

# *Why Practice Buddhism?*

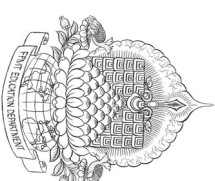


*Lama Zopa Rinpoche*



Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition

## FPMT Education Department



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FPMT Education Department  
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Our organization is based on the Buddhist tradition of Lama Tsongkhapa of Tibet, as taught by our founder, Lama Thubten Yeshe, and our spiritual director, Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

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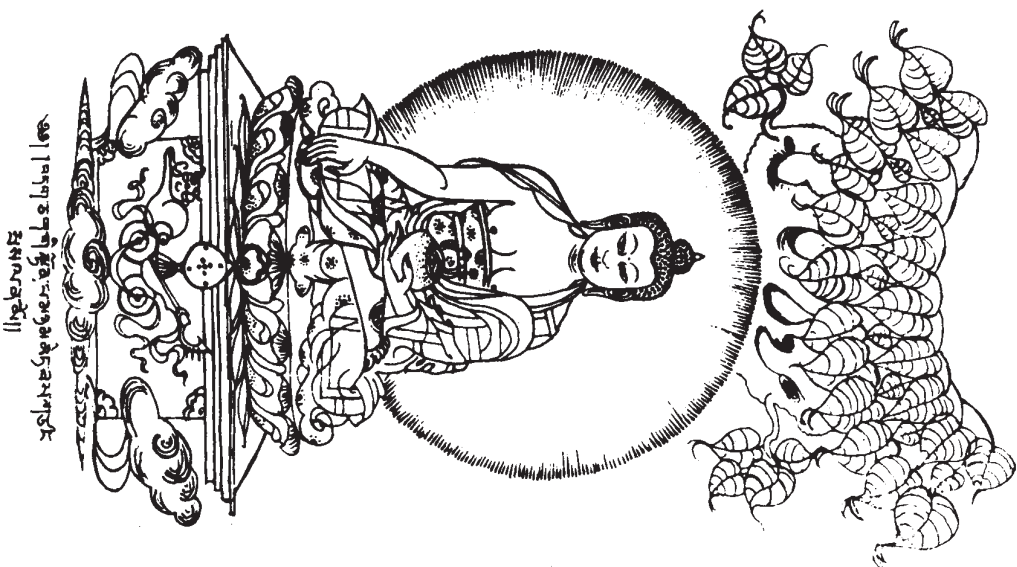
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## Introduction



This booklet contains the transcript of Lama Zopa Rinpoche speaking to the Mongolian people during a radio broadcast in June 2004. Before the broadcast started, Ven. Sarah Thresher asked Rinpoche why Mongolia needed Buddhism. Rinpoche burst into laughter and laughed for over a minute, then chanted this brief teaching which includes the entire path to enlightenment.

The audio CD of this teaching, *The Singing Lam-rim*, is available from The Foundation Store ([www.fpmt.org/shop](http://www.fpmt.org/shop)) or by writing to [materials@fpmt.org](mailto:materials@fpmt.org).



Guru Shakyamuni Buddha  
Drawing by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

## *Who Is Buddha and How Is Buddha Guiding Me?*

Generally, in a country and in the world, there is somebody amongst all the others who has the greatest compassion, and there is somebody who has the highest education and somebody who has the greatest capacity. Buddha is one who has actualized the path of method and wisdom, has completely ceased all gross and subtle defilements and has achieved the fully enlightened mind, the omniscient mind perfected with all understanding. Buddha's mind has not even the slightest ignorance and can see directly all present, past and future phenomena simultaneously. Buddha has also trained in great compassion towards every single sentient being without discrimination and has perfect power to reveal all the methods that fit exactly sentient beings' karma.

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha very kindly made 500 prayers and vowed to descend to this world to benefit us in this 100-age quarrelling time who were left out by other buddhas. He generated compassion and bodhichitra for all sentient beings and then practiced charity — giving up his own body, wealth, family, and so forth — practiced morality, patience and perseverance for three countless great eons. Buddha completed the two types of merit, virtue and wisdom, and achieved enlightenment. He then revealed the teachings of the four Noble Truths — that show the path to liberation, the Paramitayana path — that shows the path to full enlightenment, and the tantric path which brings enlightenment very quickly — even in one lifetime.

Therefore, the path to enlightenment is very scientific. Buddha himself experienced the path and then revealed it to others. In the same way, many great pandits analysed the Buddha's teachings and many yogis practiced them. So many meditators from different countries of the world — India, Tibet, China, Mongolia, Nepal — achieved enlightenment by practising the path correctly just as the Buddha explained. So practicing Buddhism is not just blind faith. Even now, there are many meditators attaining the path.

### *Colophon:*

Transcript of a speech given by Lama Zopa Rinpoche for Mongolian radio in June 2004. Transcribed and edited by Ven. Sarah Thresher.

# *Why Practice Buddhism?*

*A Teaching from Lama Zopa Rinpoche*



Because what we are all seeking is happiness and what none of us want is suffering. Therefore, we need to abandon the real cause of suffering and create the unmistakable cause of happiness. The actual cause of happiness is not outside. Even though people commonly believe that suffering is connected to external situations, actually these are just the conditions for suffering.

Similarly, the actual cause of happiness is not outside, it is within the mind. For example, when somebody gets angry with you, at that time think to yourself that among all the numberless holy beings, such as the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and all the other beings this person is the only one in your life with whom you can learn patience — the healthy, peaceful, happy, pure mind of patience, which brings so much peace and happiness to your own life, as well as to your companions, family and country, and to the rest of the world and all living beings.

If you don't practice patience and instead get angry, that habit leaves the negative imprint of anger on the mental continuum again and again. Anger destroys your own peace and happiness and brings so much suffering to your life. It harms your companion, friends and family, as well as the people in your country, in the rest of the world and all living beings. So you can see how practicing patience with this

person is the source of all your happiness now and in the future, right up to the peerless happiness, the complete bliss of full enlightenment. And it is also the source of peace and happiness for others, starting from your family and going out to all living beings.

When you think of the benefits of patience, which are as vast as the sky, you get a very deep feeling for the kindness of the person who is angry towards you. You see how precious that person is in your life. By looking at the person who is angry with you in a positive way, it is so beneficial to develop your mind in the path to liberation and enlightenment — particularly patience.

The positive thought seeing that person as kind immediately brings inner peace and happiness, and because you don't get angry and harm the person in return it brings peace to others. The person you previously called an enemy then becomes your most kind friend. By practicing patience you are able to bring so much peace and happiness to all sentient beings. This comes from your positive thought. So you can see how your suffering and happiness as well as that of others come from your mind.

When you look at the person who is angry with you as being negative and bad, label it as harm, and then believe that label you create suffering for yourself and others. This way of thinking causes anger to rise towards the other person and from the anger comes unhappiness for yourself, for others and on a larger scale for all living beings.

When your mind is transformed into the peaceful, happy mind of patience, that brings happiness to yourself and to all living beings. This is practicing Buddhism. This is practicing what the Buddha taught. Without the practice of Buddhism, this paramita of patience, one person can destroy a whole country and even the whole world. There are many recent examples of this happening.

If there were loving kindness, compassion, the thought of benefiting others and contentment in the hearts of everyone in the world, there would be no need for weapons or guns at all, and no reason to have armies. How incredible this country and the world would be if everyone could generate and develop these most precious qualities of the mind! With these inner qualities, you become a friend to everyone and everyone becomes your friend. You love everyone and everyone loves you. How incredibly happy the world would be!

less sentient beings, who want happiness and do not want suffering, from all the suffering and its causes and bring them to full enlightenment. This is the very meaning of our lives and the purpose of being human. In order to free the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsara suffering and bring them to full enlightenment, we need to abandon self-cherishing thought, and to generate loving kindness, compassion and bodhichitta and enter the Mahayana path. Then we practice the bodhisatva's deeds, the six paramitas, and actualize the five paths and ten bhūmis, which ceases not only the gross delusions — the disturbing thought obscurations — and karma, but even the subtle defilements.

In order to bring the numberless sentient beings to enlightenment as quickly as possible we need to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible and for this we need to practice highest tantra. This depends on receiving a great initiation, which definitely plants the seed of the four kayas on the mindstream. Then, with an attitude of bodhichitta based on renunciation of this life and right view, emptiness, one actualizes the generation stage and completion stage, which cease in the quickest way the disturbing thought obscurations and subtle defilements including the dualistic view and cause the attainment of full enlightenment, the unified state of Vajradhara.

Therefore, actualizing full enlightenment quickly depends on the tantric path and that depends on actualizing bodhichitta and the right view. In order to actualize bodhichitta one needs to achieve the preliminary of renunciation of samsara and for that one needs to actualize renunciation to this life. The success of all of this up to enlightenment depends on correctly devoting to the virtuous friend. This is the whole progression of the stages of the path to enlightenment.





the fire, you cannot stop the burning. Likewise, as long as you don't let go of the I, you cannot abandon suffering. Therefore, to pacify harms to yourself and sufferings to others, give yourself up for others, cherish others as yourself." If your attitude in daily life is ignorance, anger and attachment, all your actions become non-virtue and the result is only suffering and obstacles. If your attitude in life is non-ignorance, non-anger, non-attachment, your actions become virtue and the result is only happiness. From this you can understand again how suffering and happiness come from your own mind, by depending on what kind of attitude you generate — positive or negative. Therefore the happiest, most fulfilling and best life is one lived with the attitude of cherishing and benefiting others.

Happiness comes from virtue, suffering comes from non-virtue. Every single happiness that is experienced in this life — success in business, good reputation, wealth — comes as a result of past good karma. There is not one single happiness, including even the comfort experienced in a dream that does not come from good karma. This means that all happiness comes from Dharma. So if one wishes happiness, one needs to practice Dharma, and one must practice all the time.

Regards the different levels of happiness: the first level is to not be reborn in the lower realms and to achieve the body of a happy migratory being — a deva or human body. This depends upon cultivating an attitude of detachment to this life. Then, by taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, one abandons non-virtue and practices the virtue of the ten moralities.

Achieving the second level of happiness — the everlasting happiness that is the total cessation of all suffering and its causes — delusion and karma — depends upon renouncing the suffering of samsara, the aggregates caused by delusion and karma which are in the nature of suffering, then practicing the three higher trainings and the five paths to liberation.

Even if one has achieved liberation from samsara for oneself, it is not sufficient. Not only have all sentient beings been your own mother and kind, but also every single sentient being is the source of all your past happiness — from time without beginning — present, and future happiness. So the very purpose of our lives is to liberate the number-

It is the same if you can let go of desire. When there is strong desire, only seeking the pleasure of this life for yourself it brings so many problems and so much suffering. You become an alcoholic, and make life totally useless and meaningless. At this time we have received a most precious human body that can be used to achieve every happiness. With this body we can achieve so much peace and happiness in this life. More importantly, we can achieve happiness for all our future lives. Even more importantly, we can achieve ultimate everlasting happiness — total liberation from the cycle of rebirth and death along old age, sickness and all the rest of the sufferings and their causes — delusions and their actions.

And even more importantly, we can achieve the peerless happiness of full enlightenment, which is the total cessation of all the mistakes of the mind and the achievement of all qualities and realizations. By achieving enlightenment, we can serve others by causing numberless beings to gain the happiness of this life, the happiness of future lives, the total cessation of suffering — liberation, and more importantly the peerless happiness of full enlightenment.

Alcoholics cannot even do the works for this life. They can't even do their job properly and they cause so much suffering to their families — to the husband, wife, and children — instead of bringing them happiness and peace. They make the family poor instead of bringing wealth.

So it is clear how all the problems of this life that harm you and harm others come from the mind — from the dissatisfied mind of desire. Therefore, if you can be educated in how to be content and have a satisfied mind, your whole life can be filled with much inner peace and happiness, and there will be great success for you, your family and the world. By doing this, there will be no need for court cases and no need for prison. You can say goodbye to depression, loneliness and suicide!

The dissatisfied mind, discontent and desire bring relationship problems one after another for the whole life. You get swamped in relationship problems, like a person drowning in mud who finds it difficult to get out. Due to this, your friend and companion leave you — and you have to suffer pain in your heart for years as well as all the other sufferings.

So you can see how all your own peace and happiness and that of others, as well as all the problems in your own life and those of others come from your own mind. Peace and happiness come from a content, satisfied mind — from a mind that has let go of the dissatisfied mind of desire. Peace and happiness come from the pure, healthy, happy, peaceful virtuous thought, which is Dharma; while negative thought — the unhealthy, dissatisfied mind — fills life up with so many problems and causes problems to the family, the country, the world and all living beings, from life to life.

Therefore, letting go of desire and making yourself free from all the confusion and problems that cause you to engage in so many different negative karmas in this life and then to be born in the lower realms in future lives — as a hell being, hungry ghost or animal — is giving independence to yourself. This is the way to fill yourself from deep down in your heart with so much peace, satisfaction and joy. This is renunciation, the very fundamental practice of Buddhism.

Also, if your attitude in life is self-cherishing and ego, that opens the door to so many undesirable things and causes so many problems to your companion, family, friends and to the world and all living beings from life to life. The minute you cherish the I, the self, that itself is a problem because it brings no real joy and happiness in the heart. The minute you cherish the I, that itself is an unhappy mind.

A selfish person thinks only of their own needs and happiness and has no concern for the needs and happiness of others. The stronger the self-cherishing thought the easier it is to create problems in life. Wherever a person with strong self-cherishing goes — to the countryside or to the city, to the east or to the west — they always find problems. Whoever that person strays with, they will always find difficulties.

Even if the other person starts off as a friend, sooner or later they will find out how self-centred the other person is and there will be disharmony and fighting. They will end up arguing, disliking and hating each other. Wherever that person goes they will make so many enemies. Instead of so many people becoming their friends, they will become enemies. Even if they start as friends sooner or later they will become enemies due to the self-cherishing mind.

Self-cherishing is the greatest obstacle to achieving happiness in this

life, so there is no question that it prevents us from achieving happiness in future lives, liberation and enlightenment. Self-cherishing is the greatest obstacle to benefit others, to bring happiness to the family and to everyone in Mongolia, as well as to the world and all living beings.

The great bodhisatva Shantideva said: “If one does not exchange oneself for others, one cannot achieve enlightenment (peerless happiness). Leave aside the happiness of future lives, even the happiness of this life won’t succeed.”

“If the attitude is self-cherishing, even if someone is doing a job, working for others, they will steal and cheat and lie and be careless and lazy, which will lead to worry, fear, court cases and debts. Their life will be swamped by debts. Nobody likes a person whose attitude to life is one of self-cherishing. When that person has problems nobody wants to help.”

A person who has a good heart, always putting others first, cherishing others and living their life to benefit others has so much success in their life. That person brings so much happiness to the family, to the country to the world and to all living beings, from life to life. That person can cause all living beings to gain all the different levels of happiness up to enlightenment — besides being able to accomplish all of this happiness for themselves. That person’s heart is filled with so much joy and fulfillment. They have no guilt or regret. There is incredible joy and happiness in their life both now and in the future — like the sun shining. Even at the end of their life there will be so much peace and happiness, and when they pass away it will be very inspiring for others.

Even if there is nobody else there to pray for that person, they will support and guide themselves to a pure land of Buddha or another very good rebirth in the next life where they can develop the mind more easily and quickly in the path to enlightenment.

So, here again, the happiness and suffering in our life come from the mind, from our own mind. They are dependent on whether we live life with the self-cherishing thought or with the thought cherishing others. Therefore, the very heart of all Mahayana Buddhist practice is letting go of self and cherishing others.

The great bodhisatva Shantideva said: “As long as you don’t drop