

## How to Make Life Dharma While Studying

Rinpoche commented that:

“This is very, very, good advice for other monks and nuns [and all] who are studying at Sera, Kopan, Nalanda, Istituto Lama Tsongkhapa, etc. and for other students. This explains how to make the life Dharma. One thing is how to study but it’s also how to make the life Dharma.”

My very dear xxxxx,

Thank you for your very kind letter and sorry for the long delay.

Motivation is the most important thing. You must have a bodhicitta motivation. Not just wanting to be free from the lower realms and born in higher realms or to be free from samsara and achieve liberation. You must have the bodhicitta motivation for eating, walking, sleeping and studying Dharma - especially for studying Dharma. This is very, very important.

Now, the purpose of your life is for the numberless hell beings, numberless hungry ghosts, numberless animals, numberless human beings, numberless suras, numberless asuras and numberless intermediate state beings.

All your past happiness from beginningless rebirths, all your present happiness and all your future happiness including the ultimate happiness of nirvana and the ultimate happiness of full enlightenment are received by the kindness of the numberless hell beings, numberless hungry ghosts, numberless animals, numberless human beings, numberless suras, numberless asuras and numberless intermediate state beings. Therefore, they are most kind, most important, most precious and most dear. Not only that but they have also been your mother and kind numberless times. They have not only been your human mothers but all kinds of different mothers numberless times during beginningless rebirths.

All sentient beings have been your mother, but due to ignorance not knowing the Dharma they have been suffering in the oceans of sufferings of the hell realms, the numberless hell beings, numberless hungry ghosts, numberless animals, numberless human beings, numberless suras, numberless asuras and numberless intermediate state beings. Therefore, you are responsible to help.

You are responsible because you have received a perfect human rebirth just this one time and with that you can help sentient beings. You have met the Dharma that is extremely rare to meet and you have met the Guru revealing the unmistakable path to enlightenment while the majority of sentient beings have not, and due to ignorance they are experiencing the oceans of sufferings of the hells, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, suras, asuras and intermediate state. Just like you, they have not practiced and not realized the Four Noble Truths and therefore they have to experience the oceans of samsaric suffering endlessly. Just like that, there are numberless hell beings, numberless hungry ghosts, numberless animals, numberless human beings, numberless suras, numberless asuras and numberless intermediate state beings. If they are not guided they will have to experience all these sufferings ENDLESSLY. Now here, each one of them is numberless.

So you have the responsibility to free the numberless precious kind mother hell beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering, to free the numberless precious kind mother hungry ghosts from the oceans of samsaric suffering and to free the numberless precious kind mother animals from the oceans of samsaric suffering. It's the same for the human beings, suras, asuras and intermediate state beings. They have all been your kind mothers and you are responsible to free them from the oceans of samsaric suffering. You are responsible to free each one of them from the oceans of samsaric suffering and to bring them to full enlightenment.

You are responsible to bring the numberless hell beings to full enlightenment, to bring the numberless hungry ghosts to full enlightenment, to bring the numberless animals to full enlightenment, to bring the numberless human beings to full enlightenment, to bring the numberless suras to full enlightenment, to bring the numberless asuras to full enlightenment and to bring the numberless intermediate state beings to full enlightenment. Therefore you need to achieve enlightenment. Therefore you need to actualize the path and also to purify defilements and collect extensive merits. So therefore you are going to attempt to study.

The other thing is that you have to think that you are fulfilling His Holiness the Dalai Lama's wishes, Guru Chenrezig's holy wishes. That's the purpose of your life. That's why you are here. Think that you are fulfilling His Holiness' wishes in the daytime and at nighttime again and again. You are His Holiness' disciple therefore you are so fortunate. When you study and practice day and night by thinking that you are fulfilling the Guru's wishes it makes the most meaningful life: you are doing the greatest purification, you are collecting the greatest merit and you are also ripening your mind—this is the quickest way to open your mind and have realizations so that you can understand what you are studying.

So it is very, very, good to think about obtaining the Guru's advice as the purpose of your life. This way you don't waste your life: you are always practicing Dharma and because everything is done with bodhicitta and following the Guru's advice it all becomes the cause of enlightenment day and night. This way you can see how fortunate you are and that what you are doing is the way to help the six realms' sentient beings. So you are living a really meaningful life. And this way your mind is always happy. You are always happy whether you can understand what you are learning or not because you are living with bodhicitta, collecting merits filling the sky all the time and following His Holiness' wishes. So you are very happy every day and especially when you die—VERY, VERY, VERY, VERY HAPPY.

It might useful if you practice *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga*. *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga* is seeing your Guru as oneness with Lama Tsongkhapa. It has the special advantage that it helps to develop the seven types of wisdom: great wisdom, clear wisdom, quick wisdom, profound wisdom, teaching wisdom, debating wisdom and writing wisdom. This is the common meditation. Then there is the uncommon meditation. I started to give the lung for the uncommon meditation to some Chinese people in Dharamsala but I did not finish it. Even if it is not possible for you to do the uncommon meditation still you can do the common one. For example, if you are going to do three malas of *mig-tse-ma* mantra then do two malas to purify all the negative karmas collected with the Guru since beginningless rebirth and do one mala to receive the wisdoms. This is a very good practice to change your mind so that your mind becomes Dharma and the Dharma becomes the path and the path

becomes free of obstacles to achieve liberation and full enlightenment. So it is very good to help your studies.

*Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga* has nine benefits:

1. It establishes the very root of all happiness for all the good things from this life up to enlightenment.
2. It makes all the teachings you listen to, reflect and meditate upon effective to subdue your mind.
3. You will not experience outer, inner or secret obstacles.
4. You will be protected from harms such as paralysis due to outer and inner pollution.
5. You will not be harmed by different types of spirits: nagas, king or *tse*.
6. You will be able to accomplish exactly what you wish.
7. You will achieve the great, clear, quick and profound wisdoms and the wisdoms of explanation, composition and debating.
8. You will meet with Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings life after life.
9. At the time of death you can be born in Tushita, the pure realm of Lama Tsongkhapa.

Then every day, day and night, pray,

May I be like Lama Tsongkhapa all the time and in all the lifetimes offer extensive benefit to sentient beings and to the teachings of the Buddha.

That's a very important prayer. It helps you to become learned, pure and good-hearted like Lama Tsongkhapa as much as possible.

Yes, studying the Dharma is good and studying the extensive scriptures is good. Yes. But that doesn't necessarily mean that your study and debate becomes practicing Dharma. For all these things to become Dharma, your mind has to become Dharma. If your mind becomes Dharma, then everything becomes Dharma, even eating, walking, sitting and sleeping.

So in the Gelugpa tradition we have the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment. Buddha revealed the Hinayana teachings, the Mahayana Paramitayana teachings and the Mahayana Tantrayana, or Vajrayana, teachings. All of this comes in the Kangyur that has more than one hundred volumes taught by the Buddha and in the Tengyur that has more than two hundred volumes taught by the pandits. Now all of this is included in the lam-rim, the graduated path of the lower capable being, middle capable being and higher capable being. And all of the lam-rim is included in the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment—renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness.

Renunciation means renouncing attachment to this life, such as the eight worldly dharmas, and renouncing the future lives' samsara and samsaric perfections. Both of these renunciations count as one in Lama Tsongkhapa's tradition, *The Three Principals of the Path* (*lam gts'o rnam gsum*). In other traditions they are explained separately as renouncing this life and renouncing future lives. In the Nyingma tradition they have *The Four Aspects that Change the Mind* (*blo ldog rnam bzhi*) and in the Sakya tradition they have *Cutting the Four Clings* (*zhen pa bzhi brah*) by Manjushri or Sakya Pandita:

If one clings to this life, one is not a Dharma practitioner.

If one clings to samsara, it is not renunciation.  
If one clings to one's own purpose, it is not bodhicitta.  
If one clings to the I, it is not right view.

Also Lama Dromtönpa would go walking in the bushes from time to time. One day there was an old man sitting and meditating. Dromtönpa said to him, "What are you doing?" And the old man said, "I'm meditating." Dromtönpa said, "It's good that you are meditating but it's better to practice Dharma." Then the old man started to read texts because he thought that was what Dromtönpa meant by practicing Dharma. Then Dromtönpa came and said, "What are you doing?" The old man replied, "I'm reading texts." Dromtönpa said, "It's good that you are reading texts but it's better to practice Dharma." Then the man started to circumambulate the temple thinking that must be Dharma. Again Dromtönpa asked him, "What are you doing?" The old man replied, "I am circumambulating the temple." Dromtönpa said, "It's good that you are circumambulating the temple but wouldn't it be better to practice Dharma?" Only then did the old man finally ask Dromtönpa, "What do you mean by practicing Dharma?" And Dromtönpa said, "Renounce this life."

As I explained before, to renounce this life means to give up attachment in all four traditions. If you do this then all your studying, debating, and even walking, sitting, sleeping and eating, everything becomes Dharma. Otherwise none of these things become practicing Dharma. Even if you are a lharampa geshe and you are the only expert in sutra and tantra in this world it doesn't necessarily mean that you are practicing Dharma.

Then each time you go to study and take classes or to debate always remember the motivation of bodhicitta. When you debate your motivation is bodhicitta—to achieve enlightenment and destroy the ignorance of yourself and others. If your study and debate don't become Dharma then it is non-virtue. Then everything becomes non-virtue and the result is the lower realms. For example, in Tibet there was even a Ganden Tripa who was born as a cow and the cow went and sat on the throne. This happens when your actions don't become Dharma.

One particular thing is that of course when you go for teachings you should generate strong bodhicitta wanting to free the numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, suras and asuras from the oceans of samsaric sufferings that they have been experiencing from beginningless rebirth and bring them to full enlightenment. Think,

I must achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible therefore I'm going to take the teaching.

Then when you are taking the teachings, whoever the teacher is, think,

I am receiving this teaching from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, Tara, Manjushri, Guhysamaja, Yamantaka, Heruka and all the numberless Buddhas. I am taking these teachings from all of them.

Then think,

Each word I listen to frees me from the oceans of samsaric suffering by leaving an imprint on my mind and causing realization. Even more than that, each word frees me from the oceans of each realm's suffering and brings me to full enlightenment and that means I can free every single sentient being—every single hell being, hungry

ghost, animal, human being, sura and asura—from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to full enlightenment. Therefore each word I listen to is SO precious and wish-fulfilling. Each of these words is so precious for me.

That might also help you not to fall asleep and not to get distracted.

Okay. Thank you very much.

With much love and prayers  
Lama Zopa

*Colophon: Dictated to Ven Sarab Thresher, Tushita Meditation Centre, Dharamsala, India. May 2012.  
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