

Lama Zopa Rinpoche's Birthday Message

Thank you very much to everyone who offered my birthday. Ha-ha-ha. Ha-ha-ha. All my dear students, and dear friends, and dear benefactors, dear helpers, everyone, for wishing birthday, my birthday.

My birthday. I didn't have a birthday. It only started from last year, the year before. It was made by the Spanish nun who wrote the Lawudo book, *Lawudo Lama*, this book. She made that. She made my birthday. She mentioned the date of my birthday.

However, just a little thing to mention. Okay.

Actually the real birthday in my view, that is each day, each hour, each minute, each second, instead of letting your mind be controlled by the worldly desire, attachment, which is nothing new, which has been from beginningless rebirths up to now, up to this second... So that's why still we... Even though Shakyamuni Buddha was a sentient being before and numberless buddhas originally were sentient beings, but they didn't allow, they took—kind of like in the world people talk about human rights—they took the real human rights, so they didn't let their mind to be controlled, overpowered, by the worldly desire or the attachment to this life, to this life. Those who took freedom for themselves, they became free from samsara, the oceans of samsaric sufferings, which continuation has no beginning. They were able to make an end to that. And then not only that, they achieved enlightenment, full enlightenment. But like me, us, those of us, we didn't get done that, so that's why still we have not been from beginningless rebirths free from the oceans of suffering of samsara.

So that's the first thing, the first, the very first real Dharma, pure Dharma making your mind free, pure, positive, virtue, a cause of happiness. So you control... So that mind controlled the worldly desire, the eight worldly dharmas, the attachment to this life. Then, with that mind, all the actions of body, speech, and mind become virtue, a cause of happiness. So, with that, any action that is done becomes a cause of happiness, a cause of the happiness of future lives—after that to be born in a pure land in the future life, a deva and human body, a perfect human body. So that's the real birthday.

And then you take the human rights. Instead of the old behavior from beginningless rebirths, which is nothing new, letting the mind, yourself, be under the control of the attachment to samsara, to even your future-life pleasures, samsaric pleasures, all that... With that [attachment], every action done with your body, speech, and mind becomes a cause of samsara. It leads you to suffer, as we have been suffering from beginningless rebirths, the oceans of samsaric sufferings. So [instead] taking freedom, your independence, your own independence, freedom. You control. Instead of that attachment to samsara controlling you, your mind, you control, you take freedom for yourself by seeing that samsara is the nature of

suffering. Yourself is taking freedom, independence, for yourself—human rights for yourself.

Then, [there is] the mind which is even more positive than before in the Dharma, in virtue, a positive and healthy mind more than before, so a satisfied mind. Before it was a happy mind, a real happy mind, but now even more happy—to be free from samsara is an even more happy mind, free. Total satisfaction is what I said now—renunciation, the mind wanting to be liberated from samsara. Then actions done with body, speech, and mind, the actions done with that, the actions of body, speech, and mind done with that motivation, become a cause of liberation from samsara, a cause to achieve liberation from samsara, nirvana. It's unbelievable—a more healthy mind than before, more positive. It is unbelievable, unbelievable. Then, of course, that is an unbelievable birthday.

Then, we let our mind, we let ourselves, be slaves to the self-cherishing thought, slaves. Yourself is used as a duster by the self-cherishing thought. Like a broom, you are totally used by your own self-cherishing thought. You have been totally controlled by it from beginningless rebirths, then you experienced all the sufferings. Not only yourself, but you caused to suffer numberless sentient beings from life to life. Even that was from life to life, from beginningless rebirths. Wow, wow, wow. That is the most frightening mind.

Due to that, then you take freedom, independence, from that. Instead of cherishing only I and giving up numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, numberless human beings, sura beings, asura beings, intermediate state beings, *bah, bah, bah...* You give them up and only work for yourself alone, so you have been suffering from beginningless rebirths up to now. You have been working for the self, the self-cherishing thought, and so as a result, up to now, from beginningless rebirths up to now, you have been suffering because of that. Reality! That's the reality. Nobody caused you suffering but yourself, your self-cherishing thought. So then, with bodhichitta let go of the I, from where all the suffering arises, the oceans of suffering, all the obstacles to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, to free the sentient beings, the numberless sentient beings, from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment. Even one sentient being, to help even one sentient being, for you to help even one sentient being, that's the main obstacle. Your self-cherishing thought is the main obstacle not letting you do that, not letting you benefit even one sentient being, to free them from the oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring them to enlightenment, to peerless happiness, to enlightenment. Oh, so then you give freedom—that is the greatest freedom, greatest freedom, independence—to yourself: bodhichitta. So when you practice bodhichitta, each time, oh, then you give freedom to yourself, independence, real independence. You control. You don't give power to the self-cherishing thought, you control it with the bodhichitta cherishing numberless sentient beings, wow, wow, wow, by letting go of I and cherishing numberless sentient beings.

As the Kadampa geshe said, “What is called I is something to throw far away, to cast far away.” It’s like used toilet paper or poison, something to throw far away. Like that, it is something to throw so far away, immediately. “What is called ‘others,’ it’s a dharma,” “it’s a phenomenon that you take immediately,” “an object to take immediately, quickly, immediately.” Then with that, your actions of body, speech, and mind, everything, become a cause of enlightenment, a cause for yourself to achieve enlightenment, a cause for yourself to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. And that becomes a cause for every sentient being to achieve enlightenment. That becomes the cause... If you have that, then you are able to cause happiness to the numberless hell beings, numberless hungry ghosts, numberless animals, numberless human beings, numberless suras, numberless asuras, numberless intermediate state beings. And that becomes the basis to cause happiness to everyone and to free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings. When you generate bodhichitta, when you have the realization, it causes that. Wow, wow, wow. Not just you, but numberless sentient beings, wow, wow, wow, you free them from the oceans of samsaric sufferings. Your bodhichitta can do that. Wow, wow, wow, wow, wow, wow. Amazing, amazing, amazing. Then, whatever action of body, speech, and mind is done with that, it becomes a cause of enlightenment. Wow, wow, wow. Then after you achieve enlightenment, you are able to free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings. Not only that, you are able to bring them to peerless happiness, the total cessation of obscurations and completion of realizations, enlightenment. *Bah, bah, bah, bah, bah, bah.*

So just living with that is the best birthday. How to live the life for sentient beings is to live the life with bodhichitta, to live the life for sentient beings. Eat for sentient beings, for the happiness of other sentient beings. Walk for sentient beings, their happiness and to achieve enlightenment. Sleep for sentient beings. Work for sentient beings, their happiness up to enlightenment. Do everything, whatever you do—wash—for sentient beings. Wow, wow, wow. Amazing, amazing, amazing. That’s the best thing, the best birthday. Amazing, amazing.

Then, by receiving a highest tantra initiation, the four types of initiation (the vase, the secret initiation, the wisdom initiation, the word initiation), then on the basis of keeping samayas and vows, [you practice] the generation stage. Through visualization, you purify the ordinary death, rebirth, and intermediate stage. Then through visualization, you make your mind capable to achieve the path-time three kayas, dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, nirmanakaya. That plants the seed of the result-time four kayas. Then, [you practice] the completion stage. By actualizing... The mind has gross mind, subtle mind, extremely subtle. The body has the gross body, subtle body, extremely subtle body. The extremely subtle mind actualizes emptiness, the transcendental wisdom of great bliss nondual with emptiness, actual clear light. Then, by achieving that and then the illusory body, you purify the ordinary subtle

wind and mind, and you achieve the ultimate dharmakaya and rupakaya, a buddha's holy mind and holy body, for sentient beings—to liberate them from the oceans of samsaric suffering by yourself, by yourself alone, and then to bring everyone to the peerless happiness, the total cessation of obscurations and completion of realizations, *sanggye*.

Of course, this is not only advice for you; it is advice for myself too. We are born in the southern continent where there are tantric teachings existing, whereas in the pure land, Amitabha Buddha's pure land, there are no tantric teachings existing. Yes, you may develop the common path [there], but in that life you don't achieve enlightenment. Khedrub Raga said, this great learned, great yogi, Nyingma, I think, Raga mentioned that not this life but next life you achieve enlightenment. He said that. However, yes, there you can't achieve the tantric realizations in that life. [You can achieve] sutra realizations but not tantra, it seems. So here... The bodhisattvas there, they pray to be reborn here, where we are, the southern continent, so then they can practice tantra here and achieve enlightenment quickly for sentient beings.

So we are unbelievably, unbelievably, most unbelievably fortunate. We are born here just before the Buddhadharmas, like the sun, sets down. Just before, just before, just, just, just before it sets down, like that [just before] the Buddhadharmas totally degenerates. Just before that happened, finally we met it in this world. So it is unbelievable, most unbelievably fortunate the opportunity that we have. It is unbelievable, unbelievable, unbelievable. *Bah, bah, bah*.

That's all. Okay. So what I say is that so it's good if you can, if you are practicing tantra, to do self-initiation, even not the long one but you can do the middle and short. At least the short one you can do. That is the best birthday. You purify everything you broke; the pratimoksha, bodhisattva, and tantric vows, the vices, are purified. Of course, *tungwa*, downfalls, by sojong are purified, by attending sojong in the monasteries or somewhere.

If you haven't done a retreat, the general thing you can do is the tsog offering. The short one is a hundred times tsog. You can do the short prayer or OM AH HUM. By chanting it slowly, you can do one hundred tsog. Like the normal, like the usual *Lama Chopas*, whichever practice you do, you can do even OM AH HUM, the short one, but slowly with the meditation. [It becomes] numberless nectar tsog, oceans of nectar tsog, numberless, then you offer it. Then it generated bliss, infinite, nondual with emptiness. There is a stanza. So tsog is very powerful, a very powerful purification. If you broke samaya, it is a powerful purification. It hooks the realizations. To restore samayas and vows, you do *Lama Chopas*, in which there is the taking of the bodhisattva and tantra vows. With any practice you do, yes, you can do that. There is Lama Yeshe's tsog, *Vajrasattva Tsog*, which is very good. Any number of Vajrasattva mantras you can do, either three times after each verse or twenty-one times with meditation. Nectar beams are emitted from Guru Vajrasattva, purifying not only yourself but all the sentient beings. You can visualize in your heart, on a

lotus, a sun and moon disk, all the sentient beings around and purify them together. It's a very good one. So good, but short. It depends on how many times you want to do Vajrasattva, that or even just one is okay. If you don't have much time, then even one. So like that. Other than that... Yeah, that's a good one.

Then, other than that, you can do, if you have some idea, *Heart Sutra* meditation. Like for one hour, you can do *Heart Sutra* meditation. Or you repeat the *Heart Sutra* slowly with meditation however many times during that time. Something like that; I'm giving an example. It could be one hour and a half or two hours, as you like. You can repeat the *Heart Sutra* slowly with meditation. Or you don't have to repeat it; you just do it very slowly in one hour. Or you repeat it a few times during that time. You do it however you want. Or you can do one and a half hours. You can try like that. The time is up to you. That is to realize emptiness, for you quickly to be free from samsara. Of course, to directly cease even the subtle obscurations is by this—by directly perceiving emptiness, this wisdom, with the great support of bodhichitta.

Or you can do *King of Prayers*. You can do *King of Prayers*, *Bodhicharyavatara* prayer, then the *Blissful Realm Prayer*. There are eight prayers. So those things you can do. That is also a good one.

Then, if you can, when you are at the center, because you have a birthday then you benefit the center. You make a tea offering, coffee, whatever, or food. You can do snacks. Anything you can do. You can do *Vajrasattva Tsog* or *Lama Chopa Tsog*, whatever you want. Then recite... Then do the *Heart Sutra* with meditation, the lamrim prayers, or recite *Essential Nectar*. You read the whole thing to leave positive imprints to realize and to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. You leave positive imprints of renunciation, bodhichitta, and right view. If you read the whole lamrim, it is so good. So like that, there are many things you can do, many great things. This is positive.

If you are not at a center, then at your own house you can do those practices. If you have Dharma friends, you can invite them and you can do them at home. It is very good. However, the way of doing it... Of course, the best enjoying is with bodhichitta, so all the activities are done with bodhichitta. Then, [among] the six paramitas to achieve enlightenment, here you do the paramita of charity. You make charity to however many people you invite, who come to the center or come to the house. You offer them drink. You eat food, whatever. You make charity with bodhichitta. You practice, of the six paramitas, charity, the paramita of charity. Of course, within the charity you can practice the rest of the paramitas. With wisdom, there is no real I, the subject making charity; the actual action of making charity; the object to whom you made charity. It's all a hallucination, the *gagja*, refuting object. What is there is the mere labeled I, merely labeled action of making charity, merely labeled object to make charity. So like that, you practice mindfulness of that, wisdom. All are merely labeled—I is merely labeled, action is merely labeled, object is merely labeled. Then, the real I making charity, real action of making charity, [real]

object to make charity, but looking at all those as like a dream, like a mirage, like a hallucination. Looking at it as a hallucination, as it is a hallucination. Looking at it, not like, looking at it as a hallucination, like a hallucination. Sorry. Looking at it as a hallucination, looking at it as a hallucination. Like that. Oh, that. So like that awareness. *Bah, bah, bah*. Within that charity, you can do the rest of the practices of charity. However, the motivation is bodhichitta, so unbelievable, unbelievable merit you collect. As the Buddha said, “During my teachings, if you make charity of a hair,” so tiny, “to a sentient being, the result is eighty thousand times.” *Bah, bah, bah*. All your wishes succeed, for wealth, all the progress. *Bah, bah, bah*. Then, finally, the last thing is that you achieve enlightenment. *Bah, bah, bah*. It is amazing, amazing, amazing, amazing. So you have an incredible opportunity, even if you invite three people, anybody.

But now here one thing is that at the center, for example, either me or other lamas came to give teachings and they attended, so they became disciples of the lama from whom also you have taken teachings and initiations, so they are the guru’s pores. “The pores” are not necessarily only the pores of the body, not necessarily. All these are called “pores”—the guru’s disciples, the guru’s horse and dogs, any animals that belong to the guru. It is like Kadampa geshe Chenngawa. He collected the butter from tea. From Tibetan tea, he collected butter and sent it to Tolung to his teacher, his guru. The dogs, the outside street dogs, I think maybe they belonged to the guru, I think, so he keeps the butter from the tea, Tibetan tea, and he sent it there to the dogs to eat because they belonged to his guru. They say it collects far more greater merit than offering to those people who do pujas for people. So if the guru is lay, then the wife, husband, children are all the guru’s pores. So they [the people at the center] are the guru’s pores. So then on top of that, you think to whom you are making charity is all the guru’s pores. By thinking they are the guru’s pores, then you are making offerings to them. Then, if to one disciple you offer one paper glass of water, for example, you collect merit, so much more unbelievable, unbelievable merit, more than if you make offerings to numberless buddhas, numberless Dharma, numberless sangha, numberless statues, numberless stupas, numberless scriptures. Oh, more than that. So much more greater merit, more than that, you get. You get. So, when you offer tea, or a snack, or food, whatever, if you offer it by thinking that—wow, wow, wow. It is unbelievable, unbelievable, unbelievable. In this way, if you know how to practice Dharma, to collect the most extensive merits and do the greatest purification, it brings you to enlightenment quicker. Then you are able to... Sentient beings don’t have to suffer for a long time, numberless. So, quicker you liberate sentient beings from the sufferings of samsara, then you bring them to achieve enlightenment quicker. So that’s the benefit.

So, like that, it doesn’t have to be like kind of with attachment, “my birthday.” Then everything becomes... Besides the actions from beginningless rebirth up to now

became only a cause of samsara, here the party totally becomes a cause of samsara, a cause of the lower realms, a cause of samsara. Because it is done with the attachment to this life, it becomes a cause of the lower realms. So it doesn't have to be like that if you know how to practice Dharma, how to live the life.

It's my birthday so I'm finishing my small good karma. The small good karma, that you enjoy and that you can benefit to others, the small good karma, that finishes very quickly. Eating delicious cakes and all the things, the enjoyments, you finish your little good karma. Ha-ha. The result of past good karma, you finish very quickly.

Okay. Thank you very much. Please enjoy with bodhichitta! Okay. Ha-ha.

Colophon: Lama Zopa Rinpoche offered this message in a video recorded on December 3, 2018, in Switzerland. Transcribed by Ven. Joan Nicell and Ven. Thubten Khadro. Very lightly edited by Ven. Joan Nicell, December 2018.