

8TH KARMAPA ON CHOD: LINEAGE AND TEXTS

WITH TEACHING BY 17TH KARMAPA, OGYEN TRINLEY DORJE



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“What should one do when sick?---Chop up your body and offer it as feast. Hide concepts as treasure in the nature of phenomena. And moreover do it many times. Do not give rise to joy if you get better. No matter what sickness occurs in the manifesting circumstances, know that each one is a training exercise. If you do not know occurring circumstances as supports, even with a lofty view, you will lose your way. That conceit of merely mental emptiness is the clutch of the secret demon.”

---Machig Labdron from *Answers to Questions on the Esoteric Instructions of the Perfection of Wisdom* (tr. Sarah Harding (2016)).

“Some people when they practice Chod, they worry that if you practice Chod too much, then you're going to encounter adverse conditions such as illnesses. Actually, that fear is a sign that your Chod practice has not gone deep enough. Why? Because actually, it's a good sign if you get sick, or have obstacles due to having practiced Chod because that means that some karmic debt collectors have come to enjoy the body that you have offered them. So, getting sick should be a cause for your feeling happy rather than becoming worried. At the same time, you do not need to worry about getting sick.”

“These teachings of Chod we have been receiving here come to us from the female lineage of Chod, from the Great Master Machig Labdron, it is through her kindness that we were able to receive these teachings, she was a person who appeared in the form of a woman's body. And from that perspective, she can stand as a very inspiring example, to women who wish to practice the Dharma. Using the body of a woman, she attained the state of full accomplishment. Sometimes, in general society, women are regarded as lower and because of this collective attitude on the part of society, sometimes women can feel discouraged. However, when it comes to practicing the Dharma, we should not feel discouraged at all. In fact, we should feel more encouraged and inspired. When we practice the Dharma, and particularly when women practicing the Dharma, we should actually not be humble about our capabilities, we should be proud of our capabilities, we should call upon our pride and strength of heart.”

--17th Karmapa (Teachings on Chod by 8th Karmapa, October 2012)

INTRODUCTION

Today, is the new moon (the last day of Saga Dawa) and tomorrow the 30th June, is being celebrated as HH 17th Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje's birthday¹. As an offering for the Karmapa's birthday and teachings, am happy to present an introduction and full (edited) transcript with images and footnotes of the three-day Chod empowerment and teaching the 17th Karmapa gave in October 2012 at a Drugpa Kagyu monastery in Himachal Pradesh, India². In this unprecedented event, the 17th Karmapa granted (for the first time in his lifetime) initiation and teachings on Chod. I was fortunate to be able to attend this whole event in person. Approximately 1,000 people from across the Himalayan region and around the world attended this historic Dharma transmission in person, which had been given in response to a request by western Buddhist teacher, Lama Tsultrim Allione (said by some to be an emanation of Machig Labdron) who attended the event together with many members of her Tara Mandala community. Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo also attended the whole event.

Ever since attending this 2012 event, I have wanted to type up these teachings for the benefit of myself, others and the teachings. Sadly, various obstacles have prevented that. However, this year it seems the time is ripe to do this. As the Youtube videos of these teachings have been publicly available since that time³, I am making the transcript available to all who wish to read it. There are no secret pith teachings or instructions in it and so no secrets revealed and breaking samaya.

I am offering thus:

- 1) A new translation (with Tibetan and phonetics) of the 8th Karmapa's short practice text/recitation called 'The profound severance instruction'.
- 2) Full edited transcript of the 17th Karmapa's Chod teaching in 2012

Below is a brief introduction and overview of the 8th Karmapa on Chod, texts, lineage and the 17th Karmapa's teaching.

8th Karmapa on Chod - texts and sadhana

After bestowing the empowerment, the 17th Karmapa gave a teaching based on the *Chod Guiding Instruction text* (gCod kyi khrid yig)⁴ by the 8th Karmapa, Mikyo Dorje (mi bskyod rdo rje, 1507–1554), which outlines a week-long Chod retreat⁵. This text by 8th Karmapa has not been translated or published by Sarah Harding (in her book on Chod (2016))⁶. The 17th Karmapa's teaching in 2012 does not really follow the 8th Karmapa's text word by word, there is no oral transmission of the text nor citations from it. Thus, it is more a general teaching on the principles and foundations of Chod and Dharma practice contained within it.

There is another 8th Karmapa Chod text (available online): *Profound Chod Instructions*⁷ (gCod khrid zab mo). Sarah Harding has translated this second text (Chapter 20: 2016) with a different heading as it is the first part of a compiled commentary by Karma Chagme⁸ called *THE BODY DONATION AND FEEDING RITUAL ARRANGED AS CONVENIENT LITURGY: Combining Lord Rangjung Dorje's Ninefold Spirit Feast and Six Earth Lord Application with Mikyö Dorje's Single-Seat Severance Poem*. Harding interestingly notes that the poem is the same, but Karma Chagme replaces the name Sangye Nyenpa, with the 2nd Karmapa, Karma Pakshi:

In this text, Mikyö Dorje's "poem" comes first. This is available in several other editions—for example, in a collection of recitation texts from Palpung Monastery (seat of the Karma Kagyu Tai Situ incarnations in Kham), where it is called simply *Profound Severance Guide* (gCod khrid zab mo). The poem is reproduced accurately, with one notable exception: wherever Mikyö Dorje has the name of his own guru, Sangye Nyenpa (Sangs rgyas mnyan pa, 1445/57–1510/25), Karma Chakme has substituted the name of the second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi (1204–1283). Perhaps Karma Chakme preferred to identify the source of the lineage as the great master of the early days of the Karma Kagyu so that it would be more widely relevant and familiar to future practitioners. Karma Pakshi is legendary, though not known as a teacher of Severance. Karma Chakme then adds a white and a black distribution that he attributes to Könchok Bang, but he renders them into verse to facilitate recitation. In the colophon he further states that these are the only parts of the liturgy that he has tampered with; all other sections remain true to the originals.

It is not clear why Karma Chagme did that though. However, as Harding does not include the Tibetan script or phonetics, and it is contained in a big book, I have done a new translation with the Tibetan and phonetics as a pdf booklet for those who want to chant it as a daily practice. For those with the 8th Karmapa's Chod empowerment, please contact me here for the text. If I am able to find someone who has the time and willing to explain the 8th Karmapa's Instruction text then I will try and translate that in the future too.

The 8th Karmapa's Chod Lineage

The 17th Karmapa explained the close connection of the Karmapas to Chod:

"Since the time of the 3rd Karmapa who wrote the first commentary on Chöd, the Karmapas have maintained a close connection to this practice. I myself feel a deep bond with these teachings coming from Machig Labdrön. She is the perfect embodiment of wisdom and compassion and has inspired Buddhist practitioners for many centuries. I am especially pleased that I can offer this encouragement and support to female practitioners from around the Himalayan region and the world, and pray that the good merit from this event generates peace."

"The Gyalwang Karmapas are the historical holders of the direct lineage of Chöd, which is based on the Indian Buddhist deity Prajñāpāramitā, the Mother of all the Buddhas, embodiment of wisdom. Of the eight practice lineages of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, Chöd is the only lineage established by a woman."

The Karmapas and several Karma Kagyu masters are important holders of the Chod lineages. Most of the lineages mention the 3rd Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje. Dharma Sengge's *Dharma History* situates Rangjung Dorje as an important inheritor of Chod, explaining that he is responsible for having clarified previous erroneous ideas about Chod. Sorensen (2013: 100-1) also explains why Rangjung Dorje is a pivotal figure in the development of the Chod tradition.

The 8th Karmapa's lineage comes from that of an important Kagyu lineage holder, Bengar Jampel Zangpo, as I wrote about [here](#)⁹ before. Sorensen (2013: Chapter 2) explains that in Namkha Gyaltsen's appendix to the life-story (*rnam thar*) in *The Great Explanation* collection, the transmission lineages of Chod are described along three different paths:

1. One lineage of the Sūtra tradition of Prajñāpāramitā, or Yum Chenmo (Great Mother).
2. A second lineage from Śākyamuni Buddha, runs through Mañjuśrī, Nāgārjuna, and the Brahmin Āryadeva to Padampa Sangyé and finally to Machig.
3. A third lineage of Tantra runs from Vajradhara through Tārā to Machig.

The Bengar Zangpo/Karma Kamtsang lineage¹⁰ seems to belong to the second type. [Bengar Jampel Zangpo](#) (15th Century) was a student of the 6th Karmapa and a teacher to the 7th Karmapa and 1st Gyaltsab Rinpoche. The lineage supplication by Bengar Jampel Zangpo could be called the Chod lineage of the Karmapas and Karma Kamtsang¹¹.

Unlike texts in the Life-Liberation stories and *The Blue Annals*, the supplication does not classify its lineage according to a particular category such as “Male lineage,” “Union lineage,” or one of the other popular categories of Chod lineages. In addition, it identifies the locations for many of the transmissions and contains several Karmapas [3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 13th 15th], the 2nd and 8th Zharmarpa and Tai Situpas (8th, 9th and 11th) [2] and Jamgon Kongtrul 1st and 2nd.’ There is another lineage, called the *Lineage of Chod Explanation*, which also contains several Karmapas who passed it on to Bengar Zangpo who passed it down to the 1st Sangye Nyenpa and then 8th Karmapa.

The 17th Karmapa's teaching on Chod and the 8th Karmapa's seven-day retreat topics

As an entry point into understanding the practice of Chod, the 17th Karmapa first explained the meaning of Chod—a Tibetan verb that means to cut or sever—in terms of what is to be cut and what does the cutting. Otherwise, there is the danger that we leave Chod practice at the level of mere ritual. What we aim to cut with Chod practice, he explained, are the ‘demons’ (maras) of negative emotions and mind states and in particular the ‘demon’ of

self-grasping or fixation. What we sever these with is the prajñā or wisdom that realizes essencelessness, or lack of self.

The instruction text itself by the 8th Karmapa, describing contemplations for a seven-day retreat, does not go into great detail about the ritualistic aspects most people associate with Chod, such as the thigh bone horn, the damaru drum and bell. In fact, one might say that the 8th Karmapa focuses mostly on the essence of Chod and its foundations. The seven contemplations are:

- 1) Understanding that all pleasures are inherently a cause of suffering and developing the 'wish to emerge' from samsara,
- 2) Generating great and limitless compassion and love for all beings,
- 3) going for refuge and understanding why the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are stable and genuine refuges
- 4) Developing bodhicitta, the mind that wishes to attain full awakening for the benefit of all beings
- 5) The practice of generosity and giving away the body
- 6) Giving away one's body, speech and mind
- 7) Dedicating the Merit

The Karmapa also gives some background on the history and origin of Chod and Machig's life story.

Written and edited by Adele Tomlin, for the new moon of the Saga Dawa month and HH the 17th Karmapa, Orgyen Trinley Dorje's birthday on the first day of the fifth month.

17TH KARMAPA'S TEACHING ON 8TH KARMAPA'S CHOD (2012)

OPENING REMARKS

In terms of my own relation to Chod and the Dharma, I feel I have not completed all my studies on this yet. Listening, contemplating, practising Dharma, it is not like graduating and passing from school, where you finish your studies and graduate and it's complete. It is a life long endeavour and therefore, I am someone who is still learning and studying about the Dharma. As I have not reached a complete level of Dharma study then its also possible my Dharma practice is not perfect either.

So, I do not know if I could say anything about Chod that is really beneficial but as it has been laid down in pith instructions by previous masters, I thought if I were to read those to you I think it would definitely be of benefit.

There are many different types of instructions on Chod, and I thought it would be beneficial to consult a guiding instruction text (thri-yig) by the 8th Karmapa, Mikyo Dorje. There is a continuity of this oral transmission up to the present day, but not that many who have got the meaning transmission (don rgyud), so I thought it would be good if I said a little about the meaning.

Since we have a good amount of time to spend together, it would be good and beneficial if it were not only me but also if Dorzong Rinpoche also supported me in teaching and helped me, as doing this for two days may be difficult for me. It would be a good opportunity to get teachings from him and we can discuss it with the organisers to see if we can make it happen.

The history and lineage of Chod – male and female lineages

Many of you are practitioners of Chod already and know how to do it. Perhaps there are some among you here who do not know a lot about the history and origin of Chod, about

Machig Labdron and so on. When we talk about Chod, not only about Machig, we need to talk about lineage, history and origin of Chod and of Machig. Then you will understand how Chod came about and so on. If one knows the origin and history then it will be beneficial in giving rise to faith and confidence.

Mother and Father Chod lineages

So, when we talk about the practice of Chod, within the pantheon of Tibetan Buddhist practice, it is considered to be one of the eight chariot practices of Zhije¹², the genuine dharma that pacifies suffering. It is a branch or extension of that tradition.

We talk about Father (pho) and Mother (mo) Chod. So, this is related to how the teachings were passed down. So, that passed down by male practitioners, the father Chod is from Padampa Sangye and the Mother Chod is from Machig Labdron. When it came down from the female it is the Mo (Mother) lineage and from male it is the male/father lineage.

(Translator asks question about the lineage)

To clarify, all of the Chod teachings can be traced back to Padampa Sangye but the lineage for female teachings Gyalton Sangye Yeshe's nephew Sonam Lama and these were given to Machig Labdron they continued onward and they are female lineage teachings¹³. The male lineage was passed from Padampa Sangye, the Yellow moustache man from Yarlung, then he passed the teachings on to Nyonpa Piri (crazy one) and that is called the male lineage. So, that's a rough description of the female and male lineage of Chod.

The meaning of Chod – what is being severed and who is doing the severing?

When we use the word 'Chod' it is a verb, like chopping wood, it means cutting and chopping something. So Chod is sometimes translated as cutting or severing. Here when we say Chod, we need to ask what are we cutting/severing? We are cutting off primarily the four maras, and among the four maras, the main one we are severing is self-inflation and self-clinging. What does the cutting? It is our individual practice. It is relying on the antidote

to conceptual and dualistic clinging. It is the prajna or wisdom that realises selflessness. Through our practice of Chod we try to cut the root of ego clinging and fixation.

It is very important to have this basic understanding as to what is being cut and what is doing the cutting. If you do not understand the meaning of Chod, or the essence of Chod, then some people might think it is not that profound in relation to liberation from samsara and something merely to be performed for eliminating sickness or disease. So, we must know what is meant by what is being cut and who is doing the cutting. This is very important.

Instruction text by Mikyo Dorje

In the instruction text by Mikyo Dorje on Chod, the practice retreat is for one week. There are these stages one can do in seven days. In the guiding text, he sets forth the instructions in a one week time frame, for each day. In foreign countries, people may get this kind of holiday of one week this is of benefit so that they can practice it like that. Then you can apply these instructions from the 8th Karmapa's texts. So, if we can practice like that it would be good.

FIRST DAY – REVULSION AND WISHING TO EMERGE FROM SAMBARA

For the first session/day, the main contemplation is developing sadness, weariness and wishing to emerge (nge-jung) from samsara, which is nothing other than suffering. Due to the 'other-influence' of karma and afflictions, there is suffering, it causes nothing but suffering. As the 8th Karmapa teaches, whatever arises from karma and afflictions is suffering by nature, whereas all genuine independence (rang dbang) is happiness. All cases of being subject to the power (gzhan dbang) of others/afflictions is suffering and the nature of non-virtue.

Often people mistakenly think that subtle small, yet impure, pleasures are beneficial and appear as genuine happiness. Then we apply a lot of diligence to try and attain those forms of temporary happiness. However, we are just creating more causes for suffering. However, even though there are instances that seem to be happiness, these are contaminated and not real happiness but cause suffering. For that reason, we need to decide that these subtle pleasures are also nothing but suffering.

People often think these instances are real happiness, and apply lots of effort to gain that kind of happiness. If it is contaminated, by karma and afflictions, then even the small types of happiness are the nature of suffering. So, if it is produced by karma and afflictions this is the nature of dependence. We need to decisively determine that to be true.

Wishing to emerge from samsara (nge-jung) and not using the word ‘renunciation’ in English

This is how sentient beings continually wander in samsara, based on the conditions we accumulate. Sometimes we end up in the highest realms of samsara or the lower realms but wherever we are, depending on our accumulated karma, we end up wandering in samsara. So, we find ourselves with all kinds of situations in samsara depending on the realms we are born in, such as the different types of bodies that beings take on.

For example, in terms of the human body, some individuals have all their faculties present and some do not. Even those who have all their faculties present some suffer from a variety of illnesses and suffering and so on. So there is a wide range of karma we accumulate, and a wide range of different results that beings experience in samsara. Thus we have to decide that samsara is all completely suffering and does not go beyond that. We have to determine that there is temporary happiness and ultimate happiness. There is not one moment of genuine happiness in the context of samsara. For that reason, samsara has been compared to a pit of snakes, and an island of monsters. By contemplating this way, we give rise the attitude of definite emergence from samsara, which has often been translated in English as ‘renunciation’.

I have studied English for many years, and read many things in English, but I have not actually really studied it in depth. In terms of really taking it to a deeper level, I do not think my studies have got to that level yet. This word '*renunciation*' in English for the Tibetan *Nge-jung* does not fit that meaning so well, which means giving up something, like with objects we throw away etc. It is not like that. *Ngepa Jungway (Nge-jung)* means literally 'definitively wishing to emerge' from the suffering of samsara and be liberated from it. Understanding that samsara is the nature of suffering and developing a strong wish to emerge from that. One needs to give rise to this attitude fervently to be decisive about it. That is the main topic of the first day for the retreat.

So, for beginners, on the first day, from morning until night, one must think about the sadness and all-pervasive suffering of samsara. There is no rule about how long the sessions should be. Generally, a good rule to go by is doing short sessions as many times as possible.

Gaining confidence in the possibility of liberation

When talking about 'liberation' we need to understand that means liberation from temporary, contaminated happiness and attaining ultimate, lasting happiness. If we do not have confidence in the possibility of liberation, then generating *nge-jung* is difficult I think.

So, in terms of our contemplation that samsara is the nature of suffering without an instant of genuine happiness, we cannot leave the contemplation there without taking it any further, because then what would be the motivation to proceed with our practice of Dharma? We also need to generate confidence that there is an ultimate, genuine state of happiness that can be attained, which is superior to the happiness and suffering of samsara. It's very important to gain confidence that this state of liberation exists and is possible to attain. That there is ultimate (*thar-thug*) bliss and temporary bliss. So developing *ngejung* is tricky. Some might think that if the nature of samsara is nothing but suffering then there is a danger that we might think there is absolutely no happiness in it at all and that there is no value in it. So we must also believe there is a real possibility of liberation from it.

The faults of seeing samsara as outside ourselves

There is a danger that we might point outside of oneself and think samsara is out there, like our physical environment such as rocks, cliffs and so on. We do not point at ourselves as being the source of samsara. We are not looking inside to see what samsara is.

Some, like Tibetans, think if one stays in the household that is samsara, worldly activities, and that someone who leaves the household, like a monk, is someone who is liberated from samsara. They have a cultural attitude like that and think that samsara is a place.

However, samsara is not pointing outside, it means looking at your own mind and seeing that samsara means cyclic existence, which under the influence of karma and afflictions, one goes around and around, cycling endlessly. We find ourselves trapped in this seemingly endless cycle of karma, afflictions and suffering. However, seeing the nature of that cycle, one develops the wish to draw a line/end on the cycling around. We need to look inwards to do that. The root of ultimate samsara is the karma and afflictions, that is what we need to point the finger of blame at. There are some descriptions that point to the outer container and inner contents of samsara. If we think about the inner contents of samsara, the beings, that is about one's inner mental life. This is important to understand.

If we think, in particular, about human beings they have been seeking happiness in outer sources for so long and trying to make changes externally to make that so. They seek happiness and want to be free from suffering and make lots of efforts to do that. In the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, there has been lots of improvement in science, external development, technology machines and so on. All this has been done with the goal of increasing the happiness of beings and reducing the hardships of beings. Making convenient and accessible things that were not available before. However, if we really look at these external developments, we can see they have not really reduced the suffering in our minds, nor have they increased our happiness either. In fact, if we look at our states of mind while these external developments have been happening, we can see that our worries and concerns have increased rather than decreased. That the outer developments have not

reduced our hardships but even in some cases, increased them. So, our hopes and hardships have been going in opposite directions. Our hardships have increased in many ways as have our anxieties. So, we can see that this is the main problem of samsara. Looking for happiness, where happiness is not to be found.

What we are encouraged to contemplate is that the ultimate lasting form of happiness is not to be obtained from external things. In fact, it would be very difficult to obtain that from outer things. That is something which arises from gaining greater intimacy with our own minds. It is something we can achieve by relating to our own minds from the inside. That is what real liberation, lasting joy and happiness are. Thus, if we keep trying to increase our happiness from that which has only increased our suffering up until now, then that is the definition of being a fool. So, we need to think about if there is a state of genuine and lasting happiness that can be attained. If there is such a state that can be attained, then we need to put our time and energy into attaining that. We need to employ our intelligence in relation to this and investigate it for ourselves. That is very important.

Personal experience of suffering and how it is different from others his age

I would like to give a simple example of my own experience of how happiness depends on our own minds rather than on outer conditions. It depends a little on outer conditions but not 100 percent on them. For example, sometimes students sometimes come to me, young foreign men who are around the same age as me in their 20s, who have a different life situation from me, they have a great deal of freedom to do what they want. They can play sports and consume lots of entertainment and so on. Sometimes, those people ask me about my life and ask me if I am happy with my life. They think I am the same as them and ask: 'Do you feel your life is miserable and stressed and pressured? Do you like it? '

If I think about the causes and conditions that led up to my current situation, I was recognised at a very young age as Karmapa. The cultural assumptions that go with that are that people think you are Buddha, but actually I am a human. It is strange I have to make that declaration. I am a human being. I was born from human beings and I always had to

depend on my family and friends for support, I was not independent. Sometimes, I experienced the same degrees of joys and sorrows that others went through, and went through my own share of suffering and sorrow in my mind. As I got older, I also experienced suffering and sadness because I am a human being. However, I have much less freedom to do what I want than the average human. So maybe I should go to a human rights organisation and explain my situation and fight for my rights and happiness (laughs).

Yet, I have made this point many times, that I try and see being the Karmapa as an opportunity to serve many sentient beings and to help and benefit others. So, it is an opportunity I have to serve and benefit others. If I think about it from that perspective, it brings ease and peace to my mind.

There are the obstacles that come from not having the freedoms of a normal human being but also the obstacles from being the Karmapa and carrying out the activities of the Karmapa. So, sometimes the situation seems very complex and heavy. However, I try to simplify it and try to think if I can use the opportunity of having the name Karmapa to hold others in my mind with a heart of love and concern then even if I do not achieve much tangible benefit for others, maybe it is enough to be satisfied in the knowledge that there are sentient beings out there who maybe inspired and comforted by my presence in the world and that there is someone who loves them and gives them hope in some way. So, if I can do that and inspire others and give them some strength of mind, in my simple way of thinking about it, it's enough for me. That is enough satisfaction for me.

My basic point is that some people around my age have a lot more freedom and opportunities than me, yet sometimes they have a lot more suffering, not always but sometimes relatively speaking, they have more suffering. Basically, the happiness we enjoy is not completely dependent on outer causes and conditions but has a lot to do with the way you think about them. Thus, one's attitude is very important in terms of how much happiness you can experience. This is a very important point to contemplate in terms of happiness not coming from external things but from our own minds.

The interdependence of karma, cause and effect

So in terms of presentation, from the Buddhist perspective, we often talk about karma, cause and effect that cause the situations we find ourselves in. It is true that karma, cause and effect is accumulated by individuals and the causes that generate the result. However, we might only then think about it in relation to our own individual actions and the results they produce. That is not a full understanding of karma, cause and effect. It is not just about ourselves. There is also a collective accumulated karma, cause and effect and conditions. We need to understand that our actions produce not only results for ourselves but also results that effect and influence the experience of others.

So, thinking about karma, cause and effect, is not only thinking about the karma and causes accumulated in previous lives. It is something we are continually accumulating even presently. We do not only experience karma from our own causes and conditions but our own actions also effect the world and other beings. Sometimes they are positive and sometimes negative effects. The collective effect of karma is becoming more and more relevant in these contemporary times. The world is getting smaller and smaller not physically but in terms of our connections and how we can witness the effects of our actions on others who may be physically far away. We could be said to live in a 'global village', we are inhabitants of planet Earth but our actions now have an impact on each other so much, that it is almost like we are living in the same village or community. So, the collective aspect of karma is becoming clearer and clearer in the modern world. So having a good relationship with karma, cause and effect is being able to take responsibility and carry the burden of one's own actions.

The way to motivate ourselves in terms of conduct and our actions is to think about the way they affect others and the broader environment and world, and not just follow random motivations in engaging in activity. The reason is because we are interconnected with beings and with the world and planet. Bearing this in mind, we should try to bring a great concern and consideration to the choices we make in terms of our actions. We should try to not

allow our disturbing, negative and self-centred emotions to dictate and control what kind of actions we engage in.

[Chod Teaching Day 1 - YouTube](#)

The different levels of revulsion and wishing to emerge (nge jung) from samsara

Sometimes they make fun of lamas and say when the lama does not have good knowledge then when he gives teachings he ca not stop coughing, like me (coughs and laughs).

We were discussing weariness and renunciation yesterday which is better translated as definite emergence. In relation to that, the Kagyu masters of the past have said the revulsion (logshey) is the foot of meditation, devotion is the head of meditation and non-distraction is the main practice of meditation. In relation to revulsion being the foot of meditation, this means revulsion and disgust are the ground of meditation. This means give meditation to its owner which means that the owner of meditation is developing disgust and revulsion with samsara. In general, if we want to accomplish Dharma in a genuine way, and in particular, we want to accomplish the secret mantra in a genuine way, then one must develop a very strong feeling of disgust and revulsion for samsara. That is how I personally feel as well.

I was taught traditionally that there are different levels of devotion that we can generate, for example, supreme devotion, middling devotion and common level devotion. I think that you could also set up different levels of revulsion in the same way. For example, you could consider the revulsion of a person of common capacity or at an entry level spiritual practitioner, so to speak. Their revulsion would consist of feeling fear toward the three lower realms, and developing revulsion towards samsara on the basis of that fear. Then, for a middling spiritual practitioner, their revulsion would be based on a wish to emerge from all of the samsaric states, including the higher realms of samsara. Then, for beings of highest capacity, their revulsion would consist of a desire to be free from, or a desire to emerge from all of the extremes, not only the extreme of samsara, but also the extreme of one-sided peace as well.

So, in this way, you could use a wide variety of descriptions of the different levels and styles of revulsion. In any case, it's important to approach the concept of renunciation stage by stage, while recognizing where you yourself are at this moment. You should not try to skip over where you're at

now, in order to develop some idealized form of renunciation that you perceive as superior. You should start with where your heart and mind are now. Try to connect with that level of revulsion towards samsara and then slowly improve upon that stage by stage. You should not try to make renunciation, or you should not try to approach renunciation as something that you can not make any connection with at present, that you're just idealizing. It should be personal and practical for you in the present. So, I think that it's very important in any case that we take the notion of revulsion towards samsara seriously and make our own best efforts to further our relationship with this principle. Next I'd like to illustrate this with a small example.

Putting into practice the Guru's commands without hesitation

So, I tell this story in the spirit of it being a half joke. Once, when I was staying in Varanasi at the monastery of Vajra Vidya Institute, I was out for a walk with one of my translators and went on the roof. Half-jokingly, I invoked a phrase from the past of classical Buddhist literature and said, 'if I had a worthy disciple, he would jump off the roof right now'. His response was to look around and make sure that I was talking to him. Once he realized that there was no one around who I could have been saying this to, he got scared and took a few steps back from the roof. When he came to me he said, 'are you talking to me?' Then we both laughed. So, I said to him 'today when I said that to you, we both had a laugh, but Tilopa and Naropa took this very seriously'.

I'm familiar with most of the spiritual biographies of the past masters of the Kagyu lineage. Sometimes, I might not get all of the details exactly correct. However, my recollection of the life story of Naropa is that he relied on Tilopa as a master for three years. During those first three years, Tilopa did not even teach one word of Dharma to Naropa. Naropa would continue circumambulating and prostrating to Tilopa every day. However, still Tilopa would not teach the Dharma to Naropa.

One day, Tilopa suddenly went up on top of the roof of the temple they were staying at and Naropa followed him up there. Tilopa suddenly declared, 'If I had a worthy disciple, he would jump off the roof right now', and Naropa immediately jumped off the roof. Of course, he had a really harsh landing. He was in really bad shape after he had hit the ground. Tilopa, then came to him, blessed his body and made him completely recover from the injuries that he incurred in the fall. Then, finally, he started to give him the oral instructions. So, there was no hesitation whatsoever in Naropa's response. This indicates that there is a different level in the courage and strength of heart, on the

part of Vajrayana disciples. The moral of the story is not to encourage people to jump necessarily when their teacher asks them to jump. That's not the main point. The jumping is an example that illustrates the main point which is we should try our very best to take whatever our master says as our heart command and accomplish that without any hesitation; with full commitment giving all of our energy to that.

So, when I was joking around with my translator, obviously he was not ready to fulfil that type of outrageous request, but Naropa was ready. Due to Naropa's readiness to accomplish whatever his guru asked him to do, then he attained Buddhahood in one lifetime and one body. Again, the jumping part is just an example. However, the meaning is that it's very important for us to take our guru's instructions to heart and accomplish them as best we can without hesitation and that there are different levels that we can reach in terms of the courage that we have available to us to do that.

Obviously, it's very hard for us to reach this level of courage and freedom from hesitation in accomplishing our gurus' commands. However, that type of type of courage and readiness is exactly what we need if we are to become an authentic disciple from the perspective of the Vajrayana. So, all of us perhaps sometimes pretentiously identify ourselves as disciples of Vajrayana. However, whether or not we are a fully equipped disciple of Vajrayana is something we need to analyse further, in light of this example from Naropa. On the one hand, we're always dealing with the situation with our devotion to our teacher and the instructions he or she gives us. However, on the other hand, we will revert to our own notions of our personal freedom, our rights as a person on our rights of self-determination, and so on. That might make us more hesitant in accomplishing whatever the guru says. So that we come to a point where if the guru gives us a command we like then we accomplish that. However, if the guru gives us a command, we do not like then we forget about it, we toss it aside. Yet, if we are really to traverse the path of Vajrayana, which is the most powerful path the Buddha Dharma has to offer, we have to be in the end completely free of hesitation in accomplishing our guru's command, because that is the style of transmission, the guru gives his or her commands and pointing out instructions free from hesitation. Then it's the disciple's responsibility to accomplish those instructions, free from hesitation, and free from holding back. So, in accomplishing the Guru's command, the disciples should be free of depending on other reference points and sources of reliance, they should be free of reverting to mundane ways of thinking such as 'Oh, if I do this, then other people will think badly of me,' or 'oh, if I do this, it will damage my

reputation and damage my renown' and so forth. There is too much worry that creeps in sometimes when it comes to accomplishing the instructions that our Guru has given us.

Leaving worldly concerns behind

This all leads back to the point that we've been discussing about generating revulsion towards samsara, and revulsion toward worldly ways of being. The worldly way of being is to be attached to and have great clinging toward food, wealth, enjoyments and especially to reputation and fame. When it comes to developing the revulsion that we need to, in order to have the courage to accomplish our gurus' commands, we need to leave all of that type of clinging to worldly ways behind. If we are able to do that, then we will be able to accomplish the Vajrayana path in a genuine way, the most powerful path that the Dharma has to offer. However, at the same time, it's very important for us to be mindful of the fact that we are not going to be able to have this level of courage right away. We have to train in developing that courage on freedom from hesitation in a gradual way. However, we do have to train and practice and get used to approaching our guru's instructions in this way. Just making aspirations alone is not going to work, we have to train and practice. So, this is my personal opinion about how we should relate with our guru's instructions and how we should train ourselves in relating to them. However, please do not take this as me putting pressure on you that you have to think this way too. It is just my personal thought.

So, this notion of making yourself into a worthy vessel of the teachings as a disciple is a very important one, there's this phrase in the traditional teachings where the disciple is literally 'a worthy vessel'. This is a very important thing, especially in Vajrayana. For example, if we have a very precious object that is very large in size, and very heavy and if we're looking for a box to put that object in, then the box has to be ready to hold that object, it has to be the right size, and it has to be strong enough to hold the weight. So even though the object might be something we really love, if we do not get the proper box to hold it in, then we're not going to be able to take care of it properly. And in the same way, we might really like the teachings of Vajrayana, we might really consider the teachings of Vajrayana to be precious and sacred. However, if we're not ready to receive them, if we as the vessel that will hold the teachings of Vajrayana are not ready to receive them, then Vajrayana teachings are not going to work on us. Just in the same way that we see the Vajrayana ought to be important and sacred, we also have to make ourselves sacred to the same degree so that we can act

as a vessel that will hold the Vajrayana teachings properly. So, this is something that's very important to think about.

The importance of an authentic guru

Related to this, we're discussing the importance of having an authentic a guru as well. This is also of course, very important. Naropa was able to generate unshakable confidence and certainty in Tilopa's qualifications as a Vajrayana master. Due to that, he did not have any difficulty in accomplishing Tilopa's commands. So, this is a very important thing. If we do not give rise to unshakable certainty, that our Guru is a qualified master, then there's a danger that we'll lose our life by following our gurus' instructions, and we wo not get any benefit from them. So Naropa, without hesitation, jumped off the building. However, then he got revived by Tilopa after he was injured. That's because he had the confidence that Tilopa was a fully qualified Master and Tilopa was indeed a fully quite qualified master. However, if we were to jump off the roof, without examining the teacher to determine whether he or she is a qualified master, then everything's finished, we'll die, or we might have to call 911 (an ambulance). However, wewo not get the benefit of receiving Dharma instructions from having done that.

Thus, it's very important for us to first examine the teacher and determine whether he or she has the necessary qualifications. In some texts it says that it is permissible for us to examine the Vajra master for up to 12 years to determine whether they are authentic or not.

There's a story about the master Drogon Chagall Pogba. Who during the Yuan Dynasty has Gubri Khan as a student and so he went to China, or perhaps it was Mongolia. However, in any case, wherever they were, Gubri Khan analyzed Drogon Chagall Pogba for three years and investigated his qualities. And at the end of this three-year period, Gubri Khan said to Drogon Chagyell Pogba, 'I have examined you for three years to determine whether you're an authentic master, and I decided now, and I'm confident that you're an authentic master, and you have all the necessary qualities. Please accept me as your disciple'. And chigan Drogon Chagall Park was response was, 'that is not enough, you examining me for three years is not enough. Now I have to examine you for three years to determine whether you're, you're a worthy disciple'.

So, then it became a six-year process of first the student examining the teacher for three years and then the teacher examining the student for three years. However, some teachers say that's too long, because all the while you're not able to practice the Dharma.

In any case, examining the teacher is very important, if it is necessary to examine them. You do not want to engage in unnecessary examinations. Yet, it is necessary to examine, then you can examine them for up to 12 years the Tantras say. The examination is not just some process of being cynical, to look for any possible fault that you could find with the teacher and, ask questions like, 'what does he think about this? What does he think about that? Where is she doing? Who is she talking to and all these things?' This process of examination is not encouraged, in order to just be cynical and adopt a negative view of the prospective Vajra Master.

Furthermore, when we examine the teacher, we should be mindful of not just their faults, but also their positive qualities. If we're looking only for faults and shortcomings in someone, then even if we're examining the Buddha Shakyamuni himself, we're bound to find some flaws, because even though the Buddha Shakyamuni was flawless, if someone has an attitude that's looking only for flaws in a person, then their perceptions are going to make up some flaws they will see. If a person is filled with anger and aggression themselves, then inevitably they're going to see the fault of anger and aggression when they look at others.

So, a lot of this depends on the view and attitude that we ourselves bring to looking at this other person and we should be aware of that. When we examine a Vajra master, we're not going to find someone who is completely free of flaws. The Tantra say that in the Kali Yuga, or the degenerate ages, then the teachers have both qualities and flaws mixed. It's a mixed situation. However, if we find that the teacher has more positive qualities than shortcomings, then it is suitable to rely on them as a master. However, once we rely on them as a master, it is important for us to have certainty and confidence in the way that we rely on them as a genuine, fully authentic master. If we allow our perception of some small flaw, to govern our attitude, after we have accepted them as a teacher, then that wrong view will create obstacles that will hinder the entrance of blessings into our mind stream. Naropa illustrates this importance very clearly. When he first met Tilopa, he was catching fish and gutting fish by the river. Yet, he did not give rise to wrong views about Tilopa. He did not regard him negatively, or write him off as being a genuine teacher

This is a very important point and it's a very difficult practice to do. If any subtle flaw arises in our perception in relation to our master, then the instruction is that we do not have a wrong view about that. Because if we develop a wrong view, and on the basis of that, then it causes problems in terms of our ability to receive blessings from the master. In short, it's important for us to investigate and give rise to certainty that the master is fully qualified. And it's important for ourselves as disciples to determine that we also are fully qualified and have this quality of readiness.

SECOND DAY - CULTIVATING GREAT LIMITLESS COMPASSION FOR ALL SENTIENT BEINGS

Going back to the guiding instruction text of the eighth Karmapa. And his prescription for how to do a seven-day retreat practice. We've already discussed the contents of the first day of the retreat, which involves contemplating renunciation, or revulsion towards samsara. His instructions for the second day of the retreat are to cultivate great, unbearable compassion.

During this second day, we train in the meditations of limitless compassion and great compassion. The distinction between these two involves a distinction regarding the focal object of the compassion. If when we meditate on compassion, we include limitless sentient beings not limited by a number then that is the meditation of limitless compassion, or immeasurable compassion, boundless compassion. If when we meditate on compassion, we include all sentient beings without excluding even one sentient being, that is the meditation of great compassion. There is a difference between great compassion and limitless compassion.

The difference between great and limitless compassion

One way you could think about it is a distinction regarding place. So, if you were to think about and cultivate compassion for all the sentient beings who live on the planet Earth, then you would be thinking about a limitless numberless number of sentient beings, because you cannot possibly count the number of sentient beings there are in the earth. However, it would be distinguished from great compassion because great compassion would be including all sentient beings, any creature who possesses a mind which would go beyond the scope of justice sentient beings on planet Earth. So that would be one instance of there being a distinction between limitless compassion and great compassion; great compassion would not exclude any sentient being anywhere at all. Limitless

compassion would be compassion that simply directed to a number list or innumerable group of sentient beings.

Compassion and wishing to be free from samsara - two sides of the same coin

If we divide our day into sessions, and work on cultivating these meditations of limitless compassion and great compassion. In terms of the way that compassion relates to definite wishing to emerge, or renunciation, we can say that compassion and renunciation are two sides of the same coin. The inward facing side of the coin is renunciation and the outward facing side of the coin is compassion. However, it's basically the same feeling, or same desire when one feels the desire to be free from suffering. One focus is that desire to be free from suffering for oneself, that's renunciation. When one focuses on that freedom, to free others from suffering, then that is compassion. So, during the first day of the retreat, you focus on developing renunciation by thinking about the way you yourself have experienced the sufferings of samsara, and the way you yourself wander in samsara. Then, develop revulsion towards that, and a desire to gain freedom from that.

Now, here on the second day, you simply shift the focus of that outwardly to other sentient beings, and reflect on how just like you, they wander without any control of their own, through samsara. So, you reflect on how, just as you undergo suffering and want to be happy, other beings too undergo suffering and want to be happy. In particular, you take your own experience of feeling tormented by suffering as the basis or grounds for your contemplation of compassion for others. Without that ground of being aware of how you yourself suffer, you can not have a genuine feeling of connection with the sufferings of others. So, you shift your focus to others and reflect that just as you desire happiness and want to be free from suffering, in the exact same way, all other sentient beings desire happiness and want to be free from suffering. If we do not engage in this contemplation, then we can lapse into pride and self-centered thinking, assuming that we are the only ones who are tormented by suffering, and not caring at all about whether others are suffering or not.

The unbearable suffering of animals

For example, when you are traveling around and on the streets, you might see chickens that are being transported for slaughter. There might be a small cage that is stuffed with dozens or even hundreds of chickens. However, when we're usually out and about do we actually think about how those chickens feel and what they're going through? No, we do not care. We do not think about

what happiness and suffering they have. We just think about what happiness and suffering we have and if things are enjoyable for us, then everything's fine for us. This is a sign of having no compassion. Therefore, it's very important for us to become capable of being mindful of the existence of others and the fact that others have feelings of happiness and suffering in the same way that we have feelings of happiness and suffering.

I'll give you an example now of contemplating compassion that you might want not want to hear. It is said that there is a traditional way of killing ducks. I have not seen this myself I've just read about it in texts. Apparently, in this method, you put two or three ducks in a box and close the box and then light a fire underneath the box. The box of course gets very hot and the ducks start burning. Then you open the box from the top, which of course lets cool air in the box and the ducks immediately start gasping for the cooler air because below them is nothing but hot air. When they open the box and the ducks gasp for cool air in this way then they pour hot oil down their throats. Then they repeat the process, close the box again, allow the box to heat up and the ducks start burning, they open the box again, and pour hot oil down the duck's mouth as it gasps for cool air. So they repeat this process until the duck dies.

The rationale behind this, according to this system of slaughtering the duck, is that it makes the duck meat very delicious meat. So, this type of suffering of sentient beings is similar to what we read about in the descriptions of the hell realms. There is one hell realm that's called repeated revival where beings are tortured and killed, but then revived again, and tortured and killed and revived again and tortured and killed. So, the only difference between the suffering of these ducks and the beings and the repeated revival hell round is that there's no dying, they only die once, they do not die a number of times. The suffering is equivalent to the suffering of a hell realm, the suffering that these ducks go through. When we are beginners, on the path of cultivating compassion, it's very difficult for us to consider all sentient beings. This is because all sentient beings are an abstract notion to us at first, there is no particular clear individual or group of individuals to point to and say I'm cultivating compassion for these individuals. So ,we need to train our minds in this notion that eventually we wish to cultivate compassion for all sentient beings, any creature that possesses a mind, we train ourselves in contemplating again and again that any creature that possesses a mind wants to be happy, wants to be free from suffering and has feelings of happiness and suffering in the same way that we do. So, we need to cultivate some basic sense of acceptance of this fact. And

agreement with this fact, that any being who possesses a mind wishes to have happiness and wishes to be free from suffering. So, we come to cultivate respect for that fact.

If we train and contemplate this way, again and again, then if we come upon a situation in our day to day lives, where we have a chance to provide a sentient being with some comfort or happiness, or a chance to separate a sentient being from a particular type of suffering, then we will respond automatically and immediately. We will very naturally act to connect that sentient being with happiness, or to separate that sentient being with suffering. If we do not have any previous training in contemplating in this way, then we may come across an opportunity to provide a sentient being with happiness or separate them from suffering, but we will not have this same instantaneous or automatic reaction to act. Therefore, it's very important for us to train our mind in the contemplations of compassion in this way.

Even though it's important for us to contemplate how all sentient beings want to be free from suffering and to enjoy happiness, at the beginning, it is important to work with a focal object of our compassion that can arise very clearly in our minds. This will help make our compassion that we eventually extend to sentient all sentient beings, very genuine and tangible. We can sit down and say to ourselves 'may all beings be happy' and that feels very pleasant and easy. However, if we think of someone who gives us a hard time, who we have very difficult relationship and say, may he or she be free from suffering and enjoy happiness, then wishing them to be free from suffering is much more difficult. So, we can encounter a situation where we're actually thinking 'well, do I really want them to be happy or not?'. We do not feel so sure.

So, it's a bit like if we bought a big piece of cloth to cover the heads of everyone in this room, that would be easy. If we just ordered a really huge cloth, and we strung it out across the room and in fairly short amount of time, everyone's head would be covered by the same cloth. Yet, if you said that we want to get cloth to make a hat for each person in this room, then that's a much more difficult process because you'd have to measure each person's head, and determine that each piece of cloth would be appropriate for each person's head. So, in the same way, it's easy to contemplate, 'may all sentient beings be happy'. However, when you get into the specifics of each and every sentient being happy, then it requires more training in terms of developing compassion.

The other thing that's helpful in developing compassion in a gradual manner is choosing an object of contemplation that's fairly easy for us to work with in the beginning. So, we want to be specific in the beginning and not just vaguely think about all sentient beings. Yet, at the same time, we want to start with an object that is approachable in terms of giving rise to compassion toward that being. If we start off by challenging ourselves too much, by selecting a difficult object, then we might not want to come back to the meditation on compassion repeatedly. It's kind of like video games. If you start off at a difficult level in the video game that you can not master at all, then it's no fun for you and you will not want to play that video game again. However, if you start off at an easy level, then it's fun for you to play, you get used to the game and then you want to get into more and more challenging levels. In the same way we can start off with an object that's easy for us to feel compassion for, and slowly introduce objects that are more and more challenging. This is just my idea, but I do not have any experience of it personally (laughs).

Of course, if we meditate on compassion in this way, then benefit will arise not only for others, but for ourselves as well. If we have genuine concern for others, this can benefit others and ourselves. What is the reason for that? If we think exclusively about our own suffering, and forget about or become unaware of the suffering that's happening with other people everywhere in the world, then that can really overwhelm us with a sense of loneliness. We can develop the impression that there's just too much suffering for us to bear. However, if we open our eyes outward, to consider the individual suffering that others around us are experiencing, we see that maybe some of them have more suffering than we do. We can release our own suffering and think others are suffering more than me and not be so uptight or worried about our own suffering.

In fact, some other sentient beings are experiencing unbearable forms of suffering, but they still keep going, they still keep persisting with great resilience. Considering the suffering of others in this way, can have the effect of releasing ourselves from feeling so overwhelmed about our own personal suffering, we realize that it's not only me who is suffering, but that others do as well, and some others suffer much more than ourselves, yet they still persist and continue.

So, this can have an effect of actually inspiring us and refreshing our energy. When we do the meditation of compassion, we should remember not to focus exclusively on suffering. If we just make it all about suffering, then we'll just wrap ourselves up in the concept of suffering. We have to

also remember the key aspiration, or a desire for sentient beings to be free from suffering, and make that our focus. So, the main focus in the end becomes not the suffering of the individual, but the wish that that individual will be free from suffering. So, we do not want to liberate the suffering from suffering. We want to liberate the suffering person from suffering. If we keep that our focus, then we will not lose hope. And we will not lose our strength of heart.

I've had personal experience of having great personal hardships happen to me. Yet, then turning around and thinking about how everyone experiences suffering, has a genuine effect of releasing the tension that the personal suffering had produced. So, this is an important point.

The Vajrayana Path and Milarepa's Song 'Ten Things It is Like' – Samsara like a pit of fire

In his song called the *Ten Things It is Like*, Milarepa said 'when compassion wells up from within the depths of my heart, it's like burning in a pit of fire'. Here, Milarepa is describing the quality of unbearable compassion. If you're in the middle of a pit of fire, then you're going to want to do something about it right? That moment, you're not going to want to delay in your actions. Similarly, when fully authentic, genuine compassion arises in your heart, then it's something unbearable, in the sense that it has no patience to it, you're not able to patiently wait to free sentient beings from suffering, you want to go about the task of freeing them from suffering right now, this very instant. It is as if you and they are burning in a pit of fire, you need to remove them from that situation right away. Also, it's completely unacceptable for that not to happen.

I think this quality of unbearable compassion really forms the root of why the Vajrayana is considered to be a swifter path than the Paramitayana. Of course, as we know, the traditional teachings say that the secret mantra of Vajrayana is a swifter path than the Paramitayana. I think that the root reason for this is this quality of unbearable compassion. The Vajrayana mode of transport on the path is like a BMW or an aeroplane in its rapidity, but I think this is because it depends upon this quality of great unbearable compassion. If we don't have this fuel of great unbearable compassion as our path, then the quality of the swiftness of Vajrayana will not be accessible to us. So, I think that this is the main quality that makes the Vajrayana a rapid path. This is a very important point when compassion wells up from the depths of my heart. It should feel like burning in a pit of fire.

THIRD DAY – GOING FOR REFUGE AND SEEING ALL BEINGS AS LOVING MOTHERS

Going for refuge and seeing all beings as our mothers

During the third day of the retreat, the 8th Karmapa tells us to focus on going for refuge. When we go for refuge in this context, we imagine that we are going for refuge together with all sentient beings as limitless as space. Sentient beings who are tormented by suffering just as we are. Sentient beings who long for happiness just as we do. In the Mahayana way of going for refuge in this way, we consider these sentient beings to be our kind, loving mothers, they are the basis of love. So, the image of the mother that is invoked here is that of a loving mother.

Even though it's technically possible that some mothers in the world haven't been so loving at one time or another, we are operating on the assumption that the mother we are invoking in this contemplation here is a loving mother. We are working in a context in which we are not thinking of any mother that's not loving. The mother that has been very loving and nurturing and caring to us. Reflecting on how all sentient beings have at some point in the past been our loving mothers.

Of course, in order to do this contemplation, some form of acceptance of past and future lifetimes is necessary. For some people, this is easy, for others, it's difficult. It seems to be the case that some people can easily have confidence in the existence of past and future lifetimes. Even though they don't have to go through a process of examination or logical analysis to arrive at that confidence. They just basically feel confident that there are past and future lifetimes. I think that this is probably the result of positive habitual tendencies accrued in the past, due to these positive habitual tendencies, some people are able to have confidence in past and future lifetimes, even though they don't have a particular reason to base their confidence on.

So, there's that type of individual. Yet for the people who don't have an easy time having confidence in the existence of past and future lives, there are some logical reasonings that are given in the Buddhist teachings to prove the existence of past and future lives. However, these are just inferential methods, there is no direct evidence that you can produce to show beyond a shadow of a doubt, in this very moment that there are past and future lifetimes. Proving past and future lifetimes in that way, would be very difficult.

I think that even though the recollection and some confidence in the existence of past and future lifetimes is very important, there are methods for contemplating the kindness of sentient beings that don't necessarily rely on the assumption that past and future lifetimes exist, if you difficulty believing that past and future lifetimes exist. This is because the general quality that's being highlighted in the contemplation of all sentient beings having been our mothers, is that of kindness and how we have been the recipients of other beings' kindness in the past, of all beings' kindness in the past. So, the focus there is on receiving benefit, and being nurtured and sustained. We can also develop a similar degree of appreciation.

If we just contemplate the world that we live in now and see how that we are all dependent on each other in this present world. Everything in the world is mutually dependent. And all of the things that we need to survive, are given to us by others, whether it's the clothes that we wear, the food that we eat, or the air that we breathe, we depend upon other sentient beings, and we depend upon the world that is our environment, to provide us with these things. We don't get anything that we need to survive, just through our own efforts alone without depending upon others.

For example, we might enjoy our brand name clothing that we wear. Probably most of the people gathered here are wearing clothing that was made in a factory. We don't know the people who worked in that factory personally, we haven't seen them. However, we've received the benefit of their efforts, they have provided us with this clothing to wear. In that way, we have been a recipient of their kindness. In the same way, sentient beings are continually relying on each other for sustenance, and for a benefit. So, it's like two hands coming together. Sentient beings are always relying on each other. We gather sustenance from the world, from the plants around us and from the sentient beings who inhabit the world. All of us and everything is very intimately connected with each other. Once we understand this, our sense of gratitude and recognition increases.

So, thinking in this way about the interdependence of everything in the world, as it is right now, is not the most traditional way to develop a sense of appreciation. In terms of love of all sentient beings. appreciation and loving kindness toward all sentient beings, that would be the mother contemplation. Nevertheless, I think it is a contemplation that will work and be beneficial for us to develop this present appreciation. Once we develop appreciation towards other sentient beings' kindness, we should develop it to the point where we want to repay that kindness. Then, however,

we will arrive at that desire to repay the kindness of sentient beings, it will be beneficial to our minds.

Appreciating the work of others

Another small example of appreciating the kindness of sentient beings' is a story about a someone I met who worked on developing some of the parts that go inside Apple technology like iPads and iPhones. There was a father who once said, my wife has an iPad, my daughter has iPhone, and I have an 'Ipay' (laughter). He was paying for everything. In any case, these types of technology are very popular.

He told me that the higher level of the technology the device contains, the more difficult it is to produce that material and get it to fit inside the device properly. Basically, the fancier the device is, the harder the work is to produce that device. He said that now he had that appreciation for how much work and how difficult it is to make this device, then when he saw a device like an iPhone, or an iPad, and so on, then his reaction was different than it was previously. He wouldn't have been mindful of all of the hard work that went into making that device and how difficult it must have been for the people who put it together. So, there was some sense of appreciation and gratitude that arose in his mind. When we have this appreciation of the work of others and how we are the recipients of others kindness, then this sense of gratitude can be with us naturally, all the time.

When we go for refuge together with all sentient beings, wanting to free sentient beings, from the suffering of samsara, then of course, we also want to establish them in the supreme of all forms of happiness and benefit. When we think about what types of happiness and benefit there are, if we examine any of the mundane forms of happiness and benefit that we experience in samsara, we see that all of those are conditioned forms of happiness and they don't last. They are not truly permanent sources of joy and contentment, the only permanent and lasting source of joy and happiness is the state of liberation, the state of Buddha, that does not dwell in the extremes of samsara, and Nirvana.

Therefore, while we are going for refuge, we go for refuge with the desire to establish all sentient beings in the state of Buddhahood. We recognize that Buddhahood, therefore, is itself the ultimate source of refuge, because it is only the state of Buddhahood that can provide us with the result of lasting genuine happiness, unconditioned happiness, the state of complete, perfect happiness.

The distinction between taking and going for refuge

So, while we are going for refuge here, we imagine that we are bringing all sentient beings under the protection of the Buddha in this way. Related to that, I think there's an important distinction that can be made in terms of different styles of going for refuge. In one style of going for refuge, we approach the object of refuge with a very impoverished attitude. By the way, this distinction is coming from Buddhist texts it is not just something that I'm making up.

For example, when we say 'kyab su chio', I *take* refuge, *taking* refuge here, we refer to approaching the sources of refuge with a very impoverished attitude, in the same manner that a person with no wealth of their own, would approach a person who had wealth, asking them for support and protection. You regard yourself as being in a very destitute state, and you approach the source of refuge with your palms join saying, 'please grant me protection'. So that would be taking refuge in this case.

However, when we actually say 'kyab su dro ' I *go* for refuge, there's a difference. We don't simply approach the Buddha as the person who's providing us protection in our destitute state. Actually, that way of approaching refuge is similar to taking refuge in worldly gods. However, instead of doing it that way, we regard Buddhahood itself as the state that we wish to obtain, because we know that that's the only lasting happiness that we can ever hope to achieve. So, it's not that we are asking the Buddha to protect us, it is that we are bolstering our desire to attain Buddhahood ourselves. So, we are committing ourselves to achieving the state of Buddhahood, with the knowledge that if we achieve that state, we will be completely fearless of both samsara and nirvana. Going for refuge with the attitude that we will achieve and make manifest the state of Buddhahood ourselves is the real meaning.

Thus, going to the state of refuge, going to the state of the objects of refuge is the real meaning of taking refuge here, and is the most genuine sense of going for refuge. So, we are not asking for refuge from the objects of refuge, but rather we are going to the state of those objects as refuge.

We take refuge in the Dharma and the Sangha in the same way as the way of going for refuge rather. So, I shouldn't say we go for refuge to the Buddha and go for refuge in the Dharma in the same way that going for refuge in the Buddha was just explained. Rather than thinking that the Dharma is

going to provide us with protection, we commit ourselves to *realize* the dharma of scripture and realization. Rather than thinking the Sangha is going to provide us with protection, we commit ourselves to traversing the ten levels and five paths.

The best thing that the Buddha can give us is the teachings on liberation. However, that is something that the Buddha has already provided to us. Then in terms of attaining the state of Buddhahood, the Buddha has already attained that. So, it's up to us to go to the state of Buddhahood. ourselves. And we are the ones who are going to bear that responsibility. We can't expect the Buddha to take responsibility for our own enlightenment and be the one who decides whether we go up or whether we go down. We have to be the ones who decide whether we go up or whether we go down. This is why we say taking refuge is not the correct way. That's why the Buddha said 'I am my own protector and you are your own protector'. All right, which means you are your own protector. You need to protect yourself. No one else is your protector.

So, the only thing that the Buddha does is provide the methods for achieving that liberation. What method does he provide? The genuine dharma. Again, the genuine Dharma is something that we have to practice ourselves, the Dharma is not going to volunteer for us to do our practice, so that we can achieve liberation. However, if we practice the Dharma, then that's the best way, we are going to be able to free ourselves and give ourselves protection. That's why the Dharma is referred to as the protector, because it is the practice of the Dharma, that affords the genuine protection. That's why in Tibetan, the Dharma is called the protector (kyobpa) , and not the other three, not the other two jewels. Therefore, the meaning of going for refuge here is active: taking responsibility ourselves. It is not just taking refuge in receiving something, it's going for refuge ourselves. Not just assuming that we can sit here and leave the Buddha over there and everything will happen magically for us, but we have to take ourselves and go to the state of Buddhahood, go to the practice of the Dharma, so that we can become free of all of the fears of samsara and nirvana.

FOURTH DAY – GENERATING BODHICITTA

For the fourth day of the retreat, the Karmapa suggests we meditate on bodhicitta. So, during the third day, it is going for refuge, but the fourth day is cultivating bodhicitta.

As we discussed already, all of the limitless sentient beings all totally want to have happiness and be free from suffering. However, if we ask, what kind of a state are they in now, then we find that even though they want to be free from suffering, they are imprisoned within the state of suffering. Even though they want to enjoy happiness, they are impoverished with regard to happiness. Thus, we find sentient beings destitute and in a compassion-inspiring state that is the responsibility of each and every individual to accomplish the benefit of sentient beings. The Buddhas of the past applied great effort to accomplish the benefit of countless sentient beings. The Buddhists of the future will apply great effort to benefit countless sentient beings. Those Buddhas who are attaining enlightenment in the present, of which there are many, are applying great effort to benefit all sentient beings, limitless as space in order that they may enjoy the genuine happiness, which is the state of Buddhahood: the changeless, genuine happiness that is free from suffering.

Based upon the example of these, we ourselves give rise to the pledge and the commitment that we will establish all sentient beings as limitless space in the state of genuine, changeless happiness: the state of Buddhahood. In order to establish them in that state, we will apply ourselves with great effort in body, speech and mind. In order to do this, we have to train in bodhicitta we have to train our mind in bodhicitta and we have to train in the conduct of bodhicitta This is the topic that we devote to our sessions throughout the duration of the day on this fourth day.

The lunch was very strong and am getting a little bit sleepy (laughter). It's been twelve years since I came to India. This year in particular, I'm having more challenges related to illness. In general, I do not frequently get sick, but this year seems to be more of a challenge. In particular, there are some fatigue problems that I've been having where I get tired very easily. Some doctors suspect that it might be problems with the functioning of my liver, they are not sure what exactly the problem is. In any case, my mind doesn't feel very clear right now.

Three types of capacity of beings in the Mahayana

The Mahayana, the great vehicle of the bodhisattvas can be said to have three classifications. These classifications I think are mainly based on the individual capacity or responsibility. We can say that, generally, in terms of practitioners, there are three classifications, and these classifications are set forth by Atisha, in his texts on the stages of the path. They are based on the different levels of capacity, or ability to assume responsibility of different individuals.

It is not, as some would think, a matter of good and bad where one classification is worse than the other. It is simply a situation where different people have different levels of ability and responsibility. So Pandita Atisha talks about three types of people: entry level spiritual practitioners, middling level spiritual practitioners and great spiritual practitioners: entry level persons, middling persons and great persons.

The word for *person* in Sanskrit is *purusha*, which carries a basic meaning of possessing ability. So, this goes back to the point that these distinctions are drawn on the mental ability or the strength of the heart and mind of different individuals to assume different responsibilities on their path of dharma.

The entry level spiritual practitioner, or the common level of spiritual practitioner motivates themselves by their fear of the lower realms of samsara. It's taught that in order to be at this level of practitioner, you must have this fear of the three realms of samsara. There is a line of teaching that says, if you cling to this lifetime or if you are attached to this lifetime, then you are not a Dharma practitioner, you are not a spiritual practitioner. In accordance with that, we can generally say that if you are only focused on the activities of sustaining yourself in this lifetime, conquering enemies and nurturing friends, then you are not practicing the Dharma. The practice of focusing on the next lifetime and the life times that come after that one is what we can call Dharma in a proper sense. So, if you are engaged in a practice that entails focusing on aims for the next lifetime and lifetime is following that, then you can say that you are practicing the Dharma.

At the very least, in order to be classified in Buddhism, as an entry level spiritual practitioner, then you have to be motivated by a fear of the three lower realms of samsara. However, this category of entry level spiritual practitioner also can be said to have two sub classifications. One is the principle category of entry level spiritual practitioner, and one is the mundane category of entry level of spiritual practitioner. So the principle one has the qualities that we've already discussed in terms of their fear of the three lower realms of

samsara, and that having that be motivation for their practice of dharma, then the main authority of the mundane time of entry level spiritual practitioners still has some clinging to this lifetime. Nevertheless, out of the bodhisattvas skilfulness, then the bodhisattvas find some type of Dharma teachings that is appropriate for the karmic fortune, of these mundane entry level spiritual practitioners. In any case, the main category is those who are motivated by fear from the fear of the three lower realms.

Then, as we discussed earlier, the middling level of spiritual practitioner is motivated by fear of all states of samsara, not just the three lower realms, but all samsaric destinations, and that becomes the basis of their dharma practice. They see clearly that, whenever one is governed by karma and mental afflictions, one has no power or control over oneself. This is why we call it samsara, *Korwa* in Tibetan, which means cycling, or spinning around. So the practitioner at level of middling spiritual practitioner, sees that as long as you are governed by karma and the mental afflictions, you will be spinning and spinning in the cycle of samsara. From the moment you are governed by karma and the mental afflictions onwards, you will have no genuine happiness and your experience will be nothing other than suffering. You might have some seeming happiness now and again, but that seeming happiness is actually suffering as it's basic nature. So you motivate yourself by that insight, to practice the Dharma and become free from samsara.

Then the great level spiritual practitioner is not motivated just by a fear of samsara, but also by great compassion for all sentient beings. The great spiritual practitioner bears in mind the welfare of all sentient beings and that becomes the motivation for their practice. So we can see that these are three types of path that are designed for three different levels of heart and mind capacity or power. These are not set in stone, it's not the case that one individual is going to be that on the same level of spiritual practice all the time. This mental ability is something that can be changed and improved upon. That's why it's very important to train our minds. And if we train our minds, then the power and ability and capacity of our minds will continually increase.

In fact, it's possible to bring the power and capacity of our mind to a very high level. So even if we are a person right now, who can't think of anything other than him or herself, that doesn't mean that we are going to be stuck at that level of spiritual practice forever. We can train our minds and start with that limited outlook and slowly expand it and build upon it. So, we have this term, *sem kye*, giving rise to bodhicitta or generating the mind of bodhicitta or expanding the mind and bodhicitta.

The importance of mind-training and motivation in the different vehicles

This is a very important training to undertake, taking this narrow, limited mind that has limited capacity and power and slowly expanding it and making its frame of reference bigger and bigger in stages. However, in order to do that we must engage in the trainings we must exercise our minds to train them to be able to take on more and more and become faster and faster. Some people might have some naturally present capacity of mind due to previous training, perhaps trainings they engaged in in previous lifetimes and so things like bodhicitta and considering the welfare of all sentient beings come very naturally. Yet in other cases, if that's not the case for us, then we need to engage in the trainings and exercise our mind.

There is a story about a lama, with a bit of experience, who had a student who asked him a question, and we can alter the content of the story a little bit to suit our context here. The student asked, 'Where does Chod fit in terms of the Hinayana and Mahayana, the greater vehicle or lesser vehicle? And the lama's response was, "if you have the motivation of the great vehicle, it's a practice of the great vehicle, if you have the motivation of the lesser vehicle then it changes the practice of the lesser vehicle. However, for me and you both, it's neither the great vehicle nor the lesser vehicle." So, he was kind of making a humble, yet honest assessment of both individuals in terms of the power of their motivation for a Dharma practice and acknowledging that it didn't live up to even the level of lesser vehicles' motivation.

So, whether or not any type of Dharma practice we do can be genuinely called Mahayana Dharma practice depends on what type of attitude and motivation we bring to the practice. It's not always going to be the same level that we pretend that it is in our mind. We might pretentiously identify as Mahayana practitioners, Vajrayana practitioners, and so on. However, sometimes we don't have the motivation of the Mahayana when we are doing our practice, and we don't even have the motivation of the Hinayana when we are doing our practice, and therefore, our practice actually becomes nothing.

In terms of dharma, it's not even Dharma practice, let alone Hinayana or Mahayana. So, it's not about the Dharma that is to be practiced, it's about the person who is practicing it and their motivation. That is what determines whether any given practice is Mahayana, Vajrayana and so on. For this reason, examining our motivation, before we do any practice becomes very important. It doesn't matter what other people say in terms of what level of practice we are doing. It doesn't matter how we ourselves describe our level of practice, the main thing is to examine our own motivation and see if that's what we are really practising.

Dzogchen teachings - Perfection needs to be developed in the person

The master, Gotsangpa said “the dharma of great perfection by itself is of no benefit. One must transform the person into the great perfection”, something like that. You don't need to make the dharma into great perfection, it is already perfect. You need to make the person practicing the great perfection, perfect. The dharma of the great perfection is already perfect. What you need to do is transform the person who's practicing that. This leads back to the key point of the Dharma and the person not being separate. You want to have the Dharma and the person merged together as one taste, or one level. This is very important.

In terms of the way I think about this, of course, I give many teachings and I'm engaged with various transmissions and empowerment all the time. Sometimes I think it's valuable just to ask ourselves, what level of practice are we doing, in terms of ourselves from our own internal perspectives, not listening to others, not talking to others about it, but just asking

ourselves: “What level am I practicing at? With what motivation am I practicing the Dharma? Am I practicing with a Mahayana motivation? Am I practicing with a Hinayana motivation?” Then, if you do that investigation of yourself, you might find it very challenging to even rise to the level of Hinayana motivation, if you are being honest with yourself. Usually, as people who identify ourselves as Mahayana practitioners, we consider the practitioners of the vehicles of the heroes on solitary realizers, to be lower level of practitioners. However, if we genuinely examine our motivation, then we might find that it's very difficult, and that we are a long way off, even from reaching that level of motivation for practice. We might think to ourselves, I'm going to attain Buddhahood in one lifetime and one body, and I'm a Vajrayana practitioner. We might mix that together in some vague way with our prayers and then take some composite identity from that we are a Vajrayana practitioner. If we look more deeply, then it's very difficult. It's a great challenge. Some of you may not be willing to do that. Maybe, I'm going to make you all dejected by saying these things. So let me make up for that and say to all of you, that you are great and doing well (laughs).

We can use the examples of some of the short earthquakes that happened recently in Dharamsala in a similar way that some Kadampa teachers give examples that illustrate the different capacities of individuals in terms of their concern for others and bodhicitta. So recently, there were some very short earthquakes in the Dharamsala area many times, very sharp many times. They were maybe four or five on the Richter scale, eight or nine times. They were very short, maybe only a half second long or one second long. However, since this area has been traumatized severely by earthquakes in the past, people got very scared as soon as they felt the earth shaking. It is said that Dharamsala is the fifth most dangerous region for earthquakes. It is a Himalayan region and a lot of people have died in the past many years ago when there was a big earthquake. So, there's this natural response of fear.

We also had a laugh with each other when comparing different individuals' responses to the earth starting to shake. Some people, the first time the earth shakes, they are bolting out of

the room, trying to get outside. It can be like a display of the different levels of courage or bravery in watching people's reaction to how they deal with the earthquake.

So of course, the Khampas of Tibet all say that it's so important to have bravery and be courageous. We use this as an opportunity to gauge in a humorous way the bravery of different individuals. So some people, the very first second earthquake started happening, they were already out the door. Whereas, some people got to the door, and their right foot was out the door, but their left foot was still inside. So they took one step, only thinking of getting themselves free and protecting themselves but before they lifted their other foot up, then they thought of others, whether they be friends or family members, and then they turned around to tend to them to make sure that they were going to get out safely.

You can see that this is kind of analogous to our level of capacity on the spiritual path in terms, of what comes instinctively to us. Does it come instinctively to us to just take care of ourselves? Or do we have some small level of instinct to take care of others as well? We need to have both wisdom and compassion on the path in order to achieve perfect enlightenment. However, practising the Mahayana it is not enough to just have a desire. To achieve enlightenment for oneself, one must also have a desire for others to achieve enlightenment. As for thinking only of others and not at all about oneself, that is very difficult. Yet, we can at least try to train our minds in having the recognition that the welfare of others is equivalent to the welfare of ourselves. We might even find some times that there are more reasons for others to achieve freedom from suffering than there are for ourselves to achieve freedom from suffering.

The difficulty of seeing the danger of things that are not immediately present

Actually, it's interesting to think about the way our brain behaves. It is said that our brain is wired in some circumstances not to react unless something is right before our very eyes, especially in cases of danger. For example, you wouldn't be scared of a tiger unless the tiger was right in front of you, within reach of you, so to speak. If someone came up to you and said a tiger is going to be here in three years time, then you wouldn't have much reaction

for that. It wouldn't set off the kind of danger response mechanisms of your brain. So, our brain has a very short-term function in that way in terms of responding to danger. That kind of danger capacity doesn't have a real long-term mechanism to it.

We can see this neurological function in play when it comes to issues about the environment and global warming. People say that there is danger, but it's not the same level of danger to us as if a tiger were right in front of us. It's a little bit more long term than that. And because it's a little bit more long term, then we don't have a sense of urgency naturally arising inside of ourselves. The long-term issue is harder to connect with a reaction of urgency. We can see how much difficulty that creates even in terms of the environment.

When it comes to traveling the path of dharma, whether it's motivating yourself on the basis of fear of the lower realms or fear of samsara, or fear of the two extremes of peace and cyclic existence then these are all long-term concerns. And , you need to go beyond just relying on the short term indicators of your brain, but also call upon the intelligence of your heart, in order to transform your mind to address these fears, or address these situations. We need to learn how to take more of a long-term view of things, in terms of our desire to be free from suffering and to enjoy happiness, we have to take that into account.

FIFTH DAY – INSTRUCTIONS ON THE MAIN PRACTICE - LETTING GO OR GIVING AWAY THE BODY

The eighth Karmapa gives instructions that on the fifth day we engage in the practice of mind training, in particular in connection with the notion of letting go, or giving away our body. Of letting go of attachment to not only the body but to everything.

There is a tradition that many of you, surely know about in Tibet where they give the corpses away as food to the vultures. In the same way, there is a tradition in Machig's Chod practice of casting one's own corpse flesh as food for others. Some people have said that the practice of giving corpses to the vultures as food originated with Machig Labdron. There

are some kind of oral sayings in this regard. I don't think we can definitively say that's the case, as it seems that this tradition of giving corpses to the vultures as food might have come from the ancient times of Tibet.

Letting go of the five skandhas/aggregates

in any case, when we engage in the mind training here, we are engaged in developing or transforming our mind, to develop more willingness to give away our body for the benefit of others, giving away our skandhas and everything, for the benefit of others. On the one hand, this instruction is very connected with the key instructions of the Mind Training tradition. On the other hand, it's also connected with the Vajrayana tradition. In any case, one trains in transforming one's mind by imagining that one is giving away one's five skandhas. Through doing that, one's self fixation or clinging to the self is decreased. One realizes that the object of one's clinging to the self, to the five skandhas is baseless and rootless.

So, this practice of letting go and casting away the objects of our clinging to the self, the five skandhas includes all of the qualities of relinquishment of the path of the hearers and solitary realizers. When we train our minds in giving away the five skandhas, the objects of our ego clinging, then that has the effect of harming our ego-clinging itself and undermining our self-fixation. Then, from the Bodhisattva perspective, if we engage in this letting go of our five skandhas, not just for the sake of undermining our own ego clinging so that we can achieve liberation for ourselves, but if we do it for the sake of all sentient beings achieving the state of perfect Buddhahood, that does not abide in the extremes of peace or existence, then it becomes a practice of the bodhisattva path. If we dedicate our body, speech and mind and possessions without any attachment to them for the purpose that other sentient beings may achieve the state of Buddhahood free from the two extremes of peace and existence, then that becomes a practice of the bodhisattva path.

On the other hand, we have some teachings that say that it's not appropriate to give the gift of one's body, if one has not achieved at least the first Bodhisattva Bhumi. So therefore,

this is the practice of mind training that we engage in at this stage, and it's a process of training the mind.

Historical examples in Tibet of mind-training

Some historical examples that illustrate this are the reactions that some Tibetan lamas had, during the Cultural Revolution when they were forced to do certain things by the Red Army. Some monks were forced to, or were told to kill other sentient beings or destroy temples, stupas and so on. When they refused, they were beaten because of that, but they didn't feel the suffering of being beaten.

Another example is in Kham, Tibet, there were rats in the fields and the Red Army wanted the rats removed because they were harming the crops. So they tried to force some monks to kill the rats, but the monks refused to kill the rats. So, as punishment for not doing that members of the Red Army beat the monks on their arms. Yet, some of the monks reported that they didn't feel the suffering of their arms being beaten, they felt glad about this, they beat their arms with a stone. So the lamas reported that they didn't feel much suffering, when this happened to them. In fact, they actually felt that their body had finally become useful for sentient beings, that they had taken on so many bodies in beginningless, samsara and now finally, their body had become useful and beneficial to sentient beings, because it prevented the deaths of these rats. Their arms being pounded prevented the deaths of these rats and that made them very happy. They said it may have hurt a little bit, but there was no great suffering, they were glad that this was taking place. So, this is an example of transformation of the mind through training. It's an example of this quality of letting go and giving that we are training in on this fifth day of practice.

Chod and sickness

Some people when they practice Chod, they worry that if you practice Chod too much, then you are going to encounter adverse conditions, such as illnesses. However, that's actually a sign that your Chod practice hasn't gone deep enough. Why? Because actually, it's a good

sign if you get sick, or have obstacles due to having practiced Chod because that means that some karmic debt collectors have come to enjoy the body that you have offered them. So, it should be a cause for your feeling happy rather than becoming worried. At the same time, you don't need to worry about it.

Actually, you already gave up your sort of debt. So, if they take it, that is good thing. Let them enjoy. 'Oh, I give it to them, then they accept it's good thing. They don't accept, not good'. Maybe something like that.

Even though you have this sort of fear, it is also a good sign, because you did something. Otherwise, you would not have this kind of fear, right? If you just stay there, then I don't think you will have this fear. However, there is also no need to worry and no need to take seriously that fear because you have to let it go and give it up.

In this way, we let go of everything that we claim to all of the objects of our clinging, all of the objects of our self-fixation, and leave them free of reference point. When we do this, then our self-fixation really doesn't know what to do, because all of the objects that it uses and usually refers to aren't there anymore before our mind. So we leave our self-fixation in a very disoriented state. That is a very great benefit that comes of doing this practice and it's possible to accomplish this benefit. So this is the practice of cutting through or severing that we do.

As we said earlier, the practice of Chod involves cutting through the Mara of inflation, self-fixation, and cutting through the four Maras all together. Not only do we just cut through them, but we cut through them in a forceful way, using forceful methods. So, we are not just doing an intellectual contemplation or engaging in the process of reasoning, but we are decisively engaging in this practice of Chod to cut through our fixation on self.

[Chod Teaching Day 2 - YouTube](#)

Now we are coming to the conclusion of our program together here. Yesterday afternoon, you all had the opportunity to receive a teaching from His Eminence, Dorzong Rinpoche, he gave very profound Dharma teaching. I'm so happy that he did and I would like to thank him for doing that. In terms of our session here this morning.

I mentioned earlier that I would like to say some things about the history of Chod practice and the life story of Machig Labdron. So we will begin this morning's session, the final session of the program with that topic. After that, I will return to the guiding instructions text of the eighth Karmapa, Mikyo Dorje and his instructions for the one-week retreat practice. Then finally, I have a few words of thank you have to say at the end and then once that's over, it will be done.

As we acknowledged previously, Chod is a branch of the broader tradition known as Zhije, or the pacification of suffering, which was one of the eighth Precious Chariot lineages. We also discussed previously how Chod can be classified into two groups of Pho and Mo Chod, or male and female, and both male and female Chod. As I said before, come down to us through Padampa Sangye, I will not say too much about him.

Padampa Sangye, Bodhidharma and Zen Buddhism

There are some people who have asserted that he is actually the same person who is known as Bodhidharma¹⁴, the 5th Century master who brought the Buddha Dharma from India to China, which was Bodhidharma, who is known as the founder of the Zen tradition.

In Tibetan, they gave him the name Samten, which means meditative concentration. So, in general, it's very difficult for us to examine claims like this, because the lives of the great mahasiddhas are very hard to track using conventional means, because sometimes the masters are said to have displayed the manner of dying in one place, but then appeared as a living person subsequently in another place. That makes it difficult to explain their life histories in a completely reliable and accurate way. So, we can't be so sure about this claim that Padampa Sangye was the same person as Bodhidharma.

In fact, if you look at the chronology of the situation, when Bodhidharma is said to have lived and so forth, then it becomes difficult, I think to assert that Bodhidharma was the same person as Padampa Sangye, especially considering Bodhidharma's connection to Shaolin. Apparently Bodhidharma was said to have been connected to the Shaolin tradition of martial arts, as well as the Zen tradition.

There was also the famous master who was known by Tibetans as Hashang Mahayana [Heshang Moheyang](#) (*Héshang Mófēyǎn*, which is actually the Zen tradition but Tibetans call it Hashang Mahayana. That's really inaccurate because the Hashang tradition was the Zen tradition or Chinese Chan tradition. So actually, the Chinese word Hashang it seems can also mean Khenpo. Maybe these days it means monk.

Therefore, in short, this assertion that Bodhidharma was the same person as Padampa Sangye is not so reliable or tenable. Padampa Sangye visited Tibet four or five times and there are many stories about his life and deeds, but we don't need to go into detail about them here. We will instead now look at the life story of Machig Labdron.

Actually, before we get into Machig Labdron, I will make a few more remarks about the topic of Hashang Mahayana. the Dharma view that was associated with that figure. Of course, the commonly or the general understanding that we have of the history of the spread of Buddhism is that Buddhism spread from India to Tibet in a way that was distinct from the spread of Buddhism from India to China. However, I think if we look closer into this issue, that we can see some evidence that in fact, Buddhism arrived in Tibet, to some degree, from China before the great wave of transmission of Buddha Dharma from India to Tibet.

For example, we see in the history of the Dharma King Songtsen Gampo, that he brought the great Jowo statue to Lhasa from China. He also invited a princess to Tibet from China. I think that these things were in some ways indicative of some presence of Buddhism coming

to Tibet from China before the main wave of transmission started directly from India to Tibet. We can consider this. This is just my personal thought. This can perhaps be considered, like, for example, the time when Songsten Gampo was bringing the Jowo statue to Lhasa, and building monasteries and so forth, the beginning of the spreading of Buddhism to Tibet. In the early days that was happening to some extent from China around the seventh century.

It seems that at the time of the one who came to be labelled by Tibetans as Hashang Mahayana, who seems to have been simply a master who was holding the view of the Chan tradition. It seems that around that time, there were many people who were holding that lineage, that stream of transmission of the Dharma at the same time that the Dharma began to be transmitted to Tibet, directly from India as well. It seems that these two traditions came into philosophical conflict with each other.

This philosophical conflict happened during the time of the Dharma King, Trisong Detsen. So it's evidenced in the famous example of the debate between Kamalashila, and the monk who later became named by Tibetans as Hashang Mahayana. So I don't think it's the case that it was just this one monk who was holding that view coming from the Chan tradition, but rather, there were many practitioners who were holding this view. At the same time, there was a stream of transmission coming from India, of course, starting at the time of Trisong Detsen. Those two systems came into philosophical conflict. So, there were some Dharma debates that happened between these two groups. There was a great scholar, Rigpe Relji, who made lists of all of the texts in the Tengyur, the collected translations of shastras or commentaries. When he lost the debate, then the king of the Tibet, supported the tradition from China directly from India, right? Rather than the older tradition. Also actually, in the olden times, they also have some texts composed by some Masters of the Zen tradition. They have a lot of texts there but these days it's not in the Tengyur.

There is the Tsanphu monastery, this monastery is the first shedra of Tibet, the first monastic College in a monastery. He is the one of the famous Khenpos from here and his

name is Chomde Rigrel. One day he composed one index/kashag. Then Jamyang khyentse Wangpo in his own texts said the Zen tradition is like Mahamudra, in a symbolic way. It is not a direct expression but a symbolic explanation of Mahamudra. Sometimes, Tibetans have the view of the Zen tradition and they have some problem with it and think that it is not pure or authentic. Maybe that is because of the debate at Kamalashila .

So eventually, what happened, of course, was that, you know, Kamalashila was declared the winner of the debate. Then eventually the king chose that the stream of teachings that was coming directly from India as the stream of teachings that would be representative of the mainstream Buddhism in Tibet. That was the view of Buddhism that was adopted for Tibet. Due to that, people have come to think that the view of Hashang Mahayana was inferior. However, actually, it might not have been the case the view is inferior, but perhaps the person defending it in debate didn't explain it properly. That's why they lost the debate. So perhaps is not so much of a fault with the view, but just the person. It is of course, eminently possible that the person defending this view in the debate against Kamalashila might not have been clear about the view that he was supposed to be defending, and so didn't defend that view adequately.

Machig Labdron's Life and astonishing abilities

Machig Labdron (*ma gcig lab sgron*) 's birthplace was in South Tibet in an area, called Lab. That is why she is called Labdron, which means 'lamp'. I won't say the father and mother's name. She was born in the 12th Century in 1140, showing signs of great faith and devotion in the Dharma.

From the age of three she began reciting the mantra of Om Mani Padme Hum and also the Ha Ri Ni Sa mantra (of Chakrasamvara/Vajrayogini). Then when she was five years old, she began studying, reading and writing, from her mother. this is a very remarkable point that really caught my attention. That she learned reading from her mother and became very proficient in reading to the point that, by the time she had turned eight years old, she was able to recite the Prajñāpāramitā in 8000 Lines Sutra, twice per day. So, she became a very proficient reader.

This really reminded me of my father as there were a lot of children in my family, nine or ten children. My father would teach us how to read, and he would include my sister. This was somewhat controversial in my area, because a lot of people thought that you shouldn't teach girls how to read. You shouldn't give girls an education. Some people even thought that was a bad thing to educate girls. They think that you should just send the girls to milk the cows and do work like that. They would say, why would you want to teach a girl how to read? Why do you want to get into that business? However, my father didn't listen to that, he taught me and my sisters how to read. Of course, one of my sisters is with me here. She became very good at reading to the point where when she was young, she could read the Pema Katang the life story of Guru Life story of Padmasambhava, once every single day. So, she was a great reader back then I don't know how she is these days.

In any case, this point about Machig's life story, the point about education was very striking to me, not just because she was a girl and learning how to read but because her mother was the one who taught her, so her mother also knew how to read, which was very rare in those days, I think. It seems that her mother came from a very wealthy family. So, since her mother was from a wealthy family, she probably had more opportunity to receive an education.

Then later on, Machig Labdron began studying reading with a Master called Choney, which means object (place) of offerings. So, Machig Labdron relied on Choney, the family guru, and she was teaching her reading and was extremely impressed by her progress. At some point, this master told Machig's family: 'I don't think this is an ordinary girl you have here. She's definitely some type of Dakini, her prajna her knowledge and wisdom, are like a blazing forest fire. Therefore, I think it would be good if she took the name Sherab, and she got the name Sherab Dronme – which means 'lamp of wisdom' or the 'torch of wisdom'.

Then, when she was 16 years old, she went to an area known as Drathang and she studied the extensive, middle length, and condensed Prajñāpāramitā sutras with the Treasure-

Revealer known as Drapa Ngonshe, who was a Tertön. Then, later, from the master known as Kyoton Sonam Lama she received the transmission of Zhije, the genuine Dharma that pacifies suffering. She did a lot of meditation on that¹⁵.

Then, when Machig was 23 years old, she met a man named Topa Badra, and married him perhaps. Some people say that he was Tibetan, but actually, he was Indian. He was considered to be an emanation of the Yidam known as Sangye Thopa, or the Buddha Kapala¹⁶.

Machig and Topa Badra had three children, two sons and one daughter. Then her husband died and she was alone and had to take care of the three children alone with some hardship. She went through a very hard time having to assume this responsibility by herself. Then at the age of 34, she began to feel heartfelt revulsion and renunciation towards samsara and this caused her to leave her home and go off to many isolated places of solitude to do practice and retreat.

Then by some accounts, in the end, Machig Labdron passed away in the year 1201. However, there are different assertions as to her birth and death dates. In particular, there are two different sets of dates that are asserted, but we don't need to get into those types of details.

The Dharma tradition that she founded of Chod is said to be a tradition of direct experience of the meaning of the Prajñāpāramitā sutras, a method for realization of this meaning to arise in one's mind stream. So, her Dharma system was not prevalent or renowned previously in India. Her propagation of this system, in particular was of great benefit to women practitioners, women who had a desire to practice the Dharma. In helping women throughout Tibet, who wanted to practice the Dharma. Later on, her tradition of Chod came to be widely held and practiced within all schools of Tibetan Buddhism. So, in short, it's a very precious and sacred tradition. So, that's all I'll say about the history for now. We can return to our discussion of the instructions.

SIXTH DAY – GIVING AWAY ONE’S BODY

Now we are at the point of the 8th Karmapa’s explanation where he is discussing the instructions for the sixth day of the retreat, in which we enter into the main practice of Chod itself. Here, he gives the contemplations for the practice of giving one's body, or practicing the generosity of one's body, which in Tibetan is called Lujin (lus byin).

Reflecting on the kindness of beings

First, we begin by reflecting on how all sentient beings as limitless as space only want to enjoy happiness and be free from suffering, and are all equal and the same in that regard. Not only that, we reflect on how all sentient beings have been kind to us, have been our benefactors, in the past. Thinking of them in this way, we realize that they are suitable recipients of all our generosity. In terms of all of the positive things that we possess, including our body, speech, and mind, sentient beings are worthy recipients of these, they are worthy recipients of any generosity we can extend to them. Therefore, we must extend this generosity to them.

Two types of generosity – temporary and ultimate

There are two types of generosity we can offer: temporary generosity and ultimate generosity. In terms of the temporary, or short term, generosity, we give things to sentient beings that will dispel their sufferings of being hot or being cold, that will dispel their sufferings of hunger and thirst. Also, we train our minds in the examples of generosity that were given to us by the great bodhisattvas of the past. So, in the life stories of the great bodhisattvas of the past, there are examples of bodhisattvas giving their own body freely to other sentient beings, even if the request was only a joke, or just teasing.

There are stories, for example, of bodhisattvas who were approached by an enemy who was just teasing him and saying, ‘Please cut off your head’. Then, without hesitation, or attachment, the Bodhisattva cut off his head to offer to that person. However, with the temporary generosity, even if something is of small, mundane benefit to sentient beings, if

it benefits them, then we try to provide that to them, regardless of attachment of any kind for our body, our life, our possessions and so forth. So here we train our minds in this way. It's difficult for us to immediately begin emulating the great bodhisattvas, but we began training our minds in extending this type of generosity. This is all under the category of temporary generosity.

In terms of ultimate generosity, we consider the highest benefit of all sentient beings, not just considering the benefit of dispelling sentient beings' hunger or thirst. We want to give them the genuine happiness that is free from suffering.

If we were willing previously at the stage of temporary generosity, to give away all of our body, speech and mind along with all of our roots of virtue for sentient beings, even to accomplish a small benefit on their behalf, then of course, it goes without saying that we are going to be willing here in the context of ultimate generosity to give them our body speech and mind and possessions along with all of our roots of virtue for the sake of accomplishing the great benefit of their attaining the state of liberation. At this point, we feel so compelled to give these things to sentient beings that it is it becomes a choiceless matter, we have no choice but to give all of these things away to sentient beings.

Giving the roots of all our virtues

So, we give without hesitation and automatically, feeling completely compelled and moved to enact this giving, giving all of our body speech, mind possessions as well as our roots of virtue that we have accumulated throughout the three times. So, this phrase, *along with all of our roots of virtue* has a special meaning here. When we give all of our body speech, mind and possessions away to sentient beings in order to accomplish the greatest benefit for them, then that of course will have a beneficial effect for ourselves in terms of the merit that arises from such an act of generosity. Rather than clinging on to that for ourselves, we in turn, give that away as well to other sentient beings, and then the merit that arises from giving that merit away to other sentient beings, we in turn give that away again, to all sentient beings, we don't keep it for ourselves. Thus, this process continues infinitely, we

continue giving infinite virtue to an infinite number of sentient beings. In this case, we are not clinging to ourselves as being ourselves. We are giving everything away, free from hesitation, free from any clinging on to ourselves whatsoever. This is what we tried to train our mind in at this stage. In a gradual way, starting small, and then getting bigger and bigger progressively, so that our mind of giving, our capacity to give, this mind of letting go and extending becomes vaster and vaster.

If we become familiar with training our minds in this way, then this attitude of generosity will accompany us from lifetime to lifetime and we will not forgo it or relinquish it. Usually what happens is that we don't relinquish our self-fixation from lifetime to lifetime. We might change bodies, but our self-fixation stays with us.

Here, what happens is that through familiarizing our minds with this attitude of giving, an attitude of letting go, then that openness expands and expands. It stays with us from lifetime to lifetime, this concern for all sentient beings, equal to the extent of space will not be forgotten. Even though we change lifetimes, even though we change bodies.

Becoming part of other sentient beings

The reason for this never degenerating is because by habituating ourselves, in thinking of sentient beings in this way, we become part of other sentient beings. That which we take to be ourselves and that which we take to be others are no longer two separate things. What we consider benefiting ourselves, and what we consider benefiting other sentient beings are no longer two separate things. Our own body, speech and mind and the body, speech and mind of all sentient beings are no longer two separate things. Therefore, from lifetime to lifetime, we can have this attitude of care and generosity and concern for other sentient beings remain with us. Not only will it remain with us, but this attitude of enthusiasm for the welfare of all sentient beings, seeing ourselves as a part of all sentient beings and sentient beings as a part of ourselves will increase. This devotion to the welfare of all sentient beings, as well as bravery, strength of heart and diligence for accomplishing the welfare of sentient

beings will automatically and naturally be with us from lifetime to lifetime and will keep increasing and increasing, until it becomes boundless and infinite.

Realising selflessness or non-duality

When we have reached that point, the five skandhas that were previously the source or the objects of our fixation on a self, are no longer seen as the self or me that we were previously so obsessed with. Previously, we observed the five skandhas and then thought to ourselves, my aggregates and me and I. However, that relationship is no longer functioning because the skandhas that were the reference point for the self-fixation, are no longer seen as me or I. So it is said that the bodhisattvas with great powers of wisdom and intelligence, see the true nature of the five aggregates as being selfless, without a self. they see that true nature, just as it is. Because they see this, they can look upon other sentient beings with great non-referential compassion and perform the generosity of the body. So, when they perform the generosity of their body, they are including their head, feet, and so on. They clearly see that the body that they are giving away is not the self and that the body they are giving away, does not truly exist. It lacks true existence.

For these great bodhisattvas, this body is simply like making a drawing. So, this kind of act of generosity, of giving away the body is like making a drawing in the sky. It doesn't exist as a real thing. Since self-clinging is the root of suffering, these bodhisattvas with very sharp faculties are said to not experience any suffering, no matter what type of generosity of the body they perform. That's a very high level of accomplishment.

When we work with the practice of training our mind and giving away the body, we must ensure that we are doing something that is serving as an antidote for our fixation on itself. The way this practice serves as an antidote for a fixation on a self is that we give away what we previously thought of as the self, or as the I. This removes the reference object for self-fixation. When we give this away to others, without any hesitation, or without any attachment to the body, it removes the reference points for our self-fixation. Once the

reference points for our self-fixation are removed, then the self-fixation is left in a groundless state and that's what truly undermines the Self-fixation.

So, this is the 'giving away the body' practice we do on the sixth day. First, we give rise to the bodhicitta motivation, then we do the chanting of the Chod sadhana, and engage in the visualization of offering the generosity of our body. When we do the practice of extending the generosity of your body, this is the means to do the visualization practice. Just visualizing this time, the first time you just prepare, you need to give rise to the motivation. Then you do the sadhana and visualization going through giving your body and cutting it up and so forth. Just the visualization at this point is sufficient. I cannot give away my body like that (laughs). If you give away your body physically I don't take any responsibility for that. I am not Tilopa and I cannot heal you (laughs).

SEVENTH DAY - DEDICATION OF MERIT

On the seventh day, we focus on dedicating the merit, dedicating all of our roots of virtue to supreme enlightenment. So, this relates to the key point of the Mind Training teachings that says that there are two main activities that we should never forget, which are the beginning and at the end. In the beginning, we give rise to the correct motivation. At the end, we dedicate our merit. So, with regard to the correct motivation in the beginning, it said that whether our Dharma practice becomes actual Dharma or not, depends upon the motivation that we give rise to. It is our motivation that also distinguishes whether our practice is a practice of the lesser vehicle or the greater vehicle.

Therefore, having a correct motivation at the beginning is very important. In particular, if we want our practice to become genuine Mahayana practice, then we need to give rise to the motivation of bodhicitta, the desire to achieve awakening for the benefit of all sentient beings limitless as space. Then in the end, dedicating the merit is important. Whatever roots of virtue we have accumulated, we dedicate that to the achievement of unsurpassable enlightenment for all sentient beings. That is the dedication of merit that determines

whether our practice will lead to the result of our arriving at the unsurpassable ground or not. The motivation determines whether our practice will be genuine practice and the dedication determines that we will arrive at our intended result of practice. In this way, the dedication of merit is like the driver of the car that takes us to the correct location. These are two extremely important points, the motivation in the beginning, and the dedication of merit at the end, these two things are something that we should never forget. In between those two, there's a lot of different instructions on the main practice.

In between those two, there was a lot of instructions that we could practice in the context of the main practice, but those are going to change from circumstance to circumstance. We should always precede our practice with the motivation of bodhichitta and conclude our practice by dedicating the merit for all sentient beings. This is the case whether we are practicing Mahayana, or practices of secret mantra, Vajrayana. Whether we are practicing the causal vehicle, or the resultant vehicle, even if we are just saying one syllable of a mantra or Om Mani Padme Hum, we should precede it with the motivation of bodhichitta and conclude with the dedication of merit. If one does that then it is the Mahayana Dharma vehicle.

The dedication determines the path we are on

So, it said about the bodhisattvas that even when they were ordinary beings, there is no time when they are not training on the path, there is no action of their body speech or mind that is not done for the benefit of others, that is not dedicated to the benefit of sentient beings. So this determines whether or not we have reached the path of the Mahayana or not. The heart of the path of Mahayana is giving rise to bodhichitta, which is in essence thinking about the benefit of others. Bodhichitta is the desire for all sentient beings to achieve the result of unsurpassable enlightenment. When we consider the Buddha, having gone through the journey of gathering the accumulations for three countless eons, he wasn't gathering merit for three countless eons, just so that things would go well for himself. He was gathering merit for three countless eons in order to bring benefit to sentient beings as much as he could, and in order to establish a connection with limitless

sentient beings. Furthermore, he wanted to achieve the result of Buddhahood not just for himself, but for the benefit of all sentient beings. Therefore, in the end when he attained Buddhahood, it's not the case that his work for sentient beings was done. When he attained Buddhahood, he could then benefit sentient beings by way of body speech, mind, qualities and activity in a continuous way. So, the body speech, mind, qualities and activity of the Buddha are continuously performing the benefit for others, and are for the sake of the benefit of others.

Small samsara and big samsara - Benefiting beings is endless

So, we should not think that when we attain Buddhahood, our work is all done. Buddhas continue working for the benefit of sentient beings even after they attain Buddhahood. Therefore, it says sometimes that the state of a sentient being is the small samsara but the state of Buddhahood is big (or ultimate) samsara. That is because the duration of being a sentient being is limited, there will come a time when a sentient being transforms into the state of a Buddha, free from samsara. From that perspective, samsara is limited, it's just a small samsara. Yet, when you are Buddha, when you attain the state of Buddhahood, then you are working for sentient beings all the time continually. At that point, samsara is your office and working for the sentient beings within samsara is your job. You have a permanent office/job in samsara and we should give permanent salary to them (laughter). So the Buddha becomes a permanent citizen now of samsara (laughter). So, with this value of helping other sentient beings in mind, some bodhisattvas say that they don't want to achieve Buddhahood because they want to remain in samsara in order to benefit sentient beings, as all they value is benefiting other sentient beings.

However, there have been some teachers that say that there is a danger that you would develop a wrong view. They say it okay to think like that, but on the other hand, there is also a difference between Buddhas and bodhisattvas, in the way that they accomplish benefit for other sentient beings. So, if we start with ordinary sentient beings, we could say that they can try to benefit other sentient beings, but they are only going to accomplish a very limited benefit of sentient beings, they cannot accomplish a great benefit of sentient

beings. Then, when you are a bodhisattva, some of the things that you do will accomplish great benefit for sentient beings, but then some of the things you do will still be of no benefit to them. However, it is said that when you are a Buddha, then everything that you do will be of benefit for sentient beings and no action will be devoid of benefit. So, from that perspective, the state of Buddhahood is the supreme way to benefit sentient beings, because you are continually benefiting sentient beings and nothing that you do is not benefiting sentient beings.

However, the bodhisattvas value staying in samsara so much because of their concern for the welfare of sentient beings. That is what puts their mind at ease. Nothing puts the bodhisattvas' mind at ease, except for benefiting sentient beings. In relation to this, the master Yangonpa, had a verse that said 'I am going to remain in the depths of samsara, and may my enemy of Buddhahood please stay away from me'.

He had a thought that Buddhahood might be one-sided peace. It is not that, but we might have a wrong view and he thought that if you were to think that, then he makes this aspiration. It is like putting a heavy stone in water then it sinks and stays there. It is heavy like that not small. So if you were to think that Buddhahood was one sided peace, then Yangonpa makes this aspiration that his enemy of Buddhahood would stay away, so that he could remain in samsara for the benefit of sentient beings.

So, I think that's all I have to say, for this teaching session. I have been discussing the outline of practice for a one-week retreat in connection with the practice of Chod. I haven't just made these instructions up myself, I've relied on the teachings of the forefather masters of the Kagyu lineage and explained them to you. If you take these instructions and put them into practice, then I think that it would be very beneficial, and hope that it would be very beneficial for you. However, you shouldn't think that you can just do this one-week retreat once and that you've accomplished your homework assignment. This is not just like a one - time homework in that way. It's not something where you just do it once and then you are

done. It's a permanent assignment. Although I should admit that I don't like homework, and I never do my English homework (laughs).

Closing Remarks

So, to conclude, I would like to express a few words of gratitude. In Tibetan, we have this phrase 'I'd like to say two or three words, but if you say that you ended up talking for an hour. The main condition for all of these teachings and the empowerment of Chod to have taken place was the request of Lama Tsultrim Allione. So, Lama Tsultrim had a very strong connection with the previous 16th Karmapa. All of you know about this and know about her so I do not need to say a lot. However, since I had been given the name of the 17th Karmapa, she felt a wish to reconnect with Karmapa through making a Dharma connection with me. She has had a great devotion toward the teachings of Chod. For a long time, she has been doing a lot of work to preserve and maintain the continuity of the teachings and practice of Chod. She has a very pure heart motivation in doing this, which I deeply rejoice and I genuinely hope to be able to support the work that she does in this regard, in a continuing way in the future. From a personal perspective, I feel grateful to her because this was my first opportunity to confer the empowerment of Chod. So, I feel very fortunate to have had this opportunity. I would not have had this opportunity if it were not for her request. Therefore, I'd like to extend a special note of gratitude to her and say thank you.

So, from the time I was young, I had a great interest in the practice of Chod and I felt some kind of connection with it, like some type of karmic connection. However, I did not have the opportunity to practice Chod, I never had the opportunity to confer the Chod empowerment. They did the ritual of Chod in Tsurphu monastery every year but I did not attend this. In fact, this empowerment here was the first time I even saw the empowerment text. So, I'm very happy that this opportunity has come to pass. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Tara mandala for all of the work that they did to organize and have these teachings happen here as well as all of the sponsors that have made this teaching gathering possible.

I'd also like to thank all of the people that came here from various parts of the world from all directions. Most of you who travelled here from abroad came from a great distance. You have done this, through taking on great hardship, and making a great effort to arrive here. Going to great expense to yourself. I think this is a really a great example of going for refuge to the Dharma, because the reason that you came here was because you consider the Dharma and the teachings of Chod in particular, to be very precious and very valuable. So, I think this is a good case of genuinely going for refuge to the Dharma. Then also, we have our gathering of nuns who have come to these teachings. They have also gone through hardship, to come here every day and go back to their residence every night. I would like to thank you all for being here.

With regard to the declaration that these teachings or this program has been provided primarily to female practitioners, it's important to understand that in the Dharma, there is no gender. The Dharma is about working with your mind. Mind does not have any gender, mind is not male, mind is not female. Nevertheless, on the other hand, the teachings of Chod that we have been receiving here come to us from the female lineage of Chod. This comes to us from the Great Master, Machig Labdron, it is through her kindness that we were able to receive these teachings, she was a person who appeared in the form of a woman's body. From that perspective, she can stand as a very inspiring example, to women who wished to practice the Dharma. Because using the body of a woman, she attained the state of full accomplishment. Sometimes, in general society, women are regarded as lower. because of this collective attitude on the part of society, sometimes women can feel discouraged.

However, when it comes to the time of practicing the Dharma, we should not feel discouraged at all. In fact, we should feel more encouraged and inspired. So, when we practice the Dharma, and particularly when women are practicing the Dharma, we should actually not be humble about our capabilities, we should be proud of our capabilities, we should call upon our pride and strength of heart. When I say pride, I mean beneficial pride, useful pride. We can think to ourselves, "I can do the practice of the Dharma", we should

actually have more of this pride. When we practice the Dharma. If we think to ourselves, “I can not do it, I’m not capable of doing it”, then that’s not a good thought to have. It’s an obstacle to our practice of dharma. So, in order to further inspire you in your practice of dharma and help you to connect with your confidence in your ability to practice, I have offered these teachings and I think that our gathering together in this way will become a pleasing offering to all of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. It will become a pleasing offering to Machig Labdron in all of the lineage masters of Chod.

So, it is important therefore, for you to hold these teachings to ensure that the continuity of these teachings is not broken. You can do that by putting these teachings into practice and continuing to train your mind and continuing to engage in the practice with great effort in body, speech and mind. then of course, in the end, dedicating the virtue to all sentient beings. Our mothers limitless as space are very important.

I would also like to say a few words of gratitude about the venue that we have enjoyed for these past days for this empowerment and teachings. When I first arrived in Dharamsala, I was housed at Gyuto monastery. The original plan was that I would stay at Gyuto monastery for maybe a few days or a couple of months, but I’ve been there now for 12 years. They have been extremely kind to me. Now maybe we can call Gyuto monastery my permanent hotel. On the other hand, Gyuto is a great seat of its own tradition, and they have their own ceremonies and programmes to attend to. So, it’s a challenge for them sometimes because I have the name of Karmapa and I have my own programmes to carry out. Sometimes, there are challenges with negotiating the space and how the space will be used. There’s not always a space available to have large programs on my behalf there. So, to avoid those difficulties, we were very fortunate that HE Dorzong Rinpoche has offered this monastery as the venue for this program, in a secluded place and very beautiful environment. In fact, I think that I should write a poem about how beautiful this monastery and its environment are. Rinpoche established this seat here for his lineage and it has provided a wonderful environment for our teachings to happen. Therefore, I would like to thank Rinpoche from the bottom of my heart.

I think that I have a special connection with Rinpoche and the many Lamas of the Drugpa Kagyu tradition. The previous Khamtrul Rinpoche, Chogye Rinpoche and their Togden practitioners, all had a very special connection with the 16th Karmapa. I also personally have a connection with the Drugpa Kagyu lineage because my mother is a very strong Drugpa Kagyu. She is like 'I am a Drugpa Kagyu' (laughs) and has a strong identification with that, stronger than a Drugpa Kagyu monk. So ordinary monks can take lessons from my mother on that (laughter).

In any case, I'm very thankful for the fortunate opportunity to have had this program happen here in the Dorzong monastery. I also want to thank all of the staff of the monastery and all of the people who are working to make the meals here possible. We've been so lucky, because this monastery is in an isolated area, there are not so many restaurants around. So many people have worked very hard to provide us with meals. That's really a lucky situation to be in because if we were studying with Marpa Lotsawa, he would say, either you are going to get the Dharma or you are going to get food, but you are not going to get both. These two things should not be mixed together. However, we have gotten both Dharma and food, so we are very, very lucky that a great many causes and conditions have come together for this program to be possible.

This is a demonstration of the reality of interdependent arising, the coming together of many different factors that have made this possible. Looking at it in this way, we can see that opportunities like this are extremely rare, difficult to find, and are therefore very precious. So, if we have an attitude, and mindfulness of the preciousness of situations like this and opportunities like this, then there will arise great benefit from our engagement with these opportunities. If we just take a mundane attitude, with no appreciation for the rarity of such occasions, then we will not get any benefit from engaging in opportunities like this, but that would be your fault, not mine.

Bibliography/Further Reading

Did Machik Lapdrön Really Teach Chöd? A Survey of the Early Sources by Sarah Harding

<https://www.tsadra.org/2014/04/28/did-machik-really-teach-chod/>

8th Karmapa, Mikyo Dorje

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gcod kyi khrid yig - page 595- 616 in Volume 19 of Work W8039. Location: 11 ff. (pp. 587-607). Colophon: ces bya ba 'di ni dge slong mi bskyod pa'am ming gzhan karma par grags pas so//

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¹ An official announcement was made recently, that as the Karmapa’s birthday falls on the first day of the fifth Tibetan lunar month, it should be celebrated on that day and not as has been done on the 26th June by the western calendar.

² The Kagyu Office summaries are just that very brief, edited summaries. Hence why I have done a full transcript.

³ For the videos see: [Chöd Teaching | Karmapa – The Official Website of the 17th Karmapa \(kagyuoffice.org\)](https://www.karmapa.org/en/chod-teaching). However, they do not include the empowerment day teaching, see here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-EuCtWVTzA>.

⁴ This 8th Karmapa text is available online in an edition of the Karmapa’s Collected Works (page 595 - 616 in Volume 19 of Work W8039, 11 ff. (pp. 587-607). Also in *Karma pa sku phreng rim byon gyi gsung ’bum phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 71, dPal brtsegs bod yig dpe rnying zhib ’jug khang, 2013, pp. 489–501. *Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC)*, purl.bdrc.io/resource/MW3PD1288_86DC39. [BDRC bdr:MW3PD1288_86DC39]. Also in the Collected Works of Mikyo Dorje (*gSung ’bum mi bskyod rdo rje*, vol. 19, 2004, pp. 1015–44. *Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC)*, purl.bdrc.io/resource/MW8039_4FE2BD. [BDRC bdr:MW8039_4FE2BD]

⁵ In 2020, I translated and published a one-day meditation by 8th Karmapa on the Mind of Awakening/Bodhicitta, see here: <https://dakinitranslations.com/2020/08/06/new-translation-one-day-meditation-on-mind-of-awakening-by-8th-karmapa-mikyo-dorje/>

⁶ The only 8th Karmapa text Harding (2016) translates is *The Body Donation and Feeding Ritual Arranged as Convenient Liturgy Combining Lord Rangjung Dorje’s Ninefold Spirit Feast and Six Earth Lord Application with Mikyö Dorje’s Single-Seat Severance Poem, Compiled by Karma Chakme*.

⁷ The Tibetan text title is “gCod khrid zab mo.” *Karma pa sku phreng rim byon gyi gsung ’bum phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 71, dPal brtsegs bod yig dpe rnying zhib ’jug khang, 2013, pp. 73–79. *Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC)*, purl.bdrc.io/resource/MW3PD1288_1B6DBB. [BDRC

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⁸ Harding says: “In this text, Mikyö Dorje’s “poem” comes first. This is available in several other editions—for example, in a collection of recitation texts from Palpung Monastery (seat of the Karma Kagyu Tai Situ incarnations in Kham), where it is called simply *Profound Severance Guide* (*gCod khrid zab mo*).^{*} All the liturgical sections in the first five pages in our text are from Mikyö Dorje, with Karma Chakme dividing it into parts and adding useful descriptions and instructions. The poem is reproduced accurately, with one notable exception: wherever Mikyö Dorje has the name of his own guru, Sangye Nyenpa (Sangs rgyas mnyan pa, 1445/57–1510/25), Karma Chakme has substituted the name of the second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi (1204–1283). Perhaps Karma Chakme preferred to identify the source of the lineage as the great master of the early days of the Karma Kagyu so that it would be more widely relevant and familiar to future practitioners. Karma Pakshi is legendary, though not known as a teacher of Severance.”

⁹ See: [CHOD LINEAGES AND MACHIG LABDRON: Indic-Tibetan Sources, Contemporary Works, The Karmapas and ‘The Long Lineage Supplication to Machig’ by Bengar Jampel Zangpo – Dakini Translations and Publications](#) མཁའ་འགྲོ་མའི་ལོ་ཙྰ་བའི་འགྲུར་དང་འགྲེམས་སྤྲེལ། (June 2021).

¹⁰ *The Long Lineage Supplication to Machig by Bengar Zangpo* (Ring brgyud kyi gsol ‘debs ma gcig gis mdzad par ban sgar ‘jam dpal bzang pos kha bskang ba ldeb- in Jamgon Kongtrul’s *Treasury of Precious Instructions*) is a practice text invoking the recipients of a transmission of Chod teachings, tracing a Chod lineage that is transmitted through several Karmapas and Karma Kagyu masters and establishes a Chod connection between Machig and [3rd Karmapa, Rangjung Dorjé](#). Please see full article about it here: [CHOD LINEAGES AND MACHIG LABDRON: Indic-Tibetan Sources, Contemporary Works, The Karmapas and ‘The Long Lineage Supplication to Machig’ by Bengar Jampel Zangpo](#). Sarah Harding (2016) has done a translation of the lineage prayer but without much explanation with it.

¹¹ Sorensen (2013: 82-86) is the only contemporary source to consider this Bengar supplication (although she does not provide a word-for-word translation of the text as written), she says:

“This is one of the earliest instances of a text making a direct connection between Padampa Sangyé and Machig Labdrön in the context of Chod transmissions; as we have seen, texts such as *The Blue Annals* are more ambiguous about the direct receipt of Chod teachings by Machik from Padampa Sangyé.”

¹² The practice of Buddhism in Tibet is encompassed by the eight major practice traditions called in Tibet the Eight Chariots of the Practice Lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. The Eight Chariots, or conveyances, refer to the eight major practice lineages of Tibetan learning and attainment, traditions which can be traced directly back through the centuries of the history of Tibet and beyond that into India. These traditions encompass the major schools and lineages within Tibet. The Eight Traditions, with their key scriptural sources, are as follows:

1) NYINGMA LINEAGE

The main doctrinal lineage of Kama, the Ancient Translation School known as Nyingmapa: (Key scriptural sources include: 1) Scripture of the Great Assemblage ('dus pa mdo), 2) Guhyagarbha Tantra (sgyu 'phrul drwa ba), 3) Mind Section (sems sde). In addition, the Eight Sadhanas Sections (sgrub pa sde brgyad), and the core of Dzogchen, The Heart Essence (snying thig).) More on the Nyingma lineage

2) KADAMPA LINEAGE

Atisha's lineage, the Old Kadampa School (Key scriptural sources include: The Graded Path for the Three Types of Individuals: Lamp of the Path of Enlightenment (byang chub lam sgron), Key Instructions of the Practices of Sixteen Spheres (thig le bcu drug), and similar texts. Tsongkhapa and his lineage, the New Kadampa School emphasizes philosophical doctrine.)

3) SAKYA LINEAGE

Lineage of the glorious Sakyapa: (Key scriptural sources include: The Instruction on the Nine-fold Path and Result (lam 'bras).)

4) MARPA KAGYÜ LINEAGE

The Four Major Schools and Eight Minor Schools of the lineage of the Marpa Kagyü Tradition (Key scriptural sources include: The Four Transmitted Precepts Consolidated in One, The Path of Skillful Means, The Six Dharmas of Naropa, and The Path of Liberation Mahamudra.)

5) SHANGPA KAGYÜ LINEAGE

The Shangpa Kagyü: (Key scriptural sources include: The Lineage of Yogi Khyungpo Naljor, and The Teachings of the Five-fold Ultimate Reality, (mthar thug lnga idan gyi chos skor).)

6) ShiJe and Chö Lineages: "Pacification of Suffering" and "Genuine Dharma of Severance"

Phadampa Sangye's and Machik Lapdron's lineage: (Key scriptural sources include: Pacification of Suffering (zhi byed), and its branch teaching Genuine Dharma of Severance (gcod), and related texts.)

7) JODRUK LINEAGE: "SIX APPLICATIONS"

Vajra Yoga Instruction Lineage, (Key scriptural sources include: the intention of the root Tantras, essence of all completion stage practice (sampanakrama), Six Applications of Kalachakra (sbyor ba yan lag drug).)

8) NYENDRUB LINEAGE: “FOUR BRANCHES OF APPROACH AND ACCOMPLISHMENT”

The Great Yogi Orgyenpa Rinchenpal’s Lineage: (Key scriptural sources include: the Three Vajra Instructions of Body, Speech, and Mind (rdo rje gsum gyi bsnyen sgrub).) This is taken from [The 8 Practice Lineages | Karmapa – The Official Website of the 17th Karmapa \(kagyuoffice.org\)](#) . See [Zhiye and Chod - The Treasury of Lives: A Biographical Encyclopedia of Tibet, Inner Asia and the Himalayan Region](#).

¹³ This is contrary to the research of Michelle Sorensen (2013) on Machig Labdron. Sorensen (2013) explains how it has become standard to attribute the transmission of Chod from Dampa Sangye to Machig although there is little material evidence that such a transmission took place. Frequently invoked in support of this argument is the prose work by Āryadeva the Brahmin, Padampa’s maternal uncle, *The Great Poem on the Prajñāpāramitā* or such root texts:

“However, such claims are at odds with another traditional claim, namely that Machig’s system of Chod was the only Buddhist teaching transmitted from Tibet to India, rather than from India to Tibet.” (2013: 5)

For example, in Lodro Rinpoche’s Introduction to the Chod commentary by Jamgon Kongtrul (2007: 13) he states that Machig’s Chod was unusual in being not only headed by a female lineage holder but also the first time that a practice was transmitted from Tibet into India.^[17]

Of the extant texts directly attributable to Machig Labdron, *The Great Explanation/Speech Chapter* is the only one that can presently be historically situated through the existence of an annotated outline and a commentary ascribed to the Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorjé^[18] (for more on the Karmapas and Chod, see below).

After an extensive overview of the original sources of Chod, Sorensen (2013: 50) concludes that, despite claims that Dampa Sangye was the founder of Chod:

“There is no satisfactory evidence that there was a Buddhist Chod lineage of transmissions identified as such until Machik started to describe and categorize her own teachings.”

¹⁴ For more information on his life, see: Broughton, Jeffrey L. (1999), *The Bodhidharma Anthology: The Earliest Records of Zen*, Berkeley: University of California Press and Red Pine, ed. (1989), *The Zen*

Teaching of Bodhidharma: A Bilingual Edition, New York: North Point Press. Also: [Bodhidharma - Wikipedia](#)

¹⁵ It is said that “Machig Labdron's early teacher, Drapa Ngongshechen, gave her the reading transmissions for the Many Sutras, the Perfection of Wisdom in One Hundred Thousand Verses, in Twenty-Five Thousand Verses and in Eight Thousand Verses. She assimilated the sutras and commentaries, and realization arose.[4] He asked her to stay for four years, after which he advised her to continue studies with Kyoton Sonam Lama. With her realizations, Machig Labdron began to cut attachments to places and started to travel and live spontaneously as a yogini, while eating what she found, sleeping wherever, and wearing clothes of a beggar. When she was twenty years of age, Sonam Lama conferred a series of empowerments on Machig Labdron at a temple in Ei Gangwa, during which her famous ultimate empowerments into the nature of reality from the sambogakaya occurred. Later, Sonam Lama also conferred tantra, the Five Deities of Varahi, Secret Yoga Mantra, and transmissions which empower explanation, composition, and debate. Sonam Lama gave Machig Labdron the name of Queen of Vajra Space (rdo rje dbyings phyug ma) to match her level of accomplishment.”

¹⁶ In the *Life of Yeshe Tsogyel*, Padmasambhava predicted that Yeshe Tsogyal would be reborn as Machig Labdrön, and her consort, Atsara Sale, would become Topa Bhadra, Machig Labdron's consort. Her assistant and Padmasambhava's secondary consort, Tashi Khyidren, would be reborn as Machig Labdron's daughter, and so on. All of the important figures in Yeshe Tsogyel's life were to be reborn in the life of Machig Labdron, including Padmasambhava himself, who would become Padampa Sangye.