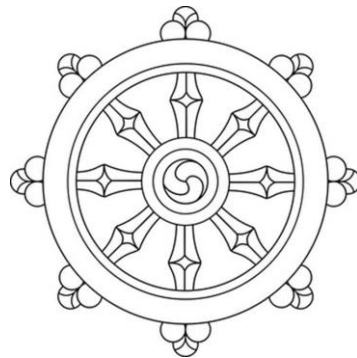




Namgyal Yangzab Buddhist Community of Canada

Lama Yongdu Chokyi Gyaltzen

# Commentary on the Mangala Sutta



Excerpt of a Dharma Discourse on Tuesday, October 13, 2020, at the Dharma Center of Canada,  
concluding a three-week Dzogchen Retreat.

Transcribed November 2020, by the NYBCC Editing Team  
Lightly edited by Lama Chokyi Gyaltzen on December 29, 2020

Lama Yongdu Chokyi Gyaltzen

# Commentary on the Mangala Sutta

This is not a “class.”

This is a lovely rain of blessings for all of us!

The words of the Buddha—at least, probably pretty close to words of the Buddha—his extraordinary words of advice. Sometimes Namgyal Rinpoche would end a retreat by chanting and reading these Mangala blessings. It is such a beautiful way to finish a retreat because it is such high teaching: the blessings that we need to gather in order to awaken.

It is a very famous *sutta* and very short, found in two different places within the Theravadin collection of teachings of the Buddha. Namgyal Rinpoche did not often give teachings specifically on it—though I felt he was always giving teachings on these blessings ...

(Lama Mark then gives the reading transmission in Pali and in English!)

*Evam me sutam*

*Ekam sama*

*yam Bhagavā*

*Sāvattiyam viharati*

*Jetavane Anāthapindikassa ārāme*

*Atha kho aññatarā devatā*

*Abhikkantāya rattiyā abhikkanta vannā*

*Kevala kappam Jetavanam obhāsetvā*

*Yena Bhagavā tenupasamkamī*

*Upasamkamitvā bhagavantam*

*Abhivādetvā ekamantam atthāsi*

*Ekamantam thitā kho sā devatā*

*Bhagavantam gāthāya ajjhabhāsi*

Thus have I heard:

On one occasion, the Exalted One was dwelling at the monastery of Anāthapindika,

in Jeta’s Grove, near Savatthi.

Now, when the night was far spent, a certain deity whose surpassing splendour illuminated the entire Jeta Grove, came to the presence of the Exalted One, and drawing near, respectfully saluted Him

and stood at one side.

Standing thus,

he addressed the Exalted One in verse:

---

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Buddhist Publication Society, The Mirror of the Dhamma

1  
*Bahū devā manussā ca  
Mangalāni acintayum  
Ākankhamānā sothānam  
Brūhi mangala muttamam*

2  
*Asevanā ca bālānam  
Panditānañ ca sevanā  
Pūjā ca pūjanīyānam  
Etam mangala muttamam*

3  
*Patirūpa-*desa vāso ca  
Pubbe ca katapuññatā  
Atta sammā panidhi ca  
Etam mangala muttamam**

4  
*Bāhu saccañ ca sippañ ca  
Vinayo ca susikkhito  
Subhāsītā ca yā vācā  
Etam mangala muttamam*

5  
*Mātā pitu upatthānam  
Puttadārassa sangaho  
Anākulā ca kammantā  
Etam mangala muttamam*

6  
*Dānañ ca dhammacariyā ca  
Ñātakānañ ca sangaho  
Anavajjāni kammāni  
Etam mangala muttamam*

1  
Many deities and men, yearning after  
good,  
have pondered on Blessings.  
Pray, tell me the Highest Blessing!

2  
Not to associate with fools,  
to associate with the wise  
and honour those who are worthy of  
honour;  
This is the Highest Blessing.

3  
To reside in a suitable locality,  
to have done meritorious actions in the  
past,  
and to have set oneself on the right course;  
This is the Highest Blessing.

4  
Vast learning, perfect handicraft,  
a highly trained discipline,  
and pleasant speech;  
This is the Highest Blessing.

5  
The support of father and mother,  
the cherishing of wife and children,  
and peaceful occupations;  
This is the Highest Blessing.

6  
Liberality, righteous conduct,  
the helping of relatives,  
and blameless actions;  
This is Highest Blessing.

7

*Ārati virati pāpā  
Majjapānā ca samyamo  
Appamādo ca dhammesu  
Etam mangala muttamam*

8

*Gāravo ca nivāto ca  
Santutthi ca kataññutā  
Kālena dhamma savanam  
Etam mangala muttamam*

9

*Khanti ca sovacassatā  
Samanānañ ca dassanam  
Kālena dhamma sākacchā  
Etam mangala muttamam*

10

*Tapo ca brahmacariyāñ ca  
Ariyasaccāna dassanam  
Nibbāna sacchikiriyā ca  
Etam mangala muttamam*

11

*Phutthassa loka dhammehi  
Cittam yassa na kampati  
Asokam virajam khemam  
Etam mangala muttamam*

12

*Etādisāni katvāna  
Sabbattha maparājītā  
Sabbattha sotthim gacchanti  
Tam tesam mangala-muttamam ti*

7

To cease and abstain from evil,  
abstention from intoxicants,  
and steadfastness in virtue;  
This is the Highest Blessing.

8

Reverence, humility,  
contentment, gratitude, and the  
opportune hearing of the Dhamma;  
This is the Highest Blessing.

9

Patience, obedience,  
sight of the Samanas (Sanctified Ones),  
and religious discussions at due season;  
This is the Highest Blessing.

10

Self-control, Holy Life,  
perception of the Noble Truths,  
and the realization of Nibbāna;  
This is the Highest Blessing.

11

He whose mind does not flutter  
by contact with worldly contingencies,  
Sorrowless, Stainless, and Secure;  
This is the Highest Blessing.

12

To them, fulfilling matters such as these,  
everywhere invincible,  
in every way moving happily;  
These are the Highest Blessings.

The background to this discourse is: The Exalted One, the Buddha, was dwelling at the monastery Anāthapindika. This place was owned by a wealthy sponsor who bought the property from a prince. Significantly, this is the grove in which the Buddha would retreat and practice meditation for three months during the rainy season. It is still the custom for monastics, in both the Northern and Southern Schools, to have a three-month period—called the rains retreat—where you do not go out walking, thereby avoiding squashing bugs underfoot. You stay at a retreat centre, and you practice for three months. The rest of the year, you ministered the sick, you go on alms rounds, you wander from county to county, from town to town, from area to area, and in addition, you practice meditation. But also, if you have the authorization, you teach Dharma. Yet in the rains retreat, for three months, for sure, everything gets shut down, and you practice deeply.

We still try to fulfill this ideal, with either retreat and teachings or strict silent individual retreats. I think it is a wonderful thing to do, a wonderful ideal to uphold, for all of us to participate every year in at least a three-month retreat.

This teaching on blessings was given in this grove, called Jeta's Grove near Savatthi. A radiant being of surpassing splendour filled the entire Jeta Grove with light and came to the Buddha, and drawing near asked him the following question:

1

**Many deities and men, yearning after good,  
have pondered on Blessings.  
Pray, tell me the Highest Blessing!**

The word “blessing” is translated from the Pali word *mangala*. I think blessing is a good translation for *mangala*. The origins of the English word are worth exploring. The word “blessing” in old English actually means “blood,” referring to ancient blood-sacrifice. But later, it came to mean “honour,” “goodness,” “receiving goodness,” “asking goodness,” and eventually was used frequently in the Old and New Testaments. “Blessings” there is referring to “obtaining good” and “obtaining grace from God.” Essentially “receiving goodness from God,” and that’s really what it means in general English usage.

So, *mangala* does mean “blessing,” but here, it clearly means a goodness that supports an excellent life. One gives blessings by being in excellent ordinary states, beatific states, and transcendent states. And also, most importantly, one receives blessings by being in excellent states.

The Buddha here is describing THE most important things that you could do in your life. Just like Je Gampopa did, in the teaching of last night (Precious Garland of the Sublime Path, Tib. zhal gdams lam mchog rin po che'i phreng ba\_sgam po pa gsung 'bum), advice

carried down from Milarepa's tradition of Tilopa, Naropa, and Marpa, and also from Atisha. Atisha was a great Yogi-Scholar from India who visited Tibet for thirteen years. Gampopa summarized and distilled the most important things to have. Not just for a good life but to obtain and gather the blessings for the highest: Nirvana and beyond—Buddhahood—how to attain the *Bodhisattva* stages and become a fully awakened being.

2

**Not to associate with fools,  
to associate with the wise  
and honour those who are worthy of honour;  
This is the Highest Blessing.**

**“Not to associate with fools”:** This is exactly how Gampopa starts out his words of advice: “Find a spiritual master!” That’s exactly what that verse means. Find a wise being that can teach the Dharma, where you can hear the Dharma, and you can reflect on it. Additionally, a wise being that not only teaches reflection and contemplation but also steers you in the right direction and helps sort out for you what is genuine experience in meditation, what is actually realization and “good beingness.” Further, the blessing to you and others of giving honour to those who are worthy of honour. Of course, giving every single sentient being—no matter who they are—honour, as they all have the potential to awaken. However, here, it refers to giving honour by the dawning of wisdom and compassion. Though every single being should be treated with honour because they have innate Buddha-nature, not all beings are good nutrient for your awakening. Not many beings have the Buddha-nature close to the surface and operational in their lives.

Directly put, who you associate with, who you “eat off” is the direction your life will take. I am not saying that we are to be cannibals ... but, consider it deeply: all we do all day really is eat. Have you noticed that? Here at the Dharma Centre? That’s what we do: to eat! (Lama Mark is joking). But actually, joking aside, if you look around, there are books, there are people, there is an almost limitless number of sentient beings. Just count the number of sentient beings on this property—all giving off messages. There is just nothing but eating, imbibing, absorbing, injecting, incorporating—call it what you wish—all day long. Feeding, feeding... And the question then becomes: “What do you feed on?”, “What kinds of things and ideas and concepts and blessings do you feed upon?” So, the Buddha is saying: “Sort that out!” And really spend the majority of your time feeding off and growing with ones worthy of honour, meaning wise and compassionate beings. If at all possible, keep to the company of wise and compassionate beings to become like them, “... this is the Highest Blessing.”

**To reside in a suitable locality,  
to have done meritorious actions in the past,  
and to have set oneself on the right course;  
This is the Highest Blessing**

**“To reside in a suitable locality”:** Like the Dharma Centre, like a retreat centre that is blessed, a place where you can grow. A place where you can meditate, study, all deeply; that is called a suitable locality.

Namgyal Rinpoche once said to me when going for a walk: “Would you like to know what a Rinpoche does?” and I said: “Oh, yes, I would like to know what a Rinpoche does!” I must have been nineteen or so. (That was a time when he would go for walks ...). And he said: “The duty of a Rinpoche is to create enlightened spaces for beings.” It does not matter what the space is. In Vajrayana, it does not matter what space you are in ... If it is with a suitably wise being, perhaps a Guru, then by the being’s blessings, it becomes the location for Dharma and awakening. Now to help yourself, to give yourself a chance to unfold, if you are not with your teacher, if you are not with your spiritual mentor and wandering here and wandering there, then you need a supportive environment of a blessed suitable locality. Otherwise, one may spend a lot of time in an unfavourable situation that is not conducive for study, learning, reflection, contemplation, and meditation.

**“to have done meritorious actions in the past”:** As Lho Ontul Rinpoche has said so many times: “We can never get enough merit. We have to heap up merit so high—until full Buddhahood!” And he is absolutely correct. As ancient texts in Vajrayana say: The more merit you gather, the faster and swifter the realizations come. And not just for yourself but for others too! That means that blessings and merit can spread to others more quickly.

**“and to have set oneself in the right course”:** Well, that is the Eight-Fold Noble Path. What is the right course? What path do you walk? Like sometimes here, at the Centre, along the paths in the woods? Occasionally, there is not an obvious marker, and one exclaims: “Which fork? This way? That way?” Life is full of all these decisions, so often, isn’t it? “Which way? This way? That way? This way?” And all kinds of voices, isn’t that right? Telling you: “Go this way!” “No, go that way!” “No, it should be this way!”

As Gampopa said in his text, of which I was giving the reading transmission last night: “Be very careful that you are not led around by the noose (the cow’s ring in the nose).” Being led around by partial, conceptual, and not well-founded views can be harmful. But they might sound fantastic at the time! They might sound absolutely amazing and

convincing! Yet, they may be wrong for you. They may even be wrong for many beings. This is important. It is essential to refine and develop the Eight-Fold Noble Path into great wisdom and compassion, “... this is the Highest Blessing.”

4

**Vast learning, perfect handicraft,  
a highly trained discipline,  
and pleasant speech;  
This is the Highest Blessing.**

**“Vast learning”:** Don’t be scared of learning! Don’t be afraid of using your intellect, even if your intellect is not highly developed! It can be developed. There is nothing wrong with a fine intellect blended with compassion and humility. I have met people that had no University education, and they have amazing intellects. They really learned; they studied and learned. So, I would love to see everybody have the opportunity to learn. Collecting lots of facts does not make an intellect. The art of learning, association, synthesis and how we learn is key to “vast learning.” Our dear friend Melody Massey was a very good example. Even though she never went to a university, she learned all her life. She was a fountain of knowledge, maybe not like a scholar, but she loved reading, sharing understanding, and learning. This is called “love of learning,” which can lead to “vast learning.” Learn everything! Don’t be scared of learning about all kinds of things; it is useful if it is integrated and synthesized.

Sometimes in Dharma texts or pith instructions of great masters you see: “Ah, give up all that learning! It is not important!” But you may find—if you dig into their biographies—that they spent a lot of time studying and learning to prepare the ground of unshakable confidence in the Path of Dharma. And now they are saying: “You don’t need all of that stuff.” Actually, they did—maybe you do too! However, while you are deep in contemplation, all that learning, ideas, and concepts can get in the way. There is a time for learning and a time to set it all aside and look into the heart of mind.

So, study Dharma, study science, study arts, study crafts, study life, study beings—study non-beings! Don’t be worried by having partial views as long as you understand they are concepts, lacking any substantiality or reality, like clouds appearing and vanishing. Great concepts, powerful ideas, especially at the right time, can be essential for the Path.

**“perfect handicraft, a highly trained discipline”:** Now, I am speaking as did Namgyal Rinpoche, paraphrasing him. One of the things that Namgyal Rinpoche taught us so much was “Excellent handicraft.” He wanted everybody, as far as I know, to have a really good



handicraft, a skill in art, a skill in craft—because it brings confidence! It also brings good motor skills. The hands are connected to our brains and heart. Our motor skills are connected to every part of our body and physiology. Shaping things with our hands, excellent shaping and manipulation are marvellous activities.

If you are going to manipulate all day—which is what we do— isn't it right to be an awakened manipulator? We manipulate our teacup; we manipulate the *dorje*; we manipulate each other; we are always manipulating. We are manipulating the environment, and the environment is manipulating us. That's what human beings do; that is what all sentient beings do. Even amoebas and bacteria are always manipulating themselves and their environment. If you look down a microscope, you will see, they are always going to manipulate the environment and each other.

If you are going to manipulate, why not manipulate with compassion and wisdom! So, craft is the ability to manipulate excellent form and bring form about into manifestation. It's a great foundation. To learn how to bring Dharma Speech into manifestation, bring Dharma Body into manifestation, and bring *Dharmakaya* into manifestation.

And then **“pleasant speech,”** or **“full speech”**: It may not be a sweet voice. I don't have a very sweet voice, but I really try to cultivate every word for the purposes of liberation and Dharma, either wholesome, beatific, or liberative. This is what pleasant speech means: good, full speech. You may not be able to sing, but you still can use your voice to bring blessings to others. Pleasant speech mixed with the training of *Bodhicitta* will lead to Buddha speech or the sixty-tones of Manjushri. Imagine how wonderful it would be that every word uttered brought beings, in time, to complete awakening, “... this is the Highest Blessing.”

5

**The support of father and mother,  
the cherishing of wife and children,  
and peaceful occupations;  
This is the Highest Blessing.**

**“The support of father and mother”**: Don't give up on your father and mother! It is a duty! They brought you into the world, they clothed you, they fed you, sometimes they educated you—they brought many, many blessings. It is very important to support father and mother the best you can and in different ways.

**“the cherishing of wife and children”:** It is so important to love your wife, husband, partner, and your children and be compassionate. If you cannot do that, as Gampopa said, if I may paraphrase: “There are problems if you cannot do that!” Of course, you also need to have beings in your family that can receive love and wise compassion. So, it goes both ways.

**“and peaceful occupations.”:** It means occupations that actually support beings, that are not destructive occupations. I sense that being engaged in relatively non-harmful occupations fits with pretty much all the people I meet who come to study with me. There are very few that I meet that are doing destructive jobs such as bank robbery, slavery and prostitution, gun smuggling, creating illegal street drugs etc. But there are many in the world that do have destructive occupations both to themselves and many others. And of course, the damage is high to not just humans, but to almost all organisms. “... this is the Highest Blessing.”

6

**Liberality, righteous conduct,  
the helping of relatives,  
and blameless actions;  
This is Highest Blessing.**

**“Liberal giving, righteous conduct”:** The word “liberality” here means generosity. Liberality is an old-fashioned word. The Pali word is *Dāna*. Literally, *Dāna* is generosity, to give, to share. It is the first of the *Parami* when well developed. Of course, we would like to have all the *parami* beautifully developed. This you have to for awakening to flourish in one’s being! Yes, wouldn’t it be great: “Transcendental *parami* for 24/7!” Wouldn’t that be just wonderful?

But how do we start? At least get generosity fully developed. Don’t be scared of being fully generous!

**“righteous conduct”:** “Righteous” ... mmh... do you recall when this text was translated? Many, many years ago. So, we see a very biblical way of translating. “Righteous conduct” today is: “Correct, ethical, wholesome, beatific conduct.”

When I read that, it reminds me of the title that the great Tibetan yogi Shabkar received from the public. Not his Dharma name, not his *tantric* name, not his secret name. He was given a name by the lay community, like so many traditional cultures do, bestowing a common nickname. When you have been with them in their group for some time, they

give you a name that, in their view, summarizes what you generally manifest. And *shabkar* (Tib.) literally means “white foot.” Why did he get the title of White Foot from the public? Because everywhere he went, he left a “white” impression as opposed to a “black” impression. Isn’t that simply beautiful?

So, imagine, everywhere you walk, there is a blessing! Try that as a meditation. Try going from the bathhouse back to the cabin, driving from here to Toronto, wherever you are going. And every step, every turning of the wheel is a footprint of blessings, is a footprint of good conduct, and so on ... everything you do ... fantastic, what a text, amazing!

**“the helping of relatives”:** Yes, if you can, help them!

Have you noticed that it is a challenge to have blameless actions towards family, friends, and all beings? It is so hard to have actions by day, so that the mind is unperturbed, without disturbance, not even a wavelet of worry so one can sleep well at night.

Now, ruffling people’s feathers is different. Being one who causes difficulties or some distress for others, out of compassion and with great skill, is a different matter. But that takes a considerable degree of wisdom and compassion. Before you do that and become a bit of a troublemaker of the highest quality, first of all, we need to have clean and compassionate-wise intent to manifest “blameless action.” That means everything we do, from the point of view of activity—*karma*—is clean, really clean, ethically clean, and the best wholesome activity for everybody. That must start with our mental activity: “... this is the Highest Blessing.” Therefore, we could be named *Shabkar—White Foot*.

7

**To cease and abstain from evil,  
abstention from intoxicants,  
and steadfastness in virtue;  
This is the Highest Blessing.**

**“To cease and abstain from evil”:** Now, that means “BAD things!”

Most of us, I would say, looking around the room here and looking at the Zoomers over there: you don’t do really bad things. But occasionally in our life: can we recall some bad things? There may be some in this room that are so young—that’s so lovely! —that they have not yet done some bad things. Start the Dharma young and don’t do bad-bad things that you have to undo for the rest of your life! Mmmh? Don’t! It’s worth it! Because you don’t have that disturbance in your mental continuum.

When you go to meditate, and you have done wholesome things, and there are very few bad things that you have done, the mind can remain effortlessly settled because you

are not filled with the memories and recollections of bad things, terrible things that one has been involved with. So, if you have an opportunity not to do terrible things—don't! Please, don't! And if you do, then one seeks blessings and lots of purification to reverse and purify those harms.

And sometimes, because of cause and effect, we are brought into situations where we have an excellent opportunity for doing bad things because of the influence of others. It has to be cause and effect; it has to be interdependent. So, be careful who you hang out with. Abstention! We are all going to do dumb things. Have you all done dumb things? How many people in this room have done dumb things? All of us have done plenty of stupid, dumb, unwholesome things! Isn't that right? But it turns out that if you look at your life—myself included—you have done WAY MORE good things in your life! Keep the numbers of good things really high! Ok? And don't keep beating yourself up for the few, or the lesser, unfortunate dumb things of greed, hatred, delusion, pride, and jealousy. But we need to keep developing the good qualities. And learn about the range of good qualities and bring them to fruition.

**“abstaining from intoxicants”:** Well... (Lama Mark hits his fist hard onto the teaching table) Intoxicants ... (Lama Mark hits again)—I am going to speak personally!—IT MAKES MY JOB HARD WORK! Ok? So, please, don't take intoxicants! Now every one of us can drink, “smoke and toke”—smoke and toke? Toke and smoke? I don't know. (Lama Mark playfully pretends to be “smoking grass” and “drinking” ...) Whatever the substance is, it could be coffee, it could be even a prescription drug, it could be too much meditation. Who knows the extent of intoxicating substances or activities? Anyways, whatever the intoxicant is, please make sure, especially when it comes to drugs and alcohol, that you understand that their long-term effects are not innocent. They leave traces or alterations to the nervous system. And for each of us, we are all different in how we react to intoxicants.

I know of one person who took one snort of cocaine and ended up in the psychiatric ward of a hospital, and they were psychotic for the rest of their short life. Others? I know of one person who was a heroin addict for five years and came out of it beautifully. We are all unique in our physiology and genetics. But any kind of intoxicant, alcohol, hard drugs, soft drugs, plant drugs, it does not matter; they are all drugs. Any kind of substance—including food! —affects the nervous system and many other organs; some more than others. They will reorganize aspects of brain function, which is harder work when one comes to the Path of Liberation. So, please, don't make it an obstacle!

**“and steadfastness in virtue”**: Yeah, try it! Try to gather the most virtuous qualities of the Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment plus *Bodhicitta*. Gather them, gather them again and again, from many beings, especially Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas*, so it is a giant steady mountain of merit and strength built on ethics and virtue in your being, “... this is the Highest Blessing.”

8

**Reverence, humility,  
contentment, gratitude, and the  
opportune hearing of the Dhamma;  
This is the Highest Blessing.**

**“Reverence”**: Have deep reverence for that which is beatific, which is wholesome, for that which is truly wise; deep reverence for that which is compassionate, and for all that which is liberating and bringing beings to full awakeness. Have great reverence! Because it unbinds beings, it brings a smile that permeates every cell and leads to future days and future lifetimes moving towards complete Buddhahood for the benefit of others.

**“humility”**: You might be an egomaniac, but you can still have humility. Humility is “of the earth”; it means “of humus.” So, even if you have a strong ego—even if you have a weak ego!—really bring your foundation of everything you do based in Dharma, based in the Golden Earth, the foundation of the Great Diamond Earth, enriched from the “Ground.” And from that, manifest to all. If you have a big ego, make it a liberative ego. And if it is a delicate, small little ego, but still strong, manifest that ... I have met some very small beings, tiny—even very small Dharma teachers—who have a huge footprint because their humility is so deep. Boy, they are loud in that deep humility! “Of the earth” means everything, all experience coming directly, without veils from primordial awareness.

**“contentment”**: Contentment of what? You know, Namgyal Rinpoche had me stand up, at the tender age of twenty, in front of about a hundred people and scolded me—over something very good that happened spiritually, interesting ... I gently complained to him the previous evening that the blessing I received was not the complete going out. And he had these words for me in front of all these people: “You don’t count your blessings!”

Be content! Learn to feel really good about the blessings you carry! You have to know the good qualities you carry and actually be with that. And learn to be content, to a point, not with your conditioning, but with the merit, with the beings that you associate with, with all the good qualities waiting to be discovered. Add them up. And even under adverse

situations and circumstances—like being locked away in Antigua, month after month after month, not being able to leave (Lama Mark looks at TV-pictures of Zoom-participants from Guatemala that are not able to travel from their country since the Covid pandemic began)—be content in the blessings that you have, the capacities that you have, and identifying what those are.

**“gratitude”**: The same thing. Have great gratitude for all the riches that you have and that you can gather from others.

**“and the opportune hearing of the Dhamma”**: Hearing the Dharma is so precious! Reflect on that. Reflect on the times you have heard the Dharma and what a treasure it is, “...this is the Highest Blessing.”

9

**Patience, obedience,  
sight of the Samanas (Sanctified Ones),  
and religious discussions at due season;  
This is the Highest Blessing.**

**“Patience”**: Develop great patience! Developing patience is loving-kindness. It is absolutely essential to unfold. Developing great patience is the downgoing of frustration and hatred. The more developed is loving-kindness, the greater the patience. It is such hard work, but it is worth it! And one of the ways of developing patience—if you do not develop patience in retreat or through meditative patience—then incorporate craft. Craft uses your hands and your eyes and your speech. Crafting with your hands, building with excellence, whatever it is, from sculpture to jewelry, allows one to slow down and develop patience.

Patience is also being able to finish well what we start and to bring about good manifestations of our wholesome intentions. There are fine energy channels and nerves connecting the heart centre and belly with the hands, arms, throat, and eyes. If one is very aware and recollective, we can go a long way to clear the frustration and anger out of the heart. It is similar to cleaning chimney pipes and clogged drains! Crafting will bring about—hopefully—on the inner level profound patience. It does not always because anger is held deep in the inner channels. So, Preliminary Liberating Instructions and inner yoga of secret *Tantrayana* are so often necessary. And we need to have good instructions and be surrounded by wise beings.

**“obedience”:** What does “obedience” mean? Obedience means a clean, clear tractableness towards that which is good. We recognize that which is good, that which is wise, that which is compassionate. And tracking it and being with it. Here obedience does not mean blind subservience. In the Dharma, obedience implies practice and testing out the principles or natural laws by which we increase the wholesome, build merit, and awaken.

Turn on your brain cells, have intelligence with obedience! Walk away from that which is bad, from that which is binding and unwholesome. But when you know, it’s good, when you know it’s great, when you know it’s right for you and other beings, if you then enact, if you perform with your body, speech, and mind in conformity with that wisdom and compassion: THAT is obedience!

**“sight of the Samanas”:** It is really lovely to be in the presence or see holy beings. It is really amazing. I don’t know what it does for you, but I feel I have a pretty good idea. It can be heart palpitating to be in the presence of a truly wise, awakened, or realized being. The blessings that can arise by just looking, seeing, hearing, even smelling, or by touch. Being in the same area of realized beings is a phenomenal blessing. If we “have the eyes to see,” it helps us all awaken. By recognizing awake, vast empty-compassion in the other, it can quickly bring forth a lasting taste, a glimpse of the wisdom mind in us. Then confidence and devotion in the preciousness of awakening—true refuge!—dawns.

**“and religious discussions at due season”:** Don’t have Dharma discussions, don’t have religious discussions—or in the words of Namgyal Rinpoche, I never forgot them: “Don’t frivolously talk Dharma, don’t frivolously have Dharma classes”—outside of a place and an opportune setting that is correct for the hearers to be able to listen with respect and honour the Dharma. In the time of the Buddha, this meant having Dharma discussions or teachings outside of the rainy season and retreats. A Dharma talk or discussion during a meal or while having beers may diminish the extraordinary rarity and gift that is Dharma.

**“Due seasons”** mean the outer environmental circumstances are auspicious. Pick a meritorious time and place. Perhaps the season or time is more appropriate for a meditation retreat, like the rains-retreat in Asia or re-building a hermitage. Don’t, unless you have the rare ability to give Dharma teachings, deliver pith instructions or give genuine empowerment in the middle of a busy bar or a coffee shop. But if you don’t, DON’T! That is what is meant by the “due seasons.” “... this is the Highest Blessing.”

10

**Self-control, Holy Life,  
perception of the Noble Truths,  
and the realization of Nibbāna;  
This is the Highest Blessing.**

**“Self-control”:** Having self-control—that is tough! When I sometimes say: “Keep a lid on it!” that is hard for me to do too. It is hard for all of us to do. Just keep a lid on it! One does not have to say everything on one’s mind. One does not have to act out whatever arises. Self-control in body, speech, and mind is a very wise and beautiful skill.

**“living a noble life”:** Lead a holy life! Find out for yourself what a holy life is by hearing, studying, seeing, and meditating with holy beings. “Noble” means transcendent, beyond the clinging to sense objects and caught in the turmoil of samsara. It is beyond belief in appearances being real. Nobility is effortlessly manifesting indivisible wisdom and compassion.

**“perception of the Noble Truths and the attainment of Nibbāna”:** That is, really strive to accomplish the realization of the Four Noble Truths and the realization of *Nibbāna* (Skt. *Nirvana*). Strive to accomplish the realization of freedom--complete freedom—to be in great love and wisdom, the unbinding, the unborn, “... this is the Highest Blessing.”

11

**He whose mind does not flutter  
by contact with worldly contingencies,  
Sorrowless, Stainless, and Secure;  
This is the Highest Blessing.**

**“He whose mind does not flutter by contact with worldly contingencies”:** Wow! That’s very worthwhile! So, at the beginning, it means not being bashed or jostled around by every statement, word, e-mail, message that comes along, and things that happen. Though we still have to take care of them! There are important differences between the meaning of care and concern and worry, anxiety. The key differences are intent mind: worry that causes harm or paralysis, or concern that is born from care and love of the other.

**“flutter”** here means “worry and flurry,” always being concerned and worried by everything we come in contact with. Mind itself never flutters; only states of mind appear



to get tossed about. Direct understanding, the knowledge of appearance-emptiness, is the fastest means to liberate the turbulence of “worldly contingencies.”

**“sorrowless”:** No sorrows! That means you can go to sleep, you can rest your mind, you can sit in meditation, you can read a book, and you are not sorrowful for what you have done. Sorrowless means purity of mental activity, thus blameless activity of body, speech, and mind.

**“stainless”:** Pure, utterly pure. Try to become a vast container—an uncontained yet an untainted being of light, wisdom, and compassion for all—that is stainless, with not even a drop of unwholesomeness.

“Stainless”: a mind of pure Dharma intent, like a polished mirror, fully reflective, full of light, transparent, and without any possible clinging to appearances.

**“secure”:** What is the security? The great security, the only security in life? *Bodhicitta*! The realization of *Bodhicitta*. If you want to be utterly secure, it is not going to be your finances. Although it’s good to have good finances ...

All beings around you, no matter how fantastic they are, are going to part at some point. At any given time, you can lose your house, your partner, your friends, your love, anything and at any time. That does not mean you don’t cultivate the relative; it does not mean you don’t take care of beings and things and that you do not have love for all the good things in your life. Yet, when it comes to “secure,” utterly dependable, we need to ask what is the real ultimate security, the Ground, the “Diamond Ground” of utter, indestructible security in your life. It will always be there no matter what happens: death, illness, terrible things, happy things, super blissful experiences. “Secure” is the realization of *Bodhicitta*, the primordial wisdom mind, the natural state of all experience, our mind’s nature. “... this is the Highest Blessing.”

12

**To them, fulfilling matters such as these,  
everywhere invincible,  
in every way moving happily;  
These are the Highest Blessings.**

**“To them, fulfilling matters such as these, everywhere invincible”:** That is the blessing that spreads into all places, like the spreading of understanding and compassion. These blessings permeate everywhere, into the heart of all beings. Thus, it satisfies the most

insatiable hungers for happiness, bringing about “in every way moving happily.” Sharing in great joy and in the great bliss of awake mind, “... this are the Highest Blessings.”

*Sarva mangalam*

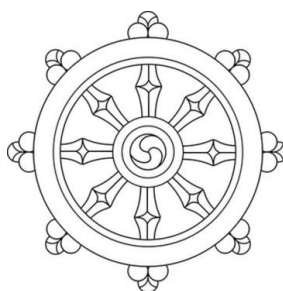
A short commentary. It is my sincere wish for all of us, to gather all the above blessings so that we become—walking, sitting, standing, laying down—literally “mountains of blessings” for all sentient beings! Like a 16<sup>th</sup> Karmapa, a Dharma King, someone like Khandro Rinpoche, a Dharma Queen, the invincible Namgyal Rinpoche, the great Kalu Rinpoche, the blessed Ontul Rinpoche, the countless blessings of the Dalai Lama’s mind! Incredible steadfast beings that are enormous mountains of merit which just blaze to all beings, quietly, and sometimes loudly, like the sound of a thousand conches.

May the blessings of all of you keep growing, keep sprouting. Don’t give up in your quest for full awakesness and for full compassion and wisdom. And may this place—which is not just an ordinary place, but is a sacred ground, where so many beings have grown and woke up, and where so many teachings of Dharma, refuge and *Bodhicitta* vows, pith instructions and empowerments have happened—may this place called the Dharma Center of Canada, keep flourishing! Dharma can be taught anywhere. But sanctified ground and a place soaked in blessings are rare and supportive. And may this whole community of beings, diverse in their thinking, diverse in their ways, keep coming together and sprouting pure Dharma in beings and in manifestations throughout this land. And may these Dharma blessings spread throughout Ontario, may it spread across the world, may it embrace the entire planet, may it spread throughout the solar system. And may the rays of light of Dharma and blessings fill all of the galaxies and universes, and multiple universes of Buddha awakesness.

*sarva mangalam*

*sarva mangalam*

*sarva mangalam*



Excerpt of a Dharma Discourse on Tuesday, October 13, 2020, at the Dharma Center of Canada,  
concluding a three-week Dzogchen Retreat.

Transcribed November 2020, by the NYBCC Editing Team  
Lightly edited by Lama Chokyi Gyaltsen on December 29, 2020.

May any errors do not obscure the essence, and may they be forgiven.  
May these teachings, so generously offered, help lead to the cessation of suffering and the full  
awakening of all beings!

© NYBCC