

How to Practice: Condensed Advice On How To Practice For Our Entire Lives.

After receiving a letter from an FPMT study group requesting Rinpoche's blessing for the group, and, if possible, a message to take back to the group, Rinpoche responded:

Hello My Dear Students,

Whose life goal is to achieve enlightenment and to liberate all sentient beings from the ocean of samsara and to bring them to full enlightenment. Because of that, life becomes most beneficial. "All sentient beings" means also for yourself.

I'm very happy that your hearts are open to look for a new path, new happiness, Dharma happiness. Especially for ultimate happiness and liberation from samsara and full enlightenment.

You must know that the life you have achieved this time is extremely difficult to get again and again. Even just once, it is extremely difficult. We make prayers to achieve this perfect human body that is qualified with 8 freedoms and 10 richnesses. We have made so many prayers for this. We lived in pure morality in the past and have practiced charity to achieve this perfect rebirth. So we created those causes as well as lived in pure morality, which is very difficult. We have done this, which is miraculous. It does not last forever and can end at anytime. Therefore, we must practice Dharma right away because we don't want suffering, but only happiness. And because our main goal is to enlighten all sentient beings. We have miraculously met Tibetan Buddhism at this time. This Tibetan Buddhism is Mahayana. This has Hinayana teachings to achieve liberation from samsara and the Mahayana purpose to get enlightened for all sentient beings. Tantra is also included, not Hindu tantra, but Buddhist tantra to achieve enlightenment in one lifetime, with highest yoga tantra you can even achieve enlightenment in a brief lifetime of these degenerate times.

So Tibetan Buddhism is complete, is what the Buddha taught. So you can see now how it is a miracle of miracles we have met Tibetan Buddhism which includes all the teachings and the path. So all of you are most fortunate beings.

So deeply from my heart, with palms together, I sincerely request all of you please to study and meditate as much as you can. But don't only study for intellectual understanding, but as much as you possibly can, study to put the Dharma into practice in your daily life.

The heart of the Dharma is bodhicitta so your attitude should become that. So dedicate whatever you are doing, put effort into whatever you are doing for all sentient beings. That includes friends, enemies and strangers. By studying lam-rim you will understand how to do that. That's the most important thing. And you can do some meditation on emptiness everyday. And read the guru devotion part of the lam-rim. Read, study and meditate everyday on those outlines until you get some stable realizations on seeing the Guru as Buddha.

The very last advice is, don't think "I'm going to live for many years", following the concept of permanence. This life is like last night's dream, very short, or like lightening in the sky – it appears while it is going. So therefore put all your effort into Dharma as I mentioned before.

Then also, you will encounter problems. At that time, use bodhicitta, emptiness, patience. When you encounter problems, apply Dharma to bring peace in your heart and the heart of the other person. Sometimes there's no peace now, but from your method it can bring ultimate peace to that person and to your heart and mind.

In Universal Education, Essential Wisdom [Essential Education, Foundation for Developing Compassion and Wisdom] I gave advice, the very very very basic advice of the important practice to apply to bring peace to all sentient beings, even animals, is to practice kindness not only to human beings, but to animals, day and night, all of the time practice kindness. From this, your life, your heart is always in peace, day and night, under any circumstances, during difficult times, during easy times. Then the result from one positive action brings happiness, a happy result in 100,000 lifetimes from this one kindness to one sentient being.

Now here you are practicing kindness all of the time. So you can imagine you will have unbelievable peace and happiness all of the time, in this life and going on into future lives, from your compassion and loving kindness. So right away everyday you make so many people happy, as the day goes, week goes, month goes, wherever you travel, wherever you live.

Whenever you see good things happen to others, think how wonderful it is that they have this happiness, this success. If somebody has a beautiful house, car, family, friend, you rejoice. When somebody makes a great profit in business, you rejoice. So basically this person has great happiness and you think how wonderful it is. If they have a great education, more understanding of the Dharma, if they practice more, or have a beautiful body, you rejoice.

This doesn't directly use karma, but by practicing kindness to others and rejoicing you collect merit like the limitless skies. Rejoicing is the easiest way to collect merit. You collect all merits. So you are always creating the cause of happiness. So you are making your life meaningful all of the time. You are making your life beneficial for yourself and all sentient beings. Whenever people see you or remember you, there's always happiness. When they see you their minds are always happy.

When you rejoice for somebody whose level of mind is lower than yours, you collect double the merit. If they are the same level as you, you get the same merit. If they are at a higher level of mind, you get half the merit. For example, if one who doesn't have the realization of bodhicitta rejoices in one day of a bodhisattva's merit, that person collects half the merit of what that bodhisattva collects in one day. I am talking about how much merit you collect: without rejoicing, it takes 23,000 years. When you rejoice, you collect that merit in one second so you can see how rejoicing is the easiest way in life to collect extensive merit.

So now you can rejoice in one bodhisattva's merits. Unbelievable, unbelievable, unbelievable. Now bodhisattvas are not just one but numberless so the amount of merit you collect is something that makes one unconscious, it can make one faint. There are numberless bodhisattvas and sentient beings, so you can just imagine [how much merit you collect].

As it says in the *Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, by renouncing attachment and desire, it becomes very pure Dharma. So each time you practice that, it becomes very pure Dharma. So any time you are renouncing delusion, it becomes pure Dharma. So any time you go against attachment and desire, it becomes pure Dharma. As attachment and desire only lead to suffering. There are so many people in the world, so much suffering in organizations, countries, etc. by following desire and not practicing contentment. There are so many people engaged in illegal things who end up in prison. They have to suffer a lot and make many people unhappy. They get killed and punished. So renouncing attachment and desire is one method to bring peace and happiness into your life, into your heart, to create inner peace.

When somebody harms you, forgive them. Immediately the other person receives so much peace and happiness and you also receive much peace and happiness. But most people get angry and want to get back at the person and they do the opposite and give harm back to the person. So as a result, their family members and friends will harm you. You will be harmed by that person 500 times, not necessarily when you are in a human body. So from that negative karma, harming that person, you experience getting harmed or killed by that person 500 times. It makes you suffer on and on without end. There's the one complete negative karma that has four aspects:

- 1) the base, 2) thought, 3) action, and 4) goal.

With all of these complete you can get four suffering results:

- 1) The ripening aspect result – lower realm rebirth for many billions of years

And three suffering results in the human realm:

- 2) The result similar to the cause – getting killed by others
- 3) Possessed result, to do with the place – whatever view you hold is bad, the appearance you see is bad, living in a very dusty place, medicines, food become harmful to you and can cause harm, sickness and death
- 4) Creating the result similar to the cause – again you kill because of the past imprint of killing then you engage again and again in that negative karma.

So you can see this one negative karma today results in so much suffering. It can make you faint. If you think you have created so much negative karma today with your body, speech, and mind, this week, month, year. From birth and on top of that from beginningless rebirth you have created karma which is not purified, not finished by experiencing it so if you really think well, you can't stand having one negative karma near you. So you can see forgiveness is incredible. It stops you from harming others and others from harming you with body, speech, and mind. Also so many people, friends and family and so forth who are all connected to you don't engage in negative karmas because of you. So many people, all connected in the world.

Then the next point, if you do some harm, some mistake, immediately apologize so it doesn't make the person angry with you. It doesn't make them angry or suffer. If you say sorry immediately, they don't become angry and it brings release. So if you can practice like this, it's unbelievable.

Do not get angry. Have peace in your heart. Then if you practice like this, with patience, you give happiness to all sentient beings. Not only your family, but people in the office. Not only in this country or this world, but after this life to all sentient beings. In this world, there are

many people historically who killed so many millions of people. Mao Tse Tung, Hitler and many others. If possible you can recite daily one lam-rim prayer like *The Foundation of All Good Qualities*, *The Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, *The Gradual Path to Enlightenment*. So each time you recite one of these lam-rim prayers it leaves a positive imprint in the mind.

Another prayer you can recite is the lam-rim prayer that is contained at the end of your deity's long sadhana that contains all the stages of the path of the common and tantric path. When you do that, it plants the seed of the quickest path to enlightenment. It makes one closer to liberation and enlightenment.

So this is my very brief essential advice to you about how to make your life most beneficial so you have no regret now or in the future – only bliss and happiness. Your life only goes quickly up, not down because you understand guru devotion, correctly devoting to the virtuous friend without mistakes and developing bodhicitta, the ultimate good heart.

Much love and prayers to all of you who are coming now and who are coming in the future.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche

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