to find other Lamas to pray for the three yogis.” He searched, found a monk, and asked him to perform a *Puja* to assist the three yogis on their journey through the intermediate state. The monk told him, “I’m not learned and don’t understand much, but I will come if you give me a meal in return.” The compassionate man agreed, and the monk went to the house where the

three yogis had died. He sat down and, without taking a break, recited *The Refuge Prayer*, while the compassionate man looked on. The evil demon arose again after sunset but didn't want to be seen, so it hid in a corner of the room, while the monk continued reciting *The Refuge Prayer*. The monk addressed the demon and said, "You needn't hide from me. I don't see an evil spirit anyway." In order to gain control over the monk and to harm him, the demon that would not come out in the open had to blow his breath on the monk, but it only managed to blow out the light of the candles. Having witnessed the power of the monk's recitation, the demon that had brought on the epidemic was convinced – he converted and took refuge. The monk who would not let the demon distract him from reciting *The Refuge Prayer* was Jowo Atisha, and the compassionate man who always called for help was Dromtönpa, who became Jowo Atisha's foremost disciple.

There is another story about an Indian king. Usually a king is very busy, because he has to administer the law and see to it that his subjects finish their work and are doing well. This king refused doing anything of the kind. He just sat in his room and recited *The Refuge Prayer*. He accumulated so much merit that the country he ruled was very prosperous and all his servants and kin were always happy and content.

Mahasiddha Tangtong Gyalpo was an extraordinary master - he was clairvoyant. His main practice was recitation of *The Refuge Prayer*. One of his disciples watched him and remarked, "Oh, today you are reciting *The Refuge Prayer* quite fervently and so often. Why?" Tangtong Gyalpo replied, "Heretics are fighting at the Vajrasana (the seat of Lord Buddha's enlightenment at Bodhgaya in India), so I am reciting *The Refuge Prayer* extra for them." The disciple inquired, "Is the situation that bad at Bodhgaya?" Tangtong Gyalpo answered, "No, I'm reciting *The Refuge Prayer* for them." And so, the different views that were topics of controversy and that were being argued at Bodhgaya were settled. Tangtong Gyalpo was one of the most accomplished Tibetan Mahasiddhas and recited *The Refuge Prayer* uninterruptedly, so we shouldn't underestimate the benefit of reciting it.

One day villagers approached Tangtong Gyalpo and told him, "A vicious tiger is roaming around near here and is eating our sheep. Please help us." Tangtong Gyalpo wrote down a few letters on a piece of paper, gave it to them, and said, "Take this with you and always recite what I have written down." After the villagers had started the recitation, the tiger lived peacefully with the other animals and stopped causing harm.

Mahasiddha Tangtong Gyalpo was very learned and he was the first person to construct 58 iron suspension bridges, 60 wooden bridges, 118 ferries, 111 Stupa monuments, and countless temples and monasteries in Tibet and Bhutan. One day he looked up a very rich man who refused to help him, though. His students remarked, "A whole bunch of bears are coming closer to us." Fearful, they ran away. Tangtong Gyalpo stayed and was all alone. An earth spirit appeared and the bears carried all the rich man's things to him. When his students returned, they were very astounded, but Tangtong Gyalpo stayed calm. He told his disciples that all those things meant nothing to him.

Tangtong Gyalpo was already a Mahasiddha when he was young. Once he came to a river that nobody could cross, not even the cow standing at the shore. He picked up the cow and carried it to the other side. The people who saw this didn't know that he was a Mahasiddha and thought that he must be crazy.

Like other Tibetans, he was involved in trade and walked with friends to and from Tibet selling his ware. One day he arrived in Nepal and sold his musk for a really high price. At that

time, the king was about to have seven thieves executed, but it was possible to pay ransom for them. Tangtong Gyalpo bought them free and returned home with these seven men. The people were shocked at the sight of the thieves and thought Tangtong Gyalpo must be crazy. He was truly a great saint.

Mahasiddha Tangtong Gyalpo decided to move to a kingdom in India that was ruled by a non-Buddhist king who demanded that human lives be offered to the mighty gods that he worshipped. The king was surrounded and thus protected by a huge number of bodyguards and soldiers. Tangtong Gyalpo arrived at the palace of this king, entered his room, and just sat down on his throne. The king became extremely upset, called his bodyguards, who came running but couldn't see Tangtong Gyalpo. Of course, they searched for him all over the room and in the palace and when they found him, they buried him deep down under the earth. The bodyguards left him locked in the dungeon and walked away, but Tangtong Gyalpo followed their heels and again took his seat on the king's throne. The king was so angry that he had his bodyguards throw him into the big river. He stepped out of the flowing current, returned to the room of the king, and again took his seat on the throne. The king was extremely angry and the bodyguards and soldiers felt helpless, so they decided to throw Tangtong Gyalpo into a fire. But he stepped out of the fire and sat on the throne of the king again. The king was shattered at the sight and asked Tangtong Gyalpo, "Why can't I vanquish you? Tell me, where do you come from?" Tangtong Gyalpo replied, "I come from Tibet but have lived in India many times and therefore know the language." He had been Kamalashila in a former life. The king asked, "What brought you here this time?" Tangtong Gyampo answered, "I am here for your sake. I want to help you. Killing so many people causes calamity and will bring you disaster. Please stop killing. Instead, make Tormas and offerings." The king promised to stop killing, took refuge, meditated Noble Chenrezig, and benefited his kingdom as a result. When he saw that the king had become somewhat stable spiritually, Tangtong Gyalpo returned to Tibet. After a few years, the king got sick and returned to his evil ways of offering animals and human beings to the gods he believed in, but all his sacrifices did not make him well. Distressed, he asked a Tibetan merchant who happened to pass through his kingdom whether he knew Tangtong Gyalpo. The merchant replied, "No, but I know Mahasiddha Tangtong Gyalpo. Do you mean him?" The king brought many offerings to the Mahasiddha in Tibet and confessed and regretted his evil ways. Tangtong Gyalpo told him, "You knew that you should not make living offerings to your god." The king tried to defend himself and blamed the god that he believed in. Mahasiddha replied, "Wait a minute. I will write something down for you. Take this with you and read it to your god." The king did as told. What was written on the sheet? Stop killing! When the king read this out loud to his god, he promised to stop killing.

The wondrous qualities of great Mahasiddhas are that they can protect living beings from succumbing to temptations that incessantly lurk everywhere.

Tibet is a Buddhist nation, but there are followers of the white and black indigenous religions called Bön. The black Bönpo believe in worldly deities and resort to killing, thinking they can appease the gods they believe in; they do have magical powers. One day a black Bönpo sorcerer wanted to destroy a Buddhist *Stupa* ("reliquary shrine"). Stupas, too, have spiritual energy. The sorcerer couldn't destroy the Stupa, because Tangtong Gyalpo was seated on its top. More black Bönpos came running and threw stones at the Mahasiddha, who fell down and lay at the bottom of the Stupa, covered with rocks. They thought they had managed to get rid of him and were very happy. When they returned the next day, they saw Tangtong Gyalpo seated on the top of the Stupa; they bowed to him and brought him offerings.

This is what I wanted to say about the great Mahasiddha Tangtong Gyalpo, who benefited living beings immensely, who built many Stupas, and who taught *The Refuge Prayer* to many living beings. He built the many Stupas as a symbol of the power of refuge, which was most important to him. The qualities of Buddhahood become evident when reflecting the life of Tangtong Gyalpo, who had attained omniscience, i.e., the eye of wisdom that all great Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have. One should not think that these great masters are distanced from oneself.

There are five eyes of wisdom (*spyang-nga* in Tibetan). The first is called “the eye of flesh,” i.e., the sensory eye that perceives physical surroundings very far away. It is said that a Mahasiddha sees a thousand arm-lengths far off. This ability increases to the stage at which a Buddha sees into all reaches of the cosmos. The second is called “the divine eye,” at which stage a highly realized Mahasiddha can see what ordinary beings cannot see, e.g., what is taking place under the earth. The divine eye of a Bodhisattva can see all levels of samsaric existence - the desire, form, and formless realms. The third eye is called “the eye of discriminating wisdom,” at which point realization of the two types of non-self (that of an individual and that of objects) has been perfected. The eye of discriminating wisdom unfolds slowly through practice and grows until perfect omniscience of Buddhahood has been attained. The fourth eye of wisdom is called “the eye of Dharma” that sees reality without obscurations. At this stage a very advanced Mahasiddha has attained nine of the ten powers or strengths of a Buddha. The ten strengths are: knowledge of appropriate and inappropriate actions; knowledge of the ripening of karma, of natures, aptitudes, and aspirations; knowledge of the destination of all paths; the possession of *Samadhi* (“mental absorption”), divine sight, memory of previous actions, and peace. The fifth eye of omniscience is called “the eye of a Buddha.” At this stage an enlightened being has no duality anymore, nothing is far, or near, or out of reach.

The ability to develop what is also called “the wisdom ear” unfolds along the path to Buddhahood. At first a diligent practitioner can hear sounds at a greater distance and more clearly than ordinary beings can hear. This ability increases until Buddhahood has been attained and duality has finally been overcome. A third ability is to be able to read thoughts and recognize the mind of living beings. The fourth ability has to do with seeing the karma of others. The fifth ability is having perfected the accumulation of merit and wisdom and having exhausted all disturbing emotions. This is the fulfilment of the pristine wisdom of a Buddha, i.e., it is the omniscience of a Buddha.

The five eyes of wisdom are abilities that practitioners gradually attain by practicing the path to Buddhahood. All-embracing compassion is like the hook that is flung out to those who are ready and open. The hook cannot take hold if it lands on a rock, rather it needs to attach to an eye of a living being in order to lead them to Buddhahood.

### **Practicing Meditation Together**

Calm abiding meditation means allowing one’s mind to settle down and to be at peace. Whoever has trouble resting in a settled mind while practicing calm abiding meditation should rely on a support, for example, by focusing on the breath. There is a term in Tibetan that is literally translated as “falling into oneself,” i.e., not being distracted, not meditating, not creating anything with one’s mind. Let us practice this together for a short while.

The Tibetan term for “abiding peacefully within oneself” is exclusive to Mahayana and means that one is present, undistracted, and doesn’t do anything when one notices that one’s mind

has followed after a thought. What does it mean to be distracted? It means following after thoughts that naturally arise and that can be limitless and endless. There is no need to disperse thoughts that arise while meditating, rather one looks at the essence of a thought the moment it arises and doesn't do anything but rests in it. /Short meditation./

As said in "*The Dorje Chang Lineage Prayer*":

*"The essence of thoughts is Dharmakaya.  
They are no things whatsoever, and yet they arise."*

Since the essence of thoughts is the *Dharmakaya* ("the truth body that is emptiness"), the essence of thoughts is emptiness. There is nothing to block off or to practice in the unbounded expanse of emptiness.

It's important not to follow after thoughts but to look at the essence of thoughts when they arise and, without doing anything, to just watch them flow back into the mind out of which they arose. Looking at the essence of thoughts without following after them, but allowing them to subside into one's mind again is called "self-liberation of thoughts." /Short meditation./ Self-liberation of thoughts can be compared to the waves of an ocean. The waves are not different than the ocean - they arise on the surface of the ocean and subside into it again. In the same way, nothing needs to be created or added, because - like the mind - the intrinsic nature of thoughts is emptiness. Thoughts arise from the mind and subside into the mind again. /Short meditation./ Thoughts such as, "I'm distracted," or "I'm not distracted" are mental fabrications. /Short meditation./

The point of practicing meditation is to abide in the peace of the given moment. Beginners cannot abide in unmitigated presence for a longer period of time - maybe they can for a minute or two. One needs to learn to naturally abide in the intrinsic nature of one's mind for a short while. During this time, one doesn't follow after a thought that arises, thus producing more thoughts. A practitioner tries to extend the length of time abiding in his or her mind's inartificial, natural state. /Short meditation./

Differentiating during meditation practice that one has become distracted is fostering a discursive mind. Instead, one simply abides in the nature of one's mind the moment one notices that a thought has arisen and that one has become distracted by that thought. The purpose of this practice is not to be distracted for a few minutes. Let us meditate a short while together by concentrating on our ingoing and outgoing breath.

## **Impermanence & Karma**

The Lojong teachings of Jowo Atisha that instruct practitioners how to tame and train their mind show how to develop loving kindness and compassion, which points to a future life. They instruct disciples that it makes a difference whether one's next life will be marked by freedom from suffering or not. Mahasiddha Khyungpo Näljor taught that this life is due to karma accumulated in a past life. He said that one doesn't need to fear impermanence, rather one should be fearful of creating negative karma in this life, because it will be experienced as suffering in one's future life. We attained this life due to the karma we created in our past life, so we can determine our next life by engaging in virtuous activities.

Seeing that we cannot look into the future, we don't know what we will experience in our next life. We can deduce from our past life, though, by looking at our present situation. If we

realize *karma* (“the infallible law of cause and effect”), then we will see that our present situation is based upon our past actions. Trusting that this applies to our next life inspires us to accumulate positive karma by acting virtuously now so that we will have favourable conditions and good opportunities in our next life.

We are free to lead our lives according to the instructions our Lama presents, by acknowledging how invaluable the basis of our life (which is our human body that is endowed with favourable conditions) actually is, by understanding the meaning of impermanence and death, and by respecting the law of karma. Contemplating these preliminary practices of having attained a precious human life, impermanence, and karma, we have prepared the ground to engage in meditation.

There was a Lojong teacher named Karak Gomchung, who lived approximately 1000-1100 C.E. He spent much time meditating in a cave that became overgrown with a thorn bush more and more each year. Karak Gomchung became entangled in the thorn bush every time he had to leave his cave to use the outhouse. He thought that he would need to tear it down so that he could go outside when he needed to without trouble, but he looked at the thorn bush and thought, “Why bother? Maybe I’ll be dead tomorrow.” So he didn’t do anything and just left it, but he had to make his way past the thorn bush every time he needed to leave his cave. He contemplated impermanence and death every time he went outside, and for years and years he wondered whether he should saw it down or not. Karak Gomchung became a Mahasiddha because he contemplated impermanence and death so intensively due to the bush. Jetsün Milarepa practiced in the same way in that – not fearing impermanence and death – he focused all his attention on practicing and achieving the changeless state of Mahamudra.

Maybe we cannot practice as diligently as Karak Gomchung and Jetsün Milarepa, but we are practicing the Dharma when we contemplate impermanence and death. By contemplating the truth of impermanence again and again, anything that happens to us – joyous or frustrating, at work or at home – does not affect us as strongly. By contemplating the truth of impermanence and the law of karma again and again, we see that any pleasant and unpleasant experiences that we have are due to our own actions and that they change. If contemplated well, we will be less involved with temporary and transitory experiences and things. Therefore the teachings state that impermanence is our best friend. Being aware of impermanence diminishes our fear, diminishes our attachment, diminishes our wants and needs, and increases our wish and enthusiasm to practice.

Looking at the difference between disciples who practice and those who don’t: Someone who practices is aware of the fact that all situations in this life - any unpleasant situations as well as suffering and pain – change and do not last. Practitioners are also aware of the infallible law of karma. Non-practitioners, who usually become fearful when they contemplate impermanence, suffer very much when things don’t work out for them or when they are sick.

Jetsün Milarepa’s disciples once asked him, “Whose emanation are you? Are you an emanation of Vajradhara Buddha or the reincarnation of a Bodhisattva? Whose *Tulku* (‘incarnation’) are you?” Uprooting their wrong view that it isn’t possible to attain realization in a single life time, the Jetsün replied, “No, I am not an emanation of Vajradhara and I am not the reincarnation of a Bodhisattva. My realization arose from my devotion and dedication. My karma was very negative. I killed many people when I was young. Then I realized the truth of karma and practiced with great joy and diligence.” He told his disciples, “It’s possible to attain realization in one lifetime if you practice.”



So, it's extremely important to contemplate impermanence and then to practice meditation. One needs to rely on the experiences that one will have when one practices – then it will be very beneficial. These are a few thoughts about the tremendous importance of contemplating impermanence. Now I wish to speak in more detail about the inevitable law of karma.

The instructions that deal with karma teach about the ten virtuous and ten non-virtuous actions. Disciples need to know them well, seeing one negative action leads to the other quite quickly. Reading about them will not suffice, rather it's important to know them very, very well and to live by them. This is done by directly looking at what is taking place in one's mind and taking care that the results of one's actions will be wholesome and good.

Killing is the first very negative deed in the list of the ten non-virtuous actions and means taking away a living being's life. We think that we don't kill and have no bad feelings when we step on a tiny insect, but it denotes taking life. Since one is free to take away the life of another living being, one is also free to spare or save life. The sacred teachings state that if one takes life once, one will be reborn as an insect 500 times.

We need to be aware of the fact that there are living beings in everything that we drink and eat, so nobody is free from killing. As a result, we all have so much karmic debt and remain surrounded by living beings we are extremely indebted to. Dharma students know about the law of karma and therefore refrain from killing consciously. But there are many people who kill as a hobby. There are people who – due to ignorance and the ensuing mind poisons of hatred and greed – see killing as an entertaining past-time. Hunters go into the woods to kill deer or ice bears; there are people who like to go fishing, and there are butchers, and there are people who shoot down birds. They do things like this due to their ignorance, and we should have compassion for them.

Mahayana practitioners should be aware of the fact that all living beings were once their kind parents and should know that they are eating their past mother or father when they eat meat. If one respects the law of cause and effect, one will know that eating meat will bring on future suffering and hardships.

As we saw, it's impossible not to kill, because space, our home, our furniture, vegetables are all filled with living beings. We constantly kill living beings, even if we don't see them. But we can be careful of not running over animals while driving a car. We can also take care and be attentive not to step on insects or worms while walking down the street. And if it happens, which nobody can avoid, one can speak the name of the Buddha, repeat Mantras, and recite wishing prayers that they attain a higher rebirth in their next life and become free from suffering when we accidentally do - we can do that. We can also buy caskets filled with living fish that are destined to be killed at a market and set them free into a river, lake, or ocean, wherever they are at home. Kyabje Chatral Rinpoche, now in his mid-90s, is one of the most renowned opponents of meat eating. He bought and continues buying many living fish for sale at markets in India and releases them into their natural habitation. It's very beneficial to do this, especially on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the lunar calendar or on days that are auspicious for Mahakala practice. That's when I do this together with Ani-la. *Participant:* Or feed mice or save rain worms from smouldering in the sun when they are stranded on a sidewalk after a summer rain." Lama-la: We once fed mice and the result was that more and more showed up.

A story is recounted about the historical Buddha's previous life, before he attained enlightenment. He was on a ship carrying 500 merchants and their goods across the stormy sea. He saw that a man wanted to kill the merchants and throw them overboard so that he

could call all their goods on the ship his own. Out of deep compassion, Lord Buddha in a previous life thought, "If I don't do anything to stop this man from killing me and the 500 Bodhisattvas, he will experience unbearable suffering in the hell realms in his next life, so it would be better if he died than committing such a horrendous act." He killed the pirate in order to spare him from amassing so much negative karma. The Buddha in a former life saw the consequences that such a horrendous act would bring and accumulated the positive karma of 80,000 lives when he saw himself forced to do what he did. In the Mahayana teachings we learn that there are situations in which it is necessary to do things that seem to contradict the Buddhadharmā.

The first non-virtuous action that one refrains from when learning to live according to the law of karma is killing. The second wrongdoing is taking what is not given, i.e., stealing. For example, making an unjust profit through a business is also stealing, like selling things one bought for a cheap price overly expensive or selling rotten or poisoned food – so beware of businessmen and women. It's extremely important to have ethical behaviour and to only engage in wholesome activities.

The third non-virtuous action is telling lies. Sometimes it is beneficial to say something untruthful. For example, if a hunter intent on killing deer asks whether one knows where deer are grazing, it's not bad to say that one doesn't know if one does. On the contrary, it's what is referred to as "a white deed." Another example of a white lie is not confirming statements made by someone when they speak badly about somebody they don't get along with. In this way, one hinders their anger and resentment from increasing - and that's good.

The fourth non-virtuous action is sexual misconduct. It's very important to be disciplined when it comes to one's sexual behaviour. Let me tell an ancient story: There was once a Brahmin named Kyebu Karma Senge. He had spent many years in retreat as a monk and was a gentleman. He went to the market to beg for alms when he left retreat, met the daughter of another Brahmin, and saw that she burned with desire for him. She thought that she would die without him. He had great compassion and gave in to her passion so that she would not die - and that was meritorious. It's important not to be greedy for inappropriate objects.

The fifth to tenth non-virtuous actions are slandering others, speaking harshly, engaging in idle chatter, having greedy thoughts, being malicious, and having wrong views.

I sincerely want you to internalize in your mind the instructions on avoiding the ten non-virtuous actions and to directly look at your mind with wakeful awareness so that whatever you do is meritorious and beneficial. Wakeful awareness helps us to really know the relevance and significance of refraining from carrying out any or all of the ten non-virtuous actions and engaging in the ten virtuous actions. Integrating these teachings fully in our lives helps us to increase our wholesome actions and to diminish any wrongdoings we might be inclined to commit. Wakeful awareness helps us become naturally peaceful, joyful, and worthy individuals, who can truly help others in best ways.

The Buddhadharmā clearly instructs us what to abandon and what to adopt so that our negativities decrease and our goodness increases. By realizing and experiencing the benefits that one creates by adhering to these teachings, further qualities will manifest from within and for us. We will have confidence and devotion in the Dharma and will try to lead a worthy life of enthusiastic effort if we take these teachings to heart. Out of gratitude to our spiritual teacher and friend who gave us these instructions, our devotion will grow and become irreversible.

The Dharma taught by Lord Buddha is so very beneficial, because invaluable qualities become manifest, one from the other, and increase if we practice. Lord Buddha is the One we sincerely trust and deeply revere. Being an example, he illuminates our mind. The Tibetan term for Buddha is *bcom-ldän-'däs*, which means “the One who has subdued all obscurations and transcended negativities.”

Our mind will be peaceful if we are heedful of all our actions, i.e., if we are mindful of purification by abandoning all non-virtuous actions and if we are mindful of accumulating merit by engaging in wholesome actions. As a result, it will be very easy to practice calm abiding meditation. And that is why the Lojong teachings tell us that benefiting others is more important than thinking of oneself.

Three great masters have gone down in history as the most excellent proponents of Lojong. One was Dharmarakshita. Due to the habitual imprints he had created in past lives, he was strongly affiliated with Hinayana, but he naturally had great compassion. One day someone nearby was very sick, whose doctor told him that he could only recover if he ate the meat of a human being. Dharmarakshita heard about this and, in order to stop someone from being slaughtered for the sick man and out of great compassion, he cut meat from his thigh and gave it to the sick man to eat. Seeing he leaned towards Hinayana more strongly than Mahayana, Dharmarakshita had not realized emptiness and therefore – although he never regretted having done what he did and certain that it was the right thing to do – he suffered immensely from the wound. The sick man recovered, and Dharmarakshita thought, “That’s important. It’s no tragedy if I die from the infected wound, because I have the Dharma.” Yet, he suffered immensely from the pain and couldn’t sleep. One night, at about 3 o’clock, he was able to sleep for a few minutes and had a dream. An image dressed in a white gown appeared to him in his dream and said, “Oh, son of a noble family, you have performed the most excellent deed to attain Buddhahood. The highest means to attain Buddhahood is having compassion.” The image who appeared and spoke these words to Dharmarakshita in his dream was Bodhisattva Chenrezig, the Lord of Compassion, who blew on the wound and healed it. Even though he had not realized emptiness, Dharmarakshita experienced the benefit of having great compassion. As a result, he read the philosophical Madhyamika treatises of Nargarjuna and understood them very fast.

Jampäl Näljor was another renowned proponent of Lojong. Jampäl Näljor was able to actually take other beings’ suffering upon himself when he meditated. While sitting on a throne and offering teachings one day, he saw a man throw a stone at a dog. The dog felt nothing, because Jampäl Näljor had taken the pain upon himself. But he did react by shouting, “Ouch.” The people in the audience thought, “What a strange Lama.” He was clairvoyant, knew what the people thought, and showed them the black and blue mark on his body. They searched but couldn’t find a slightest bruise on the dog, so they won great trust in Jampäl Näljor.

There was once a king named Pema, who was Lord Buddha in a former life, before he became enlightened. His kingdom was called Nye-yong. During the reign of King Pema an epidemic broke out in Nye-yong and many people got sick. The king asked every doctor he was able to summon to help. They told him that they could not cure the epidemic, but if the sick people ate the meat of a fish that had the name Naroheta, they would become well again. King Pema, who was a Bodhisattva, wanted to help the people living in his kingdom, so he made many offerings and recited many wishing prayers to be reborn as that fish. He jumped from a cliff into the ocean, drowned, and was reborn as the fish Naroheta. In the language of fish, he called to the people, “I am Naroheta,” thus inviting them to eat him up. The people took

Naroheta, and when they cut meat off his body, it grew again, so there was enough meat for everyone. Naroheta then said to the people, “Give up non-virtuous ways and accumulate merit by doing good. That is the way to freedom from suffering.” This took place in a past life of Lord Buddha, when he was a Bodhisattva who did not shy away from any hardships while treading the path to enlightenment.

In yet another former life of Lord Buddha, he was a tortoise. He saw a large ship filled with merchants sink to the bottom of the deep ocean. Being a Bodhisattva in his former life as a tortoise, it rose from the ground of the ocean, carrying each merchant on its back to the shore, and that’s how it saved their lives. But then, the tortoise became tired from swimming back and forth and laid down to rest on the sand of the beach. It fell asleep, and while it was sleeping many blood-sucking insects nestled in its skin and woke it up. The tortoise thought, “If I scratch at the biting insects, then they will die.” And so, the tortoise died. Having offered the blood of his body for the sake of the insects, the Bodhisattva attained enlightenment in a future life at Bodhgaya in India and turned the Wheel of Dharma for the benefit of all living beings at Varanasi. In the past, those insects drank the blood of a Bodhisattva which caused them to be reborn in godly realms of existence. Living in a heaven up high, they could watch how Lord Buddha’s teachings were brought to the world and see them spread. They wanted to take part, took birth in the world, and became 80,000 disciples in number.

Because of having offered so much in many past lives as a Bodhisattva, Shakyamuni became Lord Buddha, the “Fully Enlightened One,” during our fortunate aeon.

Shri Asanga was a Bodhisattva who longed to see the future Buddha so strongly that he did not stop meditating Buddha Maitreya in retreat for 12 whole years. He did not attain any results, though, and thought that he would never be able to accomplish his wish to meet Buddha Maitreya face-to-face. Asanga gave up, left his cave, and came across a wounded dog lying on the road. The dog was so wounded that its entire body was being eaten up by maggots. Asanga felt immense compassion for the distressed and aggressive dog and wanted to help, but he realized that if he pulled the maggots out of the wounds with his fingers, then they would die and if he left them in the wound, then the dog would die. He cut flesh off from his own thigh to put the maggots on, but realized that if he pulled the maggots out with his fingers, he would kill them. He couldn’t bear to look at what he was doing, so he closed his eyes, lifted them out with his tongue, and put them on the hunk of flesh. When his tongue accidentally touched the ground instead of the wound, he opened his eyes and saw Buddha Maitreya, who had manifested as the dog, standing before him. Asanga said to him, “I’ve been practicing 12 years to see you and you never appeared to me. Why now?” Maitreya replied, “It’s not that I was ever separated from you. We were always together, but you couldn’t see me, because you still had many obscurations. You had not generated great compassion in your heart and that is why you couldn’t see me. Through practicing well, all your obscurations of knowledge and conflicting emotions eventually diminished and, like waking up from a dream, immense compassion arose in your heart when you saw the wounded dog and then you could see me.” Maitreya continued, “If you don’t believe me, go into town carrying me on your shoulder and ask the people you meet on the way what they see you carrying.” Asanga did as told. Many people he asked answered, “We don’t see anything on your shoulder.” He asked a young girl who had purified many of her obscurations and she replied, “You are carrying an injured dog on your shoulder.” Let us now meditate together for a short while.

**Experiencing Faith and Devotion in Our Lama,  
Abiding in the Calm of Our Mind,**

## **& Looking at Our Mind's True Nature**

Most Venerable Kalu Rinpoche always taught that three stages of meditation need to be practiced in this sequence: calm abiding, special insight meditation, and Yidam practice. I wish to speak about cultivating and experiencing faith and devotion in our Lama and abiding in the true nature of our mind after we do a short meditation together.

The ability to abide in one's mind is attained by exerting oneself in regular meditation practice. A student who is able to rest in the peace of his or her own mind will notice the great benefit of keeping the mind in its own place, will experience joy, and will reserve time to practice every day. There is so much upheaval in the world nowadays, so people's minds are very agitated and disturbed. Keeping one's mind in the state of calm and ease through calm abiding meditation practice is therefore very good. Whether focusing on an object or practicing without focusing on an object, the most important point in calm abiding meditation is not giving in to distractions.

It isn't easy for beginners to keep their mind focused during calm abiding meditation, so it's helpful to practice in a group; meditating with a Lama is also a very good support. It's very beneficial for lay practitioners to take time off from their daily obligations and chores in order to practice calm abiding meditation. When disciples feel exhausted and want to rest and relax, practicing calm abiding meditation refreshes immensely.

Calm abiding meditation is the foundation for all other meditation practices. It is the practice by which disciples learn to gain control of their mind and to become independent, which is very important if one aspires to mature and progress spiritually. It's not easy pursuing any higher education at college or university either – every student needs to work hard in order to succeed. It's the same with calm abiding. One needs to practice diligently, and being able to abide in calm and ease is very good for every meditation practice. Any work or studies one does will also go smoothly as a result.

Let us practice calm abiding meditation together for a short while now. I want to ask you to watch your breathing and count your ingoing and outgoing breath 21 times. /Short meditation./

One needs prerequisites if one aspires to realize the nature of one's mind and experience Mahamudra, and the prerequisites are having faith and devotion in our Lama and accumulating merit and wisdom. That is what one needs - no more.

There are many methods to accumulate merit and wisdom, basically taking refuge, generating the mind of awakening, contemplating the four preliminary practices of Ngöndro, meditating Dorje Sempa, and making Mandala offerings. Then practicing Guru-yoga enables a disciple to develop and cultivate faith and devotion in his or her Lama. Meditating a Yidam, repeating the respective Mantra, and engaging in the six perfections are also means to accumulate merit and wisdom.

It's very important not to be narrow-minded when hoping to accumulate merit and wisdom. Striving for the sake of one's own well-being is an erroneous motivation and is not what is meant. The vast motivation is including everyone. The broad-minded motivation is the sincere wish to benefit all living beings through one's practice.

How does one accumulate merit and wisdom? One accumulates merit by engaging in the six perfections, which are generosity, ethics, patience, joyful endeavour, meditative concentration, and discriminating awareness. One accumulates wisdom by realizing and practicing free from what is referred to as “the three circles,” which are belief in the independent existence of and attachment to a self, an object, and an action. One should practice accumulating merit and wisdom together. Meditating the creation and completion phases of a Yidam are the means to practice them together. One accumulates merit and wisdom together by being aware of the fact that the Yidam deity that one produces during the creation phase of meditation practice is empty of inherent existence and by abiding in emptiness after having dissolved the visualization during the completion phase. One must be very attentive not to fall into the one phase of practice by underestimating or neglecting the other and one should always remember the heart of awakening, which – as stated in *The Bodhicitta Prayer* - is having all living beings in mind while practicing to attain Buddhahood.

Whether one is reciting *The Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, whether one is engaged in a small or large virtuous action, one should not differentiate between the one doing something, i.e., one should not divide into a subject, object, and action. It’s very important to become accustomed to having good and beneficial habits and not to be prejudiced or divisive.

One needs to be aware of what one recites, i.e., one needs to know why one is taking refuge and what the mind of awakening means, and one always needs to have all living beings in mind while treading the spiritual path. Furthermore, one always concludes each practice session by dedicating the merit one was able to accumulate for the welfare of all living beings. These are the prerequisites if one wishes to attain enlightenment. So, good practice consists of taking refuge and giving rise to the mind of awakening, practicing the main body of the respective liturgy, and dedicating the merit. Then our practice will be complete and beneficial. But, it’s necessary to practice diligently until meditation becomes a natural habit.

Why is it important to have faith and devotion in our Lama? Then our meditation will go well. How do we develop best faith and devotion in our Lama? By contemplating his amazing qualities, by thinking about his extreme kindness and generosity, and by praying to him again and again. On a worldly level, everyone enjoys beautiful things and likes being treated nicely. If we want to develop and increase our faith and devotion in our Lama, it’s good to be aware of what we enjoy in life. Everything our Lama does is the self-perfected manifestation of a great yogi, so we should wish to transform our mind so that we can fully appreciate and enjoy our Lama’s wonderful presence. If we have authentic faith and devotion in our Lama, tears come to our eyes and the goose-bumps we get make every hair of our body stand up. All our thoughts that are directed towards ourselves will cease when we have true devotion in our Lama, because our mind is never separated from him - and so we are always happy. We abide in that experience of peace and joy, and then Mahamudra is not out of reach.

A practitioner doesn’t need to exert effort to realize Mahamudra if he or she has genuine faith and devotion in a Lama, because faith and devotion naturally move one to practice. It’s said that someone who has become a Bodhisattva has accumulated merit over a period of at least three aeons. True faith and devotion in one’s Lama open doors. It’s said that one unites with one’s Lama through his blessings, that one’s meditation will be natural as a result, and that one doesn’t need to exert oneself for three aeons in order to progress spiritually.

There are Lamas who have attained the three eyes of wisdom and are therefore omniscient. When he spoke about this topic, Venerable Kalu Rinpoche told a story from the Kagyü Transmission Lineage known as Taklung, which is one of the eight smaller Kagyü Schools

that originated from Phagdrü Dorje Gyalpo, a heart-son of Lhaje Gampopa. Taklung Tulku, who founded the Taklung Kagyü Lineage but wasn't omniscient, had a very dedicated disciple who was convinced of his Lama's omniscience and therefore had immense faith and devotion in him. One day the disciple got sick, closed his eyes, and prayed intensively to his Lama. In his mind, he saw Taklung Tulku bless him while appearing before him, and in that moment he became cured of his illness. It does happen that a Lama isn't that realized, but that his qualities manifest through the devotion on the side of a disciple.

There was once a Lama who presented many teachings, although he himself didn't really have any high realizations and experiences. This Lama had a very devoted disciple who looked up to him as a Buddha. The disciple had a pure vision of his Lama and as a result he achieved realization. Due to his realization, the disciple could enter the pure realms of Devachen and of the Five Dhyani Buddhas. One day he searched for his deceased Lama, found him in the hell realm, and got him out. And so, if one relies upon a Lama, it's very good to recognize that he is the embodiment of refuge by seeing his body as the Sangha, his speech as the Dharma, and his mind as a Buddha.

Having trained to be mindful and aware, it's good to look at one's mind and to try to find whether it has a color or not - whether it is yellow, white, red, or blue, etc. Then it's good to investigate whether one's momentary mind has a form or not - whether it's round, square, or triangular, etc. Then one should try to find out whether one's mind is a phenomenon or not - like a bird, an insect, or other phenomenon that consists of substances one can name and list. One discovers that no "thing" is there that one can call one's mind. But, it's not the case that it is nothing. For instance, one is happy when someone says something nice and unhappy when someone says something not so nice. One needs to look at one's feelings and examine them. Looking at feelings, one discovers mind's clarity and then looks at this clarity precisely. By practicing in this way, one sees that the nature of mind's clarity is emptiness, i.e., devoid of independent, solid, lasting existence. So, mind is empty of true existence and is clear at the same time - it is the indivisibility of emptiness and clarity. Seeing that the mind is clear is possible due to its empty essence, which means to say that emptiness and clarity are inseparably united and never apart. They are not even as divided as black and white threads twisted around each other to make a thread of yarn - emptiness and clarity are not like the two threads one can call "black" and "white" of that thread of yarn. Every living being has a mind that is the indivisibility of emptiness and clarity, even the tiniest insect. There is no thing like a "big mind" and "a little mind," because the mind of a human being and that of a tiny living being have the same essence and nature in that they are both empty and clear.

All living beings have the same potential to experience and manifest the three *Kayas* (the "bodies of a Buddha"). Mind's emptiness is the Dharmakaya, and mind's clarity is the Sambhogakaya. Mind's unimpeded appearance is the Nirmanakaya. Being inseparable, they are the Svabhavikakaya. The mind of every living being is endowed with the three Kayas that are inseparable.

Someone whose mind is overwhelmed by mental and emotional defilements is said to be entangled in *samsara* ("conditioned existence that is marked by suffering"). Someone who has purified his or her mind of delusive defilements is said to abide in Nirvana. They are like turning one's hand around, nevertheless it's the same hand. In the same way, all living beings are endowed with the Buddha nature, which is basic goodness. In the treatise, entitled *Uttaratantrashastra*, Buddha Maitreya explained why all delusions that obscure one's true nature, which is Buddha nature, are adventitious and transitory; delusions are impermanent but conceal the qualities of Buddhahood that every living being has. H.H. the Dalai Lama

spoke about this in Zürich recently when he presented teachings on Shantideva's treatise, entitled *Bodhicharyavatara*. He taught that the delusions obscuring one's Buddha nature are fleeting stains, which means to say that they can be cleansed.

Let me stress that the stains obscuring the ground of one's being are impermanent. Therefore one needn't think that Mahamudra is out of reach or far away. One can realize Mahamudra by purifying the veils that conceal one's true nature. But, one needs to know and recognize how one's mind functions and truly is. As mentioned, mind's true nature is the indivisibility of emptiness and clarity. In order to realize this, one needs to learn to allow one's mind to be at peace and at ease, which is presently not the case. As long as one follows after thoughts that arise, one's mind is perturbed and one is in a continuous, moving stream of discursiveness.

The ability to recognize whether one's mind is perturbed or at ease is possible because of one's basic awareness, *rig-pa* in Tibetan. Whether one's mind is agitated, or at ease, or aware, all are aspects of the same mind, which practitioners come to realize through meditation.

It's necessary to always look to see what is taking place in one's mind - whether it abides in calm, whether it moves by following after thoughts, and how it functions. Awareness needs to be cultivated by looking to see whether one's mind is a single entity, is made up of many parts, and so forth - it means knowing what is taking place in one's mind by looking at it again and again and then abiding in its true nature. This is an ongoing practice and leads to a personal experience. Experiencing one's own mind is not an intellectual matter, rather it's a matter of looking directly at one's own mind. Real meditation consists of examining and looking at one's own mind and leads to experiences. Students can discuss emptiness as long as they want, but they won't experience their own mind as long as they don't turn their attention inwards, investigate, and look at their own mind. So, meditation means examining one's own mind and resting in it.

The Lojong teachings of Jowo Atisha state: Do not ponder the past, which leads astray. Do not make plans for the future, rather abide in the present mind without succumbing to discursiveness. Resting in mind's true and inartificial nature means being free from mental fabrications, which is also called "simplicity." If one has thoughts while meditating (for instance, that one is abiding in the true nature of one's mind, or if one thinks one wants to meditate on one's mind, or if one thinks that meditating is boring), then one's mind has moved. Any thought one follows is a mental fabrication that distracts from resting in the true nature of one's mind. Furthermore, one shouldn't think that it's necessary to dis sever or block thoughts, but one should appreciate and acknowledge that thoughts are the self-perfected manifestation of one's wisdom-awareness. During meditation, a practitioner simply notices that a thought has arisen, doesn't follow after it, and doesn't wish to get rid of it either.

Every thought is an expression or manifestation of one's mind, and the essence of every thought is the Dharmakaya. That's why the Dharmakaya (the "truth body") is so near - it is one's present mind and can be compared to the ocean. Waves, which can be compared to thoughts, are not produced but are the natural display of the ocean on which they appear. Thoughts naturally flow back into the mind again, just like waves naturally subside into the ocean, i.e., thoughts are not different than the mind, just like waves are not separate from the ocean.

And so, we should develop deep and sincere devotion in our Lama. We should also accumulate merit and wisdom.



## **Dakini Sukhasiddhi**

Practitioners who have faith and devotion in their Lama receive the blessing of the Samadhi empowerment from him and this takes place in the mind of a dedicated disciple. Disciples request from their Lama the empowerment into the Yidam that they wish and are able to meditate. Before giving the empowerment of Noble Sukhasiddhi, called „an initiation with substances,“ I wish to ask you to really practice calm abiding meditation with joyful endeavor.

It's important for beginners to practice calm abiding meditation regularly and often for a short period of time and not for hours and hours in one session. Having gained experience and having slowly become more and more proficient, one can increase the period of time that one abides in the calm of one's mind. It's also very important to cultivate faith and devotion in one's Lama, to pray to him, and to personally receive the initiation from him so that one can engage in the practices of Mahamudra.

When practitioners experience abiding in the calm of their mind, then compassion for those beings entangled in the delusion that marks samsara naturally arises in them. Aware of the empty nature of all things, dedicated disciples are also aware of the empty nature of compassion, so they are engaged in practicing meditating both emptiness and their mind's clarity, which is compassion, together.

It's possible to practice Mahamudra any time, i.e., to turn one's attention inwards and to look at one's own mind in any situation. Sometimes one has problems and difficulties in daily life, sometimes one is sick, but one can experience great joy in those situations if one abides in the present moment of one's mind.

Great Indian Mahasiddhas set examples that it is possible to attain realization of Mahamudra while working for their living. For example, Mahasiddha Tilopa practiced Mahamudra while pounding sesame seeds. You can read their hagiographies or see the murals and paintings that depict the various kinds of lives that the Great Forefathers of the Kagyü Lineage led. Some Mahasiddhas are shown meditating, others are depicted working, and yet others were rulers of a kingdom. All Mahasiddhas remained irreversibly united with their meditation practice and never forfeited it. There are many Tibetan Mahasiddhas who have not become renowned. At Karma Kagyü Ling, H.H. the Dalai Lama mentioned that three-year-retreatants are very diligent, but when they have finished, they are often finished. He continued and told us, “That's not how one's practice should be – it should be like the current of a continuously flowing river.”

The Shangpa Kagyü Lineage was founded by Mahasiddha Khyungpo Näljor in the eleventh century. From among his many teachers, one of his main teachers was Dakini Sukhasiddhi; his other main teacher was Dakini Niguma, who is said to have been the sister of Mahapandita Naropa.

Sukhasiddhi was born in Khache, the Tibetan designation for Kashmir. She married and gave birth to six children. Because of her immense compassion, she was actually a Dakini. An epidemic broke out in her home-town. Having become impoverished as a result, Sukhasiddhi's husband and children had to go out in all directions to beg for food, leaving her a bowl of rice. In the meantime, a noble monk came begging for food at her door. She offered him the rice. Unable to get any food, her family returned home and they asked her for the rice

that they had left her. She told them that she had given it away. They became furious, didn't want to live with her anymore, and kicked her out of the house.

Dakini Sukhasiddhi asked people she met on the road where she should go. A stranger advised that she should go to Oddiyana, situated farther west, a prosperous Land in which all men were Dakas and all women were Dakinis. He gave her grain with which to brew beer so that she could earn her living. A woman dropped by her little stand every day to buy the beer that she brewed and sold. Sukhasiddhi asked this woman, whose name was Avadhutima, why she did this. Avadhutima replied that a realized Siddha, whose name was Virupa, was living in the forest nearby and that she brought him the beer everyday. When Sukhasiddhi heard this, she said, "I don't want to take money from you, but want to give the Lama this beer. Please give it to him." Avadhutima did. One day Mahasiddha Virupa asked her, "Why don't you have to pay for the beer anymore?" She answered, "The old lady who sells this beer wants to give it to you." Virupa said, "I want to meet her." The next day Avadhutima, who was a Dakini, asked Sukhasiddhi to escort her to meet Virupa. Sukhasiddhi poured lots of beer into her flagon and packed a huge portion of pork into her pouch to bring to Virupa.

Mahasiddha Virupa gave teachings and meditation instructions to Sukhasiddhi, who was 61 years-old at that time. Having practiced, she attained realization that very same evening and, as a result, was able to continue living as though she were a young girl. She became the teacher of Khyungpo Näljor, who, as mentioned, founded the Shangpa Kagyü Lineage that is known for its transmission of the "The Six Dharmas of Sukhasiddhi," which is different than "The Six Dharmas of Niguma" and "The Six Yogas of Naropa." The subjects taught are the same and practicing the one or the other leads to the same result. The Lineage-holder who received the instructions of "The Six Dharmas of Sukhasiddhi" from Khyungpo Näljor, realized them, and then passed them on to his heart-son was Mokchokpa Rinchen Tsöndru. He also attained a rainbow body in that life - his present Tulku now lives in Marseille. The Mahasiddhas who followed in the succession of the Shangpa Transmission and became Lineage-holders were Kyergangpa Chökyi Senge, Rigongpa Sangye Nyentön, and Sangye Tönpa. The Lineage later included the Glorious Karmapas, Tangtong Gyalpo, Taranata, and Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye the Great. There was a realized Tibetan Mahasiddha whose name was Potongpa. Due to his high realization, he met Dakini Niguma, Dakini Sukhasiddhi, and many other Dakinis when he was only 10 years old. He became the Shangpa Kagyü Lineage-holder of the short transmission.

It's very important for disciples to receive long-life initiations, because they grant a long life and freedom from sicknesses, thus enabling us to accumulate more merit and wisdom in this life. Dakini Sukhasiddhi is also holder of the Chöd Transmission-Lineage that was founded by Machig Labdrön. The blessings that Dakinis impart are very beneficial, and it is possible to quickly and easily attain realization due to their blessings.

## **Conclusion**

It has been a great pleasure for me to be at Chang Chub Choephel Ling in Heidelberg that is dedicated to the Seventeenth Gyalwa Karmapa and to speak to you. This is one of the oldest Dharma centers in Europe and has benefited many people. Having such a sacred center is essential. It was founded with the pure intention to help many living beings. Many Lamas have visited and presented teachings here. I am very happy about this center.

Everybody who is able to visit this center can be very happy, because where else can one get together with people and practice? So it would be good if those who care support and help

maintain the center as best as they possibly can. I want everybody who helps to be assured that your contributions to the center of the Gyalwa Karmapa are wonderful and very meritorious. You have Bodhicitta, the good heart to care and help others. By helping and practicing here, your precious human life will become like an invaluable jewel. But the jewel needs to be treasured and polished.

We are practitioners of Mahayana, and there are so very many living beings in the world. We always need to be aware of the prayer that we recite, “May peace and happiness fully arise for beings as limitless in number as space is vast in its extent.” More and more tragedies occur in the world – violence and wars are increasing. Everybody is endowed with the Buddha nature, which is the wish-fulfilling jewel. Please help as best as you can and polish your true and pure nature by practicing for the benefit of all living beings. Thank you very much.

### **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 very state!  
May precious and supreme Bodhicitta that has not been generated now be so,  
And may precious Bodhicitta that has already been never decline, but continuously increase!

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 its extent.  
Having accumulated merit and purified negativities,  
May I and all living beings without exception  
Swiftly establish the levels and grounds of Buddhahood.



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