

Chenrezig Teachings

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Beginning prayers.

I have almost finished the teachings in these few days. There is nothing much more to say.

Question: Rinpoche, I have two questions. First is that yesterday the vow of bodhisattva was also translated as bodhicitta?

Answer: It's okay, doesn't matter. Aspiration bodhicitta vow and engaging bodhicitta vow are also bodhisattva's vows. Bodhisattva is the person, bodhicitta is the mind.

Question: The second question is that I read in the bodhisattva vow there are also the secondary downfalls, 46 secondary downfalls that were not listed?

Answer: They are branches, yesterday we didn't see them. These secondary ones are less damaging than the root downfalls that we saw yesterday. And if you want to study them, you can look at a text by Shantideva called *Lapduk, Collection of Training in English*, and there you will find all the details. There are three main texts by Shantideva, there is this collection of training, this is the biggest one, and second one is called the *Collection of Sutras*, and the third one is the *Bodhicharyavatara*. And we used the *Bodhicharyavatara*.

We know the story of Shantideva, when he was teaching the *Bodhicharyavatara*, he was in the ninth chapter on wisdom, and then he started to go up to the sky. And he finished the teaching from there. But not everyone had understood him at that time in Nalanda University. Then he went to another university and the people from Nalanda found him and asked, which the correct version was, where they could find all the texts he had written. And he said he had been teaching all the *Bodhicharyavatara*, but in his room he had written two other texts. They could go into his room and find them. And these two other texts he had written were the *Collection of Training* and the *Collection of Sutra*.

Today I will explain the practice of Chenrezig, Avalokiteshvara. Actually the day before yesterday, when I went to the Zen Buddhist Centre (Sampo), I gave the whole explanation already on the way how to meditate on Chenrezig. There is nothing other than that I can teach on this practice specifically. There is another way to present it, so I will do that today, and it is by presenting what are the base (ground), path and result of Avalokiteshvara. So, let's start with the base, what is it? The base is what all sentient beings have in their mind stream, which is the disposition, also called *sugatagarbha*, in English *buddhanature*.

Because we have this base, Chenrezig, in our mind stream, each and every sentient being has it, then even if it is a being that has done very bad actions, that person always has some love in it. There is nobody that doesn't have any love at all within their mind stream, and this is because we all have this base, Chenrezig, Avalokiteshvara.

In this disposition, the buddhanature, *sugatagarbha*, there are all the 30 major qualities, the 80 major qualities of a Buddha, there are what are called the 10 powers, the 18 unmixed qualities and so on. Everything is there in the base, but because we do not realize it, because it is covered by temporary obscurations, then at the moment it is not visible.

In our mind stream we can do virtue or non-virtue, both are possible, and sometimes we do virtuous actions, sometimes we do non-virtuous actions. When we do virtuous actions, where does this come from, what is the force behind it? This is

coming from the base Avalokiteshvara, this disposition, buddhanature. When we do negative actions, what it does is that it covers it, makes it invisible.

And this base, the buddhanature, or this disposition sugatagarbha, it has manifestation power. This sometimes shines out, when we have love, compassion, affection. We can see this happens for example between parents for their children or the children for their parents, or for close friends we have this kind of feeling. But it happens that only some people manage to make this love, this compassion, very big. How do we make it big and vast? This is by relying on the path of Avalokiteshvara.

What is this path of Avalokiteshvara? As we talked earlier, it is bodhicitta, as it has been defined by the Bodhisattva Maitreya. Bodhicitta for the sake of other beings is the mind that wishes to attain buddhahood for the sake of all the beings. This is called the path Avalokiteshvara. This path Avalokiteshvara, we see it is a practice. We need to practice to develop our bodhicitta. How do we develop bodhicitta? Either training in the Four Immeasurables or training in the Six Paramitas.

The kadampa practitioners talked about methods to develop bodhicitta and seven advices of cause and effect that would help very much to make this love or affection that we have big, to develop it. These seven advices of cause and effect were practiced by the kadampa practitioners of the past, such as Jowo Serlingpa, Jowo Atisha and many other absolutely fantastic practitioners. Jowo Atisha came to Tibet and transmitted these practices in Tibet as a way to develop bodhicitta. There are in kadampa two lineages. One is the kadam nyingma (old) and the other one is kadam sarma (new). In particular in the kadam nyingma there were extraordinary practitioners like Dromtönpa, Geshe Chekawa, Geshe Tönpa and others. In this kadam nyingma there were absolutely amazing dharma practitioners. They would spend their whole life only devoted to the practice of dharma, not at all anything to do with worldly activities; a bit like Milarepa.

The nyingma lineage, as we usually understand it – my lineage is nyingma – is a lineage which comes from before the kadam nyingma, it comes from the time when the buddhist teachings were brought from India to Tibet. At that time that nyingma lineage started. This kadam nyingma came later, and it was brought by Atisha to Tibet. The kadam nyingpas would abandon all worldly activities. And we can look at their biographies, it's very inspiring. If we can do like them, it's fantastic.

I think in the nyungnes [practice of the 1000-arm Chenrezig] we can find many of the biographies of the kadam nyingma masters. So we can look into nyungne text.

What are the seven advices of cause and effect that they are teaching? The first one is to know that all sentient beings have been our mothers. When they were our mothers they had love and compassion for us. For the moment it is very difficult for us to develop compassion for all sentient beings, because we have been for so many lifetimes busy with our own benefit only. This is a method to change that. So the first advice is to know that all sentient beings have been our mother.

And it is said that we have been wandering around in samsara since beginningless time, one life after another. I think nowadays it is easier to have confidence in that because we have many stories and research showing that people remember their previous lives. That's one thing. The second thing is that it is explained like this by the Buddha and the Buddha was omniscient and someone who would only tell the truth. That's also good base to have confidence. And we can also see the way the karma works: all the causes make results. So it's logical that there would be a continuation life after life, that we had already many lives.

From the scientific research we see that there has already been approximately 3000 cases established, where people could actually remember life story from their previous life. Nowadays we all believe in science, don't we? So, here we have a good reason to believe that there is previous life. And if there is a previous life, then there is one before that etc., and we can understand that it has been the case from the beginning of samsara.

If we want to know about the scientific research on this topic, we can look for Ian Stevenson, he is an American scientist who has been leading this research for 40 years. He has written about 20 books on this topic. This kind of research does back up the Buddhist view on previous lives, the fact that there are previous lives.

Sentient beings have been taking life after life in samsara for very long time. There are four ways in which sentient beings can be born. One can be born through mother's womb, or one can be born in an egg, and then come out of the egg, or through warmth [larvae], and there is a fourth type, which is called miraculous rebirth. For the two first ones, which are to be born through womb and egg, we need parents; we have to rely on parents for this process to happen. So we can imagine how many times we have been changing parents. So, when we need to rely on the parents to take rebirth, when we stay in womb like we humans stay for nine months, we have to be carried in mother's body, and then after that the difficulty for the mother is the difficulty of the birth. It is something which is not easy – if we don't know about it, there are many mothers among us, we can ask them.

Rinpoche in English: Understood? We have experience, not easy, very difficult!

So there is the carrying in the womb and then the birth. But that's not all. After the baby is there, he or she is always pissing and shitting and the mother has to clean and do this kind of care until the baby can walk. And then you help them to walk and you have to teach them how to talk, and after that you have to give them more advice, and instruct to go to school, and so on. It continues until we are 20, until that we are under the care of our parents. We know how much our parents have done for us. So the first of the seven advices is to know that beings have been our mother, and the second one is to feel gratitude, because we understand all the difficulties they have gone through, when they have been our mother taking care of us. So we engender gratitude.

And we understand what our mother in this life has been through to take care of us and we can imagine them through samsara through all this lineage of rebirths, one after another there has been a mother or mother and father who have taken care of us. They have been so kind time after time, so we remember their kindness.

Rinpoche in English: We always say "mother, mother, mother". We don't mention the father, I don't know what happened!

So we remember their kindness, and by doing this we increase the Path Avalokiteshvara. The first was that we know that they have been our mothers. Second one: we understand the kindness they had while being our mother, and the third one is that we engender the wish to repay that kindness.

And how do we repay that kindness? Temporarily we have our current parents, we help them as much as we can, and this is to repay the kindness, this is the temporary way to return the kindness of our parents. And how can we ultimately return the kindness of our parents? Ultimately we engender bodhicitta, and then we go through the training of the Six Paramitas and so on. We have the wish to bring all sentient beings into the state of buddhahood, liberation from all suffering.

The fourth one is the wish that if only all my parents could have this temporary and ultimate happiness. And the fifth one is that we have the strong wish or rejoice at the idea that it would be wonderful, if they were free from suffering. So it is the great compassion for them.

The sixth one is integrity. We don't just say the words, but it comes from deep down in our heart. And the seventh one is bodhicitta. If we as beginners go through these seven steps, it is a way to engender bodhicitta, and it helps very much on the path Avalokiteshvara. Even doing this training of bodhicitta alone is already very worthwhile itself. Not only do we need to train on the methods of bodhicitta and meditate on it, to use all these different methods and develop bodhicitta, love and compassion, but we also need to develop the wisdom aspect. What is the wisdom aspect? It is the wisdom that realizes no-self. So, there are the methods and there is the wisdom, methods being bodhicitta, love, compassion and training in them, and wisdom is the wisdom that realizes no-self. We have seen there are the two types of no-self, or we can also say the view of emptiness, we need to train in that also.

If we do not enhance our way of practice of the methods, such as the seven advices of cause and effect, we will come to a point where we cannot stand the suffering of others. To avoid that it is necessary to engender the wisdom that realizes no-self. That will help to pacify this suffering. If we have no wisdom, if we do not realize the no-self, then we will think that these suffering sentient beings are truly existent and we will cling to them as such.

Practicing the methods help us to gather the accumulation of merit. Engendering, developing and training in bodhicitta, love and compassion, and making offerings are part of the methods and it does accumulate merit. Then there is the accumulation of wisdom. This is the aspect of wisdom meditating on the no-self of phenomena and the no-self of the individual, the view of emptiness; this is all part of the accumulation of wisdom. At the moment most of the accumulation that we do, is the accumulation of merit. And if we do some accumulation of wisdom, it is separately. So, we do either accumulation of merit (most of the accumulations) and maybe some accumulation of wisdom. But one day we come to a point, where we can do both accumulations at the same time. For example, we help sentient beings and at the same time don't see them as truly existent. At that time we say that the two accumulations are in union. When they are in union it is the real path Avalokiteshvara.

So the path Avalokiteshvara is the path of union of the two accumulations, or we can also say the union of the two truths. And then one day, when we have trained in that, we will attain the union of the two kayas. The union of the two kayas is the result Avalokiteshvara. On this path Avalokiteshvara, the union of the two accumulations, when we train and train, we little by little abandon the two obscurations. How do we do that? It is by training on the five paths. First there is the path of accumulation and of junction, and we train in them until one day we realize the path of vision. When we are at the level of the path of vision, this is when the gross obscurations, the labeling obscurations, have been abandoned.

And from the second bhumi up to the seventh bhumi this is when the connate obscurations of disturbing emotions have been abandoned. Afflicting obscurations, their connate aspect is abandoned at that time. What types of obscurations are abandoned from the second up to tenth bhumi? It is the connate aspect of the obscuration of the knowable. The eight, ninth and tenth bhumi are called the three pure bhumis. At that time all the obscurations of the disturbing emotions have been completely abandoned. At the very end of the tenth bhumi there comes the time when we apply a remedy, which is called the vajra-like samadhi, and at that time, after that even the most subtle obscurations, which are still left, are completely abandoned. And then we become Buddha! And that is called the result of Avalokiteshvara. At that time for one's own benefit we have attained the dharmakaya, for others' benefit we have attained the rupakaya. And this is what is called Buddha endowed with double benefit (both benefits)/ [two-fold benefit].

It is necessary to have the dharmakaya for one's own benefit, because without it there is no way that we can do the benefit of others, this is the cause for being able to fulfil the benefit of others. And we also need the rupakaya, if we want to do the benefit of others, because without rupakaya, the body-kaya, there is no way that they can see us. So we need the rupakaya, which is about sambhogakaya, which can be seen by beings with higher level of development, like pure beings, and about nirmanakaya, which can be seen by ordinary beings.

The cause of attaining the dharmakaya is the accumulation of wisdom and the cause of attaining the rupakaya, which is constituted of the sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya, is the accumulation of merit. The dharmakaya is defined as the aspect which knows the subject, and this is the wisdom that knows everything as it is, and the wisdom that knows the multitude of things. And then there is the svabhavikakaya, which is defined as the pure nature of the expanse.

When the svabhavikakaya is in our mind stream as ordinary beings, it is called natural purity. And when it is in the buddhas' mind it is called the purity which is free from temporary stains. Why? Because in our case, right now, the svabhavikakaya is still covered by obscurations, but in the case of a buddha these two obscurations have been completely gone, they have been abandoned. But actually in essence it is the same.

The sambhogakaya is defined as the one, which has the five excellences: the excellent place, the excellent entourage, the excellent teacher, the excellent dharma, which is the mahayana, and so on. From sambhogakaya emanates the nirmanakaya. The nirmanakaya there are four types: one is the Supreme Nirmanakaya, one is the rebirth nirmanakaya, one is the artisan nirmanakaya and one is the diverse nirmanakaya. So, what is the first one, the Supreme Nirmanakaya? This is for example Buddha Shakyamuni, who has done the 12 deeds.

The second type is the reborn nirmanakaya – these are for example the great beings that have done great benefits for the sake of sentient beings. There are in India many noble teachers like the Six Ornaments and the two Supreme Ones. Or there are in Tibet the three Manjushris: Sakya Pandita, Kunchap Longchenpa and Jetsun Tshongkhapa. And there are more. Why they are called reborn nirmanakayas is because they have turned the Wheel of Dharma for the sake of sentient beings. They represent the Buddha's Body, Speech and Mind.

The third type, the artisan nirmanakaya, what is it? There are two ways to define it. One way is that at the time of the Buddha, when he was alive, there was Bishokarma, who took all the measurements of the Buddha, and if one makes a representation exactly according to these measurements, then this is the artisan nirmanakaya. Another understanding is that it is all these representations of the Buddha that we can make: statues, pictures and thangkas, or other representations, because they benefit when we see them. When Buddha came to Earth, he was born as an Indian man, but it is said that his body was taller than ordinary beings'.

And diverse nirmanakaya – that's uncertain what they are, it can be many things: it can be human beings, animals, it can be something made of earth, water, fire and wind, or it can be like bridges, different things that help beings.

With that we understand what is meant by Avalokiteshvara, by the base, path and resultant Avalokiteshvara. So, let's not think that Avalokiteshvara is just an aspect of a deity or something like this.

Why is it then that we meditate on this outer aspect of Avalokiteshvara? This is to have something to focus on in our mind when we do the practice. We know he has four hands, one head, white in color, he looks beautiful. By meditating like this it will help to go against seeing things impure as we usually do. After the creation phase we have the dissolution phase, and this is against clinging to everything as being pure, which can happen after this meditation. And ultimately we should know that we need to meditate on the union of the creation phase and dissolution phase.

We can look in the secret mantrayana, we can look in the mahayana, the scriptures of both, we can always find out that the core of doing all these practices is to increase our bodhicitta. So the practice of no-self of individual and no-self of phenomena are to increase bodhicitta, compassion, love and so on. It is all to increase our bodhicitta.

This explanation on the practice of the base Avalokiteshvara, the path Avalokiteshvara and the resultant Avalokiteshvara is not something that I have made up myself. This is something that comes from the teachers of the past and it is written in their commentaries.

There is also a text written by Bokar Rinpoche first in French and there is also an English translation. There is an explanation on the practice of Avalokiteshvara that he has written, and in that explanation the base, path and resultant Avalokiteshvara are also explained. From India I knew that Bokar Rinpoche was a good lama, but I didn't know that he was so learned. It was only afterwards I found out that he had written commentaries in English about this practice of Avalokiteshvara etc. and I knew he was also a very good practitioner and learned master.

Most of you are probably kagyus, so you can look in the writings of Situ Rinpoche and Thrangu Rinpoche, there are very good writings there. Particularly Thrangu Rinpoche has written a lot of books, they are available in English. I am sometimes reading a bit of them and understand a little bit. My English is improving! If you are kagyu, you can also look at the pictures of kagyu lamas, there are some on the walls over there, and practice using mainly these pictures. This is a Samye Dzong center, you must be related with Samye Ling. This master (in the picture, HH Gyalwa Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje) is okay, you don't need many other things.

Question: About balance in practice of wisdom of no-self and the accumulation of merit. I noticed that I have started with having a lot of feeling of suffering of individuals, and then the no-self practice changed that. But is it possible to go too much into the no-self practice, is there an important balance?

Answer: Yes, when they become same in balance, at that time you enter into good level. But right now we are ordinary persons. Sometimes we practice the accumulation of merit and we lose the wisdom. When we try to practice emptiness we lose the accumulation of merit (compassion), but try to do slowly, slowly, when you are doing accumulation, that time you don't much attach or focus on accumulation. You try to do emptiness and put together, try more and more to do that.

Question: I'm not sure, if I understood the last part of it.

Answer: Let's say you are meditating on the creation phase, on a deity, for example on Avalokiteshvara, we are creating an aspect of the deity, this is the part of accumulating merit. So when we are doing the creation phase visualizing the deity and all that, seeing it very clearly, all the details, at the same time we are seeing them as not truly existent, but more of the nature of a rainbow, that will be putting it in union. We should not visualize it like something very real, like stone or earth. When we can do these two together, this is when we can do in union the accumulation of merit with wisdom. You see it like rainbows. When we see a rainbow, we see clearly all the colors: yellow and blue etc., but then, there is nothing we can grasp at. In the same way we visualize deities.

Any questions?

Question: Could you make a summary of the visualization instructions you gave in the Zen Centre?

Answer: The five aspects of enlightenment. Actually, when we recite a sadhana, the sadhanas were made for beginners. Great yogis, when they do their practice of creation phase and dissolution phase, they don't need a sadhana as a support. But for ordinary beings, for beginners, it is very useful, because the words remind us of the meaning and it is a support for our practice. These words are not ordinary words, they were not written by ordinary beings, but either a tertön who has all the qualities of a tertön, or they were found as a mind treasure. So they are not words written by anybody just like this.

Ordinary beings could write a text, for example I can write compositions and I could write a text like this, but if it was written by an ordinary being like me, it would be ordinary words, meaning that there would not be much power in reading them. But this text, the sadhana that we use, was written by special beings. When they wrote they had very strong bodhicitta and strong blessing, which are transmitted in the words. So there is a great benefit when we read those words.

For example the treasure texts, the termas, come from Guru Rinpoche, who prepared them. When he was doing that he had a strong wish that in the future it may benefit infinite sentient beings. And he also gave name of the terton, the treasure revealer that will come, and the place and time, and he said this person would find this treasure text, may it be beneficial for all beings. Thanks to that it is so powerful, because if it was just ordinary text it wouldn't hold this blessing.

And all the sadhanas have a sequence from beginning to end. They always start with refuge. The refuge can be short or long, the number of lines can be different, but there is always taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. As we read these lines, we remember their qualities and we remember that we take temporary and ultimate refuge in them.

And the second step is always the bodhicitta. So, when we read the lines of bodhicitta, then it reminds us of the bodhicitta, so we remember that we are doing this practice for the benefit of all sentient beings. After that there is the gek, the tormas for the obstacle makers and then the visualization of the protection circle. The gek is when we offer the tormas, something for the obstacle makers, so that they don't create obstacles to us when we do this practice of Avalokiteshvara, for example. And then we place the protection circle, so that the siddhis that we have do not go outside, or that the obstacles cannot come in anymore. This is why we visualize a vajra tent, i.e. the protection circle.

And then there is the offering and after that the invitation. For the offering we can bless with water whatever offering we have at home and imagine that we make an offering to all the Buddhas and so on. For the blessing we imagine that the place where we are in is for example Potala for this Avalokiteshvara practice, or a Pure Realm.

And for the creation phase we do it with the three samadhis. The first one is the samadhi of true nature. We imagine that the place where we are is emptiness; it's all dissolved into the sky. And the second samadhi is called the all-illuminating samadhi. What is it? From the expanse of emptiness comes a lotus flower with eight petals, and this is representing great compassion, in the best case uncontrived compassion. The second one is the all-illuminating samadhi, and now the third one, which is the causal samadhi. On top of the top of lotus with eight petals we visualize a moon and sun and then a seed syllable. The seed syllable in the case of the practice of Avalokiteshvara is HRI. This HRI, the seed syllable, is the causal samadhi.

These are called the three aspects of samadhi, and we can also summarize them as the five aspects of enlightenment, it comes to the same thing. From the seed syllable HRI there are lights that radiate to the realm of buddhas and bodhisattvas, the offerings are called the offerings of Kuntuzangpo (Samantabhadra), vast offerings. And there are five colors of five lights, each of them representing offering goddesses. They represent five types of desirables that are offered. And then from there even more light comes out, each light with offering goddesses offering to buddhas and bodhisattvas. This was the offering above. Then there is the generosity below to sentient beings, and then all these rays and the buddhas and bodhisattvas dissolve back into the seed syllable HRI, and all of a sudden the HRI becomes Avalokiteshvara, full.

After that comes the invitation and this is when the wisdom deity dissolves into the samayasattva. And then we ask the deity to stay until the end of samsara. After that we do prostrations, and then there are offerings and praise. Then there is a recitation with a special visualization of the mantra around the seed syllable. The colors and directions all depend on the sadhana, so we follow the instructions of the particular sadhana and focus on the recitation.

When it is time to finish our meditation session we do again offerings and praise. And if there is no tsok included in the sadhana, we start doing the dissolution here. And if we do tsok, we start it after the praise. Often before the tsok there is also solka, practice for the protectors. And then we do the tsok and continue until the end of it. In the tsok itself there is the blessing, the invitation, the offering, the annihilation, and then there is enjoying of the tsok, we offer it to the lama and eat ourselves. Then, still in the tsok, there is the lakma, the remainders, and after that may be practice of the yidam and protectors. And if it is a practice linked to a terma, there may be some recitation linked with that also.

After all this we do the dissolution. For the dissolution all the environment dissolves into the yidam deity that we are practicing. The body dissolves first. Inside the body there is the seed syllable and mantra. The seed syllable dissolves itself until there is nothing left, and we remain in a state of no focus. When we are in the state of no focusing, as soon as a thought arises, we visualize again all the deities as before. It is said that in order to go against the view of eternity we do the creation phase and then in order to go against the nihilistic view we see all that appears as the body of Avalokiteshvara, we hear all sounds as the mantra of Avalokiteshvara and all the thoughts as the mind of Avalokiteshvara. This is in all the practices. There are the words that describe that in the practices. If we can meditate according to the practice, this is the best; then we do the meditation. If this is not possible for us, then we look at the words and reflect on them.

After that we do the dedication of the merit and after the session we keep this visualization that everything that appears is the body of Avalokiteshvara, the sound is the mantra and thoughts are the mind of Avalokiteshvara. And this is also creation phase.

What we need to understand is that we do this practice in order to go against the strong clinging that we have to things as being impure. This is a method to revert it. And then, when we go to the point when we cling to as things being pure, we do the dissolution in order to revert that. And when we have attained the realization of both, the creation phase and the dissolution phase, there is nothing special to do, we can sleep! Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok never seemed to be sitting and doing special meditation; it looked like he was sleeping most of the time! He is probably a being, who has already attained stability in the creation and dissolution phase.

Dedication prayers.