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Thursday, February 11

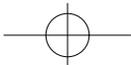
EVENING: FINAL VAJRASATTVA SESSION

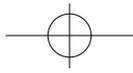
LAMA TSONG KHAPA'S PRACTICE OF THE THIRTY-FIVE BUDDHAS

Even though there are some people who are unable to do prostrations because there is not enough space in here, they still have the opportunity to recite the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas while sitting or standing. Reading the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas, which are in the prayer book, gives you an unbelievable opportunity to purify negative karma. As I mentioned the other day, reciting each name once purifies so many eons of negative karma. What we are trying to do here, not just with the Vajrasattva practice but through various means, is to purify our negative karma and defilements as much as possible and to collect extensive merit.

I once asked Denma Lochö Rinpoche why, while Lama Tsong Khapa did so much practice of the Thirty-five Buddhas, there is no mention of his having done the preliminary practice of Vajrasattva recitation many times. In Lama Tsong Khapa's life story you hear only that he did many hundreds of thousands of prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas. Lama Tsong Khapa actually saw the Thirty-five Buddhas in his cave at Wölka. When he first saw the Thirty-five Buddhas, he saw their holy bodies but they had no heads. It was only after Lama Tsong Khapa prefixed the name of each buddha with the title "tathagata" that he saw the Thirty-five Buddhas with heads. Tathagata, or *de-zhin shag-pa* in Tibetan, could be translated into English as "Gone As It Is" or "Mind Gone in the Sky of Emptiness."

Only the holy mind of a buddha can directly see the two truths at the same time. While directly seeing the absolute truth, a buddha's holy mind can at the same time directly see the conventional truth. I'm not completely sure, but I think that higher bodhisattvas can see the two truths together, but cannot see them directly. Only a buddha's holy mind





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can directly see the two truths at the same time. In the *Lama Tsong Khapa Guru Yoga*, the verse that praises Lama Tsong Khapa's knowledge refers to understanding directly and simultaneously all objects of knowledge, or the two truths, which is a special quality of the buddha's holy mind.

So, "Gone As It Is" means that the mind is flying, or is gone, in the sky of emptiness, directly perceiving the very nature of phenomena as it is.

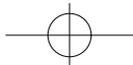
After Lama Tsong Khapa added the title "de-zhin sheg-pa," he was able to see the Thirty-five Buddhas with their heads. Lama Tsong Khapa started this tradition. In the Sakya, Kagyu and Nyingma traditions, the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas are recited without the title "tathagata," or "de-zhin sheg-pa." Just the name is recited.

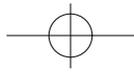
When I asked Denma Lochö Rinpoche this question about why there was no mention of Vajrasattva, but only mention of Lama Tsong Khapa's having done practice of the Thirty-five Buddhas so many times, Rinpoche answered that it is because if you do the Thirty-five Buddhas practice just one time well, you can purify the very heavy negative karma of the five uninterrupted negative karmas (having killed your father, your mother or an arhat; caused blood to flow from a Buddha; or caused disunity among the sangha). All these can be purified by doing confession with the Thirty-five Buddhas practice well just once. Rinpoche gave this as the reason for Lama Tsong Khapa doing so many prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas.

There are also stories of the lam-rim lineage lamas doing many prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas. Je Drubkhangpa did one thousand prostrations a day. His disciple, Purchog Jampa Rinpoche—a very high lama at Sera Monastery and an embodiment of Maitreya Buddha—did three hundred prostrations every day even when he was very old. Lama Atisha's life story mentions that he was still doing prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas when he was showing the aspect of being very old and shaky. It was said that even though he was old, either Purchog Jampa Rinpoche or Lama Atisha, I don't remember which, did prostrations like a running wolf.

In *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, it mentions that Lama Tsong Khapa realized emptiness and achieved many other realizations through doing prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas.

The great advantage of having memorized the Thirty-five Buddhas prayer is that you can recite it in the car while you are going to work.



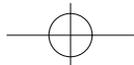


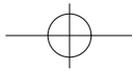
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Since you spend so much time driving back and forth between home and work, it is good to spend the time doing prayers or reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas. You can also recite it when you are flying by plane. You can recite the prayer from a book, but it is so much easier if you can recite it by heart because it means that you can purify at any time. Since reciting the names even once purifies so many eons of negative karma, it's a great loss if you don't recite them. And here, if you don't recite while everyone else is reciting, you yourself incur a great loss. It also means that you will take longer to purify your negative karmas and to have realizations. It will take you longer to achieve enlightenment, which means that the numberless other sentient beings who have karmic connections with you, and depend on you, have to suffer longer.

Therefore, you must realize what a precious opportunity you have right now. This present time is the most precious time. If you don't take this opportunity to practice, it is a great loss. There is no greater loss for you than this. As I mentioned the other day, it's a greater loss than losing a million dollars. It's a greater loss than losing zillions of dollars. When their business collapses and they lose a million dollars, some people become crazy with *lung* and want to jump off a bridge or off the roof of a building. Such a loss is nothing! What you lose is just something material; it means nothing. But here, if you don't take this incredible opportunity to practice, to purify and to collect merit in such an easy way, there is no greater loss than this. This is a much greater loss than losing billions of dollars or skies filled with diamonds or gold. Even if you own skies filled with diamonds, gold or wish-fulfilling gems, that alone cannot purify your negative karma or stop your rebirth in the lower realms. However, even if you don't own any of this wealth, reciting Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's name just once has the power to purify 80,000 eons of negative karma.

Reciting the name of any of the Thirty-five Buddhas can purify not simply negative karma but many thousands of eons of negative karma. Therefore, even losing that much wealth is nothing when compared to the loss of missing this chance to practice the Thirty-five Buddhas. This is such an easy way to purify and to collect extensive merit. Simply by reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas, you can achieve unbelievable purification.





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CALLING THE GURU FROM AFAR: THE MEANING OF JIN-GYI-LOB

As His Holiness often mentions in his teachings, in the expression *jin-gyi-lob*, *jin* means glorious and *lob* means transforming the mind into the path, into Dharma. Transforming the mind into the path means that you transform your mind into guru devotion through *seeing* the virtuous friend as buddha by *looking* at the virtuous friend as buddha. After transforming your ordinary thoughts toward the virtuous friend into guru devotion, you transform your mind into renunciation of samsara; you renounce the attachment that clings to samsara, to samsaric happiness and perfections. You then transform your mind from the self-cherishing thought into bodhicitta. You also transform your mind from ignorance, the concept of inherent existence, into the wisdom that sees all phenomena as empty (this wisdom includes the selflessness of the person and the selflessness of the aggregates). You then transform your mind from impure thought into pure thought. With this thought, you see everything as pure, as a manifestation of the deity. You see the place as the deity's mandala; your own body and the bodies of others as the deity's holy body, and sounds as mantras, the deity's holy speech. You transform your mind into the completion of the path, up to enlightenment.

You request blessings to transform your mind (*lob*) into these glorious, or magnificent (*jin*), paths. The expression *jin-gyi-lob* involves the transformation of your mind into the whole path, from guru devotion up to enlightenment. Each time we say *jin-gyi-lob* in *Calling the Guru from Afar*, we are making single-pointed requests to the guru. We are begging the guru to transform our mind right now, on this cushion, in this session. And we are not talking about transforming mind in general, some mind in the sky, but our own mind.

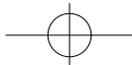
At the end of *Calling the Guru from Afar* recite the following verses.

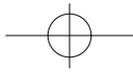
“May I never arise heresy for even one second towards the actions of the glorious guru. With the devotion that sees whatever actions are done as pure, may I receive the blessings of the guru in my heart.

“*Pal-den tsa-wa'i...*”

MOTIVATION FOR VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE

Generate a strong feeling of regret, because for purification, this is the





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most important of the four remedial powers. How much you purify, or lessen, your negative karma depends on how much regret you are able to generate by reflecting on the shortcomings of negative karma—of the ten non-virtuous actions, breaking samaya vows, and negativity collected in relation to the virtuous friend, the heaviest negative karma of all.

The power of regret, or of putting the blame on the negative karma, fits very well into the specific motivation for doing Vajrasattva practice.

The other place you can do this practice is when you begin the mantra recitation. You can begin by practicing this power, by generating a strong feeling of regret. Also, in the long sadhana, before you recite the mantra, you request your crown Vajrasattva to purify all your defilements, negative karmas and degenerated samaya—this can also be part of practicing the power of regret. With the recitation of the mantra, you can take time to think in more detail about all the negative karma that you have created. You can expand the subject by thinking of the various ways in which you have created negative karma.

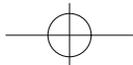
Now meditate to generate a strong motivation of bodhicitta for doing the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation, ensuring that your motivation includes generation of the thought of regret.

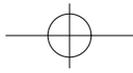
CONCLUDING PRACTICES

Think, “From now on, the vows that I can keep, I will keep; the vows that are extremely difficult to keep, I will keep for one day, one hour, one minute, or at least a few seconds.”

Guru Vajrasattva, extremely pleased by your determination not to commit negative actions again, absorbs within you. Your body, speech and mind become inseparable from Vajrasattva’s vajra holy body, vajra holy speech and vajra holy mind.

In emptiness there is no I, no creator; there is no action of creating; there is no negative karma created. All phenomena are totally empty of existence from their own side. While your mind is in the state of emptiness, while you are seeing all phenomena as empty, as they are empty in reality, dedicate the merits.





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DEDICATION

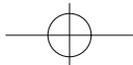
“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, may I be able to bring benefit as limitless as the sky to all sentient beings, just as Lama Tsong Khapa did, by having the same qualities within me that Lama Tsong Khapa had, from now on in all my future lifetimes.”

It is extremely important to do this dedication every day in your daily life. You can understand the importance of this prayer by reading Lama Tsong Khapa’s life story and especially by studying his sutra and tantra teachings. Actually, you can understand its importance just by understanding lam-rim teachings correctly.

“Due to all the merits of the three times collected by me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings, no matter which universe, world, country, area or place I am, simply by my being there, may the sentient beings in that universe, world, country, area or place never ever be reborn in the lower realms. May they immediately be liberated from all diseases, spirit harms, negative karma and defilements, actualize the whole path to enlightenment, especially bodhicitta, and quickly achieve enlightenment.

“Simply by my being there, may the sentient beings in that universe, world, country, area or place who are blind immediately be able to see; may those who are lame immediately be able to walk; may those in a coma immediately wake up and recover; and may those who have cancer or AIDS immediately be healed. Simply by being there in that universe, world, country, area or place, may I be able to bring all these benefits. May I bring about whatever is most beneficial. May those with relationship problems become harmonious. May those who need to find a guru find a guru. May those who need teachings be able to receive teachings. May those living in poverty immediately receive wealth. May those unable to find a job find one. May everyone achieve perfect happiness. In this way, may I become wish-fulfilling for all sentient beings, like the bodhisattva Kshitigarbha, who brings infinite benefit to sentient beings.

“I will dedicate all the merits as the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three times have dedicated their merits, and as Samantabhadra and Manjughosha realize. I dedicate all my merits in the best way to quickly enlighten all sentient beings.”





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One piece of advice from His Holiness Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche is for you, at the end of your practice, to give away all your merits to all sentient beings. Give all your merits, including all the happiness up to enlightenment that results from those merits, to all sentient beings. Give everything to every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal, every human being, every asura being, every sura being and every intermediate state being.

Doing this, we again collect infinite merit, which we now dedicate in the following way. “Due to these merits, may whatever suffering sentient beings have ripen upon me, and may whatever happiness and merit I have ripen upon all other living beings.”

LAMA ÖSEL’S LONG-LIFE PRAYER

You don’t need to recite the HRIH at the beginning of Lama Ösel’s long-life prayer. It was recited in the past, but there is no need to recite it from now on.

MULTIPLYING MANTRAS

After reciting the mantras that multiply each merit 100,000 times, recite the name of the buddha that not only increases each merit 100,000 times but also causes whatever prayers we have done to be actualized (...NGO WA DANG MÖN LAM...)

Then pray, “Due to the blessings of the eminent buddhas and bodhisattvas, due to unbetraying dependent arising and due to my special attitude—“attitude” not “altitude”—may all my pure prayers be accomplished immediately.”

