

In the footsteps of the Guru – Guru Devotion

Geshe Tenzin Zopa



“In general, Atiśa had seventy-two teachers from whom he received teachings on tantra and the Perfection Vehicle. Three teachers in particular revealed [the teachings of] the awakening mind Maitrī yogi, Dharmarakṣita, and Serlingpa. Among them it is his teacher Serlingpa that Atiśa held in highest reverence. The basis for this claim is the following : While Atiśa did not have reliquaries for the others, he had one with a silver parasol for Serlingpa; while there were no monthly commemoration rites for the others, there was one for Serlingpa; while Atiśa would place his folded palms at his heart whenever he heard the names of his other teachers, he would place his folded palms at his crown whenever he heard the name of his teacher Serlingpa; and while no tears would fall when Atiśa recalled the memory of his other teachers, this would happen the moment he recalled the memory of his teacher Serlingpa. Atiśa was once asked, “Though you have many teachers, why is that you have such depth of reverence for Serlingpa?” Atiśa replied, “It is from none other than my teacher Serlingpa that I received the awakening mind that equalizes and exchanges self with others”.

Mind-training, the great collection, The library of Tibetan Classics p.234

NB: Overall, Lama Atisha claimed he had 157 teachers. He received from Lama Serlingpa his nearing lineage of both Seven causes and effects and Self exchanging with others. At that time, it was very rare to have both such lineages and both nearing lineages. Rejoice rejoice rejoice!

Table of contents

Motivation.....	5
Introduction.....	6
I. A new GPS is needed in our life.....	9
A. Taking refuge in our Buddha nature.....	9
B. Exploring the uncharted territory of your mind.....	10
C. Discovering your Buddha potential.....	10
D. Pure being, pure world, pure happiness.....	11
E. Sustaining this awareness of our pure nature as the path.....	11
F. Awakening within this preexistent Buddha being.....	11
G. Being present as a pure being.....	12
H. Turning everything as a conducive condition to awaken.....	12
I. The best protection for our mind.....	12
J. Altruistic wholehearted motivation.....	12
K. What are the differences between teacher-student relationship and Guru-disciple relationship?.....	14
L. How to establish the relationship?.....	14
M. The conventional and ultimate aspect of the inner Guru.....	16
II. Who is Guru? And what does he or she represent?.....	19
Differentiation between Guru and Root Guru.....	25
How the Guru is at our side from life to life up to enlightenment.....	27
III. Defining characteristics of the teacher or the Guru to whom the students rely on ..	29
A. The ten qualities of the Mahayanist Guru.....	35
B. The importance of knowing those ten qualities and to take our time.....	43
IV. Defining characteristics of the student who relies on the teacher.....	45
V. The reasons why we need to rely on the Guru.....	52
VI. The Guru is kinder than all the Buddhas.....	54
A. How the Guru is blessing us constantly.....	54
B. How the Guru is looking after us constantly.....	55
VII. The benefit of relying on the Guru.....	57
VIII. How to cultivate the Guru devotion in thoughts and practice.....	61
IX. Examples of Guru devotion practitioners.....	69
X. How to overcome our impure view if the Guru manifests mistakes.....	72
XI. Meditation guide on guru devotion.....	75

A.	The Six preparatory practices	75
B.	The Seven Limbs Practice	78
	First: Limb of Prostrations	78
	Second: Limb of Offerings	82
	Third: Limb of Confession	83
	Fourth: Limb of Rejoicing	87
	Five: Limb of Requesting to Turn the Wheel of Dharma	89
	Sixth: Limb of Supplication	90
	Seventh: Limb of Dedication	90
C.	The last (6th) Preparatory Practice: The Request.....	91
D.	The actual session of Meditation.....	91
XII.	Collection of prayers in relation to the Guru	97
A.	Prayers not to give rise to heresy towards the Guru	97
B.	Requesting prayers to request the Guru to remain among us in all times	97
C.	Prayers to receive the blessings of the four initiations or empowerments – Guru entering your heart	97
D.	Absorbing the merit field of the Guru to receive blessings in our continuum.....	98
E.	Dedication prayers in relation to the Guru	99
XIII.	The Nine Attitudes of Guru Devotion	100
XIV.	Questions and answers.....	111
	Dedication	127
	Acknowledgement (in order of appearance).....	128
	Care of Dharma Materials	129

Motivation

*The foundation of all good qualities is the kind, perfect, and pure Guru
Correct devotion to him is the root of the path
By clearly seeing this and applying great effort
Please bless me to relate upon you with great respect.*

Lama Tsongkhapa

This book is a compilation of Geshe Tenzin Zopa's teachings about Guru devotion, based on the transcripts of his following teachings:

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- FPMT Australia, Lojong teachings, 3 April 2022
- FPMT Australia, Lojong teachings, 25 April 2021
- Chag Tong Chen Tong, Guru Devotion, Hobart Tasmania, August 2015

Any mistakes, errors, omissions are mine alone.

It is dedicated to the good health and long life of all Gurus, for their most precious teachings to always inspire us to take them as a path, for the benefit of all beings; starting with Geshe Tenzin Zopa who is restlessly traveling all around the world to share his deep and expansive scriptural and experiential knowledge.

May those teachings create the causes and conditions for all students to meet their karmic definite Root Guru so they can progress swiftly on this path and achieve full enlightenment for the welfare of all beings.

May all Geshela's most meaningful projects always be successful, starting with the Rachen Gompa Nunnery World Stupa peace.

May the FPMT and all its teachers, students, volunteers, members and their relatives see all their inner, outer and secret obstacles dispelled.

May Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche's legacy keep on shining all over the world.

May we all have the merits to actualize Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche's swift and unmistakable rebirth and reincarnation.

Deep gratitude to Tenzin Phuntsok Sherpa who kindly agreed to check the manuscript. May you always find the most conducive and auspicious conditions on your path all the way up to enlightenment!

Tenzin Kunzang

Introduction

In Lama Tsongkhapa's tradition, especially in the tradition of Lam-Rim, Lama Tsongkhapa highlighted one subject within the instructions to be learnt: the subject of Guru devotion. One of the most important knowledge areas, one of the most important instructions and one of the most important practices, among all the stages of the path, is relying on the Guru, the Guru devotion, and the Guru yoga practice. The main reason for that is as a spiritual seeker, as a follower of the Dharma, if the practice of relying on the spiritual teacher goes wrong, then the entire rest of the journey of the spiritual path will go wrong. If relying on the spiritual teacher goes right, then the rest of the development of the different stages of the path will go right.

In other words, if relying on the spiritual teacher is well or purely established within our mind stream, then the realizations on the rest of the stages of the path including the realization of the resultant enlightenment will easily be obtained. If the relying on the spiritual teacher did not mature, did not develop fully, correctly in our mind stream then whatever stages of the path you are practicing, even Tantra, the realizations of the path, and the realizations of the resultant path, the Buddhahood or the liberation will never come in one's way.

That is why, Lama Tsongkhapa presented Guru Devotion and the practice of the Guru Yoga as the "root of the path". Lama Tsongkhapa even named its condensed Lam-Rim "The foundation of all good qualities" referring to the spiritual teacher, the reliance on the perfect spiritual teacher, which serves as a foundation of the rest of the mandala, the rest of the celestial enlightenment in our system.

The first practice in relation to Guru Devotion is to train our heart to see our spiritual teacher as a Buddha, as no different than a Buddha. The intention of the composers of the Lamp for the Path, the Middle-Length Lam-Rim or any gradual stages of the path, is to answer the ultimate intention of the spiritual seeker, which is to achieve Buddhahood for the benefit of the rest of the numberless sentient beings. Those spiritual seekers may be in different stages.

Those who are at the beginning, even though their ultimate goal is Buddhahood, at the present time they need to first secure higher rebirths in future lifetimes, such as actualizing precious human rebirths, by overcoming the limitations of the 3 Hell Lower Realms, then by engaging in the practice of Refuge, practice of Karma, to continue to pursue their ultimate goal in future lives. Then, though certain practitioners' ultimate goal is full enlightenment; at that very stage, they have understood the limitations of the 6 Realms of samsaric existence and by engaging in the practice of the 4 Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, the practice of the Twelve Links of Interdependent Arising, practice of Emptiness, practice of Selflessness, they secure first the self-liberation, Nirvana.

Then, there are other practitioners who have already a greater courage, a greater immediate ambition, or inspiration, that even how hard it may be, even how many times I may fail to achieve full enlightenment, even if it takes countless eons of lifetimes, I will straight away cultivate the altruistic Dharma, the altruistic path, altruistic attitude such as Bodhicitta, altruistic wisdom of emptiness infused by Bodhicitta as a main body path. And there are also some individuals who carry an even more courageous heart and some sense of urgency in the concern of the rest of the numberless sentient beings' needs for a guide, for their ultimate benefit, they take the tantric path as the main body practice, and aspire to achieve full enlightenment within this very lifetime by taking the generation and completion stage, the main path of the Highest Yoga Tantric practice.

Wherever you are, the entire path has to be practiced, integrated, some as preliminary practice, some as main body practice, some as a resultant practice. Therefore, the way of presenting the Lam-Rim is intended towards the disciple whose ultimate goal is Buddhahood. Therefore, my point here is, because of the ultimate goal being Buddhahood, the main point of this teaching on Guru devotion is to train our heart in seeing our spiritual teacher as Buddha, sameness with the Buddha.

There are three main points to be kept in our heart along the training to be successful. The first point that is to be trained is to see the Guru as Buddha, as claimed by the Buddhas themselves. We have to train our heart to believe “yes my Guru is Buddha”. This claim was made by Buddha Vajradhara himself who said: “In future time I will come in the form of a Guru”. I will come in the form of a spiritual teacher, in human form to guide you. He prophesized that. So, it does not matter from the Guru’s side if he or she is really a Buddha or not, but for training purposes, you need to trust this belief.

Then, the second one is to train our heart through logic and reasoning, based on the scriptures, that the ten directions Buddhas will come to us in the form of ordinary beings to perform the deeds of the enlightened ones. Therefore, the Guru to whom you are relying on, he or she too is performing the deeds of the Buddha. The deed of the Buddha is to turn the wheel of Dharma, the deed of the Buddha is to inspire the followers on the spiritual path, on the path to enlightenment, path of liberation, path of virtue. By referring to that, training your heart to see that your Guru is doing the same thing that the Buddha would do. Your Guru is in a similar way also nurturing your heart to gradually gain renunciation towards Samsara, negativities, and to gain altruistic mind.

By comparing ourselves with, before we met the Dharma, we can see that we are already practicing the 6 Paramitas. When we examine our grasping towards object of attachment, of aversion, our heart is lighter. There is quite a progress in that you can witness, and this is exactly what Buddha would do. Even Buddha manifesting in Sambhogakaya form, or in Nirmanakaya form to you, there would not be nothing more than this. The ordinary appearance of the Guru who is revealing the Dharma to you, who is guiding you, who is inspiring you on the path, there is no extra work that needs to be done than what your current Guru is doing.

The third point is by protecting our heart by understanding the limitations of our heart. Our mind is hallucinated, by inherent perceptions, dualistic perceptions, delusional perceptions. Whatever we think, whatever we see, whenever our five senses engage with its object, we engage in a dualistic way; and on top of that, we engage in a delusional way. This habituation has been accumulated in our system from beginningless lifetimes, numberless lifetimes, so if we do not use our wisdom, if we are not mindful, it is so easy to see negativities in any object that comes in the perception of our mind. It is so easy to see negatively, impurely. There are absolutely no inherent negativities in any phenomena by its own right, there is no substantial impurity in any phenomena, but when the interdependent conditions of our impure or negative emotions project, negativities and impurities reflect back.

Therefore, in a similar way, even though the Guru may actually be a Buddha, if our mindfulness is not clear, by simply using our ordinary mind, even in the Buddha we may see false. Even though there is no false in the Buddha, we may perceive false. Like jaundice patients who perceive white mountains as yellow, someone who has never seen white mountains before will think white mountains are actually yellow. And they start to grasp as white mountains as yellow. Therefore, if we do not watch our minds even when relating to the Guru, there is a danger of reflecting our own limitations, delusions, hallucinations, and that is the way we may see false in the Guru. Therefore, even if your Guru is an ordinary being, for the benefit of the training, you always have to remember that “I am like a jaundice patient”. So, I have to make sure that I am using my wisdom to see the

reality of my Guru. I never should engage with my Guru with my usual ordinary perceptions, or ordinary mind. I have to be mindful and always see only the qualities in them, and only project teachings in the actions of the Guru.

The purpose of this training is to eventually come to a point where you actualize the resultant Buddhahood, yourself becoming one entity, as a result, with the Guru-Buddha. Oneself achieving the state of Buddhahood, the day when you achieve the stage of Guruhood. Relying on the Guru will cause that. By relying correctly on the Guru, you will achieve that, you will be able to deliver the actualization of Buddhahood. In order to do that, you need to achieve the realizations on Guru devotion. You achieve that when you do not need to rely on the proposition of Vajradhara, without relying on the reasoning, without needing to have a concern about the obstacles of the false appearances towards the Guru; but naturally always actualizing Guru in Buddha which is one, inseparable from your own Buddha nature. Your own ultimate nature and the nature of the Enlightened One and the nature of your Guru seen in oneness, and be able to sustain that in your system, without degeneration. Then you actualize the realization on Guru devotion.

When you actualize that there will not be any limitations in relating to the Guru in thoughts and actions, in your practice of Guru Yoga. You will be perfected naturally. Then, there will not be a moment when you feel separation from the Guru. You will be the ambassador of the Guru through your body, speech and mind. That to be achieved is called the Inner Guru. The purpose to achieve it as soon as possible, or eventually the Inner Guru is to achieve the resultant Guru-Buddha. Once you realized oneness with the Guru-Buddha, then the entire stages of the path will be naturally integrated, the realizations naturally delivered, and Buddhahood achieved. That is why the practice of Guru devotion serves as the root of the path.

But if the Guru Devotion is not intact you will never have a sense of trust in the words of the Buddha. Even if you aspire for Buddhahood, you will never have a genuine sense of trust, of confidence, because the trust in the words of the Buddha comes through the channeling of the Guru. Through the transmissions and the living example of the Guru, one can see how the Dharma really works and how we can really transform our ordinary mind.

I. A new GPS is needed in our life

So, we start in taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma, Sangha for those of you who already have refuge practices or have taken refuge in Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. If not, it is totally good, just simply acknowledge one's own true being, or innate being. The origin of your being is pure, unstained by all the afflictions. In Buddhist teachings, we label that as Buddha nature. Our inner being is not different than the Buddha. We conditionally, under other powers, like karma, and the conditions of the environment where we exist, such as this world, clouded our pure being, with different emotions, especially negative emotions. Just like clouds in the pure sky, in this pure space, they come into being because of different factors, like the moist, or other elements. But this sky, especially the space, by nature is luminous, is pure, is vast. It carries all the potential of the existence, because of that pure and vast infinite empty space.

Throughout our lives, we did not really try, or we were not aware of that pure nature, because of the overwhelming distractions of the environment; until the extreme where it is as if you only knew, only witnessed the clouded space, and you made a judgment: this is the space, this is the sky. It is like that. And after that, maybe you only stayed in the building, in your room, and never got the chance to see or even tried to look at the space and see how it really is, and forever, for the rest of your time here, you think that the sky is always clouded.

Similarly, even though our nature, our innate nature is very pure, because of being in this close-up environmental distractions, material distractions, sensual distractions, the hallucinational distractions, we live very much in that limited space. And we think that it is our nature, that whatever reaction that is manifesting in us, such as those ups and downs emotions, all the rest of the inconveniences in relation to our physical body, the environment, we think we are caught up in those lifestyles, and we apprehend and grasp to that. And that is it. That is me, that it is, that is my world: deluded, impure, subject to emotional downfalls, subject to suffering, subject to inconvenience.

And because of that, even when we get some impressions of rest by closing out the windows of the sensual mind to go to sleep, the first thing we do in the morning, is very much expecting, looking forward for the inconveniences, the insecurity, the uneasy path, uneasy world, uneasy life; and sinking into it, slipping all our life into that direction. There is not even a moment for us to really, genuinely, appreciate who we really are, to appreciate that Buddha being that you really did not manage to appreciate, you did not manage to recognize, following the deluded path. That is my situation and maybe many of you are in the same page, I hope not, but maybe some of you are there. That is why, a new guidance is necessary. A new GPS is necessary. A new GPS company. The GPS developed by a new company, not the old one.

So that is the company of the Guru. The product we must use. That is the real GPS. The new GPS, the new designed GPS. Newly designed to us, newly designed to me. But that is, in fact, the oldest most reliable GPS, the oldest one. That GPS and that company existed even before Samsara existed. Before all these false directional guiding distractions of whatever I said. Guru even existed before Buddha came into existence. Without Guru there is no Buddha.

A. Taking refuge in our Buddha nature

Let's first start by refreshing the refuge. Those who do not have refuge in Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, that is the refuge (gesture of showing the heart-mind), that acknowledgment is your refuge. It is so important. If you do not have a refuge, if you do not trust these words, this statement, at least try to investigate it, because there is no harm. Anyway, there would be some

benefits. You will not waste your time, and that would be one of the best discoveries one can ever discover: that Buddha within. Your being, being Buddha. That is called Buddha nature, or Buddha potential. After that, our job is just to clear away those clouds in this pure sky. It is about clearing away our misconceptions, our ignorance through wisdom. There are no physical capacities required, only through wisdom. In fact, the job is much easier than when we need to clear the rubbish bin; that requires quite some physical strength. For this, we just need to, at least, have a curious mind about that, at least some beneficial doubt. Usually, doubt is negative but here you need to have this specific type of doubt, the beneficial doubt.

B Exploring the uncharted territory of your mind

There are two kinds of doubts: a beneficial side of doubt and a non-beneficial side of doubt. Especially in the West, we always need to ask questions. So, this is the question I always ask: do I have the Buddha nature? Am I really in fact same as the Buddha? And how come that I do not see it? I must go and look for it. Westerners are so adventurous, they climb mountains, they dive-deep in the sea. Why do not you dive down here, why do not you climb that mountain? (gesture of showing the heart). You are so adventurous. I am sometimes surprised how many of you already explored the world, but still you have not explored yet this unexplored territory.

I remember long time ago; I watched a video. There were a few people in a hall very similar to this hall. And they hanged, not like those Yoga people down there (gesture of showing lower floors of the building), they hanged on a rope on the ceiling, and at the end of the rope, there was an iron hook, very sharp, thick. They pierced their skin, their back skin with and hanged themselves like that. Then, slowly, they were pushed, swinging like that screaming. Because they have tried all the excitements in the world, they have travelled everywhere, they have experienced all the adventures, until they become bored of their life, because there was no more excitement, until they must try that to excite them. Unbelievable.

It is far scarier than base-jumping, isn't it? They pierce their skin; it is quite a lengthy swing, and they scream. Once they go down: "wow. Life is worth living". If I had been in the same room, I would have introduced them to the most exciting thing that they had not discovered yet (gesture of showing the heart) and easy way, no need to feel the pain. Anyway. That is the most exciting excursion you can do. It is so interesting. It is like feeling your heartbeats stronger, deeper. Of course you must be ready, your heart must be strong. Because it is going to be super exciting. Your heartbeat is going to be very fast. Then, it will not get into the wrong way. As a result, your heart is going to be completely settled, most joyous, most peaceful. The discovery of one's own true nature, both the conventional nature, and the ultimate nature. Both are Buddha potential.

C. Discovering your Buddha potential

The first thing is that you will gain the deepest respect for yourself. When we have this deepest respect, we will not do anything that is harmful to ourselves. One of the most toxic harmful things we do to ourselves, is letting negative emotions express in our mental system. That is the most harmful thing that we are allowing to happen to us because we do not have inner respect to ourselves. If you knew your true value, you would stop allowing the arising of any negative emotions, depression, because that is the worst for the immune system of both our body and mind, our happy living, our peaceful life. It is so harmful: its immediate impact is to ruin our inner peace, the very moment any negative emotion arises.

Innately you never wish for even the slightest moment of suffering. Inside, that is our innate will. We never honor that, mainly because we do not understand who we really are. And we do not value our true being because of that. All these impure inconveniences that come in our way, to our eyes, to our ears, to our feelings, to our thinking; it is all because of not honoring the true being

of yourself. We are already identifying ourselves as a person carrying limitations, and that reflects into the outer world. It is very much the image in the mirror that you are projecting.

D. Pure being, pure world, pure happiness

The purer you become, the sharper your awareness in relation to your existence becomes and the purer and purer the outside world becomes. The more you are purifying your mind, the purer the object of your mind becomes. That is the whole thing. If we do not understand that: no matter how much we try to fix the outside world, including fixing our body, its physical aspect, we will not be able to achieve this inner aspiration of true happiness. Money will not solve the problem. Physical good health will not solve the problem. Youthfulness will not solve the problem. Never dying will not solve the problem. Forever living will not solve the problem. Having so many friends, complete family members will not fix the problem. Staying single will not solve the problem. Being in relationship will not solve the problem. Having children will not solve the problem. Not having children will not solve the problem. Traveling will not solve the problem. Eating will not solve the problem. Different types of food will not solve the problem.

As long as you do not acknowledge that, as long as you do not discover your pure being, nothing is able to make your life pure, make your life wonderful, make your life happy. Nothing will be able to do so. And we are the clue. We have been the Guinea pig. We have tried every external thing to bring fulfillment in our life. Did we manage it up to now? For me no. I also tried to save money. But after saving money, my stress becomes greater than before I had money. And I do have more troubles when I am healthier, rather than when I am sick. I ruin my body, my well-being when I am healthy, when I am strong. When I am sick, I take care of myself.

E. Sustaining this awareness of our pure nature as the path

This is the real thing. Whatever teaching we do, this must be taught. If this does not happen, then it is a down to earth conversation. If it is not discussed during the teachings, then even if the entire world becomes your Guru, you will still be a wild student. You will not be managed by anybody. Therefore, happiness or suffering is in the palm of your hands, your fingertips. It is nowhere to go and collect it. You just simply acknowledge that, be aware of that, and sustain that awareness. Sustaining that awareness is the way out. But first you need to acknowledge it. If you trust the words of Buddha, then you apply and try to implement that through your own day to day exercises, and you will experience the results.

If you do not trust the words of the Buddha, the words of the Panditas, the relics teachings, this wisdom coming from the Buddha's teachings, great panditas teachings, like Shantideva, Nagarjuna, Atisha; if you are not ready to trust their words, at least use your intelligence, your own logical reasoning to convince yourself. There are plenty of reasons, plenty of valid logics. Through your own ways, you will be able to make sense to this.

F. Awakening within this preexistent Buddha being

All the very serious Buddhist practitioners, maybe all the spiritual seekers, their ultimate goal is to discover that, to discover their pre-existent Buddha, their awakening Buddha, and awakening within, which is becoming a Buddha. How to awaken? Through a constant habituation of that concept in our mind: being aware and sustaining the awareness, until you are so accustomed to it, that it becomes like you, it becomes you. It becomes your word. This is normal thing, isn't it?

Now you have to make the same exercise constantly. From the very first day, you will start to experience genuine sense of settled-ness, a genuine sense of inner peace. With even one minute of exercise, that one minute, you will be present to yourself, to your family, you will be so different. And maybe you are already so peaceful, so charming, so lovable to the family; and now you become extraordinary to them, extraordinary, charming, because there is no limit. Ever shining.

You become more and more lovable, that itself is a way to gather conducive conditions to nurture that pure being, to awaken all those conducive conditions.

G. Being present as a pure being

Now, when you take a walk in the park, the same park, the same flowers, you will see them totally differently. That flower you have been watching yesterday, just now has growing up, maybe you never paid attention to that flower, you were expecting the blossoming day, you never really saw how beautiful it is while that flower was still closed. In the same way, there will be so many peaceful and beautiful interactions with anything and everything.

Now with yourself present in a pure being to that flower, now you see every single good characteristic of that flower. You will start to see everything as amazing. You will have such an amazing conversation with that flower. And because of that, I am quite sure, the flower will feel even much better. I think some scientists even made some research about it, isn't it? Flowers nurtured with love are much more beautiful, healthier, than flowers nurtured with a little bit of stress.

H. Turning everything as a conducive condition to awaken

With that kind of state of mind, the benefit to you is again accumulating unbelievable beneficial conditions to help to develop yourself, to awaken. Therefore, instead of just taking Dharma environment as conducive conditions, you can take the entire existence as a conducive condition to nurture your Buddha potential into fully awakened. And that is the true Dharma practice. Everything taken as a tool to transform yourself: perceived as being negative, impure, limited; into a pure Buddha being. *Cho* means Dharma. It means a tool to fix the broken engine. That is the meaning of Dharma. It is not just the Buddhist word that comes in the scriptures. You can make everything a tool to fix our whole habits, the unwanted ones into a pure habit, into the wanted experience.

I. The best protection for our mind

In Tibetan Buddhism, in the whole Buddha – Dharma, there are those “Yana”: Tantrayana, Mantrayana, ...it sounds very heavy for many. It sounds very alien, very secret, very hidden. But the meaning of “Tantra” is a tool to transform impure into pure. Mantra means protection to your mind. This is Tantra, Secret mantra. Protect your mind from impure perception, impure being, impure ideas. Whenever you engage in the training, you are practicing this training. How many rituals you do, how many this and that you do, if that is not happening, then you are not practicing Tantra. You are practicing Tantric rituals only; you are not practicing the actual Tantra. When you practice the actual Tantra, your mind must be protected from the impure perceptions. First, it is about yourself; then it is about the object directly related to your own perceptions; then to the entire beings, to the entire universe. That is about Tantra. And again, each and every one of us, we can practice right now.

J. Altruistic wholehearted motivation

Then, based on that refuge, you open your heart as big as possible. Do not worry about bursting your heart. You open your heart as big as possible for that heart to be able to express altruism. Just simply expressing from the depth of your heart, not just through the words, through the throat, from the depth of your heart, sincerely, wholeheartedly, and you mean it. And all sentient beings, not just a few people. May all sentient beings, as long as there is a sentient being, they are the objects for me, to cause them from temporary happiness up to the ultimate happiness of enlightenment, the everlasting happiness. Any miserable being is the object of my service to alleviate them. From how tiniest inconvenience they may be experiencing, whatever causes and conditions they may be going through, I will cause them to be free from those inconveniences and

abide them in the state of ultimate happiness of enlightenment, for that purpose, then I am going to engage in today's discourse. So that is the motivation.

Regarding the motivation, it is not just saying it and then it disappears. No. The moment you express that from the depth of your heart, the potential is already established in your mental continuum, it will never be wasted and one day, you will eventually be able to do that job, you will have all the capabilities for that job. Like Shakyamuni Buddha himself, at the beginning, he was just like us. Like Tara, at the beginning she was one ordinary lady, she had the same aspirations at the beginning and without a delay she became the Liberator. She liberated numberless beings, and she is still working, and she will never give up on even the worst person, she will never give up. Similarly, you will have the same capability, it is just a matter of time.

The subject of the Guru, in one way, is maybe the easiest subject. In another way, it is the hardest one. It really depends on individuals. It can be so difficult to practice. Just apprehending the idea can be so challenging. When we really need to integrate it into our practice, it is so hard. But in another way, so easy to understand and so easy to practice. That is the best practice. It is the yummiest practice. And how about the result? But if you do not know how to practice, if you are not appreciating this practice, it is so hard to receive the blessings of the Buddhist practice. So so hard, so difficult to progress on this path. When we can practice it, all the blessings, all the realizations on the stages of the path, happen just so fast, so easily. This practice is just taking care of all the rest of the practices, it is just like that. So, I want to suggest you to be in the group of those who are taking it so easy. This subject is so easy. This practice is so easy. This practice I am going to take as my heart practice. So, as auspiciousness, it is better to go with this team. Ok?

So, there is an outer aspect of the Guru, and an inner aspect of the Guru. The outer aspect of the Guru is conventionally referring to the physical human aspect of the spiritual teacher, the spiritual figure with whom you established, spiritual teacher and disciple - Guru and disciple - spiritual mentor and disciple relationship. That simply happened through the establishment of a commitment based on inspiration. You do not even need to meet in person, do not even need to receive teachings, just simply based on that inspiration, you just make the commitment in your heart whether the teacher knows that you are doing that or not, for your own benefit you establish that commitment. After that, come the cultivation of the Guru Yoga, the Guru - disciple relationship, fulfilling the meaning out of it, devoting to it.

The devotion is expressed in two different kinds of ways. One is subject to your faith. If there is no faith, there is no basis for spiritual development. There are many kinds of faith.

At least the faith born from admiration: that faith is established through hearing about this person. Or just the feeling that you develop in relation to the spiritual teacher that gives you the inspiration for liberation. Inspiration to enlightenment. Inspiration to be in the Bodhisattva's' way of life. Inspiration to renounce the karma, the delusions, the samsara. Inspiration to renounce all the unhappiness. Inspiration to be happy, to develop inner peace, be virtuous. Something is there that just inspires you. And you wish to achieve that quality. And now you completely surrender yourself under the influence of that figure. That is the faith. That is where the faith comes from, the faithfulness. In Tibetan, there are three types: the faith developed on trust, faith developed in wanting to achieve the qualities that that person has, and the faith that is developed simply because the qualities of the person are so heart-touching, in virtue, in Dharma. So, you need that element.

Then, the second quality to develop devotion is conviction. Conviction in the commitment you took to live on that journey, that you will uphold and treasure that relationship. That will lead into an exercise or Yoga, or practice, which is expressing your devotion through thoughts and actions. The devotion in thoughts is practiced by always keeping this inspirational figure close to your

heart, never letting the devotion to degenerate in your heart, in your knowledge, to always stay, stick or be aware of that inspirational reason. Then, the exercise in action is when yourself are really engaging in living the life under the influence of that inspiration or living a life accumulating those qualities that you saw in the Guru. Otherwise, living a life trusting in whatever the Guru has ever spoken to you, taught you, then with complete trust, following those instructions. So that is very much living in devotion, in another words, devoting to the Guru through thoughts and actions.

K. What are the differences between teacher-student relationship and Guru-disciple relationship?

It is not just a teacher. It is a Guru. There are differences in our spiritual understanding. When someone becomes a Guru to you, the responsibility increases. The relationship with a teacher, is not as advanced as the relationship you establish with someone as Guru and disciple. Teacher and student relationship, contrary to Guru and disciple, is based just on learning knowledge, without the Guru-disciple commitment. There is a special way to establish the Guru-disciple commitment. The teacher-student commitment is based on the teacher's responsibility to pass down the knowledge. The student needs to learn and of course, offer respect, which we would do to anyone who teaches us any knowledge. Even for Dharma teaching, it is very much similar: someone qualified in the teachings teaches you the knowledge. You appreciate and respect that. So, the relationship can be at that level. But, when a spiritual teacher becomes a spiritual Guru, or that the teacher who taught the Dharma becomes a spiritual Guru to you, then the relationship lies on the disciple's side. Off course it lies on both sides. But when you commit to someone as "I am that person's disciple and that person is my Guru", it lies on the student's heart. The responsibility to make that commitment is on the student and not the Guru's side.

L. How to establish the relationship?

There are three different ways to establish the relationship. Based on whatever I said just before about the devotion, you engage in activities of Dharma, of virtue. The main activities of the Guru coming into our life is to provide guidance, to show you the path, for you to receive the "kindness of the Dharma from him", as said by Lama Tsongkhapa in the Middle Length Lam-Rim.

There are three or four different ways:

The first one is through receiving commentaries of the Buddha's teachings, such as the teachings of the three baskets: teachings on moral ethics, teachings on concentration and attitudes, teachings on wisdom; those are the teachings on the Tripitaka, the three collections of the doctrines. Then, the whole purpose of that is to make the student to live on the path by practicing the three higher trainings: higher training in morality, higher training in concentration, higher training in wisdom. They are root compositions by Buddha himself. There are so many commentaries from qualified masters, such as the 17 Pandits, from Nalanda University which came into existence about 300 years later after the Buddha passed away: such as the work of Nagarjuna, work of Chandrakirti, Dharmakirti, Buddhapalita, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Atisha, Serlingpa, Shantideva...

These 17 Great Pandits came into existence. They themselves are scientists of the Buddha's teachings. Initially they studied for academic purposes. They had a motivation to practice and enlighten just like the Buddha, but they did not just trust immediately Buddha's teachings. They followed one statement of the Buddha: "...to my teachings, to really bring the benefit, first you need to examine it just as the goldsmith examine the gold when they cut it, burn it, to get the best gold, the real gold. Similarly, you need to observe the teachings in the same way, you need to

analyze it, through debate, through discussion, rigorous study”. So, they did rigorous studies especially depending on logics, on reasoning and experiential kind of evidence. And they accepted the teachings only after the teaching became path to them.

They trained in love, they trained in compassion, they only accepted these teachings as valid only when the result of Bodhicitta was developed into their hearts. They learnt about emptiness, about the view of no self. They investigated through analytical meditation, absorption meditation, until they realized the wisdom of emptiness. Then they established it as a valid teaching. Then after that, thinking about future generations purpose, and how the Root texts, the original texts are very subtle, and difficult to understand, then these masters wrote commentaries. They made it clearer for us to study easily. Similarly, when the teachings came to Tibet, the Tibetan Great scholars, like Lama Tsongkhapa, did the same thing. He did rigorous studies. He applied into practice. So, this is to establish the relationship through commentaries.

Then, you enjoy the relationship through receiving commentaries from the teacher. That is one of the ways to nurture you. That is one of the benefits you receive from the teacher.

The second one is through receiving transmissions, like oral transmissions. They may not really give a detailed commentary. The commentary needs to have a lineage, not just being a scholar making a commentary. You need to receive it in a Buddhist strict tradition. In Tibetan Buddhist Nalanda tradition, the strict way to receive a commentary, or an oral transmission, or an instruction, is an uninterrupted transmission of the teaching from a master to another, starting from the enlightened one all the way up to the teacher to whom you are regarding as a teacher. Then, there not just carrying intelligent empty words, but it carries the blessings of all this lineage. That should be a direct cause for your realization. Dharma is for here (gesture showing the heart), not just for here (gesture showing the brain), or even here also, I do not know (showing the heart again) ...to the mind, not the head.

Then, even if you did not understand anything through the discourse, you receive the ultimate benefit. And of course, if you understand, that is good too. That is wonderful. But you still receive the benefit, the main benefit, the transmission. The oral transmission carries the same benefit. But here, there is no explanation. There are some little explanations, but mostly, it is reading the text, or reading the mantra. And sometimes, that comes with a repetition from the student’s side. Sometimes, it will be simply listening to it and the session is designed just for the purpose of the oral transmission.

The third one is through receiving vows, precepts. There are many different vows: individual liberation vows (such as refuge vows, 5 lays vows), ordination vows, preordination vows, novice vows, fully ordained vows. These are all individual liberation vows. Then there are the Bodhisattvas vows: the initial stage, the intentional Bodhisattvas vows. The later one is the engaging Bodhisattvas vows. Then, the Tantric vows: the Tantric vows in relation to the five Dhyani Buddhas. Then, there are special precepts in relation to the Guru-disciple, the Guru Yoga practice which is your practice in relation to your Guru. Then you can receive initiations.

To extract the benefit of the relationship, these are the different ways you engage with your Guru. For some students, one of these transmission ceremonies is the time when they establish the Guru-disciple relationship from their heart. Some even approach the Guru to ask, “can you be my Guru?”. If you ask the Guru, and the Guru says “no, no, no”, especially in the Tibetan culture, there is a practice of so much humility, and sometimes they are overdoing. You will ask and they will answer “no, no, no, how can I be your Guru. I’m nobody”. You may get this reply, or you may not hear anything when you encounter with a Tibetan master, and they always push to someone: “there is a Guru there, you should go for this one, or this one”. Therefore, you have to also understand the nature of that individual. The most important is your heart. Even if the Guru says

“you’re my student” but your heart is not ready, you are not able to establish the relationship. Your heart matters. Your commitment matters. The Samaya, you are the one who keeps the Samaya in your heart.

In most cases, the students do not ask. It is just your own heart, your own decision. And there is no ceremony, with the heart of “I want to take that person as my Guru” then when you receive explanation on any teaching, you take it. That is yourself your ceremony. You take initiation, that is your ceremony. You take vows that is your ceremony. You take oral transmission, that is your ceremony. But in another way, just receiving transmission, just receiving commentary, or just receiving certain precepts, even refuge precepts, lay vows precepts, bodhisattvas’ precepts, it is enough to establish the relationship in your heart. But with the heart and the motivation to regard that teacher as your Guru to tie the node in your heart, then even receiving one commentary, even just one word of the Dharma, during an oral transmission, even receiving one letter of the Dharma, the syllable “A”, even one single word of instructions “yes” or “no”, this will create the auspiciousness to tie the knot of Guru-disciple relationship.

Now, it is important to understand that you do not have necessarily to establish the Guru-disciple relationship in any of those cases, except in the case of initiations, tantric vows and monastic vows. You can just take the preceptor as a representation of the refuge, as a representation of your Guru, and you can still receive the precept. So, when you receive oral transmissions, you do not have necessarily to establish the relationship. Just receiving a commentary, not necessarily you have to establish the relationship. Just receiving instructions, not necessarily you have to establish the relationship.

As far as it concerns the individual liberation vows in relation to monastic vows: pre-ordination vows, novice vows, fully ordained vows; the monastic vows are granted in a community, with a minimum of 4 fully ordained Sanghas, among them there is a principal one. You can take all the four Sanghas who are giving you the precepts, or the monastic vows, as your Guru, or just take the principal one as your Guru. In any case, the principal one naturally becomes your Guru. Then, when you take initiations, naturally, the initiation Master will be your Guru, without discussion. One you decided to take initiation, the initiation Master is your Guru. Then when you take Tantric vows, naturally the teacher is going to be your Guru. During the initiation ceremony, when you take the Bodhisattvas vows (before the initiation itself), the teacher becomes your Guru. But again, you can take Bodhisattvas vows alone, from a Master that who is just a figure, the bridge or the preceptor, but you do not have to take him or her necessarily as your Guru.

There are very rare possibilities when the Guru choose the disciple through certain signs, the Guru notices the ripen disciple. The Guru may say “ok among here this person is my disciple” or “you’ll be my disciple”. It is quite rare but possible. The Guru chooses, you are not ready, and the Guru says, “you follow me as a disciple”.

So, it is mainly from the student side. You are accepting that teacher as your Guru. The way to do that, off course, is by making that commitment in your heart, based on a certain degree of faith, and certainty, a conviction, that this teacher has the capability to fulfill the journey that you pursue, the liberation. This teacher has the qualification to condition your spiritual path.

M. The conventional and ultimate aspect of the inner Guru

Now, regarding the Inner Guru. There is a conventional aspect and an ultimate aspect. So, the true Buddha being of your mind, or true Buddha being, your main base of self, which is the mental factor, the primary or the base mind consciousness, in another words, your Buddha nature is your inner Guru. And that Buddha nature is one entity with your Guru, the outer Guru.

The interpretive inner Guru is your altruistic nature of the mind. The inner Guru is your wisdom being of the mind, or the Dharmakaya. The emptiness of the mind is your ultimate Guru. And by being aware of that, this Buddha being in you, one entity with your Guru, will cultivate the inner Guru. You are establishing the inner Guru. Then, holding the awareness of that, is what is called devoting in thoughts. Upholding your actions of body, speech and mind, in the actions of your Guru, is upholding the Guru devotion in actions: whatever you say, you say it in the awareness of the Guru speaking, whatever way you physically behave you behave by being aware of the Guru's behavior, or even in the motivation. Whatever I speak, I will speak as the Guru would speak. Then it is not "me" speaking. The Guru is speaking, the Guru is thinking like that, the Guru is taking a walk, the Guru is meeting people.

So, the inner Guru is the most powerful protection, most powerful guidance, most powerful refuge, most powerful foundation to all your good qualities. The most powerful protection from all the misfortunes, and misbehaviors. The protection is so powerful that just by that it purifies all the past karma. It protects from even any past karmic consequences ripening in the form of an intense suffering now, because you have the wisdom and attitude to transform them for beneficial usage. In attitude when you manifest the interpretive inner Guru, when any suffering comes in my way, you would translate that into the Guru's way, Tonglen practice, taking and giving, developing compassion within you. Or if you use the definite inner Guru, you would translate them into the view of emptiness, and you would try to understand the nature of that suffering. You would try to understand the nature of the self, the Guru's being, and dissolve all the suffering into empty, through the finding of no substantial existence of pain, of problem makers, in the object, or pain or problem makers within the subject mind.

Not only it protects from committing new causes for future suffering, because you behave accordingly as the Guru would. All the actions you are going to commit from your three doors, everything is virtue, everything is a cause for enlightenment. So, therefore, it also stops future sufferings. That is the most powerful. We do not need to hang any blessings strings, even though I am going to give you blessings strings at the end of the session. This is for the reminder, for different purposes. I am going to give this for friendship, ok? The protection I am going to give is the inner Guru, that one you would need to carry it on, that one, you need to take it seriously.

Therefore, even if the Gurus is a real Buddha, or not a Buddha, for our own benefit, your own practice, all the Gurus are Buddhas. So, we must view that for our own benefit. Whether from the Guru's side is already a Buddha or not, it is none of our business. But for our full benefit, out of that relationship, you view your Guru as a Buddha. Since Guru is a Buddha, when Guru manifests into passing away, or on a physical aspect, he is always away from your life, or go away for long time, then we have to interpret this way: Guru is doing this by the heart of great compassion to us, to be able to give us the direct or the ultimate refuge, the ultimate Guru, which is the inner Guru. So, by dissolving his or her physical existence, it is the birth of the inner Guru. So, we need to be sure of that, we need to make it real in our wisdom: the dissolution of the physical Guru's existence is the new birth of the inner Guru within us.

So, the Gurus are really relating to us with immeasurable compassion, they really show the manifestation of the dissolution of their physical existence from the physical world when the Guru is dying, it is a complete dissolution. It is the direct antidote to destroy the permanent grasping of relying outward to the physical Guru, to really overcome the reliance on the Guru outwardly, externally, physically. Worse than that, that reliance subtlety is served by permanent grasping. And it is very conceptual. It is not completely the wisdom way. Conceptually you take refuge outwardly. Ultimately, the Buddha or Guru, they have no ability to take away our sufferings, our negativities, the way the dirt is taken away. In Tibet they use example of the hair in the middle of the butter. The Guru will not be able to do that.

Abiding you in the state of enlightenment they will not do that. That is not the purpose, they do not have the ability, anyone has it. Therefore, when practicing Buddhism, the first practice is the refuge. Among the three objects of Refuge, the main Refuge is the Dharma. The teaching is the one, the wisdom is the one. The attitude, the wisdom through the knowledge they transmit to us, we ourselves must awaken in that, using those tools within ourselves. The actual work out takes place when you develop the inner Guru, and you start to listen to your heart. Always waiting the answer, the guidance from outside. We always do that.

When do we not understand immediately we have to ask somebody “is this correct? It this incorrect?”. “Should I practice this. Should I not?” “When should I do retreat?” “When should I enlighten?”. And then there is quite a danger “when should I go to toilets?”. “I should sleep or not?”. And especially nowadays with internet, the Guru has to be on the phone 24 hours because you are going to get a question on “can I go to bed now?”. And maybe it is “can you ring the alarm when I should wake up?”. “What kind of breakfast I should eat?”. “I feel lonely, can you come?” Seriously there is a danger.

And many do live like that, the Guru is more like the boyfriend, like the girlfriend kind of figure. When the Guru goes away, instead of being confident of your practice, you feel so down, so depressed. When the Guru is talking to someone, and he is not talking to someone, you feel like you are ignored. You know the Guru is here (gesture of showing the heart). “The Guru is out there paying attention to someone else but not to me”. It is very much a communication through attachment, and that attachment unknowingly is built up in our system, which is not healthy. And again, it serves so many negative bases like attachment, aversion is there, ignorance is there. So therefore, at the end, the Guru must dissolve that physical aspect into passing into Parinirvana.

It is also crucial to be aware of the delusion of thinking the guru is your personal property and the jealousy and possessiveness that goes with it. The Guru is the embodiment of all the Buddhas and is working equally for all sentient beings. That attitude generates so much disharmony between the sangha community, the disciples, the organizations, and within us. This is something the Guru has to be very clear towards the students and at the same time, the students must have that in mind that from the very beginning. Then the beginner students, mixed with their delusions, those who are still initially starting the path; if you do not make that very clear distinction from the beginning, then, the Guru becomes like a personal Guru. Many conflicts happen because of that lack of education from the very start. The Guru, especially the Mahayanist Guru is a universal Guru. Yes, I regard that Guru as more precious than all the numberless past, present and future Buddhas, and he is more important than my own life, but this precious gem is equally precious to all the sentient beings. Therefore, being flexible when relating to the Guru is fundamental, to have a steady practice of Guru devotion, a successful Guru Yoga practice, not to generate negative karma and to be constant and not looking for another Guru whenever the Guru does not fulfill your expectations.

Shakyamuni Buddha, when he came into this world, from the Mahayanist understanding, he was already enlightened countless eons before. He only came to show us the display of these twelve deeds of teachings, and he actually had a choice, as he had already obtained the Vajra body. He could have stayed there without dying. Even if he would have needed to change his look, he would have just dissolved into light and came back. He can do anything. But he showed the passage into Parinirvana, the death. [In Tib]: “In order to liberate the disciple from permanent grasping through the Dharma, Buddha showed the aspect of passing into Parinirvana”. And our Gurus do the same thing. Another way of presenting it: to ripen the inner Guru within us. And that is so powerful. So, now when the physical body in a conventional way dissolves, the Guru is inseparable from you. The Guru is everywhere, in fact, the Guru become more alive than before in that sense.

II. Who is Guru? And what does he or she represent?

Lama Tsongkhapa who came into existence about 600 years ago, as the main founder of the Gelug tradition, one of the major traditions of Tibetan Buddhism said in his teachings The Foundation of all good qualities:

*The foundation of all good qualities
is the kind, perfect and venerable Guru
Correct devotion to him is the root of the path
By clearly seeing this and applying great effort
Please bless me to rely upon with great respect.*

The main meaning is the Guru serves as the foundation to all our good qualities, starting from the quality to be able to purify our past mistakes, quality to live in the present moment fully in virtue, in Dharma, quality for us not to commit any new karma, for us not to experience inconveniences in future times, especially future lifetimes. Then the qualities of beneficial attitudes, qualities such as love, compassion, we all have, all being are born with them; but boundless compassion, great compassion, unconditional love we need to develop them, we need to train our heart to develop them. So, the Guru serves as a foundation for us to make the innate quality of love into boundless love, immeasurable love, altruistic love. That compassion is always protecting us from suffering, causes of suffering. That would develop into great compassion concerning the well-being of all sentient beings, until it develops into altruistic compassion.

Guru serves that purpose; particularly the Mahayanist Guru serves that Bodhicitta, that altruistic love to develop all the way up to omniscient altruism, the most perfect quality of attitude that can ever been achieved. The main instruction of the Mahayanist Guru is to live with Bodhicitta in every action of your body, speech and mind. That will bring you so much happiness, so much sense of fulfillment in your life, because then every interaction with others is infused by Bodhicitta. When you live with the heart of Bodhicitta, that is it, this is the way for happiness, because everything is for the benefit of all sentient beings. It is like a magic mantra. Then, there is no room for discouragement, depression, sadness, inconvenience. Everything is meaningful.

The omniscient altruism or omniscient love, compassion is all pervasive, not only in the thoughts but all pervasive in actions. Even those times when we are misbehaving, Buddha is actually right there through his compassionate omniscient love and compassion, trying to deal with us, to liberate us from there, according to our mental dispositions. There is no room to teach us emptiness or there is no room to teach us to behave like Bodhisattvas. Even to those who are destroying the world now, Buddha is right there at their side to minimize, otherwise they would be destroying everything. Even when there is just a little possibility not to destroy everything, you understand that there is Buddha who is right there behind benefiting. But the benefit depends to the dispositions of the being: sometimes you want to give advice to somebody, but if there is no disposition, he or she will not listen, even when you want to do help that person.

So, at least for yourself, without any doubt, the Guru will serve as this foundation. Guru serves as the foundation for all the securities that we look for, the inner security, the inner immune system to deal with death, to deal with nasty diseases, to deal with financial crisis, to deal with relationships crisis. It is unbelievable.

I am not a good practitioner but even me, like the person who is the tiniest, the most beginner practitioner, when I experienced the heart-break of losing the most loved one in my life, the most cherished person in my life, my Guru, the physical aspect of his existence, I was shattered,

completely shattered, at that time I was almost like a corpse, the mind belonged to him like that. My Guru was my brain, my mind. I had no ability, I had no kind of confidence, no trust to myself to make decision, about what I should do, even going to meal, I was going only when the Guru said go, I literally lived like that. I did not ask him, he volunteered. I did not ask him “can I go to meal?”, “can I go to toilets?”, “can I sleep?”. But then he volunteered. “ok now you go to sleep”, “now you wake up”, “now you go to eat”, “now you study”, “now you play”. Like that. Just waiting the instructions, that is it.

But then you lose that figure. The dissolving of his physical existence really serves the rebirth of the inner Guru. Right there I became a totally new person: confident, outspoken, brave, happy. Just within half an hour, completely different, and the Guru served that foundation for me to become that. Even today, for me to be able to speak in front of you, I was not like that. I was always staying behind. I would not have dared to even look at you. Even when there was food on the table, I would have just wait and go behind and eat the leftovers food. Most of time I was eating the left-over food. It was almost as if I was under your feet, not the same level. Then suddenly, “ok now I can lead the Bal”, “I can lead my life”. Not only my life, others’ also.

Where is it coming from? It is not me. The Guru is serving that foundation. And that time, I was much younger than now. Now I am very old. It was about 22 years ago. And that time wherever I go, I am so attached to that one comfort zone. I used to travel with my master in some other countries. The suffering that goes in my heart, I miss the same bed, the same food, the same people, not daring to face anybody, there is no dare to try any new food, any new place. In one way, it was maybe a good quality, because I was completely contented with what I have. You can eat the same thing; you can be the same thing. But in another way, it is a very small-minded thinking.

But when he passed away, everywhere became my home, everywhere is my monastery. At this very moment, New York is my place. This is my home, and you are my family. No way back then, I could have seen you as my family. You would have been my strangers, quite scary strangers. You would have been trying to do anything to me, you would have tried to smile at me, to talk nicely to me, to give me chocolate. But I would have felt I am not worthy of it. I would have been running away like that.

Now, everywhere is so beautiful. Everybody is so loving, even when we meet the first time, it is if we knew each other for long time. A mindset. Guru serves that. The Guru serves to have that. You not only find happiness in pleasurable things, but you find happiness even in the service, you find so much meaning in the service. If you happen to ask even the worst practitioner “when was the last time you were unhappy”, I really have to think hard, when was I unhappy? I was actually always happy. Even in the most crisis time, you still find a positive thinking out of it. That is why you did not end up drained, kind of pulled into unhappiness.

Just giving a little example. If I can do that little thing, for you, sure you can do that. You are much smarter, you have much more life-experiences, exposure. It is maybe even easier to apprehend the teaching. For me, it took me long time to apprehend it, to make sense to the teachings. Initially I am not like you. You look so subdued. You look so wonderful already. I was not like that. When we go to class, almost all of us, all my classmates, even after becoming monks, 3 to 4 years later, we used to go and collect the Coca-Cola bottles caps, the metal ones. Then we transform them into round wheels, we made them very sharp from the corner, then with the center we made a tool, and put a string. In a small room in our teacher’s class, we all sit like packed, all of us, and instead of listening to the teachings we were playing with that. And try to cut the robes of the person who is sitting in front of us. And sometimes we even cut all through the flesh. It was so

sharp. So wild. Comparing to that, you people are already Arya Bodhisattvas. So subdued. So devoted. So diligent.

Really, I mean it. In such a busy developed city, one strange person comes all away from Nepal and come and listen to this blah-blah-blah. I mean can you imagine, who would do that? That is quite amazing. The effort, the diligence. Unbelievable. I would have expected nobody to turn out. It is quite a lot of people who came. Full house you can say that. I would not have expected that. Not easy, especially in New-York. Because there are so many things to do, so many things to see. So, it is easy for you, not because it is easy but, because the result, the impact is unbelievable. You can enjoy getting old. You can enjoy getting sick. You can enjoy even death. Then no doubt, you can enjoy the rebirth, isn't? The Guru is so powerful in that sense.

Then another text of Lama Tsongkhapa, Song of Spiritual Experience:

Then the root of creating well and auspicious conditions for all the excellence for this and future lives is to rely properly with effort both in thoughts and actions upon the sublime spiritual mentor who reveals the path.

Truly the auspiciousness starts when you found your Guru, then you start to rely diligently in thoughts and actions. Auspiciousness is all about conditions for happiness, inner happiness, true happiness, isn't it? Because you see everything as auspicious in the eyes of the Guru, or in the eyes of the inner Guru. You try to see the world through the lenses of the Guru. You hear the things through the ears of the Guru, try to feel the world through the senses of the Guru. Think about others, think about yourself, think about the rest of the world, from the perspective of the Guru's heart. The environment of your meaning of life is already created and that is auspicious.

If we are able to live this life like that, then the future lives are definitely going to be auspicious, higher rebirths, a precious human rebirth that is definitely going to happen. It is so amazing. Another auspicious thing is that the relationship Guru-disciple you established in this life, in future lives, it will definitely happen again, because you create the environment to nurture it. Even in case in this lifetime you are enabled to achieve full enlightenment, it will happen again, not only for one or two lifetimes, in all future lifetimes until you achieve it. And it is not only something that we say to comfort us, but it is also real. The relationship will never go away. There are so many relationships that just come and go, but the relationship that you establish with the Guru with Guru Devotion, with Guru Yoga practice in thoughts and actions, you create legitimate right causes for the relationship to exist until we achieve enlightenment.

Even if we do not want the Guru, the Guru is going to say "no, no, I am not going to go away from you". The Guru will be there forever. Again, some of you watched the movie "Unmistaken child", it is a lifetime experience, whether with the previous reincarnation or with the present reincarnation. There, we make aspiration. I made the aspiration. I am a small example ok. I made the aspiration "may I never be separated from your presence, from your being, even from the physical existence". And aspired, "may I meet him swiftly". The Guru manifested within 9 months, and within just a matter of few years, the same person came back. And if you think carefully about the karma, just to meet this Guru in this lifetime, I am quite 100% sure that in past lifetimes, we already met, we were already there. So, three lifetimes, you can signature, one person can experience three lifetimes with the Guru that is not giving up on you, and the Guru is always with you, not only in thoughts, but the real person also coming in your way like that. It is unbelievable. It is so real what the teaching says, it is real. And every aspect, all aspects of the Guru, unbelievable skillful means in many ways, now this little baby has another ways of skillful means, and in another way, at the end of the day everything is a skillful means according with your dispositions nurturing you sometimes with quietness, sometimes with wrathfulness, sometimes

with teachings, sometimes with no teachings, sometimes even with the teachings of passing into death, or teachings of being born. So, this what Lama Tsongkhapa meant when he says, “create auspiciousness”, not only in this lifetime, also in future lifetimes.

Then, there is another Sutra, the Supreme Array Sutra:

Youthful Sudhana, the teachers are those who protect me from all miserable realms, they cause me to know the sameness of phenomena.

Guru is the only way to make the spiritual disciple understand, to make us understand completely the ultimate nature of phenomena, emptiness. Without the blessings of the Guru, you may become a scholar, reading the texts, but you will not understand completely, even if you are able to write down, you will not be able to understand completely. Buddha- Dharma is not like any other knowledge, anything to do with Buddha-Dharma teachings, you only understand when it becomes your path, when it becomes a realization as a path.

I always use the example of Lama Tsongkhapa. Before him, so many teachers came to Tibet, many have misinterpreted or not completed, or not completely illustrated the teachings on emptiness. It is almost as if there were some limitations to understand the exact intent of Nagarjuna’s intent on emptiness. And Lama Tsongkhapa himself through many years of dedications, rigorous studies, he understood the language, he even composed the most amazing commentary comparing to the all-time scholars on emptiness especially, the toughest subject, there is not even one single mistake of interpretation. But he still had not realized the wisdom of emptiness as a path.

Then he approached his Guru, he even managed to see directly Manjushri who is his ultimate Guru. He instructed him to do purification practices, accumulations of merits. Then, one day, whatever intellectual understanding he had, everything, became a path, only then he knew emptiness completely. Therefore, the blessings of the Guru whom he followed the instructions, he did not say you need to study and do more and more studies on emptiness, he said you need to go and accumulate some merits and purify negativities. And he did follow. He thought he did not understand, he thought he needed more studies. But because of following the blessings of the instructions, which I think I forgot to mention earlier, one of the ways to establish the Guru-disciple relationship is through instructions... So, he followed the exact instructions, then he realized the wisdom of emptiness.

Sometimes the instructions may be “do not worry about the stress about emptiness, just take a nice walk, maybe everyday spend one hour in the garden”. And if the Guru says so, you will better do that and that maybe will make you realize emptiness. Rather than squeezing your brain to try to understand, to dig what there is more about emptiness. Or maybe like Gampopa, who is one of the heart disciples of Milarepa. He is a scholar also. And he wanted to go and dedicate a long retreat after attending a lot of teachings. But he expected that maybe there were still a lot of instructions that maybe he had not received from Milarepa. Of course, initially he got initiations, he got this and that, but he still feels that something is not revealing itself to him. But when Gampopa was about to leave, Milarepa told him “That is it. Bye bye” like that. After he travelled a bit further and reached a river or something like that, he crossed away, then Milarepa called him back. Gampopa was so happy “ok now I am going to receive, I feel something has not really been passed down to me and I think he is going to reveal it, maybe I even need to spend a few more days to receive the teachings”. But then before he approaches Milarepa, Milarepa said “stop there, now I am confident that you are ready to listen my most profound teaching, the final one, so pay attention”. Then he lifted all his clothes and showed his bottom. So, Gampopa, because asked to pay really attention, was looking carefully and he saw one of the ugliest bottoms. He has

never seen such a bottom before, unbelievable, disappointing. Anyway, I am just exaggerating. So, Milarepa looked a bit green. So, it could be a quite green bottom, skinny, all skins worn out because of too much sitting in the ground.

So, then Gampopa understood. It requires diligence, constant consistence, stay put in a sustainable practice. Stay put does not mean always sitting, it means not distracted by distractions, uninterrupted. It is about meditation. "Meditation" again, not an understanding of you need to sit, it is not about that, it means you need to practice until you gain realizations, without ever giving up even how many hardships you must go through, and the reason is there. He is talking about consistency, repeated effort, never getting up from meditation session: the meditation does not mean always in the cushion, but your entire activities turn into analytical meditation on emptiness. And regarding absorption meditation, if you only have 5 minutes, just only that it is good enough. If you have more you do, otherwise, that is enough.

It is talking about that: uninterrupted, 24 hours everything taken into meditation. Everything you do, your family responsibility, job responsibility, you do not need to change. But do not get interrupted by worldly kind of distractions. That is what Gampopa understood. Then, after that, he left. And from there, he actualized one life-time enlightenment. So, the Guru can teach in that kind of way. So that is the most profound teaching.

They showed me the path that leads to happiness, the true happiness, happiness from all the untrue happiness.

Because of the suffering of change, all the comfort that we experienced is actually untrue happiness, not a true happiness. So, through the practice of the Dharma, especially the wisdom of emptiness, the attitude of bodhicitta, you are really able to experience a sustainable happiness.

They instructed in deeds always auspicious. They revealed to me the path to the city of omniscience [Geshela: "enlightened state"]. They guided me into that state of omniscience.

The Guru comes into so many ways, different aspects. Guru comes into so many different aspects. As long as your heart is in guru devotion, everything is a manifestation of the Guru. All the difficult people in your life are none-other than your most precious Guru's emanation. Again, I will give you one example. I had a very difficult relationship with my father when I was little. And there is a long story, and I am not going through that. The thing is that after the Dharma environment created by the Guru's precious and consistent reminder, it took 3 to 6 years, every single day, without teachings, because I was not ready to understand, or without even explanation, I was not ready to understand about karma, I was not ready to understand about compassion. But one thing he always put his hand on my head saying, "the kindest person in your life is your father". There is a long story. There is a movie going out and you will watch that. So, I am doing a promotion of that movie. Maybe next year, in New York.

So, then through the skillful means of the Guru being in your life, your heart is completely transformed and even that immature someone who does not understand Dharma yet, even now I also do not understand Dharma yet, you saw this person you used to see as the worst person, is now the best person in your life. And you are able to make honestly the statement that in fact my father was my first Guru who served as a basis for me to enjoy all this amazing spiritual life. Even for me to accumulate some merits, a lot of merits to be able to share the Dharma with you. It is because of his kindness. If he would not have treated me the way he did, I would not be here. I would still be in the Himalayas doing farming. Maybe all my life would be with two or three cows. That would be my disciples. That would be my Dharma environment. And maybe small field. All

year working, just to have a free simple meal, that would be my life. But now, my life is like every single day, I am given the opportunity to purify myself, accumulate merits. This is what is happening. It is because of his kindness. So, he is truly the Guru for this immature person to realize the taste of renunciation towards samsara, towards worldly pursue.

So, this is what Guru did. Without the Guru, maybe with all the great scriptures out there, I may not be in this position. It did not really manifest in that way. But the wrathful figure father did. Therefore, if you have anybody in your life so-called as “difficult”, try to use this technique, to see them as an emanation of your Guru to train your patience. Without perfecting in patience, you cannot be enlightened. Without perfecting the attitude of patience, Bodhicitta will not be developed, no way to become a Bodhisattva, no way to become enlightened. So, the manifestation of Shakyamuni Buddha himself and all the deities will not train you to develop patience. They are just too nice. The difficult people in our life are the one who are directly leading us to perfect the practice of patience.

Therefore, they deserve the same respect as we do to respect the Guru. And at least the benefit is for you that you do not have aversion towards this harm-giver. First thing is you need to neutralize your heart: as if in a boiling hot water, you would pour a whole nice cup of cold water. You enjoy the immediate benefit. The Guru can cause that.

They showed the sea of past, present and future phenomena.

It means they let you see all the subtle karmas. Therefore, we are not confused: why am I here? Why does this thing happen to me? There are so many questions that are so confusing. And that itself is so stressful. Not knowing what is going to happen in the future. Not knowing what went wrong in the past and what is happening here. The Guru will lead us to understand the entirety of the past events, even future events and everything will come to dissolve into one taste. All the goodness will develop, all the negative things just will be completely purified into empty.

And they revealed to me the circle of noble beings' assembly.

Even for your own house, the moment you start to learn the Dharma, the moment you start to cultivate the inner Guru, when you go back home, your home is not an ordinary home now. Your home is the Guru's celestial home. And people around, good or bad, everybody is a celestial being. So, you do not have to feel the inconvenience. It is just a different method; it is just helping on your path. Some are naughty one, some are loving one. It is ok, all of them are actually helping you. Now, when you go back you have no stress, you are happy to face very positively the environment.

The teacher praised all my virtues, remembering this you will weep.

Then, when you think about the Guru in this way, then it is so heart-touching.

LAMA, what does it mean? LA MA. two words: LA...MA. The first two letters, you can interpret as the supreme. No more supreme, no greater than that. Now, there is MA. People hardly know, they may interpret this, but the MA, you can understand as the mother. Mother, the creator of all, the creator of your life. The main creator of your life is your mother. So, the Lama is the main creator, he is like a mother that would give birth to all the qualities, all the higher qualities, all the happiness up to the enlightened qualities. That is why is MA. In Prajnaparamita Sutra, the Wisdom Sutra, is called as MA, mother. It is given the title of Mother, because all the Dharma is born from it, all the enlightened qualities, enlightenment itself is born from there. From the wisdom of emptiness, all existence is actualized from there, including enlightenment. In similar way, Lama

or someone to whom you relate as your teacher, your Guru is not only supreme in his qualities and knowledge, but also in the benefit to you, and he serves as a mother giving birth to all your qualities, your enlightenment like that. GE WA: Teacher of the virtue. Your Guru is the teacher of the virtue.

Differentiation between Guru and Root Guru

From here then, what we can learn is the differentiation between Guru and Root Guru. There is a teaching, there is a practice of relating to the Root Guru. We call someone as our principal Guru, and the rest of the others are our Gurus, but not necessarily Root Guru. Many people have this question: how to differentiate? Who is my Root Guru and who is not? You can have many Root Gurus too or you can have just one Root Guru. Or you can have the entirety of your Gurus as your Root Gurus too. Or, if you are not up to that, then you must not necessarily have a Root Guru. You can be neutral to all the other Gurus as precious Gurus, but not necessarily as your Root Guru.

The relation that Lama Atisha has with Lama Serlingpa as described in the preface quote, is a relation disciple-root Guru. In the common language to elaborate, for us to understand; this is more elaborated in the scriptures; as far as it concerns the impact, the feeling, emotionally, the Root Guru is someone who really made your life changing from ordinary life to extraordinary life, changing it from worldly life to spiritual life, changing you from a very negative person to a positive person, changing you from the worst person to a better person, being so self-centered person to a more generous, more open-hearted person, a very depressed person to a more up-lifted person, more in acceptance, more open-hearted person; the teacher who really sustains you: no matter how many times you fall down, the teacher will rescue you again and again, will pull you back so you can stand, even numberless times, even during your entire life.

Even if you keep falling into doing negative things, falling into delusional, falling into being miserable, being so depressed, again and again, the Guru is someone who directly is communicating with you and never give up on you, even how nasty you become, how negative you become, how many faults you may have, no matter how much that Guru has guided you, but still you fail to the Guru, the Guru will never give up on you, he puts extra efforts to always bring you back on track. That kind of scenario, that kind of experience, the Guru to whom you can relate to that kind of experiences, that Guru, that teacher you can regard as your Root Guru.

Now from the intellectual point of view, from the traditional scriptural definition, your Root Guru is the Guru who has been kind in three times and the three ways. The kindness in the three times is the Guru who gave you teachings in the past lifetimes, the Guru who guides you and teaches you in this life, and the Guru who will also guide you at the time of death, when you are transiting from this life to next life, at the time of death, of intermediate state, making sure that your consciousness is guided into virtue, either leading you through the process of the death process, then making your continuum to get to the clear-light, and then making sure your continuum through the intermediate state will travel to a virtuous mind, so that your next rebirth you are able to have a higher rebirth, even reach enlightenment. This is your Root Guru.

At the time of death, the Guru is either in person blessing you, either doing practices of transferring consciousness like po'wa; or the Guru is not doing anything in person, but you have some kind of blessings received from the Guru: it could be like a relics, blessed string, blessed pills, scriptures, stupas, statues, whatever the gift you received from the Guru, it becomes a representation of your Guru, and at the time of dying, you are able to focus on the remembrance of the Guru, using that close object to remind you of your Guru.

When people pass away, as a spiritual disciple, when you think of the Guru, that is the greatest protection. When you think of the Guru, you already receive the help to close the door of committing negative karma and fall into the Hell realms, that is how the Guru assists you to take higher rebirth. There are so many stories about His Holiness' disciple, at the time of dying, they reported that they called his name, they remember Him, and it was even proven that through some clairvoyance and observations, their reincarnation was reborn either in the pure land, either in the precious human realm, or reincarnated into their own family as a fortunate family member. Not only that, but His Holiness also several times said that at the time of death: "remember my name and you do not have to worry, just let it be and you will travel safely, your journey will be taken care of".

Then the Guru will take care of you during the 49 days, the Guru is fully dedicated to performing prayers for you as those 49 days are the most crucial period: 7 times for 7 weeks, you go through the clear-light and experience the intermediate state's death and rebirth. So, each time the intermediate state being dies and goes through the clear-light experience, when there are effective prayers, especially done by the Guru to the disciple, then even if you are not able to achieve realizations during the clear-light, at the time of clear-light death, that still gives you the opportunity to experience enlightenment and that kind of virtues, seven times during 49 days. In case during those 49 days, you cannot achieve Buddhahood, since there is a conditional condition of virtues that is imposing into you, infused to you, supporting you, conditioning you, your continuum has the full meritorious causes to be reborn as a precious human rebirth or in the Pure Land. So, this is what is called the Guru being kind in three times.

So, that kind of Guru, that kind of teacher, you can regard as your Root Guru. It does not matter if the Guru is famous or not, if that Guru carries some title or not, if that Guru is a yogi or not, if that Guru is female or male, sangha or lay, as long as you are spiritually impacted by these three times of blessings, then you can relate as your Root Guru.

Now, the benefit in the three ways. This is mainly from the Tantra. In the Tantra, the Root Guru is defined by the kindness of the Dharma in the three ways. It is someone who has granted vows, such as refuge, Sanghas vows, Bodhisattvas vows tantric vows, all of them or one of them; then, who has given you the oral transmission of sutras, tantras, mantras, commentaries; then, who initiates you, grant you initiations from any or the whole of the 4 stages of the tantric class. Or someone who initiated you, gave you oral transmissions and instructions for your daily sadhanas, and commentaries of the whole grounds and paths. This is the teacher who is kind in three ways.

Then, there are also another way of understanding of the Guru being king in three ways: someone who has given you three kinds of vows, precepts: individual liberation precepts, Bodhisattvas vows, then the tantric vows or precepts in relation to the five Dhyanis Buddhas and on top the Guru-disciple samaya after receiving the tantric vows. So, you can also understand those three ways of blessings as receiving three kinds of vows too. So, whoever intellectually or traditionally you have received blessings like that, you can regard this teacher as your Root Guru.

That does not discard the rest of the other spiritual teachers for you to always have the highest reverence, equally, to all of them which is seeing all the teachers as an emanation of Buddha, oneness with the Buddha, or seeing all the other Gurus as an emanation embodiment of your Root Guru. So, as long as you are able to keep that reverence, you receive immense of benefits from all the Gurus, in relation to accumulation of vast merits and purification of negativities. Because the Guru is not only the root of the path, not only the foundation of all good qualities all the way up to enlightenment, but he is also one of the most powerful object among all the holy objects, Guru is the most powerful holy object, in particularly if you have a Root Guru, then that Guru is

the most powerful holy object to purify negativities: whenever you relate to purify negativities or obstacles in relation to that Guru, the most effective purification will happen.

When you do purification of obstacles and practices of the four opponent powers. The first power is the reliance: you take refuge in the Guru. Then, with the second one: you can confess in the presence of your Guru, with a phone call or a message in today's time, the best is in person directly: "I have done this mistake, and I know now that all these mistakes are mistakes and sincerely in front of you, I make the promise that I am purify now". You can do that directly with the Buddha, the Dharmakaya, the ultimate object of refuge, through conventional holy objects like statues, scriptures, stupas...But with the Guru who is oneness with the Buddhas and came as an embodiment of the ordinary person, who is very similar to yourself, who is down to earth, it is powerful.

The whole reason of Buddha manifesting in ordinary Guru is to communicate with us, with the disciple, at their level. That is the whole purpose. They already achieved Dharmakaya, they do not need that. That is a skillful mean, the only way to drag the disciple from the mud of the samsara to the dry land of Pure Land, of the virtue of enlightenment. So, the Guru is the most powerful antidote to purify. The Third one, the remedy can be the name mantra or the advice of the Guru. There is no greater power than following Guru's advice. Then the fourth one, the power of restrain: making a commitment right in front of the Guru, there is nothing more efficient, powerful than that.

The Guru is the most powerful object of purification. That is why having a Guru, especially having a Root Guru, is so powerful for both accumulation of merits and purification of negativities.

How the Guru is at our side from life to life up to enlightenment

The Ten Teachings Sutra says:

Develop the following ideas with respect to your teacher. I have wandered for a long time through cycling existence, and they search for me.

If Guru had not come to existence in our life, we would continue to wander in cycling existence. For eons we have been wandered lost. At this very moment, we meet the Dharma, have some sense of interest in accumulating virtues, abstaining from committing non-virtues. In fact, all are the blessings driven from the Guru, whether you have already met the Guru or not, happen because there is a karmic link, there is karma committed from the past lifetime: its influence is benefiting us in some way. So, whatever goodness we have has to be understood as the Guru's impact.

I have been asleep having been obscured by delusion for a long time and they wake me, they pull me out of the depth of oceans of existence. I have entered a bad path, and they reveal the good path to me. They released me from being bound in the prison of this life. I have been worn out by illness for long time.

The Guru played the role of the doctor to diagnose our sickness: the illness of compounded suffering, the contamination of karma and delusions. The ignorant and the delusions will never claim they are a disease to us. Our ignorant mind, our deluded mind, our obscured mind always glorifies the mind of ignorance, the idea of ignorance, the idea of delusion. Even after meeting the Dharma, there are so many times when it is so obvious how we really so easily follow the demand of ignorance, the demand of delusion, like attachment, so easily convinced: when attachment arises, it is like everything makes sense, and make you feel nice, and convinces you, and you fulfill the urge of the attachment, you serve accordingly to the demand of this poison.

Even the Guru manifesting old age or some inconvenience of health, all this is a direct instruction, direct teaching to our heart to overcome one of the most stubborn, difficult obstacles: the permanent grasping, to life, to time, things which we are attached or to which we have aversion for. That is the hardest obstacle for our spiritual development. Even to realize the selflessness of the self and the phenomena, it is the most difficult obstacle. The permanent grasping serves as the hardest foundation to the grasping to the dualistic existence and inherent existence. To develop the altruistic attitude of love and compassion, the greatest obstacle is the self-cherishing attitude, which is again built on the false view of permanent grasping of self, of self-importance. Why is that? Because the self never changes, never dies. And the grasping for the needs of the self is always there. Liking is always liking; aversion is always aversion. So, whether to do with the path of wisdom of emptiness, or the path of method, of Bodhicitta lies on the hard concrete ground of the self-cherishing and self-grasping ignorant.

In order to overcome that, the Guru manifests, even though their body is an indestructible body, they already achieved the three bodies of the Buddha, the Vajra Speech, the Vajra Body, the Vajra Mind, for us to realize those antidotes, they manifest inconvenience with their health. Now, from us, the disciples showing a little bit of sign that we understood this as a teaching then create the causes for the Guru to not need to manifest that. So, whatever conventional manifestation of health issues, including of the treatments, to swiftly go through it, and swiftly recover, and continue to manifest healthy, youthful, manifesting the indestructible vajra existence for eons of lifetimes, students can gather to do collective practices and dedicate the merits for that.

III. Defining characteristics of the teacher or the Guru to whom the students rely on

So, we are talking about who is the Guru, what kind of qualities, characteristics that make that individual a Guru figure. So, the Panchen Lobsang Chokyi Gyaltzen in the Guru Puja says:

*You have the ten qualities suitable for one to teach the path of those gone to bliss,
Lord of the Dharma representative of all the Conquerors,*

...who in fact carries the ten qualities which we discuss later to teach the path of those gone to bliss, to transmit the wisdom that all the Buddhas have realized in the past. Guru is the embodiment, the representative, or the ambassador of the Dharma, of all the past, present and future Buddhas, who is the Lord of the Dharma, who is Mahayana virtuous friend. As a Mahayanist Guru, the Guru is your physical virtuous friend. Here, the virtuous friend is referring to the guide, the teacher, the mentor, the spiritual inspiration.

In some common language, when we call our Guru, we call him or her as a spiritual friend. That is not the same way as it sounds when we call among us spiritual friend. When we relate to the Guru as a spiritual friend, it has a subtler meaning, a greater meaning than just a normal Dharma friend.

Then there is the special prayer that we make before offering the food, especially Lama Yeshe, Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche in the FPMT, they used this prayer.

The Guru is Buddha

The Guru is Dharma

The Guru is also Sangha.

The Guru is the creator of all happiness.

To all the Gurus I make this offering

This particular verse comes from Tantric treatise. This teaching is coming directly from the Buddha who himself explained it.

The Guru is Buddha means the Guru is omniscient. Buddha has three bodies. In another way, you can also divide in 2, 3 or 4 bodies. So, there is the form body and the wisdom body. Buddha carries the quality of both form body and wisdom body. In fact, Guru is the one who is in fact illustrating the Buddha's qualities in the easiest access to the most ordinary base. Otherwise, generally, Buddha's wisdom body is almost not possible for us to perceive it. Only, when we achieve this state of omniscience, we are able to perceive the Buddha's wisdom body. We need to become Buddha to have access to that.

When it come to the Sambhogakaya body, like the manifestation of Tara, Manjushri, Vajrasattva, Chenrezig, all the Sambhogakaya aspects of the Buddhas' manifestation and the actual living form, like the person, only the Arya Bodhisattvas have access to that. We, ordinary being, we can only see the Tara in the picture, in the statue. Now the Nirmanakaya aspect of the Buddha's holy body, such as Shakyamuni Buddha's holy body, when Shakyamuni Buddha came into this world, we did not have the access to see him. He came but we were not around, I was not fortunate enough to be able to see him in person, I am just seeing him in picture, in statues.

So, now there is one Buddha for whom we can see not only the form Nirmanakaya aspect of the Buddha's holy body, but also his Dharmakaya, and his Sambhogakaya, the whole entirety of the Buddha. We can directly, with our own naked eyes, communicate with this Buddha, live with him, eat together, receive directly a Dharma discourse: that is the Guru. No other emanation of the

Buddha has that completeness. From that point of view, we can regard that we are the most fortunate one.

Those who really can meet their karmic infinite Guru, that itself, also, is a great play of one's meritorious karma, that you accumulated since beginning-less lifetimes. That opportunity, not everybody has it. Especially in our times, all of us here, maybe there is actually no more fortunate time than our time. Even though it is globally a degenerated time, it is a time where the compassionate Buddha, a living Guru form, like His Holiness the Dalai Lama, is teaching us, unbelievable. Even that ordinary manifestation, the Nirmanakaya, in the ordinary form of the Guru's aspect of the compassionate Buddha, we can see his enlightened qualities: those of a living Arya Bodhisattvas, real enlightened qualities.

Not all the Guru manifested that way, some Gurus are manifesting in quite a challenging way. It is quite difficult to easily witness the enlightened quality sometimes. But His Holiness the Dalai Lama is a completely living embodiment to our naked ordinary eyes, to our ordinary mind: he is a fully enlightened illustration of the enlightened qualities, and we have that merit, can you imagine? We have that fortune. Even during Shakyamuni Buddha's time, many did not have that fortune and we do not know about the future, but in our time, our whole lifetime, not just one limb like that, the infinite nectar of Dharma, is also provided.

Sometimes we met the Guru, but his or her teachings are so rare. His Holiness is so accessible, many teachings, abundance of teachings, not only abundance but immense of profundity, not only profundity but abundance of completeness: sutra, tantra, precepts, all Dharma in one. He offers all that because he upholds the greatest qualities of the Guru. One of the most important is the moral ethics, ethical discipline, no question about complete refuge precepts, entire individual liberation precepts, entire Sangha precepts, not easy to find a Guru in today's time, in this world, someone who live in the complete precepts, not easy.

Some hold the precepts from the age of thirteen, fourteen, sixteen. His Holiness hold them since the age of two: Sangha precepts, individual liberation precepts, now he is also one of the longest living people, 88 now, he is almost reaching the 90 years old. Almost 90 years old. Pure living in moral conduct. Can you find many like that? No. They are many who gave up. All the precepts they gave up away. But when it comes to His Holiness, it is unbelievable.

There are no higher precepts than the fully ordination precepts as liberation individual precepts. Shakyamuni Buddha holds the highest precepts, whatever Shakyamuni Buddha hold as precepts, His Holiness the Dalai Lama holds those precepts too. Exactly the same. And he is holding that precept in the most difficult time, in the most difficult environment, that means greater merits, greater impact. Now, he is not only holding individual precepts. But he holds all three precepts: individual liberation precept, the Bodhisattva precepts, the Tantric precepts. He is the lineage holder of the most obvious, most perfected preservation of the Bodhisattva conduct. And every opportunity he has, he transmits the Bodhisattvas vows to us. We have been nurtured by the blessings in our mental continuum, many, many times, up to today, throughout our lifetime, unbelievable.

There are many times, numberless eons of times where there was not even one person holding that precept to pass it down to the lineage. And we have a living compassionate Buddha. He is the emanation of all the Buddhas of course. Not only that, but he is also the direct emanation of the compassionate Buddha, of Bodhicitta. Now he transmits that to us through himself upholding those precepts. There is a saying: during one of the most critical degenerated times in the Dharma, there will be many transgressed precepts and many preaching others to practice precepts, when themselves will be corrupted with the precepts behaving worse than ordinary

people and will ask people to behave better. This time is coming, we are rushing to arrive to that time.

In such a critical time, a Guru like His holiness who has the courage to do what he does, no need to worry about his old age, the whole body, he still aspires to live over hundred years old, to teach us over fifteen years, this is the expression of the deepest compassion. If it was for him, as he does not have to carry this body, he could just enjoy Sukhavati. He is a living enlightened qualities Buddha illustrating for our ordinary mind, the embodiment of a Buddha, a Guru in a human form. What can be luckier than that, luckier than this position? There will not be anything more fortunate than that. In fact, we are in the luckiest time.

Then, His Holiness is the one who uphold the entire lineage of the 4 classes of Tantra. He is the holder of the Kalachakra, he is the holder of the Guyasamaja tantra, he is the holder of the Yamantaka tantra, he is the holder of the Mother Tantra, you know Heruka, Vajrayogini, etc...He is the lineage holder of all the Tantra of the four schools of Buddhism. And not just he claims that, but he transmits that, he nurtures that, he nurtures so many practitioners onto that path. Therefore, for us it is actually very easy in one way, to see Guru in Buddha, it is so easy with His Holiness.

And many of you have met Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche, no need to even question, no need to even ask twice if this person is a Bodhisattva or not, he is a living Bodhisattva's enlightened way of life. We have a direct transmission from this amazing living Guru.

Then, the Guru is Dharma. When they teach, they are the embodiment of the Buddha. They live in the practice. They truly see the world with the wisdom of emptiness. So, they live in that wisdom. The conventional aspect of the wisdom of Dharma, the attitude of loving, selfless, altruistic kind of like, they are completely detached to Samsara, to negativities, genuine sense of renunciation, altruistic sense of renunciation. They are able to understand the limitations of all other sentient beings, then, they completely submit themselves to dedicate their entire life in the service of sentient beings.

The Guru is also Sangha. Sangha is the person who upholds those precepts, upholds those practices.

The Guru is the creator of all happiness. Those fortunate ones. For a disciple who has intact Guru devotion, then this is how it is. You will follow accordingly what the Guru has shown to you. And as we talked this morning, that gives you the protection to purify the past karma, gives you the tool to transform all the present ripening of karma: even when facing something negative, you will be able to turn everything into something meaningful. It also protects our three doors from committing new karma for future lifetimes. Therefore, the Guru is the creator of all happiness.

Then in Lama Chopa:

*You are the Guru, you are the Yidam.
You are the Dakini, Dharma protector.
From now until enlightenment,
I shall seek no other refuge than you.
In this life, the Bardo, and all future lives,
Hold me with your hook of compassion,
Free me from the fears of Samsara and Nirvana,
Grant all attainments,
Be my constant companion,*

And guard me from interferences.

Besides Guru being Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, Guru is also Yidam. There is no greater Yidam than the Guru. If you put Guru aside and you just practice deity Yoga, even if it is Guyasamaja, Kalachakra, Vajra Yogini, no blessings. Even if the deity has the blessing, there is no breach to channel the blessings through our continuum. So, when the deity Yogas are cojoined with the Guru Yoga, then the actual meaning, or the essence, is delivered. We can practice our entire practices of deity Yoga in one deity which is the Guru Yoga. The sadhana of all deities can be practiced in one sadhana, upholding the precept of the Guru-Disciple samaya, or exercising our spiritual practice in expressing devotion in thoughts and actions as discussed, this morning, the meaning of these two practices.

Then, *Guru is the Dharma protector*. Sometimes, we practice this protector, that protector. If you practice Guru Yoga, you practice all the Dharma protectors. So, then Guru is the one who is forever the refuge to us, throughout the lifetimes, in the most difficult time: the transition from life to death. One of the most effective practices to be able to take clear light onto a path is when you remember the Guru when you are dying. During the death process, if you remember the Guru, just simply remember that you are resting your head on the laps of your Guru or you just completely have the refuge, complete confident of giving your life under the care of the Guru and no fear, nothing, do not worry about anything, just ready to dissolve your body, completely under the care of the Guru is the most powerful conditional causes to be able to take the natural clear light onto a path, it is even possible to actualize Buddhahood within the Dharmakaya actualization. You enlighten in the Dharmakaya.

Or just remember that something that has to do with the Guru, and that is never going away from your heart, maybe it could be one act of the Guru that inspired your heart so much. In difficult time, remember that. Or it could be one incident of your meeting in this life with the Guru, that has carved imprints of inspiration in your heart. Just by remembering that, you are very much under the refuge of the Guru. Or that one sound, maybe it could be a teaching, a recitation of mantra, or it could be just a laughter, it could be Lama Zopa Rinpoche's laughter, it is like so easy to remember, so uplifting. The sound, the look. Maybe just the sound in that difficult time, one may not have the physical strength, the mental to remember both laughing and the image of the smile, or the sound, maybe just the sound. Or maybe just the image of that just open big mouth laughing. Whatever it may be, something very simple like that, to do with the Guru, you remember that.

That will serve as a condition to ripen the natural clear light onto the path. Best enlightenment, if not, direct realization of emptiness, if not at least conceptual realization of emptiness, if not it will leave a very powerful imprint to take the next rebirth in the most favorable realm, which again will be directly nurtured by the Guru. So, usually I describe like this, so some of you may have already heard what I am going to say but it is very important. You may have many practices. You may have many initiations. You may have much knowledge. But still you need to prepare that one thing, that one Dharma, that one meditation object, to be ready in the most crucial time during the dissolution of the death, while you are losing your strength of memory, while you are losing strength of concentration, because of the overwhelming hallucinations naturally arriving in your mind, or maybe because dying of intense pain, there is almost no room to remember the Dharma, or maybe just an accident, only just a glimpse of time. There is not much time to even think about it. Shortest period of time.

And that one thing you can remember is like a switch, the moment you hold the switch, no matter how many hundreds of lives you lived, just because of one switch, everything is enlightened, because all throughout your life, you engage the most professional electrician to fix, it is as if the

Guru fixes the wiring in your entire system. There are so many things to remember. Ok, when we are young, when we are intelligent, we can remember, we memorized the Sutra there, the Tantra there, this ritual there, this Yana, that Yana, this philosophy. It is almost like you need a professional electrician to do all the wiring properly. As long as that wiring is done, as an imprint, you see the wiring is done inside the ceiling, which is invisible for us now, but is already there as an imprint. Saved.

Ok, now here, you as the owner of that journey, that home, that wall, you just need to know where the switch is. You do not need to know how the wiring is set. But you must have set it properly at least, one time. We have done, we have set the imprint of the wiring of the Lam-Rim, quite many rounds, not just one time you know. And we are good. We have done that. But there is a danger that in the darkest time if you did not know exactly where the switch is, even if everything is well done, no switch, no light. Exactly like that.

So, during the death process, you need to hold onto that switch only, only remember one thing. It is good enough. Just remember to hold the switch, you have everything in your hand. Everything is lightened. All the imprints will be lightened. I think I did mention these a few days ago. The amazing thing is that during the death process after the dissolution of the 80 conceptual thoughts, the moment the white appearance arrives surprisingly or amazingly by nature, that subtle state of mind does not have room for negative emotions, negative imprints to ripen, unbelievable. That is already so amazing. Because the store of the negative and positive imprints is almost, for me it is more negative for sure, but by nature of existence you know, we are kind of designed, or very much put into a position of having this consciousness into a life circle again and again. Whenever there is a period that you need to go through during the death process, on the basis of these 4 elements, there is a period before arriving to clear light, when the white appearance occurs, it is a great period, then red appearance, black-near appearance, our entire non virtuous imprints are almost shut.

So, if we have a strong imprint, a strong switch like imprint that is able to carry on before even our clinical death occurs, like I am lying on the lap of the Guru, I am resting my head, I am dying on the lap of my Guru until complete protection of the Guru, just that alone, or whatever example I have given before it is quite easy to be able to hold, even though there is so much pain going on, even though there is so much hallucination going on, but still it is quite possible to hold on to it. If you are able to pass that, able to carry on before your breathing stops, then this is quite stable afterwards, especially during the 80 conceptual thoughts you are able to manage to carry on that awareness, once the white appearance comes in your way, that switch is like as if the entire light would activate all the imprints of all the Dharma accumulated from beginning-less lifetimes to ripen. Everything will ripen.

That practice will switch on everything into light. Then the entire of those Dharma practices will harmonize: some practices of preliminary, some practices of embody practices, other practice, that bring the resultant kind of conditions to make possible the natural clear light to bring out the maximum benefit. That is the way all the spiritual practitioners are hoping for the best outcome.

That is why you do so many rounds of repetitions of malas, it is to leave imprints, so many rounds and retreats is to leave imprints, as strong imprints as possible, especially during absorption meditation to carve the imprints by using the subtle consciousness. That is why absorption meditation is so important: if you do not do absorption meditation, it is quite hard to leave intense imprints. The imprints are there, the imprints that you can utilize when the gross memories cease. When the gross memories cease the subtle mind become awake, like our gross mind is right now. So, at that time, whatever imprints you left in your mind through the meditative mind, which is like

the mind of the dead person, that subtle mind would act like the memory of the awake person at that time. So, it is like when the magic happens.

So, that is why throughout the life you just accumulate as much as possible of knowledge and practice. But there is one practice you need to make it totally familiar to you. I remember when Geshe Lama Konchog, maybe one or two hours before he stopped breathing, his classmate Geshe Kenchok, who was senior in his age, he even had difficulties to walk; walked down many staircases to sit near to Geshe Lama Konchog, and ask him: “at this very stage how do you maintain your practice?” And Geshela of course cannot say many words, it was just a few hours before he passed away, his breathing was very lengthy in and out, but softly he said: “I’ve already arrived in Vajra Yogini Pure Land”.

Roughly to understand, for him, it is like that one simple word, he did not describe many things, he did not even say “meditate on emptiness”, he said “I’ve already arrived in Vajra Yogini Pure Land”. So, we tried to discuss exactly what he tried to say. At that point, you hold onto the virtuous thinking that you already arrived at the destination that you are supposed to go. You have been preparing all throughout the life, you just decide you are going to arrive there, you hold onto that and that could be his switch. When the natural clear light occurs, there he actualized the absolute completeness of Vajra Yogini Pure Land. And all the signs have proven that.

For some people, it can be the refuge practice, for some people, it can be the guru yoga practice, for some people, it can be a mantra practice, for some people, it can be Chenrezig practice, for some people, Tara practice, it does not matter, or just be “om”, or “a”, or “om mani padme hum”. Something very very solid and you try to check it out, to check whether you are really impacting that or not, you go to bed when we go to bed and try to remember that switch.

First try to remember consciously when you are just settling onto the bed, and now you try to hold on to that and see how long you can hold on to that. By the time you are dosing of, initially you may forget, and gradually, in the morning when you wake up, you will come to a position “did I really sleep? or have I been meditating on this the whole night?”. You did go to sleep, but because you are able to dose of, in other words in the death process you are able to die off with that switch, and now when you wake up, it is the clear light, natural clear appearance of the light of the day, the clear light appearance, and there, you can almost not differentiate, as if you did not sleep, but actually you went to sleep.

So, we have to try it out. Sometimes, it will be just a bit of struggle even just to be able to hold on until you are dosing of, it will be quite hard. And sometimes, you will also be amazed, it is like very groggy, sleeping but still aware, forcing yourself to wake up, to remember, it will be amazing. So, you train again and again. The most extended one is the dream, in the dream state of the mind, you are able to remember that you are meditating on it and you are able to narrate that, when you wake up. You are able to remember. Sometimes we remember the dreaming time, isn’t? what we dream of, we have a very vivid idea when we wake up. Now, you have a very vivid idea of you are already asleep, but you are able to remember the practice and you are able to tell the whole description when you wake up. And you are able to do that a few times like that, then well done. But keep on until the last breath. Keep on, the more, the better.

So, this is really extremely crucial, otherwise we know so much: yes, the imprints are very important but then we may miss one of the most important chance because we do not know, next life we may be born in the formless realm, may be continue to be born as a spirit, formless realms for countless eons, or, worse than that we may be born in one of the Hell realms and then it is very hard. If we cannot liberate ourselves, or at least realize emptiness within this lifetime, then very hard. So, that is why, while studying many practices, you also need to consolidate the whole

practices in one simple practice, one simple yoga, and you channel like “Om Mani Padme Hum” day and day on that, you absorb meditate on, it almost like become your body in the shadow, it will never leave you anytime.

That is very important. Guru is the most powerful one to be able to do that. Even remembering Guru’s dog can bring so much benefit, no question about able to remember the wholeness of the Guru. Even remembering Guru’s dog, Guru’s pet also is so powerful.

A. The ten qualities of the Mahayanist Guru

Maitreya’s Ornament of the Mahayana Sutra emphasizes ten qualities of the Mahayanist Guru. There are also ten qualities to the Vinaya Guru providing precepts, ten qualities of the Tantric Guru who provides the initiation etc. All these ten qualities are there in the Guru, but the thing is with the obscurations that we have it is very difficult to detect these ten qualities. Even though Guru is enlightened, it is very difficult to see the enlightened qualities. Even though Guru already realized emptiness, it is very difficult to see that quality in the Guru because of our own obscurations. Guru already achieved Shamata, but we will not be able to detect that. Guru is already perfect in all morality, but we may not be able to witness that. Therefore, if you are enabled to witness all these ten qualities, then at least, maybe five, four, minimum three qualities.

First, the ten qualities:

Rely on a Mahayana teacher who is disciplined, serene, thoroughly pacified, has good qualities surpassing those of the student. That he is energetic, has a wealth of scripture knowledge, possessing loving concern, has a thorough knowledge of reality, skilled in instructing the disciple, and has abundance descriptiveness.

The first thing is **well disciplined**. Lama Tsongkhapa emphasizes that if the teachers themselves are not tamed, how are they going to tame their students, if they themselves are not subdued, how are they going to subdue? How are they going to condition to subdue the disciple? Therefore, the first one is moral discipline. So, from our ordinary environment, ordinary mind, when you look for a Guru, you try to look for someone who uphold as many vows as possible. So that is what the teachings says as many vows as possible for our ordinary mind. Otherwise, someone on the street as a beggar may be holding all the qualities required but we do not have the ability to see that. Only outwardly that, because of the limitations that we have, at least, outwardly someone who is observing as many precepts as possible, as mentioned before, three kinds of precepts: individual liberation precepts, Bodhisattvas precepts, Tantric precepts. From there, you can determine how much disciplined the teacher is.

So, if the objective of your spiritual path is just to take liberation precepts, you have no interest to learn any of the other part of the Dharma, then as long as that teacher has the lineage, has the practice, and has the capability to offer the Vinaya precepts that is good enough. But if your objective of training in the spiritual path is for full enlightenment, for the purpose of full liberation, then the teacher really needs to carry the qualities of all the three Guru’s qualities: the Vinaya Guru’s qualities, the Mahayanic Guru’s qualities, and Tantric Guru’s qualities. Because in order to actualize full enlightenment one needs to train this way.

It is just a matter of time, whether in this life or future lifetimes, one needs to train in all these precepts. So even in this life, in order to swiften your path, in order to achieve enlightenment through gathering all the precepts that exist in Buddha’s practice; that including the precepts of sangha, like the monks and nuns, then just relying on the lay teachers is not good enough, isn’t

it? In order to provide the sangha vows, the teacher has to be sangha. So given the opportunity to take all those precepts, enlightenment is possible within one lifetime. But knowing that life is so short, that the time to practice is so limited, you want to practice whatever practice is out there, you want to gather all the precepts: because the more the precepts you practice, the greater the precepts you practice, it really makes your practice more concentrated, right to take as many vows as possible?

So due to that reason then, it is best to choose the Guru who carries all the qualifications of the three types of Gurus, qualifications that I mentioned before in relation to Vinaya, Mahayana, Tantra. Then, since your main body practice is Mahayana, definitely you need someone that knows how to teach all the stages of the higher capable beings' path and not only that, someone who also have knowledge of the earlier middle and small capable beings' path. Without the complete knowledge of the Lam Rim, someone will not be able to guide us through the stages of the path, isn't it? Then, without entering the resultant path of the Tantra, again enlightenment cannot be achieved. So, whether you will practice Tantra now or later, one day you have to practice and the relation that you set with the Guru is not just for this life, the relationship once you set it is forever, so due to that reason, then if someone also carries the qualifications of Tantra that would be the best.

The discipline must be applied in all three doors. Therefore, the individual liberation vows are mainly to discipline the speech and the body, the outer doors to discipline them from misbehaviors. The Bodhisattvas vows are mainly to discipline the heart. The tantric vows are mainly to discipline the inner most subtle system like the subtle nervous system, drops, channels, chakras, subtle consciousness. Just disciplining our gross system is not good enough. Just disciplining our gross mind is not good enough. Just doing some external yoga, stretching is not good enough. You need to do the inner, the subtle yoga also.

And liberation vows are for the whole lifetime. The Bodhisattvas vows are for the entire rest of your existences. You carry the Bodhisattvas promise even if one is reborn in the Hell Realms. That precept will serve as a tool to ripen a bounce back to a higher rebirth. Similar goes with Tantric vows, it is forever. How will you discipline others if you are not disciplined yourself? One of the main purposes of being a Guru is to be an inspirational figure. So, someone who is living in the vows purely. Even Shakyamuni Buddha. He has everything. So why did he have to renounce everything and take all these vows? There is a great teaching right there.

If someone is not even observing the 5 lay vows, can you imagine? It is the foundation, the basis to inspire others. Not question about the rest of the vows. If they engage in the wrongness of the 5 false, that is devastating, very harmful. So, when you observe the qualities of the Guru you would like to take as your Guru in the future, you observe based on these precepts. There is nothing else to observe. You cannot base yourself on the quality of their speech. Some Gurus are mute. They observe silence. They will never talk to you, never give spoken teaching. Their living body is the teaching. The living life of them is the teaching. Some Gurus always stay in the cave. They will never come to you to reveal the Dharma. They may just say one word. And that is the entire Lam-Rim for you, the entire transmission for you.

Then, **serene**: best is someone who has already achieved Shamata. Best even special insight, if not Shamata, if not at least someone who is so peaceful within. The teacher's mind must be serviceable to the teacher, the person, serviceable; meaning only behaving according with what it is virtuously intended. That what is called serene. So, you will see for our ordinary mind, someone who is not angry, someone who is not jealous, someone who does not easily get attached, someone who is not selfish, someone who is not ego centered, someone who is not

depressed, someone who is so peaceful. The main observation is about the ethics based on those precepts.

And even the teachings have to be in accordance with the teachings the Buddha described, not anyhow in your way. So then, the transmission of the Dharma to you is mainly the transmission of the blessings to you. And the first blessings you need to receive is the moral discipline, the upholding of the precepts. Whenever you refer to your Guru, you smell the perfume of pure morality. When you relate to your Guru, the first thing that brings a smile to your face, brings a smile to your heart is like when you go to a lavender field. When you first think about your Guru the first thing is the pure morality.

From the disciple's side, of course as we discuss in the last session, we should regard the teacher as the Buddha, whether the Guru is actually Buddha or not. But from the Guru's side, he or she still needs to carry a minimum of qualifications, to be able to control their emotions, able to control their hearts. At least, whenever negative emotions arise, such as anger, if the Guru is still an ordinary being, he must at least timely be able to apply the antidote, and not to express the anger in violence through harsh word, harmful physical gesture disturbing yourself emotionally. So, you need to have a certain control, you need to have a certain ability to control that. In order to achieve that level, you need to live in the practice of training in concentration.

Then **thoroughly pacified** meaning the pacification of all delusions and obstacles: from his training in higher wisdom. The text is referring to emptiness: someone who is living in the practice of emptiness, selflessness, wisdom of selflessness and wisdom of emptiness. The best is someone who has already achieved the Dharmakaya. If not, someone who has least realized the non-conceptual direct realization on emptiness. If not at least, conceptually realizing emptiness, if not at least someone who understand emptiness well, and practicing, living in the practice of emptiness. When someone lives in the practice of emptiness, you have less grasping, less impulsive behavior, everything very easy to understand, very easy to harmonize, very easy to transform, very easy to say, "it is ok for me, yes, it is nasty but forgive, yes, it is not easy, but it is ok, it can be fine". Even someone slaps you and "yes, it is painful, but it is ok".

Then has good qualities surpassing those of the student. The student is here to learn enlightened qualities so, someone in the position of a Guru, sure he must have more illustrations of discipline, or more wisdom, more pacified. All these three higher trainings must be manifested in the living Guru.

Then **energetic**. When it comes to help the student, to offer the Dharma, he is so energetic. If when you come to ask for a teaching, the answer is "oh no again", this is an issue. When asked to teach the Dharma, that someone would say "thank you ok". He should be like Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche. The quality of Rinpoche was he never looked at the time, when offering the Dharma. Rinpoche would have never said, "I was asked to teach just one hour, then one hour sharp, you do not deserve more than that". Rinpoche never looked at the time. He would teach until the student felt "this is too much" cannot take it, not enough merits, whatever.

Many, many times when I was attendant, I witnessed Rinpoche limitless kindness in teaching the Dharma. There was this one time in Singapore around 8 o'clock, or 7 o'clock, he started to teach, full house, and Rinpoche went until the next morning 8 o'clock. One closed eye, and by the time in the morning, only the attendants, the keeper, and one or two left, all the others, they were all gone, because they had to go for work, to attend the family responsibilities, but Rinpoche, though nobody is there, he was still carrying on. Unbelievable. Really uplifting with this quality "energetic". Then, he would see one insect, he would give 100%-time, one person 100%-time. Some of you may have tried to get an appointment with Rinpoche, you maybe never made it,

because Rinpoche is always, always with people, always doing something, benefiting others. Like he did not have enough time in this human timetable, only because of that. It is not that you are not important, and he does not want to see you. It was not like that.

Those of you who got the chance to see him, from his side he was completely settled with you, he has no time, until his attendant has to chase you up, has to remind “we do not have a lot of time Rinpoche, ok now you have to stop, he would give you hundred per cent of his time, his existence to you, his care, his wisdom. You just went to say hello and the entire Lam-Rim teachings will be delivered to you. Unbelievable. This is very rare. Almost no one out there is just like that. This is called energetic. Unbelievable.

There was that one time, we went to Lawudo. That time I was Rinpoche’s attendant. I did attendant for three years. When we came down, before we came down, we did a whole week of Nyung-na. When Rinpoche is taking part of a Nyung-na retreat, it goes 24 hours, isn’t it? Now, in the last day, we have to rush to Lukla, because we have a flight on the next morning, early morning, back to Kathmandu. After that, the third day Rinpoche has to fly for America to receive some teachings or something from Geshe Lhundup Sopa, in a medicine or something like that.

But then, first we were supposed to leave early morning, right after the last session of the Nyung-na, then quickly have breakfast then leave. But then there, after we finish the last session, he remembered that these Thame nuns requested the oral transmission of Nyung-na and he went to offer now, because we did not know when we will have the opportunity to come back and the Nyung-na text is quite thick. And the moment he opened it, he started first with a few hours of lengthy introductory teachings, the whole Lam-Rim went there, then lunch was over, finished, no lunch, then after that I think the actual oral transmission was finished even in one hour or even half an hour, because he read so fast.

But he went up to 4 or 5 o’clock. Then Rinpoche’s sister Ani Samten, obviously seeing that Rinpoche did not eat any food and is leaving. Rinpoche hardly comes to Lawudo. So, she is already crying, the main thing is that she is concerned that Rinpoche had not eaten anything, that now he may just leave, he may be rushed before having the time to eat anything. So, she prepared a lot of potatoes, and dishes, potatoes pancakes, bowls of potatoes, potatoes this, potatoes that. So many different types of potatoes meals. Then, he looked at Venerable Anila and immediately he settled there, and he just pleased her, and he was just eating, making another offering, all the Buddhas...

Then, by the time when we need to leave off course, we were forcing him to “please move”, then maybe around 5 or 6, there is already a little drizzling that is happening, then, there is a mist coming. It is quite dark already. So, we are using torch lights. We are about an entourage of 12 – 15 people, we want to lead the road first. After one or two steps, Rinpoche asked us to stop and said he wanted to lead the road, because the way we are leading the road was just rushing and the sound was quite rough, because of the stone’s chips under the shoes. So, the moment he said he wanted to lead, after one step, he saw a frog there, so, he spent about half an hour blessing the frog with mantras, Rinpoche was screaming with mantras, then dedications prayers. The frog had already run away quite far, longer gone, but Rinpoche was still like this, dedicating prayers for the frog.

Then, after one step, there is an ant crawling, now Rinpoche is really using the torch to make sure he does not miss any ant, nor miss a frog. From there to Lukla, we arrived at 3 o’clock in the morning, just for that short distance. So, when we arrived at 3 o’clock, he just turned his eyes this way, there was this big rock, with written mantras, maybe Guru Padmasambhava’s mantra, a lot of mantras there. He said we need to do Guru Puja here. Of course, we just have to sit on the

ground, the clothes are wet, and everything. Because of course before that, already a lot of things happened: every little stone stupa, whenever he sees them, he goes around, even makes circumambulations, all our clothes are wet and covered with mud.

One of the other monks wanted to lead the chanting, the Umze, then the moment he started to lead the meditation, Rinpoche stopped him and said he wanted to be the lead Umze. The moment he started to chant, there was this one verse that he chanted loudly, then paused, and start meditating completely silent for so long. Then, there was this monk, called Tsiril Ngodrup, one of the senior monks who stayed in Lawudo to help Anila Samten. We are supposed to arrive sometime in late afternoon or something, at Lukla, because there is a stupa Rinpoche asked to build and we are supposed to consecrate that. And this monk has been going down and up three or four times and he was honestly very tired. He used to be a very funny monk.

This monk moved right in front of Rinpoche, so close. And whenever Rinpoche was carrying on meditating, he would put his palms together saying, “Rinpoche Kyab Su Chhi Yo”. “Rinpoche, I take refuge in you”. So loud that he wakes Rinpoche up from the Samadhi. But the way he did it is so cute, you can see he is so exhausted, if it is not for inspiration or the Dharma, I think he might have been super angry, because he was so exhausted, it is not going the way he planned, but at the same time he is so inspired by Rinpoche. So, it is a mix of this tiredness and inspiration. And Rinpoche again very steadily wakes up and he would just go the second line, then again, like that until 7 o’clock. From 3 o’clock to 7 o’clock.

Then, after there were people waiting since the day before. All the villagers brought plates with fresh barley, then big salt, some butter, for auspiciousness, and they are asking to bless their home. There were so many. So, he fulfilled this person’s wishes, go into this house, and everybody has altars, so, the moment he sees altars, he does the 35 Buddhas prostrations. The moment he sees people, he starts to teach Lam-Rim. We were just going into this house half an hour-one hour, then this house, half an hour-one hour, by the time we had finished this short town there, it was nighttime, around 9 – 10 o’clock. All day, you know there is no food, just going in and out. Then after that we must go, we already missed the flight, all the program and the flights to America will have to be reorganized.

One villager thought Rinpoche must be so tired that that would be amazing if Rinpoche would ride a horse. He presented a horse to Rinpoche as an offering. Rinpoche accepted it and assigned one of the attendants to make sure to recite non-stop mantras loudly to the horse. You have to carry the horse, because off course, nobody was allowed to ride on the horse, all night long. So, anyway, that is energetic. Unbelievable, you never see someone like that. That is the quality of the Guru.

Just think about very much his whole life, after he established the Kopan monastery, maybe around 1970 something, then the FPMT, the centers were developed around the world and they are so many, and he is always all around the world. It is not to compare. I do travel. It is very tiring, physically, you can see it is very torturing, especially after 40 years old. It is not the same as before. People say after you cross 40, there are quite big changes. I said “no, it is just your mind, no, no”. Physically it does make changes. And every week you just change the environment, change the time, change the people, change the food, change the weather. And Rinpoche lived his whole life like that.

Always on the road. And that time he does not have iPad or else. All his luggages are all his texts, to transmit them to others, so he is carrying all those texts. Since he is flying so much, traveling on the road so much, he does not really use many of those texts, but it is so powerful to bless.

Just having that idea is a proof of his kindness. He just kept moving everywhere, just to go and bless. Amazing.

When we are studying in the monasteries, because we have few teachers, some teachers keep repeating the same thing again and again, and teach for long hours, we do not really like that kind of teachers, we want that kind of teachers that would teach little, short and bye bye. But the thing is it is our attitude which was wrong. As a student we need to have the merits to be able to appreciate that kind of teacher. Without many merits, we will not appreciate a teacher who teaches so much that you get tired. You want to go to rock and roll disco dancing or you want to go to a long-winded teacher of the Dharma, I am sure you want to go rock and roll? I will not go to the long-winded Dharma teaching. Even if you pay so much money to go to the club, most people will still choose to go there. Even if you offer Dharma for free, people will not get interested to listen. The more the profound you teach, the more authentic you teach, and less people are interested. So, it is a play of merits.

The way Rinpoche puts effort to teach to the disciples is because teaching is the only way to liberate sentient beings. You know all the Buddhas come in our way, but they can't wash away our sins, they cannot transfer their realizations onto us, the only way is through teaching.

Then, has a wealth of scriptures knowledge.

Off course, we need to learn correct Dharma teachings. If the teacher does not have a proper **knowledge**, then, if it is taught wrongly, it ruins countless eons of life. Most of all, it can ruin almost the only one chance to enlighten. It sounds like this life, you were taught mistakenly, you were guided wrong teachings, wrong practice, that would be the worst disaster. You really need to have a proper training to be able to offer Dharma. Offering Dharma teachings is very serious. If something goes wrong, it is heavy karma, because you really shut the door to one of the biggest potentials, not to achieve the potential. Those who meet the complete Dharma, especially Tantric Dharma, you really came across the potential of enlighten within this very lifetime, but are given wrong teachings, can you imagine? The impact would be a disaster. So, it is so serious.

Such as our present Gurus like His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche...whatever they teach, they teach it in accordance with the intent of this past great Masters, all the way up to the Buddha. So, for Dharma knowledge just being intelligent is not good enough. The Dharma path is the path that already has been examined by someone traveling into it. That someone actualized that path and revealed that experience in the writing. It is that word interpretation we need to cultivate. Therefore, when we go to receive teachings, we are not actually going to get new words, a new kind of ideas, it is more about blessings, more about authenticity. That is the way the realizations come about. Therefore, the teacher has to go to through thorough rigorous study.

Lama Tsongkhapa in The Middle Length Lam-Rim says:

That said, if a teacher has scriptural knowledge and realization but these are inferior or equal to those of the disciple, that is not enough. Someone with "superior qualities" is needed. As Collection of Indicative Verses (Udānavarga, 25.5–6) says:

People relying on someone inferior sink,

Those relying on one of their peers stay the same,

Those who rely on the foremost achieve excellence.

Therefore, rely on your superiors. If you rely on any such masters, endowed with ethics, complete peace, and extensive superior wisdom, you'll even end up ahead of them.

So, you need on a teacher that is so good that without delaying much you will become better than the teacher.

Maitreya's Ornament of the Mahayana Sutra keeps on explaining:

Possessing loving concern.

Then if the teacher has the heart of loving concern for the students, then the teacher will really be genuine, honest, and relate to you only to benefit you, because his only concern is your happiness, isn't it? Then, when you have the **loving concern**, then, you have the compassion. Then, the teacher will never do anything that can be an inconvenience to your spiritual path. So, again when we talk about inconvenience, in the "samsaric" way, when the true teachers give you homework, teach, you are really going to start to feel inconvenient to Samsara; because there are no praises, what we are normally doing, the Samsara thing, the true teacher will not give you any comfort, and that for some people can be very painful. So, meeting a true teacher, a qualified teacher leading you on the path emotionally, physically, it is not like you immediately you start to enjoy liberation. No. Maybe you start to feel like hell. Even to get through the transformation, the changes, that transition is very harsh.

I remember my late Guru used to say that when you really teach the real Dharma, it is very much like getting into the heart of the student and pointing all your faults. And you must point all the faults. Faults of your ignorance, faults of your desire, faults of your anger. And if you do not have the real purpose of the Dharma, that is very offensive. These days they may sue you. That can be very harsh. You cannot not even bless properly the disciple. If the disciple does not have the ripen qualities, then, when you touch the disciple's head to bless him or her the traditional way, the Guru might be sued. That is why in today's time, if you are not careful, in the name of Dharma, maybe just do very happy things, comfortable things: this is ok, that is also ok. But maybe never really get into the actual zone of the Dharma, because that is not an easy subject. That is not easy to listen.

For example, about Guru devotion, not easy. Not many Gurus would really only confidently talk about Guru devotion, because it is as if they are talking about themselves. Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche used to talk about Guru devotion. He always talked about Guru devotion. The courage. Because that is the subject that matters. You must address it, because that is the real matter. And in the same way, Lama Zopa Rinpoche always talked about the suffering in the Hell Lower Realms, the suffering of the six Realms. It sounds like very depressing. But that is the subject you really need to discuss, because to really enter the path of Dharma, you need to really gain renunciation from suffering, renunciation from the causes of suffering. Without talking about them, how to gain renunciation? Without gaining renunciation about them, how to get renunciation? And sometimes, in the name of Dharma, you try to avoid talking about that. You try to avoid talking about the Guru subject. It is nice. The conversation is nice. But the real kick of the Dharma does not happen. So, tricky.

Thorough knowledge in reality and skilled in instructing the disciple.

Why is he specifically speaking about that? Before he already said, "thoroughly pacified". He was talking about emptiness, now he is talking about "**thorough knowledge**" of reality. It means that is the ultimate teaching that we need to deliver the teaching on emptiness. Yesterday we talked about the reasons why: as long as we do not actualize the antidote of the root cause of all the limitations of Samsara, the innate ignorance, we are only healing the symptoms, we are never able to overcome the root cause. All the Dharma is beautiful, beneficial, antidote to negativities, but as far as the root ignorance is concerned, only emptiness can overcome it.

I also mentioned the statement that the 84,000 teachings of the Buddha were all for the purpose to make us understand emptiness, the 84,000 different teachings, three wheels of turning, numberless wheels turning, everything is intended to make us understand emptiness and make us realize emptiness. So, the Guru you are going to take as a Guru, one of the knowledge areas he must be knowledgeable on is the teaching on emptiness. Otherwise, he may teach many Dharma, but not the essence. You may not be able to receive the essence.

The purpose of Dharma is to subdue our mind by overcoming delusions and that can be done only with the correct antidote. The correct antidote to overcome delusion is the wisdom of emptiness. The result of practicing the Dharma is to achieve Dharmakaya, the state of full enlightenment. To achieve the state of Dharmakaya, you need to have the right cause for that, because the wrong cause will not produce the expected result. Therefore, you need the right cause: the right cause of the Dharmakaya must be the earlier mentioned, the wisdom of emptiness. That wisdom of emptiness is only developed through correct applications of the analysis, such as the reasoning of the king of reasoning, such as the reasoning of interdependent arising as a meaning of emptiness etc...

So, due to that reason, the teacher may know many, many knowledge, but if the teacher does not know correct knowledge on emptiness, then they cannot lead us to the path. Therefore, it is specifically mentioned here: the teacher needs to have a qualification on the correct knowledge on emptiness: best if someone already realized it; if not at least someone who has a correct, exact understanding of the intention, the emptiness understanding, such as Nagarjuna's, such as Buddha's intention of that.

Then, skilled in instructing the disciple.

All the Gurus have all different ways, different methods to communicate. **Skilled in presenting the teaching:** the Guru, as a teacher, knows that whatever teaching you teach to the disciple, the ultimate goal is to make the student understand emptiness: he has to find all the different tunes to lead the disciples there. So, that is what you mean by skillfulness. Skillfulness does not mean we are teaching all sort of things, but my ultimate purpose is to make sure my student will realize emptiness and to do that, you have to plan the process. This is the journey. I will lead, I will teach the student like this.

Therefore, not like a normal teacher who comes and goes and once a while teaches, you also need a Guru lifelong dependence. You need somebody who in fact regards you as a disciple, so that the Guru can be able to be skillful, so he can plan, can have a planning for you, have a direction for you. One of the ways to understand skillful is to have all the tools so that whatever the disciples need, you have to offer to them.

Another way of understanding "skillful", is that you carry some skills in psychology to understand the disciple's mindset, best is to have clairvoyance, so you can deliver the teachings accordingly, not in the way the disciple asks, because the disciple can request teachings maybe just based on emotions, or even ignorance.

The Guru is never discouraged. The teacher must not be reluctant to teach and work for his disciple regardless their level of intelligence. So, from the teacher's side, whatever background the student comes from, whatever level of intelligence, whatever manners the disciple comes in your way: it may be very lazy manner, very disturbing manner, etc., the teacher never gives up on the student. The teacher always carries the skillful means to take care of his disciple and nurtures the disciple.

Sometimes, in the monasteries, these teachers adopt a student, most of time those students are really young children. Initially the child does not have faith, does not understand what a teacher is and the child still carries a child's innocent mind. He just wants to play, just wants to mess up with things. But the teacher's way of taking care of the child is really like the most loving parent, the most loving mother. How the most loving mother will take care: they have a plan for this little boy or girl. Then gradually the teacher is going to be more and more tough and more and more giving advanced teachings. They will guide. Then if the student messes up, the teacher will never give up on the student. So, basically the student turns out to be the worst person in the whole universe, the teacher still holds you as the dearest in his or her heart. That kind of relation is that will be established from the Guru's side.

B. The importance of knowing those ten qualities and to take our time

Therefore, it is so beneficial for us to know these ten qualities and try to find those in the Guru. It is worthwhile giving your time, to study from that person; to study initially regarding the teacher just as a normal teacher, not as a Guru, and engage in the teacher's activities. It can be projects, it can be any activities, like volunteering. Then from there, you not only know the aspect of the teacher on the throne or facing towards you, but you start to also see the real human side, the real nature of that person, because all these qualities need to be carried as a person's nature, not just as a make-up. When you teach you teach all the flowery wonderful things. In front of the student, you behave like a Buddha. But the moment the student goes away you become like maras; you behave like a monster. You cannot do that. So, you need to spend time with this teacher. There are serious practitioners, serious motivated practitioners, they even dedicated over twelve years, some even twenty, thirty years and are still learning, but have not established Guru-disciple relationship yet. Because sometimes, it could be your mistake, it could be the teacher's mistake, it could be your limitation or it could be limitation from the teacher, somehow, it is still difficult to get fully inspired. So, it takes time. The best platform is to study, to take time to study with that person, then get involved in activities.

If one does not have all the ten qualities, but has seven, six, five, or even three qualities, the main quality is having more knowledge than the disciple, well-disciplined and having great compassion. Some texts talk about the three qualities: the good training in three higher trainings: good morality, good concentration, meaning good control of your emotion, then wisdom.

In another words, ethics is the number one. On top of that, someone that is compassionate. Then, knowledgeable. These three things. As long as you see these three things which is quite easy to spot, then you can take that person as a Guru.

Then, as a Mahayanist Guru, someone who is able to transmit the Mahayanist teachings, like the teachings on Bodhicitta, someone even able to grant the Bodhisattvas precepts, that is the way you can take your practice even further. If it is a Vinaya Guru, on top of these ten qualities, one of the qualities is that they need to live in the Vinaya precepts. Among the Vinaya precepts, the higher ones are the full-ordination precepts. Therefore, the best is someone who has full-ordination Sangha vows; if not, novice; if not, preordination; if not, minimum holding five lay vows. Even if the teacher is a lay person, that someone must be upholding those five lay vows as a minimum. But, if you as a student aspire to become Sangha, then you should choose someone who is holding the Vinaya vows. They also need to know how to do the precepts ceremonies.

Then, for tantric Guru, someone that carries the lineage of initiations, because the main purpose of having a tantric Guru is to open the door to you of the initiations. In order for you to do the initiation, you need someone who has the lineage of the initiation, not only the initiation lineage, but someone who has done the commitments retreat; not only someone who did the commitment retreat, but someone who has the interest in the tools and all the ways to transmit

you the initiation; then not only the initiation in Kriya Tantra, but also in the Highest Yoga Tantra, which is the generation and completion stages tantra. So, to practice the completion stage, you can only practice it with HYT practices. Therefore, you need someone who is practicing like that. So, these are the qualities to have in addition to the rest.

Being someone's Guru is a big responsibility. Sometimes nowadays, you just go through a few months of course, and you have this intelligent training through your school, it is very easy to understand the teaching. Then after, that immediately you become a Guru. There are numberless Gurus out there. It is so easy to become a Guru. In fact, it is not easy to claim yourself as a Guru, or to accept yourself as the Guru of somebody, because to be a Guru, you need to have those basic qualities and need to carry the responsibility of someone's enlightenment, someone's liberation. Shakyamuni Buddha, Lama Tsongkhapa, all the Masters have emphasized that before subduing others, you need to be subdued. Without subduing yourself you have no tools to subdue others. Spiritual Gurus' job is to cause and condition the disciples' untamed mind to subdue and liberate them that way.

In today's time, it is not easy to find a teacher who carries these complete perfected ten qualities, it is not easy, it is a very degenerated time. Then the main reason for that, is the degeneration of our own merits, our own karma, our own time, as mentioned before, it would require a lot of merits to meet perfect qualified Guru. Due to that, it is so difficult to find such a qualified Guru with the full qualifications. Sometimes the Guru may be the Buddha but then, due to the obscurations that we carry, the thickening imprints or misperceptions and impure perceptions; by the distractions of negative emotions, like ego, sometimes all that blocks us to see through those good qualities in others. Sometimes due to the influence of always hearing negative things about others, always seeing negative things about others, overthinking negative thoughts about others, when we open our ears, open our eyes, when we relate to others, you always look for false, always see the false so easily or project false on others easily.

IV. Defining characteristics of the student who relies on the teacher.

After finding such a qualified Guru, then established the Guru-disciple relationship, in order to receive the maximum benefits, the student also need to have qualities. The spiritual advantages will be accomplished fully when a qualified disciple relies on the qualified teacher. If the disciple is not equipped in those 3 or 5 qualities, then even if the Guru, by his or her own side, is a real Buddha, he will not be able to fulfill all the spiritual purpose of the disciple's journey. The qualities of both the Guru and the student have to come together.

As for the qualities of the Mahayanist Guru, the teachings are mainly based on Maitreya's work, the Mahayanist Sutra, which is widely relied on by all the different traditions of the Tibetan Mahayanist Buddhism or those of the followers of the Mahayanist path. Maitreya's work harmonized what Buddha taught in the Paramita Sutra.

As for the characteristics of the student, the teachings rely mainly on Aryadeva's Four Hundred Stanzas. Here, Aryadeva says:

It is said that one who is nonpartisan, intelligent, and diligent is the vessel for listening for the teachings. The good qualities for the instructor do not appear otherwise nor do those of the fellow listeners.

As a minimum, the student must have those three qualities.

Nonpartisan. Certain translations mention "impartial". There may be many explanations. What I understand is that you must be very clear about your objective of relying on the Guru, your purpose of practicing Dharma, purpose of choosing the spiritual path. A clear direction without the bias of relying on your own ordinary mind pursues, and ordinary mind's objectives, because that is tainted by worldly concern. Because even when you pursue the Dharma, you will pursue the Dharma for worldly purposes, for temporary benefits.

The purpose must be to be liberated, the liberation, enlightenment, especially for Lam-Rim students the purpose is full enlightenment for the benefit of numberless sentient beings. Here "nonpartisan" means clear mind, not orientated towards your own interest. You need to use that clear mind. You need to have the clarity and honesty about why you establish the relationship with the Guru, why you took refuge, why you entered the Mahayanist path, why you take Bodhisattvas' precepts, why you want to take initiation, why you want to do retreat, why you want to be Sangha.

Without that in the name of the Dharma you may pursue Samsara, in the name of the Dharma you may waste your time, committing karma for samsara, instead of committing meritorious deeds, meritorious virtues for enlightenment, liberation. If this quality is not intact when you rely on the Guru, you rely on the Guru for worldly purpose. You do not pursue real Dharma, real instructions for Dharma. You just simply ask for observations, about how to be rich, healthy, have long life, how to increase wealth. Many of us do that. If we are not careful, we may fall into that category. We may receive initiations of Long life deities for long life or Medicine Buddha for good health. Not for enlightenment and that is wrong. Good health will come by the way but the motivation of the practice of Medicine Buddha has to be for purifications of the causes of the diseases, which is karma and delusions, and to gain freedom from cyclic existence, then actualize genuine sense of liberation and enlightenment.

You may accumulate merits for better rebirths but not for full enlightenment, it is still bound by karma and delusions. In the same way, if you attend this Dharma discourse by carrying a

motivation just to feel uplifted because your life is a bit stressful, with a bit of inconvenience, so when you hear some Dharma teachings you feel some sense of comfort, that is not good enough, you have to listen to this course for liberation and enlightenment purpose. Then all the comfort and all the temporary gains will come by the way.

If the relationship you establish with the Guru is not for liberation, but is for worldly purpose, then, you do not have that quality of nonpartisan mind. Nonpartisan mind is having clear purpose of enlightenment. Then, from there, when whatever ways you relate with the Guru is for enlightenment purpose, for liberation purpose, nothing to do with worldly purpose; then, at least from your side, whatever way the Guru relates to you does not matter, because from your side, everything is going to be a cause of liberation and enlightenment, only because of that motivation.

The purpose of the relation with the Guru is only to cause me to understand all my flaws as flaws, by providing both guidance and teachings, especially to identify all the delusions in me as delusions, the ignorant in me as ignorant, and providing the right correct antidote to that. Then its whole purpose is to purify the entire samsara, entire negative actions of body, speech and mind, its purpose is to progress on all the stages of the path, developing your heart, all the altruism, altruistic attitude, wisdom, to abide in an absolute state of full enlightenment, absolute liberation. And for that, even at the cost of my life, I have to be able to devote to this person in the practice of the nine attitudes we are going to discuss further.

Even if that person that I regard as a Guru appears to me as behaving like a street dog, I will still take that as a teaching to subdue my ego, subdue my delusions and progress on my path. Even if that Guru totally abandoned me, I would regard that as the best teaching for me to overcome my samsara and actualize full liberation. So in short, you need to have the mind of non-partisan, meaning your purpose is liberation from entire ocean of samsaric existence and its causes: karma and delusions, nothing to do with any form of worldly concern in relation to your Guru, in relation to the Dharma, in relation to be in the sangha community, and you have a clear heart that “I will never be distracted by any worldly concerns, worldly matters, worldliness of behavior”.

Then, the second one is *intelligent*. The intelligence here is merely referring to having the discrimination of knowing what to be adopted, what to be abandoned. As a minimum, for someone who is aspiring for true Dharma, you need to have a basic wisdom of the limitations of the ten non-virtues actions and the advantages of the ten virtues actions: of samsara and karma. It means you know what Dharma is, what is not Dharma. So how to define Dharma and non-Dharma, what is worldly Dharma. Anything beneficial for liberation and enlightenment is Dharma. Anything is beneficial for worldly purpose is non-Dharma. Anything that is not beneficial for liberation and enlightenment is not Dharma. What boost our delusions or what create the causes for liberation and enlightenment. Even with a correct motivation, without basic discrimination, you may follow the wrong path, mistaken instructions by mistaken speakers.

So, if Guru relates to you with anything that is not concerned by liberation and enlightenment, you should put aside. You do not have to criticize the Guru, you do not have to argue with the Guru, you just must have the wisdom to put aside, even if the Guru says so. Then, if it is anything that is beneficial for liberation and enlightenment, even how harsh it is, physically, emotionally, how harsh it is, follow, just adopt it. That is the nonpartisan.

Because when the qualified Guru relates to you as a disciple, all the technics are not the smooth ones, all technics are not pleasant, some technics can be very hard. Some technics can be beaten you up. That does not happen these days, but in our time, there was a lot of beating. When the whip, when the slap comes in your way, you need to have this wisdom to see that as powerful as an initiation, as powerful as the mantra dispelling negativities, or that kind of antidote that is

totally cleansing, detoxing. And the harder the Guru hits, the greater the initiation you receive. The harder the Guru hits you, even the hardest one, when the breath almost stopped, there, I think you received the highest yoga tantric initiation; slightly lighter one, yoga tantra, then Kriya tantra, action tantra. And you long for the highest yoga tantra.

Usually, it does not really happen that harsh, but you do get a lot of slaps, because we are very naughty. If you did not get those slaps, and the whips, no way for any little progress to be possible, looking at the wildness of the distractions, it is not possible. It is painful if you want to interpret literally, but blissful if you interpret it with the qualities of a ripen disciple. In the past, many disciples got a slap by the Guru, and you looked at the mirror and “wow I got a handprint of the Guru on my cheek. My cheek becomes a holy place to visit, because I have a handprint of the Guru. It does not work these days, and it is also not necessary.

Times have changed. But during our time, sometimes from the Guru’s mouth it was only scoldings, you would not hear anything else. But those scoldings were the nectar. You did not realize that those are the real nectar. If he did not shout that way, I think we may not have actualized the progress that we did. Therefore, whenever the Guru shouts at you, we need to have that discriminative wisdom: you understand this is a very powerful mantra, deity powerful mantra dispelling the unseen, hidden spirit harms, those very heavy karmas, ...So when you relate like that, it is like “wow”.

Even now, there is so many pleasant things happening with the Gurus. For example, with Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche, I am just giving a little example from my side, with Khyensur Lama Lhundrup, with Geshe Lama Konchog, the most cherished things were the scolding times, the slap that you receive. There are many amazing things, playful things, many picnics happened. But the real things that you really remember that you really feel like that helped so much is that whip, that very harsh whip, and that mark you got on your bottom, or I do not know where, now it is like a sparkling kind of light form, light in there (gesture showing the heart). Honestly speaking that thing that you miss the most is the scolding, not the rest, not the rest of the teachings. Especially now you start to scold people, no one is scolding you. Now, you really miss someone scolding you.

I think in today’s time, not only in the West, even in Monasteries, your emotions become the authority, your ego is the authority, your feelings are the number one. There is not even some kind of shared authority with your Guru. That is why the Guru also must talk very sweet thing. The Guru must give presents. In the past, can you imagine? to invite Atisha to Tibet, Yeshe O and his nephew Jangchub O, sacrificed themselves to gather presents, they collected gold. It is not because of Guru needs the gold, just see the preciousness.

Even Milarepa and Marpa, Marpa did not take Milarepa before Milarepa had a proper thing to give him. It is not because of Marpa being greedy, Marpa is very rich. Milarepa has nothing, his home is destroyed, most of his family is also dead, he is almost homeless. Marpa’s wife is a Dakini. Even she found her husband was very greedy, this person is longing for teachings, but my husband is expecting gifts first. That is why Marpa’s wife gave him a jewel (this was given by Marpa to her). But she thought she could hide and give it quietly to Milarepa and told him, maybe you offer him that first and maybe he will allow to sit in the teachings. She did it. Milarepa was bitten up, scolded. And Marpa scolded his wife too. He immediately knew. This is my wife’s jewel. This is not your offering, get out. It sounds unbelievable.

Then after that, he put so much effort on his own to accumulate merits. Just to prepare the vessel: there is so much pollution, negativities, that need to be purified, and accumulate a lot of good things in his system, the merits. Otherwise, even if Marpa showers him with teachings, he may

hear the philosophy, he may hear a lot of words, but they cannot go into his heart. The blessings will not go into his heart. So, he went around and collected means and finally was able to make one a copper basin. But he has nothing to put into, because he had no means. He only can afford that. But Marpa knew this was his own offering, not someone's else. His own sincere hard work. So, Marpa banged the basin. Because it is an empty vessel, it made such a loud sound. And Marpa said "throughout your spiritual training you will have so many hardships with material resources, because you created the auspiciousness of empty vessel to offer to your Guru, but you are going to be one of the most famous sages, because the sound is very good".

And it happened exactly that way. Milarepa throughout his journey was always in empty caves, no one around, no food, no clothes. Initially so many abused him. Even thieves, hunters, he has nothing in his cave, they just came to steal from him, and since he has nothing, they really lifted him up and banged him on the ground. It happened like that. So many hardships, but he never gave up. Honestly among the thousand over years of Tibetan Buddhism tradition, there is no greater famous master than Milarepa, isn't it? So, creating the auspiciousness, showing the respect, verbally, physically, if you are serious about spiritual development, that is the number one.

After that **diligent**. Certain translations mention joyous effort, persistent and constant practice. Then, even with the correct motivation, you are "intelligent" plus, you have received correct Dharma instructions, you meet a qualified Guru, you meet the complete Dharma, but if you do not practice persistently, then you will not gain the realizations, or the benefits of the practice.

That I think I already shared. Gampopa's story about Milarepa, that is the diligence. That is the teaching about diligence. Diligent. As a student we need to work very hard. We need to work harder than the Guru, because the Guru already did the homework, the Guru already passed the exam. The disciple, the student, ourselves, we need to do homework. We need to study hard. We need to practice hard. Especially here, you can understand "diligent" in relation to the Guru Yoga practice, in relation to relating to the Guru.

Especially, with our requests to the Guru to teach [so one thing in relation to Dharma teachings, if you reveal the Dharma without any request, there are certain negative consequences]: as students, we need to be diligent in requesting the Guru to teach. You may even need to request thousand times, you know the more you request, the longer you request, then after the Guru decided to reveal, even one single word is like such a powerful blessing to you. Then diligent in obeying the instruction of the teacher. If the teacher asks, gives certain homework, then be diligent in practicing that, and diligent in practicing in a sustainable sustained way, not just practicing some time to time, no, have a sustainable practice like that.

These three qualities are the student's qualities. With those and the qualified teacher, no one can stop you from becoming Buddha, no none can stop you from realizing the stages of the path. Enlightenment can be on the tip of your fingers. During so many lifetimes, we had one or the others. This precious human rebirth, this time we have all the conducive conditions gathered; therefore, we must strive to develop those qualities while we can.

Lama Tsongkhapa, in The Middle Length Lam-Rim wrote:

As the commentaries say, someone endowed with the three characteristics is a suitable vessel for hearing the teachings. If all three are complete, the excellent qualities of the Dharma teacher appear as excellent qualities and do not appear as faults. Not only that, the excellent qualities of the listener also appear as excellent qualities to himself and do not appear as faults. If the characteristics of a suitable vessel are not complete, the listener, under the power of his or her

faults, will classify even a very pure and virtuous Dharma teacher among those who have faults, and they will perceive the teacher's faults as qualities.

If the student does not have these three qualities, there is even a danger that the student sees faults in the perfect complete Dharma and perfect enlightened teacher. Then, you may be distracted and pursue the wrong path. Like Devadatta. Those qualities were not there in him, even though he was physically with an enlightened Guru, Shakyamuni Buddha, he was only seeing faults in Shakyamuni Buddha. He only hears wrong messages from Shakyamuni Buddha. All the inspirational deeds of Shakyamuni Buddha were wrong for him. When Shakyamuni Buddha was always very nice, very accessible to the disciple, Devadatta told Shakyamuni Buddha "You're flattering to gather a group of disciples". Then, when he teaches about love and compassion, the practice of generosity, and the Six Perfections, then Devadatta told Shakyamuni Buddha: "You're cheating your disciples with those sweet words". Then he pursued the total opposite training: whatever Guru Shakyamuni Buddha would say, he would do the opposite.

So, if the student does not carry those mentioned qualities, there is such a danger. Your own false are reflected on the teacher, even though the teacher is a Buddha.

Then, another danger is that if you do not have those three qualities, if you happen to meet false teacher, disqualified or unethical teacher, you will define all the false characteristics of the teacher as qualities, you will regard those false as the qualities of a qualified teacher. Then, because of not having those three qualities, when the teacher gives false instructions, you will regard those false views and advice as right view or correct advice. You will diligently pursue and live in the practice of wrong path.

So, not only seeing false in a qualified Guru, but also following a wrong teacher and path and this is the false of not studying Lam-Rim. This happened in Tibet, this happened in the West, in the past and still happening today. The teachers themselves are not studying Lam-Rim, the students themselves are not studying Lam-Rim. They do not know exactly what they are doing. And the end can be disastrous, not only to your practice but also in our conventional life. You will end up losing your faith, totally giving up the Dharma. I have witnessed that.

Lama Tsongkhapa keeps on with:

Bhāviveka says in his Essence of the Middle Way (Madhyamakahrdaya):

While the mind is tormented by bias one will never realize peace.

To be biased means to be attached to one's own approach and averse to others' approaches. On discovering something like this in your own mind, you should discard it.

Lama Tsongkhapa, from the very beginning of his teaching says "take this teaching as a mirror" to check your spiritual status and you should correct right there, immediately, not tomorrow.

In the Vinayasutra, it is mentioned that even with your Guru, even with your Root Guru, if he instructed you with something that you find contradictory, logically, not just emotionally contradictory, and contradictory to the Lam-Rim, to the Dharma, then you should express and discuss with the Guru. You should tell "I think I did not understand this. Can you explain exactly please the underline meaning of this teaching, of this conversation, or this manner that you have just shown to me".

The Vinaya said you can, it is not a disrespectful thing. But of course, the way you express it, you have to express it with great respect, verbally, physically. Not opposing. You just want to clarify.

There are teachings that are interpretive teachings, not all the teachings are given as definitive, there are so many interpretive teachings: Guru's physical actions, Guru's conversation to you, Guru's manifesting a certain aspect.

The Guru who are already enlightened by their own side, but they manifest getting sick, it is an interpretive teaching to us. It is not that literally the Guru gets sick. It is not like Guru is tormented by karma, or Guru is totally overwhelmed by samsara. It is not like that. Those are interpretive teachings. You must know that as long as you carry contaminated aggregates, that you are born with a human body, then, you are subject to aging, sickness, death. So, therefore, to overcome that, then you need to practice Dharma. You do not feel pitiful that the Guru got sick. Guru is not suffering, Guru is just interpreting, illustrating the teaching on samsara to you. You must understand that.

Then, the Vinayasutra mentions that even after discussion, your logic, your common sense, in comparison to the teaching, to the Lam-Rim is still in contradiction, then you just leave aside. It is not a debate. You will not try to prove your point: "Guru, you're wrong. You're mistaken". In your heart, you just leave aside, and you continue to rely on all the good qualities. If the Guru shows certain physical inappropriate actions, then you should go physically from that Guru's environment. And that is also a skillful way not to commit any karma.

Once you have relied on the Guru, that you have established the relationship, then that Guru is forever your Guru until you achieved enlightenment. If there is any limitation in losing the faith coming from you, it is your limitation, it is harmful to you, so you have to protect yourself from that. But then again, if the Guru from his or her side is ordinary and showing ordinariness, plus showing aspect of inappropriate physical actions, then physically you should avoid, you should go away. If it is to do with verbal actions, then you should stop communicating with the Guru verbally either with the phone, or in conversations if that disturbs your emotions, if that disturbs your practice. But that does not mean you give up all the wise teachings. You just establish that boundary and delete from your heart the rest, but you do not delete the Guru. You still see the Guru as a Buddha and interpret those actions as a teaching "I should not behave like that".

If we give up the Guru, this is our mistake. As explained at the beginning, those three trainings we need to always have in our heart, Buddha Vajradhara prophesized "I will manifest in ordinary person Guru's form. Guru still did perform the deeds of the Buddhas turning the wheel of Dharma, even though at this particular moment something went wrong, but then whatever good quality that you have in the past is by the kindness of this Guru. If you have many qualities, if you have many Gurus, is by the kindness of this particular Guru. That is the deeds of the Buddha that blessed you through this Guru. Now, the third one, the most important one, because of myself not purified, the ignorance, the impure views, the hallucinations, the dualistic mind, because of that appeared those limitations in my Guru. It is the reflection of my own limitations.

But practically, physically you move away. In that way, there will never be the opportunity to break the Samaya with the Guru.

Lama Tsongkhapa continues with:

Even if one has both impartiality and intelligence, someone who is just like one of those listening to the Dharma in a life less painting is not a suitable vessel. Therefore you also need to have strong interest. Candrakirti's commentary states that, first, respect for the Dharma and the expounder of the Dharma and, second, an attentive mind are added, so that five characteristics are set forth. That being so, we can categorize this into four: strong interest in the Dharma, a fully attentive mind

while listening, great respect for the Dharma and the expounder of Dharma, and holding to good explanations and rejecting faulty ones. Intelligence is a conducive circumstance for those four, and impartiality is what eliminates adverse circumstances.

To the first three qualities, two are added. **Always to be respectful to the Dharma** that you are learning and practicing, and to the teacher, physically, verbally and in thoughts; and to be **attentive**, not to forget. Attentive means both attentive during the teachings but also, whatever the Guru says to try to receive instructions to liberation, to enlightenment. Even if the Guru says, “have a nice tea”, you have to be attentive to find the instruction for enlightenment. Even if he says, “have a nice day”, you hear Guru is asking me to spend my day with Bodhicitta. If he says, “take care of yourself”. You think immediately “ok, I am going to have a nice dinner, treat myself with...I do not know, in Australia with a big beer (laughs), in Europe, one glass of wine, or a nice movie”. No. Not like that.

What Guru means is “take good care of yourself with Bodhicitta”, which means inseparable from Bodhicitta. When you are inseparable with Bodhicitta, then you are always taking care of yourself, isn't it? This is being attentive. Therefore, whenever you are around the Guru, whatever he manifests, laughing, crying, walking, sitting, everything you try to interpret into Dharma. Another meaning is whatever instructions you receive you practice consistently, all the time.

Those are the five qualities of the disciple.

V. The reasons why we need to rely on the Guru

About the importance of relying on the Guru, Geshe Potowa said:

For the purpose of achieving liberation and enlightenment, there is no greater importance than having and relying on a perfect Guru.

Even in our ordinary lives, to master something, you need a teacher, and you need to honor that teacher. Without proper guidance by some qualified teacher, even as a carpenter, without that, you cannot master this position, isn't it?

So, we are very much just coming out from the Hell Realms. For eons we never really have an idea of the Dharma path. And the Dharma path has been travelled before but not by us. It is an unknown path. Because of that, if you do not have a Lama, if you do not have a Guru, a teacher, then it is not possible for us to travel without mistake. So, therefore, it is so important to rely on a Guru.

Then, in the Sutras one can read:

Therefore, all your spiritual Gurus are most precious, more important than all the Buddhas. All the Buddhas are perfected with all the skills and have boundless compassion to us. But without the condition of a Guru there is no way to achieve all the Buddhas' blessings in our continuum. And Buddha himself also actualized the state of full enlightenment through the kindness of his Guru.

So, Buddhahood also is not possible without the blessings of the Guru. Therefore, see the Guru with greater importance than all the Buddha's. Because of that, rely on the Guru. Have a Guru, rely on a Guru.

Without realizations on Guru devotion, no realizations on the rest of the path. "The foundation of all good qualities" as written by Lama Tsongkhapa in the Great Lam Rim, the Middle Length Lam Rim, the Small Lam Rim, the first chapter that introduces the teaching to the disciples is on Guru devotion, the very first chapter of the Lam Rim is on Guru devotion. From there you can see the importance of Guru devotion practices as a basis to all your blessings, all your knowledge. As said in the small Lam Rim, the foundation of all good qualities:

The foundation of all good qualities is the perfect Guru and relying upon that correctly serves as the root to the path.

Then as it is said in the Lam Rim, all along the Gradual Path we need Guru devotion to actualize realizations: realization on the small scope path, middle scope path, higher scope path, like altruism, Bodhicitta, emptiness including Tantra. Without actualizing realizations on Guru devotion, none of the rest of the Lam Rim realizations will be obtained. It is that much serious, that much essential. In short, without realizations on Guru devotion, no realizations on the rest of the path.

Therefore, the Kadampa masters emphasize that when you do Lam Rim meditation, put effort, even if it takes much time, much effort, on the first chapter on Guru devotion. It is worth doing so, worth spending time there, worth giving enough time, even if it takes your whole life, it is worthy. The moment you actualize realizations on Guru Devotion, the rest of the path on small capable beings, middle capable beings, higher capable beings, including Bodhicitta, Emptiness, including Tantra, comes without effort. The realization arises without effort, you see.

When you do not have realizations on Guru Devotion, then the rest of the path will be delayed, realization will take a longer time to come to your way. One of the reasons is, in order to actualize the spiritual path as a realization, it requires tremendous purification of the impure basis, tremendous purification of our defilements, our karma, our delusions. It requires tremendous unbelievable merits in order to digest those blessings on the path. So, Guru is the greatest object, the most powerful object for us to purify our karma through relating practices in thoughts and actions. Through relating practices in thought and action, it enables you to accumulate merits which is the greatest and the swiftest way.

VI. The Guru is kinder than all the Buddhas

In Lama Chopa, we normally recite:

The Guru is kinder than all the Buddhas to those untamed by countless past Buddhas...

...like for us so many countless Buddhas came into existence, but we are still in Samsara, so that obviously shows we were untamed by them. Then:

The unruly transmigrating beings of this degenerated age who are difficult to subdue.

So, during this degenerated time, the degeneration of delusions, of time, of life, it makes even harder for us to be tamed.

You accurately show the good way of those gone to bliss. Compassionate refuge savior, I make request to you.

Even in the legend of the history, during this fortunate era, a thousand fortunate Buddhas are to descend and during this time of 5 degenerations, all the Buddhas had a discussion to determinate who should go to help the sentient beings of our time, in the Southern world. Then all the Buddhas refused: “this is the most important, I do not think I can manage it”. Only Shakyamuni Buddha finally said “ok, then I will go”. So, even Shakyamuni came, and we are still wandering around. We do not know when we will meet the fortunate Buddhas again or not in future times, while we are on the path. Shakyamuni Buddha who was the most karmically connected to us, because when he was training on the path, he made aspirations to really be among us this time being, this world. Because of these aspirations, he was able to descend this time. And even with that we did not manage to surpass the path like his Holiness the Dalai Lama mentioned before. Therefore, Guru is kinder than all the Buddhas.

Then, another verse, specifically dedicated to meditating on how the Guru is kinder than Shakyamuni Buddha.

When the son of the Muni, Shakyamuni, said because of the time you enacted the deeds of a conqueror, for the many transmigratory beings who lack a refuge savior, compassionate refuge savior, I make requests to you.

From here, Shakyamuni came but we did not manage to receive teachings directly, practiced under the guidance of Shakyamuni Buddha. Then from that point of view, the Guru is even more precious than all the Buddhas, even Shakyamuni Buddha.

A. How the Guru is blessing us constantly

So, the only antidote is the Dharma whether is the path of attitude, whether is the path of wisdom, which is revealed by the Guru in this area of Shakyamuni Buddha, revealed by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Then when we meet a human Guru in person, that Guru reveals us the path and that catches all the misleading guides of the delusions and ignorance and provides us all the cure of the antidotes. Then by constantly living in the antidote, cultivating antidote, we can see we come up to a quite a progress in a healthy living as a healthy being isn't?

Comparing with some times in our life and now after meeting the Guru, after meeting the teaching you see much progress, isn't it? You become truly healthier, healthier in the virtue, so much closer to liberation, getting so further away from the control of karma and delusions, isn't it? We have come to a position where we are just spending time to finish up the past definite karmic result only, we are almost not committing any negative conditions to complete indefinite karma to be a definite karma for us to continue to remain in cycling existence for a long time isn't it? We are in fact working very hard to complete all the indefinite virtuous karma to be a definite virtuous karma.

You know the way we behave, the way we practice day-to-day is very much in that position now and that is due to the Guru revealing, diagnosing our sickness, providing the medicine, and also acting as a nurse to remind us of timely to make sure that we take the medicine at the right time. So that is like all of us trying our best to do our daily commitments properly and timely. At least try not to forget in the morning to set correct motivation, then in the daytime, try to stay as much as close to the altruistic motivation we set in the morning, and at the end of the day, to do some purification practice and try to do some dedication.

It is like taking that medicine three times a day and Gurus are the one that through the teachings, through their living examples, the moment we think of them, the moment we hear their teachings, the moment just to have the awareness "I have Guru in my life", make sure that you take the medicine timely, isn't it? You really make sure you take the medicine timely and in case you forget to take the one session of medicine, then Guru would give two doses next time and if you forget to do today Vajrasattva practice tomorrow you say double. It's like take double pills.

Then as Guru has opened so many clinics, you do not have to go to the hospital all the time, to the Guru's main mandala monastery, you do not have to go all the time there. This center is the clinic. Just nearby you, you can go many times. Then Guru sends many nurses to make sure the medicine is taken effectively, Guru sends us like a nurse to go around the different centers and repeat the teachings, it is very much like that. Then here so many senior practitioners who lead teachings and meditations, act on behalf of the Guru. It is like assigned qualified doctors in different local clinics making sure you take your medicine timely. So, this is all play of the Guru's blessings.

B. How the Guru is looking after us constantly

When the Guru takes the responsibility to be a Guru, then you watch over all the time. The Guru becomes CCTV to the disciple. So, you watch. Watching does not mean you have to stay together. You watch, you always remember the disciple. Even, if you see the disciple maybe ten years later, twenty years later, the first thing you do is in a certain way making a judgment. It is quite a stressful one. The Guru will always either testing you or always looking on the progress of your practice. Where you are. It could be just through a natural conversation. It could be just looking into your eyes. It could be from far observing you. In today's time, the Guru can use Instagram, Facebook to watch over. Now maybe people talk about AI, so maybe now the Guru needs to have an AI gadget to watch over the disciple, maybe even develop a chip to put inside somewhere that the Guru can monitor. The best is if the Guru has already some sense of clairvoyance and that is necessary. So, the purer, the longer, the more serious the Guru practices and observes the vows, naturally it will bring higher perceptions, higher mind such as clairvoyance. Many Gurus go into meditative zone and through that meditative zone they watch over the disciple, and they can see through the disciple's progress on their practice.

Another for the Guru to watch over you, is yourself developing the inner Guru and then you observe that samaya with the Guru. Then without any choice you will progress without any doubt you will progress rapidly. You will be disciplined in closed doors, you will be disciplined outside the doors, you will be disciplined when you are alone, you will be disciplined when you are with others. You become transparent to your Guru when you develop the inner Guru. And that is not easy, it sounds easy: "I regard myself oneness with the Guru". But that is not good enough, you need to have that sense of you literally becoming the Guru. You literally become that Guru to whom you rely on. And how much you know about your mind, how much you see about your behaviors, with your body, speech and mind, you come to a point where really, seriously, the Guru is actually seeing everything you do. Your Guru is really seeing every thought. Up to that level.

Some individuals might think that would be quite stressful if that really happens that the Guru is really watching over you 24 hours. You do not have to worry about that. When you achieve that level, you will become the most positive person, you will come to a point that you will lose entirety of your fears, including fear of death, fear of wrong doings, fear of accumulations of negativities. You will lose entirety of your fears for now, for later, for future, for all the rest of your existence, you will lose all your fears. You will have a sense of confidence that you have the best protection, nothing can harm you, no spirit can harm you, nothing. You will come to a point where even your own delusions like anger will not harm you, because once you really have that confidence you will not get angry. How possible Guru Buddha will get angry, isn't it?

After that, now when you will think "ok now I think I realized the Inner Guru". But then, you realized you got angry. "How come Guru gets angry?" That already prove you did not actualize the realization properly. When you come to that point, then there is no room for anger. There is no room for any negativities. The entirety of your worldly responsibilities will turn into a path to enlightenment. Everything. Maybe outwardly nothing has changed. But ultimately completely changed: your way of living, your life, your environment, everything. So, it is very, very powerful. It is the best protection amulet. People wear a lot of amulets. "Amulet", not eggs omelet. Protection chakras wheel you know. If you actualize the Inner Guru, then it is the best protection. Then, you do not need any external protection wheels.

The Guru will always be concerned by the well-being of the disciple. The temporary well-being as well as the ultimate well-being of enlightenment. When you are able to rely on a perfect qualified Guru, then you never have to feel that you lack of love, lack of someone who is concerning about your life, your meaning of life, you actualize the most loving parent, the most loving person, loving being in your life who is not only concerned by your temporary well-being, but also concerned by your ultimate well-being. Once the Guru takes the responsibility to be the Guru to the disciple, then they take the responsibility until his or her enlightenment. Then, there is no U-turn, there is no reverse. That much seriousness is there.

VII. The benefit of relying on the Guru

Now you have found the perfect Guru and are a suitable vessel, now you strive to receive the Dharma. Lama Tsongkhapa says in the Middle Length Lam-Rim:

Thus someone endowed with the characteristics of a suitable vessel should examine, as explained above, whether a teacher has the necessary characteristics, and if so, receive the kindness of the Dharma from him.

Then, the way you receive the teachings should be different, not like in the past, when you were still searching for the right Guru and the right path. And the platform where you search for the right Guru, where you develop the right qualities for the student and searching for the right path is through the Dharma discourses, through the Dharma interaction like through lectures, attending Dharma courses, Dharma events, specially listening to the commentaries teachings, day after day, week after week, year after year, until you come to a certainty of the three or five qualities that Aryadeva emphasized for us and the 10, if not 5, if not 3 that Maitreya stated for the teacher. Even if it takes ten, twenty, or thirty years, you continue to search for the certainty through Dharma teachings interactions.

Not by asking people about the qualities of this Guru, not by just reading the biography; but by attending Dharma discourses or teachings, or by being around that teacher like some Dharma events, it could be a Dharma journey, like a pilgrimage, spend time with that particular teacher. There, you can observe the possibility of that teacher becoming your Guru in the future. You observe his or her knowledge, his or her character, his or her day-to-day behaviors, etc. Once you have the certainty, then you establish the Guru-Disciple relationship and receive the “kindness of the Dharma” as stated by Lama Tsongkhapa, which is the whole purpose of it.

Then, you start to receive oral transmissions, advice, commentaries, vows, initiations, and you take all the good conduct of the Guru as guidelines to you. After you establish the Guru-Disciple relationship, then “bye-bye”. It does not work. You do not wait to have just some occasional coffee meeting, or pizza. That does not work. You can put aside the pizza, the coffee, the chatting. But wherever there is a teaching you rush. That is how you are now striving the kindness of the Dharma. The way to receive the blessings of the Buddha conditioned by the Guru, this is the way. For that, it does not matter the time, the health, the resources...That is what the Indian Panditas, the Great masters, Milarepa, the great Tibetan masters. That is why they achieved enlightenment in one lifetime. Like Atisha, in the ten, eleventh century. There is no proper route. For the sake of Dharma, he overcame all those obstacles. Even at the cost of his life, he is there to pursue the Dharma.

From the Lam Rim Chenmo:

By relying on the teacher, you will come closer to Buddhahood, you will please the conqueror, you will not be bereft of future teachers, you will not fall into miserable realms, neither bad karma, nor difficulties will overpower you.

When you have inner guru then nothing cannot harm you.

Through the mindfulness of the Bodhisattvas’ deeds and by not contradicting them, your collections of good qualities will continue to increase, and you will reach all of your provisional and final goals. After obtaining virtues through serving and respecting the teacher with the thoughts and practices you will accomplish others’ welfare as well as yours.

Then there is another Sutra, the Sutra of the showing the Tathagata inconceivable secrets which says:

Sons and daughters of the good lineage, rely on becoming emotionally close to serve and venerate the Guru with the greatest respect. If you do so, your thoughts will be virtuous thoughts, hearing virtuous teachings, whereby your practice as well will be virtuous. Then, through creating virtuous karma and becoming virtuous you will please your virtuous friend. You also will not bring suffering upon others or yourselves because you will not create non virtuous karma. But will only cultivate virtues. As a result of the guiding others and yourself you will complete the path of unsurpassed enlightenment, and therefore will be able to walk for the welfare of all living beings who have entered in the wrong path. That is why Bodhisattvas rely on the Guru, they will accomplish all their collection of good qualities.

Then, there is another Sutra: Sutra of Ksitigarbha says:

Those whom the teacher care for will purify the karma that will otherwise cause them to wander through the miserable realms for 10 million limitless eons. They purify this karma with harm to their bodies, and mind in this lifetime. This harm includes sickness such as the infection diseases with fever, calamities such as famine. They may purify their karma by merely undergoing something as little as a dream or scolding.

So, it says that even if you dream of the Guru, that purifies many challenges or obstacles in our life like health obstacles, environmental obstacles. Even just one little scolding by the Guru also carries that power.

They produce more root of virtues into one morning than those who give to worships or observe precepts from limitless 10 of millions of Buddhas.

The Guru Yoga practice is so powerful, the merit is unbelievable, numberless time greater, limitless 10 million times greater than serving three meals offerings to the limitless times of Buddhas.

Those who respect and serve the Guru are endowed with unimaginable good qualities. Then also understand that all the Buddhas immeasurable good qualities of the transforming others 'mind arise from this proper reliance on the teacher. Therefore, rely on, become close to, serve and venerate the Guru, just as you would with the Buddha.

Then, the Sutra of the Garland of the birth stories:

Any intelligent person should not be distant from excellent being which is called for the Guru and should rely on this virtuous being in a disciplined manner...

Disciplined manner is having those three qualities of the student as mentioned before.

Once you are closed to them, particles of their good qualities will stick to you automatically.

Well, that is good: automatically! Then there is one quotation of the Tantric Treaty called.....:

Without the Lama none of the higher knowledge would be able to develop in you

and then there is the Sutra giving the reason called...Like the boat, even great the boat is, if the captain, the sailor is not there then you cannot utilize the boat to cross the ocean.

There is a great amount of Dharma out there. The Guru does not just teach the words, the main thing is to transmit the blessings of the Dharma. The main thing is about that, not the teaching themselves. The teaching can be just one word, it can be a thousand words, but the main thing is to be able to practice the Guru Yoga, to practice the Guru Devotion. That brings the blessings to you, to have somebody with whom to establish this relationship serves as the board captain for you to cross the ocean.

The example of the magnifying glass: with a magnifying glass, you can put fire to dry grass. Otherwise, no matter how strong the sun is out there, no matter how the entire universe is filled with the bright and strong sun, without that magnifying glass, we cannot burn, we cannot light the fire. No matter how many great Buddhas, Lamas and holy beings are out there, if you do not have someone to relate as your Guru, then you cannot light the meritorious fire that is in you, you cannot ripen the path towards enlightenment within you, so in a similar way, it goes with the Buddha's blessings.

In the Middle Length Lam-Rim, Lama Tsongkhapa quotes:

The Marvelous Array Sūtra (Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra) also says:

“These are my spiritual friends, expounders of Dharma, exhaustively teaching the qualities of all phenomena, thoroughly teaching the conduct of bodhisattvas”: with these thoughts in mind, I have come here.

“As they give birth to all of this, they are like my mother. They pour forth the milk of virtues, hence they are like wet nurses; they train me thoroughly in the branches of enlightenment. These spiritual friends completely turn away harm, like doctors they release from aging and death, like Lord Indra they shower rains of nectar. Like the full moon, they enhance the white qualities; like bright sunlight, they show the way to peace. Regarding friends and foes, they are stable like mountains, their minds as undisturbed as the depths of the sea. They give perfect support, some say ‘like boatmen.’” With this in mind I, Sudhana, have come here.

“These bodhisattvas bring forth my understanding; they cause the enlightenment of Buddha's children; these beings, these friends of mine, are praised by the Buddha”: with such virtuous thoughts I have come here.

“As they save the world they are like heroes; they have become the captains, protectors, and refuge; they are the eye bestowing happiness on me”: with thoughts like these, I honor my spiritual friends.

Biologically in this life we do not have relationship, but the way how they nurture you, the way they care for you, is really like the most loving mother. One example to illustrate, when I first came in the monastery, at the age of nine, I was very sick, diarrhea, vomiting, could not even move the body for four, even six months like that. Then my late Master Geshe Lama Konchog, the late Master Khensur Lama Lhundrup, I was staying in their living area. They had no biological relationship with me, I am just the newcomer there. They literally wiped your uncontrolled feces, and clean, and put you in their arm to shower, to go to toilet, feed you with a spoon, not just for one or two days. Exactly like a mother.

Khensur Rinpoche Lama Lhundrup, he was like a mother to all of the little children, to all the 30-fourty little monks. He would stay until 1 or 2 o'clock, because at the middle of the night, the little monks needed to go to toilets. We go to sleep around 10- 11 o'clock and around 1 o 2, we needed to go to the toilet. But the toilets are very far. So, they are scared. So, they peed in their beds. So, he stayed sometimes until 3 o'clock to bring any of the kids who would need to go there and bring

them back and let them sleep. And of course, as little kids, we kicked our blankets out, so he was covering us again with the blanket. Then, by 3 o'clock he would go back to his room to start his daily sadhana practices. He hardly sleeps. Even with half an hour or one hour of sleep, all throughout the day he meets with people, he goes to see all the classes, all the monks who are doing their duties, look how they cook the food, himself giving classes, every single day, for 40-50 years like that. Unbelievable. Then, when it is our turn to have the responsibility of looking after young monks when we go to Sera. Naturally, you feel that responsibility, naturally you are blessed by this Guru living teachings.

VIII. How to cultivate the Guru devotion in thoughts and practice

In the Middle Length Lam-Rim, Lama Tsongkhapa writes that two things need to ripen in our heart to devote to the Guru in thoughts, irresistible faith and a genuine sense of respect:

This has two points: the root, training in faith, and remembering his kindness so as to generate respect.

Jewels' Blaze Dhāraṇī (Ratnolkādhāraṇī) says: Faith, a preliminary practice, gives birth like a mother to all good qualities, guards them, and makes them increase.

This says that faith gives birth to excellent qualities that have not yet arisen, and once they have come into existence, it maintains and increases them.

Always admiring the Guru and always sees the qualities in him allows you to always pay attention to anything that is coming from the Guru's body, speech and mind. Then, everything becomes an open book teaching. Everything is inspirational. That is how you become like the Guru. Wishing is not enough; you have to train your body, speech and mind. You have to train to think the way the Guru thinks, behave the way the Guru behaves. If someone says, "you behave like your Guru", it is a huge compliment. You have to trust the Guru. You have to train in all that so that it becomes stable. That way nothing can part from your Guru.

Even when the Guru scolds you: "the Guru knows I have some un-pacified secret obstacle. So, the Guru throw a powerful deity mantra to me to dispel all these hindrances. Unseen obstacles are purified". But if the Guru does not scold you that does not mean that you do not have any hidden obstacles. Not like that.

Then, always remembering the kindness. Always express so much respect. It is like in the darkness night, someone brought a lamp for you to see the way out.

With no faith you may receive some benefits, but they will not increase. To receive fully the blessings, it is very much being like a container to receive the nectar of the Dharma. Especially the faith you develop through reasoning on the advantage of the Dharma, of the benefits you receive by relying on the Guru. Not just blind faith.

First, how to cultivate the Guru devotion in thoughts.

The Tantra bestowing the initiation of Vajrapani says:

If you would ask, O Lord of secrets [which is talking about Buddha] how disciples should see the Master? Then, I would answer that they should view them just as they view the Baghavan.

This is Buddha own guidance: see your Guru how you relate to the Buddha.

When you relate to Guru, you view them just like Buddha. It means see them in Buddha. Some Sutric practice like Vinaya, maybe Theravadan practice, their teachers are like a Buddha, like a resemblance of the Guru, an example of the Buddha, "similar" to Buddha, not as Buddha as in the Mayahana understanding where the Guru is "sameness" with the Buddha. In Mahayanist Sutra they see as a Buddha. Then, in Tantra, it is "oneness" with the Buddha deity, the Yidam. In short, see them in Buddha, see them as Buddhas.

If the disciple sees the master in this way, they will always cultivate virtues, they will become Buddha and benefit the entire world.

Then the Tantra bestowing the initiation of Vajrapani says:

Keep the master's good qualities in mind, never see upon their faults.

Very important. There are many times, our own faults reflect on the Guru, our own limitations reflect on the Guru. Then, we start to apprehend that as the false of the Guru. So, always be mindful. The Guru is Buddha. Then, when your mind is pure, you can translate everything as a teaching, as Buddha's qualities, like the scolding as a powerful mantra, even just one slap as an initiation. The benefit you receive is the enlightened benefit.

*Apprehend your master's excellent qualities;
do not ever apprehend his faults!
Apprehending his qualities will gain you siddhis;
apprehending his faults will block their attainment.*

In the Middle Length Lam-Rim, Lama Tsongkhapa comments the previous verses this way:

You should act accordingly. Thus if excellent qualities predominate in your guru but you think about him in terms of the few faults he has, this will become an obstacle to your own siddhis.

So, that is it. Everything is there. The moment you see even one little limitation, it becomes an obstacle to you to actualize the benefit of the Dharma, the realizations. It does not matter if there is a fault or not, but from your side, seeing the qualities, that helps to condition to gain realizations on the path.

In today's time, due to our lack of merits, it is very difficult to actualize the perfect Guru. Therefore, in ordinariness' appearance, there is a lot of limitations, and it is so easy to see limitations. Therefore, even if you see false, you only focus on the qualities. You may see false, because of our own limitations, but do not focus on that.

Then, there is another Sutra, the Ten Teachings Sutra:

Develop the following ideas with respect to your teacher. I have wandered for a long time through cyclic existence, and they search for me. I have been asleep having been obscured by delusions for long time, they wake me, they pull me out of the death of the ocean of existence. I have entered a bad path, and they revealed the good path to me, they released me from being bound in the prison of existence. I have been worn out by the illness for long time, and they are my doctors, they are rainclouds that put out my blazing fire of attachment and like.

So, think like that and try to see the enlightened qualities of the Buddha and express gratitude, kindness.

So, seeing this we should never forsaking even at the cost of our life.

See, there may be a lot of maras coming in your way to separate you from the relationship, they may say your teacher is like that, your teacher is this this this, you understand this is a mara trying to separate you from the greatest thing that you have in your life. The masters came from Tibet, they regard His Holiness as their root Guru, their Guru, their Buddha. They just want to see a glimpse of him. Many people caused their life because His Holiness called them, just because they wanted to see him. Their imprints caused their lives. But they are ok, just because of the

devotion. Exactly as the teaching says, “even at the cost of their lives, they will never be separated from their perfect Guru”.

In our ordinary lives, we may not have that kind of environment, but when problems come in our way, I saw that, some people went through, but that is also because of not having those three qualities, the nonpartisan attitude, they relate to the Guru for the success of their business, people do that, they relate to the Guru just to have their wealth vase blessed. They relate to the Guru for good health. So, when the reality of our past karmic actions kicks us down, “oh, Guru is no use, he cannot protect me”, so they give up the Guru. “Oh, I have been doing all the virtuous things in relation to you” but the motivation may be about samsaric things, so when the wealth goes down, when economic crisis comes in their way, they say “Guru is no use”, they give up the Guru. I saw it literally in my life. Many times.

So, if you do not have a proper teaching on how to relate to the Guru, these things could happen. And that is the worst disaster that can happen.

Seeing this we should never forsaking him even at the cost of life, and please him with offerings implementing his words.

The best offering you can do the Guru is implementing the teachings, like Milarepa said I have nothing material to offer to my Guru, I offer my practice. What a qualified Guru really wants from the disciple? Your enlightenment. If you happen to gain enlightenment that is the best offering, if you stay stick with your development of your path, that is the best offering, if you are happy, that is the best offering, if you stay away from negativities, that is the best offering to the Guru. They do not need the material one. The material one comes from the student side for them to accumulate merits with their own right intentions. The Guru’s side is completely only concern of your own liberation, nothing else, no other expectations.

Lama Tsongkhapa said:

I, Yogi who has practicing in this manner, you who aspire for liberation too should do likewise.

How to rely on the Guru in actions? Maitreya’s Ornament of Mahayana Sutra says:

Rely on the teacher by way of respect, material things, service, and practices.

Then, there is another Sutra, Fifty praises of Guru Yoga about the Guru Devotion practice:

What need is there to say much here. Do whatever pleases your Guru, eliminate all that displeases them. Analyze this. Strive at it.

From the same text he says:

Offering to your pledge master constitute continues offerings to all the Buddhas. Offering to them is the collection of merits. From the collections of merits supplies wisdom, comes the supreme attainment.

So, again the best offering is the practice. Then, again from the 50 verses, Lama Tsongkhapa quoted in the Lam Rim:

One who wishes for the inexhaustible qualities of the Buddha offers to the Guru whatever is slightly appealing.

Even if slightly appealing, even slightly pleasing, also offer. No question about greatest blessed things. Whatever is special, offer them.

Furthermore, the student perspective differs from the Guru's perspective, the student must do this offering because the Guru are the supreme field through which the student accumulates a collection of merits and sublime wisdom. However, the Guru must not take the gift into consideration.

This is very good.

In the Middle Length Lam-Rim, Lama Tsongkhapa says:

The three means of pleasing the Guru are offering him material things, serving him and paying him respect with body and speech, and practicing in accord with his advice. In this regard Ornament for the Mahāyāna Sūtras says: Through homage, offerings purely obtained, and service and practice, you should rely on a spiritual friend.

Even if you want to make a material offering, if you are capable, there are two things you need to keep in mind: a material object that is pure by its nature, meaning not obtained through wrong livelihood, like selling weapons, exploitation, ...and pure by its motivation, meaning free from the 8 worldly concerns.

Lama Tsongkhapa continues:

As for the first, Fifty Verses on the Guru says: If through things not [typically] given— your children, your spouse, and even your life— you should always rely on the master of your commitments, then needless to say, you should through fleeting possessions.

And (v. 21):

Giving [to your guru] amounts to always offering gifts to all the Buddha's. Such offering accumulates merit that in turn leads to the highest siddhi.

They will come ripening times when you offer even your wife, children, your life. Even one offering to the Guru surpasses offerings offered to all the ten directions Buddha's.

Then, Lama Tsongkhapa says:

Second is bathing him, anointing him, massaging him, wrapping him up, cleaning him, nursing him when he is ill, and so forth, and talking about his excellent qualities. The third is the main one, which is practicing without going against his instructions.

[...]

It is said that the benefits are enormous, outshining the roots of virtue of making offerings and the like to innumerable Buddha's.

Like my late Master, Geshe Lama Konghog was ill, my brother, his name is Ngodrup, he did exactly like this. And not just for one day, two days. But year after year, especially when he was fully ill, over one year. All his full attention to the Guru with so much gentleness and skillfulness. I tried to take some opportunity to do like that. My Guru was pushing me away. I was trying to massage him. “You are hurting me, I need Ngodrup”. I was studying away, and my brother was doing that every day. One day I was visiting. I told my brother, “Go to sleep, I will stay, get some rest”. My brother, even one little move, he was waking up, not even need to call him. I fell asleep.

When I woke up, I was him because I thought something was happening and my Guru told me “I need Ngodrup”. Then I was preparing the porridge. I wanted my Guru to get stronger faster, so I put 3 spoons of a supplement powder instead of one. My Master said, “it smells a lot”. So, not skillful. Another Master, Lama Lhundrup, told my brother, «Whichever life you take, you will have a happy life, a successful life”, because you served to the Guru like that. He served the same way Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche with the same care than Geshe Drömdonba, not like a job, but really understanding the value of the practice. If you have the opportunity, you should do like that.

The best offering is practicing according with the instructions and the teachings whether you are close to the Guru or not, whether you are attending him or not. As I said before. What will make your Guru the happiest is to live your life in accordance with the Dharma. To live with Bodhicitta to please your Mahayanist Guru. And be diligent about your practice. What a qualified Mahayanist Guru does not like you to do? Waste your life in worldly concerns like the 8 worldly concerns, following the delusions like committing negativities. They do not like that you get distracted by those. The Guru is when your whole life is infused with the Bodhisattvas’ way of life. You take your entire ways of life, and you integrate them with the Bodhisattvas’ way of life. At least with your motivation.

By keeping pure the Samaya and following the instructions properly, you will be able to purify all your past karma, even the heavier one that would bring you to being reborn in the Lower Hell Realms, just by having one little inconvenient dream, or some headache, by the power of proper reliance to the Guru.

Lama Tsongkhapa writes:

If you take someone as your spiritual teacher and then relinquish your reliance on him, you will be harmed by illnesses and evil spirits in this life, and in future lives you will have to experience the immeasurable sufferings of the lower rebirths.

We already have abundance of negative karma. Because of breaking the Samaya, then we are without protection. Then, all the karma will ripen and then we will experience suffering, obstacles in life and bad rebirth in future lifetimes. When we rely on the Guru, we have protection and freedom. When we do not rely on a Guru we are not. This has to be understood in this way. It is not that by relying on the Guru, then we will experience all that if we break the Samaya. No, we already have created such karma and will have to experience the consequences. Relying on the Guru protects us.

Lama Tsongkhapa says:

Aside from that, excellent qualities that have not arisen will not arise, and those that have arisen will deteriorate and vanish. If you rely on non-virtuous friends and bad companions, your excellent qualities will also diminish, your faults will increase, and misfortune will befall you. Therefore, it was taught that this should be avoided in every way.

So, we should train diligently in the practice repeatedly as Lama Tsongkhapa says:

It will not be enough to perform the visualization in a single meditation session.

Then Vajradhara statement says:

Attainment follows proper reliance on the master. Thoroughly please your Guru in all things.

Then, Cherawa said:

We use the word Guru for whoever is pleased by the practice and does not give even the slightest consideration to material gifts. One who does the opposite is not suitable to be a Guru for those wishing to achieve liberation.

On the basis of these quotes, we can now discuss even more serious teachings in relation to the Guru Yoga practice or the Guru Devotion which is how to relate the Guru in the practice in thoughts and actions. So that is the main homework that we need to cultivate in order to receive all the benefits of having a qualified Guru and having a qualified teacher.

All the blessings and progress on the path, the actualization of the path within our continuum, all the way up to achieving a resultant Guru Buddhahood start and happen through the practice of relating in thoughts and actions to the Guru. Even at the beginning, from just having faith and conviction up to practice the way how all the past Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, our Gurus, and all these successful practitioners, such as those of the Mahasiddhas, all of them have actualized the benefits, including one lifetime enlightenment, all that can only be done when we have the preconditions.

Otherwise, it is so hard to practice the way how you should cultivate according to the teachings, accordingly how the past Buddhas and our Gurus have practiced and succeeded in the path. Just directly learning how to relate in thoughts and how to relate in action does not work with us. Maybe in good times, you may find fantastic, but in tough times you will give up, you can easily give up, easily misunderstood, misinterpret and you may find incapable to live in such a practice. So, the precondition to cultivate this practice is out most important, not just finding a qualified Guru, yourself also have to be qualified student.

Our emotions, the emotional and our normal mind, our normal sensual mind way of making decisions: what to be adopted and what to be abandoned, is based on what pleases the sensual mind at that time, what sensually pleases it at that time, what emotionally pleases it at that time. And we think “this is good for me; this is beneficial for me “. And if another time, sensually, emotionally something is not pleasing to you, that it is a hardship for you, then usually you give up.

So, when you practice any form of Dharma practices, when you are engaging in the practice, mostly it is unpleasant, honestly, mostly it is quite nasty outwardly, even inwardly it is very hard, not easy. We may think the moment you start to practice Dharma, everything is “wow wow wow”, but it is not such a thing: everything is unbelievable, I have never expected this such miserable. I did not know that practicing the Dharma can make us so miserable. But then those ripened students say, “oh this miserable is the doorway to liberation, this hardship is the doorway to liberation, this hardship is the doorway to purifications of all the faults”. Then your determination, your perseverance is so steadfast. So similar goes with this Guru Yoga practice. When you find your Guru, you find all the qualities before you commit yourself to the Guru.

Everything is like perfect portrait the Gurus you know Buddha’s best quality in the texts. You describe even the statue of the Buddha, the Buddha’s quality, you admire this statue, it is the best in everything, even there is a big diamond rock put outside out there and after you are hearing all the qualifications of the statue, all the Buddha’s quality in it, you will choose this statue rather than the big mountain diamond.

So, when we first meet the Guru, it sounds like that. It is so exciting, so wonderful. But when you really start to engage into the actual cultivation of the Guru Devotion in thoughts and actions, then you struggle: sometimes Guru intendedly displays the role of antidote to purify our thickening

stubborn negativities. we learn that from Milarepa's life story, if you read the Kadampa Masters and the 80 Mahasiddhas of India, learn their biographies, every one of them when they relate to the Guru went through an unbelievable nasty time, like Tilopa relating to Naropa. Can you imagine he heard so much about Naropa, his unbelievable qualities, but then when he first meets him and establishes the Guru-Disciple relationship, he is this nasty fisherman. Milarepa met Marpa before hearing about his unbelievable glorious qualifications, and the first time Milarepa saw Marpa, he is someone who is like a householder heavy drinking man and a very inconsiderate teacher.

Then, maybe you may think "ok maybe I have not seen yet all the other good qualities, abundance of good qualities" when you establish the Guru-Disciple relationship. We all know how much Milarepa went through tough times. So, therefore as I mentioned before, be non-partisan. Your purpose is full enlightenment, your purpose of relating to the Guru, is to purify your negativities and pursue enlightenment by accumulating merits. With a qualified Guru seen as the Buddha, you develop that pure view, this pure thought and develop that until that spontaneously arises, and arises even when the Guru manifests to behave like a street dog, behave like the nastiest person in your life, but you are still able to see the perfect enlightened Guru and every display of the actions of the Guru as a powerful teaching to you.

Then when you commit in actions, you are ready to engage, in any form of actions, you understand everything deeply, not just emotionally, but deeply understood it is a purification tool to accumulate merits, as how Milarepa committed to build nine stories building, that his Guru Marpa instructed him to do, for the purpose of his purification. He never gave up and same as he did, we have to come to that point. We may think that Milarepa was able to do this way, that in our time, the Guru has to be more lenient, but it does not work like that. The Guru has to do the Guru's job, same way it was done in ancient time, it has to be done now, and in the future as long as it is pursuing enlightenment, the student also has to catch up with the practice, with what Milarepa's practiced. We have no choice because there is no kind of discount enlightenment that we can buy or bonus enlightenment or discount enlightenment, discount path.

So, not even for a moment, do not have any negative thoughts about the Guru, or do not even reflect on one fault of the Guru, not even for a moment. We have to put effort, so the imprint becomes so strong so that, you will not even have a dream seeing faults in the Guru. When we are awake, our awareness is awake, then surely never to see faults. Even for one moment, even for one fault. You want to do that because that will harm you: there will be obstacles to progress on our path. If we see quality that will condition our progress on the path.

This is being devoted to the Guru in thoughts. How to devote to the Guru in actions, you will adopt the Guru's actions as your own and become the embodiment of the Guru. Like our most precious Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche and its extensive practice of prostrations, using his limbs to engage constantly in the service of sentient beings, to always live in virtue. Through the powerful practice of Guru Yoga, you engage in that, for us to develop those enlightened qualities as our own qualities. As far as it concerns the speech, the Guru always speaks only Dharma, every single speech that came out from Rinpoche's mouth, everything was Dharma, there was not even one single idle gossip, expression of negativities. All is about Bodhicitta, compassion, love.

So, we adopt those qualities. From now on, you try to engage with anybody in the same way. As far as it is concerned with the attitude, everything is infused with Bodhicitta, with the wisdom of emptiness, losing all grasping to inherent existence. Rinpoche was viewing everything as a dream-like, then always remaining in space like meditation, completely losing all the conceptual hallucinational views of true existence or inherent existence, always living in the Dharmakaya state of mind in union with Bodhicitta in the concern of all sentient beings' welfare all the time.

We try to apply that into our daily live, to have a taste of emptiness and every virtue we do, try to infuse them with altruism. We try to train our body, speech and mind, that is the perfect Guru Yoga practice, and this is the perfect, the best offering to the Guru, and you will be happy because your heart is filled with purposefulness, filled with meaning. That is true happiness, virtuous happiness that is a cause for enlightenment. Making ourselves as an offering to the practice to the Guru according to the teachings and practices of the Guru that itself is the best offering. Then Guru is never separated from us. Guru is always within us, your own Dharmakaya is Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Not only that, your own body, speech also start to actualize his characteristics such as Rinpoche's qualities and if we continue to develop that, eventually you will become the resultant Guru.

So, when we practice genuinely, then the Guru is never separated. Because Guru is Buddha. If Guru is an ordinary person, then yes there is a separation. But since Guru is Buddha, then Guru pervades the entire existence and we need to realize, to wake up to see Guru in every single action, thought, speech. And that is the ultimate Guru Yoga. Since the Guru is living in the existence of Dharmakaya, then Guru pervades everything. Seeing Guru separated from us, leaving us, and grieving when the Guru passes away is actually a false view. The real truth is Guru is Dharmakaya, pervades everything.

So, when the Guru passes away, yes with our ordinary minds, we are sad. But instead, with the Dharma wisdom, we rejoice, our heart is completely filled with rejoicing in Rinpoche's Bodhisattva ways of live, the Buddha manifesting in our life. So, the grief is turned into a path, courage, inspiration, mindfulness, dedication. Whatever we do, say or think is Guru's actions, words, or thoughts; and we get the real true most powerful protection through the Guru Yoga. Therefore, we do not have to be afraid.

As Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche used to say:

If you submit completely to the Guru, the compassionate Buddha, then you can die with confidence, you can die with joy, and your future lifetime is completely taken care by the compassionate Buddha.

And that is the teachings for us to relate to him.

IX. Examples of Guru devotion practitioners

There are many examples. I think Lama Zopa Rinpoche is one of the best examples.

There are so many stories, factual stories on how the practice of Guru Yoga enables to actualize realizations within a short period of time much easier. There is one great master of course, Sakya Pandita. He served his Guru, Venerable Drakpa Gyaltzen when Venerable Drakpa Gyaltzen was ill. By serving perfectly, by serving whole-heartedly, just that alone enabled to see in Guru Drakpa Gyaltzen the absolute Manjushri, he had a direct vision of Manjushri. Then all the knowledge of the five signs naturally actualized.

Then, a great Tibetan Master, when his tutor was ill then he became like the nurse taking care of the ill Guru. Thanks to that, without any hardships, he actualized direct realizations on emptiness.

Then, Geshe Drömdonba, the great Kadampa master, whose main Guru was Lama Atisha. When Lama Atisha in his old age was sick, Geshe Drömdonba served like the most compassionate nurse. Lama Atisha at that time was so sick, he did not have any control any more of his feces. Geshe Drömdonba used his own bare hands to clean everything, even the gesture was like collecting relics, and the way how he put the feces outside, was a gesture of the deepest respect because seeing the qualities of the Buddha.

Lama Atisha had so many great students, some are great scholars, great meditators... In fact Geshe Drömdonba had no time to study, no time to meditate, he has to take care full time of Atisha. He also needs to find all the resources to feed Atisha. It is a very nomadic life. He has cows, so he has to take care of the cows, how to make clothes, etc... And all the rest of the chores that you need to do. So, there was one great meditator, one of the Atisha's students, who thought that among the three main disciples he could be the one with the highest state of realizations because he gets chance to meditate. Then, the other one says: "a meditator yes, he does meditation, but he did not get chance to study much, I'm a scholar, so maybe my realization would be higher".

Geshe Drömdonba just did not even think about realizations, he just did his job, just serving the Guru, so later Atisha through his clairvoyance realized such a mysterious thing was going on, and he called all these three disciples. Atisha said I need to mark your status or stages of your realizations. Atisha said Geshe Drömdonba was the number one, highest realizations on the path, then the second one is the scholar, and the third one is the meditator.

Why Geshe Drömdonba achieved such a high level of realizations? Because he gets opportunity to serve the Guru. He gets opportunity to serve both in thoughts and actions. That is his main sadhana, his main focus. There are so many purification practices out there, such as Vajrasattva practices, 35 Buddhas of Confession practice, etc... But there are no greater purification practices than serving Guru that would purify our karma. Geshe Drömdonba because of serving the Guru purified the karma and that is how he actualized realizations and there are so many objects where you can accumulate merits such as Refuge fields, Lama Chöpa merits field.

All the Buddhas are the objects of merits fields. But then when you actualize your Guru as the central object of your merits field, then you accumulate merits, such as practices of seven limbs practices, etc... So, there is no greater object than the Guru to accumulate extensive merits, that is how Geshe Drömdonba achieved such a high level of realizations.

Atisha had 157 Gurus. Though he was devoted to them in the same way, seeing all of them equally as an emanation of the Buddhas. Regarding the kindness from the Guru's side bestowed onto him as a blessing, there was one Guru who stands out among all the other Guru's. That is Lama Serlingpa. Among all 157 of them, it is Lama Serlingpa that Lama Atisha had in highest reverence. From Lama Atisha his reverence is equal to all the Buddhas but in relation to the blessings as I mentioned that impacted the disciple, that was a special relationship that as a disciple you cultivate with your Guru (cf. preface quote). He was revering all of them the same. We have to be mindful about that, sometimes we may be like all over one Guru, and do so much for that one, and treat another one like an ordinary friend. That is the way limitations come. Dangerous. It is a big obstacle.

He received so many teachings on altruism from so many teachers but somehow Serlingpa granted him the transmission's blessings to him that enabled him to transform his mind from self-cherishing to cherishing the rest of the numberless sentient beings. Due to the blessings, he received relating to the care and the teachings of Serlingpa he was able to let go of the self-cherishing attitude. He was able to adopt the heart of cherishing the numberless sentient beings' wellbeing. He was able to commit himself wholeheartedly forever to work for the well-beings of numberless sentient beings. That kind of transformation was very much transmitted to him when Serlingpa taught him the teaching, when he related to Serlingpa, he received those blessings. Therefore, that is the greatest blessings that he received, the greatest impact that he received in his life in this relation, that is why he expressed such a reverence to Serlingpa.

It does not mean that he does not show the greatest reverence to the rest of the teachers, but there is no greater reverence than seeing any of the Guru as a Buddha, any of the Guru inseparable from the Buddha. There is no greater reverence that the disciple can show. So, Atisha showed it to all the rest of the teachers. But when it comes to the emotional relationship, the closeness, then he does not have that with the rest of the other teachers comparing to what he has with Lama Serlingpa.

Lama Tsongkhapa in the Middle Length Lam-Rim wrote:

For instance, Atiśa upheld the view of the Madhyamaka, while Serlingpa upheld the view of the True Aspectarian Cittamātra, which is why, in terms of view, one guru was higher than the other. However, as Atiśa discovered the general stages of the Mahāyāna path and bodhicitta relying on him, he regarded Serlingpa as peerless among spiritual teachers.

When it comes about our Guru, it is not about the status, the look, the status, or even the number of followers, of the radiance or the magnificence of how the Guru looks, their size...He is not a product that you choose as if you were going to the supermarket or based on advertisements. It is totally about you and your connection with your Guru. One example is Serlingpa and Atisha. Serlingpa holds lower philosophical views than Atisha. Atisha holds the Madhyamika Prasangika philosophical view, the highest one, similar than Nagarjuna. Serlingpa the Cittamatra, the third one. But most important is how intact is the value of the relationship between those two.

When we relate to our Guru, if you go to certain ceremony and find your Guru is sitting at the entrance. And your friends' Guru are sitting up there on the throne or close. "Oh, it seems that my Guru is nobody, my Guru is very small". If you are not careful there is a danger of thinking like that. No, your Guru who is most humble is sitting there at the entrance, you should see him sitting on the lion throne.

There is this Master from Sera Jey. He is one of the true livings Kadampa Masters, whom under the request of Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche gave the transmissions of the Five Treatises in Kopan

Monastery. Scholarly, number one in Ritual, Tantra, Sutra, number one in everything. He is totally free of the worldly concerns. He was asked to be the Abbot of the Sera Monastery. He ran away. Eventually, his own disciple became the Abbot. So, when they sit in the Gompa, his disciple is sitting on the throne, and he is on the floor. Because he was always staying the last and he tried not to have too many disciples following. Very humble. Always sitting at the entrance with the little monks. That is the greatest teachings to gain really, to tease your heart on how you would view this Master.

There are many examples like Sudhana, always taught in the Sutra.

X. How to overcome our impure view if the Guru manifests mistakes

Interpret everything as a teaching. If the Guru manifests any mistakes, you just understand that this is a teaching about the mistakes we should not do it. Instead of saying this is the mistake of the Guru, rather these are the illustrations of the limitations in us, not to do those mistakes.

There are situations where the Guru Devotion is not properly developed. There are individuals they even have never heard teachings on Guru Devotion. We may be already practicing Tantra, meaning already have initiations, but still we may be not aware of those three points I mentioned before, to train our hearts to see the Guru as Buddha. Then you get upset with the Guru. You feel disappointed with the Guru. You misunderstand the Guru. You criticize the Guru. You even give up the Guru. There are individuals who even after they received the initiations, they criticize the Guru. They give up the Guru, the initiating Guru. They give up the Guru from whom they receive the vows. It happens like that. Unbelievable.

And some individuals they think they are great. They are so critical. They are so smart to be able to spot faults in the Guru. Absolutely not. It is so devastating. Disasters happen. Devastating disasters happen. And all these faults come from that training that did not happen properly. In fact, the training has to take long time. Therefore, there are many individuals before studying Lam-Rim, they already received initiations. Then, they get into such tragedy. And it can cause huge obstacles to your own spiritual development.

Kadampa Geshe Chekawa says it is like a miracle that we are able to see our Guru at least like us, a human being. It is a miracle. Looking at the mysteriousness of our heart, our perceptions, the thickness of the emotional negativities, hallucinational imprints that we have, it is almost a miracle. It is hard to see our Guru as a great being. It would be extremely rare and hard to see the Guru as Buddha. He is kind of indirectly saying that how many limitations that we are carrying the thickness of the negativities that we accumulated from beginning-less lifetimes, comparing to that magnitude in this life, it is almost not possible to meet the Guru, to hear the name of the Guru. No question about being able to have a Dharma discourse, receive the Dharma blessings. You may not even know the language of the Guru, even the name of the Guru. That is why Geshe Chekawa, is saying that it is still a miracle that we are able to view our Guru as a human being like us.

Then, even the great Bodhisattva Asanga, it took 12 years of intense purification, intense accumulation of merits, uninterrupted meditation on the Guru, uninterrupted aspiration to meet the Guru. He heard about Maitreya. So, he wanted to rely on Maitreya as his Guru. So, he wanted to have a meeting with Maitreya. So, he went into retreat to actualize all the conducive conditions of merits, he made so many aspirations and he tried to visualize, to familiarize at least in thoughts, to be able to view Maitreya in person, for twelve years.

So many purifications, and he gave up many times. And finally, when he gave up, he went off, and he saw one wounded dog. It is the first time he saw his Guru and he did not see even a human being; he was him in the form of a wounded dog. That is why Geshe Chekawa is so true. We are so fortunate actually we are able to at least see our Guru as a human being, we did see them as a dog. It really makes so then when Asanga developed a deep sense of compassion, concerning the well-being of a wounded dog, then right there an intense purification of his obscurations happened, then he saw the whole Maitreya there in the human form. And he could not believe. He thought he was hallucinating.

I do not know but he must have grasped Maitreya somewhere, maybe Maitreya's robe or whatever: "how come" and he must be crying, or I do not know: "how come? I was trying to see you for twelve years. How come? Where were you? Why did you not appear to me?". And he says, "I am always with you". Of course, said "I don't believe". And he says "Look at my robes. Every time my robe is filled with your spit, your saliva. In the cave you've been throwing your saliva everywhere, my robes are filled with your saliva. I was always with you. Because of your obscurations, you did not manage to see me. I was always there".

But still Asanga did not believe it. He said "ok, it is all about your purification of the mind. When your mind is not purified, then you will not be able to even see me in a human form. If you do not believe, then you carry me and do a round within the village". Then when he was walking carrying Maitreya, some people thought he was not carrying anything, others saw him carrying a dog, while in fact he was carrying Maitreya.

At the end of that walk, Maitreya asked Asanga to hold his robes and then bring him to Maitreya Pure Land. He resided there one morning, which is equal to five hundred years of human time, and that is when he received all the transmissions of the five treatises and all the transmissions that he passed down to Lama Serlingpa, Lama Atisha. That is how The Lamp for the Path and the Lam-Rim came about.

Some individuals, they misinterpret. They say "Buddha has shown 500 different kinds of misfortune reincarnations. Buddha manifested those unfortunate lives like being born in the Hell Realms, being born as a monkey, etc. to illustrate Bodhisattvas' conduct through that reincarnation, not to show unfortunate deeds. Some think "the Guru needs to show some misbehaviors for the concern of the disciple and the Guru is so kind of misbehaving. Guru is misbehaving exactly like me. Guru gets drunk because I get drunk. Guru is so kind because I like to drink because I like to drink. Guru gets drunk for me. I womanize. Therefore, Guru womanizes. Guru is so angry because my main problem is anger. Guru is so kind, Guru is so kind, Guru always shows anger to guide me. Guru shows so much attachment to suit my mind. So, I am so happy. Guru really comes to my level, so I am so happy". Some individuals think like that. Especially in the West. Some individuals they literally express that. So, if you continue to do that, then, that will be hard.

Lama Tsongkhapa in the Middle Length Lam-Rim says:

When it comes to your own guru, whether his flaws are great or small, contemplate the faults of thinking about him in those terms, repeatedly generate a mind to eliminate this, and make it stop. If concepts of faults arise due to carelessness, acute afflictions, and so forth, apply yourself to confession and restraint.

If you familiarize yourself with these antidotes accordingly, you may see that there are a few faults, but since your mind focuses on excellent qualities, it will not become an obstacle to your faith.

If in case, even one moment just due to distraction, due to influence of maybe others' words, others' perceptions, due to the influence of maybe certain inconveniences that you are facing in your own situation, you happen to see limitations in your Guru, even the slightest one moment of fault, immediately do a confession, immediately restrain it, through four opponents powers, Vajrasattva practice, even just one mantra OM BENZA SATTO HUNG, like "Oh Buddha. Om benza satto hung, how can I have that kind of mindset?".

Then of you have already other type of practices, like Six-Session Guru Yoga, the Guru Puja practice Lama Chöpa, otherwise you can the Hundred deities of Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga. If not at least do Migtsema, the four- or five-lines Lama Tsongkhapa prayer:

MIG MEY TZE WAY TER CHEN CHENREZIG

DRI MEY KHYEN PI WANG PO JAMPAL YANG

DU PUNG MA LU JOM DZEY SANG WEY DAG

GANG CHENG KE PEY TSUG GYEN TSONGKHAPA

LO SANG TRAG PEY SHAB LA SOL WA DEB

Or you can recite your Guru's name mantra, and you recite twenty-one times or one mala while reflecting on the four opponents' powers: you acknowledge the mistaken view, then you feel the absolute presence of your Guru, within you or in front of you, everywhere there is the Guru, then recite and meditate on Vajrasattva or your Guru mantra, then make a firm commitment that I will never again allow, from now on, to generate such kind of mistaken thoughts. This is up most important, ok? To keep the pure Samaya with the Guru. It is up most important to succeed in our spiritual practice to realize realizations on the stages of the path. Whatever practice you wish to achieve, the number one important Samaya is the one in relation to the Guru.

The best is inseparability of your mind with the Guru's mind. The moment you have awareness, the Guru is always there, like the Inner Guru. Then on top of that, seeing the qualities of the Buddha. That will boost your spiritual immune system to quickly actualize the realizations of the stages of the path. It is also very obvious in our conventional world, like in the monasteries, in the societies, the lay practitioners, in Himalayas, in Tibet, even in the West, how successful the disciple becomes, very much you can define based on their reliance on their Guru, their service to their Guru. It is very obvious.

In the story of Geshe Drömdonba, the meditator and the scholar, one of the reason the Guru devotion is not intact is because both the scholar and the meditator, their hearts are filled with their own egotistic concerns. But Geshe Drömdonba is completely free from any of his own concerns. He is like he is just carrying an empty body and inside his attitude and his wisdom are completely all of his Guru.

XI. Meditation guide on guru devotion

A. The Six preparatory practices

In the Middle Length Lam-Rim, Lama Tsongkhapa composed a guideline for the basis on all the meditation subject of the Lam-Rim, different subjects of Sutra and Tantra (p. 61, chapter 5 – The Meditation Session). This is the “must-have” foundation for whatever Sutric or Tantric meditations you do. Otherwise, we will encounter many flaws to the meditation. Or, even if we do not have many flaws, we will not succeed in the purpose of the practice swiftly. There will be a lot of obstacles, or it will take long, long time to deliver the realizations. This guideline has to be understood as a foundational or preparatory basis for any kind of meditation. As a spiritual seeker aspiring to reach enlightenment, even when we do some breathing meditation, if we construct the breathing meditation on that basis, then it becomes so meaningful. Otherwise, it is just normal exercise. It will not be so beneficial for our own spiritual development.

Similarly, if you do Samatha concentration training even on the breathing or on the light, it will result the benefit including with the special insight. Otherwise, no matter the level of concentration we achieve, even the 9 levels, the special insight will be far away. Then, when we learn about the teachings on special insight, if we do not have a proper motivation, or a proper conducive condition, then we will waste our time. Just staying focus on one object will train you in concentration but huge amount of time will be wasted from fulfilling great purpose.

Now in order to fulfil a greater purpose, even if you want to stay focused on one object, even the light, if you do that on the basis of this guideline, which is also based on the Sutra and the Tantra, based on Buddha’s teaching, then the ultimate purpose will be fulfilled. One of the key foundations from the meditation is the six preparatory practice and the Seven Limbs of the preliminary practices, as emphasized by the Buddha in the King of Prayers. That is the root. Bringing it into practice is very much the tradition of Lama Serlingpa and Lama Atisha, and specially this tradition of very extendedly engagement of the practice of the Six preparatory practices and Seven Limbs practice is done in Tibet, which special guidance of Lama Serlingpa to Lama Atisha.

So, this is really the special Limbs of practice of Lama Atisha, which was adopted by all the Kadampa Masters, including later Lama Tsongkhapa himself. Lama Tsongkhapa is the proof that, even in degenerated times, by adopting this tradition, conducted extensive practices, and he achieved enlightenment within one lifetime. Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche embodied those practices too and all over his mandala, Rinpoche was expecting his students to practice those too. Even with his busy schedule, it was one of Rinpoche’s major practices. Even if enlightened being like Rinpoche are engaging in such practices every day, then some of us, we have to conduct all these practices. We cannot say this is a New Age Dharma, this is a digital time, internet time, just offering on the internet is enough, no. Actually, we are living time when we are losing this practice. We need to revive it back, to gain momentum. Otherwise, we are really losing all those opportunities of those precious times and practices in our life.

Whatever practice you are doing, in order to bring it into results which it to gain realizations on the stage of the path, or realizations on that particular practice you are conducting, it depends on the way you are conducting the Preliminary or Preparatory practices. It plays an equal role than the practice itself. Sometimes, we miss out even it we are masters in the practice’s information or in the actual meditation or practice. This is the actual way of practicing in our tradition all the way up to Shakyamuni Buddha.

Lam-Rim Lama Tsongkhapa says:

Engage in the six preparatory practices presented in the biography of Serlingpa as follows: First, clean your dwelling and arrange representations of the exalted body, speech, and mind. Second, beautifully arrange offerings honestly acquired. Third, on a comfortable seat straighten your body and assume a suitable lotus or half-lotus posture, making sure that your mind is suffused with refuge and bodhicitta. Fourth, in the space in front of you, imagine the lineage gurus of vast conduct and profound view as well as countless buddhas, ārya bodhisattvas, śrāvakas, and pratyekabuddhas along with those who dwell in the Buddha's words. Thus visualize the merit field. Fifth, it is exceedingly difficult for paths to arise in your mind stream if the favorable conditions for their arising, the accumulations [of merit and wisdom], have not been collected and their adverse conditions, the obstructions, have not been purified. Therefore, to unite the key points of accumulation and purification, purify your mind stream by means of the seven-limb practice.

So, first preparatory practice if you are a Gompa keeper, then **cleaning including the altar** dirt is the first thing to do. Then, through the motivation cleaning the inner dirt. It is a very powerful practice. Then, if you are doing a retreat, then you clean the retreat hut, even if it is a cave. Then, at your home the prayer/altar room. Conventionally, even if it looks clean, still you do the Yoga of cleaning. Then, when you do the cleaning, whether you are using the brush or vacuuming, moping, you say Drul Pang Tima Pang.

There was this monk who achieved Arhatship just by doing that first preparatory practice, cleaning the Monastery environment. Initially, his wisdom is so poor. He cannot even remember this one sentence. It is an interpretive meaning. Drul is the dust, Tima is the limitation, like delusions, karma. This monk was asked to recite this. By practicing again and again, especially by doing the Yoga of cleaning itself, helped to purify his limitations, until he was able to remember the sentence correctly and without much delay, he was able to understand the meaning of Drul Pang Tima Pang: the meaning of the limitation of all the delusions, the karma and achieve the full freedom of all the karma and delusions and Samsara. So, we can do the same and while reciting having in mind the understanding that Tima Pang are all the delusions and karma.

Then, when the cleaning is done, you **arrange the altar**: in the middle you arrange the Buddha statue or picture, which is the representation of the holy body, then, at the right side of the Buddha's hand, towards you (from your side, when you look at it is your left side, isn't it?) you arrange the scripture, as a representation of the holy speech, then the left side, the stupa, which represents the holy mind. Then, in front, you arrange the offerings.

Then, if you have the picture of your Guru and a stack, you arrange the Guru's picture on the stack behind the Buddha's statue, then in front of it, the Buddha's picture or statue. Guru's picture goes higher. But, if you have all in one row, flat, then you arrange Buddha's statue or picture a bit higher and in front Guru's picture. Otherwise, the statue in the middle and the Guru's picture on the wall.

Then, if you have a deity picture: at the right of the Buddha's hand, same side than the scripture, you arrange the Highest Yoga Tantra deity first, then Yoga Tantra deities, then Kriya Tantra deities, then Action Tantra deities. Both, if you have both Mother and Father Tantra deity: like Yamantaka, Guyasamaja, they are Father Tantra deities, then Heruka, Vajra Yogini, they are Mother Tantra deities. You arrange the Father Tantra deities at the right side, and the Mother Tantra at the left, where the stupa is after that you can organize. Or you put Guru and the Buddha side by side, you put the Guru at the right side of the Buddha and after the Guru, you arrange the Father Tantra deity, then left side of the Buddha you organize Mother Tantra deity's statue, then the stupa put

at the corner. As for the stupa, you can put it above (if you have a shelf) or at the end corner at the right side of the Buddha.

You can put the scriptures above all the other holy objects, on top, even one layer on top of the Guru, one layer on top of the Buddha's image, or deities' images, or aside, or side by side also. Then, if on top of that, you have Tara, Chenrezig, Vajrapani, Medicine Buddha, you can organize them either at a second level or all along the way with the deities, side by side.

Then, if you have Dharma protectors, like Dzambala, Vajravarahi, Palden Lhamo, Six-Armed Mahakala, Kalarupa, etc. you can arrange after that, or behind the Gurus and Buddhas images, or at the end of the two sides, and especially the Dharma protectors, mostly you can cover them either with a five-colors clothes, , if you have a box, or a separate shrine. Also, the Highest Yoga Tantra deities, if you are staying with the family, or exposed to the public, it is good also to put them behind the Buddha's statues or cover them.

Then secondary preparatory practice, you make **extensive offerings**. When it comes to the offerings, if you are a deity yoga practitioner, then it is good to always have two sets of offerings for the self-generation and the front generation. The eight offerings: one for the front generation, referring to the offering for the Merit field, so from the Buddha's right side, starting with water, water, flower, incense, light, perfume, music, food. The, the self-generation: from your right side, so, opposite, similarly starting water, water, flower, incense, light, perfume, music, food. Because for the Highest Yoga Tantra practitioner, you practice sadhana, there is always a self-generation and front-generation offerings. So, you have a fixed offerings and daily you can change the water, so it is only three waters (perfume and the earlier two: bathing water and drinking water).

Then, those who do not practice Highest Yoga Tantra, you can also arrange those offerings because it is so meaningful. It is an extensive offering of the 8 offerings. And there are no rules, just arrange one, two, four, ten, twenty sets. Otherwise, you offer 8 water bowl offering. They will symbolize the 8 offerings. Or 7 water bowl offering, which represent the 7 pure water resources, or the 7 qualities of pure water (Tibet). The best, being the 8 offerings, even if you offer water symbolizing those. There is no limitation in numbers, so you can offer 108 water bowl offerings if your altar is small, just one. No particular size. If you can afford, you offer in a container made with precious gems, the five precious gems: gold, silver, copper, brass crystal, rubies, topaz, then it becomes also an offering of precious jewel.

Then, the offering substances (or container) "honestly acquired", free from the five wrong livelihoods: selling weapons, making weapons, human trafficking, selling animal products, selling intoxicants, selling poisons. In the Vinaya, there are other rules: offering obtained from cheating people, selling the Dharma, stealing holy objects.

Then, the third preparatory practice is the **sitting meditation posture**: the recommended one is the seven Vairochana posture, it is the best. You can use the half posture, like the Mother Tara sitting, or Maitreya sitting posture on a chair, or whatever is comfortable, but the other rest of the six Vairochana meditation posture are very beneficial. They are only a few exceptions. Otherwise, for most those are beneficial for the meditations. I always use the example of that meditator who only got realization after checking the right meditation posture with a master who had clairvoyance and who saw that his previous life was as a cow. Therefore, all his inner subtle channels and chakras system was aligned and activated only when he was laying down, like a cow resting on the ground. So, if you are a serious meditator, you need to check what is the best meditation posture for you.

Then, you refresh your Refuge in the Three Jewels, then, Bodhicitta motivation.

The fourth preparatory practice is **visualizing the Merit field**. For Lam-Rim meditation, you have to visualize the Lam-Rim merit field, all your lineage Gurus, at the center your Root Guru, then the Lineage of the Vast Conduct, referring to Serlingpa, Asanga, then Maitreya; then the Lineage of the Profound View: Shantideva, Nagarjuna, Manjushri. Then, the countless Buddhas of the three times. Then, the Arya beings of the Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, the Bodhisattvas, ordinary Bodhisattvas, Aryas Bodhisattvas, Hearers and Solitary Realizers along with those dwelling in the Buddha's words: which is referring to the Dharma protectors, who obey the Buddha's instructions to protect the Dharma and the practitioners.

So, the whole Lama Chöpa merit field you can look at the picture or memorize them. You can do it in three ways: visualizing one by one, or like the view of a bird, or just your Root Guru who is the essence of all.

The fifth preparatory practice is the offering of the 7 Limbs Practice to purify obstacles to the meditation and accumulation of merits, meritorious resources to the success of the meditation.

The sixth preparatory practice is requesting inspiration from the Merit field for Guru Yoga practice, then inspiration from the Guru.

B. The Seven Limbs Practice

First: Limb of Prostrations

(NB: the 6th preparatory practice comes after the Seven Limbs practice)

The first Limb is Prostration, then the second one is Offering, then the third one is the Limb of Purification, then the fourth one is Rejoicing, then the fifth one is the Requesting to remain, not to depart in Parinirvana, then the sixth is to Turn the Wheel of Dharma, then the last one is the Limb of Dedication. Within those seven, the prostration and the purification are aimed to purify obstacles. The rest are mainly aimed to accumulate merits.

They are mainly based on the Sutra of Good conduct, the King of Prayers as explained by Lama Tsongkhapa in the Middle Length Lam-Rim:

*As for the limb of prostration, the **prostration combining the three doors** is set out in the stanza:*

I bow respectfully with body, speech, and mind to all the lions among men without exception, in how ever many worlds there are in the ten directions and three times.

You are mainly doing the prostrations to the Buddha who is lying among the men, not only to that Buddha, but to all the Buddhas among the three worlds, all the Buddhas of the ten directions and all the Buddhas of the three times. It not only purifies the minor limitations of our body, speech and mind but also their root: the ego-centered ignorance, in another words, the self-grasping ignorance. Prostration is honoring, paying respect to something, someone higher or more important than your centered-egoistic identity, and that itself is the direct antidote to the root, the ignorance.

It is that much powerful, so when you conduct prostrations, at an immediate level it purifies the imbalanced physical energies, imbalanced physical chakras, imbalanced nervous system, the blood flow, the organs from crown to toes. Even for a bone dislocation, when you do proper long prostrations, it helps to adjust. The outer physical nervous system, the organs and the blood flow harmonized will directly impact a harmonious function of the inner chakra, the channels, the

subtle spiritual nervous system and the drops, the utilization of the subtle drop that needs to be intact in order to utilize even the most profound practice of the clear light. If our drops are not intact, pure, undamaged, and the channels are intact, then whatever meditation we do becomes very, very effective. Otherwise, it does not work. That is why the prostrations directly, immediately, impact that.

Then, when you do prostrations, emotionally you get exercise. You may find it quite magic. If you feel a bit low, a bit unhappy, a bit confused, a bit dull, prostrations will immediately uplift you, your mind becomes clearer. You become more energized. Then, from a medical point of view, stretching is really healthy. Then, in Chinese medicine, energy exercise like Qigong, Tai Chi, even from their point of view, doing prostrations is very effective and has the same effect. I heard that even modern science analyzed the positive effects of prostrations on health. Similarly, from a psychological point of view, it has been proven it has an impact too on physical and mental health. Then, in Tibetan Buddhist environment, especially in a monastic environment, there is not a lot of exercise, but most of the monks and nuns live very long life. What they eat is very simple, they do not have a lot of varieties of food. But it helps them to keep being happy emotionally and healthy physically, especially long prostrations.

When you do prostrations, each of the gesture has a special meaning. First you join your two hands putting your thumbs inside your palms, that is the Buddhist way of doing prostrations (not with flat hands), the right hand being the method aspect of the path, the Bodhicitta, love, compassion, and the left hand, the wisdom of selflessness, of emptiness. Together, they represent the union of wisdom and method to perform powerful practice of veneration, of purification, whatever benefit that come from the practice you perform will be dedicated for that.

Then, you place your hands on the center of the crown, to purify all the limitations to actualize the major and minor marks of the Buddha, especially the Ushnisha, Buddha's crown, one of the marks of the Buddha. Then, you place on the forehead, to purify whatever negativities you accumulated physically and accumulate all the causes to actualize Buddha's holy body. Then, you place them on the throat to purify all the negativities accumulated through your speech, to accumulate all the causes to actualize Buddha's meritorious sound and speech. Then, the last one, placed at the heart purifies all the negativities accumulated through your heart and then accumulate all the causes to achieve Buddha's omniscient enlightened mind.

After that, you gradually lie down on the ground, flat. The texts emphasize to go down like a big tree, like in slow motion. Your feet should be together side by side, as much as possible, because then all your body structure is very straight up, stretched. If your balance is not that good, then of course you can put a bit of distance between them. Then, when you do the hand gesture, you should stretch your arms as much as possible before gathering your hands on your crown.

The more you cover space around you with your gestures, the more ground you cover with your body, not only the surface, but the space beneath also all the way down to the final grounds; the number of dusts you cover is the number of merits you create to achieve the higher beneficial body of the Dharma Kings, or the Kings of the 33 Gods. That will be the number of reincarnations you will obtain as a Wheel turning King, which is so beneficial. You will also be reborn as a deva or a human, a son or daughter of the Gods.

Then, once on the ground, put your hands a bit back behind and gather them in a vast gesture, as if you were gathered things before stretching your arms ahead and put them again at your crown, before stretching and expanding them again around your body to pull you back on feet. A bit as if you were swimming. You should not remain too long on the ground. You should get up as swift as

possible. Then, when you do down, you always touch the ground with full flat palms, not fists, and stretch your fingers as much as you can. Traditionally, you would do three times like that in front of holy objects or your Guru. But you can do as many times as you can.

Then, they are short prostrations called prostrations of Five Limbs: forehead, palms and knees. You do not have to lie down. You can also do three time just the hand gesture and bow down the upper part of your body. You can also just join the palms of your hands at the level of your heart, or even with just one hand at your heart, with the thumb inside. That gesture of respect, we do not only do it to the Guru or the Buddhas (even a holy object the size of your thumb, or a “defect” painting or Tsa-tsa), but to everybody.

There is a saying: you offer the same respect that you have to the Buddha to all sentient beings, because the sentient beings are the whole purpose of the existence of the Buddha. Therefore, the culture of greeting everybody with that gesture of respect is so meaningful whenever we meet each other. So, when you go to pilgrimage or to a temple, one thing to accumulate merits is to at least do the prostrations with your hand at your heart to all the holy objects.

That was the physical type of prostrations. Now, the verbal prostrations: it consists in offering praises. If you are doing prostrations to the Guru, you can say:

“All magnificent Glorious Enlightened Guru, may I become just like you” or “I prostrate to the Guru”, “Lama Kyab Su Chhi Wo”. Or you could do to Buddha: “I prostrate to Buddha”, or to the Dharma “I prostrate to the Dharma”, or to the Bodhisattvas “I prostrate to the Bodhisattvas”, you prostrate to the Arhat, to the Sangha, to the Stupa. Whenever you are saying you are doing the prostration of speech. It is because Sariputra, in his previous life had prostrated in front of Buddha’s picture and expressed his aspiration to become like Buddha that Sariputra had this immense karma to be one of the closest to Shakyamuni Buddha and his attendant.

Then, **mental prostration**: you see the Guru as Buddha and generate faith and veneration. You do that to the Buddha too remembering his qualities and express genuine sense of inspiration and faith. You do that to the Dharma, the Sangha, all holy beings.

When you do prostrations and want to purify something specifically in relation to the Guru, if you displeased the Guru, disobeyed the Guru, or Guru’s advice, did not follow the Guru’s instructions, or criticize the Guru, whatever karma you committed, maybe in the past, in this lifetime or there may be possibility in the future, such karmic imprints may be carried in your heart, in order to purify that, then you recite: “Lamala Kyab Su Chhi Wo”. Then if you do manage you do long prostrations, or one of the other forms of physical prostrations, three times, hundreds of times.

The, if you have some karma committed in relation to certain holy objects, certain holy places, certain individual holy beings, certain Sangha, then you can express their names, and do prostrations. Under the instruction of Manjushri that saw he needed to purify obscurations and accumulate merits in order to realize emptiness directly, Lama Tsongkhapa engaged in 35 Buddhas Prostrations practice and accumulated many hundred thousand of prostrations, on top of mandala offerings (specifically for the accumulation of merits). You can establish a special karmic connection with 35 Buddhas and 35 specific qualities of those Buddhas, that you will be able to achieve, and the 8 Medicine Buddhas.

Or you can also do Vajrasattva recitation.

But the most common one, if you are able is the 35 Buddhas. Best if you memorize the 35 Buddhas prayer, when you recite them, you are doing verbal prostrations too. The, by reflecting on the

meaning, you do mental prostrations at the same time. By combining them, you are doing the three prostrations together. If you cannot memorize them, you can record your own voice and play it when you do the prostrations. You can listen to others' recording too, but best with your voice to accumulate merits of your own speech. Then, you focus on your physical gesture and mental attitude generating faith in the Buddhas and their qualities.

The Sutras describe all the benefits of doing prostrations. The first one is you will have a beautiful body whenever you will reincarnate, not in a worldly way, a meritorious body to inspire others in virtue, to influence them with virtuous inspiration. Then, wherever you are, it brings harmony, peace and happiness, people feel so comfortable and happy to be around you. Not only the people, but your presence also blesses the place and the other living creatures. The place you touch is where everybody gathers and feel so wonderful and inspired. You create that kind of karma and energy.

Then, you will be able to live in pure morality. It conditions to observe the vows in pure morality, that is why those who keep Tantric vows, Bodhisattvas vows, Sangha vows, one of the tools to preserve pure vows is doing prostrations. You will have more devotion, the more prostration you do and the more devotion you develop, towards your Guru, the Dharma, Buddha, Sangha, virtues, ...You will always pursue being near to the Guru, being near to the Dharma, the Buddha, the Sangha.

Your mind will become so clear and courageous towards activities in relation to the Dharma, to virtues activities, so enthusiastic. Otherwise, you will always excuse not to practice, instead of having the mental attitude of "I can do it, I will do it right on". Eventually you will develop the most courageous Bodhicitta mind. Then, "I will achieve enlightenment. I will make sure I will achieve enlightenment within this very lifetime, within this very retreat time, on this very cushion, within this very journey". Then, you will achieve enlightenment, the exalted wisdom. The prostrations will act as a direct cause, not a conditional cause, to the Dharmakaya body of the Buddha, the wisdom body of the Buddha.

You cannot have all the Buddhas on your altar, but one thing you can do is inviting all the Buddhas as your merits field where you are going to do prostrations there to all of them through your mind. While doing prostrations, you manifest yourself in numberless bodies, not only the merits field is numberless but the practitioner too through your visualization, to accumulate another round of numberless merits. Then, you also visualize all your previous reincarnations in all Realms, all of them manifested under the form of a human, same as you, you carry the same mind set, the same devotion, same inspiration and same manner, exactly. You also bring all your future reincarnations, the possibilities of being reincarnated in all Realms, and all your reincarnations in the Bodhisattvas path, the 10 Bhumis Bodhisattvas path, all of your reincarnations as a sentient being, same as you, same inspiration...And you are the leader. When you recite you are the chant leader. When you are doing it, everybody is watching at you. That itself actualizes the effectiveness of purification of the past karma as well as the purification of all the karmic imprints that will result for future consequences.

You absolutely feel their presence. It is the words of the Buddha. So, if you really follow the instructions of the Buddha, it becomes real. Not just imaginary. Sometimes you can visualize as big as Mount Meru to cover more space, or sometimes so tiny as atoms, so you have numberless Buddhas, numberless beings, numberless reincarnations of you around, to accumulate extraordinary merits and extraordinary purification.

As explained in the Middle Length Lam-Rim, you can use this verse from the King of Prayers to combine with the **physical prostrations**:

Owing to the power of prayer for good conduct, all the buddhas directly appear to my mind. I bow sincerely to all these buddhas with as many bodies as there are atoms in the world.

Then, **mental prostrations**:

On every atom, as many buddhas as there are atoms are surrounded by bodhisattvas. Everyone is absorbed in meditation on suchness. I fully venerate all of these accomplished ones.

Then, **verbal prostrations**:

I extol the good qualities of all the buddhas. I praise all of the sugatas with the sounds of an ocean of songs in voices of inexhaustible seas of praise.

As an aspirational prayer for the 35 Buddhas. You can also recite the 8 Medicine Buddhas to make it a powerful healing practice: in the Medicine Buddha puja, you have a section of reciting seven times the names of the Medicine Buddhas.

It is important to utilize your own speech. This way you use the sense organ, the tongue, which is part of the physical aggregate, to create a sound that will create its own karmic impact. Then, the sound, the tongue, the body, the mind, each of them has its own special karmic meritorious accumulation, which will be a cause to bring all the benefit from the prostrations.

Second: Limb of Offerings

You should regard each of the different types of offering in their numberless infinite forms. The offerings that can be consumed, regard them as nectar. Those which cannot be consumed, you offer them as jewels, precious gems, beautiful objects to see, to hear, to be touched. For example, flowers, it can be divine flowers in the Pure Lands, decorative flowers in the celestial of the deities, you visualize them. Then, the human realm flowers, you can visualize all the flowers that exist in the world, not only the flowers you planted, all the wildflowers and so on.

You can offer what is owned by you and by others in the visualization. When you offer things that belong to others, including tree or plants owned by Nagas or spirits, those beings accumulate merits too, you are sharing your merits with them, that how you are helping them. You are benefiting them. So, when you do not have time for meditation, wherever you go, whatever you see, you can say “Om Ha Hum” and offer everything. Then, everything around becomes pure. The environment becomes like an extensive celestial offering by the power of the mantra: Om multiplies, Ha transforms into divine pure offering, Hum purifies all the impure substances in relation to the object (even ugliness, incompleteness). On top of that if you are able to dedicate the merits to the owner, that would really be a Bodhisattvas’ way of life.

Then, if you are practicing Tantra, you can use the Eight Lines of the Dakinis prayers. Whenever you recite that, you are actualizing what you see as Heruka, Vajrayogini celestial. For example, if you see a mountain and recite the prayers, that mountain becomes Vajrayogini Mountain. So, now when you go for a walk, you just make extensive offering yoga of practice. Similarly, you turn your groceries into supplies for the Buddhas, the Dakinis. This is so powerful. That is why it is called secret mantra, swift path, because it is so precious and powerful.

Similarly, instead of going to the toys store to buy cows, horses, elephants for the altar, in the fields, there are plenty of cows and horses. If you do the offering of those animals, the animals will benefit from it. You can offer also your body, others’ body. So, even when you see your friends

and family, instead of saying “hello” you can say “Om Ha Hum” if they do not mind. If the person is wearing beautiful ornaments, or clothes, you do the same “Om Ha Hum”. You cause them to accumulate a similar benefit than you, even if they do not know the Dharma.

If you carry that kind of mind, you start to see offerings to the Buddha in everything through your practice. This is very powerful to transform our mind and purify our impure views, our negativities.

Same, any sound becomes offerings. Now, you are carrying the lenses or the earplugs of the offering. Whatever sound you hear, you make an offering, even the complains of someone, you also make an offering out of it. If you really want to overcome the complains of somebody, arguing does not help, you make the offering. By the power of your own interpretation and perception, that what you call taking everything onto the path to enlightenment. It is a Lojong practice. Then if you can offer even a bell to the stupa or holy object, there are so many benefits.

Even when we offer incense, there is some light when we light it up, that also becomes a light offering. That light also will be a substitute to the butter lamp if you do not have one. Similarly, crystals in the sun will reflect rainbowed colored lights, then, the light of the sun, of the moon, the lights in the city the light in your room. We ignore all that and we just offer tiny candles and think we are great practitioners. And that will make meaningful the use of the electricity, otherwise, turning on the lights will exhaust your merits and money. Think of Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche and all his massive light offerings. Making light offerings is so important to purify our ignorance. Our wisdom will increase, emptiness will be realized as quick as possible.

Incense offering includes two practices: the offering of the incense sticks and the incense powder which has a different meaning. The sand mandala too includes colored sand mixed with medicinal colors, incense colors, herbs colors, natural precious colors if you do it properly. If you gather them together and put that on the altar. That also becomes part of the incense offering.

You can make the offering even more meaningful conjoining the offering with the Bodhisattvas’ way of offering, which is called the Samantabhadra’s clouds of offering practice, you can find in the prayer book. Just by the power of the prayers, it becomes extensive.

Lama Tsongkhapa keeps on quoting the King of Prayers Sutra:

I offer these buddhas and bodhisattvas fabulous flowers, glorious garlands, cymbals, scented balm, precious parasols, excellent butter lamps, and superb incense. I offer these buddhas and bodhisattvas’ sublime garments, supreme scents, sachets of fragrant powder equal to Mount Meru, and every wonderful thing in a splendid array.

Unsurpassable offerings are set forth in the stanza:

May all these unsurpassable and vast offerings appear before all the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Whatever offering you do on top of those, you mention them and then recite if you want to put the offering into words:

Through the power of faith along with virtuous deeds, I pay homage and make offerings to all the conquerors.

Third: Limb of Confession

By combining the purification and accumulation of merits of the Seven Limbs practices, eventually, we will actualize the complete purified state of our being, which is Buddha’s form body and Buddha’s wisdom body.

In the Middle-Length Lam-Rim, quoting the King of Prayers, you will find this verse:

I confess each and every one of the negative actions I have done with my body, speech, and mind influenced by desire, hatred, and ignorance.

Every limitation needs to be confessed. No questions about the negative actions that performed through our body, speech and mind, that are by nature negative such as killing: causing life of others, causing pain to others, by nature is negative. Whether you have this motivation or not, whether you have a wrong or positive motivation or not, it is negative. Just misleading with words and others are misled, by nature is negative. Similarly, the arising of desirous attachment, like arising of anger, aversion, ignorance, does not need motivation, by nature is negative. It is harmful by nature.

Then, the action that are not by nature harmful but done with a harmful motivation or intention, or a harmful conclusion, they have to be purified. Similarly, there are certain actions, limitation or aspiration which can be included as negative, as obstacles, that need to be purified, even though by nature it is not negative, such as self-nirvana, aspiring to self-nirvana, to remain just for yourself completely in the peace of nirvana just by completely forgetting about the concern of well-being of others. Comparing to the altruistic path, it falls into a limitation and needs to be purified.

Then, there are many limitations in relation to correct views, as by nature not believing in Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. By nature, not believing in karma, is not negative, but in relation to the view that you hold as a Buddhist, whose views are based on the Dharma, then if you do not believe into Buddhas, Dharma, Sangha then it falls into wrong views. You need to purify that. Then, if you do not believe in the laws of causes and effects, rebirth and reincarnation, then, as a Buddhists all these are limitations that need to be purified.

There are also many views that carry limitations, in comparison to the ultimate view. By nature, the view held by Vaibashika or Sautantrika or Cittamatra or Madhyamaka Svatantrika, holding the dualistic view of inherent existence, or even non-Buddhist view like permanent existence, are not negative. So many people follow these views. They have their own reason to follow that and are benefited from that including in believing in God, in a creator. But, as a follower of the correct view of Madhyamika Prasangika, following the view of Shakyamuni Buddha, of Nagarjuna, Lama Tsongkhapa, then the earlier views are to be negated. They are obstacles. They carry limitations and need to be purified. Otherwise, we will not be able to actualize the ultimate view, isn't it?

Therefore, "negative action" are not just the actions that are negative by nature, or by intention. There are many different forms of limitations. This audience is mainly a Mahayanic audience. Lam-Rim audience are Mahayanic audience, even if at the moment for some of us the purpose is for now only higher rebirth or a purposeful life. Ultimately our goal is to achieve Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings. Even if you are following the small scope, your ultimate goal is to follow the higher scope.

Self-liberation is due to desire. Desire is a very broad subject. In relation to the individuals who aspire to self-liberation, they may not accept that their intention to pursue self-liberation is due to attachment desire. But from the Mahayanic point of view, this is attachment desire, because this is about self-concern, the concern of self-cherishing purpose, isn't it?

One of the benefits of doing confession purification practices is that we can purify what we committed in the past, also stop committing new action in the future. In relation to results, to

purify the consequences of the past committed karma and stop the formation of the future karmic consequences to be experienced.

They are many forms of purification. A very common in the Tibetan Buddhism Mahayana tradition is Samayavajra practice, Vajrasattva practice, 35 Buddhas confession practice. They are the general antidotes to purify any form of limitations. Then, the main element of all those practices is the Four Opponent Powers. It is the key element to make the purification possible: Reliance or Refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, the deity or the Guru; then, the Power of Regret or acknowledging the mistake as a mistake; then, the Power of Antidote; then, the Power of Refrain or making a firm commitment not to do it again. The Vinaya Sutra emphasizes that there is not any negative action that cannot be purified by the four opponent powers, even the five heinous crimes.

The negative action come in two forms: Definite and Indefinite Karma. Once you committed a karma, once the four factors of the karma are already completed, including its conditions for the results to ripen, one has definitely to experience the results. This is called a definite karma. By applying the four-opponent power, one will still have to experience the results; but the purification will reduce the duration of time of the consequences, or the intensity of the consequences. Certain karmas are supposed to be experienced in the Lower Hell Realms, but due to the power of the purification practice, the results will be only experienced by having a disturbing dream, or a headache, or a stomach pain, or born in the Hell Realm but for just one moment, or a day, instead of remaining there for eons.

You can find the Samayavajra and the Vajrasattva Practice in the FPMT Retreat Prayers Book (to listen the entirety of Geshela's instructions for those two practices as guided meditations, Middle Lam-Rim, June 2024, teaching #9: <https://longku.fpmt.ch/de/mediathek/teachings/audio/1378/2.2.7.1391>).

The practice of Samayavajra is particularly recommended to purify broken Samaya in relation to Guru, if you harass the Guru, or any limitations that we have in our mind stream for beginningless lives. Certain individuals not finding qualified Guru could be due to karma committed in the past, that needs to be purified. Then, you can take that Samayavajra practice as a purification and that may help. Or, you may have found a Guru, and you may find it so difficult to obtain teachings, or you may find it is so difficult to get the blessings in relation to the Guru or to feel the benefits in the relation to the Guru, again it has to do with the karma, so you can do this practice.

While doing the Samayavajra practice, you need to have a genuine sense of trust, to believe, a total conviction in the practice. On the basis of the Four Opponent Powers, take refuge in Samayavajra (1st power), confess and purify all your negative karma, even those that you do not remember (2nd power). It is very much possible that we must have committed some karma that we forgot since beginningless past lives. Confess also all the tendencies to commit karma in the future, all of them have to be purified with a sense of urgency "I must purify right now" as if you have swallowed a poison. Generate an even greater sense of urgency: if we pass away from this life before purifying all the negativities, there are so many negative karmas that would bring the possibility to be born in the Lower Hell Realms for countless eons. That is much scarier than just dying because of poison. Then the visualization and the mantra recitation are the 3rd power, the antidote. Then, hear Samayavajra saying:

Guru Samayavajra then says: "All your negative karmas, obscurations, and degenerated samayas are completely purified."

The Omniscient One can see even your subtle karma, while we cannot. Until we become Buddha, we will not be able to see it. So, trust the Omniscient One when he says that statement that you are completely purified. Then, make sure to be mindful that “even at the cost of my life, I will not commit any negativity in the future” (4th power). There should be a time frame in order to make an effective purification: for example, “at least until I finished this purification practice”, or until next morning, best being “even at the cost of my life I will not again”. The rest of the sadhana can only be done if you have the initiation, otherwise, you simply visualize Samayavajra dissolve into a light form and enter your heart merging with it and Guru Samayavajra and you become inseparable. Meditate on the three circles: meaning understand yourself, the creator of the negative karma, the karma created and the purification practice (the blessings; you being inseparable with the deity), all lies in emptiness of inherent existence. Then, dedicate the merits.

In a similar way, you can do Vajrasattva with or without initiation, there will just be differences in the way of visualizing Father and mother Vajrasattva or Solitary Vajrasattva (depending on the initiation), at the top of your head or merged with your heart, but without the arising of Vajrasattva as in the Highest Yoga Tantra sadhana. If possible, one of the most meaningful things, on the basis of a daily 21 times of Vajrasattva 100 syllables mantra recitation with a glimpse of meditation of the Four Opponent Powers, then conducting a 100,000 Vajrasattva retreat. It is regarded as very powerful and one of the meaningful highlights of the precious human rebirth. It requires about three months of your full-time. And the rest of life with a daily 21 times mantra recitation. That will give a great protection of not committing new karma and will purify intensively past karmas, even those of the karmas newly accumulated will never multiplied. Because once the karma is committed it multiplies.

It is good to memorize these particular verses:

“Through ignorance and delusion, I have broken and degenerated my commitments. Guru, be my savior and refuge. Lord, holder of the vajra, endowed with great compassion, in you, the foremost of beings, I take refuge.”

(Vajrasattva replies) *“Son of the lineage, your negative karmas, obscurations, and all broken and degenerated commitments are now cleansed and purified”.*

Every now and then, while you are walking, eating, doing anything, just take one minute and do this. It will be really helpful. Or, suddenly something happens, for example, while walking you accidentally step onto an ant. Right there you recite “Om Vajra Sattva Hum” and say those verses sincerely, feeling the presence of Guru Vajrasattva. Feel that not only the mistake is purified but also you help the victim to whom you accidentally caused harm.

On top of that, if the broken Samaya or the karma created is in relation to the Guru, one of the specific ways of purifying, besides Samayavarja is confessing to the Guru of having broken the Samaya and then ask for forgiveness if the Guru is alive, it is very important. If not, then you can also ask forgiveness from one of the closest disciples, even the attendants, or in front of certain holy objects, like statues or pictures of the Guru, the mala or vajra or bell of the Guru, texts held by the Guru. Or you can visit the Guru’s mandala or shrine, and there you do three prostrations, kneel down and ask forgiveness to keep intact the Samaya with the Guru, which is the most important.

Even the slightest of broken samaya with the Guru will become a huge obstacle in our spiritual path. But, when the Samaya to the Guru is pure then everything becomes so easy, life becomes so meaningful, spiritual life or any practice becomes so easy, actualizing realizations becomes so easy, any form of accumulation of merits becomes so vast, extensive. With a pure intact Guru

Samaya then, you will have the awareness and mindfulness of integrating all the practices into Guru Yoga practice which makes all the practice more effective and beneficial.

If it is negativities in relation to individual liberation vows, like refuge, lays vows, committing 10 non-virtues actions, one should refresh the refuge and together refresh the lay vows, minimum three times a day and three times at night. Otherwise as much as possible. If it is individual liberation vows in relation to Sangha, if you are pre-ordained Sangha then you purify through your ordination abbot. If it is in relation to novice or fully ordained Sangha, that must be purified within the Sangha community in the presence of minimum 4 fully ordained Sanghas, the more the better.

Then, Bodhisattva vows, you need to purify by retaking the Bodhisattva vows from the Guru, during initiations or separately, or you retake Bodhisattva vows in front of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas' holy objects, or visualizing Buddhas and Bodhisattvas' holy objects. In relation to Tantric vows, you retake them through initiations, in the presence of the Guru, or in six-session Guru Yoga practice, Guru Puja practice. Then, if you take the 8 Mahayana precepts, you confess through Vajrasattva practice, but instead of reciting "Vajrasattva" in the mantra, you recite "Pemasattva", the lotus. You can use the mantra of pure morality and recite it twenty-one times:

*OM AMOGHA SHILA SAMBHARA [SAMBHARA] / BHARA BHARA / MAHA SHUDDHA SATTVA
PADMA VIBHUSHITA BHUJA / DHARA DHARA SAMANTA / AVALOKITE HUM PHAT SVAHA (21x)*

It is good to recite it whenever we have free time, because we may not know when we will be limiting the precepts to keep 24/24 the Samaya very purely.

Then, those of you who have initiations, you have daily sadhana. There is possibility of not doing them correctly, doing mistakes, limitations that need to be purified. As mentioned before, we cannot take lightly any limitation. If you are doing Yamantaka sadhana, there is a section with the mantra "Om Yamantaka Samaya", then you can take the occasion to do a Yamantaka Vajrasattva purification. You can do similarly with Heruka. It is Vajrasattva in many manifestations designed to purify specific limitations that happened in specific practices.

Fourth: Limb of Rejoicing

I rejoice in all the merit, whatever it may be, of all the buddhas of the ten directions, bodhisattvas, pratyekabuddhas, those with more to learn, those with no more to learn, and all ordinary beings.

Those are the five kinds of beings to rejoice not only in the merits you created but also all the merits created by the others, like all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions. It is a huge opportunity, when you think about the benefit of rejoicing. If you want to practice just one thing, practice rejoicing. It is one of the best ways to keep our mind happy: day to day, our heart filled with happiness, positivity. The benefit out of it is supreme. That is why Shantideva made a statement: "rejoicing is the greatest virtue, among all the virtues".

If our mind is so easy to scatter by worries, by worldly concerns, by sensual distractions, then you practice rejoicing, with your mind totally invested in rejoicing: like taking the time to rejoice to all the merits accumulated by the Buddhas in the South, in the East...one by one. Rejoice in the merits of the 35 Buddhas, the 21 Taras. Reflect on each quality of each of the 35 Buddhas starting with Shakyamuni Buddha's Major and Minor Marks, Buddha's deeds. Unbelievable. Wow. 21 Taras. Take the 21 Praises and reflect on each of them. You can read the commentary. 5 Dhyani Buddhas. All the levels of Bodhisattvas' merits. Ordinary Bodhisattvas. Pratyekabuddhas, Hearers, "Those with more to learn" are the learners who have not achieved cessation from the three paths. Generally, the five types of persons are referring to the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, Sravakabuddhas, Ordinary sentient beings.

Think about all the merits and qualities, including yours, fill your heart with joy, and feel happy. That is called Rejoicing. In the Sutras it is said that rejoicing in our own merits doubles them. It is the easiest to feel happy. But we hardly do that. We are busier to think about all the negativities we did, or we may commit in the future, in the form of worries. And we hold onto past limitations we committed; you keep reminding them. The only way we should remember them, as serious practitioners, is when we do confessions and purification practices, to remember and acknowledge them. Other than that, we should never think about them and forget about it. The first step of a Purification is forgetting them, letting them go from our grasping. When we come to the point when we are losing the grip of grasping of holding onto past negativities or wrongdoing, that is a good sign. Our heart should be filled with Rejoicing.

It is so wonderful to remember all the retreats you did. Some people may think why I should recall. It is for rejoicing purposes. How many amazing Dharma events did you have with your Gurus? With your Dharma brothers and sisters? How many great things have you done in the temple? In Dharma centers? in the service of Guru, in the service of sentient beings? How many practices of generosity, forgiveness, acceptance, kindness to your family members? It is good to recall them, to remember them, again and again and feel proud of yourself. You should reward yourself. Make you a nice coffee, nice tea, nice meal. Or a nice outing. Go for it. With that heart of “wow, well done”. Not only in this lifetime. You must confirm to yourself that from beginningless lifetimes, you accumulated immense and immense of merits. The proof is your present time being born as a precious human rebirth during the time of the Compassionate Buddha manifesting in the form of Guru and be able to enjoy the Dharma, can you imagine?

This is the result of your unbelievable accumulation of merits. One lifetime is not enough to accumulate that many merits. You must have accumulated them from beginningless lifetimes. Not just from beginningless lifetimes “samsara, samsara”. Yes. When you want to purify, when you want to gain renunciation. Some people misunderstand “practicing Buddhism is so depressing, you always talk about samsara, lower Hell Realms, karma...” Yes, some particular time, particular practices require that. But there is a lot of time when we get to think about wonderful, amazing things also. Sometimes you must imagine “wow this must be my past lifetime”. And admire yourself. I must have been the attendant, or the very close friend to this particular virtuous friend, or the Guru. I would think like this: “I must have been this very cute puppy to my Guru in my past life, that is why I get the opportunity to meet my Guru”. Just to think about that is wonderful right, this cute puppy. Or a cute human being, why not?

It is so healthy, so wonderful to have that mindset. Then, if you feel comfortable, think about it all that you have: the food, the clothes, sustainable health, friends, family...is the result of your past life, or many lifetimes. Feel proud of yourself. And rejoice about that. That will double your merits without spending much time, many efforts.

Then, people who have less vows than you, less merits than you, whoever is doing good things, you rejoice and feel happy for them. This way you will accumulate double of their merits. When you rejoice on the merits of Bodhisattvas, you will accumulate half of their merits. Unbelievable and it is so easy to feel happy about Bodhisattvas’ deeds, their way of life and virtues. So, easy compared to the human beings, isn’t it? There are numberless Bodhisattvas like Shantideva, Lama Atisha, Lama Serlingpa, Arya Nagarjuna, Bodhisattvas Manjushri, Chenrezig. When you rejoice in the Buddhas’ merits, you think about Buddha Chenrezig, when you think of Bodhisattvas, you can think about Bodhisattva Chenrezig.

When you rejoice in the merits of the Buddhas, you accumulate 1 of the ten of their merits. Then, rejoicing in the merits of the Guru, I think it would be even more, or maybe equal to rejoicing in the

merits of the Buddhas. Here, it is not said how many. It should be more. Rejoicing in anyone's merits during a solar eclipse multiplies hundred million times. Sometimes, it sounds like "How could it be possible"? We should not have that kind of thoughts.

In order to gather all the three countless eons of merits, which is unmeasurable, some take countless eons, others take just one moment like that. That is why Buddhahood is possible within this very moment, in this very cushion, in this very lifetime. Or it can happen hundreds of million eons of lifetimes later. It all depends on the accumulation of merits. We do not mind if it takes three great countless eons to achieve Buddhahood but also you may regard the possibility that you may achieve Buddhahood right now. So, try to accumulate as many merits as possible also this way.

Then, rejoicing during a lunar eclipse multiplies the merits seven hundred thousand times. This is the words of the Buddha. Just think of His Holiness, Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche, your Gurus, totally filled with selflessness, altruism Bodhisattva's ways of life. Completely in peace, in positivity. You see all those qualities in them in every breath, every move. It is so heart touching, heartwarming. You can naturally feel so fortunate, in the expression of feelings, feel fortunate to have met this Guru, receiving his teachings, this Guru...feeling so wonderful. That is rejoicing. Naturally your heart, your life will be so filled with purpose and meaning. Not even one moment is wasted.

If you do whatever you do in the service of even one sentient being, you are following the advice of Shakyamuni Buddha, of the ten directions Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the Gurus: even one beneficial work for one sentient being, just one ant crawling, reciting mantras or caring for them, you are following them. Even just that, one action a day, feel "how amazing I am". Your heart can be completely filled with bliss and positivity. In the heart of that person there is no room to feel agitation, meaningless, depressed, angry, unhappy.

All of you here you are spending your whole day, dedicating your whole life in your very best in an altruistic way. The entirety of the day you are obeying, following the Bodhisattvas and Buddhas and Gurus' guidance. You are trying your very best. Unbelievable rejoicing. Life is so worth living. Whatever inconvenience that can come from Samsara, compared to the meaning of your life becomes very small. Gradually, the way we train our mind like that, in the heart of rejoicing, then you will find no meaning in giving any focus on those unhelpful thoughts that come in your way.

You will be so forgiving, understanding to yourself. You make some mistake. Do not focus on that. You are still a sentient being, you are already doing so great. You are following your Guru's and Buddhas' and Bodhisattvas' advice the best you can, 24 hours: you also go to bed like that. And some more altruistically, with altruistic intention. And if you do this mistake, how can you freak out, and pay so much attention. It is so easy to purify the mistake, to forgive yourself for that mistake. It is such a wonderful way to take care of yourself.

Don't focus on that. Yes, you have this limitation, forget it. You have such an amazing and purposeful life. Why do you focus on the moment of anger you had a few minutes ago? Let it be purified. Let go. Rejoicing is so wonderful.

Five: Limb of Requesting to Turn the Wheel of Dharma

I implore all the protectors, lights of the world in the ten directions, who have reached buddhahood, which is without attachment, to turn the peerless wheel of the teaching.

This is so important. We should practice it all the time. That way we will never experience the poverty of receiving Dharma nectar. And you will see every action, all the deeds of the Guru, as a

teaching thanks to this practice. And whenever you read the text, you will see every letter, every word as a teaching. It turns the wheel of Dharma educating you and also causing to realize the path in reliance on those words you read in the text, those words that you listen. Then, whenever you need instructions or advice, you timely receive them. If we do not have the merits through this Limb of practice, no matter how many teachings you receive, you do not hear the instructions, you do not hear the Dharma teachings, you hear something else. Even if you learn the teachings, and train in it, you never realize the path.

Sometimes just to expand or express your sincerity in requesting for Dharma teachings wholeheartedly, not only voicing out to request the teaching, but you can also visualize yourself in numerous forms and then in one voice wholeheartedly, sincerely, respectfully requesting them.

Sixth: Limb of Supplication

I supplicate, with palms joined in prayer, those wishing to demonstrate their final nirvāṇa: please stay as many eons as there are atoms to benefit and bring happiness to all beings.

So, when you request to the Gurus not to pass into Parinirvana then you can do it in many different ways: Long-life Pujas, mandala offerings, fulfilling the Guru's wishes; most of all, keeping pure Samaya in relation to the Guru, then practicing the Guru's advice. Then the Guru will live with us for a long time. In case the Guru sees the necessity of showing the teaching of impermanence and death to the disciple, then, the manifestation of the Guru will manifest swiftly for us to continue to enjoy the Dharma. You can also dedicate Long-life Retreat, like Amitayus Retreat, Namgyalma Retreat, White Tara Retreat, or daily recitation of White Tara practice in the name of the Guru to fulfill the Limb of the Supplication.

Then, we do that also to the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Deities, Dharma protectors, for their blessings to always be closed to us. That very much is constructed by reciting the names of the Buddhas, supplications of the Deity, the Buddhas, doing sadhanas of the Deities, the aspirational prayers of the Buddhas.

Seventh: Limb of Dedication

Whatever little merit I have accumulated by prostrating, offering, confessing, rejoicing, requesting, and supplicating, I dedicate it all to enlightenment.

All the roots of virtue represented by the previous six limbs are made the common property of all sentient beings and never come to an end, since they have been dedicated with strong aspiration as causes of complete enlightenment.

If you thus develop an understanding of the meaning of those words and slowly do as was taught without allowing your mind to wander, you will gather immeasurable heaps of merit.

Five of these limbs — prostrating, offering, requesting, supplicating, and rejoicing — belong to the collection of accumulations. [30] Confessing purifies obstructions. One aspect of rejoicing, the cultivation of joy in one's own virtue, multiplies the virtue. By means of dedicating, the virtues of collecting, purifying, and multiplying, however small, are multiplied manifoldly, and what would normally come to an end after producing a temporary effect is made inexhaustible.

So, the dedication is as equally important as the motivation because it fulfills the three purposes:

(1) accumulating, (2) purifying, and (3) multiplying and making inexhaustible.

By dedicating in Bodhicitta and Emptiness, if anger arises or any negativities, all the merits you have been accumulated and dedicated will not be destroyed and be forever remaining there. And not only but by dedicating in altruism, Bodhicitta multiplies since the dedication is done in the

concern of numberless sentient beings, then your merits will be numberless, as equal as the number of sentient beings. The, no matter how tiny the merit, if you dedicate it in Bodhicitta it will last until the last sentient being achieve Buddhahood. It will benefit from now until Samsara ends. It will never be exhausted and eventually it will turn into the inexhaustible merits of Buddhas' enlightened qualities: the perfected merit of wisdom and the perfected merit of method.

That will turn into the perfected merit of wisdom as Buddha's wisdom body, all pervasive forever existent, forever beneficial. The inexhaustible merit of method eventually will become Buddha's form body forever living; every single method benefiting the rest of the living beings. Even after the entire sentient beings achieve enlightenment, they will live in complete perfected virtues. Because of multiplying, purifying, accumulating, they will become inexhaustible. The practice of rejoicing also carries certain elements of the practice of dedicating such as accumulating. By rejoicing it also prevents the obstacles to consume the merits. By rejoicing, it will multiply the merits until achieving the perfected enlightened qualities and become inexhaustible too.

C. The last (6th) Preparatory Practice: The Request

Sixth, as for the final preparatory practice, with a clear visualization of the objects, offer a maṇḍala, and with strong aspiration, make numerous requests: "Please grant blessings that all erroneous attitudes such as disrespecting the spiritual teacher may cease and that all the nonerroneous attitudes toward the spiritual teacher may come about with ease. I request blessings that all outer and inner obstacles may be pacified."

Request not to pass into Parinirvana, to always turn the wheel of Dharma, to quickly grant the blessings, blessings of realizations, to clear obstacles.

In the FPMT Prayer book you can also find this verse if you practice Deity Yoga practice towards the Guru from whom you received initiations, Tantric vows, Bodhisattvas vows, you can conjoin this:

Special Request for the Three Great Purposes:

I prostrate and go for refuge to the guru and the Three Rare Sublime Ones. Please bless my mind. Please bless me and all mother sentient beings to immediately cease all the wrong concepts from disrespect to the virtuous friend up to the subtle dual appearances of white appearance, red increase, and dark near attainment.

Please bless us to immediately generate all the right realizations from respect for the virtuous friend up to the unification of no-more-learning.

Please bless us to immediately pacify all outer and inner obstacles. (3x)

At the end, if you know the Guru's name mantra you can recite it 21 times or one mala. Then, you can visualize the Guru absorbing into your heart (cf. detailed explanation of the visualization in the next section dedicated to the prayers in relation to the Guru III.C. Prayers to receive the blessings of the four initiations or empowerments).

D. The actual session of Meditation

As mentioned before, there are two types of meditation: Analytical and Absorption, analytical meditation coming first; then, when it comes to Vipassana meditation and single-pointed meditation, single-pointed meditation comes first. A correct absorption meditation object is the wisdom you actualize by practicing analytical meditation with a correct object of meditation, which is actualized through the process of learning. Learning, Contemplation, Meditation act, as causes and effects. Without learning, analysis is not possible. Without analyzing, no meditation is possible. First, we need to learn the correct meaning of the Dharma, then whatever you learn

has to be confirmed through your understanding to gain confirmation within you through logics and reasoning and experiential exercises.

You have to be convinced by your own inner wisdom, not only because the Guru, Shakyamuni Buddha, Maitreya or Nagarjuna said so. That is depending on the wisdom of others. That knowledge within, which is called the wisdom of learning, needs to be analyzed until you gain conviction on the basis of your own wisdom. For example, why is it important to rely on a Guru?

Now, you need to take that wisdom in your own day-to-day practice, for example exercising in being devoted to His Holiness the Dalai Lama in thoughts and actions. Then, check what is going on in your mind. What are the changes within you. What benefit are you receiving from that. When you do not experience it, when your practice of Guru Devotion is not right, what kind of limitations are coming in your way? For example, you will experiment how you feel protected, how your heart is filled with joy and your life meaningful. You can rely on somebody that is a perfect guide to you. You feel your life is so clear, because you have a direction thanks to the Guru. To gain a genuine sense of conviction. That confirmation is the wisdom of analysis in relation to the Guru Yoga practice.

That wisdom is going to be your object of absorption meditation. Now, when you want to practice it is better to have one precise object, easier to focus. The “oh I see” is your object. You have to place your whole concentration single-pointedly and with clarity focused on that. The object must be a mental object: not a word, not a letter, not a physical object, not a picture, a color... The wisdom has to be the object. You have to have the clarity on that object, that settledness. Mindfulness will hold steadily this wisdom and settling in that is absorption meditation. One minute, one hour, one day like that.

Then, when you go out from meditation session, while doing the activities of the day, one corner of the mind of your mindfulness is always fully aware. For example, even while focused on cooking, one part of your mind is always there, present, always seeing Guru in Buddha. You come to the point where you do not need to refer to the text or analyze any more to see Guru in Buddha. One aspect of your mind is always aware of that, never fades away. Even if you have to fully focus your awareness on something, the wisdom is so vivid that once you are done with the other task, the conviction just bounces back. When you reach to that point one can claim he or she has reached the wisdom of meditation on Guru Devotion or Realization on Guru Devotion.

This goes the same with all other subjects. The more you practice the Six Preparatory and the Seven Limbs, the more you will gather meritorious support to actualize realizations on meditation faster. On top you can gather the other Six Conducive conditions as explained in the Great Lam-Rim such as meditating in the right place, having less desire or distractions towards outer objects, less attachment with your mind or thinking, being contented, completely giving up many activities, pure ethical discipline. This is specifically required for Shamatha meditation, but if you can gather them for all the other meditations, that will be of great benefits.

As a practitioner of Mahayana Lam-Rim, the purpose of Shamatha, has to be for the purpose of Vipassana in relation to the Lam-Rim: referring to the stage where you actualized the nine level of Shamatha, and then using that Shamatha mind to meditate using the wisdom of emptiness as the object of meditation, where you have the two aspects of the mind: the discursive and the single-pointed aspect of the mind. The whole purpose of meditation here is to achieve special insights to realize emptiness directly, and then progressing through the nine levels of the Bhumis to actualize the tenth Bhumi. Until you realize the wisdom you do not change the object of meditation, otherwise it will be an obstacle.

Lama Tsongkhapa wrote in the Middle Length Lam-Rim:

Meditation on a path like the one explained below is to render the mind suitable for attending to a virtuous object just as one wishes. If you jump from object to object to sustain your interest or you pursue a variety of virtuous objects in no particular order, nothing will come of it, and having gone wrong from the beginning, your spiritual practice will continue to be faulty throughout your life.

For example, visualizing Buddha with a bird eye/view or just Buddha's eye, or in light form. You chose one object and stick to it until you gain realization.

To succeed in single-pointed concentration, you have to develop three qualities. One, is not going away from your mindfulness or complete knowledge of the object, Second, is clarity, no limitation, no addition, the third one is the impact of that meditation, your mind and your body reach a point of total ease or pliancy. Even with other meditations, like Guru Devotion, you need to achieve those three qualities. Your body and mind become pacified too.

We are still training, so we have to watch our mindfulness and assign a guardian at our sense's doors, which is the Introspection or Vigilance, to make sure our realization will not lose its strength, and that whenever a flaw arises, it can report to mindfulness. If you do not do that, even if you gain realizations, they will degenerate. Until you reach certain levels of path and grounds, even as ordinary practitioner, until we achieve certain ground of merits the realizations will decline. For example, to make sure that when you look at the Guru, you will always see him or her in Buddha. Then, if the Guru starts to act differently, because you have those lenses, you will always see Guru in Buddha. Similarly with your ear's senses, if somebody start to talk badly of your Guru, your faith can be shaken, but because of vigilance, you will tell your vigilance not to get influenced, your faith will remain intact. Otherwise, during meditation is so wonderful and then outside the cushion, we remain the same.

First contemplate the benefits of reliance and the faults of non-reliance. Then repeatedly resolve to never permit your awareness to get caught up in conceiving faults in the guru, and instead recall the excellent qualities like ethics and concentration that you yourself have perceived in him. Cultivate the faith that has the aspect of mental clarity until it arises. Then contemplate, in accordance with the above quotations from the sūtras, the instances of beneficial kindness that you have received and still receive, and from the depth of your heart, cultivate respect until it arises.

The realizations we need to gain in relation to the Guru is irresistible faith, the devotion you put into practice in thoughts and actions, then a genuine sense of conviction to see Guru in Buddha.

Then, to end the session, whatever you do, first dedicate in Bodhicitta to make sure your practice becomes altruistic: for the enlightenment of all the rest of the sentient beings and only after that you dedicate for yourself, for your enlightenment. And after that for your temporary well-being.

You should meditate like this four times a day: at dawn, like 3 to 5 am. Then, breakfast. Then, morning session from 8 to 10 am, or 9 to 11 am. Most of the retreaters usually, they take eight Mahayana precepts and have to have lunch before noon, so it will be more convenient to end at 10 am to have the time to prepare the food. In the afternoon, you do the session before sunset, it can be from 2 to 4 pm, or 3 to 5 pm, depending on the season. Then, if you are taking the precepts you use the dinner time to do some Karma Yoga and start anytime the night session after sunset: 7 to 9 pm, best is to finish early so you can sleep at 9 pm, to have at least six hours of good sleep, or even before that. Going to sleep early and waking up early is really good for health and for meditation.

Then, the number of sessions can be two or more. As a beginner, our lineage Gurus will generally advise to short sessions many times, like half an hour, the time being determined by the moment when you feel the greatest of the meditation, then at that moment you should stop. Don't push. Don't stop the session when you are exhausted. This way, in-between you are aspiring to go back to meditation cushion.

Once they have stabilized a bit, prolong the sessions while maintaining them all free from the faults of excessive tension or slackness. If you practice in this way, you will have few obstacles, and exhaustion, laxity, and lethargy will be pacified.

That goes with all the practices: Ngöndro, Lam-Rim, Lojong. Otherwise, when you come out from the session, you are even wilder. You have to have that mindset that whenever you want to do any Dharma activities, it is as if you were going for the best holidays. That kind of mindset and from time to time we need that break, we need time out from samsaric disturbances and stressful life, worldly life. On a day-to-day basis, whenever you are going some sadhana, some reading, you are going to some really nice vacations from samsara. Even one, five or ten minutes of mantra recitations, five or ten minutes of reading, five or ten minutes of glimpse meditation.

Otherwise, the day is so chaotic, so busy, a list of things to do one after the others. If you have that mindset then from early morning you want to have that mindset, you want to go for holidays. And you do your sadhanas after all the rest of your activities, when it is 10:00 or 11:00pm and then you are totally exhausted. So, if you go to holiday and fall asleep, what is the point? So, first thing in the morning, if you wake up early you do your sadhanas. Then, the rest of your day you feel like all the rest of the day in holiday. Otherwise, there is some kind of burden and stress.

Generally speaking, numerous practices enhance the object between sessions, such as prostrations, circumambulation, and recitation. However, the main point is that if you make an effort in the session itself but then, during the intervals between sessions, you carelessly let go of the causes for maintaining your focus, by not relying on mindfulness and vigilance of the observed object along with its subjective aspect, the outcome will be very little. Therefore, between sessions, you also need to read Dharma texts presenting that object and recall it again and again. Accumulate by various means the conditions that are favorable for the arising of excellent qualities, and purify by various means the adverse conditions, the obstructions.

The success of any retreat or practice depends on moral discipline:

Your determination regarding the vows you have promised to uphold, the basis of everything, should be reaffirmed regularly.

Therefore, the more precepts you take during retreats the better. The Eight Mahayana precepts will help the gathering of conducive conditions.

Apart from that, train in the collection of the following four causes for an easy arising of the paths of śamatha and special insight.

...which is accurate for any kind of meditation or practice. Those four causes are "Restraining the Sense Doors", "Acting with Vigilance", as mentioned before, "Knowing the Right measure of Food", and "Practicing earnestly without sleeping at the wrong time and behaving well when lying down to sleep".

Then, Lama Tsongkhapa keeps on explaining:

Knowing the right measure of food means to give up eating too much or too little and to eat only the amount that does not damage your virtuous activities. Furthermore, having meditated upon the faults of craving food, remember what is said in the scriptures about eating, thinking that it should be without mental afflictions, that it should benefit the giver, that while you now gather the microorganisms of your body by means of material things, in the future you will gather them by means of the Dharma, and that you will bring about the welfare of all sentient beings.

On top of that, there are certain types of food that are not recommended for the practice, called “black food” such as garlic, radish, black sesame seeds, meat. But then if you are practicing Tummo, certain Tantric practices, inner heat practices, garlic is very good; but for other meditations, it is not. You need to know what kind of food is good or not. Certain food regulates the cells for sexual desire, one of them is garlic. Then, they say certain meat like chicken regulates the desire. If you have the problem of thoughts of desire arising in your mind, this has to be reduced or overcome. The oil in the sesame seeds will bring laxity and sleepiness. Radish also has that kind of inconvenience and gives you some kind of dullness.

Most of all eating heavy in the evening will impact the freshness of your morning meditation. Even for conventional health, it is better to eat less in the evening. There are many Sanghas they practice the Vinaya and do not eat food after noon. Those who took Gelong or Getsul vows, at least for one month, they try to respect it, sometimes at least one year, some more. But of course, this depends on your body also. My late Master’s reincarnation, Phuntsok Rinpoche, took Gelong vows, so he stopped having evening food. Some months ago, he was in Lumbini. He fainted and was hospitalized. At the hospital, they say nothing is wrong, he is just so weak. The doctors said he needs to eat evening food. You have to know your body. Buddha always said: “your health is number one”. So, for health purpose it is ok to eat in the evening.

More important when you are eating, use the prayer mentioned before (cf. food offering) or meditate as indicated by Lama Tsongkhapa, not out of attachment but only to sustain the body, this precious human rebirth, to be in the service of all sentient beings as a medicine, as a blessing and as a form of charity for all the sentient beings present in your body (a minimum of 84,000 as said by the Buddha) whose life depends on the sustainability of our body, which depends on food. In the Vinaya there is a long meditation to do. At least, for us, remember that.

During the session and in-between, you should overcome the five hindrances are excitement (sensual desire, sensual distractions), negativities are like anger, laxity, forgetfulness, doubt.

Lama Tsongkhapa quotes: Letter to a Friend (v. 39):

Lord of the lineage, having practiced all day and in the first and last periods of the night, sleep with mindfulness between those periods, so that even your sleeping is not wasted!

Sleep with Bodhicitta, sleep within the clear-light meditation if you are Guru Deity practitioner, or in meditation on emptiness, or in particular when you will do a retreat on Guru-Devotion, you sleep visualizing your head on the laps of the Guru, with complete reliance on the Guru, with complete faith and conviction. Sleep the way Buddha lied down when he went into Parinirvana, in the Lion posture, combined with a meditation on the death process, it will be most beneficial for us to get familiarized with it and the clear-light meditation. Practice this meditation until you fall asleep to maintain, even asleep, the training. There is the possibility to even actualize the clear light, the accomplishment of the dream yoga and sleep yoga in the Dharma, the Sambhogakaya realization during the sleep. Then, when you wake up, the first thing to remember is your training in Bodhicitta, that will help to plant an auspicious imprint to actualize the Nirmanakaya of the

Buddha by training in the sleeping yoga. That will create the auspicious conditions to actualize the Dharmakaya, the Sambhogakaya, and when you wake up to actualize the Nirmanakaya.

Those guidelines for meditation session should be applied from Guru Devotion all the way up to enlightenment, the only change is in the subject of the meditation.

Lama Tsongkhapa explains:

From proper mental attention, gained through the arising of wisdom reflecting on the meaning of what has been studied, a direct realization of ultimate reality that comes from meditation arises.

When you reach the path of meditation by the results of training in meditation (cf. from the three practices of studying, contemplating and meditating), by the resultant time, meaning the next time you will be into the five paths and will go through the ten Bhumis training (especially on the path of seeing, path of meditation); there will be three practices that will be easier to apply: during the meditation when you are opening up to the negation, then when you achieve the cessation, and finally, when you get to the post-meditation, before entering another session of meditation. It will produce results swiftly and easily.

There are so many topics or practices to conduct to progress on the path. As a trainee on the path, we should allocate many different retreats to different topics or practices, because certain meditation will help to purify directly negativities, others to realize conventional truth, others to gain Shamatha, others to realize emptiness. Then, all these benefits will come in our way.

Lama Tsongkhapa explains:

Some who do not understand this approach may claim that if you are a scholar, you should only do analytical meditation, while if you are a sādhu, you should only do placement meditation. But this is not correct because each of them needs to do both.

XII. Collection of prayers in relation to the Guru

A. Prayers not to give rise to heresy towards the Guru

There are prayers:

*May I not give rise to heresy even for a second in regard to the actions of the glorious Guru,
May I see whatever actions as the stainless actions of a Buddha
With this devotion may I receive the Guru's blessings in my heart*

There are prayers you can recite or meditate on.

B. Requesting prayers to request the Guru to remain among us in all times

*You are the Guru, you are the Yidam
You are the Dakini, You are the Dharma protector,
From now until enlightenment
I shall not seek other refuge than you
In this life, in the Bardo and all future life
Hold me with your hook of compassion
Free me for the fears of Samsara and Nirvana
Grant all the attainments
Be my constant companion
Guard me from interferences.*

You can find this prayer in Lama Chöpa. You can meditate, you can recite them. It is very beneficial.

Then prayers to be guided by the Guru in all future times.

*In short, I seek your blessings my savior to be guided by you from birth inseparable throughout all my lives.
And thus become your main disciple, holding every secret of your holy body, speech and mind.
Savior, please grant that all be auspicious for me to be foremost among your very first circle of disciples wherever you manifest Buddhahood so that all my temporal and ultimate wishes without expectations may be effortlessly and spontaneously fulfilled.*

C. Prayers to receive the blessings of the four initiations or empowerments – Guru entering your heart

*By the force of having thus requested three times nectar and light rays: white, red and dark blue stream forth one by one and altogether from the places of my Guru's holy body, speech and mind and absorb one by one and altogether in my own three places, body, speech and mind.
The four obscurations are purified, and the four pure empowerments are received. I achieve the four kayas and I am blessed by a replica of the Guru that happily absorbs into me.*

Then, if you are visualizing your Guru on top of your crown or in front, or in the picture, in the thangka, in the statue, now the Guru dissolves into light, your crown naturally opens like that (gesture like the blossoming of a flower), in the light form, any light, whatever light you are comfortable with, mostly it is a golden saffron kind of light. Then the central channel opens like that (id. gesture), simultaneously your heart chakra, like our normal heart but in the center here, opens and becomes an eight petals lotus. In the middle of the lotus there is a moon disc, or a sun disc, or just a moon disc, and in the center of that, if you are a practitioner of Tara, a Tam, if a practitioner of Chenrezig, Hum, or most of the deities, syllable HUM. Vajra Yogini it is a BAM.

In a light energy form, Guru dissolves and they merge. Then this heart 8 petals lotus closes. Then, if you know the name mantra of your Guru, then you recite the name mantra visualized like a tie, a string around that heart. You can recite three times, seven times, as much as you wish to, it does not matter. There is no specific number. Then, on top of it, you place the interpretive vajra, which is by nature the indestructible wisdom, a close vajra, place on top of it, sealing it, like a seal. Then, you understand that me, Guru, Deity – Buddha become inseparable forever. From there, through meditation, now you achieve inner Guru. In your day-to-day life, from now onward, you live with the awareness that you are the Guru, you are oneness with the Guru, one entity with the Guru is the inner Guru. And you live your life, you guide your life in the function of Guru's body, speech and mind.

Then, you can use the three prayers of the section “The Guru Entering the Heart” of Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga:

*Magnificent and precious root Guru,
Please abide on the lotus seat at my heart.
Guide me with your great kindness,
And grant me the realizations of your holy body, speech, and mind.*

*Magnificent and precious root Guru,
Please abide on the lotus seat at my heart.
Guide me with your great kindness,
And grant me the general and sublime realizations.*

*Magnificent and precious root Guru,
Please abide on the lotus seat at my heart.
Guide me with your great kindness,
And please remain stable, without separation from my body, speech, and mind, until I attain enlightenment.*

Visualizing your Guru entering through your crown, gradually going down, at your forehead, purifying all your negative karma in relation to your body, all the meritorious karma is actualized to achieve Guru's holy body. Then, gradually arriving at your throat and purifying all the karma in relation to your speech, actualizing all the meritorious karma to actualize Guru's holy speech. Then, gradually arriving at your heart, purifying all the negative karma committed through your heart, in particular in relation to the Guru, and actualizing all the meritorious karma to actualize Guru's holy mind.

Or you can recite those verses three times. From there you can follow the rest of Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga. Or you can end with the final verse of the Foundation of all good qualities:

*In all my lives, never separated from perfect gurus,
May I enjoy the magnificent Dharma.
And, by completing the qualities of the grounds and paths,
May I quickly attain the state of Vajradhara.*

At the end, seal the practice in emptiness and Bodhicitta.

D. Absorbing the merit field of the Guru to receive blessings in our continuum

Having thus being entered into your heart, the supreme Guru, please grant this request so that you may bless me happily, once again set your radiant feet firmly at the corolla of my heart lotus.

This is the prayer you can do while doing the previous visualization. One by one, crown chakra, then rest of the throat, before arriving on the throat chakra, even though you already received the initiation. If you did not manage to purify the speech the first time, you can do another round of purification, another round of consecration by establishing the seeds of the Guru's holy body, speech and mind into your three chakras. And ultimately you become in complete oneness.

E. Dedication prayers in relation to the Guru

So, then after that you do dedications. Here we will do the Lama Tsongkhapa dedication prayer (but then you can do this in relation to your Guru, according to Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, in accordance with your practice):

By the force of the Victorious one Tsongkhapa acting as our direct Mahayana virtuous friend in all our lives may we never turn away for even a second from the pure path highly admired by the Victorious one.

May we meet the teachings of the Victorious one Losang Dragpa who had the morality, and eminently pure way of life was courageous in the extensive conduct of the sons of the Victorious one and accomplished the Yoga of the two stages of supreme bliss and emptiness.

Glorious Guru, whatever your body, retinue, lifespan, and realm, whatever your supreme and superior name, may I and others become exactly like that.

May I be able to live a life of pure morality listening to many teachings, train in Bodhicitta, and have pure view and conduct without corrupting or polluting the teachings of Losang Dragpa, the second Victorious one.

In all my lives never be separated from the perfect Gurus, may I enjoy the magnificent Dharma by completing the qualities of the ground and path may I fully attain the state of Guru Vajradara.

XIII. The Nine Attitudes of Guru Devotion

These nine qualities are the one we need to develop. Without achieving sustainable qualities, we will not be able to receive maximum benefit of the Guru, even if you have a Guru who is an enlightened Buddha. If we as a student, we carry these nine attitudes as sustainable qualities, then even if the Guru is just one ordinary person, because of equipping this quality in the disciples, you are able to receive all the benefits up to actualizing state of full enlightenment, the entire benefit as if you were directly relying on the actual Buddha.

Such intense profound practice as a beginner like us who is very fragile in the sense of so easy to generate some misunderstanding, to get overpowered by our past habitual delusional imprints and environmental factors, it is so easy to degenerate these qualities. In case you have developed them, still it is so hard to carry as a sustainable practice. Therefore, this practice should be practiced in relation to a qualified Guru, to practice more easily seeing teachings in anything that is related to the Guru.

Having in mind that whatever action you relate to the Guru will create inauspicious or auspiciousness, you can take this text as your meditational guide to first train your thoughts, then try to apply this practice into actions.

When you take this text as a form of guide to meditation then you start with the Refuge:

I request my kind perfect root Guru who is more extraordinary than all the Buddhas, please bless me to be able to follow you the qualified perfect Guru with great respect in all my lives. Realizing that correctly following you the kind perfect Guru, the foundation of all good qualities is the root of happiness and goodness I will follow you with great respect not forsaking you even at the cost of my life.

Correctly following in thoughts and actions to the Guru serves as the root causes of the foundation to all the qualities all the way up to enlightenment and correctly relating to the Guru also serves as a root to all the happiness in one's life happiness and goodness. Happiness comes from results of merits; suffering comes from negativities. When you relate to Guru, your negativities start to be purified, that is how you begin to end the suffering. By relating to the Guru, you accumulate merits. That is how you create abundance of causes for your happiness. With the understanding of that then:

I will follow with great respect not forsaking you even at the cost of my life

You will never degenerate the pure relation, your relation to the Guru even at the cost of your life.

The first attitude:

Thinking of the importance of the qualified Guru I will allow myself to enter under your control, may I be like an obedient son, acting exactly in accordance with the Guru's.

So here, as I mentioned at the beginning this practice must be established on the basis of the preliminary practices, such as actualizing your basic qualities, actualizing basic qualities of the Guru. This practice has to be practiced by qualified students to the qualified Guru. Then literally you can practice like this, then that is the greatest practice that you can claim, the most powerful practice. "After relying on the qualified Guru I will allow myself to enter under your control". That qualified disciple completely surrender yourself under the control of your Guru.

“I will allow myself to enter under your control”, is a big word, it is not an easy practice to allow yourself under the control of someone. But you can make that decision if you carry these basic three qualifications as a student who found Guru who at least carries basic three qualifications, if possible, the ten, if not at least someone who is knowledgeable, someone who is ethical and someone who is compassionate, like that.

Once this qualified disciple put yourself under the full control of your Guru then you should behave like this:

May I be like an obedient son acting exactly in accordance to the Guru's advices.

So here we have the example of an obedient son and how they would behave in relation to their father's guidance isn't it? In a similar way here, the spiritual son will behave exactly like that in relation to the Guru: without any questioning, without any doubt, you follow exactly like the obedient son, you know how an obedient son would follow their father. So, in fact the intensity of the relation between spiritual son and spiritual father is numberless time greater than in comparison to even those between the most beloved child to the most beloved parent or most obedient son in relation to the kindest father, the strength of the spiritual father-son is beyond our imagination in our worldly example.

Here when the student carries this basic qualification, the student understands the value of the teacher. This son's understanding of the value of the father is very much within this lifetime spread, but then spiritual son's understanding the value of the spiritual father is beyond this lifetime, it benefits all the way up to the benefit of enlightenment.

So therefore when you get into a very deep practice in this, when you really understand the Guru Yoga practice, then whenever you think about your Guru, it is the most heart touching, even the tears will fall, and you know the goosebumps will stand up and it will never degenerate that affection, that kind of devotion, that trust, that kind of faith, that kind of conviction to your spiritual father. You will come into a time in life in your spiritual journey the closest relation among all the humans that come in your life will be your spiritual Guru. And we have to develop up to that stage.

And that is very much based on knowing the value of your spiritual teacher. Even the father, mother are unbelievably precious, but their benefit to us is very much within this very lifetime concern. But as far as it is concerned with the spiritual relation to your spiritual father is every lifetime being your guide, every lifetime being your parent, producing all the spiritual benefit all the way up to enlightenment.

Then when you are in difficult time, when the obstacles come in your way or in your path, along the journey, the first person that comes in your heart is your Guru, when you are happy the first person that comes into your heart it will be your Guru. And when you are sad the first person that comes to comfort you is your Guru and you will think of your Guru. So, that is so intense that now every moment, even when we are losing all our consciousness, like the sensual consciousness, even when we go to the most difficult time in the death process, one thing that is so vividly present is the memory of your Guru, thinking of your Guru, just because of that, the Guru protects us from all the harms caused by the hallucinational disturbances throughout the death process.

Not only that during the clear light you see your Guru, the absolute Guru, which is the Dharmakaya. By relying on the conventional Guru your whole life, now you are able to, the moment you see the clear light, to see your absolute Guru which is the Dharmakaya. Then there, because of the seeing Guru in Dharmakaya, there when the clear light arises that causes you to actualize your resultant Guru, which is yourself being in the state of Guru Buddha, you are self-

actualizing the state of the Buddha, yourself becoming the Buddha and who causes that? Your Guru is causing that. In this lifetime we have to develop an intense connection until that you really achieve the Guru Yoga, the definite Guru Yoga even now, which is meaning that you absolutely see you are inseparable from your Guru.

You and Guru are just oneness. There is nothing that can separate you. Your being your absolute heart, your Buddha nature which you carry is absolute Buddha, absolute Guru, that is your Guru. As I mentioned before, in every experience your Guru is the first person to come in to celebrate with you, come to rescue you when trouble comes. It will become like that after you really understand the full benefit, the full meaning of the Guru Yoga practice, then eventually you become like that. It becomes natural to you like that and so beneficial that you will even bring the possibility of just that one practice alone, being the cause of one's lifetime enlightenment.

“So I may be like the obedient son acting exactly in accordance with the Guru's advice”. The Guru's advice is to know your mind, Guru's advice is to know the real yourself, know the real nature of your mind. The Guru's advice is to actualize the absolute, the most beneficial attitude and most beneficial wisdom, the attitude of altruism, the wisdom of emptiness and liberate yourself from all the flaws, that is Guru's advice, In other words, Guru's advice is learn the Dharma, contemplate in Dharma, meditate on Dharma, and actualize the path, and actualize all the realizations on the stages of the path. Guru's advice is never to indulge in worldly concerns and always stay inseparable from developing yourself in practice of Dharma, that is Guru's advice. Guru's advice is always taking good care of yourself meaning Guru's advice is never to surrender yourself under the control of negative emotions, negativities. Guru's advice is always filling your heart with the virtue or the Dharma attitude and wisdom. Guru's advice is to be in the service of preservation of Dharma meaning actualizing realization in the path, be in the service of sentient beings, it means accumulate merits by being in the service of sentient beings. So correctly following that is like “being an obedient son”.

Then second one is:

Even when Maras, evil friends and the like tried to split me from the Guru, may I be like a vajra inseparable forever.

The Vajra is an example of indestructible, immovable, the hardest phenomena. So, in the journey of our spiritual practice in particular in relation to the Guru, the Guru Yoga practice, the Guru-Disciple relationship can face so many obstacles on the way because the practice is so precious. Being so precious, the Maras also will overlap, obstacles too will overlap. Those Maras here we are talking about the negative emotions, the negative karmic influences rather than that which manifests into spirits harms.

Ego can be one of the worse Mara that may come in your way: like “How can I completely submit myself under the control of Guru?” you know, so that is ego and that is ignorance and that is the Mara. Then when your emotional objective in relation to the Guru is not fulfilled you get upset, and that is the Mara, or you misunderstood the relationship with your Guru, you develop attachment, instead of inspiration, the spiritual devotion, but then you express the ordinary desirous attachment to the Guru, emotional attachment to the Guru, that is Mara, then jealousy that is Mara, when the Guru shows the manifestation of being more close giving more time to other disciples or showing some sense of ignoring you and caring more to other disciples you get jealous, you get uneasy, that is the Mara. That will cause you to split from your Guru, that will cause you to break the Guru Yoga Samaya, Guru Devotion practice.

Evil friends, you never know who that may be, it could be your business partner, when you devote yourself to the Guru, they may say what can be more important than the money, why do you waste so much time with this funny people, a so-called Guru, they are wasting your time, rather you should focus on your business. That is possible. It could be your partner, I saw even some circle of friends that after they met their partner, their Guru Yoga practice degenerates terribly, and the partner obstructs being in the service of the Guru. I remember there was one very wealthy practitioner, he has more than enough for himself, his wife and children, and the wealth, it seems that you can enjoy it for a few lifetimes, even if he does not work, so he was being very generous, serving even materially to the Guru and he spent so much time in retreats and practices and he met a partner, initially sounds like also a very, very good practitioner, but then the partner obstructs: "How can you offer all this money you know when then we may not have food to eat", can you imagine you know? But the guy has enough wealth that can last enough for three lifetimes, maybe four lifetimes. He got pressured and got really into trouble. He had to limit everything just to please the partner.

Yes, you have to be balanced, it is understandable, but then this can be his obstacle in this very end and how long you are going to live, you know? how much time that you have? Time with such a precious Guru in your life? But then during this favorable time, your time is completely occupied with deep diving into more worldly way, so it is very hard, it also happens like that.

Then it may come in the form of even a spiritual friend, someone maybe they just talk about their Guru, and they do not talk about your Guru, maybe your Guru does not have any fame you know and do not have anything, even though he or she is your Buddha, but in the outside world he is nobody, but then someone is very glorified or even for the other person he or her Guru may be unbelievable, then you kind of shift your focus from your existent Guru to the new Guru, it also happens. Then worse than that people project flaws in your Guru and then when you hear and you get disturbed, your devotion degenerates, etc. All these are obstacles.

Then spirit. The spirit can come in a human form: they are human but then they have this negative spirit, negative mind, that tried to split you from your Guru. It also happens. Then some formless spirits when they see your path is developing, then they obstacle like meeting the Guru, having time with the Guru, receiving teachings from the Guru, etc. Then your ordinary mind starts to hijack your Guru Yoga practice by thinking okay, there is no purpose for me to relate from this person because this person I do not receive any teachings, I do not get chance to see him or her so I should give up rather than move on with a new Guru who can always be with me etc.

So, all these can be obstacles, trying to split you from your Guru to whom you have already established Guru disciple relationship. In that kind of situation, these are just a few examples:

May I be like a Vajra inseparable forever.

Whatever kind of obstacles come in your way, for you, your Guru is your Buddha or your protector, your deity, meditational deity, your refuge. That relationship, no one can obstruct you. So, you carry that immune vajra mind, indestructible vajra conviction and faith in relation to your Guru.

When the Guru gives me work, whatever the burden may I be like Earth, carrying it all

So, even how hard it is, be like the Earth carrying it all, in the burden, the job, the commitment that may come on you from the Guru could be a nasty one, conventionally, it can look like nasty, unreasonably, or it unimaginable in your capabilities, that may come in the practice as a homework by commitments, but that may come in assigning some kind of responsibilities, when you look at through your ordinary mind, it is like impossible that you have the capability to achieve

those paths, but as a ripened disciple when you receive such kind of instructions you just say yes and you do everything in your very best, without any sense of you being burdened, without any sense of you being pressured, without any sense of Guru being inconsiderate, without any sense of thinking that “Guru didn’t understand me. And Guru gave me such a task beyond my capability”, not like that.

Whatever task was given to you, you just do it, and you just do in your very best and that is the best. So it is that kind of courageous heart that we need to develop, because whatever your homework or the duty that Guru gives to us is all our tools for us to purify our karma, accumulate merits, then there are many things the Guru can see, the capability in us that our ordinary mind whatever you know would not be able to see them.

Therefore, that kind of situation if you do not have a basic qualification then how you are going to handle it. It is not easy you know. So, these are very profound practice for beginner, you know, like me, no way, even in the thoughts, to just to imagine practicing is so hard in actual action, not easy.

So then one thing if we rely on a qualified Guru, and answer yourself as a ripened disciple, whatever work, whatever responsibility given to us all will be in fact if you examine logically, examine with a clear mind, for long-term benefit, you look at the task from bigger picture you will realize that it all are the tools for your benefit, to purify accumulate merits, solely for the benefit of you alone and will never give you a task that something is non-virtuous, would never give a task that is for something not virtuous.

Because Guru are the highest in the skills and one of the basic qualifications of the Guru is compassion, so will never burden us with negative tasks, But if in case, maybe in case that you would rely on a Guru who is actually an ordinary being and then if there is any negative task that put onto you, even you know by examining logically or from the bigger picture and seeing there is a false then even in the Lam-Rim emphasizes that you can respectfully clarify it with your Guru.

So, this is also very important. Guru will never burden us, or Guru will never give us a task which by nature is negative or by its circumstances is negative or by its circumstances bring negative results. So, without making a judgment, emotional judgment but deep thinking, logical thinking, that if you see any task by nature negative or by circumstances negative, or by its cultivation it will bring negative results, then you can explain to the Guru, but with much respect, in a much respectful way, in the words you use, the gesture you approach should be so respectful and not like some sense of against the Guru, fighting with the Guru. It is just simply, in the sense of due to limitations of my own mind due to ignorance I may did not get the full picture, so just for the clarification then you consult the Guru. You can do like that but as far as a qualified Guru will never give you any task which is by nature negative or by circumstances is negative.

Then the fourth one is:

When I follow the Guru, whatever suffering occurs, may I be like a mountain immovable.

When I follow the Guru then the job is to practice on the path and practicing on the path is not a pleasant one, practicing on the path can be quite harsh. While practicing the Dharma, you cannot expect to be so joyful, so happy, so pleasant, practicing Dharma can be sometimes harsher than those harsh experiences that we go through in Samsara, because of the purification that is taking place. You know when we practice Dharma, and when the purification happens, when the heavy negative karma is purified, the processes can be very harsh, process can be very harsh.

There are some cases that by intense practice you may lose everything, you may lose all your wealth, you may lose all your family, all your family will give up on you. You just want to do retreats,

it is a “get out of my house”, that may be also possible. There is even a danger of health degenerations, because of intense practices, such kind of things is also possible to occur, and many do occur like that.

But if this occurs when you are in the stage of matured practitioner, in a sustainable Guru Yoga practice, then you will achieve benefit after benefit, from out of these experiences. But if you are not matured yet, then you may give up, and when you give up, because of not fully matured, as a student and not fully rely on a qualified teacher, then that is a real disaster, you really become a poor person, poor in worldly life and poor in practice, you have no cave to go, and you have no home to go.

If you may become like that, you have not achieved illusory body, but you also do not have this proper human structured body, you see. Your heart will be totally empty, but then not emptiness. Your heart is like totally sink into complete lost but not in the wisdom of emptiness awaken. So therefore, you must be extremely careful. Therefore, at the beginning, as a beginner practitioner, you have to take very steady development in our spiritual practice and starting from this Guru Devotion practice, you have to be very, very steady.

Once you really engage into it, then you really need to become like a vajra immovable, you really need to, even whatever suffering that comes in your way, really be like a mountain immovable. Then there, the more intense the suffering comes in your way and the more you intensify your practice, the more the suffering comes in your way, you rejoice, you feel blissed, because you see the purification is so powerful, a powerful purification is taking place, it is not like imagining, is really purifying, you are really purifying.

When my late master, in the last stage of his life, was going through this complete dissolution of his physical body, conventionally from our point of view, it looks so painful and not only that, throughout one whole year he went through this dying process, and every single day when the physical body became sicker and sicker, he became more and more joyful, and he was singing song. Your whole life praying, aspiring may all sentient beings’ suffering ripen up on me, may all my happiness ripen on them now. Now it is really happening, and this is truly the Guru’s blessings, wow, you start to sing song, those spiritual songs, rejoicing songs, and you can see the glow in the face, you can see the glow around the Master, you see from your own eye, but physically, he is sick, getting sicker and sicker every single day, until he died. It happened. So, this is what it means.

Otherwise, if we are not matured, then we say “I’ve been practicing whole life Dharma and say Dharma didn’t, is not helping me. I thought Dharma will help me, first of all not to die but I’m dying you know and secondly, I’ve been practicing Medicine Buddha whole life but then now I get sick, Medicine Buddha it seems like false”, and immature practitioners do say like that. There are many Buddhist practitioners when they are in trouble, they give up Dharma, they give up Refuge, they give up Guru. Many.

This short period of my journey around the world interacting with so many spiritual practitioners and some are much more senior practitioners than me, in Westerner community, in Chinese community, in Tibetan community. The moment obstacles come struck in them, they give up Dharma, they give up Guru, they give up everything. There is one student who met the Gurus even before I was born but did not carry these three student’s qualifications: non-partisan remember? Remember the meaning of non-partisan means your very clear objective of your spirituality whether to do with Guru devotion or renunciation or Bodhicitta, Emptiness, Sutra, Tantra, is only for liberation for the future lifetime benefit, nothing to do with worldly concern. With that qualification you relate to the Guru, the Dharma, then when your business collapses you will not

give up the Dharma, when you face a crisis, you will not give up the Dharma, otherwise you will give up.

Then when that person's business collapses, he gives up the Guru right there, or gives up the Refuge, and has so many holy objects, all the holy objects discarded from the altar, and has connection with so unbelievable living Gurus and close connection, close in the sense that a lot of interactions, more than many other students, and they also have been benefactors because of that also there are a lot of interactions with the Guru, even in the Dharma circle. Then they have so many initiations, but then when the business collapses right there, so Dharma does not work, Guru did not work, all the holy objects did not work and literally everything given up, everything given up you know. I saw that.

And there are practitioners that they are, just recently I saw one woman who is very elderly age, whole life devoted Buddhist practitioner, very devoted, she has connection with Chinese Buddhists, Tibetan Buddhists even Theravada Buddhists, but suddenly got cancer, she said "Dharma doesn't make any sense so now I don't practice", saying "I don't believe in all this", it didn't help me. So scary isn't it, whole life, she is elderly age, all because of sickness, you know like that, and many had given up because of business collapses.

Even among my own students within this short period of lifetime, initially I can see when the business goes up their dedication goes up, when business gets a little bit of obstacles, the dedication goes down like that, like stock market, it is a very fast fluctuating, and very superstitious practice, the faith is very superstitious, the devotion is very superstitious, the conviction in the practice also very superstitious, and the superstitious is also very much worldly concerned, any spiritual practice that has the superstitious subject, the mind that which apprehending the Dharma is a superstitious mind, then everything is worldly.

Therefore, we really need to come to a point that when the tragedy happens, the Guru, the Dharma, your practice highlights to you. When the glorious thing happens to you, Guru, Dharma, all these things highlight to you. You need to be like that, when problems come in your way, then you start to look for some better solution other than a Guru, other than the Dharma, other than your practice, then already you see the limitations in your practice. But whenever good thing happens to you, you start to celebrate out of Guru keeping in your heart, Dharma giving in the heart, so that meaning there is another dependence, the main dependence is other than your Guru, other than your spiritual practice.

On the journey you cannot expect everything will be pleasant, on our spiritual journey, you cannot expect everything is pleasant and even with the relation with the Guru you cannot also expect everything is planned. But if you relate to the Guru, with the ripened disciples' qualities, then yes everything is pleasant. Everything you see is beneficial. But then if you relate emotionally incorrectly, then relating to the Guru can be quite a suffering, especially if you develop attachment to your Guru, it can be the cause of unbelievable suffering, then especially emotional attachment to the Guru, that can be very dangerous. Then in the lifetime if the Guru does not please your attachment, then you always get upset, intense upset, then if Guru also departs from your physical existence, you really can torture yourself.

We have to relate to a Guru by seeing Guru in Dharmakaya, then that really establishes inseparable matured Guru Yoga practice in us to be never separated. Guru's absence is to be interpreted as a teaching to you, Guru's care you need to interpret it as Guru's teaching. Whatever action relates to you, whatever behavior the Guru relates to you, we need to interpret as a teaching. So, your purpose of relating to the Guru is to receive teachings only, you relate to the Guru is to receive teachings, receive Dharma, nothing more than that.

Buddha's purpose to come into existence is to reveal the Dharma only, nothing more than that, reveal the Dharma and this is your inspiration. Buddha's physical presence, as long as his Dharma teaching is available, whether his physical existence is present or not it does not matter. As long as we cultivate the Buddha's teaching then the purpose of Buddha's descending into this world is fulfilled.

Similar like that, Guru's purpose is to reveal the Dharma. As long as the Dharma is available to you, again the availability of the Dharma doesn't mean only talking, only reading texts, commentary, or initiation, your interpretation of the Dharma knowledge is in all actions of the Guru and that is the Dharma. So, until the Guru scolds you, instead of giving a Dharma teaching Emptiness, Guru rather kind of like scolds you a bit harsh in his words you understand as a powerful mantra is recited to you to dispel your inner, outer, secret obstacles and actualize the wisdom and merits.

As far as concerned with learning Dharma wisdom, as long as you get a valid book you can read there then you can learn from qualified teachers, but the blessing, the channeling of the blessing of the Dharma is by you keeping intact the relation between you and Guru. So you cultivate the Guru Yoga practice with your Guru, then as far as concerned with the knowledge you know if you get the opportunity to learn from the Guru him or herself you learn it, if not, you can learn from others, like Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings you learn from so many other teachers, so many books, but our Guru Yoga practice with Shakyamuni Buddha is intact. So as long as the Refuge is intact and Shakyamuni Buddha overflowing of the nectar of blessings is always there, it is wonderful. But if we lose that and we keep extracting knowledge from everywhere that will not be helpful.

Even if I have to perform very unpleasant task may I be like the servant of the king with the mind undisturbed.

Whatever the Guru asks us, we should take it as the best sadhana practice. The best sadhana is the most powerful to purify negativities and accumulate extensive merits. You should take it and do not get agitated. And if you are clear with your Guru Yoga practice then nothing is impossible, and everything is possible.

We have to practice until we come to that point, even if in case we need to perform unpleasant tasks like Geshe Drömdonba when he took care of his sick Master, he even needed to clear feces with the hand, that is quite unpleasant isn't it? But because of his true practice it is a privilege for him. So even in our lifetime if there are any unpleasant tasks that falls unto us through Guru, we should feel privileged as part of purification because of the accumulation of merits, so do not get disturbed by our mind especially if you already established Guru-Disciple relationship with someone.

Then if that Guru is someone who is actually not qualified, but you already established the practice, and for your own benefit of spiritual development from your side you will never degenerate your faith, but then physically you distant from that person, because there is some harm that is occurring; but from your heart you still cannot make a negative judgment not to lose your faith and whatever those negative experiences that can come through; you just regard as this is a purification practice. But in such a situation, physically, verbally, you stay distant, but your devotion still stays intact and never disturb your heart, or "unfortunately now I saw false in my Guru, so sad", not like that. You still try to train your heart to see that person as a Buddha to protect yourself from the negative impact, then physically and verbally you can stay distant.

Then having abandoned pride, holding myself lower than the Guru, may I be like a sweeper.

Seeing yourself as a trainee as a samsaric being and having full conviction that the Guru is Enlightened Buddha guiding you to liberate these oceans of samsaric existence. With that understanding, you really regard as supreme and offer veneration through your body, speech and mind. So, when you see someone as a Buddha, you will never think “I’m smarter than anybody, I’m greater than you”, than that person isn’t it? So, there is a benefit of practicing like that, that helps to keep us humble. Because our ego may see limitation in the Guru, so in order for that not to happen, then just always regard yourself as lower as the Guru.

May I be like a rope, joyfully holding the Guru’s work no matter how difficult or heavy a burden.

All the Guru’s activities are aimed to benefit all sentient beings, in relation to the benefit of sentient beings, in relation to the preservation of the Dharma. So, in your very best way, try to do that: first living yourself in the practice and if you have resources, if you are good in speaking, then use your talent to fulfill Guru’s tasks. Energy, economically, whatever resources that you may have that can be able to fulfill Guru’s preservation of the Dharma and benefit of sentient beings, so this is what it means.

“No matter how difficult or heavy a burden”. Like us here everyone, every each and every one of us, has our own different talent, now we are serving our root Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Like myself my talent is I enjoy living in the vows, individual liberation vows, and learning Dharma, and I studied to share the Dharma and now I enjoy sharing the Dharma, and I should rejoice to be able to share the Dharma and I should never retire, never give up, as long as I am able to you do it. And this is because I have no other capabilities no other resources that I can “be like a rope holding the Guru’s work”, I have no other capabilities and this little thing that I am capable I dedicate to entire rest of my life including keeping the vows purely, even that you use that, and practice yourself.

Each and every one of you has its own capabilities in many different ways, then individually you have your own individual spiritual Gurus to whom you have established Guru-Disciple relationship, where the Guru is really an object of your accumulation of merits, purification of karma, true liberator. Then whatever capability you have, you use them and that is the greatest practice, that is the best practice for accumulation of merits, purification of karma, and that is the way how Guru liberates us out of this ocean of samsara, including enlightenment.

And all the past disciples in relation with their Gurus have practiced like that, even in our time, our immediate Gurus, they practice like that in relation to their Gurus, such as my late Master, his Guru said you just go into the cave and meditate, you need to do that the rest of his life without even one moment of doubt, without concern of anything he just dedicated the rest of this life like that.

Even when the Guru criticizes, provokes or ignores me may I be like a dog never responding with anger.

If the Guru is really a qualified Guru, he will never do that, will never provoke or ignore, he will never do that, never, criticize you, never. If you see that a Guru is behaving like that is your projection. You are relating through your ordinary mind. And sometimes in the world, in today’s modern Gurus, there are so many self-proclaimed Gurus, self-proclaimed realized emptiness practitioners, self-proclaimed Holinesses, self-proclaimed Lamas or Gurus, there are many of them out there in those degenerated times, then they see these teachings they did not go into deep meaning, they saw like that “oh in Tibet or in India, the Great Mahasiddhas behave like that”,

so that modern Guru also tries to behave like that with their disciples, they try to be like a wrestler, they want to do boxing with their disciple like that also happens.

And that is not right because Guru is the inspirational spiritual example, figure of your spiritual path, the Buddhist path, Buddha Dharma, every Buddha Dharma's teaching must be infused with the element of compassion, peace and selfless, peace and selfless: right view and right attitude. If that element is not there, then it has nothing to do it is not with Buddhism. If there is no element of peace, gentleness, kindness, compassion, in a few words: peace and selfless. Then it is not qualified to have anything to do with Buddhist's practice.

Guru is ultimate Dharmakaya, Guru is Buddha, Guru is the Dharma, Guru is the Sangha and Guru behaves violently, Guru behaves negatively, then that is against the basic Buddhist's principle. Because one of the main qualities of the Guru is compassion, that is a minimum needed, so if you have compassion to your disciple how can you hurt your disciples, how can you be violent to your disciples, impossible, logically it does not make sense isn't it? No way. You have to illustrate the gentleness, the peacefulness, the compassionate. Then you do not understand deeply the teachings.

In the past time some Gurus manifested like this and like that, that is to a very high level, the disciple is already like a Milarepa and the Guru is like a Marpa, then there are certain unbelievable manifestations of roughness occurs. In today's time it is so difficult to get such a ripened disciple like Milarepa, if the disciple is too fragile and the Guru is not gentle, then how you are going to subdue the disciple, isn't it? Guru has to be gentle. Guru has to be so, so, so, so, so, so gentle. This is my understanding.

In today's time, Buddha's manifestations, Guru manifests into all sort of words in a worldly way, how possible to subdue disciples? How possible to benefit teaching? They say, "Oh! in the past happen like that Mahasiddhas have behaved like that, Marpa behaved like that, so I also now behave like that". It does not work like that. If the Gurus cannot show the example of peace, compassion, selfless, then who is going to show? Oneself as a disciple desperate here (showing the heart) completely enveloped with a thick ignorance and delusions and karma, you need a light of inspiration who shows the antidote, but if the antidote is worse than your behavior, then how the disciple is going to be liberated isn't it?

So sometimes it is immature, they did not really study the Dharma in depth, just saw the surface, heard some stories. You claim you are a Guru; you claim you are a spiritual practitioner and then you just behave in whatever ways you like, somehow you behave worse than the very rebellious worldly people. So that is totally contradictory with the Dharma. So, it is not for the Gurus or the practitioners to behave negatively, it is disciple's job to train our mind in case of such improper misbehaviors, then it is our benefit, our students' job to train ourselves not to negatively interpret it.

From our side any negativity we see we take the responsibility, saying it is the fault of my false view. If I see any negativities in the Guru, if I see any negativities in any good practitioner then you regard for your own benefit, for your own practice, you say "this is my own hallucination, this is my own delusion I project that" but that does not mean the practitioner or the Guru purposely should misbehave into the disciple so that the disciple can practice pure view, it is not like that but the people do misinterpret like that, so that is why this is also important.

So, this is the area sometimes this disqualified Guru, this self-proclaimed Guru may take advantage," I should behave whatever I like, this is your job to have pure view, to see me as a Buddha", they may do like that, make a big mistake. This is not a teaching to the disciples, it is

more a teaching for the Gurus, self-proclaimed Gurus. Self-proclaimed Gurus must be careful especially in degenerated time. Even how hard it is you must behave as subdued as possible, as kind as possible, as pure as possible. Even though Guru, in your room you are wild, but when you relate to the disciple you really must be very subdued, you really have to pretend to be like Buddha, also you have to pretend, even if it is pretending, also you have to pretend, you cannot behave negatively in relation to the disciple. But then of course if it is a real like a disciple like Milarepa and Guru like Marpa meet, then even in today's time go ahead in, then it is ok, but for ordinary being like us, it does not work that way.

May I be like a ferry boat never upset at any time to come and go for the Guru.

In other words, you always make available to follow Guru's instructions, then again one of the most important things is keeping purely your commitments such as your daily commitment. Each time you go back to your commitments, it is like Guru calling you, so every time you go there you achieve the Guru's calling, you are fulfilled. Then conventionally the Guru may give you certain tasks, the Guru may call for certain responsibility, then you are ready even all the time. In short, constant readiness in the practice, timely readiness, whenever you need to do retreat to help yourself to improve, you should do retreat, it is as if the Guru called you to do the retreat for the progress on your path, as if you have taken High Yoga Tantric initiation, then you do six-session Guru yoga, it is like 6 times a day, 3 times a day, 3 times at night, it is like each time, it is like the Guru is calling and when you forget all those tasks, it is as if you were going away from the Guru's order.

When any negative emotion arises, Guru always advises "guard your three doors" but then when anger arises, you let the anger do whatever anger likes, then it is as if you were not present when the Guru called you, you can understand like that: so timely guarding your three doors when negative emotions arise, then sustaining your Dharma practice. These are being in the present timely whenever the Guru calls. Whatever Guru may give you, say ok: suddenly one ripened disciple, ripened Guru calls up and says, ok you should go and do retreat, then without any second hesitation you should go and Guru says "oh I want you to be right here just doing this particular course or this particular activity", without any doubt, any delay, you should regard that as a first priority and commit to do it.

Glorious and precious Root Guru, please bless me to be able to practice in this way from now on and in all my future lives may I be able to devote myself to the virtuous friend in this way.

This is a supplication that you are always going to do.

Here, Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche says:

If you recite these words aloud and mentally reflect on their meaning you will have the good fortune to be able to devote yourself correctly to the virtuous friend in life after life".

So, you can recite this. Thank you.

"If with these Nine attitudes you serve and respect the virtuous friend, even if you do not practice intentionally, you will naturally develop excellent qualities within your mind stream and complete the extensive merits of virtue, thereby, quickly becoming a perfect complete Buddha".

XIV. Questions and answers

Question: Even if we see our Gurus behaving in a way that is very discordant in virtue and we don't know why, it could be from our side or in this degenerated time it could be because of an impure Guru, and students are suffering would you have advice on how to be able to practice in a way that is concordant with the Dharma but also towards no suffering?

So, there are two points. From the student point of view, for your own benefit, you will regard everything as a teaching as I mentioned before. It is just simply all those inconvenient kinds of deeds that performed by the Guru, it is inconvenient to your heart, then, it is causes and conditions for suffering and Samsara and simply Guru is teaching us never to behave that way. And still to tease your mind to see him in Buddha. That is for your own benefit.

But from the point of view of the Gurus. You must behave. If I may speak to the Gurus, then, as you are a spiritual Guru, it is your responsibility to behave according to the Dharma. If I do not know whatever way, but if you think that by behaving in a samsaric way, my disciples can relate to me easily and I am able to tame them and inspire them for liberation. For me, I would say, maybe during the fortunate time, it may work, because the disciples are also fortunate beings, but in our degenerated times, that may become one of the biggest obstacles, because that may even drain you even deeper into the muds of samsara. Disciples like me, I have a Phd. of false, limitations, samsara. The Guru does not have to come and teach me more samsara or ask me to learn more because I have a Phd. I may be double numberless times of Phd. of all the flaws and limitations, and I do not need the Guru to kind of teach me to be more samsaric. I need a teacher that will lead me out of that zone, that which makes me a Phd of the Dharma, of the realizations.

So, if enlightened qualities and Bodhisattvas 'way of life qualities cannot inspire disciples to the path, there is no way that a samsaric way, a false way can inspire to the path. So, if I need to talk to the Guru like me, if someone regards me as a Guru, then I would talk like that to me: "no, you cannot. You cannot misbehave. Whatever good intentions you may carry, it would not work, you are going to fail. And when someone regards you as a Guru, you also take the responsibility to accept to be the Guru, the Dharma teacher, the spiritual teacher, it is my full responsibility to uphold, in your very best, as much as possible, even how hard it is, even if you need to control yourself emotionally, also how stressful it is. For me, I am very stressful because I am not enlightened Guru, but people regard me as a spiritual teacher, some people regard me as a Guru, so even if there is just one person who is regarding me as a Guru, for the sake of that student, since I am not Buddha, it is very stressful.

I think if you go to a therapist, you may find I am most stressful than the disciple. My nervous system is completely jammed with the stress, because I am totally, my emotions are controlling, my speech is controlling, my body is controlling. I would like to walk like that (uncontrolled gesture), but I would better be walking like that (subdued gesture). It is not me. But I must behave like that, even for the sake of one student, I have to behave like this. I must behave like an Arhat, even though I am totally and 100% not. I need to speak like I am so compassionate, so gentle, so pure.

I am completely and 100% not, but for the benefit and for the responsibility you are carrying on. I am full of desire, full of dissatisfaction, full of negativities, the entire system is filled with that, but I must behave like I am very altruistic, for the benefit of even one student, one spiritual student, ok? Who is relating to you for their liberation, who is relying to you in whatever ways they are relating to you. Otherwise, do not be in that zone, just be someone else. Because as long as you start to accept the responsibility, it is a huge responsibility, it is stressful, but it is worth it. That is

maybe the biggest training that maybe I am so fortunate to have. Maybe this is kind of the ultimate discipline training, that I have the opportunity, I should celebrate. I should enjoy the stress. Isn't it? So, this is my thinking, my understanding.

Some people may say the Gurus can behave whatever they like, and we have to regard everything as a teaching. So, yes for the disciple if you see anything, from the disciple's responsibility, yes you see it as a teaching. But from the Guru's responsibility, you never show, never illustrate any of the flaws. It is only to be shown, only inspirational, only in accordance with the Dharma, according to the precepts. There is a danger of taking advantage of this teaching, whatever the Guru manifests, you have to see that as a manifestation. And some individuals have this position of spiritual teachers, and they think they can behave anything they like. The first responsibility is the observation of moral discipline. The society has to create that environment. Then everybody is disciplined.

Thank you.

Question: I'm sure you will probably address this in the next three sessions, but my question is how do you recognize the Guru? Is it an internal emotional state, is it external analytical analysis, is it a combination of both?

I think whatever you said, it has element of all. There are many many ways. I think the most important thing, the initial, the basis, is having a sense of faith towards that teacher, having a sense of conviction on the teacher, being inspired in virtue like: "that teacher is inspiring me". Then you can establish the Guru-Disciple relationship and to make the commitment from your side. For that it relies very much on yourself. When you make the decision that "ok that person, from now on, is my Guru". So then, there you establish the relationship, even without the Guru knowing. You know the Gurus Buddhas, it is sure they would know, but on the Guru side, if he is not an enlightened one, but an ordinary person, he may not know, she may not know, but you have established Guru-Disciple relationship with that person. Then, the other ways is through initiations, through oral transmissions, through receiving vows, through receiving commentaries.

So, you establish the relationship on the basis of the earlier foundational qualities. Then, there are emotional reactions from your side: the moment you see the person, you never met the person before, you never receive any teachings, the moment you saw the person, you just knew that "this is my Guru", because he just touches your heart with so much inspiration, full of transformation, full of blessings. Even without having conversation, it also happens but this is quite risky, if we are too emotional, then sometimes, there is danger, because it can be just that at that specific moment you are too positive and that positive energy just happened to make you take the decision and later when you are calmer, neutral, from your high spirit. Then you start to find flaws, you start to have unsteadiness of your commitment, because you had that emotion when you establish the relationship, so for that reason, you have to be careful.

Then there are also mutual emotions from both the Guru and disciple side. The Guru also has that kind of spontaneous connection, the disciple also has that kind of spontaneous connection and you set the Guru-Disciple relationship. But that is also quite tricky, sometimes there is an involvement of possible attachment, or you know hallucinational views may be possible.

Then sometimes there is no emotion from you but there is from the Guru side, you can be chosen and that also depends on the qualification of the Guru. Sometimes the Guru may choose based on their emotions and that may be also possibility of attachment involved, you never know.

An example of His Holiness the Dalai Lama or Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche, if they point their finger to someone and say “okay I’m your Guru” then I think there is no doubt, it is going to be safe, but if someone, just not well established, well-known or well-established teacher, suddenly pops up and say “you’re my disciple “then maybe you never know how real that is.

So, the best way to establish Guru-Disciple relationship, which all the lineage Masters would emphasize, is learn from the teacher the Dharma as long as possible, even if it takes 12 years, even if it takes a whole life, it doesn’t matter you learn. Off course in one way, it is so urgent to find the teacher, to find the Guru because it is so meritorious, but in another way once you establish the Guru-Disciple relationship, if any flaw comes, the karma is also very heavy. So therefore, first you learn from the teacher and also you try to spend as much time as possible through teaching events. Then you will also see the rest of the other qualities like moral ethics, etc.

So, you need to rely on the teacher who is an inspiration to you, your Dharma inspiration to your path. That made someone needs to have higher knowledge, qualified knowledge in the Dharma learning, also need to have a moral ethics, as someone practice moral ethics, so the higher the more morality precept observed is better. The moral ethics are the boundaries from making non virtuous or making mistakes, taking advantages of the disciples, etc. In Tibet maybe these days, people don’t really talk about that, because there are more non-ordained teachers than ordained teachers, then there are many teachers who gave up their precepts. There are many like that in the world. So, you hardly hear but in Tibet, in early time, even during the Nalanda tradition, in Nalanda ancient time, someone needed to be Sangha, because it is the strictest vows.

Even in the Lam Rim, you can see Geshe Drömdonba and Geshe Potowa discussing about the importance of having a teacher with as many vows as possible, someone starting from refuge all the way up to the Bodhisattvas, Tantra and Sangha vows, and the more the vows the better. But these days it’s very difficult to talk about that. So good moral discipline, good knowledge in Dharma, best is complete knowledge in Dharma because once you rely on someone as Guru, the Guru needs to guide through all the stages of the path until enlightenment, the commitment is up to enlightenment. So then if the Guru knows only certain part and don’t know certain part, for example the Guru knows only Sutra part, but doesn’t know tantra, then you are stuck somewhere, if you didn’t manage to find other a Guru who can provide all the necessary teachings. Then you are half-way stuck, so then it is good to have Guru who have complete knowledge of all the path, and as much as precepts as possible vows as possible and compassionate.

If someone has compassion to you, then that person will never take advantage of you or never harm you. You know if there is no compassion, even with higher knowledge, but no compassion, there can make mistakes. Thank you.

Question: Before a meal or before you eat anything you’re meant to offer to your Guru first, what if your eating is left-over or something unattractive, are we still meant to offer?

So actually, you can offer everything in the sense of nectar. Then whether it’s a leftover or the first portion of the food, by substance, it is pure or impure you know. Do everything in the respect of understanding your Guru as a Buddha, or your Guru as a deity, and then you offer this offering as a nectar. Then you receive the benefits of offering nectar, you know offering the best, even if it may be just a little, even if it may be a level one, even if it may be just water. But then without having that understanding, just simply offer it’s ok, but very limited merit: at least you offer, it is already good, better than nothing you see. Many times, we don’t even remember to offer, so that’s one thing.

Another thing is that the leftover may be left over to you, but it is on conventional nature of that particular portion, it is the first portion for its own moment of existence. So therefore, whether it's leftover or the first portion is very much an imputation of your mind. It is very much labeled, designated by your mind. So therefore, simply you think of the Guru and whenever, whatever you wish to offer, even that leftover of food it may be, offer, it is still beneficial.

Thirdly, you can offer the leftover to the inner Guru. When you start to eat the leftover, before consuming it, you can do it with the understanding of what is going into your stomach is offered to the Guru, who is residing in the central chakra of your heart, as if you are delivering the offering this way, so you can also do like that. If sometimes you forget to offer before you eat, and then while you're eating, you suddenly remember that you wished to offer the food, then that time you can offer to your inner Guru. Thank you.

Question: You mentioned the qualities of the teachers, so the teacher has to be disciplined, thoroughly pacified, and then towards the end there was one where the teacher has to have wisdom, or wisdom realizing emptiness, which he or she has gained by different methods of focusing on emptiness, like the king of reasoning and so forth and so on. So, my question is I always have a hard time differentiating between what is thoroughly pacified and the wisdom realizing it seems like thoroughly pacified, you still have to do the king of reasoning and all those methods, right, so what's the difference between that one and the last one, where you have wisdom?

So, I think that thoroughly pacified is referring to the direct realization on emptiness, so even the conceptual obstructions are overcome. When there's just a wisdom of emptiness, not necessarily it can be direct wisdom realizing emptiness. It can be a conceptual realization, which means conceptually realizing the wisdom of emptiness and also realizing the wisdom of selflessness, but not necessarily the absolute emptiness. So as far as concerned with the teaching of the qualities of the teacher, the best is someone who has fully realized emptiness directly; if not at least conceptual realization; if not at least, has a correct understanding of what it means "wisdom of emptiness", you know all the tools, how to realize selfless in a person, selfless of phenomena, then lives in the training which is the third training of the wisdom, lives in the training, doing meditation and during meditation overcome this thickening of the self-grasping, the ignorant. Then during the post-meditation, he or she is always mindful in the idea of illusion-like, so meaning the teacher carries the qualities of less grasping to things, he or she is very pacified, totally pacified. When someone has so much grasping, he's not pacified. Thank you.

Question: It's just sort of a technical thing. When you had mentioned the importance of the teacher being in the Sangha for all three steps, what's your point of view on people like Thupten Jinpa or the Karmapa a few years ago who disrobed to marry his childhood sweetheart, are they legitimate Gurus at this point or what?

So, as I mentioned at the beginning, it depends very much on individuals, of what you are acquiring from the Guru. If your purpose is, if you wish to receive the benefit of the entire vehicles of the Dharma, then one of the vehicles of the Dharma practice is living in the practice of individual liberation vows. So individual liberation vows such as refuge and lay vows, that can be granted by a lay practitioner, but as far as it concerns the Sangha vows, they only can be granted by someone who is a Sangha. So, if your objective is also to become Sangha, then your Guru should be Sangha, otherwise how to give you Sangha vows? If your objective has nothing to do with Sangha, you just want to practice Bodhisattva practices, Tantric practices, then that someone not necessarily has to be Sangha. Thank you.

Question (from zoom): If someone already has a Guru but finds out there is a mistake from all the common quality, then how to live without creating negative karma for students disciples?

I don't know if I hear everything or not, but maybe if you are talking about after establishing the reliance on the Guru, that Guru makes a mistake, then how the student should rely?

So, for that student, that Guru's mistake is not a mistake. It must be turned into a training of your mind, by educating your mind in seeing this is as a projection of your unpurified mind. The mistake that you projected on the Guru, this mistake in fact is the teaching, the emanated teaching from the Guru, the teaching to not indulge us in such a mistake and you still must train to see the Guru as a Buddha. So, that's tough but that's the practice.

So therefore, afterwards you regard as someone as your Guru, there is a saying: if Guru gives you a good slap, a good hitting, that's one of the best initiations that I have received. Then if the Guru suddenly scolds you loudly, suddenly manifests to be so angry and scolds you, then from the student's side, you should see that as the most powerful dispelling mantra dedicated to me to overcome very serious life obstacles. So that's the practice, so that's why, we have to carry these three qualities of the student, and also have to choose the Guru after a good observation as I discussed before. But if you have already chosen, then you're too late. If you happen to meet a Guru who is actually a Buddha, this is good luck for you, if you didn't meet a Guru who is a Buddha, then if someone is behaving worse than you, also good luck for you. Thank you.

Question: When our Guru recites stuff, how can it come really good but when I recite it it doesn't feel the same?

Then maybe if you want to feel the same way, then you practice Guru Yoga by thinking yourself Guru inseparable, oneness, then you recite it, maybe you may feel the same thing, try it out.

Question: The West has a pedagogical tradition of dialogue, question and answer that goes back to the Ancient Greeks, you had talked about your relationship with the Lama of complete surrender and submission at what point in your training did you begin to question and analyze rigorously where is that allowed?

In the debate field, I become crazy with my classmates, with my other seniors until there was some time when they had to tie me on the tree because it's so wild and you know never giving up questioning and competing.

Question: But not during the teachings?

During the teachings I listened like this (gesture of bowing eyes closed). But then I go there and whatever question I have challenged with others then I clarify me from there and come back then I continued to listen.

Question: Did you ever have debate with your teachers?

Yes, the teachers sometimes say, "ok come question, debate with me", then also you can become crazy there.

Oh, that's great yes.

Geshela keeps going on: and then some Gurus, in Sera Monastery I have three main Gurus, there's two senior one. One Guru he doesn't prefer your question, so just listen obediently, another Guru, he loves you make questions, so almost the class all the time is more about

discussions, questions and answers, and of course we like the questions and answers. And when you ask to debate you really but of course we still try to control ourselves like the speech not so harsh, not so like to pierce the ears loud but make sure he hears, then the gesture also more humble but still quite hard but not as aggressive as like you do with your classmates.

Question: there's a good YouTube video with Tenzin Gache and another Monk in English showing the Tibetan debate style if some of you don't know it it's look it up it's great to see.

Yes, ok thank you.

Question: You mentioned in a previous teaching to avoid eye contact. Isn't it more respectful to have an eye contact?

In our culture if you don't do eye contact then it is very strange, isn't it? I think you can do eye contact, but you can do like this (gesture of bowing, head down). Not like (gesture of confidence back straight and hands on the hips). Guru is like that and you also like that (laughs). I think eye contact is ok, but when you bow down then naturally you have to look up like that, this is just culturally like that, but then if it's inconvenient, then don't worry about it.

Question? So Geshela you mentioned not to relate the Guru with attachment, could you explain a little bit more about that please?

So, if anything in relation to Guru concern of this life is attachment. In any ways that you relate to the Guru in the concern of your future lifetime benefit of liberation and enlightenment is inspiration. So, I can differentiate like that. Thank you.

Question: We have this sense of urgency because we know that things are impermanent and many of us have spent several years of studying from books, now we have your teachings, occasionally we may attend in person teachings, it is a little difficult to measure our progress, what is happening without a teacher, and there is this longing for your teacher, I was wondering if you have any thoughts because until we have the good luck to meet the Dalai Lama and ask to be accepted and if we are accepted you know all of those things have to happen, but until then we are still studying pretty much on our own?

The progress of our spirituality is very much determined within ourselves, not the outer environment, what kind of aspects of life that you choose either sangha, meditator, just ordinary person's life, the main thing to judge or determine your spirituality is how much there is a decrease of your emotional disturbances, arising of delusions; then increasing of inner peace, increasing of contentment, increasing of inspiration, increasing of faith. Then, especially in the practice of method aspect and wisdom aspect, becoming more and more altruistic, more and more selfless, more and more detached. So those are the signs of the practice.

I think there is a question, Buddha was asked: What you have gained from meditation? Buddha replied: I did not gain anything but there is something that is happening, I lost my delusions, fear of death, anger, grasping. So, those are things that I gained from my meditation. So, there is one thing.

As far as it concerned with the Guru, there are many aspects of the Guru: the inner Guru, the outer Guru, the secret Guru. So, if we need to receive vows, initiations, then yes, we need an outer Guru, a physical Guru. To find that, the best way to look for a qualified Guru or karmic infinite Guru, is again through having Dharma discourses with that particular teacher, it can be online, in person, books, try to study their teachings. Then, you see how much it impacts you. Then, eventually, after

some time, some they even take many years, 10, 15, 20 years. As long as you find, yes, everything is impermanent as you said, which is true, in one way, there is that kind of urgency to find the Guru, but in another way, finding a qualified Guru is more an urgency than just meeting up with some teacher.

The reason is as long as you find the karmic infinite qualified Guru, then it is not much about the number of teachings you receive from the Master, it is very much about that kind of key opening the lock. Maybe just one word, or advice, is good enough, that will really consecrate the entirety of your spiritual capability, or it could be just one initiation, one oral transmission, one teaching, or just one blessing.

Now another way is that since you are looking for a qualified Guru, but then still unable to find even after many years, I think we do not really need to panic about that, as long as you continue to prepare yourself with all the preliminary practices, like accumulation of merits, through virtuous deeds which you can do, then a lot of purification practices, which you can do, and living in the practice of the common path, which is not necessarily that you need a physical Guru to guide you.

Then, because of the force of enough merits, even it can be next lifetime, you will meet timely, whenever you are ready. Many practitioners, cavemen, they even meet their Vajra Guru when they reach the 10 Bhumis, on the Bodhisattvas' path, and they never encounter any tantric teachings, like initiations, but in order to actualize full enlightenment, you need to go through the initiation, that is very much the ultimate. So then, when you reach the 10 Bhumis, which is very much when you are about to become a Buddha, your karmic infinite Guru will manifest there, initiate you and next moment you will be enlightened. So, from that point of view, this life if you have a physical Guru, which is wonderful, if you have a qualified Guru. If not, as long as you are living in the practice of accumulation of merits and purification, I think you are safe.

But then again, if you are able to meet a physical Guru, able to receive teachings directly of course, that is unbelievable, amazing, one of the greatest thing that can happen also especially yourself ready with the preliminary, when you meet the physical Guru, you get to receive vows, you receive initiations, you receive all the transmissions, that is the most meaningful thing that can happen in our lifetime.

Now, from another perspective, we in fact always have a Guru. Shakyamuni Buddha is our Guru. That is our ultimate Guru. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, the main purpose of Guru entering our life is to grant the teachings, the path, isn't it? So, Shakyamuni Buddha teachings are available, and he has stated that as long as his teachings are alive, as long as you connect with them you are connecting with him, so even Lama Tsongkhapa as long as you connect with his teachings, he says that you are connecting with him. Even if he is in person meeting you, he says there is nothing more to teach than what it is said in the Lam-Rim teachings.

Then again it is wonderful to have someone who really knows how to teach correctly explanation of the teachings, if there is anything that you need to clarify then someone who really attend you to do clarification. For that, you need someone and those could be your tutors, those scholars, those really wonderful teachers with whom no need to necessarily to rush to make a commitment of Guru-Disciple relationship.

I think whatever I said before is more about the Guru-Disciple relationship. Otherwise, I think the text is the best teacher. And if we have a trouble understanding of those texts, then we need someone that can explain, and I think there are plenty of them out there. You can choose, isn't it?

As long as we do not commit Guru-Disciple relationship I think we are still safe to learn from them. And that learning can be online, in books, in person, whatever is available.

So, we have Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Ok? And on top of that, the rest are all bonuses. If you have wonderful, if not, no to worry. You know I think we just do our part; we keep preparing our part. Then, yes, again Lam-Rim is the best to prepare ourselves, and Lam-Rim also is the best way for us to find a Guru.

There are very rare cases the Guru without even meeting before, listening before, it just clicks like that. But we have to be very sure it is not emotional one, it is really a very karmic clicking, and the faith and your commitment and devotion you express to that Guru, it has to be irresistible faith, even that Guru happens to behave like a street dog, you still have the ability to see as a Buddha. If it comes to a point to the Guru bit you up, you have the capability of merit to understand that is the biggest initiation you receive. The harder hit you get, the more intense initiation you receive, which is quite strange isn't it? In our ordinary understanding, it is quite strange and especially in the Western world this is very dangerous from both sides, from Guru's side also dangerous of taking advantages, from disciple's side also very easy to commit immense of negative karma after committing Guru-Disciple relationship, when people criticize, misunderstand, then we follow our own delusional perspective, so so dangerous.

Therefore, we have to be really sure that every scolding become a very powerful mantra to dispel all the obstacles, it is not easy. The Guru spits and all the saliva becomes an immortal nectar, it is unbelievable. Guru whips you when you are naughty, it is like a very powerful initiation, a highest yoga tantric initiation with the whip. That is why I said it is very rare. If that happens to be the case, then it is like very fully ripened immense of merits disciple with enlightened Guru meeting. Then everything is done. Otherwise, it is big problem. Better follow strictly Lam-Rim. Even if it takes 12 years. Your path will progress until the 10 Bhumis, even without Tantra, you progress. As long as you prepare, wait for the 10 Bhumis and then Guru will come to you, all the Buddhas will rush, I want to go for her, I want to initiate her.

So, we do not have to worry about when do I get my Guru? I am already waiting. Just only five minutes to be enlightened and where is my Guru? You do not have to worry. Thank you.

Question: If your principal Guru has passed away and this is my situation, I've been ordained by the center's successor, and he's now regarded as my Abbot. I feel a slight confusion about those two. Should I continue to recite the prayers Calling the Guru from Afar as I used to with Rinpoche? I wonder, should I be switching to Geshela?

I think Guru can manifest into all sorts of manifestations, maybe, even if your so-called as your Root Guru has passed away and his heart disciple is providing teachings and facilitating such as granting etc., from your point of view, you just regard him as a manifestation of your Root guru. And there would be a certain point that maybe there is no external Guru that exists and that is why I have this very strong kind of urgency that everyone of us necessary try to find inner Guru rather than rely too much on external Guru.

Guru has many different versions, outer Guru, inner Guru, secret Guru, or you can many, many different types of Gurus. At the end of the day, it is a figure of inspiration for enlightenment. So that is the Guru. And he can come into all different forms, all different aspects, and among all different aspects, the safest Guru to whom you can rely from this very moment onward until we have actualized the full enlightenment, I think the inner Guru is the safest. The moment we start to rely too much on external Guru, the moment the Guru passes away, you feel lost. The transmission of the guidance feels like stopped and that should not be the case.

And most of all, one of the purposes of practicing Buddhism is to prepare for a good death, to secure it. If we can enlighten ourselves within this very short lifetime, number one, the best. If we are enabled to do so, then at least we have to make sure we secure our next rebirth, to continue our practices because the progress of practices very much depends on the influence of our imprints, of our environment, influence of the continuation of the virtuous mind. And while having this precious human rebirth, meeting Guru, meeting Buddha-Dharma and living among the Dharma society, among the Dharma brothers and sisters, surrounded by Tangkas and statues, Sanghas still the majority of our mind is completely afflicted by the negative emotions.

For you the inner Guru can be anything, but you have to choose something which is most familiar, most inspiring and it needs to be virtuous, it cannot be joy or happiness that can arise through attachment, not initiated by any form of delusion, any of the non-virtuous mind, otherwise there is a danger of mixing, that protects you from doing any wrong things, and that particular feeling can be your inner Guru. It can be one single word of your Guru's teaching, one single act of your Guru, his or her name, or just his or her face, something you can remember forever, that would trigger your consciousness to ripen all your Dharma practices. And nothing can intervene that inspiration, that faith.

For me, what is my inner Guru? I was eleven. This incident happened in my monastery in Nepal, I was living in the main gompa, where all the other Lamas lived, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Lama Lhundrup, Geshe Lama Konchog. Especially, Lama Zopa Rinpoche he does not sleep, he is always practicing. So, I was trying to bring him some hot water. So, whenever I was going inside, Lama Zopa Rinpoche was seeing my bare feet and that could November or December, which could be very cold. I was a little kid, very skinny, and bare feet. So, one day, he needs to travel overseas and leave the monastery, at 3 o'clock which is the coldest period. So, his attendant brings all the luggage, and I had to run up to help and Rinpoche he is coming out fully dressed. Immediately he saw me, and he took off his shoes and he said: well, for you. And my feet are small, they are extremely small. And he gave them to me. And the gesture, the kindness, the sincerity.

I am just eleven years old then, I do not know about Dharma, nothing, but his expression and his softness "for you". And I can remember so clearly how he took off his shoes and brought the shoes right in front of my feet, with so much concern, so much care, just because you are getting cold. That particular moment sense of blessings, sense of love, sense of protection, sense of inspiration, sense of devotion, even if did not understand the Dharma, that wanting to practice the Dharma to become like that particular Guru, so much eager, urge, and the compassion, the selflessness, the love, caring, all the wonderful things. And after that there is one feeling there, so peaceful, so wonderful, so blissful. That particular feeling I take it as my inner Guru. It saved me whenever I feel lonely, unsafe, and because of being a beginner, I do not manage to meditate on emptiness, I use this particular feeling to protect me. I can die anytime; I need that switch to protect me. It does not require any effort and it just leads me to all the rest of virtuous thoughts. This inner Guru concept it can be very effective for depression, the antidote to any problem, even when my late Guru passed away. Thank you.

Question: Geshela, is Buddha nature itself the inner Guru?

No, Buddha nature you can use as the inner Guru but that is very difficult to recognize, to awaken. Thank you.

Question: When we talk about Lam-Rim realizations, how shall we understand Lam-Rim realizations? And then specifically for realizations on Guru Devotion, how our interactions and perceptions of the Guru will change?

Thank you. So, the Lam-Rim realizations start from the Guru Devotion practice, then precious human rebirth, then the teachings of the three scopes in our mind stream as the purpose of each of the topics is fully fulfilled in our mind streams. Such as the example of Guru Devotion, actualizing intact qualities of self as a student, as a minimum those of the three qualities or the five qualities as we learnt according with what Aryadeva has emphasized. So, those qualities have to be intact, not just in an emotional way, but really within our awareness, within our mindfulness, it becomes part of our mind, part of our mental sustainable qualities.

Then having the knowledge of either the three, or five, or then of the perfect Mahayanist Guru's meaning. On the basis of that, you are able to find and establish the Guru-Disciple relationship and train in the relationship in thoughts and actions, as we discussed in the last class, as Lama Tsongkhapa clearly stated. Then on the basis of that training in thoughts and actions in relation to the Guru then, then you come to a point that the complete conviction obtained, gained within our mind stream seeing Guru as Buddha. And that is not occasionally arisen in our heart, whenever we call the name of our Guru, we think of the Guru, whichever actions of our Body, Speech and Mind in relation to Dharma practice, to the Guru, that you clearly have that awareness that spontaneously arises within our heart seeing the Guru as a Buddha, on the basis of upholding all those criteria mentioned before as a foundation, to be able to develop seeing Guru in Buddha. Ultimately being able to see Guru in Buddha through the consistent training exercising our heart, and also the actions of our speech and physical engagement in thoughts and actions.

The result of a good exercise and training in that eventually, you will come to a point where you don't have to train, or you don't have to engage in reliance to the Guru in thoughts and actions by setting prerequisite or needing a motivation or conditions to ripen that spontaneous arising in our heart, our mind stream, it has to be spontaneous, you don't need any reasons to reflect on it the moment you hear the name of the Guru, you are able to relate as a Buddha. Whenever you see the Guru, even one pore of the Guru, you are able to relate as the Marks and Signs of the Buddha. Whenever you express the language, you express the language of honoring the Buddha's quality into the Guru. This has to become spontaneous.

At the moment, many of us, who have not reached that stage, we require a lot of external conditions to be able to do that, we need to rationalize to see the Guru as a Buddha, think Guru as a Buddha. We need to set up a prerequisite motivation to adjust our language when we relate to the Guru, our physical gesture when we relate to the Guru to relate just how you would relate to the Buddha. There is no spontaneous arising of those actions through our body, speech and mind, whenever we hear our Guru's name, whenever we see Guru in person or even on a picture or whenever we think of something related to the Guru, we need to refer to a reason why he is Buddha:" because of this, this, this. This is why I need to see him as a Buddha". That is during the training period. The realization is when you have the spontaneous arising.

Until then, when you have that spontaneous arising of seeing the Guru in Buddha, then the inner Guru also will be actualized: which is your own Dharmakaya nature, the ten directions Buddhas Dharmakaya nature and your Guru Dharmakaya nature as one. Since you have acknowledged your true nature as Dharmakaya, then you always Guru is inseparable from you. As long as you are inseparable from your nature of your mind, your Guru is inseparable from you. And that is the impact of the realization in Guru Devotion. The awareness of the Inner Guru or Oneness of Guru Buddha and your nature of the mind is the impact of the realization on Guru devotion. We have to come up to this stage. Thank you.

Question: How can you practice Guru Devotion and Guru Yoga in day-to-day life?

Keeping our body, speech and mind or at least keeping our mind set, our motivations, or our way of thinking in accordance with the instructions and the teachings of the Guru, in accordance with the example of the Guru, in accordance with the inspiration in virtues, in the Dharma that you receive from your Guru, and keeping up with that. Whatever actions you do in your day-to-day life, from the moment you wake up, you live the day with a correct motivation which is the instructions of the Guru, which is the inspiration of the Guru. Guru lives his or her life in accordance with altruism. So, you live your life in accordance with altruism.

From the morning when you wake up, you wake with a Bodhicitta mind, when you communicate with people, you communicate altruistically, compassionately. Anything to do with your own situation, with others' situation, in the relation you establish with anybody, with anything, not to be separated from the heart of Bodhicitta, from the heart of love and compassion. So, if you do that then, you stay intact with the Guru's instructions. And if you stay intact with the Guru's instructions, you are serving the Guru, you are practicing Guru devotion.

Then, as a trainee, we are still training, then on top of that, remember the Guru's kindness as many times as possible, at least three times in the daytime, three times before going to bed. At least three times, remember to see Guru as a Buddha by reasoning on all the benefits of the Dharma that you receive. Remembering all the kindness, then develop a genuine sense of faith and conviction of the Guru being Buddha. Then, if you can do, even better than that, on top of that, every thought which arises, you recognize as a thought of the Guru. Before every speech that you reveal you carry the remembrance of the Guru's blessings, that you will speak something that is beneficial, something which is meaningful. Or, before even one step of walk, you feel the presence of the Guru, so that even one step of walk becomes so meaningful, so beneficial. Even before you eat a spoon of food, a sip of water, you think of the Guru as the Buddha, and then you make offering of the food or the drink to the Guru, you offer it as nectar to the Guru.

The moment you wake up in the morning, you see the whole pervasive of the Guru in everything that you see, every thought that you have, the first moment, when you open your eyes, whatever you see you see as the Guru's celestial. And you feel the presence of the Guru because the Guru's nature is Dharmakaya, and Dharmakaya is all pervasive, so you think Guru is with you. Guru is in everything that exists. That alone is so beneficial. You feel so protected, so blessed. Then after that, if you go to the bathroom, when you are washing yourself, you relate to it the same way you are doing bath offering practices, especially in Tantra, if you want to brush your teeth, there are some special visualizations you can do, when you wash your face, even when you are collecting the water, splashing the water on the face, all these are yoga for purification. There is an intense meditation that can be done, then no question about shower.

So, if you are to see yourself oneness with the Guru, then you are making ablutions to the Guru Buddha. By making ablutions to the Guru-Buddha, your conventional ordinary being, and all the rest of the ordinary beings are able to gain purification of impurities, of negativities. Even though in the Guru-Buddha there is no stains, no impurities, but making the ablution, the bath offering to the Guru's body, speech and mind, you are able to bring the purification in the sentient beings' body, speech and mind. This is another Guru Yoga practice.

Then, when you use some cream after shower, similarly, it is like putting some oil on Guru-Buddha holy body, as we saw before. Then if you use perfume, you can also practice like that. Actually, each of these offerings, in the Sutra has its own verse. Here, if you don't memorize the verses, at least, you know the meaning and you visualize it. So, by offering clothes, the clean nice garments

to the holy Guru Buddha, the ordinary conventional me and the rest of the sentient beings will achieve the meritorious karma to actualize Vajra body.

Then, also the ornaments, even wearing a watch, glasses, chains, then especially ladies, they were many many ornaments, earrings, nose rings, eyes rings, many many rings, not only ladies, also men, so, when you practice like that the more you wear, the more it is beneficial. Similarly, those of you who like to wear beautiful colors of clothes and ornaments, now it worths adorning all that. You create so many merits. Otherwise, every time we wear something new, we exhaust the merits, while the other you accumulate the merits. Whatever you wear, you will create the causes to actualize Buddha's major and minor Marks, the 32 Marks, the 18 major Marks, meaning Buddha's enlightened qualities, such like a smooth skin, smooth palm, handsome look, pretty look, like the Tara, like Shakyamuni, Manjushri's very handsome looks. All this is the result of merits. You can create merits out of all these practices.

Then, if you do this in Guru Yoga in relation to the Guru, even greater merits. If you relate every action of virtue to the Guru, then it multiplies in immeasurable ways the merits. Because the Guru is the nearest embodiment, the nearest ambassador, the nearest emanation of all the three times Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. All the Gurus, even if you receive one single word of Dharma, or if you receive the kindness in the three ways, it does not matter, as long as you relate this practice to the Guru, the entire benefits multiply numberless times.

Similarly, whatever you eat or drink it the result of past merits. So, whenever you eat or drink you exhaust the merits. Now, you take onto the path all those day-to-day necessary activities and turn them other way. They become a huge vast accumulation of merits which is so beneficial for now as well as for the future, including to actualize enlightenment.

Then, in Tantra you can use the prayer of the Food offering that we use especially within the FPMT, all of us, we know this prayer, this is Lama Yeshe and Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche's one of the most highlighted offering prayers..." Lama Sangye, Lama Chö", which means "all the Lamas who are Buddhas in reality, because of that I make the offering of the food". The Lama is the one who conditions all my virtues, including enlightenment. The prayer is making not a single Lama is left out. When you practice Guru Yoga you cannot have a bias among the Gurus. We also discussed before: even if you receive just one syllable "A" after you regard someone as a Guru, then that person is also your Buddha.

All the great Kadampa Masters they all actualized enlightenment within this lifetime because they have this mindfulness in treasuring every single Guru as a Buddha, every single letter of the scriptures as a complete Dharma. So, even in one Guru they see the completeness of all the Gurus. Even one single letter is a complete instruction of the entire complete Dharma. Because of that the purification in their life becomes so fast, so effective. The accumulation of merits become so powerful, that is why these Kadampa Masters within that very lifetime, short lifetime, 80 years old, 70, 60, they actualized full enlightenment.

Such as Milarepa. I think we have committed less negative karma. We created less problem. We did not kill anybody, we did not destroy a town, practice black magic. Whatever worldly things we did, it did not reach out that extent. But then once he started to change the direction of his life and started to practice serious yoga practice, everything changed.

Then if you are doing activities at home, you will do a lot of things there, and now you are turning everything as 7 Limbs activities to the Guru: you clean the Guru's celestial mansion, not an ordinary home. Instead of doing random exercise, you do prostrations. There are three types of prostrations: physically, you do prostrations. Mentally, you actualize Guru as a Buddha, as your

merit field. Verbally, you express all the praises to the Guru. There is a Praise to Tara or to Chenrezig that we recite, you use the same wording, same meaning but you change the deity's name into the Guru's name. No need to compose a prayer for the Guru. Same if you know the Guru's long-life prayer or Guru's main mantra's recitation, you recite, which is really powerful. The 7 Limbs not only complete the Limb of prostration, but also the Limb of request, the Limb of requesting to turn the wheel of Dharma, requesting to never depart into Parinirvana, and even the dedication and the merits.

Now, if you're going out, then you become the ambassador of the Guru and engage with the others like that and bring the benefit of the Buddha to bless them, in the sense of creating a peaceful environment, bringing positive energy, some uplifting energy. Because your mind is inseparable from the Guru, your face become naturally very bright, your actions become very gentle. You talk with your colleagues in a very respectful and kind way. If something goes wrong, you will be so forgiving. You will not mind even if the rest of the colleagues are bringing some troubles to you and if you have the opportunity then you share inspiring stories of your Guru, of the qualities of the Buddha in that human form. That will give immense of blessings to the people who talk to you.

Then, if you are not staying at home or not going to work, then there are two options: either you are going to a bush walk, either you are going to the mall, or to the beach. You become the emanation of the Guru too. You carry the motivation with you and people just by seeing you get blessed. Just like the Guru says in the prayer:

“Whoever sees me, touches me, remembers me, sees my picture, hear my name, even hear my speech, whether they praise me or criticize me, even if they bit me up, cost my life, may I be completely as a wish-fulfilling jewel for all their temporary benefits including the benefit of enlightenment”, like the aspiration of Shantideva, of Nagarjuna.

So, even you just sit there, and people just see you, they will be benefited.

Then, when you go in nature, there are so many insects, birds, bacteria. Similarly, when you go there, you bless them, you bless the nature environment. Many of the holy places in the world are blessed because the Guru-Buddhas have descended there, Guru travelled on their roads, landed their feet there, they seat on their places. That is how they got blessed. Similarly, you carry the same energy, and all this bush will be blessed. Then, if there is nobody, you can recite mantras loudly, like Om Mani Padme Hum, in order to liberate all those bacteria, animals.

Then, you go to bed. You create your bed as the mandala of the deity. Since your Guru is a Buddha, then if you practice some certain Guru deity like Vajra Yogini, Yamantaka, Chenrezig, Tara, now your bed is the mandala built on the basis of a beautiful lotus, a cooling moon disc (especially if you are in a hot place, you emphasize more on a cooling moon disc bed, if you are on a cold place, you emphasize more on a sun disc, which is warmer. Otherwise, a balance and then right there, you do the Guru Yoga practice of the particular deity practice, especially the practice of the three kayas, the practice of the Dharmakaya clear-light meditation, in relation to that deity who is your Guru, who is the Buddha.

Then you go to bed and gradually dissolve the entire universe dissolves into an internal universe, the internal universe also dissolves into that body, this body, the 5 aggregates: the form aggregate dissolve into the compositional aggregate, which dissolves into the feeling aggregate, which dissolves into the mental aggregate, now you only have that mental aggregate, the Dharmakaya aspect of the aggregate, that also gradually dissolves into complete emptiness, in relation you can use the dissolution of the four elements, then the conceptual dissolution etc. or you can just do the dissolution of the five aggregates, all the way up to the mental aggregates, and that mental

aggregate also dissolves: the gross mental aggregate dissolves into the subtle mental aggregate, which dissolves into the most subtle mental aggregate which is the Vajra mind, that mind which is the Guru-Buddha. Then you try to really go to bed in that state of void of any tangible kind of ties, that completely dissolves into that essence of the Guru and yourself and the deity.

Or, you can just simply feeling the absolute presence of the Guru, and here you visualize that one Guru who is the embodiment of all the Gurus, to whom you feel so easiest to visualize, feel most secure, most comfortable, you feel the presence of that, and the pillow that you use, is Guru's laps, and you are resting your head on the laps of the Guru, and Guru is being the complete protection of your journey now through the sleep and through the wake up, or in another way, now during life, during the process of the transition to the intermediate state, the clear-light, the intermediate state to the rebirth, you can think like that. It is also a Guru yoga practice.

Or you just simply being aware of you and Guru's oneness and try to go to bed with that awareness. Train like that every night and next time when the actual death comes in our way, we can use any of these options and that is how the Guru benefits us at the time of passing away. And especially if we are able to pass away with this awareness of ourselves being one with the Guru, without any doubt one will be completely protected from being born in the Lower Hell Realms. That will guide through the path. Or having the full trust of the Guru, full refuge in the Guru and you pass away. Thank you.

Question: One of the Venerable students asked about those who have found not yet a Guru with whom they can establish Guru-Disciple relationship, what are the practices to accumulate merits, to do to swiftly fulfill their aspiration to find their perfect Mahayanist Guru to be able to engage in the practice of Guru Yoga?

So, just now we all come together to practice Medicine Buddha and dedicate the merits for the good health and long life of the Guru. Such practice will create the causes to meet qualified perfect Guru. There are many Gurus whose holy names are already shining in the world. Then there are aspirational prayers in relation to them that you can do and if you hear those of the Gurus who are having health matters, then in dedication to that Guru you can recite Medicine Buddha mantra. That way, one will create meritorious causes to meet one's own karmic infinite perfect Mahayanist Guru.

Even though the Gurus to whom you are dedicating the practice may not necessarily be your karmic infinite Guru, still through that way, you create the causes to meet this Guru even though his or her name is not revealed yet in the world.

Then, there is one prayer "To Meet a Perfect Guru in All Lifetimes"

*Kye wa kün tu yang dag la ma dang
In all my lives, never separated from perfect gurus,
Dräl me chhö kyi päl la long chö ching
May I enjoy the magnificent Dharma.
Sa dang lam gyi yön tän rab dzog nä
And, by completing the qualities of the grounds and paths,
Dor je chhang gi go phang nyur thob shog
May I quickly attain the state of Vajradhara*

It is a common dedication prayer you can find in the prayer book (FPMT Prayer Book, p 252 and 334). Accumulating that prayer and make aspirations from your heart to swiftly encounter your

karmic infinite Guru not only this lifetime but also never separated from this Guru in all future lifetimes, until you achieve Guru Vajradharahood.

Then, if you are already following certain tradition, like Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, Gelug, the four major traditions in Tibetan Buddhism, and If you are following Theravadan teachings or Chinese Mahayana teachings, there are always verses that you will find in the Praises to the Elders, to the Venerables, to the teachers, then you can adopt those prayers and practices. In the Gelug tradition, you can recite Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga and do the visualizations.

Then, within the Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga, there is an extensive of the Seven Limbs practice, which is conducted on the basis of the 6 preparatory we discussed previously (cf. Meditational guidelines to practice Guru devotion). It is a very profound and complete practice where you can purify immense of negativities and accumulate immense of merits, whenever you engage in any form of Guru Yoga practice. Of course, the most extensive one is the Jorcho Lama Chöpa Guru Yoga practice, which has the most elaborate meditation and practices of Six Preparatory and Seven Limbs practice elaborated one. If you want to do the entire sections of Lama Chöpa, it requires a Highest Yoga Tantric initiation, but you can do the Preliminary prayers, such as taking Refuge and Bodhicitta, then after that you can go to the Lam-Rim meditations section, and with that accomplish the practice of the Six preparatory and Seven Limbs practices.

Otherwise, you can recite Lama Tsongkhapa Migtsema prayer. This will clear obstacles to find and meet the perfect Mahayanist Gurus and accumulate all the resources to practice. The Migtsema is one of the most powerful not only to find a Guru, but also to find the meditational deity. Some individuals, they do not know which meditational deity is suitable for their swift path. Then, if you practice Migtsema, it will help.

Then, some of those who already meditational deity, in order to accomplish the stages of the path introduced in the sadhana of the deity yoga practice, through practice of retreat, or deity yoga practices, then in order to clear obstacles on the path, and accumulate all the resources, again one of the most powerful practices is the Migtsema.

The meritorious impacts are so powerful that even our compassion starts to develop by receiving the blessings of the compassionate Buddha Chenrezig, our wisdom starts to increase by the blessings of Manjushri. Then, the inner, outer, secret obstacles including spirits obstacles, delusional obstacles start to fade away, to be eliminated by the power of Vajrapani, then it opens the channel, or it establishes the channel, between you and the Guru, or between you and the deity, Lama Tsongkhapa who is the essence of the three meditational deities, or the Guru in one essence of the three lineages of the Buddha families of Chenrezig, Vajrapani, Manjushri, in the form of the Guru.

That will help to easily obtain blessings of realizations in relation to deity yoga and Guru Yoga practices.

Even some individuals, if you are going into Ngöndro retreats, if you are doing deity yoga commitment retreat, if you are going into three years retreat, Lam-Rim retreat, Lojong retreat, one of the retreat you should do at the very beginning is the Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga retreat based on the accumulation of 100,000 Migtsema, especially in the lineage of the Kadampa Masters, our lineage Gurus which was passed down through Lama Tsongkhapa, it is a pith instruction to instruct the serious disciples who conduct many retreats and practices, the first thing is to do Lama Tsongkhapa retreat. That would bring some much of comfort, easiness, smoothness in your other retreats, whether Lam-Rim retreats or deity yoga retreats.

Otherwise, because of the preciousness of the practice, like Lam-Rim, Lojong, deity yoga retreat, a lot of obstacles may occur because of being so precious, there are some negative energies, harm-givers who want to obstacle you, then it is not easy to succeed in the practice. Sometimes our concentration goes astray, even though your body is in the retreat but our concentration strays, or, our concentration is there, but our body goes stray, or gets health issues, that kind of obstacles.

Also, for individuals like Sanghas, to have a sense of purity, and diligent joyous effort in the observation of the vows, one of the daily practices that we can do to clear obstacles and encounter conducive conditions is the Migtsema. And also, those of you who are engaging in extensive studies like Geshe studies, philosophy studies, Lam-Rim studies, Lojong studies, whatever Dharma studies you do, it is one of the daily practices to conduct to clear obstacles and gather conducive conditions. This is widely recommended. Thank you.

Dedication

May this collective merit be a complete cause, anyone who has requested prayers from me, those who are living those who passed away, and especially those who are distressed, by physical health, financial difficulties, legal case, or whatever problem they may be, requesting prayer support and, also those to you who have requested prayers, or even people did not request prayers but you saw them, that they needed prayer support, it could be animal, insect, spirits. So, we dedicate this collective merit, you know, for them to purify whatever inconvenience they are going through, and they actualize virtuous meaningful life accordingly.

May this collecting merit become a complete cause all the good people in this world like His Holiness the Dalai Lama or our precious Gurus and yourself, your family members, or anyone even those of husbands who bring peace and happiness to their wives, those wives that bring peace, happiness to their husbands, those children there who serve respect, you know, who bring so much service to their parents, grandparents, and the parents who take care of their children, you know, who brings so much benefit of virtue to the children, etc. Whoever is beneficial even for one person or one animal, the dog or cats, always enjoy good health, long life and fulfill all the aspirations mundane and spiritual aspirations accordingly.

May this collective merit become a complete cause also dedicated to our most precious Guru, Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche, all his holy wishes be fulfilled and may we, sentient being in the world, actualize his unmistakable reincarnation and have the all the conducive conditions to carry on, you know, Rinpoche is enlightened legacy to serve the Dharma, to serve the sentient beings accordingly.

May this collective merit become a complete cause all the virtues institutions like the monasteries, nunneries and all the Dharma centers, any individual students that links to their own Dharma centers or monasteries and they may made these centers made this in the Dharma environment be free from inner, outer, secret obstacles actualize all the conducive conditions to preserve the Dharma, preserve the virtue in extensive learning and actualizing realization on the stages of the path accordingly.

Acknowledgement *(in order of appearance)*

The Heart of the Path, Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Mind-training, the great collection, The library of Tibetan Classics
The Foundation of all good qualities, Lama Tsongkhapa
Song of spiritual experience, Lama Tsongkhapa
The Supreme Array Sutra
The Ten Teachings Sutra
Lama Chopa Puja
Offering of the Food Prayer
Ornament of the Mahayana Sutra, Maitreya
Middle Length Lam-Rim, Lama Tsongkhapa
Collection of Indicative Verses (Udānavarga, 25.5–6)
Four Hundred Stanzas, Aryadeva
Essence of the Middle Way (Madhyamakahrdaya), Bhāviveka
Vinayasutra
Lam Rim Chenmo, Lama Tsongkhapa
The Sūtra on the Secrets of the Tathāgatas
The Sutra of Ksitigarbha
The Garland of the Birth Stories Sutra
The Tantra bestowing the Initiation of Vajrapani
Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga
King of Prayers – Sutra of Good Conduct
Samayavajra Purification practice
A Short Vajrasattva Meditation Purification with the Four Opponent Powers
Special Request for the Three Great Purposes
Calling the Guru from afar, Pabongka Rinpoche
Fifty Verses of Guru Devotion, Ashvagoshā
The Nine Attitude of Guru Devotion, Tsogdrub Rangdrol

Care of Dharma Materials

Dharma materials contain the teachings of the Buddha and thus protect against lower rebirth and reveal the path to enlightenment. Therefore, they should be treated with respect. Printed Dharma materials, as well as phones, tablets, laptops, and hard drives containing Dharma, should be kept off the floor, beds, chairs, meditation cushions, and all other places where people sit or walk. Dharma materials should not be stepped over or put in places where the feet or buttocks will point at them. They should be covered or protected for transporting and kept in a high, clean place separate from more mundane materials. Other objects, including statues, stupas, ritual implements, malas, reading glasses, and so forth, should not be placed on top of Dharma books and devices containing Dharma materials. Avoid licking the fingers to turn the pages of Dharma texts. If it is necessary to dispose of printed Dharma materials, they should be burned rather than thrown in the trash. When burning Dharma texts, visualize that the letters transform into an A (ॐ) and the A absorbs into your heart. Imagine burning blank paper. As the paper burns, recite OM ĀḤ HŪḤ or the Heart Sutra, while meditating on emptiness. Lama Zopa Rinpoche recommends that images of holy beings, deities, and holy objects not be burned. Ideally, if undamaged, they should be put in a stupa. Otherwise, put them high up in a tree inside a well-sealed structure, something like a bird house, so that the images are protected from the weather and do not end up on the ground.