

Thank You and Rejoice!

All my dear brothers and sisters,

I just want to explain simply how meaningful it is that we have Dharma centers so that we can help so many sentient beings while they have this most precious human body by awakening them to the unmistakable causes of happiness and suffering through explaining the Buddha's teachings on karma, which is our experience, not merely belief. By offering this education we open their lives to all happiness - not just that of this life, but that of future lives and the ultimate happiness of liberation from samsara and the peerless happiness of full enlightenment.

How fortunate and happy I am! How fortunate and happy we are!

We awaken sentient beings by explaining what compassion is, the need for compassion and how to develop it. This causes them to achieve the peerless happiness of full enlightenment and enlighten numberless other sentient beings by ceasing all their defilements and completing all qualities.

How fortunate and happy I am! How fortunate and happy we are!

We awaken sentient beings by teaching them the basis of Buddhism - the two truths, conventional and ultimate - and educating them as to the very nature of the I, aggregates and all other phenomena, which are empty. By understanding emptiness, sentient beings can understand the conventional truth of how things exist, not according to the hallucinating mind but according to wisdom, which accords with reality.

This offers sentient beings liberation and gives them the confidence that they can definitely achieve ultimate freedom through studying the teachings and meditating on them, thus developing and actualizing the wisdom that directly ceases all gross and subtle defilements. Developing the ultimate wisdom realizing emptiness - the only wisdom that directly separates gross and subtle defilements from the mental continuum - gives sentient beings the inconceivable freedom of achieving full enlightenment and cessation from all suffering.

How fortunate and happy I am! How fortunate and happy we are!

In this way we open sentient beings' ultimate wisdom eye by awakening them to how samsara and its pleasures are only in the nature of suffering. We inspire them to free themselves from the oceans of sufferings of the hell, hungry ghost, animal, human, sura and asura realms and achieve the ultimate, everlasting happiness of total liberation. Thus we liberate them from the prison of samsara; we release them from samsara's cage, bound by delusion and karma from time without beginning. We also liberate them from the pleasures of samsara by awakening them to how these pleasures are only in the nature of suffering; how samsara - the desire, form and formless realm aggregates - is only in the nature of suffering, being caused by karma and delusion, the impure mind, contaminated by the seed of disturbing thoughts. All realms of samsara are in the nature of pervasive compounded suffering.

We awaken sentient beings by giving them the opportunity to listen to the teachings of the Omniscient One, our kind, compassionate Guru Shakyamuni Buddha; to reflect and meditate on the teachings they have heard; and actualize the path.

Giving them the opportunity to listen to and reflect and meditate on the teachings on the four noble truths gives them a clear understanding of what liberation really is and shows them the path to achieve it. We educate them to avoid the experience of not just the suffering of pain and the suffering of change (samsaric pleasure) but also to free themselves forever from the fundamental suffering, the basis of the other two, pervasive compounding suffering, thus giving them a complete definition of liberation and how to actualize it.

How fortunate and happy I am! How fortunate and happy we are!

We educate the most kind, precious sentient beings in the tantric path - secret mantra; Vajrayana - liberating them from all suffering and its cause and bringing them to full enlightenment not only quickly, but in the very quickest way.

How fortunate and happy I am! How fortunate and happy we are!

We cause sentient beings to meet a spiritual guide - a qualified guru who shows them the whole path, lives in the practice of the higher training of morality, elucidates the complete path to enlightenment without mistake, and guides them to liberation and full enlightenment.

How fortunate and happy I am! How fortunate and happy we are!

We not only give sentient beings an extensive, clear understanding of sutra and tantra but also educate them in the lam-rim - the arrangement and gradual practice for one person to achieve enlightenment that integrates the entire 84,000 teachings of the Buddha and makes it very easy for sentient beings to go about gaining enlightenment without any confusion.

How fortunate and happy I am! How fortunate and happy we are!

Thus the Dharma center plays a most important role by taking responsibility for the peace and happiness of all sentient beings, particularly those in this world.

How fortunate and happy I am! How fortunate and happy we are!

Thank you very much to the director, teachers, all precious members and organizers, all pure students, daily meditation practitioners, those who serve with great devotion the teachings of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and all sentient beings.

With much love and prayers,

Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Colophon: Dictated to Ven Holly Ansett in Maitreya Institute, The Netherlands on 30 August 2004 as the foreword for the magazine celebrating the new building for Amitabha Buddhist Center, Singapore. Edited by Nick Ribush and lightly by Claire Isitt.