

The Importance of Volunteers

[The center's existence] is due to the kindness of all the volunteers, all the directors, all the volunteers from the very beginning when we started the center. The center's present development is the complete result of everyone who served as the directors of the center, all the volunteers, all the people who served at different times: you, everyone, starting from the first director when the center started. Then from there, everyone, every director, everybody at different times, you helped. So from everybody's help, the present development comes from that. So I want to say thank you very much – billions and zillions and trillions of thanks (I don't know what comes after that!). So from the heart, really I want to thank to everyone.

You can see how the effort which you put into helping the center in the past was very worthwhile – the individuals from the very beginning, during the middle and including now, the present ones. You can see the result of your effort – the great benefit to the six types of sentient beings: numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, numberless human beings, numberless sura beings, asura beings, intermediate state beings; and this great benefit to the living beings in this world, and to those in this country in particular. All the volunteers can see the result of your effort – present and past. This is really something you can rejoice in, that great benefit for sentient beings, for the teachings of Buddha. Sentient beings' happiness: that explains why we need the center. Sentient beings' happiness comes from the teachings of the Buddha.

'Happiness' doesn't mean just the pleasure of eating food, having comfort and a house, and just temporary pleasures. House, eating – not eating the house! The comfort of having money and all that – not just that. I think even that comes from Dharma. Even studying at kindergarten, primary school, then college or university - that's just the outside condition. If the person has success, happiness, it all comes from merit, good karma, positive action. The intention, the mental factor that accompanies the principal consciousness. So that's karma. Karma's not outside; it's one's own mind. That happiness comes from virtuous actions, not non-virtue but virtue. So it came from Dharma. Happiness, even money, having comfort, came from Dharma, it came from virtuous action. Just now I described virtuous action, that is Dharma. People think happiness comes from money, but they don't know what the cause of money is. They think making money is from going to kindergarten, from kindergarten to primary school, then college, university. This general belief you have is that that's the main cause, but that's just a condition. The minute you decide to get a job, the minute you get, you're able to make money. But there are people who can't find a job for years, even though they're trying to get one. So those are conditions – they're not the main cause. The main cause is merit. So there are people who don't have education but have plenty of money. All their wishes bring success - all the wishes they think of, they're happening. No education, but still plenty of money. There are many people like that.

I shouldn't say it, but I think even relating to myself, using myself as an example, I don't recollect, I don't know how much merit I collected in the past – I have no idea. But in this life, due to your help also, collected merit. So collecting merit, so then able to be of some benefit to others in this world, a little bit more and more able to benefit in this world, benefit to others. So even just using myself as an example, I don't know about past life, but more merit you collect, you are able to see with your eyes can benefit, some benefit, not much, but some benefit to the world – little by little. It's the result of collecting merit, creating the cause.

So money came from Dharma – not Dharma came from money. Money came from where? Money came from Dharma, virtuous action. We have to know that. So merit, good karma,

Dharma is more important than anything else. Everything comes from that, you understand. This is one point I wanted to make.

So sentient beings' happiness, to receive the happy rebirth, and especially perfect human rebirth which has eight freedoms, ten richnesses, which has the opportunity to practice not just Buddhism, the four noble truths, basic teachings, not only that, the Mahayana paramita teachings, five paths, ten bhumis, then to achieve enlightenment by collecting merit – merit of wisdom and virtue for three countless great eons to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. Then due to great, great, great unbelievable compassion, you want to free sentient beings from oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to full enlightenment as quickly as possible. So then to achieve enlightenment for that reason in one life, then you practice tantra. Kriya tantra, Charya tantra, Anuttara Yoga tantra, Maha-anuttara Yoga tantra; first you want the life for a thousand years, and then achieve enlightenment in this life. Like that you can do by practicing lower tantra. Not just that, by practicing Maha-anuttara Yoga Tantra, in this brief lifetime of hundred years, a very short life, brief lifetime of degenerated time, to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, to be able to free sentient beings even quicker from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to enlightenment. So an opportunity like this, this perfect human rebirth, with eight freedoms, ten richnesses, is incredible, incredible, unbelievable, unbelievable, unbelievable. And for that you need the preliminary practice [of] not just morality, but pure morality just to receive the human rebirth; just to receive human rebirth, you need preliminary pure morality. Then it is mentioned that perfect human rebirth [needs] the practice of the pratimoksha vows, bodhisattva vows. It's not necessary to be an ordained person, but it means five lay vows, eight lay vows, eight pratimoksha vows, the one day eight vows, then the 36 vows, then the 250 vows, so things like that.

So far in Tibet the gelongma vows didn't happen, haven't yet decided the lineage of the gelongma vows, bhikshuni vows. His Holiness said the Theravadin bhikshus, the Chinese Mahayanists and the Tibetan, the heads - those who are learned and the geshe and the lamas who preserve Dharma, spread Dharma, the entire teaching of the Buddha, so if they all come together and then agree to give the gelongma vows, then it's okay. If they all agreed, then the Tibetan lamas would start to give gelongma vows. Until that, until all those three come together and agree, this won't happen.

So it is mentioned in the texts that those who practice pratimoksha vows, bodhisattva, tantric vows, taking those vows, living in these vows – not only practiced pure pratimoksha vows, but also those other vows. So we can see now how the perfect human body we have received is unbelievably precious because we can take those different vows, three levels of vows, and tantra practice. So how incredibly precious it is! So you need that – living in pure morality, the preliminary cause, and also charity, and dedicating the merits to receive the perfect human rebirth. So you can see now, we need the teaching of Buddha. Then also, not just to receive human body but to receive the perfect human body, it depends also on refuge. Not only protecting karma, which means abandoning the non-virtues such as the five negative karmas or ten negative karma, and then engaging in ten virtues. Not only that, to receive the perfect human rebirth also requires taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. Just to be born human doesn't require pure morality, taking refuge, but for the perfect human rebirth, I think definitely you need. So here, you can see very clearly, receiving perfect human rebirth comes from the teaching of the Buddha.

Then to receive ultimate happiness, liberation from oceans of hell beings' suffering, hungry ghost suffering, animal beings' suffering human beings' sufferings, sura beings' suffering, asura beings' suffering, intermediate state beings' suffering. So free forever; once we become free, free forever

– not like works of this life, samsaric works – from beginningless life up to now we repeat numberless times, like the waves of the ocean, never finished. Not like that. That’s why Dharma practice, no matter how difficult it is, once you actualize realization, conquer the delusion, it’s just one time, just one time. Achieving nirvana, cessation of suffering and the cause of the suffering – karma and delusion – it’s just one time. Once you achieve that’s it forever – it’s not something you have to do again and again. So no matter how hard it is to practice Dharma, it’s so incredibly worthwhile once you achieve that.

So ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara, again the fundamental path is the three high trainings – higher training of the insight, that depends on higher training of concentration, calm abiding; and that depends on the higher training of morality. So again here it comes down to that – morality. So that’s the basic path to achieve liberation. So even to achieve ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara forever, it [comes] from Buddha’s teachings. You can see that for sentient beings to achieve that comes from Buddha’s teachings, the three higher trainings.

Now enlightenment, peerless happiness, total cessation of the mistakes of mind – gross obstacles, gross obscurations and even the subtle obscurations, and because of that, then there’s complete understanding omniscient mind, the full realization – there’s nothing more to achieve, full realization, *sang-gye*, so that, comes from the root. On the basis of all that, the lower path, middle path, lower capable beings’ path, middle capable beings’ path, higher capable beings’ path, bodhicitta. Bodhicitta comes from great compassion, on the basis of renunciation. You need renunciation first. So again, all this comes from Buddha’s teachings. Sentient beings’ happiness, enlightenment, comes from Buddha’s teachings – the root is bodhicitta, great compassion.

So why we do we need centers? Why we need the meditation center is this. We can now see this very clearly. You need to learn this graduated path – the path of the lower capable being, middle capable being, higher capable being; sentient beings need to learn all that, in order to achieve all those different levels of happiness. It’s very clear how the sentient beings’ happiness comes from the teaching of Buddha. So therefore sentient beings need the center in order to learn all these teachings of Buddha, to cause this happiness, to achieve all this happiness up to enlightenment, free from oceans of samsaric [suffering], free from oceans of hell suffering, hungry ghost suffering, animal suffering, human beings, sura, asura for ourselves and other sentient beings. Wow, wow, wow, wow, wow. Then to bring them to full enlightenment, wow, wow, wow, wow. So you can see it’s of the utmost importance, the need for a center, a place where there are all the facilities.

Also from here you can understand how important is the teacher, who educates sentient beings, shows the path to all these different levels of happiness up to enlightenment, so the most, most, most unbelievably important. It’s like opening the eye. We have two eyes but it is really opening deep, most deep like an ocean, extensive to understand, opening the Dharma eye, the Dharma teacher who opens the Dharma eye, can you imagine! So you can see how so important that is – wow, wow wow, wow.

In Lama Yeshe’s book – Lama Yeshe, kinder than all the three time buddhas, because we don’t see three time buddhas in that nirmanakaya form, we only see paintings and statues, or written commentary or oral commentary. We don’t have the pure mind, we don’t have the karma to see, so they can’t give teachings to us in that aspect. But the virtuous friend who is the action of the buddhas manifests in the ordinary aspect according to our karma. ‘According to our karma’ means ‘according to our mind’s karma’, means ordinary aspect, the unsubdued mind karma, ordinary mind, so ordinary aspect, so that we can communicate, and that we can receive

teachings. So therefore, why the guru is kinder than the three time buddhas is like that, the reason is like that, why kinder than three time, numberless past, present, future buddhas is like that - because from others you can't receive teachings, but the guru who has manifested in an ordinary aspect according to your not purified, impure mind, manifested according to that so then able to be seen, able to give teachings, directly guide, bring to enlightenment, free from oceans of samsaric sufferings and bring us to enlightenment. So kinder than all the three time buddhas. So Lama Yeshe who is kinder than all the three time buddhas to me, wrote in the English notebook at Kopan, now I don't remember, recollect very clearly but being learned in Dharma and humble, that is the really, real learned one. At the same time humble - that's the real learned one. It's mentioned, written there. There's more I think, but the essence that I can recollect, written in Lama's note on the table.

So you have Geshe Chonyi, who can show the lower capable beings' path, middle capable beings' path, the higher capable beings' path, two paths to enlightenment, then also sutra, tantra, who can show the essence of lam-rim, but who can show the vast philosophy, with extensive teachings, who can explain, who can show. At the same time he himself is practicing. We call learned and pure - good heart and pure in action, pure in morality - those three things, very, very important. So you have a teacher like that.

So therefore Buddha's teaching hasn't gone like the sun setting, like the sun has crossed the mountain, not completely gone yet. Like the sun is still shining, so Buddha's teachings are still shining - not yet crossed the mountain, not sunset, not completely like that. So to meet such a qualified teacher like that is not easy. In this world you have to have good karma for that. You have to have a lot of merit for that, created good karma, a lot of merit in the past. Otherwise you wouldn't meet such a teacher. So that's something to rejoice about.

So that's the essence - how much the center is benefitting sentient beings, benefitting the teachings of Buddha. Then that very much depends on the teacher, and, of course, center students, members. The key thing is the teacher. So you have all this. This is the most unbelievable thing that you have in your life, that we have in life. I just talked about the teacher. How the tsa tsa is going to turn out very much depends on the mould - if the mould is clear or how good an artist [is making the tsa tsa]. So if there's a broken nose in the mould, then there's a broken nose in the tsa tsa, so like that. So it is mentioned in the teachings that how the disciple will turn out very much depends on the teacher. So therefore as you after studying for many years, you start to realize now. Many, many years you have been studying from Geshe Chonyi, then now you realize that this is more and more precious, now you realize it more and more, deeper and deeper. At the beginning even if this was explained, you wouldn't understand how important it is because you haven't experimented, hadn't learned Buddhadharma, so wouldn't understand much. But now you can see how it is important.

So therefore your voluntary work, your effort being director or member, or secretary or treasurer, any voluntary [work] that you did at different times, you can see now how great, how it is *so* important, you can see now. Not only benefitting the body, it benefitted the mind: the Dharma center benefits the mind. Also the work is done with compassion - you could also get angry but the idea is to serve with compassion! I'm sure not everybody does with anger. No, I don't think so. Even though you might feel anger, the idea is to do with compassion, to help sentient beings so much with compassion. It's not like running a company. Running a company is done by money. The person who doesn't do well, you kick out, and you get another one. You pay money because you have money. And the object is to achieve just money - not Buddhahood, not enlightenment, not nirvana - just to get more money; the goal is that - just to get more money. So working for a company is *totally* different than working for a Dharma

center. Working for a Dharma center - whatever work is done, the main thing is to reveal the teaching, to educate sentient beings, to reveal the teaching to sentient beings, and for the sentient beings to understand and to practice. Through that, then the cause of suffering, karma and delusion, get stopped, and then they achieve liberation, and then also full enlightenment by practicing bodhicitta with the direct perception of emptiness, then ceasing the subtle defilements. So I'm saying here, whatever work you do for the Dharma center – sweeping or whatever work you're doing – the main thing is for sentient beings to meet Dharma, to learn Dharma, to practice it so they achieve enlightenment, become free from oceans of samsaric suffering which they have been suffering from beginningless rebirth, and to achieve full enlightenment. So even if you're sweeping, even you're typing, whatever you're doing for the center is for that, mainly for that. It's very different from working for a company. Working for a company is mainly to make money. There's no question of compassion, loving-kindness –there's no talk about that. You forget about compassion, loving-kindness. You don't think about that, and you just think of money. The goal is to achieve more money.

Like in *Time* magazine, they ask “Who is the most successful person this year?” It's not “Who has created more merit?”, not “Who has liberated most animals?”, nobody's interested in that; “Who has generated more realization?” or “Who has subdued the mind more?”, generated more good karma, nothing like that. “Who has been the most successful person this year?” is about who made more money this year. Their picture comes on the cover of American *Time* magazine. So one man becomes so rich, but then his life is in danger so he is so afraid to go outside, afraid of being kidnapped by people or to be killed, so many problems, worries, dangers because of so much money. Then in his life, his daily life is very messy. One person was like that.

Now in the world how many problems there are – global warming, global problems, religions fighting problems, wow, wow, wow, wow, wow – so many problems. Then disease and famine, earthquakes, big number of people dying. Now all that, including global problems, country problems, and couple, family problems, individual problems: they all come from the mind, not from somewhere else, not from outside. All, everything came from the mind, from the unsubdued mind. “Do not collect any unwholesome action; create wholesome action; subdue one's own mind. This is the teaching of the Buddha.” Buddha said that. So all these problems – we're not talking six realms –hell, hungry ghost, animals, human beings, sura, asura – all that suffering came from the mind, but even the problems in this world all came from the mind, unsubdued mind. As I mentioned, liberation, full enlightenment comes from the subdued mind. So subdue one's own mind, this is the teaching of the Buddha. No other religion says that – this is only Buddhism. Subdue the mind. Subdue one's own mind; this is the teaching of the Buddha. So here in the world maybe scientists come to know that how much peace there is in the world depends on the mind, depends on good heart. So nowadays maybe scientists come to know, I'm not sure, about subduing one's own mind. To achieve liberation, the blissful state of peace, liberation from samsara, full enlightenment, to achieve that comes from your mind; it has to come from your mind, by subduing the mind, from the completely subdued mind, Also to immediately stop global problems, country problem, suicidal problems, family problems, your own personal problems, all come from the unsubdued mind. So then by subduing that comes all the peace and happiness, as I mentioned before, up to enlightenment – incredible, incredible.

So then the Dharma center which offers Buddhadharmas, not just a meditation center – there's all kinds of meditation, like a supermarket – so not that! The Dharma center which offers Buddhism, Buddhist philosophy, and especially the essence, lam-rim, which is particularly focussed to subdue the mind, to shape the mind. You need a meditation center like this. So this, our FPMT center is that. You have been learning the teachings more and more. So all this comes from your effort – those volunteers in the past, present, in the middle, then also the future

development depends on all the past and present volunteers. And then as I often said, this center of teaching Buddhism, practicing Buddhism - its essence is compassion to sentient beings, compassion to every single sentient being – not only your friend but no compassion to the enemy – not like that; compassion to *every* hell being, hungry ghost, animal, human being, sura, asura, intermediate state beings – compassion.

So the less good-hearted compassion there is, the more there will be problems in this world – globally, in the country, in society, in the family, in your own life; the more problems the less compassion, less good heart there is. The more good heart there is the more peace in the world, in the country, in society, in the family, in your own life. The more happiness there is if you have more compassion. So therefore one of the very basic things for the meditation center is compassion, teaching and practicing compassion. That's the most, most, most, most, most, most, most, most, most important. So as I used to mention in the past, whenever you have a conversation with somebody, always try to talk about, always try to bring in compassion, try to talk compassion to that person. Live with compassion, study with compassion, meditate with compassion, work with compassion, sleep with compassion, go to the toilet with compassion, eat with compassion. So that's really, really, really, really, really, really, really, good. That's the really, really, really, really good thing to do, to help sentient beings; to help you and to help sentient beings. That's the really, really best. Real happiness comes from that; inner happiness really comes from that. So then you can make family happy, you can make center people happy, you can make society happy, you can make the country happy, you can make people in the world happy.

Then difficulties, problems: whatever problem you have, use that in the path to enlightenment, use *that* in the path to achieve enlightenment, use that to practice bodhicitta. Practice bodhicitta, the precious thought of enlightenment. Then absolute bodhicitta. So any difficulties, any problems you have in life, use them to develop bodhicitta, or absolute bodhicitta. So like that you use it, you experience it for sentient beings: any difficulty, any problems - mental, physical, whatever, you use it for sentient beings, for numberless sentient beings who are experiencing suffering now, who will be experiencing suffering in the future, which means you take all those sufferings on yourself - instead of them suffering, you suffer. Let them have dharmakaya, happiness. So that's the quickest way to achieve enlightenment, to be free from oceans of samsaric suffering; the quickest way is sincerely dedicating yourself for sentient beings. Make sure to try to remember and practice that. We received many teachings on those things.

Colophon: Talk given to volunteers at Amitabha Buddhist Center, Singapore on 7 March 2013. Transcribed by LYWA, edited by Claire Isitt, August 2013.