

FOUNDATION OF BUDDHISM

(Sui Pagoda 10.2013)

Talk on 02.10.2013

First of all, I'd like to thank the pagoda, all masters here, monks and nuns here, to receive me, and to let me talk about Dharma in this pagoda. It is interesting to hear that this place is the first place [in Vietnam] that Buddhism arrived. So, this is especially interesting for me this time to talk about Dharma [here].

This is perhaps the third time I come to Hanoi, and also I know some people here. And some people from Hanoi have gone to Tibet – Golog, and we know each other very well. For that reason, I've come here to give some teaching on Dharma. My father was also a Master from Tibetan Buddhism, who has also been here and had some disciples. So, we are keeping that strong connection until now.

Everyone here is Buddhist Dharma practitioners. The goal for us to be here, the meaning of our life is to get some good result, good understanding of Dharma. This is the goal of being a Dharma practitioner. The [main] subject for me to come here is ngondro practice, which means preliminary practices for real understanding Dharma, real realization of Dharma, [of] reality. However, since many are new here, I will talk about the fundamental understanding of Buddhism.

The foundation to be a Dharma practitioner is to be a good person. How do we mean by being a good person? Of course, there are bad people, good people, everybody knows. We need to be a good person. How do we make ourselves a good person? We need to have many qualities to be good person. Therefore, we need to learn more [about things] related to this subject.

It is impossible for one to learn Buddhism while being a bad person. Therefore, to be able to learn Buddha's Dharma well, we need to have a good foundation. The [first] essential quality for one to be a good person is Honesty. So, to be an honest person is the essential quality to practice Dharma, to learn Dharma well.

This is the same for all the Buddhist traditions in the world. Buddha himself, and also Nagarjuna, and all the Masters from India, Tibet, and China as well, they always talk about the importance of being a good person, as well as being a good Buddha practitioner. Therefore, wherever I go and whenever I have a chance to talk to people, then I always mention this important quality of being a good human being.

There is a very famous Master named Patrul Rinpoche. Many of you know, many of you may not know [yet]. He is a great Master, very very humble Dharma practitioner, and a highly accomplished Dharma practitioner, very high realized Dharma Master. He says:

"There are two main roads in Samsara. One is called "honesty" or "straight" road, and the other is "dishonesty", "crooked" road." That means there are two kinds of people: honest and dishonest. In order to practice Dharma one is to be an honest person. This is the first essential qualification to be a Dharma practitioner.

It might be said that if people take a straight or honest, straight path all the time, this will lead them to heaven or Pure Land. If people take a crooked path, this will lead them to lower realms, to hells. The, these two paths in samsara lead you to two very different directions. Therefore, this is very important for one to take the correct road at the beginning. Especially for Dharma, you have to take the correct path. If you take the crooked path, it will be difficult for you to make changes. It's because that [choice] will take you to the wrong direction, and it will destroy your energy, your time and many positive [things]. Therefore, it is very important to choose, to understand the importance of taking the correct path at the [very] beginning for Dharma.

Why and what makes people dishonest? The main cause, and the main condition for that could be many. One cause for people to be dishonest is so-called strong attachment to one's self. When one has a very strong attachment to [his/her] self, he/she is very selfish. When one is very selfish, then, of course, this person cannot see what is good and what is damaging for other people. Always thinking for oneself, taking [care] of oneself, not thinking much of others.

That is the main problem for people, because it creates unhappiness and troubles for them and others. Therefore, being very selfish is always a trouble that is the obstacle to practicing Dharma well. Because practicing Dharma mainly means you have to give many things and you have to be able to think of others. Otherwise, this is not pure Dharma. Pure Dharma means to really benefit others, not only one. But, a selfish person cannot do beneficial things [for others] thinking only for himself. Therefore, the first condition to be a dishonest person is strong attachment to oneself.

There is another emotion called "anger" which is also the main cause for people to be dishonest. A very aggressive person cannot be honest, because that kind of negative emotion destroys positive thoughts. Therefore, anger is a very strong emotion that destroys the condition for one to be an honest person. When some being very aggressive, very angry, he/she is ready destroy others, others' peace, others' good [things].

Human beings, naturally, have emotions, but there are people whose emotions are very very strong, very very aggressive. In this case, people should understand well and try to reduce this kind of negative emotion. It's because it's not only bad for one, but it's also bad for others as well. In short, very strong attachments, very strong angers are the main cause for us to be always dishonest, or always make mistakes, always bring obstacles to ourselves and to our Dharma practice as well.

When people say they are unhappy, then of course they lack peace. What reduce this kind of peace, or energy is the negative emotions I've mentioned earlier, especially hatred,

anger and jealousy. Those are three types of negative emotions in our mind. Whenever those emotions arise in people's mind, they lose inner peace. When there is not enough peace, you're unhappy. You are very distressed by these negative emotions. So, these negative emotions create negative karmas, create obstacles for one and others as well. Therefore, to understand the harm of these negative emotions is needed to be an honest person, to be a Dharma practitioner.

Try to understand the negative effect of negative emotions is called 'mind training' -to change your mind, the way your mind sees things. Otherwise, it's very difficult to really create good and pure peace in the mind. There is no way to practice Dharma if not reduce negative thoughts. Without changing this [negative] kind of view there is no way to receive power and benefit from Dharma. We have to train our mind and this is called Dharma practice.

What is Dharma practice? Dharma practice is to really change your mind, to change your view, the way you see things. Dharma practice doesn't mean just sitting there and thinking nothing. But to think what is good, what is important, what is not important, what is negative, what is positive, what brings you real benefit or what brings you obstacles. We have to distinguish between good and bad. This is called very practical Dharma practice, especially for the beginners like us. We have to know this basic understanding of Dharma: How to think correctly, accordingly?

All of us here, we have a very strong faith in Buddha and Dharma. And we have also a very strong belief in karma, cause and effect. But it's not enough to really practice Dharma. Believing is not enough yet. Believing is of course a condition, a basis, but how we believe is very important. How do we believe in karma? How do we believe in cause and effect? The answer is we have to investigate. We have to think a lot, and try to really understand by thinking, by examining. But not thinking, just believing in some words - that is not enough.

Therefore, we need to do: hearing, thinking, meditating. These three principles are the conditions to practice Dharma. Therefore, we have to think. We do not have time, we do not have energy to learn very widely, to study many volumes. But at least we have to do these three very practical things; really thinking what is good and what is bad in our mind all the time. That makes difference.

I've seen many people who really try to do that very hard and they make progress. And there are some other people hanging around. Or they're always talking about big things, talking about many volumes, many texts, but they're not really coming to the point yet. There are some people who try to do the essential thing, the real practical things. Then, they make big difference. They make big progress, they make big improvement.

We have to be practical since we do not have so much time or energy. Therefore, we have to come to the essential parts, something very beneficial for us. Then, we get good result in short time. This kind of thing we are looking for - [this is] real practicing Dharma.

We, especially monks and nuns, know 'Four Noble Truths'. That is a very essential Dharma practice in Buddhist tradition. And what are these Four Noble Truths? It's really talking about the nature of things. The Nature of life is called 'Truth of Sufferings'. There is no way to avoid this nature. Whatever it may be, we just go through and accept it. So, when we talk about the nature of life, then we have to talk about change, so-called impermanence. It is the reality of this life. To understand the reality of this life is called to understand Four Wisdoms.

When I say we may not have much time to live, that means life is uncertain. There's no guarantee that one will live many years. Of course, we hope and we wish that everyone enjoy longevity, happiness, prosperity, whatever, and everything is good. But things are not that way all the time. Things turn the opposite most of the time. It is because of cause and effect, it is because of samsara, it is because of karmas. Therefore, we need to understand reality, what is the real truth, what is the essential truth of the things, of the phenomena in the world.

So, the Truth of Suffering is the essential for us who want to practice Dharma. And to understand that we need to be honest. However, sometimes we are not being enough honest saying: "I really understand the Truth of Suffering." We say: "Oh, people have these four problems: birth, age, sickness and death" but we do not really take seriously than in mind. We just say: "Okay, there is birth, there is sickness and there is death, something like that ..." But trying to understand the meaning of the reality is [more] different than just saying we have to take that into our mind. We have to really prove that at the back of our mind, so that it gives us some understanding and realization.

But now we are saying that but we really do not have a deep understanding of what we say. Therefore, that doesn't make any change. But when someone really gets deep understanding of [all] these things, this person is really different; would be different from most people; would be a good Dharma practitioner with little attachment.

It is the same everywhere in the world, I think, people are busier and busier for this life. Therefore, people are not able to make any progress in the path. They are too busy with regular things. Why are people so busy with ordinary life? Because people see this life is more important than anything else. They do not see anything more important than that. That is the problem.

Therefore, Buddha teaches what is most important. Some people understand [meaning] of life, the meanings of the teachings, and that is called "good Dharma practitioner". Some [other] people who do not really follow the teachings of Buddha, they are so and so Dharma practitioner. There are many people who really do not care of Buddha's teachings at all. Of course, that's okay ... but there are some people who still want to try to practice Dharma, and, at the same time, they do not know how to do, what is important etc. So, I think, that is confusion. Therefore, we need to give more instructions [for them to] learn more things and try to make things correctly.

As I've said at the beginning, Dharma practice is to really try to change your mind, try to change yourself for the better. We have to ask ourselves: "Have I made any progress, any improvement in my mind? Have I made any changes with my anger and strong selfishness?" This is something we have to ask ourselves all the time and try to get a good answer to that. If you say "no", "not yet" all the time, then that is a bad answer. We cannot be like that.

Based on honesty, we have to try to get a good answer to that. But many people actually go in the opposite [direction]. They become more aggressive, more harsh, more impatient ... This is not a good signal, a good thing to be a Dharma practitioner. Being a Dharma practitioner means being more gentle, more patient, more compassionate, more sweet. Those are good qualities of a Dharma practitioner. Being angry is not only bad for people around you and it is also bad for yourself. Being impatient, some people are always angry, aggressive. And that reduces their connections with people, good relationships with people. And also that destroys inner peace, inner happiness of other people. Therefore, that is bad.

Buddhism is wisdom teaching, wisdom tradition, and also peaceful tradition, peaceful religion. And people need peace in their mind, because they are always distracted by daily life problems. So, it is very important to be a peaceful person for just a few minutes. It is something very valuable and nice to be, because we do not recognize the value of being peaceful. We do not know the value of peace. If you're able to do that, then you will see the result. You will see the positive (effects) and the benefits from doing that.

It is now accepted by many [people] in the world that Buddhism is not only religion but also good education. Buddhism is religious education or education by religion. To learn this kind of religion, Buddhism, we have to behave nicely, accordingly. If you behave in a way opposite to Buddhist [tradition], then you're not a good Dharma practitioner.

Education always is the first step, first thing in the world. Education is very important. Also in Buddhist tradition, education is very important. Having not enough education, those people who are so-called Dharma practitioners cannot behave well. They do not have good education. Education is about how to behave nicely. It's not only about knowledge, but [first of all] action. So, having nice action and behavior is very important. When we say "honest" - [this is] "honest is action". This is to act accordingly, to act nicely, to act according to reality. This is called [good] education or good behavior or good action. That is very important part for the Dharma society.

In the society, ordinary education teaches how to be a good person. And it is the same, in Dharma practice [it is taught] how to be a good person. It's the same meaning, the same essence. Because if you don't have, for example, this quality of being honest, then you will not be able to practice Dharma. That is a reality. In the worldly Dharma honesty is the first importance, and in the Dharma it is also the first important condition. What makes a good Dharma practitioner? It is to try to follow the system. If somebody understands a lot but does not follow by action, then that is a lie and that is not so good.

The great Western philosopher, Albert Einstein, says: "The only thing that gives advice to my learning is my education'. It is the same [for us]. We need this kind of education and understanding in Dharma. When you have so much knowledge but your action does not follow [what you know], you are still breaking samayas, still creating negative karmas. What gives you advice is education. Education gives advice whether your learning is good or not. So, having a good education, having a good behavior in the Dharma, in the worldly Dharma is very important.

Some people say: 'Having faith in religion would bring obstacles to freedom." They think having too much faith is bad for freedom. They cannot have freedom because thinking of this and that or believing in this and that cannot release them. But I think this is not [the case] that having religious means not having freedom. What is freedom actually? Freedom does not mean what you want to do you would do. Freedom is being respectful to each other, bringing peace between people, bringing more opening space between people. That is called freedom. Freedom means a big room, big space that you can move around. That is freedom.

So, a Western philosopher says: "Freedom is not reducing one's duty, but respect to each other". When you respect others, you give more room, more positive thoughts to others. Therefore, to be a more respectful person is not only [needed] in the worldly Dharma; it is also needed in the Dharma society. Because only by being respectful [to others], you will receive the [good] qualities of a Dharma person. If you are dishonest, disrespectful, then you will not benefit people at all. Being Dharma practitioner means to benefit, to be able to give positive things, bring happiness to each other. The meaning of being a Dharma practitioner is the same as the meaning of being respectful [to others].

Buddha says: "Whoever is older than you, see them as father or mother. Respect them. Whoever is your age (or younger), see them as brothers or sisters. Respect and care for them." This is how we should see others. We should see others like this: very close to ourselves, so that we're able to respect them. This is very important, because when we're able to establish this kind of view towards people, then we do not have reasons to be very aggressive or keep very distant. Instead, we should be very sweet to each other, and very close to each other.

That is the best way to be respectful, to bring happiness and freedom to people. Because often we are too aggressive, too mean to people, and they are not happy, not free to talk, to discuss, to share things with us. When we are being very respectful to each other, we are really creating freedom for us and others, we are creating positive things, a vast space for others. Thus, it is also a condition for everyone to get benefit from others, to get help, to get support, to get praise by others, and it is a very positive thing.

Buddhism requires this from everyone all the time. There is no reason [for anyone] to be disrespectful to [others]. When people are in good mood, they try to be respectful, nice and kind to others. But very often, people lose their temper, lose their patience, people

get upset. Then, they are not able to be respectful and sweet to each other. It is not good. Buddha says: "Be patient, so that you are able to be respectful to everyone all the time."

This is important, but our problem is that we get upset very easily, for little things. That is not so good. Because our mind is very narrow. We look like a child, very spoiled one. Therefore, we need to change our mind. We need to train our mind. We need to grow up mentally. Physically, we are too old, for many people maybe "too old". But mentally we are still like children. Therefore, it's not good being this way all the time. So, we need to understand things differently and we have to establish a new wisdom, a new understanding of life.

One of the main understandings which make strong foundation of Buddhist view the change of things and phenomenon - impermanence. This understanding is so important that one must have this kind of understanding to really take path to liberation, and also to establish renunciation. So, to understand the impermanence, understanding the change of the things is important.

So, this great philosopher, great scholar of India, Mahatma Gandhi, said: "Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever". So, you think of the changes all the time and learn as you were to live forever, you would never die.

I think this is a very good lecture that gives us a lot of understanding the meaning of life. It's because we, ordinary people, have a lot of grasping, attachment. We think things are permanent, they are there forever and they will never change. That's what we have in our mind. But in reality, things change all the time. They naturally change. To [really] understand that, we have to reduce the way we think.

Still, we usually have such strong ego grasping so we hold onto things very tightly. We think of tomorrow, the day after tomorrow and the like. As if life would never end. This is almost everyone's way of thinking. In fact, life is uncertain. You can't live like that forever. It's because everything depends on conditions. When the conditions fall apart, the results will also, depending on them. That means when the conditions for us to live in this world fall apart, then of course we will also lose the strength to live. Living depends on conditions. Therefore, Mahatma Gandhi's words "To live as you were to die tomorrow" mean you should prepare mentally, you should think of the impermanence of life every day, every moment.

The meaning of what he said "as if you were to die tomorrow" is the same as what Buddha teaches us about the nature of samsara. Samsara is uncertain. Nothing in samsara is really reliable, because things change every moment. There is no certainty. Therefore, as the Master Mahatma Gandhi says, live as if you were to die tomorrow.

In the history of Buddhism, we can learn [a lot] from the lives of great masters in India, Tibet and everywhere in the world. The reason for them to practice Dharma is because samsara is not reliable. Life is not reliable. It's because everyone will eventually lose

everything, including this life, including this beloved body. Eventually, we have to leave everything behind, this is the meaning of samsara and this is the reality of samsara. Therefore, prepare for Dharma, or prepare for death. The only thing to think of is the chain of the impermanence's parts. It's essential and it's very practical, very necessary.

We learn the same meaning from the life story of great master Milarepa. What did he do with his life in the cave? Of course, what makes him such a strong person to be in the cave without anything. The reason for him to be that strong, the reason the condition that gave him such strength is His understanding the nature of samsara, understanding the reality of life. He really understood and he realized the real essence. There is no essence for this life. This is such positive a good result. We should think of this story, we should look after similar ones and try to learn something, to get some understanding and have a different attitude.

Almost everyone knows the story of Buddha life. But we have to learn something from the story of Buddha. Buddha didn't leave the kingdom because of arguments with the family. He left because of his understanding of the reality of life. He left the kingdom, His homeland because of his renunciation. And He also understood the quality, the importance of liberation. We have to learn this from Buddha's story. Buddha's story sends us a message. His story is to give us better understanding of what is real meaning of life.

It happens very often that when people have problems, they remember Dharma. For example, when people are in bad situation say with their business, when business goes down, or business is very slow, or no business at all, then people try to think something: "Maybe I pray to Buddha or I practice Dharma" something like that. This is not a really good Dharma practitioner. To be a Dharma practitioner, the best reason should be that of Buddha: understanding the meaning of life. He was a great person who had everything but all that was the most important thing for him. What was the most meaningful for him? He was able to reach that understanding, the inner understanding and also the inner peace.

To reach that [understanding], externally we have to give up many things. If we don't give up many thing, to practice Dharma is difficult. So, at least we have to understand and try to reduce this strong [inner] wish that: "I want this. I want all of this. I do not want to lose it. I do not want to leave this behind me ..." So, we want to hold onto everything. This is the main problem.

This is actually a difficult thing to reduce [greed]. Still, if we do not try to reduce our tight attachment to everything that will bring more problems. That makes more obstacles and we're stuck over there, and we will never get in anywhere. We will never reach anywhere, just stuck in there and sufferings and sufferings, because of the inner situation. So, [we] worry too much, think too much, and of course we never get anywhere. That's because we do not have any understanding yet. Therefore, like the teacher says: "To live as if you were to die tomorrow", which means very good preparation. [We should say] I

am ready to leave anywhere, anytime, something like that. But we are not prepared at all yet.

In fact, we do not want to leave at all. If we know that this is the time for us to leave, then that's scary. That brings a lot of obstacles. Because we cannot understand, we cannot go through this. So, this kind of lessons, the story of Milarepa and stories of Buddha's life ... We should look after that, we should learn from them. Not just listen that to enjoy but listen to the story for your understanding. That is very important.

What helps to reduce attachment is to establish satisfaction or contentment. Great Master from India Nagarjuna says: "Contentment is the only jewel, treasure." So, nothing is more valuable than contentment. Why do we say that? It's because having not enough contentment or having attachment bring only suffering to people. What reduces sufferings is to content or whatever one possesses. But the nature of human beings is something opposite of contentment. They are always looking for something more, something better, bigger. And then of course in order for us to have more and more, we have to spend energy, time and knowledge etc. Then, that creates more sorrows, worry, many problems. Therefore, contentment is a treasure, treasure of life.

Understand the importance of contentment is a way to control oneself from chasing after so many material things. It is important to control oneself by this understanding otherwise it would be crazy, too difficult, and too tiring. We, human beings, are getting older and older. That's the nature. We're getting weaker and weaker. That's the nature. If we cannot control what is in our mind, the mind will become crazier and wilder. Physically, we'll be getting weaker and if we don't have contentment, that will bring big problems. That brings a lot of worries, tiredness. So, then you will have inner peace. You have peace, internally, when we have enough contentment. So, I think that is the key point.

And also we need to think of others sentient beings, not only humans but also all other beings. And we should have compassion for them. And also, for us to establish the idea that oneself is to think of others, we have to try to understand the benefits of doing this. What is the quality of compassion. What are the negative effects of not doing this. We have to understand which is better to choose from them.

What is compassion? Compassion means to wish, to have genuine wish that others are able to avoid or reduce sufferings. Compassion means you really wish, from the bottom of your heart, that any sufferings of others will diminish.

We wish beings be able to reduce their sufferings. That's one thing. Suffering is the result, and there are the causes [of sufferings]. So, there are two parts. Ignorance, anger, attachment, and jealousy are negative emotions - causes of sufferings. Actions that go along these negative emotions are called karmas. So, we not only wish to reduce sufferings - the results, but also wish to diminish the causes of sufferings. It is how to develop genuine compassion.

We say to wish all sentient beings be able to avoid sufferings. But thinking is not enough, we have to put [words] into action. Internally, we're thinking about others' happiness, but externally we should be very careful not harm others. But at our level, we are not able to do so all the time. Because of our [negative] views we sometimes harm others. We sometimes are selfish, we have no understanding. In this case, our action is harmful to others. When you are being very selfish that means you are not doing any [good] things, but just harms, to others. This is a very common problem that often happens with us.

In the teachings of Buddha and great masters they say we have to remember what kind of action we cannot have, and what kind of action we should have. So, to be mindful always is the first thing to be compassionate to others. To take care of one's conduct of body, speech and mind is the first condition to be a good, a compassionate Dharma practitioner.

It's not easy to be a compassionate person, because the kind of compassion described in Buddha's teaching is of a very high level. Somehow everyone can be kind to a few, to certain people, but [real] compassion means to be kind to all sentient beings. That kind of compassion is described by Buddha in the Mahayana teachings. To establish that, we must put a lot of efforts, actions and interest into it. Also we have to try to work very hard. It is not just something that arises in your mind by wishing, but by putting a lot of efforts like Buddha himself who worked very hard to establish such genuine compassion.

Therefore, whoever really wants to do this must understand the necessary conditions to develop this mind and then try to do so. We cannot be a compassionate person by just words, but we have to be compassionate in reality. Therefore, we have to try very hard. Also, we have to be patient to really establish this kind compassion in mind. This is not easy. It is something that takes a lot of time. It took Buddha many aeons to develop bodhicitta.

The second condition for us to develop practice Dharma well is so-called attentiveness. Attentiveness means always pay attention, not forget. When we do not pay attention, for example to our conduct, our own practice, we lose it. Therefore, attentiveness means always focus on whatever one is doing, always remember, always understand what one is doing. Often we lose that. Often we forget, we don't know what we are doing, where we are going. So, that is the problem. To be attentive is very important.

So, be careful whatever we're doing. When we practice Dharma we have to be careful of our body, mind, speech, our conduct. When we are doing practice, for example, of compassion, we have to be careful with something. For example, we cannot be angry, we cannot be mad at someone, we cannot be unhappy, upset because of this or that. This is called carefulness.

If we are not enough careful: "I want to say something mean to that person." "I want to say something that makes him/her very impressed." Or "I want to take him down." When we give ourselves this kind of chance we are not careful enough. When we give us this chance, then this is a mistake. What happens if we give us such chance? That

means we are creating more negative karmas. Negative karma is the result we get for ourselves. Negative karmas destroy positive things and cut the roots of goodness. So, being careful is always important. It is very important for Dharma practice for all the time.

The second part of the lesson given by Mahatma Gandhi is “Learn as if you were to live forever”. That means [all life] until we die, we try to learn something. It is very suitable in Dharma, in the Buddhist tradition. Buddha says: “One should try to learn even though tomorrow [he will] die”. That is the meaning. The reason to say that is [the value] of knowledge because there is continuity of consciousness. When we learn more, we are able to take that knowledge along [our] consciousness. So, Buddha himself says: “Our body will not reach next life, but knowledge will reach next life”. So, to have more knowledge, to learn more means to be better in the next life, to be smarter, more understanding, more knowledgeable in the next life. So, there is no limitation in learning. We cannot say: “I am too old, I am sick” or whatever. We have to try to study and to be more knowledgeable.

This is the end of the first day teaching

Talk on 03.10.2013

When we say Tibetan Buddhism, Chinese Buddhism, Vietnamese Buddhism, we make [it sound] very different. But in reality, it's all about Buddhism. It's all about the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. It's all about liberation. So, it is actually the same. There may be differences in particular studies, in rituals or ceremonies, something like that. But the meaning is the same, because we all believe in cause-and-effect, we all believe in interdependent origination. The essence is the same of all Buddhist traditions in the world. Therefore, we should understand that, and we should establish pure view of all the Buddhist traditions in the world.

When we take refuge in the Three Jewels, the object [of refuge] is very great, like endless space. We take refuge in the Three Jewels of three times and ten directions. It includes all. That means, we cannot divide like this: Sangha of Chinese Buddhist tradition, Vietnamese tradition, Tibetan tradition or whatever. When taking refuge, we should not say: “I will take refuge in this Buddha but not that Buddha, or this Bodhisattva but not that Bodhisattva, or this Dharma but not that Dharma.” This is not the pure view, the correct way of taking refuge. The correct, the most appropriate way of taking refuge is: “I take refuge in all of the Buddhas, all of the Bodhisattvas, Dharma, Sangha of three times and ten directions.” This is how we take refuge.

I've found one of the biggest mistakes that people often make (especially Buddhist community in the world): they have dualistic grasping. Dualistic grasping is the root of samsara. Therefore, we need to reduce this kind of grasping. It is very important that we have to respect for all traditions. We have to try very hard to establish pure view.

We need to understand that all traditions of Buddhism in the world serve people, serve human beings, serve sentient being very well. It is needed by sentient beings, needed by people. Therefore, we have to accept that all Buddhist traditions in the world are very powerful, helpful, useful, and correct. It is simple way of understanding the value of all Buddhism traditions in the world. And it is a good way of understanding as well.

The reason for us to be Buddhists should be good. Especially in Buddhism we talk about how to reduce one's own negative emotions. And Buddha teaches this very well. Among all the religions in the world, Buddhism teaches the best way of understanding how to deal with one's own upcoming problems, one's own mistakes. Buddhism shows you the best way to understand your own faults. If we think there's no way to understand [our] own faults, then it is difficult to make ourselves better. But if one knows one's own faults, then one has a chance to change for the better.

It is said often by people [in the world] and prestigious scholars that Buddhism is the profound education. It is not only a religion, but it is a very good education, [which is] something very important to be valued. Sometimes, some religions probably make people so confused or get confusing information, but I think Buddhism gives very clear information about everything. Especially, Buddhism recognizes the importance of time, the time you are in this world

This is something very necessary for us to know. If everything is useless then that is okay, but if everything is useful then the question is:” How do we use it?” The answer from Buddhist tradition is very clear. It is a great way, good way; it is valuable because this [life] would be lost. Therefore, while we have this human being knowledge, human life and many opportunities, we should use it and [know] how to use it. Therefore, it is very important to understand the value of the time that we have now. And it is taught in the Buddhist tradition very well – what is related to the value of human life. Human body is valuable and the time we're being [here] is valuable. It is very important to understand that and to use that in a correct way.

Many Buddhist texts mention how valuable human life is. But human life is only valuable when one uses it in a correct way. It's not really valuable when someone uses it just for ordinary or regular gains. But what makes human life valuable? This is knowledge and conduct. To unify human knowledge and human conduct together will make human life perfect and valuable; human life, which may understand cause-and-effect and act according to the law of cause-and-effect.

Often people do things opposite to the law and that makes human life not valuable. The only thing that makes human life very valuable is to have a correct view and have a

correct conduct together. And to understand the importance of time will make human being a perfect life.

Being very rich, very famous, being in high position do not make human life really meaningful. What makes human life meaningful? According to Buddhist understanding to be meaningful is to be useful, to be helpful to others, to open hearts for others. This is a correct way of understanding. Some people in this world create a lot of things but, in fact, they are not really beneficial to others much. On the contrary, sometimes they are very harmful. The meaning for human life is to bring benefits to others, to help others, to think about others. This is an important message by Buddha, and the meaning of the teaching of Buddha.

One of the most important thing for Buddhist people to understand is, as I have said earlier, [the value of] the time we are being here, because of impermanence. But most people do not understand the value of that much and they do not try to be diligent for Dharma. When we practice Dharma, when we learn Dharma, we have to use our time as much as we could for the result that we want to get. Therefore, to use our time correctly, not wasting it, is very important.

How do we do that? We have to know the value of human body. There are two things that make human [body] so special. First, it is difficult to obtain. To obtain it there [should] be lot of conditions which we have to create. Second, it is easy to destroy. Therefore, we have to be careful [about] the time we have here.

A great American guy, a famous one, Benjamin Franklin said: “You may delay, but time will not”. I think this is very true. We often delay many things, especially Dharma practice. We delay just naturally: “Oh I will do that later or tomorrow/next week.” But time will not delay for you. That is the problem.

With human knowledge we have the ability to protect ourselves from being in suffering, in danger, because human knowledge has the ability to distinguish what is good, what should be no good. Therefore, human knowledge is a very special knowledge and that knowledge is supported by human life. No other body can attain similar knowledge. Therefore, human knowledge is special and that knowledge has a power to protect ourselves from samsara, from negative emotions and negative karmas. It's because human beings have this knowledge that knows how to avoid bad karma.

But we do not know. [That is] we, of course, know what is good and what is bad, but the problem is that we have the bad tendency in our mind which is not controllable. Because of that, we often do things that are opposite to the requirements by the law of karma. But Buddha says: “You have to be responsible not only for others, but for yourself as well. You are your own protector.” You have to take care of yourself first, only then you're able to protect others. That is a very clear message that we should change ourselves first, and then try to do good things for others.

When someone takes the good path they can go the correct way, the good way. Someone else takes a wrong path and gets into big troubles. They even end their life in these [troubles]. What makes ordinary people ordinary? It's ignorance. Ignorance makes people ordinary, ignorant people who do not really know the reality. We say ordinary people are like children. The noble people see us like children. "Children" means those who are not grown up mentally. Who do not know many things is 'children'.

So, we know we have a lot of ignorance. And what we want is to reduce our ignorance and to establish wisdom. We want to grow up a lot of wisdom in our mind. This is the goal for us. Then, what give us the best wisdom are the instructions of Buddha; but why when we are having these great, perfect, wonderful instructions, we still try now to follow correctly. That is really big problem for us. And it's like what Franklin said: "One is born ignorant. And one must work hard to remain stupid." We are doing that in many ways. So, I think we should be aware of this.

Because of our ignorance we do not see what is important. We don't see life is the most important [thing]. This life is the most important [opportunity] for us learn to understand things correctly. This is true to think further, to think of the future, to prepare oneself for the future is important. Still, it's very important, equally important, to see the importance of this life. This life is the main life. Whether we make any progress, any improvement with our practice and establish compassion, with everything – [all about this life]. The American famous guy says: "We usually loose today because there had been yesterday and tomorrow is coming". It is similar to what's happening in our lives.

There are people, so old people or people who have physical difficulties. They want to end their lives soon. I have heard of this many times from many people in China, US, Tibet and Vietnam. When they get very old they don't want to live: "I want to die." They do not see the importance, the value of this life. They cannot accept some of the troubles related to this life. Therefore, we often lose this life, as this guy says: "We often lose our today because there had been yesterday and tomorrow is coming". So, I think it is important to really know that it is the time that we have to do something. We have to make something that make ourselves special, beneficial. It is the time, because Buddha says: "This is the only human life that you may obtain, because it is almost impossible for you to be again human being". We should know this.

[As for] causes and conditions for human life: there has [to be] causes and conditions. Conditions and causes of human life is good actions, good karmas. In the past, we have done a lot of virtuous things such as taking good keeping good conduct, doing a lot generosity and making many aspirations for this result of life. This human body has not come from any negative karmas, but from a lot of good actions. But, if we do not understand that and we do not do virtuous activities. Once we lose it, it is very very difficult to find again. That is the meaning of Buddha's teaching.

So, the conditions that we've created in the past are very special. Because of that, the fruit of this life is special. But in the future, whether we will be able to be human being

again depends on how we think or what we do. And to understand this, we need to have some wisdom, some correct understanding.

Many people think this human life comes from nothing or comes from or permanent conditions. Some people even think all are created by some beings. But we believe that this human life comes from karmas: virtuous karma. Therefore, we need to appreciate this human life, and we need to make this more useful, not only for ourselves but for others. Then, we will have future and hope. As I've said earlier, because of ignorance, because of attachment, anger, and jealousy we almost do not have hope to be human beings again. Since we know this problem the only thing we need to do is to try to solve this problem using the great, very clear, useful, practical instructions, teachings, messages given by Buddha.

Buddhism is about to understand one's own mistakes. That is an important part, but people often understand differently. Usually people are critical of others. This is not a correct way to be good people. A real Buddhist practitioner means always check one's own actions, one's own mistake and try to change, to fix one's own problem. We know that's our habits: to place blame on others and pretend oneself being perfect. This is not honest. We are like this: always point at others' [faults] and say: "You are wrong or he/she is bad. I am okay. I am good." This is the opposite of what Buddha taught us.

This is a big problem that destroys harmony, good relationships between Sangha [members] and destroys the good understanding between people. They always criticize each other, say bad [things] about someone behind. This is not [according to] good Buddhist tradition, this is not Buddha's teaching. Therefore, we (especially a kind of community like this) must know this kind of important thing. We must know what is the most important about being a good community, especially a Buddhist community. What is the most necessary for Buddhist community: harmony, good relationship, good respect to each other, not to say bad things about each other, but to say good thing about each other. This is very very important.

We see this pagoda is beautiful. What makes the pagoda beautiful? It's not about the construction, but the shanga, the community. The community makes the pagoda, the temple beautiful. If the community is bad, the shanga bad, the construction itself is not a beautiful, Buddhist holy place, according to Buddhism. Buddhist monasteries must have a good community with good knowledge and good conduct. That'll make the place beautiful and good. Therefore, shanga at anyplace, any pagoda, have to be careful, have to have good knowledge; not only knowledge but good behavior; to behave nicely, accordingly. It is very important.

Buddha says: "My teachings will not be destroyed by non-Buddhist people, but it will be destroyed by Buddhist people, by monks, my own disciples." Buddha's teaching is like a lion. A lion is such a strong animal that other animals cannot eat [him], but he can be eaten by the beings in his body. So, the Buddhist community, if not being careful enough, will really destroy the teachings of Buddha. Therefore, communities and shangas should

have good knowledge, good conduct, harmony and respect to each other. This is really important.

One of the most important subjects in Buddhist tradition, Buddhist texts, especially in Mahayana tradition is patience. 'Patience' means 'peace'. A patient person is a peaceful person. The essence of Buddha's teaching is peace – Great Peace. Also the nature of mind of sentient being is peace, is great peace. The liberation we want to achieve is also great peace. So, Buddha's teachings are actually about peace; about how to achieve peace, how to develop that kind of peace. So, patience is very important and the greatest peace is the liberation.

Patience in the teachings of Buddhism is so important and it is more important than generosity. Patience is a higher level in the Buddhist path. So, to reach that is not easy, because patience in Buddhist teachings is not small patience; it is a great patience. A patient mind means a mind that sees everyone equally important. Like father or mother. The way to see all sentient beings like that is important. It is called 'patience' that is taught in Buddhist teachings. And being patient means not being short-tempered. A person who gets angry very easily is not patient, is not peaceful is harmful, aggressive or disgusted. According to the Buddhist teachings it is very important to be peaceful to everyone, all sentient beings equally; be patient like a mother to her own child. This is the kind patience that is taught in every Buddhist tradition.

To teach people to be patient is a very important education. When people do not have enough patience - for example, a mother is not patient enough to her children - it would be dangerous. That makes children feel unhappy and do nonsense to her. Therefore, the mother being patient is very important to the children. As for husband and wife, if they are not patient to each other, they can be aggressive, and dangerous to each other. They can destroy happiness, destroy the relationship, and the family.

As for a teacher, if he or she is not patient that will bring a lot of unhappiness to the disciples. This is the same for disciples. If they are not patient enough, that'll bring more problems to the harmony between them. As I've said earlier, Buddhism is about education and it helps people learn to be very patient, how to accept things in a suitable way, in a correct way, according to the situation, according to the law of karmic connections, karmic conditions. So, it is a very high way of educating people.

There's a famous saying in the West: "The highest result of education is patience." If someone is able to be patient and accepts things patiently, that person must be very well educated. Not only we Buddhists say that patience is important, all world's religious people, non-Buddhist people, everyone see it is very important to be patient.

The other quality of patience is great remedy to anger, hatred and aggression. When people run out of patience, they get angry. Anger is something very powerful that destroys all virtuous things that one has created. Anger has the power, the negative power that reduces the seed of Dharma activities, of Dharma virtuous things. Buddha has once

said, as all Bodhisattva including Shantideva have: “Simple strong anger destroys all the virtuous things that one has created for one thousand years”. Anger is so strong. Anger has been a fire that burns all the seeds, all the virtuous things, fast and fast, like tenderness, compassion, kindness. All would be burned and destroyed by anger. Patience is the only way to reduce, to control, to destroy one’s anger, hatred. Therefore, patience is very important.

Also, we, people like us, have not done very much. We have done very little for Buddha’s Dharma. Very little. But we have very huge, very great anger, hatred. Do we accept that we have a lot of anger or we have a lot of patience? གྲྲWe must protect whatever we have done for our goodness. We have to protect whatever we have created and accumulated. This is the only way we protect that, as I’ve mentioned earlier to you. Not only me. I’m speaking for the Buddha. I’m passing the messages of the Buddha, of the intellectual people. So, we want to protect our virtuous activities, virtuous seeds, virtuous habits, whatever. Therefore, we need to be patient.

As I’ve said, being a very angry person, aggressive person is really ugly and also dangerous. “Dangerous” means you make your own style bad, you make yourself look bad. Shantideva says: “Angry person, aggressive person, has countless enemies. While a patient person, compassionate person has no enemy”. That’s the difference between one being patient and one being not patient. If a person is not being patient he creates a lot of enemies, a lot of aggressive people around. The ordinary way of getting enemies is to get angry, to create more hatred and try to attack, try to harm and try to destroy because of anger. Shantideva says: “The only thing that solves the problem, that destroys your enemy, is to destroy your own anger. Because enemy is like space, is endless”. So, if you want to make more friends, you have to be patient, you have to be kind, you have to be compassionate.

So, that is mistake we often make because of not having enough patience. It is everywhere the same, not only in Tibetan or Vietnamese but it happens in all other [places]. It is a very common problem. And in one’s personal life, of course, being patient is very useful, and being impatient is harmful to him. Buddha is victorious due to his patience. Buddha wins all attacks by enemies, by Maras through the power of patience. Because of his patience, he was the winner of the world. We can do something [good] with patience that makes us happier and easier.

And Dalai Lama says: “Nobody says I am very happy because I have lots of anger. Nobody says so. If anyone says so, that must be a crazy person”. I think this is true. Anger destroys one’s own peace and happiness. Anger hurts one’s mind, one’s heart. That we know and we could feel that. Would anyone of you say: “Oh, I am very happy because of my anger”. Would you? Anger is something painful inside and of course we see it destroys peace, inner peace. When we have anger we are out of our control. We do not know what is happening. Almost we don’t remember. After that, when the anger has disappeared, there is some pain that stays in our heart. So, there’s fruit pain left by anger.

Therefore, if one want to keep in peace, then, of course, we have to try to destroy, try to control, try to recognize one's anger, or try to put it away, or try to liberate. That is something very important for a person's life.

Nowadays, many scientists, professors and scholars in the world have the same view that Buddhism is very realistic, very useful for the human society. Buddhism is more and more needed. Dalai Lama [the 14th] always mentions the importance of Buddhism and that is related to science. Buddhist view reaches the reality. It makes the reality active [and] that is the power of Buddhism. Therefore, it is accepted that it's a religion that serves the human society in a perfect way.

Religion, in general, especially Buddhism, is not superstition. On the contrary, it is realistic and it is very active. It is true. That we can see by our own eyes. We can hear it by our own hearing. We can see people that destroy themselves because of their anger, because of their desire. We can see it happens a lot in the world, especially in China. For example, so much desire, corruption. People destroy themselves, their own lives, they end up in jails. They destroy their lives [because of] the way they're doing, because there is so much negative emotion that is running in their mind.

Buddhism is actually the best way to show you the negative part of the mind, your own problems. And therefore, many scholars, many scientists accept Buddhism is a science-religion. There is a very very close connection between Buddhism and science. And also, there is a professor at Colombia University in America says: "Buddhism is all about science. Its science is very systematic pursuit of the accurate so-called knowledge of the reality". Then, science is Buddhism, and Buddhism is science.

As you can see, Buddhism really reaches the reality. Buddhism is the way that brings more active reality and science [does so] as well. Therefore, it is the inner science (Buddhism is so-called inner science). So, Buddhism is not something that superstitious. Those who do not have [correct] knowledge, say: "Oh, you're a superstitious person because you have faith in Buddha, you believe in karma". Some people even, in fact, think: "Oh, religious person, or a Buddhist person means very weak person." But if you investigate, if you have the ability, if you use the power of your knowledge, the result [you reach] is like that of the Noble [beings]. They went through all education – the teachings in the Buddhism - and they get such high achievements. At least they're able to reduce, to get rid of negative thoughts. So, their mind is always very calm, very peaceful and gentle.

Now we all have taken refuge in the Three Jewels. That means we have taken refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Shanga and we believe in these Three Jewels. We put all trust in the Three Jewels. The only request by doing that is not to harm others. Dharma doesn't allow anyone to attack, to harm others. Therefore, we need to know that. We have to be peaceful by body, speech, and mind. It is very important. Harmful means there are direct harmful actions and indirect harmful actions. Sometimes we say bad things behind others, it is indirect harmful attack.

Also, we eat a lot of meat of other beings and this is indirect harmful action. So, it is important to be kind not only to human being but also to other sentient beings, animals, everything and everyone. Because we want to develop compassion and bodhicitta like Buddha does. Bodhicitta is a mind that contains every sentient being, with no difference. Every being is equally important, like one's own child, only child. That is very important wish and action in Buddhist tradition. Because people eat meat and seafood, other people have many chances to make money on these things. If no one eats, of course, no one would be able to sell these animals. The action of eating meat is harmful to others in a way. Therefore, we Buddhist, at least, we have to try to be vegetarian as much as possible.

Question: *I've taken refuge in You, so can I recite some mantras that I have got through internet or books?*

Answer: There are some conditions to practice Secret Yana (Vajrayana). But there are common mantras such as Vajrasattva mantra, Guru mantra, Manjushri mantra, I think, are ok [to recite]. One thing that makes one able to recite mantras is faith. If one has strong, genuine faith in Vajrasattva then I think it is ok to recite 100-syllables.

Question: *To practice Vajrayana we need a teacher who is close to us to help us in the practice, because to practice Vajrayana is difficult. Is that [thinking] correct?*

Answer: It's very important to have a good instructor or root teacher (guru). It is very important at beginning to receive complete teachings, complete and clear instructions. The second thing, I think, is that the disciple should make connection, inner connection with the teacher. I think separation is something of the inner world. Separation is not an external thing but an inner thing. If externally separated then it's just external, but if there is inner connection remains then I don't think this is separation. So there is some way to make connection mentally, internally between the disciples and the teacher.

Is it difficult to practice Vajrayana? The answer is it depends on individuals. Generally speaking to practice Dharma is difficult. Because practicing Dharma means taking care of one's own mind which is very difficult to do. It is difficult to practice Sutrayana in a correct way. Sutrayana teaches a lot. Sutrayana teaches emptiness and bodhicitta. It's not easy at all. But to practice Vajrayana means individuals should be smarter, have more mental faculty. The answer is: maybe it's difficult maybe it's not. It depends on one's own system and ability. If you try to practice it continually then it becomes easier. At the beginning it may be not very easy.

This is the end of the second day teaching

