

How to Run a Dharma Organization

...You believe you are practicing Dharma your whole life, "I did this retreat, I did this, I did that", but nothing becomes holy Dharma. So without knowing what is holy Dharma and what are worldly dharmas your whole life becomes worldly dharmas, it doesn't become holy Dharma. The very first thing is that. You want to achieve happiness and want to destroy suffering but wander in samsara continuously without knowing the secret of the mind, the motivation that is holy Dharma or worldly dharmas. Dhammapada says if with bad motivation you talk to somebody what results is suffering, like an ox has to pull a heavy carriage: that is an example to give you an idea. I think for Westerners, my own view, I think it started during the hippie time, the explosion of hippies in the West many years ago. 60, 61, 62, 63, when?

Ven. Roger: '68.

Rinpoche: '68. The explosion of hippies in the West. Due to karma drugs happened, LSD happened, buddha grass happened, hashish happened, all those things happened. In the early times at Kopan, very, very long before we built the old monastery, even before that, much earlier when we were living in the Nepali king's astrologer's house. The king's father built it British style. Lama and I were living in a very small house inside the gate; when people came, somebody offered LSD, I think they put it in bread, Tibetan bread, the white round one, something like that, so Lama put it on the altar. Lama didn't take it, I didn't take it, somebody offered it in those very, very early times. Around that time in Nepal, Kathmandu, every corner you went round, Western people came out with pale and very dusty face because they were taking so much drugs. In the early times every corner in Kathmandu was like that, most people taking drug. That is the karma to change the mind, the karma due to the Buddha's blessing they renounced or were not interested in the Western material life, so then they came to India and Nepal to look for a new happiness, rather than a material life in the West with all the comforts, all the things. They preferred to live in the mountains, a simple life. Many of them met Hinduism because [in India and Nepal] the majority are Hindu so they went to Hindu ashrams, but according to their karma after a few days met with Buddhism, some after a few months or weeks, some after a whole life as a Hindu, it is due to karma.

For example, Roger went to India, to Rishikesh, where there were many saddhus, and one mentioned to him to go to Kopan. That is very rare, it was special because usually you want to keep people for your sect, you don't want them to go to another sect, that is not normal. Roger went to one saddhu, what is his name? His name is Tralababa. That is very, very, very interesting, I thought, that he mentioned Kopan. He sent Roger to Nepal, to go there to meet Buddhism, he said. So that is very, very special. Well I can't say who he is, he could be a buddha or bodhisattva acting as a Hindu saddhu, can't say. Normally a Hindu saddhu wouldn't allow someone to go to another sect, so must be somebody very special who guided Roger in the correct way. Depending on your individual karma, it is like that. Then Roger arrived in Kopan, he didn't know about Tibetan religion, and then after five or six years he recognized it, generally Lama Tsongkhapa's tradition, he didn't know the Gelug, it was like that. It is interesting. Which year did you become a monk?

Ven Roger: 1976.

Rinpoche: At what age? 1976 he became a monk. His age?

Ven. Roger: 26.

Rinpoche: At 26 he became a monk: not a monkey but a monk. Then Lama let him work in Samsara [the business in Kathmandu], for how many years? In Delhi Roger was spiritual program coordinator for two years, for the Tushita center in Delhi with Doctor Nick, then in Kathmandu with Marcel for two years he did business to help the monastery or Nalanda, he worked very, very hard. He worked very hard, coming back from Boudha to Kopan - had to walk up at that time, he had to try very hard to walk up, he made up his own story to inspire him to walk up to Kopan. Then Roger was one time working in Sydney, working for a business called White Crow, a cleaning business, and at the same time he started a center in Sydney, he was teaching meditation, for three or four years. When did you start working for me?

Ven Roger: 1986.

Rinpoche: What age?

Ven. Roger: 37.

Rinpoche: At the age of 37 he started to work for me, taking care of the FPMT centers, the people and students, up to now. So great.

One great example, one thing is, people can be very angry, emotional, negative emotional, many things but he always tries to solve it with peace, with patience tries to solve it even though other people are very negative, very impatient, very, very negative. He tries to solve it like that, helping the FPMT centers and students - there is no FPMT centers separate from the students. So that is what he does, a great, great, great help, a real Dharma organization run with compassion, not just running a company - you run a company with money not with compassion, if a mistake is made you kick the person out and get another person. We don't have money but it is getting better and better, it is run with compassion, that is a Dharma organization, taking care of people's minds.

You understand it is not easy to run the organization. If you are not good you can destroy the organization. If you are a very impatient person, if you are not practicing patience, not practicing compassion, you can destroy the whole organization. You can destroy a center, people coming together who want to practice Dharma and spread Dharma, but if you are the one who runs the FPMT and if you don't have compassion; also you need wisdom, not just compassion but wisdom of what is right and wrong, to be able to discriminate, to be able to advise, you have to have a lot of wisdom, not just compassion. Without wisdom you can suffer a lot, but of course the basic motivation is compassion for others, then there will be less suffering and problems in the organization. You have to have much wisdom, and patience, you need a lot of that, if you don't have it even if people are good in the center they can destroy the center, you can make a mess of the center then people don't want to join. You have to understand. Then you have to have karma, merit, good karma to help people: to advise, to help people you need karma, merit, much merit.

You collect merit with sentient beings, and here we are Buddhists so we have the opportunity to collect merit with the guru, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, you have to understand that. We have a most unbelievable, most unbelievable [good fortune], we are most unbelievably fortunate. Non-believers who don't believe in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, their only opportunity is if they have compassion, because their mind doesn't believe in reincarnation and karma, if they have compassion in their mind for somebody, a beggar or a sick person or an animal who is suffering, if they have the sincere mind of compassion and want to help they collect virtue with sentient beings, [even though] not with Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Wow, wow, wow, we have an unbelievable opportunity day and night, any time; crops grow only at certain times, but

the merit field creating the cause of this life's happiness, cause of all future lives' happiness, creating cause of ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara, creating cause of enlightenment - we have opportunity all day and night to create merit with the merit field, the guru, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, especially with the guru. It's like that all the time, day and night, from our side if we are not lazy or don't understand we have that opportunity all the time, day and night. To collect merit is so important. Now FPMT is getting better, better and better, so there is basically more understanding of Dharma and more collecting merit so it is getting better and better.

Colophon: Extract from Lama Zopa Rinpoche's teaching at Maitreya Instituut, Loenen, Holland, 11 July 2015 during the third session. Based on the extremely rough, unchecked, first draft transcript typed simultaneously with the teachings by Ven Joan Nicell, lightly edited by Claire Isitt.