



# Four Dharmas of Gampopa

A TEACHING BY KHENCHEN THRANGU RINPOCHE  
FIRST DHARMA – MAY THE MIND GO TO THE DHARMA

July 13 – 15, 2018  
For Karma Tashi Ling

## 1) May The Mind Go To The Dharma

Rinpoche says, he is very happy to meet with you all, and to have this opportunity to talk a little about the Dharma. So first, to begin with, he wishes to thank you and give you his greeting, Tashi Delek!

In terms of the teaching that's being given today, in the Kagyu Lineage there are these special three teachers: Marpa, Milarepa, and Gampopa. In particular among them, in order to help benefit his pupils, Gampopa gave them many Dharma teachings. From among his Dharma teachings, it's what's called the *Four Dharmas of Gampopa* that is being taught at this time.

So when we listen to the Dharmas that the Buddha has taught, we should listen in three ways:

- 1) Listen well,
- 2) Listen perfectly,
- 3) Keep it in one's mind.

To listen well, what does that mean? It means one listens with a motivation of thinking, "I'm going to listen to this in order to help to benefit myself and others". So to have a pure motivation for listening to the Dharma, not listening out of desire or greed or being in a state of anger or ignorance. That would be a fault, if one's listening to the Dharma is faulty, then it will not be of benefit for yourself and for others. For that reason, it's taught that we should listen well. And if we don't listen well, if our listening is faulty, it's like putting food into an unclean bowl, a bowl that is unclean or may have poison in it. So that when the food becomes mixed with that, then the food is no longer beneficial, but instead becomes harmful. Therefore, we should listen well, and we should listen with good motivation.

The second way we should listen, is to listen perfectly, to listen completely, because if we are not doing that, then we will be like a bowl that is turned upside down. If we are not paying attention and listening correctly, then we'll not get the benefit of it. It's like if one has some good food or drink, and if the bowl is upside down, when you pour it, none of it will go in, not even a drop, so therefore in listening correctly and completely, we should be paying attention and listening well. And so therefore it's with good motivation, and one listens well and completely.

And the third way we should listen is to keep what is being taught in one's mind. So if one is listening well, one hears the meaning, then that meaning we have to keep in our minds. If we don't, then that is a fault, which is like having a bowl which has a hole in it in the bottom. And so, whatever good the substance is that you put in the bowl, it's not going to stay in it, because of this hole in the bottom – it's going to all go out. What we need to do,

is to keep what we hear in our mind, so that we don't have that fault. When Rinpoche is giving this teaching, he asks that we listen well, which means with good motivation of love and compassion, with wishing it to be of benefit of oneself and all beings, to listen with Bodhicitta, which is the aspiration for Enlightenment, and keep our attention to listening and keep in mind what has been taught. So, he asks that we listen correctly in that way.

So, what are *The Four Dharmas of Gampopa*?

- 1) First, that the mind goes to the Dharma,
- 2) Second, that the Dharma follows the path,
- 3) Third, that delusion is dispelled from the path,
- 4) Fourth, that delusion will arise as wisdom.

The first of these is that *the mind goes to the Dharma*. It's like the mind transforms and becomes like the Dharma. So the Dharma should be the Dharma, otherwise one may have the appearance of practicing the Dharma, and may look good while one is doing it, but sometimes when we have the outer form of chanting, prostrating, keeping vows, but if one has no control of one's mind, if one's motivation is not of the Dharma, rather of self-interest, then one's Dharma is not becoming the Dharma. So that one's Dharma becomes the Dharma, then one's mind becomes like the Dharma, and that is very important.

For the mind to go to the Dharma, then one needs the cause for that to occur. One needs the *cause*, and one needs the *condition*, and one needs a *basis*. So, one needs a cause for being able to go to the Dharma, to practice the Dharma, one needs a basis, a basis which is one's body, and then one needs the condition, or factor for the mind to go to the Dharma.

The first of these is a cause. And this cause is something that we all have, we generally have this cause for practicing the Dharma and accomplishing it. People may lack confidence, and think, "I'm not able to practice the Dharma, I can't accomplish the result that comes from the Dharma". And this is because one doesn't realize that we actually have within ourselves this cause of Buddhahood and that is the Buddha-nature, which is present in ourselves. To know what it is we have, which is present within us, and that the cause is through this Buddha-nature, then we are able to attain the wisdom, and compassion, and power of the result of Buddhahood. We can have this perfect wisdom, and compassion for all beings, and have this power to benefit others. Realizing that we have the cause of this within ourselves, we will have the confidence that we can accomplish it, and so we'll have this confidence through knowing what is present within ourselves.

One doubt that we may have is that this result, the attainment of Buddhahood, is something that should manifest. So it is something which does not manifest without a cause, but we have that cause, the Buddha-nature, the Buddha-nature is within all beings. Then why do we not have the accomplishment of Buddhahood? It's because in order to attain that result we need to have a basis for that attainment. If we don't have that basis,

then, we are like an animal, or other beings, who are in a state of ignorance, then we are not able to practice the Dharma. So we need to have a very good basis, and this is something we have: we have this good basis of being a human being, and not only have we been reborn as a human being, we've been reborn in very good human circumstances. We've been reborn in a place where the Dharma exists, where the Dharma has spread. We're in a place where there are people who follow the Dharma, and so we are in perfect circumstances, so we have what is called a precious human existence, we are able to practice the Dharma.

We're extremely fortunate in being able to meet the Dharma. We are living at a very fortunate time. For example, if we were born in Edmonton 100 years ago, then it may have been possible that one could encounter the Dharma, but we would not be able to receive these instructions for practicing the Dharma. But now we are in a time when these teachings have spread from the East into the West, and we also have this good human existence, this precious human existence. So these two have come together: this time and a human existence. We are very fortunate therefore, to have a precious human existence within which we have opportunity to practice the Dharma.

Not only that, but just 40 or 50 years ago, there were very few Dharma books that one could find. At this time, many translators have translated these teachings. One can get these books and directly be able to read them, and not only that, through the technical, scientific advancements that we now have, like CD's and videos, one can listen to the instructions from very special lamas, listen to the instructions and be able to practice. So we have at this time a very good opportunity, we are very fortunate to be able to practice the Dharma.

So, we have this cause, which is the Buddha-nature, and we have the basis, which is the precious human existence. But then we think, "I still haven't attained this ultimate result of Buddhahood – why is that?". And it's because one needs this condition or factor of the good friend, the *Kalyanamitra*, this spiritual guide, because if one has this guide, one will be able to learn what one does not know, and one can dispel obstacles in one's practice through relying on this spiritual guide. So that's why one needs to have this factor, this condition of the teacher.

So it's very important to have this guide, this teacher. For example, if we go travelling on an unknown road, an unknown route, then we need to have a guide to lead us. And if one doesn't have one, and is going somewhere one has never been before, there is danger of making a mistake and taking the wrong path. Or, we might encounter difficulties and obstacles that prevent one from going any further. Through having a teacher to rely on, then it's like having a guide who knows the entire path, the entire way. And so we don't make a mistake, we don't become lost or go astray. That's why it's important to meet a teacher, and receive instructions from them.

The Buddha said, in addressing his pupils, “Oh Noble Ones, you should think of yourselves as being patients, being ill people, in that we are in samsara where we experience these various sufferings of birth, sickness, aging, and death, and all kinds of various sufferings”. So we are like a sick person who is experiencing suffering. What we need to help us when we are sick or ill is a skilled doctor. With ourselves as a patient, and the teacher as like the doctor, so when we are ill we rely on a skilled doctor, who can then say, this is what is wrong with you, this is your illness, this is what you need to do, and what you need to take, what you must avoid doing, and what you should do. In this same way, the teacher is able to show us the path that we need to follow. Like having a very skilled doctor, and then who gives us instructions, and then we put those instructions into practice. That is like having a treatment, a medical treatment, of taking medicine and following the doctor’s advice, avoiding certain things and doing other things. In this same way, we practice the Dharma, the instructions of the teacher, then we will be like a patient who gradually, through following this treatment, gets better and better.

So we gradually get better and better through practicing the Dharma. We see the Dharma as being like the medicine that a doctor gives us. That is like the method that frees us from samsara, from suffering, so in that way it is like medicine. We think, “through this we can become free from samsara, and attain the state of Buddhahood”. That is why we rely on, and depend on a teacher. So we have the cause, which is our Buddha-nature, and we have a basis, which is our precious human existence, and then on the basis of that, be able to meet the teacher and receive his instructions. And through practicing them, we become free ourselves from suffering – we can benefit both ourselves and others.

In that way, we have the cause, the Buddha-nature, we have the basis, the precious human existence, and we have the teacher that we follow. But yet, we are still not free from samsara. Why is that? What is it that we need? What we need is the method to receive the result, which is the instructions that the teacher gives. So, we rely on the teacher and his instructions, which is the Dharma that is like medicine that we take. As well, the teacher is able to give us instructions on how to attain this ultimate result of Buddhahood. But what is it, that even having received these instructions, what prevents us from reaching this ultimate goal of Buddhahood? It is said to be this attachment to life, to activities in this life, to things in this life: food, clothes, wealth, possessions, and so on. Having strong attachment to that, that is the cause for why we are unable to attain Buddhahood, why we are unable to practice well. Therefore, we need to be free of attachment to this life. And how do we accomplish that? We accomplish that through meditation on impermanence.

We contemplate impermanence, and meditate on impermanence; what will be the result from that? It’s very beneficial to meditate on impermanence. It inspires us to practice the Dharma, it encourages us to continue practicing the Dharma, it encourages us to continue practicing the Dharma, and it helps us to attain the result. So first of all, meditation on impermanence inspires us to practice the Dharma. So, at first we don’t have faith and

devotion for the Dharma, but through understanding impermanence, through meditating on it, then there arises this wish to be free of samsara. And it inspires us to practice the Dharma. We think, "This is what I must do, I must practice the Dharma", and so there is that benefit that comes. And then secondly, having begun, in the middle phase, it is like a whip that keeps us diligent in continuing with the Dharma practice, because when we are doing the Dharma practice, sometimes we become lazy. That happens, that sometimes laziness will come and so sometimes people say, "What can I do? I really want to practice the Dharma but I don't seem to have the diligence to do it". People say, it is the ngöndro, the preliminary practices and they say, "I just don't seem to be able to finish them. Why is that? What can I do?". And the answer to that is, to meditate on impermanence. And that meditation on impermanence will then inspire one to be diligent.

So first, meditation on impermanence inspires us to begin practicing the Dharma, and then to continue with it. And then finally, it helps to attain the ultimate result. So having diligence will bring us to the attain the ultimate result. Like Milarepa, when he said, through fear of death, he went into the mountains to practice, but then he reached the state where he was free of the fear of death. It was this fear that inspired him to practice the Dharma – he did that out of fear. But through his practice, he said, "I no longer have any fear of death", because he had attained the ultimate result. So through this contemplation on impermanence, it causes us to turn to the Dharma, have diligence in practicing it, and it helps us attain the final result. So in that way, it is very beneficial, whereas if we are just engaged with things of this life, accumulating wealth, defeating enemies, and so on, then this engagement in that activity will be an obstacle towards not attaining that result. And so, what will help us be free of that obstacle, is to meditate on impermanence.

So, how do we meditate on impermanence? , we ask. Meditating on impermanence, is that going to be very pleasant, is it going to make me happy? Not really at that time, but it inspires us to practice the Dharma, and the way one does it, is through what is called *The Four Ways of Turning the Mind Away From Samsara*. In the practice, it describes how the world outside is impermanent, and beings within it are also impermanent. So in the world outside, you have the mountains, the sea, the Earth, which look very solid and lasting, but, many changes can come, like earthquakes, and so on, and the sea can be damaged by powerful weapons, and then there's the typhoons, and the hurricanes that occur. And so, there's the impermanence of the outer world, and also the beings within it are impermanent. The generations succeed one another - there's one generation, and then a second, and a third, and so on. So human beings are impermanent. There's a gradual change as to who are the humans that are alive. So the outer world is impermanent, the beings within it are impermanent, but in particular, human beings are like water bubbles, we don't endure. And at this time, there are many fearful illnesses that can suddenly occur. The doctor may say to you, "Well, you have three months left to live". And then there's the fear and suffering from that. So, this can happen. That kind of danger, fear, does occur. We need to be aware of that, and know that this can happen. But if we

practice the Dharma, that can free us from suffering and fear, and bring us to the perfect result.

So, also, it's that death is unpredictable, so we do not know when it is that we are going to die. We are like water bubbles that could go at any time. Specifically, when we die, our body will become a corpse. What will be of good for us? It won't be our possessions, or wealth, family, friends, none of that will be able to help us when we are dead. The only thing that can help us will be the Dharma. If we are able to practice the Dharma, we will be able to have a happy mind. We will be able to leave with a happy mind. And so, to attain this we need diligence in practice, and for that we need to contemplate on impermanence so that we don't have attachment to the activities and things of this life.

So, in that way, we may have no attachment to life, or things of this life, and have diligence to practice the Dharma, to turn to the Dharma and to practice it. But then, what else can occur? We can still have attachment to the happiness of samsara and think, through practicing the Dharma, then we will have health, happiness, and so on in this life. And so this attachment to the happiness of samsara, and the remedy for that is to contemplate karma. That is what we need to know, that, whatever happiness we have, that comes from our karma, and if we have suffering, that comes from karma, bad karma. It's described in the preliminary practice recitations, that when death comes what happens? Do we have power to choose what's going to happen to us? No, we don't. We have to follow our karma, whatever that is. And if we've accumulated good karma in this life, that will result in happiness. And if we have done bad actions, and accumulated bad karma, through the defilements in the mind, then that will result in suffering. So, that is something we need to be aware of, we need to know that in general, our happiness depends on the karma that we accumulate. So that is the Buddhist view, which we need to know. So, therefore, we think, "I want to be happy", then we know that we need to do good actions. And we need to avoid or give up bad actions in order to avoid the suffering that results. In order to do that, we also need to know, what is it that is good, and what is it that is bad? So in order to avoid bad actions, one needs to identify it as a bad action. A simple way to understand it is, there are three bad actions that are done by the body:

- 1) Killing (taking life),
- 2) Stealing (taking what has not been given),
- 3) Sexual misconduct.

These are the three bad actions that are done by the body. And these actions will be bad karma that ripens into the result of suffering. So therefore, one needs to avoid them. And there are the four bad actions of one's speech. They are:

- 1) Lying,
- 2) Slandering (speaking in a way that will divide people),
- 3) Harsh speech (words that are harmful to others),

- 4) Meaningless talk (speaking about all kinds of various things without any purpose or meaning, like gossiping).

So those are the four actions of the speech which are harmful to oneself and harmful to others, and so therefore can accumulate bad karma, and so we have to avoid them. And then there are the three bad actions of the mind. And these are:

- 1) Greed or avarice (desiring the possessions that others have),
- 2) Malice (wishing to cause harm to others),
- 3) Wrong views (eg: believing there is no such thing as karma, and so on).

And so those are the three negative actions or bad actions of the mind. That makes ten bad actions. We need to identify them and avoid them, and practice the Dharma in that way.

So in that way, it's important to be able to identify what are the ten bad actions, and it's also very important to avoid them, give them up, and so those bad actions are contrary to the Dharma, and they are contrary to \_\_\_\_\_ [word not clear in recording] human society. There's no need to do these bad actions, so it would be very easy to avoid doing them. So, having avoided these bad actions, then in order to attain the ultimate result, we need to do good actions. That means mainly having love for others, love and kindness, and compassion. We need the love of wanting beings to have happiness and the compassion of wishing beings to be free of suffering, and the motivation wishing to attain Buddhahood in order to benefit beings. And then in this way, with our body, speech, and mind, one engages in good actions. And so that way one can examine oneself, and see that one is never apart or separate from this motivation of love and compassion. And so that is important.

So if we understand and identify our karma, this helps us being free from attachment to the happiness of samsara. And it's said that, when we have this attachment to samsara, places, and people, and so on in samsara are like a source of suffering. So it says that in the teaching, but when it says places and situations in samsara are suffering, they are not always a source of suffering. They can also be sources of happiness. There are places or states, where people are experiencing actual suffering, which is called suffering. Also one can be in situations where there is happiness – they can be very pleasant. But they are not permanent this is what's called the suffering of change. So even though there is happiness, the happiness ceases. That which one meets, one has to separate from. That which was accumulated, is going to be used up. Those who are born will die, and so on. Everything changes, so there is nothing that lasts, or endures. So being aware of that, and also being aware of the law of karma, then this will enable us to be freed from clinging to the happiness of samsara.

So if we are freed from attachment to this life, and also freed from attachment to happiness, then what else? Also we need to be freed from attachment to peace, the bliss of peace. One should think, "I'm practicing the Dharma, so that I can attain this state of

peace and bliss”. And so it’s good to practice the Dharma, but if one isn’t doing this to bring happiness to others, but through attachment to one’s own peace and bliss, that is limited. So we need to avoid having the attachment to peace and bliss. And how do we do that? It’s through love and compassion – this love for beings, wishing beings to have happiness, and through compassion, wishing them to be free from their suffering. And so how do we do that meditation on love and compassion? Generally, all human beings are all the same. Human beings all look like they are very different, and within this human world there are many hundreds of millions of humans. But they all want to be happy, and they all want to be free from suffering. There’s no one who thinks, “I want to suffer”. And so all humans in the world are the same. Just like ourselves, we want to be happy, all other human beings have that same wish to be happy. Just as we don’t want to suffer in the same way, all other human beings, they don’t want to suffer. So in that way, we can have that love for beings, wishing them to have happiness, and the compassion wishing them to be free from suffering. And so to have that motivation is something which is very beneficial. It’s something which is beneficial for others. And because it’s beneficial for others, we also accumulate merit, and this will help us to attain the ultimate result.

The world of humans, we want happiness and we don’t want to suffer. But then also, it’s the same for all beings. We have an insect going through the Earth, and what is it doing? It is actually seeking happiness and wanting to be free of suffering. A bird flying in the sky, its goal is to find happiness and to be free from suffering. In that way, every being is the same. And so we should have that motivation, let every being have happiness and be free from suffering. Even if we are actually not able to help, or help beings, we can make the prayer, that when the opportunity is there, we’ll be able to help and benefit beings. So in that way, we develop this love and compassion which will be beneficial for all other beings.

So that’s the teaching on *turning the mind to the Dharma, or the mind going to the Dharma*. So that is the teaching for today.