

## **Teachings in Bodh Gaya (December 2008 - January 2009)**

During my time in Bodh Gaya I studied with two very special nuns: Venerable Tenzin Chogyi and Venerable Damcho. What follows are my notes. With Tenzin Chogyi we spent most of our time on the text by Shantideva “A Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life.”

### ***NOTES from Teachings in Bodh Gaya***

#### **ROOT INSTITUTE BACKGROUND**

- The Root Institute got its name from the roots of the bodhi tree signifying wisdom.
- Gelugpa tradition, 1984, lama Yeshe and lama zopa Rinpoche
- Fpmt started in the mid 1960s, kopan monastery in nepal
- Retreat huts, give back to Indian community (health clinic) free health care, maitreya school project
- Hindi dharma program (oxford educated monk who is half Indian)
- Not to convert anyone but just expose them to the teachings of the Buddha
- Test his words as a goldsmith test gold – Buddha

#### **Dharma Notes – Buddhism**

- Dharma changes you radically
- Problems come from failing to understand how we relate to others and how the world relates to us
- Our suffering goes away leaving behind everything we created
- Open to being changed, dharma recipe to cook up happiness, you already have all of the ingredients
- Dharma is the map but it is out of step with dominant culture ideas
- When you are with others watch your speech
- When you are alone watch your mind
- Little doubts little realization, big doubts big realization
- What is offered at root is a set of tools applied to being a better human being
- Tibetan translation of Buddhist is “inner being”
- Turning your attention inside for solutions to the problems you face
- Fix it mentally, some external conditions, inner experiences very happy
- Physical care (Buddha dharma teaching and hungry farmer story)
- Shantideva (leather soles to control mind)
- Protect our mind so bumpy situations don’t hurt us
- Klesha are mental states that are disturbing, delusions or afflicted emotions
- Thoughts that are emotional and disturbing
- Anger, frustration, aversion and hatred
- These emotional thoughts are not you, you are not that because it is not always there!
- Attachment and aversion, anger
- Mind of attachment on display
- Our relationship to objects and other people

- Ideal state is not mental and emotionless
- Aim is to look at what emotions come with us and see which ones are effective and which are wholesome
- Love and compassion based on correct relationship to object, attachment is the opposite of love in Buddhist terminology
- Love, take as object a human being and emotional response is that you want it to be happy
- Attachment – you look at a human being and you want them to make you happy
- With love we are rich, with attachment we are poor and impoverished
- Look at the difference between the attitudes—one is completely based in self cherishing and the other is oriented toward others
- We put our expectations on someone in attachment we aren't happy we want them to pick us as the only person that matters in the world
- We are yearning for intimacy but we never get there because we don't engage with them as a shifting, complex person and we are always assessing if they fulfill our needs
- Lower the expectation that they can make you happy—but they can be a condition
- Work with our minds to have peacefulness, contentedness and joy
- Attachment is rooted in ignorance that perceived ourselves to exist in an incorrect way
- We are not separate from everything else
- We coexist with other and we are always changing
- As long as you see yourself as me that needs to be fed that prevents real intimacy
- The antidote to attachment is generosity, attitude to give
- Never abandon a beggar even if you yourself have nothing
- In the mind of generosity you are full and want to give
- Opposing mental tendencies to hold things for yourself
- Having fixed set of expectations is unrealistic because people are always shifting and changing, loosen fixation and grasping
- Ananda and Buddha: friendship is not half of monastic life it is whole!
- Friendship, reflect back best qualities
- Painter story (mirror)
- Delusions looking at temporary states that come and go
- Look at the degree to which afflictive emotions affect you and the power of mindfulness
- We can continually transform ourselves
- Nature of mind is luminous and knowing
- Harbor positive thoughts, Aristotle, all actions good and happiness
- Moths and light
- Independent of circumstances, unaffected
- Karmapa in NYC: our mind is like a mirror heavy object in reflection but mirror doesn't have to bear the weight
- Bridges for aspiration and potential to come into me

#### Tenets of Buddhism

- all compound phenomena is changing

- grasping at things that are seemingly permanent makes us suffer, you cannot step into the same river twice, grasping at permanence messes up our life planning
- only right now full present right now
- when you wake up “oh my god, I haven’t died, I’m alive!” – lama zopa Rinpoche
- cut this feeling of impermanence
- recognizing suffering look at it in order to really develop compassion and a firm wish to end suffering, renouncing suffering and its causes
- things that cause afflictive emotions from even things that seem to bring happiness, good emotions in a box covered by afflictive emotions
- health is the slowest movement towards disintegration
- 3 types of suffering: suffering of suffering (birth, death, sickness) suffering of change (the nature of pleasure is to change in to pain, chocolate cake) you can appreciate small moments of pleasure but know in their nature turn to pain, suffering of conditioned existence, continually being dominated by our afflictive emotions and karma we create, more energy we put into transitory pleasure less we put into lasting happiness, mental state of happiness is that it renews itself it is spontaneous
- we can’t make others happy but we can be a condition for happiness, we exist in interdependence
- first end suffering for yourself then you must orient your path to work for happiness of others
- we are all flawed but we can work with that
- prostrating is humbling and an antidote to pride when we receive teachings we prostrate to cut our pride thinking we already know what we will receive
- the mind is in the heart (citta)
- when you have an altar, you are no longer the center
- ultimately attachment is corrosive to love, look at the ratio of love to attachment, so much attachment no love, love for everyone
- suffering comes from self grasping and wanting things for yourself
- mind produces our experiences, work with our mind and organize our sensory input
- node in a network, see ourselves as an ingredient
- you can relax you are just an ingredient and what you contribute is not central
- we are neither deficient nor complete
- awakening our fullest potential is the only way we can really contribute
- before you begin your sitting practice make clear why you are doing it: control the mind and develop mindfulness awareness
- our self cherishing causes us pain
- “the secret of the man of 40”
- sense of suffering desire means lack, wanting, neediness, it’s not a good place
- “just friends I didn’t know yet.” – dalai lama
- blessings and grace
- it is possible to have long term relationships but you have to work very hard
- commitment to bodhichitta, renewing and refreshing it
- wholesome relationships, abandoning sexual misconduct is a statement in favor of monogamous relationships

- we have to clean our relationships, reinforce, replenish our capacity to be tolerant, compassionate, we need them in relationships, excellent place to practice being generous and loving
- bodhisattva, awakening warrior, really brave
- internalizing the idea, realization
- sutra goes below the neck, life changing insight
- studying vs. practicing Buddhism
- joyous effort, engaging in virtue
- 6 perfections: giving, morality, patience, joyous effort, concentration and wisdom
- wishing for enlightenment of all sentient beings, aspiring (wish and promise to never give up) engaging are 2 aspects of bodhicitta
- child of the victorious Buddha
- object (all sentient beings), intention (alleviate suffering by becoming a Buddha) action (becoming a liberated being) completion (liberating all beings)
- child of Buddha, your lineage has changed, beloved of the buddhas, exceed arhats
- thinking and doing create causes engaging in 6 perfections
- bodhicitta isn't about being nice, fierce, courageous mind
- before to purify and accumulate merit, learning, contemplation, meditation
- merit = spiritual force to create the cause for realization, offerings, prostrations, taking refuge
- offering anything beautiful
- reverence, respect, values, dharma, physical and mental prostrations
- shifting priorities, 3 jewels are what matters
- Buddha jewel is the omniscient mind of the enlightened being
- Leaving samsara when we take refuge
- Conventional and ultimate for each jewel, causal refuge (what we depend on), resultant refuge (our own buddhahood)
- Fake it till you make it
- Everyone around you is a buddha emanation trying to get you enlightened
- Not about being saved, put in tremendous amount of effort and work
- No good or evil in Buddhism just ignorance and wisdom

#### Four Seals

- all compound phenomenon is changing (except for 3 things: generic mental image, emptiness)
- all contaminated phenomena is the nature of suffering, kleshas are thoughts that disturb our state of mind
- all phenomena is empty and selfless
- nirvana is true peace free from karma and delusion
- [berzinearchives.org](http://berzinearchives.org)
- Negative karma is created by mental afflictions, karma and ultimate nature of reality, ignorance, attachment and aversion
- virtue: happiness is temporary, liberation is long term
- object is not the cause but a condition
- attachment is liking things stupidly and disliking things stupidly
- suffering comes from nonvirtue

- good karma done with wisdom, virtue
- emptiness of agent, object, action
- actions done with wisdom merit to future enlightenment
- rejoicing in the virtue of others and your own virtue
- think through your day, purify anything that was not virtuous and rejoice in anything that was
- asking gurus for teachings, requesting gurus to stay life time after life time
- dedication, generosity/surrender not caring what happens to you just want what is best
- overcoming the 8 worldly concerns: praise + blame, pain + pleasure, gain+ loss, fame + notoriety
- deep understanding of selflessness
- nagpa = Tibetan inner being
- top 6 mental afflictions: attachment, aversion, pride, ignorance, deluded doubt, wrong views
- attachment: exaggerating good qualities and thinking obtaining object will bring you lasting happiness
- virtue is the only good cause of happiness
- don't be scared of intensity, intensity is fine as long as it is with wisdom
- relationships that work: you are benefiting other together, support each other, contract for mutual ego gratification doesn't work
- get energy from benefiting beings
- anticipation of happiness fools us
- attachment is the root of samsara
- happiness is liberation, there is no lasting happiness in samsara happiness in the moment due to our virtue
- I want, I don't want is the mantra of misery, what can I do for you is the mantra of happiness (dalai lama)
- Hallucinated excitement – happiness
- TNH, peace of mind is happiness
- Self confidence is different from pride

### Wrong View

- perishable: view there is some inherent self
- extreme: razors edge between 2 extremes nihilism and eternalism
- actively denying karma in future lives
- attitude that wrong views are best
- believing mistake spiritual hardships are best, extreme asceticism
- any act with thought “may I lead you to enlightenment”
- praise and compliment those who you are jealous of

### Ethics

- avoiding non virtue
- accumulating virtue
- benefiting sentient beings

- do everything you can to serve others
- attract others to dharma
- keep others faith

### **Supremely Happy Holder of Teachings (Tenzin Chogyi)**

- If there is something you can do about it do it if not let it go
- 3 kinds of patience: not getting angry when someone hurts you, putting up with hardships and suffering, putting effort into studying and practicing the dharma
- why be unhappy about something if it can be remedied? And what is the use of being unhappy if it cannot be remedied?
- Capacity is always increasing,
- Hey it's samsara what do you expect?
- Causes and conditions result in what happens
- Joyous effort: practiced should be joyful, joy in doing good

4 forces that support joyous effort

- aspiration, will power
- steadfastness
- joy, delight in practice
- relinquishment, rest
- long term view of dharma practice, future lives
- we admire the same beings, we can do it
- deep in my hearts that is what we really want most

### **Meditation**

Agitation – antidotes: posture, light in room, loosen focus, think of sobering topic (death), switch to breathe

Dullness – antidotes: posture, light, tighten focus

Compassion – wanting to end people's suffering

Love- wishing beings to be happy

5 obstacles to meditation: scattering (distraction + regret, malice + anger, dullness + drowsiness, attraction to sense objects, destructive doubts

- equalizing and exchanging self and others: 5 steps – equalizing self and others, disadvantages of self cherishing, advantages of cherishing others, actual exchange, tonglen (the holy secret)
- interdependence does not mean we are the same