

LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DHARMA CENTERS

1. SUMMARY

'The Dharma center is an emergency rescue operation, like when police go in with all that noise - sirens blaring, red and blue lights flashing, helicopters whirling - to rescue people in distress! Like that, the meditation center plays a very important role in the emergency rescue of people, human beings, using the seat belt and life jacket of the lam-rim. Meditation on refuge and karma immediately saves you from falling into the lower realms again.'

Lama Zopa Rinpoche, quoted in 'Teachings from the Vajrasattva Retreat', published by Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive.

2. LONGER ADVICE from a teaching at Institut Vajra Yogini, Lavaur, France on 12 May, 2003 Transcribed by Su Foo, edited by Claire Isitt, December 2003.

I would like to mention how urgent it is especially nowadays in this world to have meditation centers, Dharma study groups. Actually that's the most important thing in the world.

Why do I say it's the most important service to sentient beings? Studying in the meditation center, learning Dharma yourself and giving the opportunity to others to do the same, inspiring each other. You share your experience, your understanding of Dharma, meditation, and try to benefit others. The change of action is Dharma, the change of attitude is Dharma. And purifying past negative karma - only Dharma can do that. No external phenomena can purify it. Medicine can't purify past negative karma, you know, only the positive mind, which is Dharma; positive action which is Dharma, only that can purify their mind, their negative karmas, the cause of the problems.

So as long as beings don't change their action and attitude, which is Dharma, how is it possible for them to stop their problems of life? And not only this life but they are creating all this negative karma to experience in future lives. So you can see that as long as from their own side if beings don't practice Dharma, especially the good heart, if they don't change their mind and their actions for the better, which is the cause of happiness, as long as they stay like this from their own side, what other people do can't really stop their problems. Not only that, they must achieve ultimate happiness, enlightenment, by ceasing subtle mistakes of mind. So all this happiness – temporary happiness, ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara, full enlightenment, everything comes from their own mind, with Dharma, the pure mind, Dharma. Their actions, their pure action, good karma. So all these have come from their own mind, which is Dharma.

So, therefore you can now see - educating sentient beings about the mind, about reincarnation, about karma, what's the cause of happiness, what is the cause of suffering, which is contained within the Four Noble Truths, the fundamental teaching of the Buddha, our kind compassionate Buddha, the whole conclusion is educating Dharma, meditation. So here you can see that this is the most important service to sentient beings. Among the types of service this is the most important, most urgent service to sentient beings. Like if somebody has a heart attack, has an emergency, we take them to the emergency hospital - but this meditation center or the group learning Dharma, educating sentient beings, is a billion times more important than an emergency hospital.

The best service is Dharma. To teach Dharma to others, to help others to learn Dharma. Another meaning is giving education, making them understand what's the correct way, what's the correct cause of happiness. They come to the center and then they come to know the cause of suffering, delusion and karma, then they come to know what liberation really means, what they should focus on or achieve. So then they feel the need to look for the method to achieve the cessation of the suffering. Then they feel the need to do something, then they follow the path as they come to know there is a path. Then that's how they get inspired to practice the path, to follow the path to liberation and to follow the path to enlightenment.