



Four Dharmas of Gampopa

A TEACHING BY KHENCHEN THRANGU RINPOCHE
SECOND DHARMA – MAY THE DHARMA FOLLOW THE PATH

July 13 – 15, 2018
For Karma Tashi Ling

1) May The Dharma Follow the Path

First, good morning to everyone. And so, the Dharma teaching from yesterday was the teaching on the mind going to the Dharma, or the Dharma going to the Dharma, the mind following the Dharma, or the Dharma following the Dharma. So that has to go well, meaning that one should have a good motivation, a motivation that is free from any of the mind's defilements, like anger, desire, and so on. So, to have a pure motivation, and to listen to the Dharma with a motivation of love and compassion for all beings. So, Rinpoche requests that we listen to the teaching with that motivation.

So yesterday we talked about the mind going to the Dharma, mind following the Dharma, and today it's the Dharma going on the path, the Dharma following the path. So that means that when we practice the Dharma, we are not practicing just for a temporary benefit, but we are practicing the Dharma in order to attain the ultimate result, or the state of omniscient Buddhahood. So that is the reason why we are practicing. And in that way, our Dharma is following the path. So first, the mind goes to the Dharma, turns to the Dharma, then the Dharma follows the path. So how does one's Dharma follow the path? There are three ways:

- 1) The way of the lesser being,
- 2) The middle being, and
- 3) The greater being.

There are those three paths. So, the first of these, the path of the lesser being, is to follow the worldly view, which means, to have this conviction in karma, and to be able to practice perfectly in accordance with that view. So, it's understanding that we need to accumulate good karma. That by doing good actions, that will result in happiness. If we do bad actions, that karma will result in suffering. So by knowing that good karma leads to happiness, and bad karma leads to suffering, then one avoids doing any of the bad actions. We practice the good actions. And so we do that, doing that perfectly, with faith and conviction in the karma that is practicing well the Dharma in terms of a worldly view, a mundane view, and that is the path of the lesser being.

So there's the good, the valid, worldly view, the mundane view, that is followed in which one understands karma. One knows that there is karma and one understands it well, and so one has that intention, that motivation to practice in accordance with that understanding, meaning that one avoids doing bad actions. So that's called the good, mundane view. So generally, when one talks of the path of these three kinds of beings, it is called the path of the lesser being, the lesser path, but it is something that has great benefit from following. And what is that benefit? The Buddha said, that if one has the good, valid, mundane view, whoever has that will be very fortunate. They will not go to the lower existences, which means that through having this conviction in karma, the law

of karma, and following that view, practicing in accordance with it, there will be the benefit that one will not be reborn in the lower existences for thousands of kalpas or thousands of eons. And, if one asks, does following this path lead one, bring one to this ultimate result of the omniscient Buddhahood? No, it doesn't do that, but it does prevent one from being reborn in the lower existences, and brings very fortunate results, like great happiness. And it avoids being reborn in the hells, the pretas, the tormented spirits, and animals, and prevents that. This is something that is very necessary to follow because we accumulate karma through our actions, so therefore this is the danger that we accumulate the karma that results in being reborn in the lower existences. So if we are able to prevent that from occurring, that is something that is extremely fortunate. Following this path means that we will not be reborn in the lower existences, and that will enable us to be able to follow the path that will lead to the ultimate goal of omniscient Buddhahood. So this is a very beneficial path to follow.

That is what's called the path of the lesser being. Then, higher than that is the second path, the second path of the middle being. And what is that? That is called the arising of the motivation of wishing to attain liberation, liberation from samsara, that motivation of wishing to attain liberation. And so, there are the different kinds of suffering that occur in the lower existences that one can be free of. Then there's also the result of happiness in the higher existences, the paradises and so on. But that happiness, one realizes, is only a temporary benefit that we attain. And that it is still susceptible to the suffering of change. And to be afflicted by the suffering of birth, sickness, aging, and death. So, obtaining that result doesn't bring one freedom from suffering of birth, sickness, aging and death. And so, therefore, realizing that, one develops this motivation of wishing to become free of samsara. So that is called the motivation of wishing to attain liberation, and so this is higher or superior to what's called the mundane view, the belief in karma. It's higher than that, but there's benefit that one can attain for oneself and there's benefit that one could attain for others. So, is this path of the middle being, is that a cause for attaining both benefits, both for oneself and for others? No, because this motivation is just for attaining happiness for oneself alone, attaining this liberation or freedom from suffering, attaining this happiness of freedom from samsara. It is just for oneself. So that is the motivation of the middle level of being. So, it's higher than the motivation of the lesser being, but it's still not as high as that of the higher being.

So that is the path of the middle level of being, and it is superior, it is higher than the lesser path because it is not focused on attaining happiness that is temporary, but has the motivation of attaining the ultimate goal. So therefore, it is superior or higher to the path of the lesser being. But it is not really the ultimate attainment of Buddhahood, because for that one would need to have the motivation to attain benefit for oneself, but also for other beings. Then, if one had that kind of special motivation, then that would be right for attaining the ultimate result. But for the middle level of being, it is practicing the Dharma for oneself. It is being focused on oneself, cherishing oneself, wishing for freedom from samsara for oneself. And for that reason, practicing the Dharma. And so

therefore, that is not the path of the greater being, but it is the path of the middle being, with that motivation to attain liberation.

So, what is higher than that path? That is the path of the Mahayana motivation, the Mahayana path, the path of the greater way, or greater vehicle. And what is that like? It is thinking of all beings, and all beings who have been one's mother, and wanting to have happiness and be free of suffering, because all beings wish to have happiness and be free of suffering. So therefore, one has the motivation to save all beings from suffering, and to bring them to happiness. And the happiness that one wishes to bring them to is not a temporary happiness, but ultimate happiness – this ultimate or eternal happiness or bliss. So, it's a perfection, a completely perfect happiness, that is what one wishes to bring them to. This is in order to benefit others, wishing them to have happiness that's eternal or enduring. It's not something that comes to an end. It's a state that has all these good qualities, that cannot be lost, but will always remain. And so what one needs on this path is to wish to benefit others, and not just working for oneself alone. One has these two aspects:

- 1) There's wishing to attain this state of wisdom, omniscience, and
- 2) To benefit others.

So, this wishing to benefit others, this means not just one's own family, or our own circle, or followers, but all beings, whoever they are, that one wishes to benefit them. One has that motivation that also has the wisdom of not wanting to bring them to just a temporary benefit, so for example to bring them fame, possessions, wealth or so on, but to the ultimate state of Buddhahood, which is unchanging, and the omniscient state of Buddhahood. So one has that motivation, of wishing to benefit others, and also to have this wisdom. And so that's called the Bodhicitta, this aspiration for Enlightenment, for the attainment of Buddhahood. And that is the path of the greater being.

So, there is this motivation, but an ordinary being is not able to have that motivation. And then there is the instruction on how to develop that. As an ordinary being, one needs to first develop that motivation, and having developed that Bodhicitta, the aspiration to Buddhahood, then we need to increase it, we need to maintain it so that it doesn't degenerate. And as well as being able to maintain it, so it doesn't degenerate, one needs to increase it. This Bodhicitta, we first have to develop it, and then increase it, until we can reach the ultimate goal. So, the instruction on how to do that, one has to train in the development of that motivation. This is not a motivation that just comes naturally to beings. So, in this world, the motivation that beings usually have is, "I want things to go well for *me*", and generally, people do not think much of making things go well for others. So, one needs to change one's motivation, so that it isn't just about oneself, but that one needs to attain this result, the ultimate happiness, for all beings. So there are these instructions that one can receive to gradually transform one's motivation, and increase it, develop it.

So, just generally in the world, all beings, they want to be free of suffering, and they want to have happiness. That is how all beings are. So even when there's no Dharma or religion that is existing, still people have that motivation, and they want to turn to someone who will free them from suffering, and bring them happiness. And so they go to someone or something for refuge from suffering. But then, that may not be a valid refuge for oneself. So in those times, before, with religions, people would go for refuge to forests, trees, or the sun, or the moon, in order to obtain some benefit. They would pray to the deity of a tree, seeking refuge from suffering in them. And that is not a valid refuge. And then you have various religions that were established, or spread, and what kind of view they had was, that this world was created by someone. There is a creator. And so, therefore, one should turn to that creator for refuge, and if one does that, then the creator will give you happiness, and if you don't go for refuge to that creator, then he will cause you suffering. So it's like a deity that has attachment and anger. Or aversion and attachment. One goes in those religions for refuge to that creator. And then subsequently, 2500 years ago, there came the Buddha, and what he taught was that our happiness and suffering come about because of one's own actions. It's one's own karma that causes one's happiness and suffering. He explained this, and in terms of who we turn to for refuge, in looking for a deity, and so on to take refuge in, it's actually the Three Jewels – the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha – that one should take refuge in. And taking refuge in the Three Jewels is the foundation or basis for developing the Bodhicitta motivation.

So, really, beings who are suffering wish to be free of suffering, and the reason why beings are suffering is because their minds are in a state of error. Their minds have these defilements of anger, desire, envy and so on, and they have this attachment to the self, and on the basis of that, because of that, they accumulate bad karma, like harming others for the sake of one's own happiness, for example, and in this way, one accumulates bad karma. And through that accumulation of bad karma, that results in experiencing suffering. And so, what the Buddha taught was, that this motivation was an incorrect motivation. It's wrong, and one needs to have a good motivation. And so the Buddha acted as a teacher, who taught what one should do, and what one should not do, one should avoid. And one should avoid these defilements in the mind. And if one is free of those, then one will be free of suffering. And if one isn't free of them, one will not be free of suffering. And so, how does one follow, how does one free oneself of those defilements, and bad actions? It's through following a good path. And so, this is the path that he taught. The path provides us with a refuge from suffering. And so, therefore, he presented to all beings the method that we have to follow. And so, it's not like there's this muddy water that will just naturally become clear, or like ice that will naturally dissolve. It's not just learning some knowledge, one has to, in one's actions, one has to avoid bad actions, and practice by following the path. And that way, we become freed from suffering.

So, we take refuge in the Buddha, the Buddha as the teacher, and then we take refuge in the Dharma that he taught us, the path, and so we need a path that will take us to freedom from suffering, and the attainment of happiness. And so, what is this path to happiness and freedom from suffering? It is eliminating these kleshas, these defilements or afflictions of the mind, and the practice of bad actions. And so, that way, we practice the Dharma, and gradually we are able to eliminate these bad aspects, and develop good qualities and good results until we can actually reach the state of Buddhahood. And so in that way, we follow the path of the Dharma, take refuge in the Dharma as the path.

And then the third refuge is the Sangha. One takes refuge in the Sangha as companions or helpers on this path. And so how do they assist one to follow this path? So, we're practicing the Dharma, then sometimes in that practice, one doesn't know what to do, or one is unable to do something. So there can be these adverse factors that arise. And we need to eliminate those. In order to eliminate them, one needs the help of the Sangha, those who are followers of the teaching, who can assist us on this path. They help us by showing what we need to do, and what we need to avoid. "*This is the wrong path, and this is the right path*". So that we will then come to know what we did not know, we will be able to accomplish what we were not able to accomplish. They help us to have diligence to be able to practice the Dharma. So the Sangha, they are our friends or helpers on the path.

So that is called a *causal refuge*, a refuge that is a cause. And then there's what's called an ultimate refuge, the refuge that is a result, the *resultant refuge*. And that is the attainment of the state of Buddhahood. It's when we become a Buddha, like the result that is the ultimate refuge. So we turn to both these refuges, the causal refuge and the resultant refuge.

We take refuge, but we are not able to meet the Buddha, or see the Buddha. But there are these statues of the Buddha., and for the Dharma, there are these texts, physical texts. For the Sangha, there are ordinary beings who are members of the Sangha. So there are these three forms of the Three Jewels. For someone who is beginning, they will inevitably think, "Well, there's the statues of the Buddha, made of stone, or made of clay, or silver, or gold. That's not the real Buddha. So why should we bow down to these statues? Why make offerings to them? So, we have doubt why we should do that. Actually, there's no need for that doubt, because there may be a statue, and it's just made of stone, or clay, and we look at it with faith, and think, "This is truly the Buddha". But it doesn't actually become the Buddha, but what the statue is, is a representation of the qualities of the Buddha. In that way, it serves as a basis for thinking of the qualities of Buddhahood, and of a Buddha. And so that is the reason for doing the homage, and offering and so on. So, one doesn't need to think, "It's irrelevant, because it's just stone or clay", and so on.

So, knowing these statues made of clay or of stone, they have this power to enable us to think of the qualities of Buddhahood, and therefore they are important, they are necessary. That's why one bows down to them, one makes offerings to them, and so on.

And then in terms of the Dharma, the Dharma is written in texts, and so someone who is new may think, “Well, there’s no reason to show devotion or respect to these books, because that’s not the Dharma, that’s just paper and ink. So, one doesn’t need to treat it with respect, one can walk over it, or sit on it, or whatever”. But one shouldn’t do that. Although it’s true that it’s just paper, it is just ink, but these texts are able to teach us. We can learn the meaning of how to be free of the mind’s defilements, and how to avoid bad actions, and so on. These texts have the power to be able to make us understand this. So that’s why it’s important to show respect to these texts.

So, then there’s the Sangha – those that are the helpers, those who help us on the path. We take refuge in the Sangha. In terms of the followers of the Buddha, there are very special beings who follow the teachings. But there are many people following the teachings. And so some will have faults. And so, when someone sees someone in the Sangha who has faults, one may think, “Oh, the Sangha is no good”. But one shouldn’t think that, because when one is taking refuge into the Sangha, one isn’t taking refuge into the faults, or mistakes people have. It is all the good qualities that the Sangha has, or should have, that we take refuge in.

In a way, there’s the path of taking refuge, there’s the practice of taking refuge, and in that there’s the practice of doing prostrations. So, this is an activity, a physical activity of the body. And it is the mind that takes refuge, it’s true, but without this physical action, then one can’t develop or increase this mental going for refuge. So, therefore, there’s this practice of making prostrations with the body, and reciting the Refuge with one’s speech. So, in what’s called the practice of the preliminaries, the preliminary practices, ngöndro practices, that one does 100,000 prostrations, and repeats the refuge vow 100,000 times. So, this is something that is important to do, is necessary to do. So there’s nothing wrong with just doing 100 prostrations, or 200, but the more one does, the better. And so that is why there’s this tradition of doing the prostrations 100,000 times, with the recitation of the Refuge prayer 100,000 times.

So sometimes, people who are new to it, they feel doubtful about the practice. It seems like a non-Buddhist practice, to be doing these prostrations and so on. But there is a purpose to it. There’s the five points of the body on the ground, and so on, and in doing that it reminds one, it makes one think of the qualities of the refuge. So, then after the refuge, there’s the development of the Bodhicitta motivation, the Enlightened mind, or aspiration for Enlightenment motivation. So, one takes refuge for entering into the Dharma. And then after that, one needs to avoid the bad actions, and so, one takes vows or commitments to avoid those bad actions, called the Pratimoksha vows, or vows of individual liberation. And so there are two kinds of vows. There are:

- 1) the monastic vows, and
- 2) the lay vows.

And if one can take the monastic vows, then that is best, but then if not, there is the vows for lay people, the Panchasila vows. And these vows, they form a basis or foundation for developing the Bodhicitta.

So there's the lay person's vows that one can take. And, the Buddha being skilled in method, he taught there were these five vows for lay people. They are called the four basic vows, which are:

- 1) Not to kill,
- 2) Not to steal,
- 3) Not to have sexual misconduct, and
- 4) Not to lie.

And there is an additional vow of avoiding alcohol.

So, if one can take all of these five vows, then that is called the complete lay vows, the complete Panchasila vows. But if you can't take all five, there's these different levels of the lay Panchasila vows, where you have most vows, or some vows, or a single vow. So, if you feel you can't take all five vows, then you can just take four of them. And if you feel unable to keep those four, then you can choose to take three of them. And if you think, "Oh, I can't do those three", then you can take two. And if you feel those two are too much, then you can take just one, and that's called a single-vow Panchasila, or single lay person's vows. And then that single vow, you can be mindful of it, you can practice it, and keep it, and that's something that is very beneficial. So, one can keep one of these forms, the layman or laywoman's vows, and then, gradually follow the path.

So, it may seem strange to think you may choose just one vow. But then in one's mind, one can think, "I have this vow", one is mindful of it. One thinks, "This is something I can follow, keep", and one practices that way, which is, "I'm maintaining this vow in order to follow the teachings of the Buddha", and so in that way, in one's practice, one has:

- 1) the practice of Refuge,
- 2) the vows, and
- 3) the development of Bodhicitta,

and can all be complete in practicing in that way.

So then after that, we develop Bodhicitta, the Bodhicitta motivation. And we develop this for the benefit of all beings. So, we need to have that motivation, and the way we can develop it is through taking the vow, the Bodhisattva Vow. So, we imagine that in front of us, all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, that they are present. In front of them, we make this commitment, we take this vow. And in doing so, we think that, "All the Buddhas in the past, they developed for the first time this motivation", and one is doing the same as they have done, developing this motivation in the same way as the Buddhas have done in the past. And so, in that way, that is the Bodhicitta of aspiration, the Aspiration

Bodhicitta. And then one also thinks, “All the Buddhas in the past, having developed that Aspiration Bodhicitta, then they practiced the Way of the Bodhisattva”. And in the same way, oneself, having developed that motivation, will practice that path. And that is the Bodhicitta of _____ [word not clear in recording] Engagement. So, there’s these two aspects of Bodhicitta:

- 1) Aspiration, and
- 2) Engagement.

And one thinks, “I’m developing both those motivations in order to benefit beings”. And so in that way, taking that vow, that is the method for developing that motivation.

So, some say, they don’t want to take this Bodhisattva Vow, they don’t dare to take it, because they say, “I have the defilements in my mind, and so I’ll get angry, and I’ll have broken the Bodhisattva Vow, and so I’ll have really bad karma, and I’ll have a very bad result”. So they’re afraid to take the Bodhisattva Vow. But there’s no reason to be afraid to take the Bodhisattva Vow, because generally, there are two kinds of vows:

- 1) There’s one kind of vow, physical and vocal, to do with one’s body and speech.
- 2) And another is a vow of the mind.

The vows of the body, to do with the actions of one’s body and speech, those are like the Pratimoksha vows, the vows of individual liberation, like those lay person’s vows, the Panchasila vows, so physical and vocal activity, behavior. It’s easy to maintain, easy to control, but also it’s very difficult to repair such a vow if you break it. It’s like breaking a porcelain cup, so it can’t be repaired. But the Bodhicitta Vow, this is a mental vow, a vow of one’s mind. And we don’t actually have control of one’s mind. We don’t have power over our own mind, so anger can rise up in it. But because the Bodhicitta Vow is a mental motivation, it is said to be like a gold vase. So, a gold vase can be knocked, dented, but then you can put it back into shape. You can easily repair a golden vase. So in the same way, in one’s mind, things can go wrong, but then you don’t follow that mistake. But instead you can confess or repent it. And (then) continue practicing. And in that way, you can repair the Bodhisattva Vow.

Then one needs to increase and develop Bodhicitta. And so how does one do that? One does it through the practice called the Four Immeasurables. And they are said to be:

- 1) Immeasurable Love,
- 2) Immeasurable Compassion,
- 3) Immeasurable Joy, and
- 4) Immeasurable Impartiality.

There’s the love of wishing beings to have happiness, there’s the compassion of wishing beings to be free of suffering, there’s the joy or rejoicing in beings becoming free from suffering, and then there’s impartiality.

And so, they're given in that order – Love, Compassion, Joy, and Impartiality – but in fact, Impartiality should come first, because it's through partiality that one can have aversion and attachment. So, we first develop this impartiality of seeing all beings as equal, and then, on the basis of that, wishing all beings to have happiness, and wishing them to be free from suffering, and rejoicing in their freedom from suffering. In that way, one practices the Four Immeasurables.

And so that will conclude this morning's teaching here, at this point, so we conclude by doing a good prayer and dedication.