



Stupas in Tibet

The Incredible Blessings and Benefits of Holy Objects

Holy objects bless the land and plant the seed for enlightenment. Every time beings see holy objects, their minds are purified. Just by seeing a statue of Buddha, you collect numberless merits. In addition, if you make offerings, you collect much, much more merit.

By having holy objects – even if you are not talking and keeping silence – you are liberating hundreds of thousands of sentient beings every day, liberating them from samsara, saving them from the lower realms. Just by seeing holy objects one’s karma is purified. Holy objects purify the mind and plant seeds for the path to liberation. That’s how stupas and other holy objects liberate [sentient beings] each day. Every day, holy objects bring sentient beings to enlightenment. Holy objects are an antidote for war, famine, and disease.

Every day, when sentient beings see stupas and statues, this plants the seed of enlightenment. It is said that even dreaming of a stupa plants the seed of enlightenment. This is mainly due to the power of the holy object. It is said in the *King of Concentrations Sutra (Samadhira-jasutra)* that even if one sees a drawing of a stupa with an angry mind, it causes one to see ten million buddhas in the future. That same quotation says that the benefits that you receive on your mental continuum from seeing even just a line drawing of the Buddha’s holy body on a stone wall, the benefits for purifying the mind of all the defilements, are like the limitless sky. You can then receive all the realizations. This means that one’s mind gets purified, and this causes one to see numberless buddhas, actualize the path, become enlightened, and lead all sentient beings to enlightenment. Of course, those who prostrate, bow down, or pay respect even with one hand to a holy object are brought to enlightenment (and will have many future good rebirths) because

each of those actions, as many times as one does them, creates inconceivable merit. Because one has created inconceivable merit, even this life is taken care of without clinging to it.

Merely seeing a stupa purifies all this. Anybody, even animals, who sees a stupa or other holy object is purified. This becomes an incredible purification of the mind. It has that effect: it purifies the mind. This then becomes the cause for one to see numberless buddhas in the near future. Then, when one hears the Dharma, one receives the realizations of the path to enlightenment. Then one achieves total liberation, freedom forever from all the suffering causes, and one attains the highest enlightenment by completing the Mahayana path.

It is said that even a person who remembers a stupa is purified. Amazing! Even dreaming of a stupa or remembering a stupa that one has seen plants the seed of everlasting freedom, total liberation, from all the suffering causes and of everlasting happiness, the highest enlightenment. When you come to know these benefits, then you know how this stupa makes it so easy to liberate sentient beings, to bring them to enlightenment, and to save them from the lower realms of samsara.

A stupa is also the best thing for healing cancer or other sicknesses; it is the best thing to use for healing. For example, if I go around this stupa [at Rinpoche's house in Aptos] a little bit faster for just twenty minutes, it lowers my diabetes blood sugar level. This has happened many times. One day I compared: I walked down the road and my blood sugar level wasn't lowered that much, but walking around the stupa lowered it. You can advertise the stupa as unbelievably powerful for healing. Here, I have been talking about [healing] diabetes, but it's also very good for cancer.

Enlightenment doesn't happen by a click of the fingers; but seeing holy objects plants the imprint to actualize the path and achieve enlightenment. Once you have holy objects, then every day they work for sentient beings, naturally, all the time. For beings such as animals or insects who merely touch a stupa with mantras inside – even if they are touched by just the shadow of the stupa – the negative karma in their minds of having killed their father or mother is purified.

When water or rain touches the stupa, it becomes holy water. The rainwater that touches the stupa becomes blessed. So when it rains and the rainwater runs from the stupa and soaks into the ground, any

insects, worms, any being living in the ground – whomever it touches – all their negative karma gets purified. They receive a higher rebirth and become liberated.

It is the same with the wind. When the wind blows over and touches a stupa, it becomes blessed and then has the power to purify. When the wind then touches sentient beings – whomever it touches, animals or flies or insects or human beings – it purifies their negative karma of having committed the ten non-virtuous actions. This results in their not being reborn in the lower realms – the animal, hell, or hungry ghost realms. They receive a good rebirth in the next life. It is the same with dust. Even without that sentient being having any virtuous thought, [that being gets purified].

It is the same with the bells that are offered to a stupa, even the small bells that don't make much sound. When anybody hears the sound of a bell that has been offered to a stupa, whether it is on top of the stupa or around the stupa, their negative karma – even the very heavy five uninterrupted negative karmas of killing one's father, one's mother, an arhat, harming a buddha, or causing disunity among the Sangha – are purified. The five uninterrupted negative karmas are extremely heavy negative actions such that whoever has done them will immediately be reborn in the hell realms without any interruption after this life. There are eight hot hells, and the very last, the heaviest one, is where those who have committed these uninterrupted negative karmas are reborn and where they experience suffering for eons. These negative karmas are extremely heavy. But by having the Secret Relic mantra inside a stupa (this is one of the mantras that goes on the life tree that goes inside the stupa), even a bell offered to the stupa becomes very powerful. Then anybody who has these five uninterrupted negative karmas who hears the sound of the bell is purified. It is so unbelievably powerful!

Not only are non-Buddhists able to generate merit by making offerings to holy objects. Even by merely seeing these holy objects and circumambulating them, their actions become the cause of enlightenment. Also, for Buddhists who have little or no realization of Dharma, by seeing these holy objects they can gain understanding. Normally, you have to put a lot of effort into practice, but by having holy objects around, it becomes so easy to free yourself by purifying negative karma so that you can gradually achieve enlightenment.

Holy objects make it so easy for sentient beings; no matter how much negative karma we collect, how many negative deeds, it is so easy to achieve realizations and achieve enlightenment. It gives one hope in life.

It is very important to tell ordinary people that a stupa is good because it works to calm them down and bring peace of mind. Stupas are extremely powerful for health and healing. Visualize healing light coming from the stupa. The best thing to do if you are facing death is to circumambulate a stupa. This is good for long life: it purifies obstacles to life by purifying the negative karma that results in a short life. It is also very good for general success, for example, if you are having difficulties in life, are unable to find a job, or are experiencing difficulties in business. For success, you need to purify the negative karma for having these difficulties. You need to create much merit for success, so go around the stupa. Visualize light coming from the stupa and totally illuminating your body. While you circumambulate, you can chant mantras and concentrate, or you can sit down and do this meditation every day for one-half hour or one hour. Fantastic. Visualize white light coming from the stupa, totally illuminating and purifying you from sickness, delusions, spirit harm, and negative karma. You can also chant mantras.

There should be a small booklet that explains how to use a stupa in different ways. Issue a booklet “How to Use a Stupa.” (*Practices related to stupas can be found on p. 106*). In addition, an abbreviated compilation of benefits and practices found herein has been made into a small booklet called “How to Use a Stupa,” which is available as a separate document from FPMT Education Department.) Once we make such a booklet, it can be used anywhere in our centers, in any country, anywhere there are holy objects. Even if there is only one stupa, if it has these [four powerful] mantras inside, you can use the stupa for different purposes. You can use the stupa for many problems. This booklet of advice can touch on many different problems in order to help people solve many kinds of problems.

Even if a person does this practice [related to the stupa] with only the motivation of this life’s happiness – not a Dharma motivation, but for the happiness and success of just this life, which motivation is not to benefit sentient beings so that the action therefore doesn’t become Dharma – yet due to the power of the object, it becomes Dharma. It

becomes the cause to achieve enlightenment. You should have a booklet or a signboard, a big huge board like the size of a window, and explain different ways a person can use the stupa. In this way, people will come with different problems and will use the stupa by going around it, or sitting down and meditating.

We can see very clearly what an incredible opportunity we have in our life, which is a great cause for hope. Through holy objects, we create the cause of happiness. With every single action [in relation to a holy object], the resulting benefit is inconceivable, immeasurable, because the object has inconceivable qualities like the limitless sky. Because of that, everything you do, such as prostrations, has benefits like the sky.

Some of the key benefits that sentient beings receive are explained by the Buddha himself in the text on the infinite benefits of making prayer wheels and stupas. If you read this text, it’s just mind-blowing! It is just unbelievable! Because I saw this text, that’s why [I have asked] others to have many stupas built at Kopan, in Solu Khumbu, Iceland, and many other places.

The Benefits of Building Stupas

The main purpose of building stupas is to make the lives of all beings, young and old, meaningful. For those beings who see the stupa it will:

- ❖ help purify their mind
- ❖ help collect merit, which is the cause of all happiness and all success
- ❖ help heal their body and mind through purification specifically due to the power of the stupa, meditating on and seeing the holy object
- ❖ help to preserve Tibetan Mahayana culture

There is a need [in the world] to develop compassion and a warm heart. Thus, building a stupa can help to develop so much peace and happiness for numberless sentient beings. As a result, wars, disease, and desire will be pacified by this change of attitude. Disease arising out of the negative mind will be stopped, and previous negative karmas will be purified. Building a stupa will give so much peace and so

much peace of mind to the local people where the stupa is built and to people from all over the world. It will purify the mind so that people receive inner peace. Just by coming here [to this place with a stupa], beings will receive an education in order to develop a good heart, compassion and loving kindness, tolerance, patience – all these most precious human qualities of the mind. And inspiration!

It will give people courage in life. People who are depressed will gain courage by coming to this place. Instead of feeling hopeless in their life, they will get hope. They will discover that their life is full of hope and their minds will be inspired in compassion as well as in wisdom. It will thereby make their lives of the greatest benefit for themselves and others. This is about peace – for the individual beings who come to see it, for the whole country, and for the entire world – for all sentient beings.

I see the creation of stupas as being of incalculable benefit for countless sentient beings, especially for their mind streams. If one transforms or develops the mind, then all problems and suffering are transformed or ceased, because the mind is the creator of all one's happiness and suffering.

Listening to teachings and practicing meditation are the actual path, but for this you need a lot of merit; you need to have purified a lot of negative karma. The immediate and most urgent thing is to obtain a better rebirth when you die – so these holy objects can be really beneficial. Since many do not have the karma to come to teachings, the other way to liberate and save sentient beings from the lower realms, from samsara, and even from the subtle defilements is by their seeing holy objects and going around them. By their remembering the holy object, this will help them to enlightenment. This is the essential purpose of the stupa.

By means of the stupa, the prayer wheels, and the many holy objects existing, every day, without words, we will liberate so many sentient beings – without words, in silence. By actualizing and building stupas we liberate so many sentient beings every day by planting the seed of liberation and the seed of the whole path in their minds. We will create the cause for their good rebirth every day, for all those sentient beings who will circumambulate – tourists and everybody! The stupa gives peace of mind, purifies negative karma, and gives beings good rebirths and every happiness.

The conclusion for Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike is that the stupa is a way to purify defilements. A holy stupa is a way to benefit sentient beings without words. It will liberate beings from samsara in silence. To have such a holy object existing in a country makes it very rich and very lucky. Many people will come to visit for pleasure as tourists, but it will at the same time make their life meaningful. The most important point is that holy objects help beings to purify their mind and to collect extensive merit so that it is possible for them to easily have realizations of the path. That is the main function of these holy objects – to help us sentient beings have quick realizations of the path to enlightenment by the power of the holy object.

Those who build and work to actualize these holy objects will bring these beings to enlightenment. So anyone who sees it, touches it, remembers it, even dreams of it will have the seed planted for their own enlightenment. As well, prostrating and so on to the stupa helps bring them to enlightenment. By having the Secret Relic mantra within the stupa, any animals, ants, butterflies, etc. that go around the stupa even just once are purified of their negative karma to be born in the hot hells.

Even if we all die, as long as the holy objects that we have created last, our work, our effort [to create holy objects], is still benefiting sentient beings continuously. For all the many hundreds and thousands of years that the stupa will last, every day it will liberate sentient beings in silence ... without words ... without our talking Dharma to them. You see, just by seeing the stupa, the minds of the sentient beings who come here get purified. So many negative karmas get purified. Even the insects who are killed by machines during the construction – even they will not be reborn in the lower realms. Even those that die during the building process will receive a good rebirth. It is mentioned by a great Indian teacher in a text called *Matasara*, or something like that, that even if you make food for the people building the temple, your negative karma will be purified.

Even if the holy object is destroyed, still for days, months, years, hundreds of thousands of years, so many sentient beings continue to receive so much benefit from the positive imprints [they received from having seen that holy object]. These positive imprints cause them to meet the guru, to actualize the path, etc., until they achieve enlightenment. The positive imprints are still working in them. Even if the holy

object does not exist any more, the effect is still working in that being. That person will then help to bring other sentient beings to enlightenment.

Anybody who comes to see a stupa or holy objects – even those who dream about them – from that time on will not be born in the lower realms. Just by seeing and touching a stupa, their negative karmas will be purified, and they will immediately find refuge and stable faith in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Then they will be able to pacify their minds and generate loving kindness and bodhichitta. Wherever a stupa is built will become a powerful place for healing and a cause of success for whatever visitors to that place are seeking. Each person can transform their mind by coming and seeing such holy objects. In short, spending time at a stupa can become the psychology to bring peace of mind and a good heart to all beings, both young and old. These benefits apply to all sentient beings that come to the stupa, even dogs that are taken for a walk around it.

To support and contribute to creating and building stupas and other holy objects is therefore of immense benefit, not only to others but also to yourself in helping to make your life more meaningful.

You can dedicate the benefit or merit of helping with creating holy objects to family members who have passed away. You can dedicate the merit to all the people who are dying of cancer now, to all the people who have AIDS. If you want to do something to help family members who have passed away, for their good rebirth, then dedicate your merit of supporting and giving contributions toward building stupas and holy objects. You can also dedicate for all sentient beings who are suffering now and so that all those who support the creation of stupas and holy objects will also have a good rebirth. As well, you can dedicate all these merits for world peace. There are so many ways you can dedicate the merit every time you make a contribution or create holy objects yourself. And you can pray for the quick realizations of all sentient beings.

Stupas are very powerful for purification. Wherever you are in the six realms or in the pure lands or wherever, every day stupas liberate many sentient beings. You must remember that. Even though our lives are not long, the time and effort you put into creating stupas and the stupas to which you have contributed or that you have built will continuously benefit other sentient beings, liberating them from samsara

and bringing them to enlightenment. So even though our lives are short, our effort will benefit for a long time, liberating numberless sentient beings and bringing them to enlightenment. You should realize these long-term benefits of your contributions, your efforts, and your dedications.

Colophon:

This article was compiled from the following talks given by Lama Zopa Rinpoche: Talk given at Atisha Center, Bendigo, Australia, March 2000. Material used with permission of Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive (www.lamayeshe.org). Teachings given at Atisha Center and in Sydney, Australia in September and October 1996 and in March 2000; Instructions scribed by Brian Halterman in Aptos, California.

The individual extracts were originally compiled and lightly edited by Kendall Magnussen, July 2003. Final editing by Ven. Constance Miller, September 2003.



The Temple Complex at Swayambhunath, Nepal