

Our Samaya With Lamasang

January 15, 2021

Dear Dharma Friends,

1. I hope everything is going well for everyone, even though Covid-19 has been very dangerous for people's precious lives. Over 2 million people have lost their lives in the world and still it is dangerously and quickly spreading. It has not only taken away people's lives, but, also, it has been a big problem for the economy, all over the world.
2. Everyone has heard, maybe too many times, about the teachings on the difficulty of finding and obtaining the freedoms and endowments of a human life and the teachings on impermanence. But this disease has been an inescapable teaching that has really shown us impermanence.
3. Human life is difficult to obtain but easy to destroy. Even these very small viruses can destroy our lives. Therefore, we shouldn't be arrogant or egotistical because nothing really belongs to us permanently, only the mind. Yet we have traveled since beginningless time with our minds without examining whether what we pick up from our mind stream is valid.
4. We have become lax, by following after our mind without examining and without understanding its nature. So, we become more ignorant, more attached, very angry, arrogant, jealous, and very willful, but in the end just willful and angry. We still need to seek greater wisdom and peace, in order for our lives to be happier. People, including us, try everything possible to attain happiness, and we even try practicing the Dharma to feel some peace but oftentimes we fail badly.
5. I call out to you so that you may better understand my history with our beloved Lamasang; the commitment to the Dharma he instilled in me; my responsibilities to the monastery he built and the Sangha he assembled (specifically, monks, nuns, and yogis, not lay people here); the responsibilities of you yourselves as sangha; and your samaya with Lamasang and with me.
6. Lamasang had two main wishes and dreams for his life: bringing peace and happiness to people through his discoveries of his treasures (termas), and reassembling the Sangha to spread the Dharma through building the monastery. He accomplished both after he tried very hard and had gone through countless difficulties. When Lamasang had much greater income, he was very generous and he gave everything away except some Dharma tools and statues. Lamasang officially gave me his damaru and bell, which were originally given to him by Akong Khenpo, and were very valuable. Akong Khenpo was one of his main teachers. Other than those two things, he didn't give me any things that

really belong to me, but he passed along many things to me to maintain, and keep for the monastery and its history.

7. Lamasang was the main teacher and the most important root guru for me and the Sangha here. He left many good seeds in us, such as our propensities for right actions according to the Dharma he taught us. He gave us feedback that helped us change. Specifically, his compassionate and generous activities changed me a lot. Lamasang himself wished for and required that I be the 10th throne holder and the head of this monastery because I was recognized as the fifth emanation of Do-Khyentse Yeshe Dorje, the original founder of this monastery. For me, the only option is to try my best to follow his instructions and to lead the Sangha as best as I can. The responsibilities Lamasang laid on my shoulders can be reduced to keeping the Sangha harmonious and making sure they are moving in the right direction by thoroughly learning, contemplating, and practicing real Dharma.

8. Motivation, Understanding, Responsibilities

9. For us, Lamasang is everything. This is the 11th anniversary of Lamasang's departure for Nirvana and the 11th year that I have had responsibilities as the main Dharma teacher, main financial sponsor, main educational leader, and central contact for the outside world for the monastery. In fact, I am not very supportive or helpful to my 80 year-old mother, Amala, and my extended family members. But I am very supportive of the monastery because if the sangha follows Buddha's path, Lamasang's wishes come alive.

10. This is the 11th winter retreat since he left us physically. I am giving the six Bardo teachings, and hundreds of people are attending faithfully and happily. What I have been doing and how I have been doing it has been my offering to our unsurpassable guru Lamasang. I am inviting you to join me in this offering.

11. The number of practitioners in the sangha has increased since Lamasang passed away. Also, we have built more retreat centers to practice Dzogpa Chenpo, the Great Perfection. The first group of three-year retreatants just came out last month, and now the new group has begun their retreat. There are 26 people in the Dzogpa Chenpo retreat, and 16 people in the Vajra Kilaya and Black Wrathful Vajra Yogini retreats.

12. The three education facilities, the Dharma school at the monastery for the monks, the yogi center for the yogis, and the center for the nuns at the nunnery are all doing well. They have been very successful in producing well educated monks, yogis, and nuns. Our level of study is at the top for all the monasteries in the Golog region, maybe for most monasteries in Tibet.

13. These are successes that we really want to see. This kind of success is important at the monastery because it's a Buddhist monastery. This is why Lamasang, who really hoped for this community to be successful on the path, passed this responsibility on to me.

14. All these great results did not come from nothing or wrong causes. They came from genuine understanding, deep wisdom, pure devotion, and the diligence of the Great Sangha, which has been practicing little attachment and great contentment.

15. The word “contentment” doesn't seem to fit for people like me and other so called “high lamas”, tulkus, or khenpos either. In fact, it fits almost no masters from any of the Buddhist traditions. Who would be the best example of being a contented dharma practitioner? Of course, the great Tibetan yogi Milarepa, and there were others, too, in the past.

16. Do I, Hungkar Dorje, practice contentment at all? The answer is, of course, yes. I have been trying to practice it and will continue to practice it, although I have many, many articles that are, on a scale, more substantial, bigger, and expensive. Oh, then how do you practice contentment while you possess so much, you might ask. I will explain how I deal with all these things exactly, okay? Since the departure of Lamasang, when I began to change into an administrative role and focus more on finances, materials, and operations at the monastery, with my small understanding, I began to see the actual impermanence of things.

17. People usually offer gifts to me to pray for something, to do phowa for someone, or to do something else. The offerings to me, to say some prayers, are different from donations, because there are two different purposes involved. Donations for my projects do not really belong to me because they are for the projects. Offerings or gifts given to me to pray for something, or someone, by myself, belong to me because I fulfill whatever is requested. Therefore, I make sure that all donations are used for the project, but I use the gifts that people offer to me for prayer for myself.

18. Not only do I use income, from donations for their intended purposes, but I also give most of the things that belong to me, including monastic robes and clothing, to the Sangha and lay people who need them. I give away thousands of pieces of clothing, Buddha images and donated gifts every year. Traditionally, these kinds of things are sold, but I always give them away.

19. I have been keeping the tradition of treating and helping the sick established by my lord, father, and kind guru, Lamasang. For his entire life, Lamasang was famous for treating sickness, disease, and mental illness and giving Tibetan medicine away for free. I continue this virtuous activity by making thousands of doses of Tibetan medicine and giving them away to people. Since Lamasang left this earth, I and the monks, yogis, and nuns have been making 73 different kinds of Tibetan medicine, which, I'll tell you, is a lot of work. We made 8000 pounds of medicine this year and they are not cheap to make.

20. I offer twenty to thirty tons of food every year to the Sangha and the poor. Each year, it takes five to ten million yuan to build things the monastery needs, like monks' rooms or other facilities, and repair of the temples and stupas. In addition, I sponsor the five major prayer festivals at the monastery and winter retreat teachings, as well as the Hungkar

Dorje vocational school with over 600 teachers and students. There is not much of anything left at the end of the year.

21. The place where I live is actually a temple that was in the monastery. There, I have placed many Buddha statues, thangkas, and offering materials for the images of The Three Roots. If this place weren't in the monastery, I wouldn't have these many images or Dharma supports and tools there. Everything of mine will be kept in the monastery forever. In fact, I am not someone who has a very high income, compared to some others. This is because I am a small Rinpoche, with a small amount of intelligence for both the Dharma and worldly dharma. Even more, I did not come from wealth, mine was not a family where money was handed down from one generation to the next. When he was very young, Lamasang was a beggar, actually. Then he became a lama and received offerings, but he lost everything three times. Lamasang never gave me any money I started from having nothing.

22. I believe that I have created some special karma with this monastery that has taken my energy, time, consideration, and wealth. Although this has required everything of me, as long as the Sangha is taking steps on the pure path, I think the appearance of my life is useful and meaningful for both me and the monastery. I have been reducing my participation in many activities that can bring income to me, in order to have more quiet time to practice the Dharma. That is because only time can give me the opportunity to improve the level of my practice. Less involvement with so many activities gives me a clear mind to focus on the Dharma instructions. Therefore, I have reduced my travel a lot so I can read Dharma books and meditate more.

23. In the past, I traveled all over the world and was out of the monastery for around six months a year. My travel was like Lamasang's, but since his pari-nirvana I have been staying in the monastery around ten months a year. For me, it was a choice between creating more income, or devoting my precious time to practice, so I chose less income and more time for Dharma practice. This is a way for me to practice contentment; otherwise, I could become a huge hoarder.

24. Trying to release everything that I receive is a way for me to practice contentment. If there is nothing, then I am less likely to attach to pleasures. Of course, resolving to reduce attachment is easy, but giving away all objects of pleasures you own, actually, is a powerful way of abandoning your attachment, because the time that you are really attached to the objects of pleasure is when you are holding them.

25. Responsibilities of the Sangha

26. The responsibilities Lamasang laid on my shoulders are, keeping the Sangha harmonious and making sure that the Sangha is moving together in the right direction by thoroughly learning, earnestly contemplating, and conscientiously practicing real Dharma. Maybe, I am known as very direct, very provocative or critical, but I do things that reflect, and say things that are, definitely heartfelt and well-intended advice, for people who listen.

27. Generally, people recognize a monastery by its physical appearance and celebrated symbols such as temples or stupas. For example, the Mahabodhi temple is the well-known symbol for Bodhgaya in India, and the Great Stupa for World Peace is the distinctive symbol for our monastery.

28. What makes a monastery a monastery? The physical representations of a monastery are only symbols. A dynamic administrative system and a positive environment for learning, contemplating, and meditating are the sources and the heart of an authentic monastery, which make the place a real Buddhist monastery.

29. Our beloved and most kind teacher, Lamasang, built many symbols of the Buddha's enlightened body, speech, and mind, in the form of temples, stupas, and practice facilities. But, for him, these were not the things that make a monastery a real monastery. It was his teachings and the establishment of an educated, diligent Sangha that studies, contemplates, and meditates on the Dharma, following the established paths of this lineage that are the main factors making this monastery a real monastery. This was the main purpose for Lamasang being reborn here, in this particular place.

30. If there is no vital Great Sangha ornamented by the three trainings, the monastery is only a tourist site, or perhaps a business center, which no one wishes the monastery to become.

31. The essence of Lamasang's wishes and teachings for all his students or Sangha, specifically the monks, nuns and yogis here in this monastery, is for everyone to try their very best to have little attachment and to practice diligently in the monastery, and as much as possible not to be running around with unfocussed body, speech, and mind.

32. However, many monks, including some older ones and some of Lamasang's own attendants drifted away, through lack of inhibition or careless behavior toward the path of worldly dharma, and became distracted by materialism. This happened during ten years when Lamasang was either busy traveling or not as energetic as he usually was due to sickness. It took me many years to teach Sangha members to understand what conduct is not on the path and what is. I have sincerely tried to teach them by changing my own behavior, making it as correct as possible. Their understanding is much greater now than then. I took the responsibility to teach by example and lead the Sangha and the lay people. Of course, it doesn't mean that everyone is perfect now. There are still some Sangha members who can't abandon extreme self-centeredness. They contaminate the ethos of the monastery, destroy reputations, and discourage earnest Dharma practitioners. But always someone supports them to go on this way, and they get what they want.

33. He would have cried or scolded us if he saw that a monk was involved in such inappropriate ways of being like wandering around and hanging out with tourists. That is because he cared so much about the Buddha's teachings. So much, that he was willing to give up his life for the Buddha and the Dharma.

34. My lord father, Lamasang, used to tell us about how poor he was. For example, one time he didn't have any money to buy food, so he went around asking to borrow 12 yuan from his friends, including my mother's brothers, but no one lent him anything. We were really, really poor when I was small. Actually, we didn't know what was poor or rich, because everyone was poor in our area. If we look back now, we had no possessions, but luckily we had something to eat. Not only were we poor by not having things, but we were poor by not knowing things also. For example, nobody knew that corn and beans were food for people. They thought they were only food for horses.

35. My father, Lamasang, was put in prison three times, and he lost all he had because everything was taken. When people's turn of mind goes bad, they can go very bad. Those people who took my father to the jail were so mean, so awful. When they came to get Lamasang the last time, they took everything there was in the tent. Then they destroyed all the other things. For example, to harm us, they mixed rice, flour, tea, and barley together in the dust, so that we couldn't eat them anymore. Our beloved Lamasang was taken somewhere on a horse. There was no way to get information about him unless he sent word by messenger to Amala, as he had done before. We had nothing to eat other than the little food that was thrown on the ground and mixed with the dust. With tears in her eyes, Amala tried to separate the food on the ground from the dust so she could feed us.

36. Lamasang was released in 1977, and he immediately tried to get together with his students to give teachings. Although everyone was very scared of coming together under the strict rules in that rough time, he called them anyway. Of course, there were no houses so he made a big tent for people to practice in or to pray together. It was not only about having not enough money, it was also difficult to even find the material to make the tent.

37. We ourselves had one garment each made from wholly sheep's hide, which we wore for many years, without shirts or pants. We had only traditional boots in the winter, but mostly went bare-foot for many months of the year. Of course, we had no socks, no pants, no toothbrush, toothpaste, or regular shoes. We only had some simple boots that Amala made by herself. I remember I had vegetables the first time when I was a teenager, which my father got when he visited someone in the county seat. When I was around thirteen or fourteen, I asked him to buy a very small toy for me that cost less than one yuan, and he did not, and I cried unconsolably. Now I understand that during that time my lord father Lamasang had very little money.

38. Lamasang was skillful and powerful. Local people respected him, served him as much as they could, and offered him pretty much what he needed to start to build the monastery. But because the whole area and everyone in it was poor, he still had many difficulties, such as financial problems, pressure from police, competition from others, lack of proper building materials, inadequate supplies, poor working conditions and health of those helping, and even deaths of some monks.

39. It was hard even for the Buddha to keep everyone on an elevated level. There is no question about that now in this time of degeneration, an age of darkness. In fact, Guru Rinpoche said, "It's not that times are changing, but actually people are changing." I think it's also true that when people's minds go after pleasures crazily, everything is a big, chaotic mess, without rules.

40. There have been many sad stories about Sangha members' broken samaya with one another, causing disharmony and fighting in the sangha over money or properties. A monk involved in business who was living near us slipped a sedative to his business partner that put him to asleep. The monk then strangled the business partner with a rope. Not only that, but unable to throw his partner's body in the river, he just left his body on a bridge. Now that monk is in jail for life.

41. Many monks, lamas, and khenpos like to go to big cities to study English and Chinese so they can meet more people. They spend most of their time in cities taking offerings from unaware people. When they have enough money and after they spend so much time in the colorful society, they will give up their monk's lives. Do any of you really want to destroy lives of monks or Dharma lives by giving money to them?

42. This is happening in monasteries in Tibet, India, Nepal, and all over. Therefore, I have been trying to control this kind of situation. I am afraid that the way some of our lamas look at money may cause envy and disharmony in the monastery because when their minds are attached to material society, then almost nothing can really hold them back.

43. Many people really don't understand this kind of situation can occur in monasteries, but I tell you it has happened and is happening in a lot of Buddhist places. I have shared this and asked some of our Dharma friends, who are very sincere in their devotion to Lamasang, his monastery, and to me, for their understanding, and I see them understand very well and doing things for the monastery as they should be done by giving donations only to the monastery for fair and wise distribution. We need to be very careful; otherwise, the Dharma will be destroyed like it was in India. There, the Sangha went astray, and became useless, due to the absence of proper rules, lack of genuine knowledge, and poor conduct, to the extent that Buddhism died in India.

44. If the Sangha members do whatever they want without thinking of monastic discipline and the Buddhist people don't care about the conduct of monks, it will certainly hurt the tradition of the Dharma. Therefore, all Buddhists have a responsibility to protect their own tradition and try their best to do things that at least don't hurt the essence of the Buddhist tradition, which is the teachings of the Buddha. These teach how to be free from attachment, anger, and ignorance.

45. Maybe you do things that can be hidden from many people, but these things are not hidden from those with wisdom-eye, nor do these actions occur outside the law of interdependence or the rule of cause and result. It is said that performing unvirtuous

actions secretly, having impure samaya, or being disrespectful through unreliability in one's samaya, is like enjoying delicious poisoned food.

46. I am the principal Lama here, and everyone thinks that I have the most of everything. Maybe, it's not true. For example, one of the Tulkus from our monastery is always going somewhere, putting anything he finds in his pocket, so he possesses over 100 million of yuan in savings and properties, and he has the appearance of having very little desire because he has no cars, and does not use expensive things. He tells people that "I like the Chinese tradition that keeps as many goods as possible for generations." He openly proclaims this to people. Likewise, everywhere, people are holding onto so much for themselves, never resting, always running around to acquire more.

47. In the Buddha's time, monks found hundreds of kilos of gold in the room that was used by a monk who was in one of the Buddha's six dissenting classes of monks, the big troublemaker in the Sangha, Charka, who was always busy doing something so he had no time to attend the activities of the Sangha. When he passed away, he was not observant of the monastic disciplines or the rules and had destroyed the good reputation of the Great Sangha by making a lot of mistakes that were contradictory to the doctrine and system.

48. It's common for people to naturally like goods and money, and everyone falls into samsaric or worldly activities eventually. The main problem is that these misbehaving monks can lead others to the wrong path. The source of happiness of all sentient beings, the great benefit for all six realms, and the heart essence of the Buddha, is the nectar-like Dharma. But it will soon die if all the Sangha members are consumed by worldly activities.

49. Buddha said that his teachings, or Buddhism, will be destroyed by its own disciples and the Sangha will be destroyed by busyness for material things or worldly dharma. Therefore, the lamas who have responsibilities to protect and spread Buddha's teachings, must teach all Sangha members the importance of practicing contentment, so they can have time for the Dharma and time to provide anything they really need to study and practice. The correct understanding is not that I have nothing to do but observe the misbehavior of monks, or criticize them so as not to be bored, nor that I lose my position if they become wealthy, but rather that the purity and the blessing of the teachings of Buddha will disappear, the richness and goodness of the Buddhist tradition will be destroyed if we forget our samaya. Actually, no one really has the ability to accomplish both the Dharma and worldly dharma(s) simultaneously because the accomplishment of worldly dharma(s) destroys the Dharma, so we should focus on the Dharma.

50. Most people everywhere, including Buddhist followers, are good. They are good because they try to follow, respectfully, their spiritual or cultural traditions. But, of course, there are some problems everywhere, including in monasteries. Maybe some individuals don't really mean to or want to create problems, but they may not know how to control themselves, or they are still in the process of changing themselves. So, we have to try to educate or to remind them to follow the path continually and consistently.

51. As long as we try to educate them regularly and they try to listen, there is always a great chance to make everything positive. If we lose patience to lead or to correct, everything will go in the opposite direction.

52. Samaya with Lamasang

53. Fortunately, I see that most of our people have been pretty stable in their karmic connection with Lamasang and with me. I can tell you that stable and firm faith is the most powerful trait in bringing oneself to great peace, more than any other trait. My advice to you, who consider yourself Lamasang's devotees, is that you should remember what he said to us, what truly makes him happy. We may think money is the best thing that made Lamasang happy, because we may think he loved money. In fact, money was just a toy or just paper for him, and he never kept money for himself. He may have taken money from you but he didn't take it for himself, only to break your habit of stinginess and to use it where really needed.

54. We can arrange all his teachings or wishes for us into three categories: (1) to have unchangeable faith; (2) to be compassionate; and (3) to remain in the state of one's own Buddha nature. Having watched some videos of him giving teachings in the US, one observes him repeatedly saying you should develop your faith to see your guru as Buddha because only in this way can one achieve Buddhahood.

55. If you have been doing something differently from what he taught, then you should consider your behavior and adjust the level of your devotion. Because he cared about you so much. Lamasang always wanted you beside him and close to him and not stretched too far away. This student-teacher commitment is called samaya. If one's samaya is not pure, there will be no results, even though one runs around the world millions of times.

56. Actually, dharma practice is simple if you keep it simple, but you can make it complicated due to your desire and then just see it as good entertainment, a show. If you have enough belief in your practice, then everything is beautiful, peaceful, and quiet. Not only Lamasang and I say this, but all the masters. They require strong, genuine, and unchangeable faith in the guru, practice, and the lineage. Therefore, you all should stay calm, stable, and focused on the homework given to you by Lamasang.

57. Appreciation for the Sangha

58. I am very grateful for all who were good students of Lamasang and all who have been helpful and supportive of me from the time Lamasang departed until now and maybe into the future, too, and for the support given to the Sangha and every part of the monastery that I maintain. With this support, I have been able to take care of many things, including the basic living expenses for the sangha, vocational school students, staff, poor people, elderly people, and myself. In fact, it would have been difficult for me to have undertaken many meaningful events and activities that have been objects of merit without your kind support.

59. May all of you and all other beings obtain unconditional love and peace, and the inconceivable natural state of the mind without any obstacles.

Hungkar Dorje Rinpoche

Siddhi Garden of the Great Secret Place