

The Purpose of the Center Building

Good morning everybody!

We have this unbelievable, incredible opportunity that we have received this precious human body which is extremely rare to find yet we have found it, we have achieved it this time by having made prayers in the past over so many lifetimes and practiced pure morality, which is not easy, which is very difficult. It is extremely difficult and there are many obstacles to doing that yet now this time we have achieved this precious human body. We have Buddha nature, our nature of mind which is clear light, and have the potential to be fully enlightened.

However much heavy suffering there is in samsara, you can be free from that by ceasing its cause, delusion and karma. These are not independent, they are dependent arising, they exist by depending on causes and conditions and therefore can be eliminated. That's the logic, that's the scientific reason and the proof, proved by the meditators who practiced correctly, who actualized the path as Buddha has revealed it, and as he himself actualized the path and achieved full enlightenment by ceasing all the gross and subtle defilements, mistakes of the mind.

So now here we have this unbelievable opportunity, especially that we can use our Buddha nature by having found this precious human body, have met BuddhaDharma, and especially have met the complete path to enlightenment, not just a path to some realization or some kind of level of peace or happiness, not just that, but have met the complete path to enlightenment so that you can become fully qualified and able to liberate numberless other sentient beings who want happiness, who do not want suffering. You can liberate them and bring them to full enlightenment, to peerless happiness.

This is due to the kindness of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, who for three countless great eons sacrificed his own life, his body, his family. He was born as a king, he purposely took birth as a king, you see, and then left all his wealth, family, children, everything, because he most cherished other sentient beings. Not just one time but for three countless great eons he sacrificed for us, for us sentient beings, to liberate us from the oceans of this samsaric suffering, from the oceans of hell beings' suffering, from the oceans of hungry ghost sufferings, from the oceans of animal sufferings, from the oceans of human being sufferings, sura, asuras, all these oceans of suffering - to liberate us from all this. And not only that, he made prayers and practiced morality for three countless great eons, with a lot of effort. And practiced patience - we can understand that it's not easy to practice patience, everybody knows, even though you know the meditation technique, even though we know it well intellectually, practicing patience is not easy. When somebody disturbs you or does something against your attachment or your self-cherishing thought, you see how difficult it is to practice patience. Anyway, for three countless great eons he practiced patience, perseverance, wisdom, and so forth, and completed the two types of merit, the merit of wisdom, and the merit of virtue. The merit of virtue causes the rupakaya, and the merit of wisdom causes the Dharmakaya. He practiced this for us sentient beings, for every one of us, for every single insect that we see, worms, and so forth. The Buddha revealed the 84,000 teachings, the remedy for the 84,000 delusions, all three levels of teachings according to the level of the mind of sentient beings. So this is unbelievably kind, so kind. Shakyamuni Buddha is like our father, mother, everything. So, I am going to offer a scarf to Buddha, so

everybody should that this is your offering of a scarf to Buddha, to kind, compassionate Guru Shakyamuni Buddha.

Every single happiness we experience, every single merit we collect, every single virtuous thought which arises, everything is due to Buddha's kindness, Buddha's actions. And then exactly the same as I said about Buddha, we have His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Compassionate Buddha in human form to guide us in this world. It is exactly the same. His Holiness benefits the whole entire teachings and in particular the great vehicle teaching, Mahayana Buddhism, which came from India, from Buddha, India, it was not just created by Tibetan lamas in the caves or by eating tsampa! The Dharma understanding that we have and the opportunity we have to purify and collect merit every day, by reciting a lam-rim prayer, whichever it is, short or long, every day reciting the prayer of the graduated path to enlightenment, by reciting that we are mindfully planting the seed of the whole path to enlightenment within a few minutes, which brings you closer to enlightenment each time. So this is by the kindness of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who is able to spread the Dharma like the sun rising in all the different parts of the world and where there has been no Dharma, totally dark from beginning with no light of the Dharma, now they experience Mahayana teachings due to the kindness of His Holiness, his compassion, wisdom.

So everybody please, we offer together to His Holiness, okay. So this is everybody's[scarf]! Also this scarf belongs to every hell being, to every hungry ghost, every animal, every worm, insect, bird, cat and dogs, all the human beings, sura beings, asura beings, so on everyone's behalf we offer to Buddha, His Holiness.

As it mentions in the lam-rim teachings this soft light divine scarf which I offer to your indestructible vajra holy body, with my indestructible devotion, by this merit may I and all sentient beings achieve the enlightened beings' vajra holy body. So we dedicate the offering and we can think that even though we are offering to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Shakyamuni Buddha's statues, we think that this is all the guru, all the ten direction buddhas, all the Dharma, all the Sangha, all the ten direction statues, stupas, scriptures, all the Buddha's relics in the world, all the holy objects in any universe, so this is everything. With that meditation then we offer and we collect merit having made offering to all the ten directions Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, ten directions statues, stupas, scriptures, everything, we collect numberless causes of enlightenment, numberless causes of liberation from samsara, numberless causes of happiness, so no question about success in this life - without thinking about it, without looking for it, it will happen by the way.

May oneself, one's own family members, all of us here become only like Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, like your vajra holy body, like your pure land, like your holy entourage, like your holy name that liberates sentient beings, planting seeds to cease all the defilements, gross and subtle defilements, brings to full enlightenment. So by having made the request to you, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, wherever I am, may the family or people around in whichever universe, world, country, place, house, wherever one is, just by that may all the sentient beings living in that universe, world, country, place, house get their negative karma immediately purified, may they never ever get reborn in the lower realms, may all their sicknesses immediately get cured, cancer, AIDS and so forth, whether curable or incurable, may it immediately get pacified, may they be healed and free from spirit harms and find faith, find understanding. Faith comes from wisdom, so may they get faith understanding the

Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, karma and then be able to actualize loving kindness, compassion, may bodhicitta develop in everyone's heart. So just by yourself being around the family and whatever, just by being in this world, may I be able to benefit everybody naturally like that, like when just one sun rises, its beams cover the world and eliminate darkness, so like that. And then may I achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible and may war, famine, disease, torture, poverty, sicknesses and danger of fire, water, air, earthquakes, wherever this happens may it be stopped immediately. And may nobody in this world experience all these problems, forever. So make this prayer to Buddha, so that yourself being in this world may be able to help, be able to benefit naturally.

Thank you very much

So this morning after sitting on this unbelievable throne, I think my good karma (I have a very small amount, very small merit), so I think it's finished after sitting on this throne! My small good karma is finished, decreased by sitting on this unbelievable throne! You may collect merit but from my side the small good karma becomes less, runs out!

Normally as you know when you sit on the throne at the beginning of a teaching you prostrate. I didn't prostrate! You visualize the merit field, all the lineage lamas of the teaching, including Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, the whole entire merit field on the throne then you do prostration, then you sit down and by snapping your fingers, remember impermanence, death. So there are two reasons for snapping your fingers – one is to remember impermanence and death so that attachment, arrogance, pride don't arise. If you remember impermanence and death, that all this, including this throne, your own life, that death can happen at any time, so that is very powerful for us ordinary beings' mind, to keep the mind purely in Dharma and protect it from pride and attachment and so forth, from the concept of permanence of this life, which cheats us all the time, doesn't allow us to practice Dharma and to gain realizations, liberation, enlightenment. The other reason for snapping one's fingers is it reminds of emptiness, that you are empty and also that all phenomena are empty. It reminds us of emptiness because this sound exists by depending on causes and conditions and is merely imputed by mind, so therefore it is empty of independence. So using this [finger snapping] as an example then you look at it, you see yourself empty, the whole thing is empty. It doesn't mean that it doesn't exist, you are not thinking that there is no throne there but thinking that while the throne is existing, it is empty. While the I is existing, it is empty. It is empty of that which never existed in the past, never came into existence, the independent I or throne never existed before and is totally the projection of your own ignorance. So that real I or the real throne, which means existing from its own side, so we are meditating, looking at it as empty. You are not looking at something which exists and then making it empty. Of course I tried but my meditation is very berserky, my meditation is Mickey Mouse, trying to think about impermanence, but Mickey Mouse meditation! I think it's still helpful, even though it is Mickey Mouse. So all this is merely labeled by mind, so therefore it is empty of existing from its own side. Your ignorance projecting inherent or independent existence made everything appear real, through one's own ignorance everything, the whole entire life, all the 5 senses, 6 sense objects, appears real.

So first I want to pay homage to Buddha, the Compassionate Buddha, His Holiness, the guru. At the moment many of us, like myself, our mind is so obscured we cannot see Buddha, so we cannot receive teachings directly from Buddha. But you can receive teachings

directly from the guru, who manifested in human form, in ordinary form, having sufferings and so forth, showing that aspect which appears according to one's own mistaken, obscured mind. In this form you can receive teachings, advice and the guru can guide you directly. So therefore in the great vehicle teachings of Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism, the great vehicle sutra teachings and the great vehicle secret mantra, Vajrayana teachings, it says that the guru has the same qualities as the Buddha, but the guru is kinder than all the buddhas. So therefore we offer the scarf first to the guru, then Shakyamuni Buddha, as the guru in qualities is the same [as the Buddha] but is kinder to us. At Kopan Monastery in Nepal, when we built the Chenrezig gumpa I made a mistake, I offered the khata to Buddha first then offered to the guru. Geshe Lama Konchok was there, you know, whose incarnation came to Singapore, and Geshe-la was very alert, very careful, you see, did not make mistakes, so then when I offered the khata (scarf) to the altar of Buddha, then afterwards to the guru, although they were outside at the door I heard Geshe Lama Konchok telling Lama Lhundrup, the abbot of Kopan, "oh, now inauspicious". Geshe Lama Konchok said that because I offered the khata first to Buddha at the altar then afterwards to the guru. There are many other stories like that, relating with yogis like the great yogi Naropa.

So now I would like to pay homage to the Compassionate Buddha, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, then Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Then I would like to pay my homage to the masters here. I would like to pay homage sincerely from my heart to them, their full dedication, their service to the teaching of the Buddha and to sentient beings all the time, day and night. Today while they are so busy, you see, they were able to make time to attend the opening of the center here, so thank you very much to the Sangha.

Then the architects who made all this so real, this building in which to purify all the defilements, negative karma collected from beginningless rebirths and to collect extensive merit, causes for happiness, liberation from samsara, enlightenment, everything, the cause of all happiness for ourselves and sentient beings. And is a place for attainment, in Tibetan called 'duk khang'. 'Duk' is attainment and 'khang' is house, so house of attainment. This is what it is, so for actualizing this, bearing so much hardship, despite all the difficulties, I would like from the bottom of my heart to thank them. Then I would like to thank all the committees, all the board members, all the members, then all the benefactors, for whatever contribution you did here, of time or money, did for many years to actualize this building. Also I would like to thank all the past directors, from the very first director - who was the very first director here? I am not sure, anyway, from there up to now, all the directors and all the members who offered service for the center for many, many years, I would like to thank everyone very much. So I offer my greetings to everyone.

And then everybody who is here, who are my brothers, sisters, gathered today for this celebration. For this most meaningful, happy celebration here, because everything here, whatever work is done, every single thing is to liberate numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to full enlightenment. Everything is for that, every single effort you put in, whatever it is, is to actualize all this, everything is for the benefit of that, to accomplish that goal, which is like the limitless sky, for each and every sentient being. So therefore what else can be a happier life than that, working for this goal, accomplishing this. It is not just working for your own happiness, so it made life most meaningful. However much hardship you went through, experienced, exhaustion of body

and mind, worry, all this you have gone through for this, the most meaningful, and I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Here, as I just mentioned, the purpose is to liberate sentient beings from oceans of samsaric suffering and its causes. So introduce true suffering, that fundamental teaching of Buddha, educate people in that and then educate them in the cause of suffering, which is not outside but which is within sentient beings' minds, that which is sentient beings' mind - the impure mind. So they can study about that, then learn how this can be ceased, learn that you can achieve total cessation. Then [they can find out] whether total cessation can be achieved or not, that it can be achieved because there is a path existing which is not only written in a book, written by great pundits and so forth, great yogis who made commentaries; not only in texts but that there are qualified masters existing even up to now. There are many qualified master who are existing, who not only have intellectual understanding, correct understanding of the texts, Buddha's teachings, the scriptures, like the Four Noble Truths, so the whole path to liberation, all that - they not only have correct intellectual understanding but also have experience. There are still many masters who have realizations and who can actually teach, show with experience. Qualified masters exist in this world. Of course there is the Buddha of Compassion His Holiness, but there are many other masters too. So therefore you can do it, therefore we can do it, you see, there is hope, it is definite we can do it - so as there have been numberless beings who practiced and achieved liberation, and not only that but achieved enlightenment, numberless beings from different countries both in the past and happening now, there are so many meditators who are attaining the path even now, so therefore we can definitely do it. We have the same human body, it is a question of learning, taking the opportunity to open your heart to learn, study and meditate and apply, just that.

When I came the first time to Singapore, I don't know which year, before that I came but only in transit and stayed in a hotel, you see, but then my next visit was after Lama Yeshe, my master passed away. On that visit there was one time I felt something like, not vomiting, but some feeling rising, going up to here, a feeling that if I went to Singapore that something of great benefit would happen. I felt that very strongly, you see. At that time there was no one I knew here, but there is one student from Indonesia, Dharmawati, Lama Yeshe's student who is very devoted, so she arranged things here in Singapore. At that time when I was here I felt by giving talks around, going to see some abbots and temples and just talking to the people here I felt that it would be so beneficial to have a Dharma center here teaching lam-rim, the integration of the extensive Buddhist philosophy, the stages of the path to enlightenment. To learn and meditate and practice, have realizations, and also learn philosophy, so I thought that if there is something like this, giving clear teachings, that will be so beneficial. Then by talking to some people I got the idea that it is very difficult to know how to begin Dharma practice, how to go about reaching enlightenment, I thought it seemed very difficult to get the answer for that, in general. I am not saying everybody but that was my general feeling. So then the first lam-rim teaching, the root of Amitabha Buddhist Center, the first lam-rim teaching was given in Mr Lee's house, the first teaching started there, given by Dieter, first grew from there. So it has been extremely beneficial - now there have been very qualified, great teachers here. There have been Western Sangha for many years, and then there was Geshe Dawa, there have been great Tibetan teachers, then Geshe Chonyi, who is a Lharampa geshe and who is fully qualified to teach having studied extremely well in the monasteries. Geshe Chonyi has now started FPMT's five year program, Basic Program, the extensive teaching of philosophy and also the lam-rim, the

integration of the 84,000 teachings of Buddha. So the students here have been enjoying so much, have been learning well and enjoying so much, so I am very happy about that, about people coming to give freedom to themselves, to open their heart to come to learn Dharma from qualified teachers. We create the conditions, the place to learn, so I think the main purpose is not the building, the main purpose is not the building, the main purpose is learning Buddhism, philosophy, the whole path to enlightenment, the whole entire teaching, the integration of lam-rim, to actualize the path, learning and practicing whatever you can in everyday life, so making yourself closer everyday to enlightenment. That is the main thing, yourself and causing other sentient beings to do that. And of course to do that you need the place, you need facilities, conditions, many holy objects to purify the mind, the easiest way to purify the mind and to collect extensive merit, through that then realizations come. So like that, you see.

If nobody learns the path to liberation, enlightenment, which Buddha explained in the teachings, then sometimes all these precious texts are kept in the library, stored up, and after some time nobody can explain them and they become useless, except maybe you make offerings to them. If nobody in the world can explain them, soon it becomes like this, which is very sad, and has happened in some other traditions. So there is a great risk of this if people don't put in effort to learn these sutras, tantra, the extensive philosophy teachings, how to achieve the path to liberation, enlightenment. So therefore education and practice is the most important thing for your own liberation as well as for all sentient beings' liberation, enlightenment.

Now I just want to conclude my talk, I am not going to go on and on and on, day and night, which I normally do! All the holy pilgrimage places, all the statues in existence, scriptures, all these, so the whole purpose of all these is to learn Dharma, to purify one's mind, collect merit and to learn Dharma, to understand Dharma and, based on the words and the meaning which you learn, to practice and to have realization in the mind, to achieve liberation, full enlightenment and to liberate numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to enlightenment. And that is the objective of our life, the purpose of our living.

Next you can understand how it helps world peace. Learning deep methods not only for the peace of this world but for the peace and happiness of all sentient beings, including ultimate happiness, liberation, enlightenment of all sentient beings. You have the method here to do that. So world peace is not enough, just not to have war, sicknesses, just for peace like that - that just comes by the way. So the other thing is for your own liberation, enlightenment and for the liberation, enlightenment of other sentient beings. So a combination of education and practice that is substantial. Without understanding Dharma, just praying on its own, realization doesn't happen. World peace depends on compassion, as does the peace and happiness of all sentient beings. Therefore we need to learn how to develop compassion. A group of scientists at Harvard University did an experiment on this and discovered that compassion is very important in life for health. They are not talking about enlightenment, they discovered how compassion is so important for health, even for your own health, they found it very, very important. They could not find some subtle heart disease in people who live their lives for others, think of others in daily life, so they found it is so important to develop compassion. So then they took Christian priests and others from other religions about how to develop compassion, and then there was disagreement, so then finally they

found out that Buddhism has the complete method for how to develop compassion. So anyway, to be short it is proved by science, through science.

The essence, the heart of the Mahayana teaching is compassion, so when you learn Abhisamayālamkāra, all these teachings, and lam-rim, the integration, which gives you all the stages of the path, how to develop compassion, so this becomes an incredible contribution for world peace without saying you are doing it, without talking so much, talking about world peace, instead you are doing it, here we are doing it. Learning and practicing in everyday life. So in this way you are not only bringing peace in your family, in society, in the organization, in the city, in the country, the whole world: not only this, not only in this world but once you develop compassion, because of the continuity of the mind the compassion continues, there is the continuity of compassion from life to life, so that means you are able to bring peace and happiness to numberless sentient beings, you see. There is continuity of mind, so continuity of compassion, so you stop giving harm to numberless sentient beings from life to life and benefit others. Then also aspire to develop wisdom, learning the path, have realization, then you can cease all the defilements and achieve enlightenment, so become fully qualified so that then you can enlighten other sentient beings. So that's the very key for the peace and happiness of all sentient beings - compassion, generating compassion for others, that is the essence, the heart of Mahayana Buddhism. And that is taught here.

So now we can understand how the teachings of Buddha are so important. The great bodhisattva Shantideva mentioned that the originator of sentient beings' happiness is the teaching of Buddha. The teaching of Buddha is the only medicine to heal sentient beings' suffering. So therefore offering service, building this temple, center for study, building holy objects, providing for the needs of the Sangha, the Dharma teacher, printing books, so all this, you see, is service to the teaching of Buddha. This is what you have been doing. So with this the teaching of Buddha can last a long time in this world. So this is what you have been doing, what Shantideva said, to help the teachings to last, to spread, to last a long time. The teaching is the only medicine to heal the suffering of sentient beings, to heal the cause of suffering, delusion, karma. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha explained in the Mindfulness sutra - so I will just mention that and then I finish! Creating the temple, holy objects, then arranging for the needs for the Sangha then your virtue in having done this always increases, for ten million eons the merits don't get lost. So if you have generated bodhicitta then while you are eating, sleeping, working the merit always increases, always increases day and night, by having generated bodhicitta your virtue increases all the time, while you are walking, eating and so on. Like that, by building a temple and all these things I mentioned before, the place for holy objects, supplying the needs of the Sangha, so once you do that, whatever you are doing, sleeping, eating, whatever, the merit always increases, so makes your life incredibly meaningful. So therefore we should realize this and should rejoice.

So I guess that's the end, so thank you very much. So again thank you very much - unbelievable, unbelievable, for so many years, all the hardships, all the dedications, so thank you so much.

Colophon: Speech by Lama Zopa Rinpoche at the opening of the new building for Amitabha Buddhist Center, Singapore, 19th May 2007. Transcriber: SF. Edited by Claire Isitt.