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The Expansive Oral Instructions

of the Precious Dharma Master

Chetsangpa Ratna Sri Buddhi

[1]

James - The numbers of the End Notes are a bit muddled here and need reviewing BT

I have not been able to discover the dates of Chetsangpa's life, nor much about him. As indicated in the prologue to his text he was a considerable scholar and this particular work was compiled from notes taken of his teachings by his students. As one reads it there is a sense of being present in the room with Chetsangpa as he imparts not only the formal details of the teaching but also the intensity and depth of his own belief in its value and the warmth of his concern for his students. His text is presented in three parts in order to allow the insertion of two small chapters which fill out topics he does not address in detail. These five initial chapters provide a brief but thorough introduction to the path.

The progression of his instruction from the basic preliminaries through to an exposition of the non-dual view is typical of the kind of full spectrum teaching that a modern lama might give. Indeed these preliminaries, beginning with the freedoms and opportunities of a precious human life, are implicit in the other texts, for they form the dharma context within which the deeper teachings are able to be most effective (See Wangchug Dorje 1978, and Thrangu Rinpoche 1978).

Since the Council of Lhasa (See Demieville 1952) when Kamalashila won the debate with Hwashang Mahayana the gradual path has been the official buddhist view in Tibet. This is often interpreted as meaning that very lengthy preparations must be made before tantric transformatory practices are employed, let alone the direct introduction of dzogchen. However, the usual nyingma attitude is that the dharma is vast because it is for all beings, and different beings have different capacities and inclinations. Therefore what is needed is not a standard path from A to Z to be followed by all, but rather an acceptance of the need for teachings responsive to the student's present level of development. The dzogchen guru is not concerned with training scholars who are servants of dharma but with enabling those who wish to understand themselves to do so. The dharma is there to help people, not to enslave them in the service of an institution.

The vital point is the connection between guru and disciple. The guru needs to understand the state of development of the student and provide the teaching that is appropriate, just as a mother does with children of different ages. The essence of the dzogchen instruction is the introduction to how we are, how to contact the felt presence of authentic awareness and how not to lose it. However, since clarity does vanish again and again by beginners, it is vital that they understand the structure of samsara and how to cope with finding oneself lost within it. It is not a question of progressing up the ten bodhisattva stages or through the nine yantras as if one were developing one's capacity for enlightenment. The innate buddha-potential (*De-gShegs sNying-Po*), inseparable from the source or ground, is the essence of buddhahood, the goal or fulfilment. This potential does not require developing or perfecting but needs unlimited space to reveal itself as itself. This is not essentially different from the mahayana view (See Chapter 7). However if the starting point is that I have defilements, hindrances, limitations, then I have to take responsibility for removing them. If 'I' start from the position of being a limited ego-self then there is plenty to do and much progress that can be made. However if 'I' start from the view of the primordial purity of awareness inseparable from the ground and rely on this to desist from encouraging or inhibiting the flow of experience then whatever arises will go free by itself.

It is important to be clear about how to respond to the felt experience of progress, for even if we know that the result we are making progress towards is unchanging, we experience change or improvements in our capacity the more we practise, no matter what system we are in. Dzogchen affirms the perfection of the origin by insisting on the self-deconstruction and self-liberation of all that is constructed, including the results of practice. If this followed then, free of the illusion of cause and effect, the intrinsic shines forth. The relative dimension of practice, with its sense of gains and improvements just as much as its sense of faults and problems, is to be allowed to resolve in the open presence of awareness, for a golden chain binds one just as much as an iron one.

However if the indestructible openness of the ground is not opened to then we will continue to experience duality and the formative power of cause and effect. Chetsangpa's section on karmic actions and their consequences focuses on the need to be mindful with the choices we have to

make when wandering within the delusion of duality. Although the various kinds of actions and their consequences are presented in a formal almost dogmatic way, the key point is to attend to the principle that events are comprehensible. We do not have to be locked in an endless sequence of action and reaction; we can make choices on the basis of understanding our habitual tendencies. It helps to know that the stakes are high and that as long as we take ourselves to be separate individual entities we have individual responsibility for the outcome of our actions.

When we see the structure of our entrapment then, as Chetsangpa describes in the section on abandoning worldly activity, we can start to relax our habitual hopes and fears and let go of concern for our worldly interests. This helps us to deal with our emotional resistance to the fact that appearances are illusory. It also reveals the advantages of becoming carefree as the presence of awareness is gradually experienced without grasping involvement in its transient content.

THE TEXT

I bow to the Guru and to Avalokitesvara and take refuge in them.

PROLOGUE

The teachings of Chetsangpa Sri Buddhi, the precious dharma master powerful in the practice of Avalokitesvara, form three cycles. These are the cycle of his expansive oral instructions, the cycle of the great collection of songs on emptiness, and the cycle of small collections of his songs on diverse topics. Here all the teachings of his cycle of expansive oral instructions have been arranged in an orderly fashion. May this work be blessed by the divine three roots of practice: guru, deity and dakini!

INITIAL STATEMENT

The precious lord said as follows:

We have gained the difficult to obtain birth here in the southern continent known as Jambudvīpa where the dharma has spread. We have gained the freedoms and opportunities of a precious human existence which is so difficult to obtain. We have the complete five sense organs which are difficult to gain intact. We have been born in this period of the spread of the precious doctrine of the Buddha when human birth is difficult to gain. And we have met with a fully accomplished guru with whom it is difficult to meet.

Having obtained the precious holy dharma that is so difficult to obtain, this is the time to do practice. By considering how difficult it is to obtain the freedoms and opportunities, and the facts of impermanence and the inevitability of death, we must change our attitude and cease from going under the power of lazy indifference. Unwaveringly practise the instructions of your holy guru with the intensity of a man putting out a fire on top of his head. In order to get the permanent result of buddhahood it is necessary to do practice now, so don't pass this human life in dithering here and there but work towards being prepared at the time of your death. Please bear this in mind.

THE EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION OF THE DIFFICULTIES OF OBTAINING THE FREEDOMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Om Mani Padme Hung Hri

Now at this time when we have gained the pure basis of the very difficult to obtain precious human existence having the freedoms and opportunities, it is most important to practise the precious holy dharma which leads to the permanent result of buddhahood. If at this time we do not practise the dharma, then these freedoms and opportunities will not be obtained again later.

According to the sutra teachings there are eighteen aspects to the freedoms and opportunities, while according to the tantras one can obtain the indestructible vajra body having the six dhātu

elements (earth, fire, air, water, space and consciousness). However both systems say that without having accumulated very great virtues for immeasurable aeons, these bodies cannot be obtained. The buddhas do not say that the precious human existence can be obtained by doing just any kind of action whatsoever. It has specific causes.

Now how many people do you think have a precious human existence? Not all human existences are precious. There are said to be five kinds of human life: 1) a mere human existence; 2) an ordinary human existence; 3) a misguided human existence; 4) a defective human existence; 5) a precious human existence having the freedoms and opportunities.

1. A mere human existence means being born in a barbarian country which has never been visited or disciplined by a buddha and where the sound of the dharma has not been heard. Or, if one is born within a dharma country, one follows a different faith.
2. An ordinary human existence means not being able to distinguish clearly between good and bad actions. Making food, clothes and fame of principal importance, one passes all one's time on these.
3. A misguided human existence means that one has a mistaken understanding and ignores the differences in value of virtue and vice. For example, if one is offered a hundred measures of dharma or one measure of wealth, one chooses the wealth. With this mistaken understanding not knowing how to act correctly, one passes all one's life doing error.
4. A defective human existence means one in which the sense organs are not intact, or if they are complete, then one is an idiot and as stupid as an animal.
5. A precious human existence is one having all the eight freedoms and the ten opportunities.

Having the eight freedoms means avoid the one birth in the eight situations where there are impediments. It is called having the eight freedoms. **These eight restless situations** are impediments to practising the dharma are as follows:

1. If born in the hells, one is tormented by the suffering of great heat or cold and therefore one is not free to practise the dharma.
2. If born as an insatiable ghost, one is tormented by the suffering of hunger and thirst and so is not free to practise the dharma.
3. If born as an animal,¹ one suffers from assumption and mental dullness and so is not free to practise the dharma.
4. If born as a long-living god one has little immediate consciousness due to great wealth, pleasure and having a very long life-span and at the end of one's time, one has the sorrow of falling into the three lower realms of woe and so one is not free to practise the dharma.

5. If born in an uncivilized tribe, one does not know how to distinguish between virtue and error and so is not free to practise the dharma.
6. If born as one having wrong views, one does not believe in the three jewels of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, nor in the relation between actions and their consequences (karma), and so is not free to practise the dharma.
7. If born in a barbarian land, or amongst those holding to non-buddhist views within a dharma country, one does not hear the Buddha's speech and so is not free to practise the dharma.
8. If born as mentally defective, one lacks a suitable basis for dharma and so is not free to practise the dharma.

With regard to the ten opportunities, there are five opportunities concerning oneself:

1. To obtain the functioning basis of a perfect human body.
2. To be born in a central country where the dharma has been spread.
3. To have all five sense organs free from fault.
4. Not to have committed any of the five boundless errors, or any extreme form of action from which it is very difficult to turn (e.g. being a butcher).
5. To have faith in the pure dharma.

There are five opportunities dependent on others:

1. That a really pure and perfect Buddha has arrived in this world.
2. That the Buddha has preached the dharma.
3. That the dharma teaching still remains.
4. That there is the sangha, the assembly of those with understanding, practising the dharma.
5. That the dharma is taught by compassionate gurus with great love to their devoted disciples.

Having all these eighteen freedoms and opportunities in their entirety is known as having a precious human existence. It is said to be precious because if that existence is used to strongly practise the dharma, then one can achieve the benefit of all that is wonderful for oneself and for all other beings.

Yet, like the udambara flower which only blooms when there is a Buddha present in this world, this precious human existence is very difficult to obtain. The difficulty of obtaining it can be shown by example, by cause, and also by numbers.

To demonstrate it by example, if a handful of peas is thrown at a wall of very smooth fine plaster, it may just be possible for one pea to adhere to it. It is as difficult for the beings of the six realms to gain the precious human existence as it is for a pea to stick to the wall.

The cause of a precious human existence is the careful maintenance of a very pure morality. However, the power of our afflictions (assumption, desire, anger and so on) is great and we have little antidotal power ensuing from good actions with which to oppose them. We have very many bad habits and so it is very difficult to maintain a very pure morality.

The rarity of the freedoms and opportunities can be illustrated by numbers. While the beings of the six realms are like the stars of the night sky, those who gain a precious human existence are as numerous as the stars that are visible during the day.

If with this precious human existence which is so rare and so difficult to obtain, we do meaningless worldly work and follow a dreamy vacillating path until our life is finished, then we will have just thrown it away. For example, if there is some fault in the dyeing of a bale of woollen cloth, then we might say it was ruined and feel sad. Or if there is some fault in a barrel of beer, then we might feel unhappy. But if we think that such things are a sad loss, then in comparison the futile squandering of the eighteen freedoms and opportunities of a precious human existence is really a tremendous waste.

Therefore think very carefully about this because if you want the permanent happiness and peace of buddhahood then you must practise now. At this time, in this life, you must become a decisive person who can recognise the opportunities and take full advantage of them.

This present life is powerful as the important stage from which one goes up or down in the six realms. At this stage one can slip and fall into the three lower realms. Then, even if you are born with a horn on your head or at your mouth as one of the higher animals in the highest of the three lower realms, if you are told that by saying the mani mantra of Avalokitesvara just once you will gain buddhahood, you will not know how to say it. When one is like this, it is impossible to practise the dharma.

Each person must give this advice correctly to himself or herself and really understand and believe it. It is very necessary to take these freedoms and opportunities to heart in order to seriously practise the precious excellent dharma. Please bear this in mind.

THE EXPLANATION OF IMPERMANENCE AND DEATH

Om Mani Padme Hung Hri

Now that the very rare precious human existence has been obtained, we need to hold on to the essence of the freedoms and opportunities and not waste this great opportunity. In order to do that we must practise the holy dharma. If we do not practise now, then this body which is without essence will rapidly change and die.

If we consider the nature of impermanence, in general the outer vessel of the universe and the inner contents of all sentient beings are impermanent. The four large continents and the eight smaller continents around Mt. Meru are also impermanent. It is said that at the end of the kalpa aeon they are destroyed by seven fires and one flood and so they are impermanent.²

In particular, in one year there are twelve months and during the course of them the four seasons change and the rivers swell and diminish. The passing of years and months is measured and we cannot alter their length according to our wishes. Enemies become friends and friends become enemies. Whatever is examined is found to be impermanent. Within the period of twenty-four hours, there is the light of the day and the dark of the night occurring due to the rising and setting of the sun and moon.

Languages change as words and dialects alter. In brief, from moment to moment there is constant change and impermanence pervades everything.

More especially, our own body, so important and dear to us, so necessary, and about whose loss or damage we feel so sad, is also impermanent. Loving our body, we fear hunger and so give it much tasty food. We fear thirst and so give it many tasty drinks. We fear cold and so dress it in warm clothes. We fear that our body will be ugly and unattractive and so adorn it with jewels and smear it with cosmetics and clean it with much attention. By acting in this way we are cheated as the days and months and years go by until life is consumed, for truly life is impermanent and death will come.

Moreover, death is the only certainty. Of all the beings who were born in the past, none were born with an undying body and therefore I also really will die. At this time also, all the beings that are above and below ground do not endure without dying, and therefore I also really will die. All compounded things are impermanent and therefore I also, as a compounded thing, really will die. Life does not remain still for even a moment but moves like the rapidly vanishing shadow of the sun at sunset and so I also really will die.

If you think that you will not die soon, then consider that the time of death is not certain. Some die in the mother's womb. Some die at the moment of birth. Some die when they are infants or small children. Some die during youth, others when fully-grown and mature. Some die when elderly, others when very old and frail. So the time of death is not certain. The body is without firm essence, being soft and weak inside and easily destroyed. This also contributes to uncertainty about the time of death. There is no regulation life-span and so the time of our death is not certain.

Now if we consider the contributory causes of death we find that they are uncertain and unpredictable. Some die by diseases of wind, of bile or of rotting. Some die due to attacks by male or female yakshas (fierce demons). Some die by the harmful forms of the four elements of earth, water, fire, air (e.g. in a storm). Some die from having eaten food which, not having been properly digested, turns into poison. Some die because they are deceived by their friends who rob and kill them. Some die in fights with others, and some die while trying to intervene

between two warring factions. The contributory causes supporting life are as few as the stars to be seen in the daytime, while those promoting death are as many as the stars that can be seen at night. Thus the contributory causes of our own deaths are uncertain and so are difficult to predict and to guard against.

Let us now consider what is helpful at the time of death. Other than the holy dharma there is nothing that can help at that time. Wealth, luxuries and riches are of no help during the fatal illness. When friends and relatives, both close and distant, hold our hands and feet to reassure us and prevent us leaving, this cannot save us from death.

Great worldly power and having many followers, having great competence and courageous energy, being able to fool others, having a handsome face or a beautiful body, being able to speak well, being literate or knowing mathematics – whatever skills or accomplishments we might have – these are of no help at the time of our death.

Since there is no help coming from others, neither from people nor from medicine nor from our own outer qualities, we try carefully to look after our own bodies. Yet if you think this will be really beneficial you are wrong. It also proves to be ineffective.

As the time for one's own death arrives due to the force of a fatal illness and as the imminence of death is realised, all one's friends and relatives gather round, yet the fatal illness cannot be shared amongst them. Neither medical treatment nor religious ceremonies can make the fatal illness clear away. The possession of wealth and luxuries cannot ransom one from death. One is without the confidence of having previously practised the dharma. Although regret at having passed one's human life in error and unvirtue arises, it comes too late.

As one lies sleeping in one's bed, death commences. One has finished with food and drink and even drops of water that are put into one's mouth one at a time, come back out of the nose. Talking has ended and the last will and testament has been made. The skin on the face becomes taut. The eyes sink into their sockets. The teeth become long. The nostrils collapse. The lips do not meet and the teeth are bared. The body is difficult to move and seems heavy.

Although reluctant to die, one is without the power to remain. One longs for one's friends and relatives and looks at their faces with staring desperate eyes. The four elements lose their power, one after the other. The breath heaves within one's chest but the exhalation is as fine as a strand of spider's web. Then the teeth close, stopping the breath. The body stays like a stone in the place where one has died, while the mind, being insubstantial, does not remain there but is carried away like a feather in the wind, always moving on.

The mind is accompanied only by its load of errors and unvirtues as it is pushed from behind by the wind of karma and led from the front by the servants of Yama, the Lord of Death. When entering the very difficult road of the bardo, the path between this life and the next, one has no power to take along any of the immeasurable wealth or food one may have stored. Although one may have many friends, followers and servants, one goes friendless and alone. Although

one may have many fine soft clothes, one goes as naked and as empty-handed as a hair drawn out from a lump of butter. Thus one's mind wanders alone in the bardo.

Meanwhile this old and useless body is prepared for disposal. It may be bent up according to the Tibetan custom of tying a corpse in a sitting posture. Bound thrice tightly around the neck with a yak's-hair rope, its head and body are covered with a rough old shroud. It sits with its back to the family home where it was born, and with its head pointing in a direction of travel that it does not control. Then it is tearfully carried off by those who are left behind.

Maybe the body is burnt in a fire and then shining white bones are left. Perhaps it is thrown in the water and then the ribs and torso become red (when fish eat the flesh). If deposited on a mountain, then its black hair is scattered about (as all else is eaten by the wild animals). Or if it is buried in the ground then insects and worms wriggle about in it.

Thus nothing remains that stirs memories of that body, and those who are left behind are glad it has gone. Those relatives and friends who just before were weeping are now laughing merrily at the funeral feast. There are tears but also the sound of chomping on cooked meat. There is sorrow but also much noisy drinking of beer. They talk of impermanence but hold even more tightly to their wealth. They say that such and such a man died or that such and such a woman died, but now only their name is living in what was once their home.

Meanwhile the insubstantial mind starts on a big tour of many places in the bardo and the six realms without any helpful knowledge about them. At that time only the holy dharma is of any help and not anything else. Each one of us should think carefully about this. We have already been born and since then how many years have passed? How much helpful dharma will we have practised when death comes? And if in future we do not practise the dharma, then even if we were to remain alive for a hundred years, do you think we would have anything to help us when we die?

Assuredly there is impermanence and death. You must remember and contemplate on this from the depths of your being and with this understanding work with intense diligence free of procrastination. Then when death comes, those with superior qualities will realise the meaning of the deathless state of emptiness. Those with middling ability will be joyful at death. Those of ordinary capacity will not grieve at their death. So practise with energy and enthusiasm. Please bear this in mind.

THE EXPLANATION OF ACTIONS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

Om Mani Padme Hung Hri

From beginningless time up until now when we have gained this present human body, we have all been wandering in the three lower realms of samsara. Thus we have experienced only sorrow. But now we have been born for an instant in the upper realms of humans, jealous gods, and gods and we have a human body that is gained so very rarely. So with this great opportunity we need a practice which gives the permanent result of buddhahood. To follow such a practice one

must turn towards pure virtue, collecting it in even the smallest amounts, and abandon even the least trace of unvirtue. This is necessary because due to virtuous action one is born in the upper realms, and due to unvirtuous action one is born in the three lower realms. To distinguish very carefully between virtue and non-virtue, and to understand the relation between actions and their consequences is the foundation of all dharma.

Why have we been wandering in samsara up until now? In general terms this is because we have not been careful in our actions. In particular we have not managed to control the afflictions of assumption, anger and so on.

So what are these unvirtues and afflictions that are to be discarded? ³ Firstly, the ten unvirtues are to be thrown out. Of these, three are of the body, four are of speech and three are of the mind.

FIRSTLY, THE THREE UNVIRTUES OF THE BODY:

1. Taking life.
2. Taking what is not given.
3. Sexual misconduct.

Taking life has three aspects:

1. Killing due to desire, that is to say, killing in order to get meat, blood, skin and so on.
2. Killing due to anger, as when anger or hatred arises in the mind towards an enemy and then one kills him.
3. Killing due to assumption, which is to kill meaninglessly and without benefit (e.g. in offering animal sacrifices).

Taking what is not given has three aspects:

1. Forcefully taking what is not given, as in violent robbery.
2. Craftily taking what is not given, by stealing like a sneak thief.
3. Deceitfully taking what is not given, by surreptitiously swindling by means of false measures etc.

Sexual misconduct has three aspects:

1. With one's own spouse, as when there is too much possessive attachment.
2. With another person's spouses so that you steal her from her husband, as in adultery.
3. With a woman protected by the dharma, such as a nun, so that you cause her vows to be destroyed.

.SECONDLY, THE FOUR UNVIRTUES OF SPEECH:

1. Lying.
2. Disharmonious speech.
3. Rough speech.
4. Idle talk.

Lying has three aspects:

1. Very great lying, as when one says that one has supranormal powers which one does not possess, or says that one is an accomplished yogi when one is not.
2. Lesser lying, talking to no purpose, yet falsely, as in saying that one has need of something when one has not.
3. Insulting lying as when one says that someone who is without fault has done something wrong, thus lowering their prestige.

Disharmonious speech has three aspects:

1. Strongly disharmonious speech as in saying that people have said things that they have not said.
2. Secret disharmonious speech or backbiting, where one separates people by secret talking.
3. Indirect disharmonious speech by which conflict is created by influencing the environment.

Rough speech has three aspects:

1. Incidental rough speech where you are drawn into a meaningless quarrel.
2. Replying with rough speech and making strong arguments.
3. Roughness from inner inclination as when one acts out one's bad thoughts by uttering a curse.

Idle talk has three aspects:

1. Worldly idle talk, like predictions, mythical legends and so on.
2. Non-worldly idle talk, as in taking sides within the dharma and arguing against different sects and traditions.
3. Truthful words said idly, as when one talks of the dharma and puts in one's own interpretations.

THIRDLY, THE THREE UNVIRTUES OF MIND:

1. Avarice.
2. Ill-will.
3. Wrong views.

Avarice has three aspects:

1. Avarice regarding oneself, i.e. attachment to one's possessions and social circle.
2. Avarice regarding others, i.e. desire for the property of others.
3. Avarice regarding oneself and others, as when the desire for the social circle of oneself and others arises in one's mind.

Ill-will has three aspects:

1. Ill-will towards the past, which means bearing a grudge for harm suffered previously.
2. Ill-will of the present time, bearing ill-will towards one's current enemies.
3. Ill-will for the future, which means having ill-will towards the later descendants of those for whom one has ill-will now.

Wrong views have three aspects:

1. Worldly wrong views where one does not know about the karmic relation between actions and their consequences.
2. Wrong views about that which transcends this world so that there is no knowledge of the fact that beings and phenomena are devoid of inherent existence.
3. Wrong views regarding true words, in which one does not believe the Buddha's words and so believes that karma is false.

Whichever of these ten unvirtues has been done, if they are developed as very great faults then one can be born only in the three lower realms. If one does manage to be born in the three upper realms, then one will have a short life with little wealth. One will encounter hostility and there will be trouble with the law. Falsely accused of evil deeds, one's word will not be believed. Separated from one's friends, one is liked by no-one and insulted by all. One gains no wealth, or if some is gained it is taken by others. Born with many unvirtuous tendencies, one has a weak personality with many afflictions and is often annoyed by others.

THEREFORE YOU SHOULD ABANDON THE TEN UNVIRTUES AND PRACTISE THE TEN VIRTUES WHICH ARE:

1. Not killing beings, but rather ransoming them from death and protecting life.
2. Not taking what is not given but rather giving what one has to others.
3. Not indulging in sexual misbehaviour but keeping within morality.
4. Not telling lies, but speaking the pure and straight-forward truth.
5. Not using disharmonious speech but endeavouring to reconcile those who are at odds with each other.
6. Not speaking rough words, but speaking sweetly and calmly.
7. Not idly gossiping, but refraining from speech or spending one's time reading religious books or reciting mantras.
8. Not being avaricious, but knowing one's own wealth to be sufficient and meditating on the lack of need for more.
9. Not bearing ill-will, but concerning oneself with the benefit of others.
10. Not holding wrong views, but having faith in the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha) and believing in the karmic relation of cause and effect.

There also the Five Boundless Errors⁴:

1. Patricide.
2. Matricide.
3. Killing an arhat.
4. Wilfully causing a tathagata to bleed.
5. Causing a schism in the sangha.

There are the Five Similar Errors⁵:

1. Similar to patricide is to give poison to one who believes you to be a friend.
2. Similar to matricide is to kill a bodhisattva.
3. Similar to killing an arhat is to rape a female arhat or an ordained nun.
4. Similar to wilfully causing a tathagata to bleed is to destroy statues, dharma books or stupas that have been consecrated.
5. Similar to causing a schism in the sangha is taking the wealth and property of ordained monks.

THERE ALSO THE FOUR HEAVY ERRORS, ARRANGED IN FOUR GROUPS OF FOUR.

The Four Heavy Errors of Lapsing:

1. In the worldly sphere, if one makes a promise and then breaks one's word, then that is a heavy error of lapsing.
2. The heavy error of lapsing from the vow of pratimoksha restraint.
3. The heavy error of lapsing from the bodhisattva vows.
4. The heavy error of lapsing from tantric vows.

The Four Heavy Errors of Mistaken Behaviour:

1. The heavy error of sitting above scholars of attainment (i.e. in a seat of higher status).
2. The heavy error of stealing food from meditators (e.g. if ordinary monks should take the supplies that were intended for those in hermitages).
3. T The heavy error of accepting obeisance from great saints (i.e. acting as if one's attainment was greater than theirs).
4. The heavy error of taking the wealth of a tantric yogi.

The Four Heavy Errors of Demeaning:

1. The heavy error of insulting one of pure body (like an incarnate lama) while being under the power of mental dullness.
2. The heavy error of adopting and rejecting and discriminating between different dharma traditions while being under the power of partiality.
3. The heavy error of insulting truthful speech while being under the power of jealousy (e.g. to say that the writings of a fellow scholar are not correct when you know that they are in fact correct).
4. The heavy error of insulting the good qualities of others while being under the power of pride.

The Four Heavy Errors of Derogation:

1. The heavy error of destroying the special distinction of dharma by saying that worldly affairs are of equal value.
2. The heavy error of discriminating between phenomena, all of which are without inherent existence.
3. The heavy error of erroneous views, the worst of the ten unvirtues.
4. The heavy error of wilfully causing a tathagata to bleed, the worst of the five boundless errors.

THERE ARE ALSO THE EIGHT WRONG PRACTICES WHICH ARE ARRANGED IN TWO GROUPS OF FOUR.

Firstly, the Four Black Dharmas:

1. To abuse the pure dharma.
2. To praise evil dharmas.
3. To trouble and disturb the mind of those who assiduously practise virtue.
4. To stop the work of a faithful sponsor.

Secondly, the Four Rejections:

1. To abandon the Three Jewels.
2. To avoid the company of vajracharya tantric masters.
3. To want to change one's personal deity.
4. To avoid and abandon those who are fellow disciples of the same guru.

There are also the Three Careless Actions:

1. Careless actions of the body: wandering, running about, wild dancing, and heedless behaviour.
2. Careless actions of speech: worldly songs, romantic stories and all angry and desireful talk.
3. Careless actions of mind: discursive thoughts developing with the three or five afflictions (assumption, desire, anger, along with pride and jealousy).

In accordance with whatever of these unvirtues one has done, it will become necessary to take birth again. In general terms this means as a sentient being in the six realms of samsara. In particular these unvirtues lead to the three lower realms, and their most extreme result is that one will be born only in the hells. Therefore it is very important to have faith in the teachings on karma's cause and effect and to adhere to good and reject bad in even the smallest amounts. You must really understand and decide, clearly and directly, that the doctrine of karma is not false.

Here are some examples to make that clear. If at present one has wealth and all that is good, then this is the result of having been generous in previous lives. If at present one has good health and beauty then this is due to having kept good morality in previous lives. If at present one is loved and respected by everyone then this is due to having practised patience in previous lives. If at present one accomplishes whatever one wants without great effort, then this is due to having kept diligently to the side of virtue in previous lives. If at present lay people have good character and easy lives and religious people have steady meditation with few discursive thoughts, then these are both the result of having practised meditation in previous lives. If at present one is rarely ill then this is the result of having helped the sick in previous lives. And if

one has a long life then this is due to having protected life in previous lives. Thus all present happiness and well-being is the result of having practised virtue in previous lives.

However, if in previous lives one stole the wealth of others and selfishly hoarded one's own wealth, the result is that in this life one is poor and hungry. If in previous lives one has not practised meditation, then in this life one will have rough, unruly discursive thoughts and many ideas. If in previous lives morality was not observed then in this life one's body and face will be ugly. If in previous lives one had a bad character and was angry, in this life one will be unpopular and hated by all. If in previous lives one has been lazy, then no matter what one does in this life nothing will come of it. If in previous lives one has beaten and wounded others, in this life one will have many kinds of illnesses. If in previous lives one has taken the lives of others then one's present life will be short.

All the failures and unpleasant experiences of this life are the result of unvirtue practised in previous lives. Whatever has been done in previous lives becomes evident in this present body with the manifesting of their karmic effects. Where one will go in subsequent lives depends on what is done at present. The consequences of prior causal acts cannot be prevented from appearing. Therefore, if at the time of the causal act one does not reject error and take up virtue, then at the time of the karmic fruition, one will not be able to collect good consequences and prevent bad ones. So really recognise that the karmic relation of cause and effect is true, for good consequences never arise from bad actions, nor bad consequences from good actions. It is really important to carefully distinguish between good and bad karmic actions.

If one does not distinguish between different kinds of karmic action, then one will hold wrong views regarding the nature of virtuous activity, such as believing animal sacrifice to be a good thing.

For these reasons it is most important that we follow the path of virtue and be diligent in carefully distinguishing between good and bad karmic actions. Please bear this in mind.

THE EXPLANATION OF THE FAULTS AND SUFFERINGS OF SAMBARA

Om Mani Padme Hung Hri

If we consider how long we have been revolving in the desire, form and formless worlds, and wandering in the six realms of rebirth, we will realise that since the separation of samsara from nirvana, we have been moving round through the six realms one after the other up until now. Why has the time of liberation not come? The basis is co-emergent ignorance. The path is the ignorance of identification. The result is the ignorance of not understanding the nature of cause and effect. These ripen as the very long and hard experiences of the suffering of samsara.

All the sufferings of the six realms arise from one's own afflictions. Thus actions performed out of anger mature as birth in hell and the experience of the sufferings of the eighteen hells. Actions performed out of avarice result in birth as an insatiable ghost and the experience of the misery of hunger and thirst. Actions performed out of assumption result in birth as an animal

and the experience of the misery of being used as a servant. Actions performed out of desire result in birth as a human with the miseries of birth, old age, sickness and death. Actions performed out of jealousy result in birth as a jealous god experiencing the sufferings of quarrelling and fighting. Actions performed out of pride result in birth as a god and then one experiences the misery of suddenly losing divine status and falling to a lower realm. Thus, no matter where one is born in the six realms, one cannot escape from misery nor find any opportunity for happiness.

To gain liberation from that condition, it is necessary to enter the excellent dharma. To enter the dharma you must feel a repugnance for samsara similar to that of a nauseous person at the offer of food. You need to dislike samsara in the manner of a man fleeing from prison. You must feel disgust for samsara as one would on leaving a cesspit.

You must be as careful with samsara as a man guarding his life from a deadly enemy. If you have desire for samsara, then recognise its deceitful nature in the way that one who has been cheated is wise to his deceiver when they meet again.

If at this time, here in samsara, you do not practise a method which will give liberation, then, when wandering on and on in samsara, it will be difficult for you to bear the many sorrows that will come. So, fully and truly, without hypocrisy, endeavour in the practice of the holy dharma. Please bear this in mind.

ABANDONING WORLDLY ACTIVITIES

Om Mani Padme Hung Hri

In this life we have gained a precious human existence complete with the eighteen freedoms and opportunities and so we should use it to gain liberation and omniscient buddhahood. For this to happen we must practise the excellent dharma. This in turn is dependent upon the complete abandonment of all involvement in worldly activities. One should take as one's example the lives of the great saints of the past and practise one-pointedly without distraction. To achieve this one must give up both one's outer situation (friends, people, places) and one's way of acting.

ABANDONING ONE'S OUTER SITUATION

It is necessary to abandon one's motherland, for, if it is not abandoned, desire and anger will arise from attachment to it. If one remains in one's own country then many situations that hinder dharma practice will arise such as having too much work, business and so on, helping neighbours and relatives who are in trouble, subduing enemies and protecting friends, paying taxes and giving compulsory public service. With these activities one will experience the misery of attachment and aversion for it is difficult to practise the pure dharma in one's own country. So if you do not separate now from your friends and relatives, then being always busy and never free of worldly work and for all sorts of reasons, you will have no opportunity to practise dharma and will remain involved in the flow of happiness and sorrow, sickness and death.

So if you really want to practise the pure dharma you will have to turn your back on your homeland, friends and relatives, and, without attachment to any country, stay in a place where nobody knows you.

ABANDONING ONE'S WAY OF ACTING

It is necessary to accept the loss of food, clothing and fame. The great saints of the past have all done this. Be ready to forfeit your life in the practice of the dharma. Abandon all but the basic necessities of this life. Become a child of the mountains. Wear the mist as clothing and put on the hat of a cave. Give up all monitoring of happiness and sorrow and be satisfied to live without attachment in a mountain hermitage. This is the way to gain true accomplishment.

Similarly, if in this short human life there is happiness, then it should be accepted patiently. And if sorrow comes then it should be accepted in the same way. In this human life which lasts only an instant it is very important not to be concerned about happiness or sorrow but to work very hard for the permanent result of buddhahood.

If at this present time the dharma does not develop within you then in future it will be difficult to find the opportunity to practise. So give up all your strivings after food, clothing and fame.

Turning your mind from the concerns of this life, you must practise sadhana meditation. You must fiercely resolve to do this! In this life take just enough food and clothing to survive. The buddhas of the past have given many instructions on 'living on the essence'⁶ and you can also practise this.

Begging only a little food and then practising asceticism is also possible. And it is possible to wear whatever old and ragged clothes you find, or a shroud or a dog skin, or suchlike garments which give only a bare protection from the wind and cold. So give up all effort concerned with getting worldly happiness and avoiding misery. You must never become separated from the awareness of the need to constantly practise the dharma for it alone is helpful at the time of death.

If you do not act in this way, but instead desire good food, warm clothes and the standard of living of great people, wanting much food for yourself with enough to give to others and enough money to lend on interest and so on, then the really pure dharma will never develop within you.

If you can practise the really pure dharma then you will have no need for anything else. Whatever comes, comes. Whatever goes, goes. Don't get involved in what is happening. Free yourself from dependence on happiness, wealth, reputation, fame, followers and so on. If happiness comes, then happiness comes. If misery comes, then misery comes. Accordingly with good and bad experiences, high or low worldly status, good or bad situations, illnesses of the body, sorrow of the mind – whatever comes, comes. Whatever goes, goes. In this life if you go to the level of the buddha, then go; and if you go to the three lower realms, then just go. If at the end of this life you die painfully, then just die. No matter what happens, just let it come.

Don't involve yourself with the eight worldly concerns regarding pleasant words and painful words, fame and notoriety, praise and blame, gain and loss. Be open to everything, content with whatever happens. If you are hungry and become very thin and start dying, then just die. If you are freezing and turn blue and start to die, just die. If you can't be a great person, then you just can't. If others blame you and put you down, then just be blamed. If others have ambition to be like you, then let them have that ambition. If you are not liked by others, then just don't be liked. Whatever other people do towards you, that is just what they do. So don't leave your mountain hermitage, and without exerting yourself for food and clothing, set your mind firmly away from samsara.

To act in this way is very different from the following conduct: to say a prayer on finding a needle (i.e. to think that a little luck is very wonderful); to beat one's breast if a little beer turns sour; to relax in the sunshine with plenty of food and warm clothing and count one's prayer beads with muttering lips and quivering eyebrows. There are those who appear to be religious people, yet when they are without food or clothing, or when pleasant or unpleasant situations develop with friends and relatives, or when they become ill, or when bad news comes, then their spiritual practice vanishes over the horizon, and they go completely under the power of these situations. Practitioners who behave like this never attain the dharma.

Whatever the circumstances, whether there is happiness or sorrow, life or death, sickness or fever, good or bad situations, fame or notoriety, satisfaction or dissatisfaction, dharma practitioners must reject samsaric involvement in the manner of a proud warrior issuing a challenge. In this way all situations can be self-liberated, and so one must practise accordingly.

Whether one stays in the mountains or goes down into the valley, one must be happy with back-breaking effort and death, and without going under the power of any situation, one should never lose the strength of one's dharma practice.

If you practise when you feel happy but stop when you feel sad, and if you do it when it is easy and stop when it is difficult then the real dharma attainment will be hard to come by.

Those who seem to follow the dharma while getting good and plentiful food, warm clothing and all necessities, make a very good show of dharma and so get patrons who give them plenty to eat etc., but at death when they would like buddhahood, it doesn't come. If they want to eat and drink, they have enough to eat and drink but at death when they would like buddhahood, it doesn't come. If they want to sleep, then that too is possible, but at death when they would like buddhahood, it doesn't come. If they want to go out then they allow themselves that, but at death when they would like buddhahood, it doesn't come. They can maintain their friendships, but at death when they would like buddhahood, it doesn't come. They think there is no need to protect their vows, no need to do intensive meditation retreats, and they do everything to make this life happy. Superficially explaining dharma to people, they laxly teach disciples whatever will make them happy in order to bring them under their power. Acting in these and similar ways they would like to get buddhahood at death – but it is very difficult.

Dharma and the world are not in harmony, they are opposites. If you desire lasting happiness then hard and painful work is necessary. Enlightenment is not gained without hard and painful work. So stop all thoughts and actions concerned with this life and do not go under the power of pleasant or unpleasant situations. You should pass your time solely in meditation in lonely mountain hermitages.

If obstacles come to your practice, such as involvement with houses, land, friends and relatives, sons and daughters, acquaintances and true friends, wealth and property, monk friends and lay friends, then these are all demons⁷. Do not put your power under the control of others. Never separate from the renunciation that is free of all desire.

To act in this way is to follow the example of the great saints. Stop inner desires. Stop worldly action. Raise the banner of meditation practice. By becoming a yogi, stop worldly action and achieve the true welfare of yourself and all others.

NOTES

1. The Sanskrit term *moha* and its Tibetan equivalent, *gTi-Mug* is often translated as 'stupidity'. It implies a dullness of intelligence, the loss of the experience of 'getting it'. When one doesn't 'get it', one gets something else: the habit of residing inside assumptions.
2. In this state, perception is clouded by projection and by the tendency to subsume whatever is new into one's existing categories and narratives. In its extreme form it is considered to be the basis for rebirth as an animal. Animals operate largely on the basis of instincts which are not reflected on but enacted. It is not possible for them to see through the assumptions on which their lives are based.
3. Human beings operate largely on the basis of cultural and personal assumptions, which are usually 'taken for granted'. The most basic assumption is that appearances have an inherent individual reality or self-nature. When the falsity of this assumption is not awakened to, our intelligence is only able to explore the endless possibilities of samsara.
4. New suns appear in the sky, one after another, and with each one there is increasing destruction until everything is burnt up when all seven suns are present. Then out of compassion Brahma sends a flood. Due to the currents in the ocean formed by the flood, the ash at the bottom is stirred up and new continents arise.
5. There now follows a series of traditional classifications.
6. These are called the 'five boundless errors' because although the arising of the consequences of the karma of an ordinary action is influenced by the consequences

of other actions, the consequences of these five comes into play immediately at death without any boundary or influence from any other karmic maturation. One goes straight to the lowest hell and remains there until their force is exhausted.

7. Raga Asye in the *DECHEN MONLAM* gives this alternative list: a) To kill a bhikshu monk, b) To kill a lay devotee, c) To be the first to break a nun's vows of sexual restraint, d) To destroy a statue or religious painting, e) To destroy a stupa.
8. 'Living on the essence' (*bChud-Len*) is the practice of subsisting on the essence of the four elements (earth, water, fire and air). The small pills of these elixir-like essences are prepared from various substances and are then blessed by meditation. Those who have purified their desires of body and mind are able to live on just a few of these pills a day without need or desire for other food.
9. Demons are the objective form that one's own karma takes in order to cause disturbance and confusion. That is to say, we encounter demons in their traditional form if we have the karma to do so. In western countries at present the same karmic tendencies manifest as connections to different kinds of problems, e.g. computers crashing. Yet the outcome of disturbance and confusion is the same.