

**FOUR DHARMAS OF GAMPOPA  
TEACHING BY SHANGPA RINPOCHE  
KARMA KAGYUD BUDDHIST CENTRE  
19, 21, 26 and 28 FEB 2013**

**19 Feb 2013, 8pm**

Good evening to everybody. It has been many months since I was away. I could not be here to give teachings for quite some time. Its nice to see all of you in good condition and very healthy, same if not even better than before. I am very happy to see you again. Lunar New Year is still not over so I wish you a very happy new year. We will also celebrate Tibetan Losar in a few days time.

Tonight's teaching topic is Four Dharmas of Gampopa. It is a very profound subject in the sense it covers the entire teachings of the Buddha in four lines. Thus the name Four Dharmas comprising of namely:

1. Turning the mind towards the Dharma
2. Being successful in the path of practice
3. Clearing confusion to the Path
4. Appearance of confusion as wisdom

Before I go into detail on this topic, I would like to share with you the background and on the life of Gampopa. Sometimes, it helps if you know the background and the master who gave the teaching. This will create a more convincing force for us to practice. The entire dharma, its actual source is from lord Buddha. There is no doubt about it. Anything not from lord Buddha and taught by other masters cannot be considered Buddha's teachings even if those masters are highly attained. The root source of the dharma is still carefully based on the Buddha's teachings.

Gampopa was a great master who was prophesied by the Buddha himself when he taught Samadhiraja sutra to over 500 Arhats. The Buddha prophesied that the future Dawod Shonu would spread the teaching of Samadhiraja in the West. He would be a physician and spread this teaching.

He mentioned the essence of his teachings would reach the North (i.e. Tibet) where there would be a physician who would spread the teachings. He would have five great attendants. True enough, after 1,000 years, there was a physician named Gampopa who ordained and followed closely with Kadampa tradition, and subsequently Mahaumudra tradition. He combined both traditions into one stream of teaching. Until now, the tradition flourished.

Gampopa's teaching is based on Kadampa and Mahamudra teaching, based on meditation and on behaviors. That meditation is actually the essence brought from the Buddha's teachings especially the Samadhiraja Sutra.

Many of you know about Gampopa and his life stories. Briefly, Gampopa was born in central Tibet near Lhasa. He was born into a family of physicians. His father and many other great physicians trained him. He became a renowned Tibetan doctor. He married and settled himself down and had two children. They were a happy family at one time. After an epidemic, his kids died and his wife

was at the deathbed. He could not save them despite being a physician. In her dying stage, she kept looking at Gampopa for many days. Gampopa was very sad and desperate. Then he asked her what she really wanted as this attachment is preventing her from dying. Then she replied that after her death, he is not allowed to marry again and he must renounce to become a monk. She added that they had seen enough suffering and she did not wish Gampopa to repeat it again. Gampopa said that was his wish also and promised her. She felt relieved and died peacefully.

With this incident, Gampopa was very moved by samsara. His once happy family departed from him. So he did not have any desirable thoughts towards samsaric pleasure. He searched for a master to learn from and found many great Kadampa masters. One after another, he received teachings from them. He was very disciplined and was a perfect student. He became equal as his masters in terms of realisation, gentleness, in every aspect.

At that time, Milarepa was aging. His disciples Rechung (Rechungpa) wearing white (unmarried yogi) asked Milarepa to transmit all his teachings to a successor. Milarepa smiled and said he had already found his successor. At this moment, Gampopa was circumambulating a stupa. He saw three beggars. One beggar said "How nice if I could receive one big plate of hot meal." His friends laughed at his foolishness saying he should make bigger wishes. The second beggar wished for a palace with a queen, wealth and all pleasures. The third beggar said it did not make sense, as the king would still have to grow old and die. He wished to be like Milarepa who is liberated and did not have to worry about samsara. Milarepa's food is provided by dakinis and he is full of bliss and joy.

Gampopa was impressed by the conversation of these three beggars. Upon hearing the name of Milarepa, his hair stood on ends and had goose bumps. He asked them where Milarepa was. They directed him to Milarepa. Gampopa gave them food and money and left to find Milarepa.

These three beggars were manifestations of Milarepa. Gampopa though a great practitioner was not fully liberated. He realised that himself and was in search of a great master. Along the journey, Gampopa suffered. Despite the distance, Milarepa saw through his psychic power the suffering of Gampopa and felt sad each time Gampopa suffered. Mila would send thoughts and good wishes to Gampopa. Each time Gampopa overcame an obstacle, Mila would smile to himself. His disciples asked Milarepa why his apparent mood swings, sometimes crying, sometimes smiling. Milarepa explained to them that his disciple was on his way to find him.

Milarepa told his disciples that whoever brought Gampopa to him, that person would not be reborn in hell realm. One day, a lady disciple of Milarepa met Gampopa and invited him to reside at her home, as the night was dark. The lady explained to Gampopa about Mila's instructions to everyone.

Gampopa's pride grew upon hearing this. Milarepa saw Gampopa's pride and refused to see him for a week. After making supplication to his guru for a week,

Gampopa's pride subsided and was ready to see Milarepa. Gampopa brought tealeaves, gold coins and offered to Milarepa.

Milarepa said he did not need tealeaves, as he did not have a stove to make tea. He added he was an old man who did not need gold and asked Gampopa to keep the gold to sustain his living. So Milarepa did not accept any gift from Gampopa. Milarepa handed a skull cup filled with chang to Gampopa and asked him to drink it. Gampopa being a monk felt uncertain and lost. Milarepa said he had too many concepts and asked him to drink. Gampopa obeyed and emptied the skull cup. Milarepa was happy and said this signified that Gampopa would receive all his teachings completely. Milarepa prophesied that Gampopa would spread his teachings, not only his version of Mahamudra but also set a system of sangha community within the tradition of Kagyudpa. Before that, there was only Repa (yogis wearing white cotton clothing). In that way, Gampopa trained closely with Milarepa.

Guru and disciple remained with each other daily. Milarepa transmitted all his teachings to Gampopa and clarified any doubts of Gampopa. Finally one day, Milarepa told Gampopa to head to central Tibet to practice and spread the teachings. Gampopa's teachings are mainly on

- Developing Bodhicitta
- Observing Vinaya precepts
- Apply Mahamudra meditation

Two streams merge into one big river of teaching. We are fortunate to be in this tradition. Every teaching of Gampopa is this essence of teaching.

Gampopa had composed many texts, basically on Mahamudra. Some are general books. Jewel Ornament of Liberation is the most famous text that he had composed. It can be practiced by anyone. It is very profound. To Kagyudpa, this is like Lam Rim or the Gradual Path or the backbone of the practice. Dhagpo thargyen – Jewel Ornament of Liberation. I encourage you to read this book and reflect upon it. This is the Lam Rim of Kagyupa, regardless of which subsect.

Besides this, Gampopa also composed many advance texts like different levels of Mahamudra. He also composed small text. Lam Chog Richen Driwa – Jewel Garland of Supreme Path. This is also a very wonderful and profound text. It is very handy actually.

This Four Dharmas of Gampopa is the essence of his teaching. They are:-

1. Turning the mind towards the dharma
2. Dharma being the success to Path
3. Clearing confusion to the Path
4. Confusion appearing as wisdom

What is the meaning of dharma? Chanting? Prostration? Circumambulation? Donating to the poor? Giving assistance to others? What is dharma practice? How do I practice dharma? Sometimes, you see someone diligently practicing chanting or prostrating. Superficially you see the physical aspect. However, if his inward mind is distracted and not associated with loving-kindness and enlightened qualities, it is filled with anger, jealousy, pride or destructive thoughts, how can

we say he is practicing dharma? We do not know his inner thoughts. We only see the outward appearance and think it is wonderful.

It is important to know the meaning of dharma. It is important to know whether what we are doing is correct or not. If we do not check and let it be, just fulfilling the numbers (e.g. 100,000 times of prostrations) and time period, in the end, we are still the same person and not reach anywhere. That might or might not give any benefit. It is a waste of time, effort and even money. Everybody is trying to do something to gain something.

The dharma means

1. Phenomena – anything that can be perceived and detected.
2. Anything that can be perceived holds its own existence.

Dharma – hold its own entity.

Dharma or *Chos* in Tibetan means amend, repair, correct. Something must be wrong in the beginning, in our thinking, our behavior, concept etc. Dharma is the instrument to make correction. That is dharma. This is very important. So when you practice, you should know something is happening. There must be correction within you. If you are not correcting yourself in terms of behavior etc, then I am sorry to say even if you are doing many things physically, nothing is happening within you.

The real dharma is your mind, your way of thinking and perception. All these must be changed and improved upon. If that is happening, you can comfortably say that you are practicing dharma and developing yourself. It need not be high realisation. Simple realisation like loving kindness, compassion and renunciation arising within you, such changes can happen within you and that is dharma.

Turning the mind towards the mind – the earlier wrong concepts are realised and transformed into right concepts. For instance, the earlier wrong concept that samsara is good and permanent, not understanding karmic cause and result or not convinced by it makes one heedless. These are wrong concepts. Once we realised precious human body, defects of samsara etc, then we realised how wrong we are. That will drive us into full renunciation and observe cause and effect very carefully, even more careful than one's own life. We don't waste our time and every moment is so precious for us to work towards liberation. This is correction. Dharma is then properly practiced. Dharma is not superficial practice for showing off.

Corrections, fixing, repairing of our mind is dharma. Only when there is something wrong with us then we can be fixed. We are wrong from beginning less time due to ignorance, self and others, desire and hatred etc. From there, we tie up ourselves, leaving no space for us to move and free ourselves. Like an insect trapped by a spider web, the more we move, the more entangled we become. 84,000 patterns of emotions are generated. We are trapped and could not find the way out. We must clear all these bonds and come to reality, i.e. the state of nirvana, free from conceptual, emotional thoughts. It is the state of

omniscience. We need to fix ourselves back into the original state. Until then, we have no peace or liberation.

That is the meaning of dharma and the purpose of our practice. We have to be very careful when we do something. Always examine if I am doing correctly, if my motivation is correct. With full mindfulness, every simple practice can be wonderful practice. If we are too attached to the outlook, then we can be elaborative and grand looking in our practice but there is no actual practice. Even if we put in so much physical effort, sadly, there is no essence. Practitioners must always check one's motivation. For beginners, you should try to contemplate on renunciation. For intermediate practitioners, you should put thoughts to arise Bodhicitta. Bodhicitta will only arise with loving-kindness and compassion. From there the practice of Bodhisattva will arise. In that way, every levels of realisation will arise within us without any hindrance.

As a practitioner, we need such reminders from time to time and we need to focus ourselves inwardly. No need to focus what others is doing. Put more efforts and be aware of our own practice. Always try to remember this.

Our time is up and we will continue in the next session.

## **21 Feb 2013, 8pm**

Good evening everybody. Tonight we continue from the last talk that is related to the commentaries of the Four Dharmas of Gampopa.

Sometimes we expect different titles of teachings can give different aspects of knowledge. The title Four Dharmas of Gampopa seems like a special title. In actual fact, any teaching of the Buddha, whichever side, it comes to the same square, the same teaching. There is a Tibetan saying that a square material laid on the ground, whichever corner you pull from, the remaining corners will follow. Similarly, any teachings, whatever title or specific subject that we are discussing or listening upon, eventually they are the entire teachings of the Buddha. Sutra, Vinaya etc.

Even though the title is Four Dharmas of Gampopa, the entire teachings of the Buddha are within it. It is just phrased practically for us to grasp and comprehend.

Within this subject, the most important part for us at this time is to understand the first dharma of Gampopa. *Lo chos su drowa, Chos cho su drowa.*

*Lo chos su drowa* – turning mind to dharma

*Chos cho su drowa* – turning dharma towards dharma

I have already explained in the last lesson what is dharma. Dharma in the real meaning or the ultimate meaning is to clear all confusion. *Nyon mongpa zed pa* – all confusion or defilements are totally vanished or cleared, no more arising, no trace, nothing. That is called total realisation or parinibbana. In English, we call it

Enlightenment. That nature or that quality exists inherently in every sentient being. We all have that nature though there are some temporal obstructions. Just like the nature of the mirror is very clear, when clouded, you won't be able to see the clarity of the mirror. The clarity of the mirror is not separated from the mirror. It is within the mirror. The surface dust can be removed. Once the dust is removed, you will see the true quality of the mirror. Similarly our mind and defilements work in the same way. Temporal due to ignorance, not knowing reality, wrong interpretation. Thus the appearances of samsara arise. Once that appearance is removed, then samsara, nirvana, good or bad, anything that is falsely created by the conceptual all vanished. That is parinibbana and that nature is within us. It is neither weakened nor not functional. It has the same quality since beginningless time. The quality has always been there. Only defilement or confusion has to be overcome or removed. That process of removing ignorance and to realise our true nature is called Dharma. This is more to the practical way of explanation of the dharma.

Our present conceptual thoughts, which are in the wrong direction, invite more defilements and emotions. Both that mind and thoughts need to be changed. We need to amend or repair them. Thus, the definition of the dharma is also known as amendment or *Cho pa*, i.e. you fix or repair it. We fix our wrong conceptual which leads to wrong behaviors and put into the right conceptual and behavior. Under that context, we can describe or express clearly that dharma is not external. Rather it is within us. The conceptual thoughts are most important. And that leads physical and verbal behavior. Therefore, outward dharma has to be lead by the inner dharma of our mind. If the inner mind is not integrated with the dharma, yet we try our best in the outlook to associate with the dharma, then we are missing something. And probably we will not yield good result in our practise. Therefore, from one practitioner's point of view, it is important to focus and penetrate your own mind and realise how much you integrate with the dharma. With that physical behavior attitude, words, all will come naturally. We don't have to be so nice and neat. We don't have to be so compassionate looking towards others. We do not give artificial smile to empathize on others. It all comes naturally straight from your heart. We have to carefully observe and practice the true changes and corrections must happen within our own mind first.

That is actually more or less turning the mind towards the dharma.

I remember telling a story to some of you. The story happened quite sometime back, probably 900 to 1,000 years in Tibet, during the flourishing of Kadampa tradition, there were many great masters. They were very careful with their behavior and practice. There was a master who circumambulated the stupa. He came across a monk prostrating diligently. The master said to him "You are wonderful doing the prostration. But if you can practice dharma, then it is be even greater." The monk was bewildered. The next day, the monk returned to the stupa and was reading a sutra. The master went to him and said "It is wonderful that you are reading a sutra, but it is will even greater if you could practice the dharma." This repeated several times and the monk became confused. He wondered what was real dharma practice. The master taught him to integrate the path into his own mind. If he could do that, whatever physical action he does, it becomes perfect dharma. When you do not have that mindset, no matter how

many prostration or circumambulation you do is meaningless. Similarly, with this understanding, we need to pay attention to integrate dharma with our own mind and self. As long as that is being established, then whatever actions you do, whatever noble actions you do become beautiful, spiritual and is a form of great practice. Similarly, ritual puja requires many things. To make a Zambhala vase, we need many ingredients. We also need to spare time and effort to make the vase. Then we have to set up a nice and beautiful shrine. After that, many Lamas and Rinpoches have to conduct pujas for many hours and days. But if it is integrated with proper dharma and procedure of meditation, then that makes everything wonderful. Everything becomes part and parcel of your practice. That type of treasure vase within your house will give blessings and prosperity to the house dwellers. If the integration is not there and you only rely on physical rituals and so on, bringing the vase into your house is merely bringing a container with a collection of substances. There is no spiritual value within the vase so how does that help you? Everything without application of the dharma within our mind becomes just physical appearance only.

Today we try to elaborate that outlook looking grand. But nothing spiritual is inside. It is waste of material and efforts, no benefits. But if we are spiritually integrated with the dharma, even a small thing can be incomparable to vastness and greatness.

Milarepa made dedication to spirits using merely water within a walnut shell. Another lama used gold and silver materials and offered lots of food etc. All the hungry ghosts dashed towards to Mila and exclaimed "there is big feast today!" No one was attracted to the physical feast from the lama. Mila had integrated dharma within him and within the puja. You cannot fill up wealth in this whole universe. Through realisation, one is able to establish limitless offerings. So all the hungry ghosts went towards Milarepa. This is an example of mind being completely integrated with the dharma. The difference is very vast.

Briefly, dharma taught by the Buddha lies within 4 sections.

1. Realisation or understanding. The practitioner realises all the composition of phenomena is impermanent. All arising from various causes and conditions. Nothing is sustainable forever, it is constantly changing. So therefore this changes is nothing more than impermanence. This is also applicable to our life. As a child, we were young girls and boys. Then we became adults. Then we grow old and die. A practitioner has to realise everything is impermanent. There are gross impermanence and subtle impermanence. Subtle impermanence is like a snap shot. Within a snap shot are very fine short moments of time. Snap shots can also be further divided to become very subtle and finer moments. In that way, we are changing in every subtle moment. Things are not the same as before. Normally we do not realise it or try not to notice it. We think everything is just as before. Nothing is changing. We think tomorrow will be the same as before. Few years later also the same and we even forget one day we have to die. Without realising impermanence within ourselves and phenomena. That makes us lazy in thinking we do not need to do anything. This has happened since childhood. Sometimes we become active a little bit for the purpose of livelihood. But this is only temporal. Therefore contemplate on impermanence, only then we discover we can

achieve many things and realise many things. If we can sustain such realisation, then we are no longer lazy. We become very careful in what we are suppose to do and not to do. It prevents many wrong thoughts and actions and pushes you towards right thoughts and actions. Thus, the first understanding is knowing phenomena and especially ourselves.

This understanding is not periodically, rather all the time. Buddha said if you know and observe these four teachings, only then you can be considered a Buddhist. We always fail and still consider ourselves as good Buddhist. Sometimes we are too carried away by emotions and defilements. Sometimes we know but ignore and divert our thoughts to material and other things. This is quite wrong.

This will bring us to another realisation, i.e.

2. All downfalls have suffering nature. All phenomena including ourselves. Whether our mood is good or bad or neutral. Sometimes we are happy, bad or neutral is within the frame of suffering. You are just struggling within these. You say you are happy today is because you were unhappy before. If you did not experience suffering, how can you be happy? Happiness and suffering are dependable. Because of happiness, there is suffering and vice versa. Even happiness is part of suffering. If I say this, it sounds very pessimistic. But it is the reality. As long as we are in samsara and born into any realm as a being, then suffering is unavoidable. Suffering is within us. We have not cleared off our ignorance. With ignorance, there is interpretation of self and others. Then arises attachment or aversion and suffering begins. That is the suffering nature of samsara. If we do not know this and still think we are very happy and are enjoying, then we do not understand our lives and ourselves. Again how can we be Buddhists if we do not know the essence of the dharma? We have to be aware of all this.
3. From that understanding of impermanence of suffering nature, then arises this understanding that all phenomena are emptiness and lacking in self. All phenomena that we see as existing, if we just try to look carefully into each and everything, then we can't see true establishment and primordial existence, they do not exist (i) singularly, (ii) permanently and (iii) independently. We are not able to see this.

All are causes and conditions. Causes are produced by more causes and conditions all the way. We are not able to see as one single or permanent or independent. Everything becomes interdependently arising. Anything that arises interdependently, we are not able to see and find the true existence. That means, they are not established as it is. If not established as it is, then it is nothing more than emptiness. That understanding is transferred onto ourselves. We call Me, Myself, My belongings. One 'Myself' can manifest many selves. My car, my dog, my this, my that. It keeps on growing. If we try to find that self within ourselves, ultimately we are unable to say that is my real self. No way can it be found or point out. In reality, lacking of self is what we are. Lacking of existence, of substantial existence of permanence or freedom, that is phenomena. We need to realise and understand this. That is the path shown by the



Buddha. Again this is a big problem within us. Sometimes we know the fact literally. But practically we still come to the attitude that this is mine. The attachment is so great. The anger towards the unwanted person is so great. That is still happening. Sometimes we know it. This is another problem in us. Once we have that, we are separated from the dharma.

4. Within all this realisation of emptiness and lacking of self, at the end, nirvana or liberation or total enlightenment takes place. Nirvana is nothing more than peace. It is lacking of any misery. Complete freedom. That is the state of enlightenment. *Shi Wa* means peace. Until we attain liberation, we are not in peace. Sometimes, we interpret a bit of bliss or comfort as peace, that is not real peace because it eventually ceases and misery arises again. Nirvana is the only peace without misery or suffering. This nirvana can be arhats' nirvana. It can be developed even higher into total enlightenment of Buddhahood. All these understandings lead our way of thinking or motivation. That physical behavior, as long as it is integrated within you, it means you are not separated from the dharma. When not within you, without all these qualities, simply praying is not perfect. There is still no goodness though only physical practice and lacking of mental changes taking place. We try to develop devotion and somehow, we develop such strong devotion that moves us to do so many good things. This is also good but not good enough. Taking devotion as a path is within many religions. Many religions are devotion practice. Sometimes there is not much realisation in such devotion practices. It can help us to develop enthusiasm in gaining wisdom. Then it is good as an initiator to lead us to embark the wisdom aspect. But starting and ending in devotion without engagement in wisdom and so on is not good enough. Frankly speaking, many Tibetan lay practitioners, sometimes even monks, are just devotion practitioners. Though you have immense devotion, your behavior does not improve. You can be hot-tempered, jealous, stubborn, and fussy over food or worldly things. You do not change. But when you come to the temple, you have immense devotion. We just have to be a bit careful not to become like that. From devotion, we explore dharma all the way to wisdom. Then we turn the mind to the dharma. *Lo chosudrowa* is not blind faith. You do not know how to develop yourself. Mere devotion leads to worldly expectation. Then you are not in the dharma. So, our spiritual development and aim is somehow not properly present. That is why we need to know all these factors and place ourselves on the right track. It does not matter how fast or slow we move, as long as the wheels are on track, regardless of speed, we are secured.

Ok, that is all for tonight. Do you have any questions?

#### **Q&A**

Q1: Rinpoche, thank you for the wonderful teaching. You mentioned one cause leads to another cause. Why can't there be one main cause that results in everything?

A1: In general yes, one main cause could lead to everything else. There is one main cause and makes the results. Just now, I was explaining on emptiness. This is a very subtle investigation or examination. If investigated closely, even that main cause is attached with many other causes. Those causes are attached with

even more causes. It is endless. What is the actual source of which cause, you are unable to point out one or collective. Thus phenomena are lack of true existence and even it causes. Through meditation and investigation, we realise the result of emptiness. That is a little different from main cause. When you refer to Vajrasattva practice, we talk about karmic cause and effect. Sometimes we find one main cause pushes us into human rebirth and suffering. There are many other causes that result in our emotions fluctuating up and down.

Q2: Rinpoche, you mentioned we should integrate dharma into our practise. Milarepa integrated his mind when he made offering water to the spirits. He has a realised mind. We are just beginners. How should we practice with our defiled mind?

A2: You should not think your mind is unlike Milarepa. Whatever Milarepa has, you also possess. These taught by the Buddha is to identify yourself as a practitioner or not, are you integrating yourself or not. Earlier I explained what is dharma. That is to fix the wrong. How to fix? To keep up with the understanding of impermanence, suffering nature, emptiness and understanding of ultimate peace of enlightenment. That understanding is within you and not separated from you. You do not need anything else. You integrate with dharma. With that, whatever physical practice and whatever recitations of mantra or meditation, whatever you do directly causes enlightenment. There is no doubt about it. If you compare a realised and non-realised person, the mental ability to develop such quality, in terms of size and quantity, there is a huge difference. However, with proper mental attitude, if you do the same as Milarepa, I think it will also benefit the spirits.

### **26 Feb 2013, 8pm**

Good evening. As we consider ourselves as practitioner of the dharma and follower of Lord Buddha, the important factor is the need to practice. What do we need to practice? It is the dharma. What is dharma? I have already shared earlier.

Dharma means developing our mind or changing our way of thinking or understanding. That will also affect our behavior. This is dharma practice. So long as this is taking place within us, we do not need an outsider to tell us on our progress. We ourselves know. If we do lots of superficial mode of practice, yet our inner mind is not improving, then whoever tells you that you are a good practitioner is merely pleasing you.

The naming and judging must come from oneself rather than from outsider. For that, Gampopa mentioned in this teaching "Turning the mind towards the dharma". Turning the mind towards the dharma is not being devoted to the dharma or having faith in the dharma. That devotion to the dharma without knowing dharma is just superficial. It is just a nice and good gesture.

Being faithful to the dharma and thinking it will protect me, without knowing how it can protect me and what qualities I need to possess in order to be protected is not true faith and devotion. Devotion is a good thing but it is not enough. We must have true understanding of the dharma. Practise day by day and turn the mind towards the dharma.

There are two ways of understanding. The one where you reach the view straight way requires more analytical investigation, some intellectual and knowledge and understanding of some philosophical background. When one comes to perfect view of emptiness, that understanding is literally a knowledge. When we contemplate upon it, we feel that is the right view. Such as Madyamika view, emptiness and interdependency. Then you look at samsaric point of cause and effect and how it bothers each and every sentient being, from there you have great renunciation of samsara because you know what exactly it is. You will totally cut off the causes of attachment and so on. You will quickly and diligently cut off all attachments including habitual tendencies. The real renunciation will take place within you and you will enter into 6 paramitas and actualise emptiness into your own being. That is one way of how we develop our state of enlightenment.

Another way of understanding is that as we are not that intellectual to realise the philosophical aspect ourselves, we need instructions from realised teachers. What are impermanence, cause and effect? You apply yourself into these considerations and factors and feel all these are happening within you. Though one does not know the ultimate, one is able to start the procedure of practice. It can still go on. This is another way of developing ourselves. Whichever way we take, renunciation is the first step. If we do not renounce from the samsaric aspect, then there is no way out. Whether we are intelligent or ordinary, it is not possible to develop if renunciation does not take place within us.

Renunciation will be followed by devotion. Why is devotion important? There is no end to suffering and misery. Then why am I still attached to it and go on? With renunciation, you want to be detached from samsara as soon as you can. We need guidance for this detachment and how to move onto liberation. That becomes a spiritual master who becomes very important.

How do we engage with a spiritual teacher in order for us to eradicate the effects of ourselves, which causes samsara and suffering? When we find genuine master who can show us the path, we need to have certain qualities. We need qualities of devotion or *Mo gu* in Tibetan language.

*Mo* – means wanting or longing. First we see our own state. We have been in much negative thoughts and actions. Due to that beginningless time until now, we are in samsara and could not find the way out. We have taken countless rebirths. Yet we are unable to find our way out of each rebirth. We feel our past lives' actions were not wonderful things and we had accumulated much karma. What will happen next? Due to our karmic force, we may fall into lower realms of hungry ghosts or hell realm. Anything is possible. It is scary and dangerous. We start to feel the consequences of our karma. We must find a solution as quickly as possible because time does not stop for us. Just like many of our lineage masters have set good examples. For instance, Milarepa had learnt black magic and killed 35 people. He had created hailstones and killed countless insects. He saw his crimes and realised he will surely go to hell. That drove him to look for Marpa. So this longing knows this teacher will save us from the misery state. I wish to be guided by this teacher and practice as much as I can and within this lifetime I must be liberated. I do not wish to wait for next lifetime to see what will happen

next. I must be sure. So with good reasons, you have longing faith towards the person who can show you how to solve the problems.

You then need *Gu pa* – i.e. whatever the master instruct, very sincerely you adapt and practice it.

*Gu* - surrendering or follow the master's instructions. We take the master as more superior to us. We are one step lower than the teacher and are willing to follow the teacher.

*Mo gu* is devotion. It is not blind faith.

Anyway, both renunciation and devotion must take place. From there, all our development begins.

So now you know what devotion means. Longing and giving high regards or respect to the teacher. For example, Marpa and Milarepa. Marpa has the solution; Milarepa very much longed to see Marpa to receive dharma from him. Marpa gave Milarepa many trials. Milarepa did not question Marpa and sincerely followed Marpa's words as instructions. There were no questions. That was devotion or *Mo Gu*. *Mo Gu* is the head of meditation. Whatever practice we want to do, renunciation and devotion must go hand in hand. Renunciation is like the foot or base of meditation. When you have both renunciation and devotion, then your mind turning towards the dharma already exists. That renunciation and devotion should be constant. As long as they are with you, then dharma practice is with you. Even when you are performing daily work and job, deep inside, your realisation of emptiness or unessentialness of samsaric existence should still be retained deep within you.

Interdependently, you need to work. To make others happy, you need to carry on with your daily chores and studies and taking care of your family. You do not need to go away and hide in a cave and renounce. Realisation of unessentialness or lacking of true self. Lacking of true self, then there is nothing to grasp. There is no subject to grasp, it is lacking of true nature. So naturally you are detached. That is borne from realisation and understanding the nature of samsara. With that understanding, then interdependent causes and conditions, whatever arises, you carry on. With lots of wealth or without wealth, you are not affected. With that realisation, whatever you do, you do not create much karma. Karma is created from attachment, grasping of self, desire and hatred and many patterns of emotions. These generate karma. But when you are very clear of true nature, and you are performing interdependently and act for the benefit of sentient beings, then there are no preceptors of karma.

Next is applied dharma or *cho chos su drowa*. Sometimes we apply dharma in the wrong way. That is not dharma application. Sometimes we practice dharma for prestige; to become famous; to impress others; to defeat others through knowledge; to make oneself appear superior or even for material gains. During Monlam in n Bodhgaya, there will be hundreds and thousands of monks. Many village people will dress like a sangha to gain materials. That is dharma not applied correctly. There are many mis-use of dharma for temporary gains. There

is no motivation for renunciation. There is no devotion and wish to attain enlightenment for the sake of all beings. There is no pure motivation.

What is dharma? Dharma can be applied worldly and beyond worldly. Worldly dharma is similar to the Bodhipath Pradipum teachings of inferior, middle and superior persons. Inferior person is the starting point. You start with karma, cause and result. Once you start to understand this a little bit, then you start to be convinced that there is karma cause and effect. Without cause, nothing is possible. With cause, everything is possible. Then you know there are consequences with your actions. You start to have understanding of lower realms and the superior human and god realms. So you start to practice dharma and meditation to generate more merits in order to be reborn as gods and humans to attain immense enjoyment. One wishes to enjoy all these. And for that reason, we practice diligently in generosity, morality and others. That is dharma applied as dharma but in the worldly way. You can't go beyond samsara. Definitely one is able to achieve the good karma but it is not lasting. It is definitely achievable and you will not go to lower realms. That is for sure if you practice dharma. The practitioner is relieved thinking being a human or god with some enjoyment is fine. So that is the worldly aspect of the applied dharma.

Beyond worldly is an upgrade where one thinks one is still not free from the causes of suffering no matter how much one enjoys. It still ends in suffering. So the solution is to liberate oneself from the six realms and cut off from suffering. One practices dharma in general and particularly in wisdom in order to realise selflessness. One then attains foe-destroyer and becomes an Arhant. No more seed is left to regain.

The next level is where one realises that if one overcomes the suffering and is liberated, suffering still exists amongst others. Led by the realisation of emptiness and with love and compassion of sentient beings, then one will feel that liberation of all sentient beings is true liberation. That is Bodhicitta attitude with the wish that all sentient beings are liberated. That is dharma applied as dharma. That is the most supreme path.

Today is the third session. You must be wondering why I am giving such lengthy explanation on this first dharma of Gampopa. If this is clearly understood, the subsequent second, third and final dharma of Gampopa can be learnt readily. The first dharma of Gampopa is the most crucial. Our mind needs to turn and be a part of the dharma. If that happens, then the next dharma of being on the path will happen. Then clearing of confusion will occur without many obstacles. The transformation of confusion into wisdom will also occur smoothly.

Dharma towards the path means the application of dharma practice must be instrument to move towards the path. The path is the direction. You need action to progress onto the path. When the movement is there, there will be progress. Without it, there will be a state of stagnancy. That is another problem.

So first we need to create the path and the basis through our motivation and thoughts. We do not wish to gain material or worldly things. Then do we liberate just for ourselves? That is also not our path. We eradicate that path also. Then we choose the path to liberate all sentient beings with loving kindness and

compassion towards all sentient beings. With this intention, I wish to attain enlightenment with three bodies and abilities. In order to gain the ability of three kayas to liberate all beings, I need to progress in six paramitas, five stages and ten bhumis etc. One after another, I will develop and achieve these qualities. With that, we set the clear path and see the end. This is how we prepare or set the goal or path.

Once we set this path, we move along the path. Now how do we move along the path? It is based on Bodhicitta that comprises of method and wisdom application. These are also practiced in two ways of relative truth and ultimate truth.

Relative truth – everything is relatively truly happening. Good actions will yield good results. There is no denial. In Tibetan, this is *kunzob denpa*. *Kunzob* means ‘falsely happening or manifesting’. If you investigate, you will not be able to find its existence and thus it is appearing falsely. For instance, I see this cup in front of me. When I try to investigate this cup and find out what is the true existence of the cup, I need to go into the details of the cup thinking if the handle, bottom, top, sides, inside, outside is the cup or not. It is falsely interdependent. It is falsely projected and labeled as a cup. The whole phenomena of this world are just like that. That is relative truth. Yet, interdependency is actually a manifestation of emptiness. That is the ultimate truth. Within the substances, there is the ultimate truth of emptiness. So interdependently, there is the false formation of relative truth. Inevitably, everything is happening. In that sense, even though all phenomena lack emptiness and false, everything appears. So relatively we also have to follow the karmic cause and effect and every level of practices such as developing loving-kindness and compassion and that related every development and realisations.

Therefore, even though ultimate truth is emptiness, it is not void. Rather it is free from existence or non-existence. As a practitioner, we should begin with more application related to relative truth. That is inseparable wisdom and method. We should follow closely cause and effect and result and enlightenment along with proper understanding of ultimate truth.

So to develop Bodhicitta, it is important to start with loving attitude and understanding of sentient beings, how they relate to us. We regard all beings as mothers. We do not wish suffering for them. In that way, we develop compassionate attitude. Then we engage in the relief of their suffering. We take that responsibility upon ourselves. That is special attitude to make you engage or be responsible. It can only be fulfilled if we apply Bodhicitta. Only when you engage to develop all enlightened qualities, then you can liberate all sentient beings. That special attitude will make the ball start rolling. You will not have time to rest. The more you rest, the more sentient beings suffer. Since your wish is to liberate them as soon as possible, you do not have time to rest. Just like past Buddhas, without resting, they achieved Buddhahood. With that basis and process is the dharma being progressed onto the path. *Cho lam du drowa*.

I advise that you use this Four Dharmas of Gampopa as a constant reminder; supplication or wish. It is good to recite these four sentences in addition to your daily prayers.

**lo chö su dro war chin gyi lop**

Grant your blessing so that my mind may turn towards the Dharma.

ཕྱི་ཚེས་སྤྱི་བུ་བུ་བྱིན་གྱིས་ལྷོ་བཟ། །

**chö lam du dro war chin gyi lop**

Grant your blessing so that Dharma may progress along the path.

ཚེས་ལས་རྒྱ་བུ་བུ་བྱིན་གྱིས་ལྷོ་བཟ། །

**lam trul wa shyik par chin gyi lop**

Grant your blessing so that the path may clarify confusion.

ལས་འཁྲུལ་བ་ཞིག་བུ་བྱིན་གྱིས་ལྷོ་བཟ། །

**trulpa yeshé su char war chin gyi lop**

Grant your blessing so that confusion may dawn as wisdom.

འཁྲུལ་བ་ཡི་ཞེས་སྤྱི་བུ་བུ་བྱིན་གྱིས་ལྷོ་བཟ།

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**28 Feb 2013, 8pm**

Good evening to everybody. Our main subject is the Four Dharmas of Gampopa:-

1. Turning Mind towards the Dharma;
2. Dharma progress onto the Path;
3. Clear confusion along the Path;
4. Recognising Confusion as Wisdom Nature.

For one person to be liberated, there is no one particular method that is all encompassing. You need one main method with lots of support. Just like when we fall sick, we take medicine. In Tibetan medication, there is a main ingredient that is supported by other herbs of lower dosage. After taking medication, we become relieved from our pains and sufferings. Similarly, we think wisdom is everything. Then why do we need to apply so many other things such as compassion, morality and love? Why not just dive straight into wisdom?

We might be able to understand the literal meaning of wisdom. It is important to realise and actualise the wisdom. That will never happen if we do not have supportive forces. How do we acquire supportive forces? We have to apply methods under Relative Truth. This Relative Truth is the support. Like wisdom, it is not everything. We need a main approach of application, i.e. Wisdom or Emptiness approach. For one person to practice and attain enlightenment, we need to go along the paths of Relative Truth and Ultimate Truth. That is, you need to apply both method and wisdom.

So even Relative Truth practice is not entire great. One must check very carefully on our actions. Whatever we do, does that become an antidote to our defilement or not. If that is an antidote to our defilement, then that is a right approach. You

should continue with it to lessen defilements. At other times, it is not an antidote, rather it is increasing your defilements. For instance, if I give food to a hungry beggar, that act is wonderful and praised by Lord Buddha. The merits are uncountable. But what is the motivation behind? That is very important. While you are giving, how do you feel? After you give, what satisfaction do you derive?

The process of giving can be both positive and negative depending on your motivation. For example, you think I may become famous by giving food to a beggar. This giving is led by pride. While giving, you feel that you are superior than the receiver. After giving, you feel very proud and go round boasting your actions with the intention to seek praise by others. This doesn't become an antidote to your defilement. You become more and more proud. I guess there are many people like that.

Somehow even though the act of giving is good, due to your motivation and way of thinking, it becomes contaminated. It does not affect spiritual development. It might accumulate some merits.

When you first give, it is unwavering with true love and compassion. So lead by this love and compassion towards this person. You are happy to give the food to the person. While giving, you develop immense joy as a result of relieving the hunger and suffering of that person. That is your greatest joy. And after giving, you start to feel joyous giving and someone who is relieved of suffering. You also wish to do this kind act to all suffering sentient beings. The intention to benefit sentient beings increases. Then your own attachment to the worldly existence decreases. This is an antidote to your defilement. You gain merits and develop spiritually.

Just one particular act has a good side and a bad side. Basically if you ask someone to judge, they are unable to do so as it is dependent on your motivation. Only you yourself know. Anything we do and act, it is important to check ourselves. Check whether the antidote force is present or not. If not present, then develop it and eliminate the other negative forces of defilements. Do a bit of checking in our daily lives.

No matter how grand is the action; it is not of prime importance. The intention is more important. We need to keep this with us all the time.

Dharma is more or less an act. What kind of motivation makes it successful or a failure. With that, what we should know is Relative Truth and Ultimate Truth.

Ultimate Truth means 'emptiness'. EM means lacking of its true existence and entirety. The realisation of that is the realisation of Ultimate Truth. This goes along with Relative Truth.

Relative Truth is also to be realised. Besides emptiness, there are many things that we are able to see, describe, perceive and even make use of. The whole appearances of phenomena are under Relative Truth. Everything is happening unceasingly. River is flowing, oceans have waves, trees are growing, etc. You cannot say there is nothing. Yet, we can't find out the truth of them as existing. And we are unable to find the truth of total non-existence. It is happening like a



dream or illusion. Things are very real-like. If you do not know, you may take it as real. Same for dreams, when you are dreaming, it seems real. But in reality, they are not real. Someone who bullies and tortures you in your dream is not there in reality. This is just an illusion. Within the illusion, if you know it is an illusion, then let it happen. It doesn't affect you, it is okay. This is just a dream. You are like watching a movie. So the difference right now to realise the Relative Truth and not realizing Relative Truth is that we take things as truly established. It is same like a person in a dream who does not know he is in the dream. Everything is so real to that person. Within that 'real' feeling develops so much emotional feelings and miseries. That is when we do not know the truth relatively. That is illusion-like and dream-like. Until now, we have not realised the Relative Truth. That is why we take everything as real.

One day, with detachment from our attachment, we will start to understand what is Relative Truth. Then we begin to realise. If we realise Relative Truth, then we will begin to realise the Ultimate Truth and emptiness. That realisation of interdependently arising or non-dual Relative and Ultimate Truth. With Relative Truth, there is Ultimate Truth. Within Ultimate Truth, there is Relative Truth. There is total realisation and actualizing Dharmakaya as emptiness. Realisation of Relative Truth and then actualise the Sambhogakhaya and Nirmanakhaya. Sambhogakhaya and Nirmanakhaya are non-dual. They are not different from each other. Total enlightenment is already there.

The root causes to develop all these qualities are lessening the attachment to self. That is the main root. Once you start to weaken attachment, the remaining qualities will strengthen. The realisation of Relative Truth and Ultimate Truth will inevitably take place. Nothing will stop it from actualising. With that approach and practice, the Dharma will be successful.

Next is clearing the confusion on the path. Once you are on the path, there may be confusion. We need to clear the confusion or it will lead to another path. Now we come to the practice level. When we practice and meditate, there tend to be certain concepts of existence and non-existence. There is eternalism and nihilism. In earlier times, many practitioners contemplate on emptiness by 'blankness'. When we ask them to visualise some Buddhas or deities, they visualise a real person. So one does not know how to enter the middle path of existence and non-existence and becomes confused. We think it is impossible for 'have' and 'don't have' to exist together.

In Malaysia, one guy tried to visualise Green Tara. He deemed Green Tara as a real and beautiful woman and his desire arose. The 'real' obstructs and obscures our vision. Along the practice, sometimes if not properly instructed or paid attention to, or carried away by emotions, then we will fall into extremes. We did not manage to clear the confusion along the path. But with proper understanding, we should be able to clear all confusion along the path. We need to be careful in the practice.

For example in the creation and completion of any yidam, first we visualise everything from ornaments, hairstyle, facial expression, hand gestures, seat etc. you establish everything precisely. This is an antidote to non-existence or eternalism. You will block all concepts of nothingness. All this visualization

begins from emptiness, seed syllables, lotus, moon, etc and the entire mandala of yidam is being manifested. In that way, it arises from emptiness. Then its nature is definitely emptiness. That will block the wrong concept of eternalism. That will block our extreme view of existence and non-existence. It directly prevents eternalism; nihilism and us from holding the view of existence and non-existence. Sometimes we take it lightly because some Rinpoche says so. You just visualise and not analyse deeper. It is a very profound practice. Realisation can even take place.

Another confusion is based on the approach of Mahayana practice. One should not have self-intention for self-liberation. We develop loving-kindness and compassion to all sentient beings. Every single sentient being is our responsibility to liberate. For liberation of all beings, we develop the ability and power to liberate all beings. That should be our main approach. Sometimes, we do not take that approach and we have thoughts for self-liberation. As long as I am safe, the others are not my business. We slipped and take the wrong approach. That is the confused path and that will hinder us from developing the state of enlightenment. Therefore, make sure that every single practice that we do, we should not aim for myself to gain something. Ignoring the welfare of sentient being is another confusion to the path. Make sure this is not present. In general Buddhism, there is the approach of self-liberation. We won't say that is wrong approach or practice because there is able to free up suffering from one. That is a good thing but is a separate practice and subject. In the approach of Mahayana, when we apply in accordance with Bodhisattva's ways, then having self-benefit and ignoring others becomes a big confusion and mistake.

This self-seeking for peace and liberation approach exists within us. It may not be easy to get rid of it. We must have a very strong instrument or force to overcome that view. That strongest force is love, compassion and Bodhicitta. These three are the only instruments to overcome or destroy those thoughts of self-seeking for liberation. Without these, even if we try to go into that path, we may not succeed cos this self-seeking of liberation is co-emerging and established within us strongly. We need very strong reason and antidote. That is analyzing love, compassion and ultimately engaging in Bodhicitta. With that instrument or weapon, we will definitely be successful and actualize total enlightenment. This total enlightenment is not an achievement for oneself. Rather, it is an achievement for all sentient beings. Once you have that enlightenment, from then onwards, spontaneously and constantly, it will start to function for all beings. One is to purify and second is ripening and third is liberation.

Defilements or sins of beings give ground for purification;  
With purification give conditions to awake and ripen;  
And finally liberation takes place.

That enlightenment once actualised, then that function is effortlessly and unconditionally completed. No matter how numerous the sentient beings are, all will be liberated. That can be achieved through the practice of love and compassion and Bodhicitta.

That is the right approach and path. Anything that is against that, i.e. forgo all sentient beings and focus onto myself; thinking 'I suffer enough, now I must liberate'. We don't think whether others have suffered enough or not. I only think about myself. That is a wrong approach. With that approach, we cannot liberate all sentient beings and ourselves. Else Dharma will not be successful on the path. That is another failure.

In the final dharma of Gampopa, Confusion appearing in wisdom. That approach of practice can be explained in Prajnaparamita way or Vajrayana method. The whole teaching of Prajnaparamita is about that. It can be very vast. That itself become an application as well as a cause of realisation. The approach is within the Relative and Ultimate Truths.

To be in simple terms, even if we are in confused state of mind, within that confused state of mind, we try to meditate and analyse what is the confused state. Then whatever thoughts and confusion, you will start to see their nature as emptiness. The characteristic of it is clarity. Clear means you are able to see what is going on. That is clarity. So this emptiness and clarity is within that confused state of mind and concept. It is present and not beyond or out of that clarity of emptiness. Because when we start to arouse desire, desire will not arise if our mind is dull or in the mode of sleep. Anger will not arise when we are dull or in mode of sleep. Only when we are alert, that arising itself is no different from clarity and appearances. That clarity and appearances, their nature is emptiness. Relative Truth and Ultimate Truth are also within there. If you penetrate and analyse, then that desire cannot be confusion. That anger cannot be confusion. By recognizing its own true nature, then it is not a desire, it is not anger, and it is actually wisdom. Through recognizing its own nature, desire is actually a transformation of wisdom. So is anger. There are not two separate things, they are the same. Only difference is recognizing or not recognizing, realized or not realized. Grasping them tightly becomes defilement and can be destructive. Within that desire, anger, you start to recognise its own true nature. Then that kind of grasping is naturally dismantled, as there is no sustainable object to hold onto. It is emptiness and thus non-sustainable. Seeing the nature and its appearances, again there is no difference from Dharmakhaya and Sambhogakhaya. That particular emotion is the same nature of state of enlightenment. So this is the essence where confusion is transformed into wisdom.

When strong anger or desire arose, you make it as a subject for you to recognise and analyse. It is more focused. In normal times, there are no emotions, then it is difficult for you to recognise. That is why confusion transformed into wisdom. So you must be confused first before you can recognise and realized. When you are more confused and angry, then you are focused and are able to recognise more powerfully. Recognising and non-recognising confusion makes samsara and nirvana. Briefly, this is about the last Dharma of Gampopa. You can refer to Uttatantrashastra by Maitreya though it is quite difficult to understand it without guidance.

Recognise our nature and truly realise what our nature is. Then Dharmakhaya is already there. You do not need to upgrade and reach somewhere or downgrade to samsara. Your confusion is cleared and Buddha nature is already actualised.

Tibetan masters say that a sharp knife is able to cut everything. But if knife is kept in its case, it doesn't cut. So right now perhaps our Buddha nature is within the case of the knife and doesn't cut. It is temporarily obstructed. Once out of the case, that function of cutting can take place. That ability is inherently within us.

Okay, that's the end. Hopefully, I have not confused you further. Any questions?

### **Q&A**

Q1: People who have realized Ultimate Truth, they do not mind being harmed and cut. Do they feel pain?

A1: It is like a Buddha who has realized Ultimate Truth. Earlier I mentioned when you are in a dream and you know you are in a dream, when someone tried to harm you, how do you feel? You won't feel anything, as you know it is a dream. You do not have self-grasping of being hurt or affected. That kind of conscience is no longer there. For a realized person, even when harmed, he cannot be harmed. The realised person does not have the concept of being affected or harmed. Just like Buddha Shakyamuni, Devadatta tried to harm him. It did not affect the Buddha at all. Not even able to move his hair. Instead of being angry, he became even more compassionate. To harm, you must have a self-conscience saying this is me and I do not wish to be harmed.

Q2: You mentioned making anger as a subject of meditation. It sounds logical but when anger arises, you probably know it is there but you are unable to sustain it. So when anger arises, what is a very effective antidote?

A2: You are talking about the fourth Dharma where we transform confusion into wisdom. That is a very high level of practice. There is a slight anger, then you analyse the arising of the anger. Within that anger, you focus on it and recognise it. This is a very stable mind and quite a tame person. It is still not totally cut off emotion. There are mostly subtle emotions. Sometimes, there are grouse emotions. At the present moment, ours is grouse emotions. Very rough and powerful. We may not have time to analyse and recognise the wisdom aspect of anger. We apply antidote of love and compassion. That is more practical. But even that is also difficult. Yet, love and compassion, knowing sentient being as a mother and commitment to benefit sentient beings can play very important reason for you not to arouse anger and love them. To make the fourth dharma of Gampopa to happen is difficult for beginners. You need to be an advance practitioner.