

everything  
depends on the  
**MOTIVATION**

*Lama Zopa Rinpoche*

**I**T IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO KNOW HOW TO LIVE OUR DAILY LIFE. We need to know what is spiritual practice and what is not spiritual, or what is Dharma and what is not Dharma. The benefit of understanding this, of having this wisdom, is unbelievable, is infinite.

What we have to realize is that all of our activities throughout twenty-four hours – walking, sitting, sleeping, talking, doing our job – can become a cause for enlightenment, for liberation, for happiness in future lives; or for the lower realms. It all depends on our motivation.

Drinking just one mouthful of water, the one action of drinking water, can either become the cause of enlightenment, the cause of liberation, the cause of future happiness or the cause of suffering in the lower realms.

So we should think this way: if I drink the water with the motivation of bodhicitta – the thought of wanting to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of sentient beings – however, many mouthfuls I take from one glass, however many

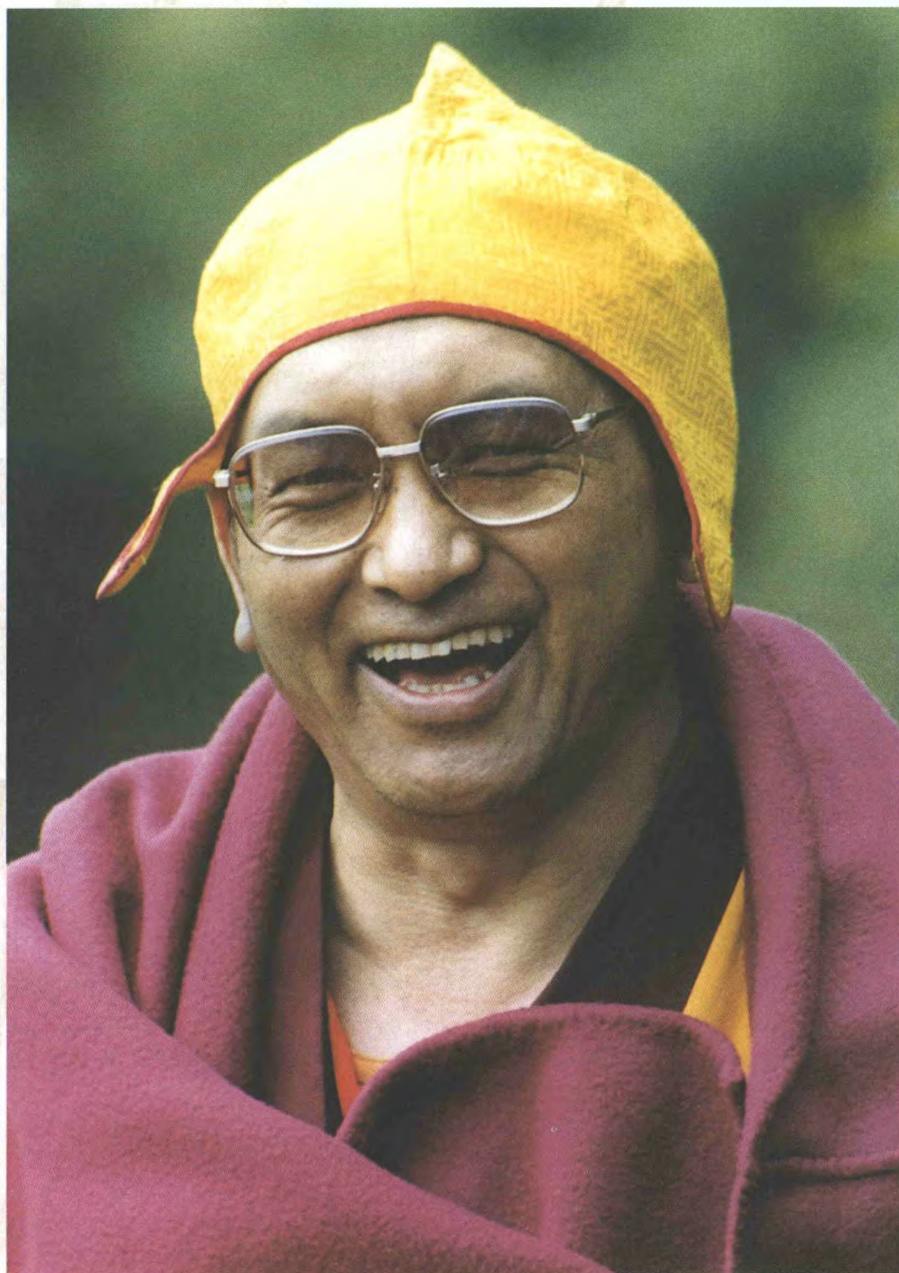
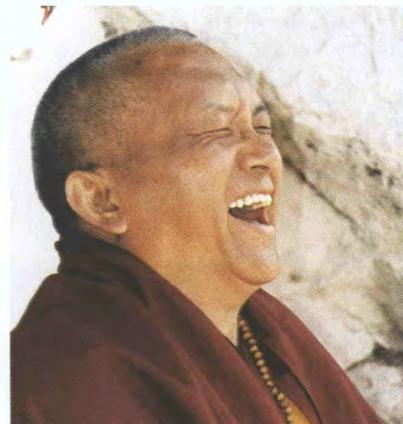


Photo: Bob Cayton



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glasses of water I drink, each one becomes a cause of enlightenment for all sentient beings, a cause for the happiness of all sentient beings.

However, if I drink this water with attachment that clings to this life, then each mouthful, each glass of water, becomes only the cause of suffering, the cause of unbearable suffering in the lower realms – not to mention the cause of problems in the human realm.

If we talk with the worldly mind of attachment that clings to this life, then however many hours we talk, all of it becomes the cause of unfortunate rebirths, the cause of suffering.

If we drive the car with the motivation of attachment that clings to this life, then however many hours we drive, all of it becomes negative karma. But if we drive with a positive motivation, there is no question that it becomes the cause of happiness.

However many hours we sleep, it all becomes negative karma, the cause of the lower realms, if we sleep with attachment that clings to this life.

It's the same when we write letters or books or read the newspaper or watch television: whether or not these actions become Dharma, the cause of happiness, depends on our motivation. If the motivation is attachment that clings to this life, then however many actions of reading the book or watching the television we do, it all becomes negative karma.

When you go shopping, whether the action of shopping becomes the cause of enlightenment for other sentient beings or one's own liberation from samsara or happiness in future lives, depends on your motivation. If the shopping is done with attachment that clings to one's own present life, then all those actions of shopping – one or ten or fifteen or hundreds or billions – are negative karma; they are not Dharma.

It's the same when you do your job: however many hours you work, all of it becomes the cause of happiness for sentient beings if it is done with bodhicitta, the thought of wanting to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of sentient beings. But if you do your job with attachment to this life, it all becomes negative karma, the cause of suffering in the lower realms.

### Walking with bodhicitta

Walking with bodhicitta makes the action of walking the cause of highest happiness, peerless enlightenment. From the time you leave home, practice mindfulness, keeping your mind constantly on bodhicitta.

THINK: THE PURPOSE OF MY LIFE IS TO FREE ALL SENTIENT BEINGS FROM SUFFERING AND TO BRING THEM HAPPINESS. Then relate this to anyone you see on the road or in shops and restaurants, people in cars, animals, insects – everyone you pass while walking.

Walk with the strong awareness that each sentient being, each human, each insect, is the source of all your past, present and future happiness, which is the "extensive kindness." Or be aware of their having been kind in four ways as one's mother, which is the "numberless kindness." Walk with this awareness, and feel especially the kindness of all the beings you see. The conclusion in your mind should be that you wish to free each of them from suffering and cause each of them happiness; you wish to lead them to enlightenment.

When you go back home, go with the motivation of bodhicitta, with this awareness. This is how to enjoy life, how to live a happy life in a meaningful way without cheating oneself with ego.

### Walking with emptiness

One can also walk with meditation on emptiness. In this way the action of walking does not become the cause of samsaric suffering, particularly of the unimaginable suffering of the lower realms. Walking with meditation on emptiness makes the action a remedy to all the samsaric sufferings; and it cuts the root of the delusions, the ignorance that doesn't perceive that the I that is empty from its own side. With this meditation, the action walking becomes the cause to achieve liberation.

While you are walking, question yourself. Why do you say "I am walking?" Analyze this. The only reason you have for saying "I am walking" is that the aggregate of the body is doing the action walking; there is no other reason than this.

Because the aggregate of the body is doing the action of walking, the mind makes up the idea, the label, "I am walking." In fact,

inside the body there is an I appearing to you from its own side, which appears to be walking. That I is a complete hallucination, is completely non-existent. The I that is walking is merely imputed by your own mind; the I that is walking is only that. What appears and what you believe – the real I not merely labeled by the mind – is a complete hallucination, it doesn't exist, it is empty.

It is the same with the road, the houses, the sky, the trees, the act of walking: they are all merely labeled by the mind. What appears to be something real from out there is a hallucination and is the object to be refuted.

So, walk with the awareness of these hallucinations – I, action, object – and that they are hallucinations (that is, that they are appearing from their own side). Then however many hours you walk with this mindfulness, all of it becomes lam-rim, the path to enlightenment; all of it becomes the remedy for cutting ignorance, the root of samsara, the root of all suffering.

### Walking as in a dream

Another simple way to meditate while walking is to question yourself: does the I appear merely labeled or not? It doesn't appear in that way. Does the action of walking appear merely labeled? Do the road, the sky, the cars, the people, your cat, your dog, the ice creams, appear merely labeled? What I see, does it appear merely labeled by the mind or not? No, they don't appear in that way. So, all this is like a dream, it is a hallucination. You are walking in a dream: the road, the trees, the sky, the earth, the people passing, the walking itself – everything is in a dream. (Actually, the correct way to say this is, "it is like a dream," but perhaps for our minds it is more effective to say, "I am dreaming.")

WHY MEDITATE LIKE THIS? When you practice this mindfulness, there is no clinging, no grasping, because you understand that everything is a hallucination, a dream, is not real. In fact, all these things appearing as something real from out there – real I from out there, real action of walking from out there, real object from out there, real road, real sky, real tree, real enemy, real friend – are completely opposite to reality. Thinking this way makes you see that it is nonsense to have attachment and anger. Immediately it brings the mind to peace, the mind becomes detached and free; immediately the mind becomes patient and without anger.

So, when you walk with the mindfulness of everything as a dream, in your heart there is the understanding that they are not real, they do not exist. If you relate this to the I, the action, the object and so forth that are appearing from out there, it makes you see that they are empty. However if you are referring to the general (merely labeled) I, general action, general sky, road, trees and so forth, then the way to meditate is that they don't exist from their own side.

When you meditate that everything is like a dream, however many things you see – all the various shapes of the bodies of people, or all the billions of phenomena, ugly or beautiful – you know there is nothing to cling to, nothing to get angry with, because there is nothing to hold on to. In your heart you know

that they don't exist. Seeing things in this way helps you to let go.

So, all the walking that is done with this meditation of seeing everything as a dream becomes the remedy for cutting the root of samsara, it becomes a remedy for the whole cycle of samsaric sufferings, including relationship problems, being treated badly by others and so forth. Walking with this mindfulness of everything being like a dream cuts the cause of suffering, of samsara, the delusions and karma. This is how walking becomes the cause to achieve ultimate happiness, liberation from the whole of samsara and its causes.

### Walking with dependent arising

A fourth way to meditate while you are walking is with mindfulness of dependent arising. As I mentioned before, you are walking because the aggregates are walking, so the mind made up the label "I am walking." The merely labeled I is merely labeled walking and merely labeled seeing the merely labeled sky, merely labeled trees, merely labeled people, merely labeled beautiful man or woman, merely labeled ugly, merely labeled cars, merely labeled houses and so forth. With this mindfulness of subtle dependent arising, you walk.

### Walking with impermanence

You can also walk while doing a meditation on impermanence and death. Each time you take a step, think that your life is finishing, getting shorter and shorter. Especially if you walk fast, you can be even more aware of how life is quickly finishing. However much life there is left, it is finishing so fast. With each step you are getting closer to death – and if the negative karma is not purified, then with each step you are getting closer to the immeasurable sufferings of the lower realms.

When you are driving you can think that you are like a person being taken to their execution; with each moment you are getting closer to being killed. Like this, practice mindfulness of the life finishing so fast and getting closer to death and the lower realms.

Meditating in this way helps you with the problems you have right now – relationship problems, emotional problems, whatever. Thinking about impermanence and death cuts immediately the problems of desire or anger or jealousy; there is incredible peace immediately. And it makes you determined to practice Dharma right now, to not waste your life. It encourages and inspires you to make every action Dharma. This is a very powerful meditation.

If we do all the activities of every twenty-four hours with the motivation of bodhicitta, we will accumulate infinite merit. And not only that, every single action becomes a cause for enlightenment and every single action becomes a cause of the happiness of every sentient being.

In this way you can make your day-to-day life most meaningful, most rich. ☸

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