

2008 SPIRITUAL PROGRAMME LOSANG DRAGPA BUDDHIST SOCIETY

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Learn to Differentiate between initiation, oral transmission, commentary and lecture etc.

By Geshe Tenzin Zopa on 19th March 2008 @ Losang Dragpa Buddhist Society, PJ

We should set a right motivation as stated in *The Graduated Path to Enlightenment – Lam Rim*. If any of you is a new comer, you can set a simple motivation in bodhicitta by thinking and inspiring your heart that the purpose of your life is to bring the everlasting happiness which is totally free from entire suffering within myself and all mother sentient beings who at this very moment is completely dominated by the three types of suffering in samsara. So for this purpose I seek refuge from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha by remembering all His qualities such as the Ten Power, Five Wisdoms and all different quality of enlightenment. Then generate full faith and conviction that the Buddha definitely can liberate myself and all other living beings from the entire ocean of samsara. And in order to derive the Buddha's blessing, I will call the name by reciting the mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha,

Tayatha Om Muni Muni Maha Muniye Soha x7

Today subject is to talk about ***The Difference Between Initiation, Commentary, Oral Transmission, Vow and General Lecture***. It is to talk about their definition and their important stage in order to actualize the different purposes.

First of all, the subject is very important for serious Dharma practitioner to know. The reason is that the root of all realization is your guru. Relying on your guru is base on your connection within the different type of teachings, it is not just mainly on word to rely somebody as guru then you can gain enlightenment, that is not the way. In order to actualize the foundation of your enlightenment, you have to actualize the practice of Guru Devotion within your mental continuum. In order to do that, you have to first find a Guru.

How does one become your Guru?

There are different stages and aspects in searching for one's Guru. At the same time, due to the lack of knowledge, many people get into the conclusion on relying on one's Guru by committing the commitment base on different teaching such as initiation. Once one committed to receive an initiation from somebody, without any second thought, the person naturally become one's Guru. On second incident, without any second thought that one fall into the conclusion of Guru-disciple relationship is that by receiving oral transmission. And thirdly is by receiving commentary, as well as by receiving vows.

The purpose of having Guru is to receive the blessing of realization. In order to receive the blessing from realization, one has to devote in both mental and outer aspect such as physical respect or verbal praises, as well as living a life or using one's precious human rebirth to just serve, fulfill and not disappoint Guru's holy mind.

Therefore because we are ordinary person, we don't have clairvoyant and omniscient mind, at the same time, in the environment such as in Malaysia or in foreign country, the time with one's Guru is very limit, to learn about one's Guru or the person who is initially one's teacher or discussion leader, there is very limit time. Especially one comes into conclusion base on one's own interest, it could be due the lack of one's knowledge that one brings the decision to realize somebody as one's Guru through the attraction of fame, or high throne or any recommendation base on other's friends interest, then it ends up with lot of criticism arise toward the Guru because of not acceptance the manner, behavior and qualification of your teacher or discussion leader. Therefore it is very important for us to know the basis circumstances on how we fall into the conclusion of Guru-disciple relationship. As long as you engage into initiation commitment, naturally it becomes Guru-disciple relationship. As long as you commit to receive oral transmission, commentary or vow, naturally you commit to Guru-disciple relationship.

The meaning of Initiation

What does it mean by receiving initiation? Initiation is the sequence of practice or ritual which provides permission for oneself to practice different Deity Yoga. It could be within one of the four Tantra school such as 1) Action Tantra 2) Kriya Tantra 3) Yoga Tantra and 4) Highest Yoga Tantra.

'Jenang' is the initiation of blessing of body, speech and mind. Many people have doubt that whether 'Jenang' is in the category of initiation or not? It is in the category of initiation. As long as one receives 'Jenang', naturally one is committed one's relationship with the particular teacher in Guru and disciple relationship. 'Jenang' is a simple initiation in the form of blessing by the deity through the Guru or teacher bestowing the purification practice of body, speech

and mind to the student and actualize the divine body, speech and mind of the student by the deity through the teacher.

As for the Great Initiation, it involves the preparatory stage which is called 'ta-gong'. This involves teaching on the preliminary practice, The Three Principal Aspect of the Path, analyzing one's connection with deity through the sign like analyzing dream as well as analyzing one's ability of conviction and faith on the first day before one gets into the actual initiation on the second day. Through the explanation on preliminary practices, one then looks into oneself on whether one is ready and qualified to accept the Great Initiation, and to commit the commitment given by the teacher? After that one can get into the conclusion on accepting the actual day initiation which is called 'ngo-she' - the actual performance of initiation. Some initiation takes two days, some take one day, it depends on the different lineage lama. When you take the Great Initiation, it involves four initiations, anyway I won't go through the details here.

As long as one commits and presents with full decision to receive the initiation, one should participate in the ceremony. In the end of the session, one pledges to oneself and convinces oneself that 'I have definitely received the initiation, and I will follow exactly the comment of this particular teacher.' That's the moment that one committed one's relationship with the particular teacher as Guru-disciple. On top of that one committed the relationship of Vajra Guru and Vajra disciple.

Why do we receive oral transmission?

With the inspiring motivation and understanding that by receiving oral transmission, it will bring benefit in the future when one achieves the Path of Preparation - whatever the oral transmission one received into ear senses, it will actualize as direct understanding on the meaning; whatever scripture one received from oral transmission, it doesn't matter on how many volumes of scripture, one will actualize all the meaning, including the memory on words that one has heard during oral transmission. So by seeing this benefit, one attends the oral transmission ceremony, and in the end of the session, one has the mind of satisfaction that one has gained and received the oral transmission. In that very moment one committed one's relationship with that particular teacher as Guru-disciple, but here it is not necessary as Vajra Guru and Vajra disciple.

Commentary

With the motivation to inspire to learn the meaning of scripture, one comes to receive the benefit of explanation by particular teacher, and in the end of the session, one feels convinced and satisfied that one has received the meaning of the commentary on particular text, that's the moment one committed one's relationship with that particular teacher as Guru and disciple.

Vow

As far as concern with vow, when one come to relate with particular teacher with the motivation of either restoring the vow or to receive new vow, including refuge vow, or 5 lay vows, or Bodhisattva vow, or Tantric vow, or initiation vow, or sangha vow such as novice vow, or pre-ordination vow, or fully ordained sangha vow, at the end of the ceremony, if one gain the satisfaction in one's mind that one has receive and achieve the vow from the particular teacher, that's the moment that one's relationship with the particular teacher become Guru-disciple.

Just by attending the ceremony will not receive initiation

If you come to attend initiation which is introduced by your friend saying that this lama is very powerful, who can able to enlightened you within 2 hours after bestow the vase on your head, then you feel inspired so much and attended the initiation. Through the ceremony, you find out that this is not possible, even at the last stage you still find that what your friend has commented to you, it is only to inspire you but in fact there is no way the teacher can enlighten you within the session. So in the end you feel this is non-sense, and you return to home. In fact you didn't commit your relationship with this particular teacher as Guru-disciple. Because first of all you haven't receive the initiation, just by attending the initiation you will not receive the initiation.

Qualification to receive initiation

In order to receive initiation, what sort of qualification one needs to actualize? First is the motivation to receive the initiation, at the same time, one need to know and recognize the deity. If it is Tara initiation, but one confuse that Tara initiation as Chenrezig initiation, then one will not received the Tara initiation. One have to make sure that one recognize Tara and this is Tara initiation.

During the ceremony, in the initial stage, the Guru will explain the preliminary practice especially the foundation practice such as renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness. Even though one might not have any education on that, but in that particular session, one have to follow and put full concentration on Guru's explanation, at least one have to follow exactly as what the Guru explained.

Then the Guru will also provide many sequences on the repetition on mantra, request, supplication. All the time it happened that during initiation, there are many repetitions such as repetition on vow, if the Guru ask you to repeat 3 times but you only repeat 2 times, it is incomplete, then you will not purely receive the initiation. If the Guru ask you to repeat 3 times, you have to repeat 3 times. If the Guru ask you to visualize Tara on top of your crown, you have to visualize Tara on top of your crown. Some people have a lot of illusion or imagination, when the Guru ask you to visualize Tara on top of the crown, you start to see Tara in front of you talking to you, then you are completely overwhelm by your visualization and you forget the guidance of the Guru, again here you will miss the opportunity. So during initiation, you really have to focus and concentrate on the process of the ceremony because initiation involve different ceremony. Or if

suddenly you feel asleep, and you miss the repetition, it is incomplete, or you didn't understand what the Guru try to tell you, then you miss the chance. If it is not like that, then initiation becomes very easy!

Why initiation is so powerful?

Initiation is so powerful, but why didn't you even actualize the proper causal stage of enlightenment? During initiation, there is stages on actualizing causal stage of enlightenment and resultant stage of enlightenment. But why is it that you still fall into very ordinary aspect? It is because due to the lack of concentration when you receive initiation. Therefore the actual ceremony of initiation we have to focus on repetition and explanation from the Guru, and we have to follow exactly the guidance.

Receiving initiation is to completely surrender your body, speech and mind under the total guidance of the Guru

Initiation cannot be interpret base on Guru's intelligent, in fact it is not only initiation ceremony, even receiving the vow, it has to be present in the ceremony base on the sequence of different step of practice. Therefore you have to follow the sequence step of practice on which the Guru guide you. If you miss that, then in fact you might end up in not receiving the initiation, not only that, at the end of the session, when the Guru ask a question on whether you have receive the initiation or not? You have to reply on the repetition that the Guru advice you to repeat. It is not just repeating the word but you have to feel from your heart that you have receive the initiation therefore you are expressing that you have received. This is one of the very very important part which is at the end of the session.

In every initiation, the Guru will ask,

'tso-wei ji-tar ka-tsel-wa; di-tar tam-chye dag-gyi gyi'

'tso-wei' here refers to 'Guru' himself;

'ji-tar ka-tsel-wa' means 'whatever the Guru advice or comment'

'di-tar tam-chye dag-gyi gyi' means that 'every single thing I will do as it is, as what the Guru have commented.'

You have to express this from the depth of your heart. This is the moment that you are completely surrender your body, speech and mind in 100% total under the guidance from your Guru, and protection under your Guru, and taking him as an object of your refuge. From that very moment, you promise to follow and do all the samaya. If it involve Bodhisattva vow, your samaya is to practice Bodhisattva vow. If it involve Tantric vow, your samaya is to practice Tantric vow, that's the moment you commit that you will do exactly as what the Guru commented. If what the Guru commented or advice is to live a life in Bodhisattva vow and

Tantric vow, and if you happen to break the Tantric vow before the end of the initiation, in fact it will become incomplete. Because there is a session at the very end during the dedication that you have to feel that you have definitely receive the initiation, and you will live a life as commented, this is the ending of the final agreement, by then you are genuinely, naturally, spontaneously, wholeheartedly become the Vajra disciple, and the teacher become Vajra Guru. And the practice is that you need to live a life on seeing the Guru in Tara if you received Tara initiation, and seeing the Guru inseparable from Buddha, Daka and Dakini and all Buddhas.

The compulsory three conditions to receive complete initiation

So you see, the preliminary, actual and final practice, these three things have to be involved, if you miss the preliminary – the motivation and the cultivation on the teaching on Three Principal Aspect of the Path, it is incomplete; the actual process is like the repetition or visualization, if you miss this, then it is incomplete; at the end you have to surrender your body, speech and mind under the guidance of Guru, and to follow the samaya. The commitment is that you need to feel full confident that you have definitely receive the initiation, that kind of satisfaction you need to have. In Tibetan, we call it 'tob-lo', it is that 'I have definitely obtained the initiation!' This is very important for the end. Even if you have done all the preliminary and actual practice, but if in the end you didn't gain 'tob-lo',

'tob' is gain;

'lo' is mind;

This is 'the mind of gain' in initiation to confirm that you have definitely receive initiation at any cost, so if you have these three things then you have received initiation.

Up to now you went through many different process of initiation, so you can look into yourself, if you find that any initiation that you didn't do properly, then in future you educate yourself to receive proper initiation and follow the proper practice, then this Tantric initiation can become one of the most powerful practice to bring your enlightenment within one life time.

It is important to know the commitment before you take initiation

Guru will provide commitment such as doing sadhana or recitation on mantra or doing different practices, it is all up to the Guru, because he is your creator now. Maybe one Guru will say after received the Tara initiation to recite 21 times on the mantra but the other Guru might say have to recite 1 mala every day, so it is up to them, because you have already surrender yourself, so you have to accept it.

Here the important thing is that the organization or the Guru have to tell very clearly on what sort of the commitment are there before you come to the initiation, this is very important, otherwise the disciple will get into very difficult position. In conventional life, there is no time to do the commitment but at the same time if you don't do then you break the samaya, so it is very important to know what sort of commitment are there. If you think that you cannot do the commitment, the best is not to take the initiation. If you take the initiation, that mean you must do the commitment, there is no short cut or excuse.

Requirement on receiving Oral Transmission

With the motivation of giving oral transmission, it is to read the text or reciting the prayer, it doesn't require the student to understand the meaning, the requirement is that the student have to hear the recitation. That's why in the previous class when we talk about the precious human rebirth, if we don't have the proper ear senses, we will lose the greatest opportunity to receive oral transmission, because in order to receive oral transmission, you need to have the ear senses.

The great benefit on receiving oral transmission is that, whether it is recite in Tibetan or English or whatever, as long as you listen to whatever the Guru recite, that's it!

Speciality in receiving Oral Transmission

The very special and extra ordinary benefit in receiving oral transmission is that in the *Five Paths* of the Mahayana Path, the first Path is *Path of Accumulation*, second one is *Path of Preparation*, then *Path of Seeing*, *Path of Meditation* and *Path of No More Learning*, when you reach the second Path on *Path of Preparation*, whatever oral transmission you received in the past, everything instantly actualize all the meaning, including the word, you will remember every single word that you have heard, there is no need to sit for memorization. Every single meaning and word you have heard you will be directly realized them, every thing become direct perception, that's the most greatest and speciality in oral transmission.

So after you receive different mantra oral transmission, when you reach the *Path of Preparation*, every single word on the mantra you will remember and the meaning will directly reflect on your mind. If you happen to receive oral transmission on the whole Kangyur and Tengyur, the whole collection on Buddha's teaching, when you achieve the *Path of Preparation*, 84,000 teaching will just realize in your mind. It is very rare though on this oral transmission, but if you have chance, it is a great opportunity.

One has to be very alert when receiving Oral Transmission

During oral transmission, if you fall asleep - gone! Gone case! Let say the oral transmission is 20 pages within 1 hour, but for 10 pages you are able to receive, after that maybe for the next 9 pages you fall asleep, then you lose, it become

incomplete teaching. So when you gain the *Path of Preparation*, it become incomplete teaching, so you have to be very alert.

During oral transmission, even when you swallow your saliva, you have to swallow very gently, because when you swallow your saliva, there is an effect bring to your throat which can block the ear kennel inside, you will not realize but when you swallow your saliva, there is one single moment that block your ear kennel, even that you have to be alert when you swallow the saliva.

To receive Oral Transmission require you to hear the sound of the Guru

But here when you receive the oral transmission, it doesn't require full concentration, this is very interesting, as long as you hear, as long as there is no blockage for your ear senses, that's enough! So this mean that your eye can be looking here and there, or reading scripture, as long as your ear can still hear the sound although your eye sense is distracted by other thing because this is just one portion of your senses, also if the feeling is distracted by other thing or one portion of mind is distracted by other things, it is ok, but as long as you hear the sound, it is consider that you receive the oral transmission.

Once your ear kennel is block, then cannot! Even if you block for one word, that mean it is incomplete. For example 'Bodhisattva', suddenly during the oral transmission you swallow your saliva, and you didn't hear the 'dhi' but only hear 'Bodh-sattva', unless you get chance to receive again, then is ok, but if there is only one chance to receive oral transmission from those who has the lineage, then we have to put that much effort.

At the end of the session, when Guru make dedication after the oral transmission, that's the time that one has to feel that 'yes, I have definitely receive oral transmission.'

The important points on receiving Oral Transmission

It is very important to know what subject, how many pages, the text composer, and of course you have to know the Lama also. The master have to tell you that he has read from here to this page, and from tomorrow onward he will continue from where. But if you are also carrying the text, that mean you are also reading together, then the master is not necessary to tell you where to stop and where to start because you should also know already. Otherwise the master should tell on which subject, and from which page to which page, these are the requirement during oral transmission.

During oral transmission, it doesn't require visualization. If you do, of course is good, also it doesn't require understanding on the meaning on any form of teaching, as long as you have motivation to receive the oral transmission by understanding its benefit, that it is for the accumulation of merit and particularly when you obtain the *Path of Preparation*, you will actualize the direct meaning on all the transmission.

During the actual oral transmission session, you provide your ear senses with all the conditions that I have just mentioned, then in conclusion you should feel that you have received it. The moment you commit that you have definitely received the oral transmission, that particular person naturally becomes your Guru.

Requirement of physical, verbal and mental's respect to receive vow

It is the same thing for receiving a vow, you need to know what vow that you are receiving. If you are receiving a refuge vow, you need to know that you are going to receive the refuge vow. It is not necessary to know the detail of the vow, but you need to know that you are committing to take a refuge vow, then you need to know the person on whom it is granted, and you have to convince yourself that by receiving the vow, this person is going to be your Guru in respect of your vow. Then you inspire to take the vow, and follow the ceremony, once you sit for the ceremony, you cannot miss the repetition. Receiving a vow requires repetition, also cannot miss the visualization and explanation, so here the requirement you need to understand is that whatever the Guru provides the vow, you need to understand.

Such as a refuge vow, if you attend the ceremony and you don't understand what is going on, you will not receive the refuge vow. You must understand every single detail of the vow that you are receiving, so the master has to explain every single detail on the vow until the disciple understands and is convinced, then follow the different sequence of the ceremony which requires prostration, making offerings, different forms of respect in verbal, physical and mental.

Verbal requirement is that if possible to express the name of the master, if not at least you need to reflect the master while recite the supplication prayer during the ceremony. Physically need to perform different sequence of prostration or putting palm together. During initiation you require to stand up and make prostration to different directions, certain initiation is to put palm together, so all those respects are requirements from the disciple, but the master has to explain. In the end you have to feel that you receive the vow and have a sense of joy, in that very moment, the relationship with the master becomes Guru-disciple. If it is a tantric vow, the relationship is Vajra Guru and Vajra disciple. If you only receive a refuge vow, it is just Guru-disciple relationship and connection.

Receiving Commentary

As for commentary, you need to express from your heart that you are going to receive the explanation on the Buddha's scripture such as Lam Rim, or receive the commentary on Lam Rim by this master, that is the motivation. Then you participate in the teaching. During the teaching you reflect the meaning according to the explanation, in the end you feel that 'yes, I have definitely received the commentary from this guru.' That's the moment you commit your relationship with the master as Guru-disciple.

The different of attending General Lecture and receiving commentary

Just by receiving explanation, it is not necessary and require to have the connection of Guru-disciple. Let say now you come to listen to this teaching that I am explaining now which is the Buddha's teaching, so you come here without motivation, so the first requirement is not there already, secondly you only come here for knowledge, you regard this as discussion, sharing the knowledge between Dharma brother and sister, or you just come here to listen on what sort of comment I will give on this topic, maybe you already know much more than me, but you want to know how much I can say about this topic, so you just investigate. Or with pure motivation that you wish to know about all these different topics therefore you want to learn from this particular person, so you come here to listen, then in the end we dedicate the merit for whatever purpose of bodhicitta or whatever you like to make, then we say thank you and good night, so this is just a lecture. It doesn't commit the Guru-disciple relationship, it is just an exchange on knowledge.

How does the master become your Guru after receiving commentary

In order to actualize Guru-disciple relationship, you need to have the motivation to accept this particular master as your Guru of commentary. The commentary is the explanation of teaching, that's it! So you want to receive this explanation and regard this master as your Guru, and in the end you should feel that how fortunate you have receive the commentary. If it is your first time, then you should feel that how fortunate that you have establish your relationship with this particular master as your Guru, then it become the Guru-disciple, otherwise it doesn't become the connection with Guru-disciple. These are very important to know.

It is very necessary and important for new comer when you relate with Buddha dharma teaching with somebody, the best is not to commit yourself accepting as Guru-disciple in the beginning, it is always safer for your own benefit as well as a true respect to the master from whom you learned. You can participate in the lecture, show sincere respect from body, speech and mind while learning from this person until you are convinced that this person can inspired you in the practice, bring protection to you, brighten your life, and you are convince with all his/ her knowledge and compassion.

Who can be your Guru?

Guru definitely require to have much more compassion than you, Guru also means is somebody who has much more knowledge than you, Guru definitely required more skill to bring benefit for others, Guru require the qualification on others are more important than himself or herself. By analyzing while learning from this particular person, you experience the positive and virtue part of the Guru and it convinced your faith to accept this particular person as your Guru, then that's very good. Otherwise in the beginning you regard as Guru but meanwhile you start to see fault and doesn't provide the need of your spiritual practice, then if you feel disappointed, it is very heavy negative karma. Rather in

the beginning, you should regard as a respected teacher and learned, and one day when you are convinced then you regard as Guru.

Guru is your liberator, without him, everything is impossible!

The thing is that if you regard and have faith that the person is your Guru, then you receive teaching from him/ her, definitely it has greater effect due to Guru-disciple relationship. When you devote to somebody as Guru, that mean you definitely have faith. We said that this faith is the root of your virtue, and the root of your enlightenment. When you receive even one word as explanation or commentary, one word of oral transmission as mantra, one simple vow of not killing, or even 'jenang' on Kriya Tantra which is the initiation on blessing the body, speech and mind, because of your relationship of Guru-disciple, the merit that you will accumulate and the benefit that you will gain to bring blessing to your heart, it is zillion and billion greater benefit, numberless greater benefit. That's why your Guru is your sole refuge, is your liberator, is your foundation of all good quality, your guru is your yidam, your guru is your daka and dakini, protector, dharmapala and everything! Your guru is your father, mother, all the dearest one!

Once you commit your relationship with that particular person as Guru-disciple, from that very moment, it doesn't matter whether the Guru is qualified or not qualified, whether it is pure or not pure, whether it is ordinary or enlightened, black or white, small or big, whether live in celestial mansion or live on street, whether act like a king or act like a street dog, it is nothing matter. The matter is that he is your liberator, he is your Buddha and your yidam and only he can liberate you, without him there is no liberation, without him everything is impossible.

In Guru Puja it said,

***Kyo-ni La-ma kyo-ni yi-dam
Kyo-ni ka-dro cho-kyong-te
Deng-ne zung-te jang-chup bar-du
Kyo-min kyab-zhan mi-tsol-way
Di-dang bar-do chi-meh thar-yang
Thug-jey chag-kyu zung-dzo-la
Si-zhi jig-drol ngo-drub kun-tsol
Ten-gyi drog-dzo bar-cho-zung***

***You are my Gurus, you are my yidams,
You are the dakinis and Dharma protectors
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 samsara and nirvana's fears,
Grant all attainments,***

Be my constant friend and guard me from interferences

If your mind is not clear, even Buddha appear in front of you, you can't see him.

The above is true, it is fact. The problem is that it is easy to commit, it is easy to relate somebody as Guru, but after that there is so dangerous of criticizing, fail in faith, seeing negative in Guru, and this negative is 100% projection of your own negative. The negative appearance from your Guru is 100% projection of your own negative. The Guru could be totally ordinary, but in the state that relate to you as Guru-disciple, whatever negative appeared, it is only your projection, there is no negative in Guru because he is Buddha. He is your Buddha, your yidam. Again here your illusion, your superstition, your deluded mind is the one who fail to see the enlightened one, fail to see all the qualities of Buddha, the failure is you, it is not the object – the Guru.

In order to be secure on this matter, it is always recommended that for you to relate the particular master as teacher first, then you study and live a life together for many years, and you observe until your heart is convince, total unshakable, your faith is total unmovable, this is regard in a more safer way. But this doesn't mean that you must check and keep carry on and on because your life is indefinite, the time of death is really indefinite, it is really uncertain. If before you rely on somebody, you happen to die, then you lost the greatest opportunity because only this precious human rebirth is able to find the precious Guru. In case if we are born in hell realm or other realm, even in god realm, there is no opportunity for us to find such wonderful Guru, and that Guru is the manifestation on Buddha Vajradhara. Buddha Vajradhara himself stated that in degenerated time, due to the lack of merit of degenerated being, he will manifest in ordinary form, so we totally miss the chance, we miss the chance to connect with the liberator even the liberator is in front of you. So both recommendation is relevant, important, we have to decide by ourselves, it depends on individual.

The story of Buddha Maitreya and Asanga prove that as long as your mind is not clear, even Buddha appear in front of you, you will never see the Buddha. Asanga meditated to see Buddha Maitreya for 12 years, in fact Buddha Maitreya is ever in front of him together for 12 years, but Asanga only able to see Buddha Maitreya after 12 years. So the matter here is that it proved as long as your mind is dominated by delusion, you will not be able to see even you analyze somebody for 12 years. The matter here is on your mind, you analyze your mind, if your mind is ready, if you are firm enough, then it is beneficial to devote.

A single syllable from the Guru can be a liberator for you

Once you devote to somebody as Guru, is it necessary to receive the entire set of the teaching of Buddha? If you don't receive the complete set, can that Guru regard as incomplete? The answer is 'No'. As long as you regard somebody as the Guru, it is not the matter on how many times you receive the teaching, how

many number of initiation you receive. It is not the matter on how many times, how many number and how many volume, the matter is your faith, and your reliance on Guru. Even one single mantra such as Om Mani Padme Hung, if he give you oral transmission, it is sufficient and enough to tie your enlightenment and clear light mind to his enlightened mind and bring up to enlightenment. In order for this Guru to enlighten you, it is not necessary that the Guru have to provide you the 84,000 teaching, all the volume in many days and many months, that's not necessary. The things is even one single syllable teaching such as a syllable 'NA', or let say 'Om Mani Padme Hung', it contains the blessing of 84,000 teaching, the commentary of 84,000 teaching, the oral transmission of 84,000 teaching, the initiation of 84,000 teaching. The six syllable mantras contain the entire aspect of Buddha's teaching. If you connect your spiritual path with this particular Guru and this particular Guru happen to give only one single 'Om Mani Padme Hung' oral transmission, that could be the liberator for you. Here it means that it is not necessary to receive every single sequence of teaching.

Our Guru such as Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche have to take care many Centers, we see him only once every 2-3 years, and his time to stay here is very limit, let say only 1 week or the most is 10 days, the teaching what we received is something like previous year the Tara initiation, but our time of death is uncertain, some people already leave to next life after the teaching, then we might find it is incomplete, but never mind, it is complete. As long as you have connected with the enlightened Guru by the condition of the complete mature faith and conviction, that is the complete cause to bring to enlightenment.

How to generate complete mature faith in your Guru?

Therefore in order to mature your innocent faith and conviction, it needs lots of effort. You need to study, contemplate on Buddha's teaching, meditate, and put so much effort in order to bring about the complete mature faith, therefore as far as concern in relate to Guru Devotion, or somebody as Guru, it is very necessary that you have to learn. And whatever teaching you receive you need to contemplate, and whatever contemplation you have done, you try to habituate your mind, then you have to see whether this teaching really benefit or not?

Sometime if you don't have karmic affinity with that particular person, although the teaching is very elaborate and vast, but it doesn't hit your heart, but certain teaching that is very simple and limit, but it hits your heart, so here again it is necessary for you to understand the fundamental important is to learn, to meditate and contemplate, then you convince yourself with all the reasons, then you devote.

The advantage and disadvantage on devoting to one's Guru

Once you devote, you have to put effort all the time to not encounter any misconception, or failure in faith. If you fail, if you generate misconception, there is danger of degenerating your practice, and also accumulate negative karma,

especially if the relation with Guru is to do with Tantra. If the relation is between Vajra Guru and Vajra disciple, then it is stated that it will bring the karma to be born into the Vajra hell, that's very heavy negative karma. But if you are able to devote purely, then the benefit is that the Guru can be able to provide the right teaching, prescription to actualize your enlightenment within one life time, so you see the advantage is very powerful, and the disadvantage is also very powerful. For this reason, we have to devote with full understanding.

In fact there are not many things to say or clarify on this topic, in the very beginning of the class, I thought to do more on question and answer because many of you already into Buddhist practice from long time, and many of you have many Gurus, so if you have any difficulty or doubt, we can do question and answer. But anyway, whatever I say is just for rough idea to get some information.

Question & Answer:

Question: Other than taking refuge vow, if you don't take initiation vow, oral transmission or commentary, does that mean we don't have a Guru?

Geshe la: Just for refuge vow, it is already your Guru.

There is certain occasion during the refuge ceremony, the refuge master will provide an option in one session where you have to fill up 2 words - one is just to participate the refuge ceremony for your knowledge, another one is to commit yourself to take the refuge, so there are 2 options. When the master explain it clearly, you can either just participate in the refuge ceremony or you can choose. There is a word call 'lo-pon', and another word 'tsun-pa'. If you are regarding the particular master as Guru, then you need to add 'lo-pon'. For certain master, whether they do or not, I don't know, but when we do the refuge ceremony, we recommend the choice to the participants. If you only participate for your education, you can participate, there is nothing wrong as far as concern for the Refuge vow and Five Lay Vows.

As for Sangha vows, you require the ground rule that when you come here, you have to accept the vow. For example during Nyung Nay practice, we do take Eight Mahayana Precepts, for the beginner on the first day, one of the senior sangha or the somebody who possess the Eight Mahayana Precepts does grant the Eight Mahayana Precepts, but that is in the form of reminder, in fact you can receive Eight Mahayana Precepts from altar and statue, so if you are attending Refuge ceremony for knowledge, then you have to add this 'tsun-pa' word. But if you are committing as Guru-disciple, then you have to add 'lo-pon' word. So in order to accept as Guru, you don't have to receive oral transmission, commentary or initiation, just for one it is already done.

Question: Would you advice to the follower to take initiation or oral transmission by various Guru in different Center or stick to your own Guru and Center?

Geshe la: Of course individual has their own choice, but just a suggestion and very pure advice, if you reflect yourself as a very fragile person, very limit in understanding of Dharma, very limit faith and not strong faith, then I recommend you to just stick on one Guru. Especially if you already know your Guru, like our Center here, we have our own Guru – His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche, so we just refer to them because they are qualified, this is enough and you don't have to go to search for other Guru.

But of course if your faith can manage it is fine. As I mentioned that if you happen to fail your faith, that is very heavy negative karma, rather better secure your limited faith which is much more beneficial than having faith to many masters but in the end you fail, because that create such heavy negative karma. So it is better to stick with one Guru yet at the same time you have to devote to qualified master which I have mentioned all the qualification.

Lama Atisha has 150 Gurus, but he manage with his faith, he devote every single Guru as Buddha. Within his Guru, there are different label, some are enlightened, some are ordinary, some are the follower of lower view than him. Lama Atisha himself follows Madhyamika view which is the highest view, but his Guru Lama Serlingpa follow Cittamatra view. So from the view, Lama Serlingpa is much more lower in view. But Lama Atisha's purpose to relate with Lama Serlingpa is for the purpose of the blessing of bodhicitta, because Lama Serlingpa has obtained Bodhicitta mind and is a living great master of bodhicitta who really transform Lama Atisha's heart into bodhicitta heart. It is because of that, since that practice is principal, so Lama Atisha regard Lama Serlingpa as root Guru within all the 150 Gurus, and without failing in faith in all the 149 Gurus. Every single Guru he respect as seeing them as Buddha, so he manage and it is the greatest benefit, and he extracted knowledge from all different Gurus without fail in faith.

But in our cases, we do go and collect knowledge from different Gurus, and we commit with different master as Guru-disciple, but most of the time we don't devote to them. Let say we receive initiation from this Lama, the next day we even forget the name of the Lama, or forget the date on the initiation, sometime even don't know what exactly the commitment is given, but then you already committed to regard him as your Guru but at the same time you don't even know what sort of thing need to follow up. So this mean that you are creating good cause but at the same time you are creating negative also, in that kind of cases, so better be careful.

Relate to this question, in Tibetan Buddhism, there are many tradition such as Nyingma, Kagyur, Sakya and Gelug. So there are many different Lamas come to visit, the Kagyur Lama is giving Kalachakra initiation, and Sakya Lama also

giving Kalachakra initiation, and Gelug Lama also giving Kalachakra initiation. Some students came to ask my opinion that whether they can go to receive Sakya Kalachakra initiation or not because a His Holiness is giving Kalachakra initiation? My answer is that I don't know. Because I don't even know what sort of commitment the Sakya Kalachakra provide because I never receive the initiation. But what I know is that I receive the initiation from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, I know all the commitments, and if whatever help you need, then I can provide to you.

So if your faith manage and if you have the devotion, as well as you know what is going on, it is up to you, for me without knowing your karmic relationship, I cannot stop you. But I also want to tell you that after receive initiation, please don't come to me if you got problem. I already said that you have to refer to the Guru in whoever you receive the initiation, because you receive initiation from this lama and now you come to ask me about the practice, it is very unfair, so I said to please don't come to me. One thing is that I might not know about the practice, second thing is that since the commitment is given by this Guru, this Guru might have his own specialist on his practice, so you should 100% follow his way. Even if I happen to give right explanation or comment on the teaching, but it could be in different aspect, then it doesn't benefit much.

Sometime this kind of circumstances happen, so I will said that if you are ready, it is up to you. But who stay on here? I am the one who stay here. Those Lama today they give initiation, tomorrow they leave, but the problem come from next day onward, and then you come to me, so I said better don't do that. I encounter many like that. So it is very difficult to say. You should really check carefully, you must at least have the understanding on the Three Principal Aspect of the Path in order to receive any initiation, that's what I can provide as an advice. And the lama who give initiation has the full responsible for the requirement for the disciple.

Question: As for oral transmission, can we receive from CD?

Geshe la: Cannot, you have to receive from direct oral lineage, directly from person to person.

Question: Even for Guru Devotion? It also must be directly from person to person, it doesn't matter if the Guru is alive or pass away?

Geshe la: Once you devote, even if the Guru pass away, then never mind, you should continue to devote. As for this one, I am not sure how it works, because I encounter my late master Geshe Lama Konchog, after he passed away, he has the Lam Rim teaching book in Chinese language from Taiwan, the books also go into China, at one stage, in Taiwan as well as in China, somehow people's karma, they just devote to Geshe Lama Konchog base on this book and they regard him as Guru, they didn't even rely on other Guru. They do discussion, and

their sole Guru is Geshe Lama Konchog, this is what they express, but whether it is really happen or not, I don't know, and I have no idea. This is a good question.

Because they didn't have direct contact, they didn't commit any form of such as vow or oral transmission or direct instruction or initiation, they just rely on book. So it is better that I say I don't know, I think you can ask your Gurus on how this actually work? As for oral transmission, then one cannot receive from CD. But just to regard somebody as Guru, whether can or not, I have no idea.

Question: Let say if you receive initiation from Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche and the commitment is to recite 1 mala on Medicine Buddha mantra, later if you take the same initiation from your Center teacher, and the commitment is also to do 1 mala of the Medicine Buddha mantra, so do you have to do 2 malas?

Geshe la: No, one mala can do. If in case the other teacher provide you 2 malas, then you have to add 1 extra mala. Also it is like when you receive initiation from different lama, most of the time they provide you the commitment to do retreat, such as 100,000 retreat, then the next time another lama provide you to do 400,000 retreat, so you don't have to do 500,000 retreat, you do 400,000 that's enough. Also when you receive initiation now, later you keep receiving the same initiation again and again, and every time they will recommend you the commitment to do, so you don't have to do it again and again, one commitment is sufficient for all the commitment.

Once you have receive the Chenrezig initiation, in fact it is better to receive again and again, it is always the more the better, you receive the initiation again and again, and the commitment is still the original one. As for teaching, it is also the same, and also the same for oral transmission, commentary, you can receive again and again, and it is better to receive again and again.

Question: Since our Lamas come here so rare, if we were to organize a video conference online for transmission on initiation, is it possible?

Geshe la: I think this is very difficult to answer. I have the doubt because in a few years past, in Taiwan there was a huge earth quake, this is in my own experience, at that time Geshe Lama Konchog was in Taiwan, and Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche was in America, there was a prediction that there will be another heavy earth quake, so Rinpoche check in observation and it came out that if Geshe Lama Konchog can give Eight Mahayana Precepts to the whole Taiwan, then it can prevent the earth quake. So Rinpoche requested one of the disciple there who has the ability to provide the TV channel and they advertise from TV and newspaper that this Lama is giving the Eight Mahayana Precepts in early morning, they broadcast in whole Taiwan. At that time everybody very scared and worried, so when Geshe la give the Eight Mahayana Precepts from TV, I heard that there were huge number of people took the Eight Mahayana Precepts in their home looking at TV, and that did help to prevent the huge earth quake.

They already had once earth quake, but the coming earth quake was prevented. That mean for the Eight Mahayana Precepts, you also have to grant the precepts, and here it is through TV, all the people preserve the vow of the Eight Mahayana Precepts, so this happened. From here you see that, maybe oral transmission also possible? Then maybe initiation also possible? So this is a very serious question, you can note down this question, and ask your Guru. It is a very important question, it sound simple but very tough question. It is not easy to decide, otherwise if you say ok, then everybody will just buy the CD and receive oral transmission from there.

Question: As regard with the TV station, I did correspond with Ven.Holly, it is said that the Lama has to be in the same room together and see each other.

Geshe la: But let say here when Rinpoche comes, the hall here is completely full, so some people have to stay upstairs and we put a TV upstairs, then how does it works?

Question: I think it is about motivation?

Geshe la: I think motivation alone is not enough. If that is enough, it is quite easy to answer, everything is motivation.

Question: Because some motivation is not strong...

Geshe la: Oh... strong motivation, then everything is possible? I think we still need clarification on this. So for this few questions, please note down, this will clarify many doubts, when your Guru comes, it is the best to ask your Guru directly.

Question: When we receive initiation from Rinpoche, some time we don't get the commentary from Rinpoche, so is it ok if we seek on other books for commentary?

Geshe la: Can.

Question: In relation to Guru, does the Guru have to be a Rinpoche or have to be a Geshe in order to be a Guru?

Geshe la: Rinpoche, Geshe, ordinary monk or nun, even novice monk or nun, or fully ordained monk or nun, even lay person, woman or man, as I mentioned earlier, it is mainly depend on you. Somebody who inspire you, the most important thing is who can inspire you and to sustain the inspiration, also always there for you and encourage your spiritual path and always there for you for your purification of past negative karma. That is I think the best. For that, it is not necessary that the Lama have to be alive. I can tell you one small story.

Such as my late master Geshe Lama Konchog, in any circumstances, in the happiest moment and in the saddest moment, he come into my mind the first, just naturally, without any force and effort, he comes. Sometime I lose my mind, this mean in the sense that sometime suddenly I feel like doing negative thing because thought arise and action start to form, but instantly it is like I am completely surrounded by him, it is almost like I can hear his voice saying, 'woei, this cannot do...'. I experience this all the way. Here you can see that your Guru is your protection, he is your everything, he protect you, he help you when you are sad. Also like participate in your happiness, every single aspect, and all the time you are inspired by him. It doesn't matter how cruel you are, but still all the time try to inspire you for virtue act.

I think it is very necessary that in our life we should have at least one person like this, but if you have many that is wonderful. I think that is the purpose of having a Guru in our heart. The one person who leave so strong imprint, and that doesn't matter whether it is Rinpoche, or ordinary being, or whoever, as long as your karmic affinity is there, it is very powerful, it is much more powerful than the outer aspect of discipliner and anything. Then either you lock yourself inside the room or you stay outside the room, it is the same, you are really true person because you assume that inside the room no human being can see you, but the moment your thought click, this Guru just come in, it is very scary, you know? It is like suddenly he block you, it is so amazing.

One time I was traveling from Sera Monastery to Banglore during my study time, we have a group of monk, about 5-6 of us, that's during our holiday, so everybody suggest that maybe we wear shirt and short to go for holiday. But if we were to wear it in the monastery and if the discipliner see, then we will be kick out, for sure we will be kick out, so we plan to go to bus station around mid-night, there is one place call Kushalnagar. So when everybody sleep, we wear short and with back pack, we go for holiday. We hire the small auto rikshawl, from Monastery about 20 minutes to reach the bus station, otherwise even in that small city of Kushalnagar, there are so many monks, so we all agreed to do that in midnight.

Then in my room, I try to change to shirt & short, but 'woooorr.....' it is like the whole room is completely fill with Geshe la, until my heart is bumping and beating. I try to avoid by thinking on other things and doing other things, but I can't avoid, it ends up that I have to go with robe. So I got scolding from my friend that I spoiled our plan! Because we thought to go to cinema to watch hindi movie! So sometime is very inconvenient with robe. So I told them that whatever it is, if they don't want me to follow them, I will still go to Banglore, because they can't stop me from going into bus, so we went together, and in hotel we stay in separate room, so I will not follow to go to cinema, I stay in hotel and watch TV. It ends up like that.

Sometime when you feel sad, the best consultant is somebody like that, it is very very good, if you wish to do something, the most powerful to inspire you is somebody you have in your heart to whom you regard as your father, mother, Guru, liberator, yidam and everything, it is also very good to chant this praises again and again with remembering on this.

Last time when I was with Geshe la, I scared of him a lot, he is very strict, I really regard him as terribly ordinary person. Sometime when he wore robe, I feel proud that I wore even better than him. He was a very senior monk and he just wore anyhow, but at least I wore it properly. However at the moment when you are alone and away from this person, every single corner he follow you. And during the worse time, he is the one who help you, he just come into your mind.

At one time there is one woman from Holland, I met her in Kopan. She looked quite wrath but she thinks that she is more prettier than Princess Diana! She asked me,

“Don’t I look like Princess Diana?”

I said, “I don’t know who is Princess Diana.”

Then she told me that she is more prettier than Princess Diana. She asked me one question,

“Don’t you miss your mother?”

I said, “No.” Then she said,

“Oh, you are like a jungle man. It is shocking that you don’t miss your mother!”

Somehow karmically we become very close, but all the time end up with argument, and she used quite rude word, but she is not Buddhist, but very good hearted. So I try to prove her that she is a jungle woman, and she try to prove me that I am a jungle man. We were so close that she even follow me all the way to Sera, when I was in Sera, she came up to Sera, but all the time we argue, and I always said that I will make sure I will convert her into Buddhism, and she will make sure that she will convert me into Jewish. And also she said that she will make sure I will go to Holland, but I said I will make sure that she will go to cave! Anyway, we have very interesting argument.

I told her that since I was in the age of 3, it is not because of somebody treat me so nice so I remember them, but I just miss one person in my life, when I feel very bad or very good, only this one person come into my life. Anyway, it is really important to have somebody in your heart, especially link with Guru-disciple, because from there you gain so much benefit which is meaningful and worthwhile. I find it is the best protection, sometime we wear all sort of protection

wheel, but the best protection is that you keep your Guru inside, and that's the best protection, it is very helpful. This will make sure that you will not in depress, and make sure that whatever you do you will accomplish, and you are not lonely, wherever you go, make sure that you don't do bad thing although all the time I do bad thing, but it does help. From a very cool person and negative person, at least it help to reduce some negativity.

Question: We meet so many Gurus along the way, for example, there is Khenrinpoche, Choden Rinpoche, how do we know who is our Guru?

Geshe la: As I mentioned earlier, you commit yourself with your faith, let say maybe Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Choden Rinpoche or Khenrinpoche, all three of them you regards as your spiritual guidance who is in the aspect of your Guru, who is your protector and inspiration, if you feel you always receive inspiration from them, whenever you think of them, your practice grow, and your faith is always respect them, then maybe you relate them as Guru.

Question: Do we have to choose one as our root Guru?

Geshe la: It is not necessary. You can accept all Guru as root Guru also, or you can choose one Guru as root Guru.

You learned different teaching and different field of knowledge from different Gurus, let say you have 10 Gurus, maybe some Guru you only receive initiation, and some Guru you only receive teaching, or commentary, and some Guru only receive oral transmission, so within the 10 Gurus, who inspire you the most? Who comes into your heart the closest? Who is the most spontaneous in your heart? That Guru you regard as root Guru. And all the other Gurus you see as the emanation of that root Guru. When you can't manage to visualize every single Guru, you also can say that all the Gurus of the past, present and future are in oneness with the root Guru in whom you can visualize, all of them are in one manifestation. So that your faith in other Guru will not be different, otherwise there will be different stages of faith, and we cannot allow our mind to respect them at different stages of faith, you have to respect and see every Guru as Buddha, you have to respect equally to all Gurus. But because of the kindness and karmic affinity, in order not to happen to see the fault, you see them as emanation.

It is the same thing as Buddha. If you have a close affinity with Tara, you cannot neglect the faith and respect to Shakyamuni Buddha or Chenrezig, so what you can do is that all other Buddhas are the emanation of Tara. Or you focus on Tara, and you see all ten direction Buddhas, Gurus and Bodhisattvas are oneness with Tara. You just pray to Tara, then you are respecting all the Buddhas. We cannot be like we pray to Tara and we don't like Amitabha, we cannot do that and cannot say like that.

Question: Sometime we meet certain Guru, we just cry endlessly, why?

Geshe la: Some people is so sensitive, they just cry, or some people see very powerful holy object, then goose bump stand up, some time you go to the most negative place, then goose bump stand up, so it depends on where and who. It is the same that just by having goose bump standing up, it doesn't mean holy, it could be very negative energy or scary, so it influence you to have goose bump standing up.

Also for tearing, some time there is inexpressible link with your heart to that particular person or a particular Buddha, then tear come. As for the sign on whether it is good crying or not, so you see either during crying or after crying, whether you get spontaneous faith arise, or spontaneous compassion arise toward other beings, then that mean it is very good sign. Sometime you cry then people become very irritated, angry and start to not liking yourself or your emotion, this mean it is negative, it is not good, it means that maybe your system is not good.

Transcript and lightly edited by Ven.Osel of Losang Dragpa Center on 23rd March 2008