

BENEFITS OF HAVING MANY HOLY OBJECTS

This teaching was given in response to a request by Ian Green for a foreword in a brochure of the Jade Buddha and the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion, to be constructed in Bendigo, Australia.

In the retreat house in Washington we have covered most of the upstairs walls with many, many photos of buddhas. There is a wall of 814 sets of the seven Medicine Buddhas, one of 867 sets of the thirty-five Buddhas, one of 161 sets of the twenty-one Taras, one of 71 sets of the sixteen Arhants and one wall showing the life deeds of Lama Tsong Khapa. Part of the ceiling is covered with 85 images of 1000-armed Chenrezig, another part has 602 sets of the Lama Chopa merit field, and part is covered with the 41 life deeds of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha as well as multiple images of Shakyamuni Buddha. There is also a set of Khedrupje's visions of Lama Tsong Khapa. Over 4,050 light offerings are made every day to all these images as well as 215 water bowl offerings.

In Tibetan monasteries or rich people's gompas they used to paint unbelievably beautiful images of buddhas on the walls; also in ancient times in Solo Kumbhu the people were very devoted and commissioned paintings of various pure lands like Amitabha pure land, mandalas etc. So in Washington we color-copied hundreds and hundreds of images of the buddhas and put them on the walls and ceilings. By putting all the pictures on the walls it's as though you actually become the painter, except that you can do it very quickly without even knowing how to paint. You can reduce the images to such a small size and so quickly on modern machines with modern technology in comparison to painting them, which would take years and besides, maybe you would not be able to paint them so small and clear.

This is maybe the only house in USA with so many holy objects, except of course Kachoe Dechen Ling, the house in California.

Having as many holy objects as possible, when you enter the room you can put your palms together in the mudra of prostration to all the holy objects, looking at each tiny holy object and prostrating. You can look around the room with your hands in the mudra of prostration and think "I am prostrating to all the buddhas." When you do this you collect eight benefits in that second so for however many thousands or hundreds of pictures of buddhas, statues, tsa.tsas etc. you have, merely by placing your palms together respectfully you receive these eight benefits.

The eight benefits are explained in the sutra teaching *Offering the Butter Lamp*:

- (1) One receives a good body of high caste, which people respect and obey and which includes having perfect organs and a beautiful or handsome form.
- (2) One will have perfect surroundings and helpers.
- (3) One will be able to live morally.

- (4) One will have devotion, or faith, which is the main factor for completing the accumulation of merits. (Being without faith is like a vehicle without fuel—unable to function—or like everything in a city not functioning and collapsing when there is no electricity.)
- (5) One will have a very brave mind for practicing the Dharma and working for other sentient beings, a mind brave in facing up to the delusions.
- (6) One will be reborn as a deva or a human being.
- (7) One will achieve the arya path.
- (8) One will become enlightened.

In just one second, it is so easy to collect merit because there are so many pictures of deities and buddhas; even in one photo there are many buddhas, such as the Guru Puja merit field or the thirty-five Buddhas, even in one picture there are so many merit fields. Each time you prostrate to them you collect that many causes of enlightenment, that many causes of liberation from samsara and, by the way, happiness of future lives. And not just one time – from each holy object, having prostrated with two palms together, because karma is expandable you enjoy the resultant happiness of deva or human rebirths and much more happiness for so many eons, not only for a hundred lifetimes but for thousands of eons.

Even though I try as much as possible to do this whenever I see holy objects, sometimes it is not easy to remember every time I enter the room unless I make a really strong determination in the morning.

Also, I try to make incense offerings to all the buddhas by putting incense in the palm of my hands; hands in the mudra of prostration and holding the incense. In my mind I make special prayers to the photos of the twenty-one Taras, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, thirty-five Buddhas, Amitabha pure land, life deeds of Lama Tsong Khapa, Medicine Buddhas, Maitreya Buddhas, to all the scriptures, thangkas, the Buddha's teachings, the Kangyur and Tengyur (Buddha's teachings and commentaries translated from the Sanskrit), the thousand volumes of Lama Tsong Khapa's teachings, and other teachings. I try, not every time but I try, to make offerings and prayers to actualize not only the words but the meanings and the path as quickly as possible. I also suggest to others to do this when you see temples or altars, the Kangyur and Tengyur, statues, stupas and scriptures. It is very important to always have high respect towards them and to make offerings and prayers. If you just think of Dharma texts as you would a western library, that the texts are just something to be read and nothing else, and you don't remember to make offerings and think how precious and holy they are, then you don't collect extensive merit.

You can collect extensive merit also by offering robes (book covers and cloth), water, flowers, incense, light, perfume and music to the texts. Also offering gold to the texts, like writing the Prajnaparamita in gold; there is unbelievable, unbelievable merit in writing this text, the benefits of which are spoken of in the sutra "*The Condensed Jewel Quality*":

Building a Stupa of the Sorrowless State (the one gone to bliss);

making the stupa from the seven jewels and making as many of these to fill many tens of thousand million worlds equaling the number of sand grains in the river Ganges;

then many sentient beings making offerings to these stupas (infinite sentient beings of all the existing worlds making offerings of lights, incense and flowers etc. three times a day for eons);

Consider the merit obtained from this compared with the following:

If one writes this sutra—the Mother Prajnaparamita taught by the Buddha having the Ten Powers—keeps this text and makes offerings to it, pays respect to it: the merit of the latter is infinitely greater!

It is the same as offering gold to the Arya Sangatasutra. So make prayers and offerings to as many texts as you can think of and you will create unbelievable merit.

One time, after Lama Yeshe passed away, I went to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama to get advice for the organization. Piero was helping at that time. Piero showed His Holiness a brochure about a project and offered a stupa to His Holiness. After showing the brochure to His Holiness, Piero put the stupa on top of the brochure. His Holiness took the stupa away and said even though it is Dharma, even a stupa you should not put on Dharma texts, you shouldn't put even holy objects on Dharma texts.

So no question about malas; it is disrespectful to put them on a text, unless there is a reason, like a strong wind that could blow the text away, in which case there is an exception – it doesn't become disrespectful because you are putting it on to protect the text from being blown away.

There is a story about a Buddha statue that was outside. One person saw the Buddha statue; it was raining and the statue was getting wet. The person felt how bad it was that the statue was being rained on, took off his shoes and put them on the head of the Buddha statue to protect it from the rain. After the rain had stopped someone else came by, saw the shoes on the statue of the Buddha and thought, "How terrible, someone has put shoes on top of the Buddha statue"; so he took the shoes off the statue. Because both acts were done with a positive motivation both actions created good karma. The man putting the shoes on the head of the Buddha did it out of respect, so the statue wouldn't get wet. Normally, putting shoes on a Buddha statue is a disrespectful action and would create negative karma.

It is very helpful to have many pictures and statues for prostrations, it helps the visualization and also with each prostration you do to just one holy object you create incredible causes, so the more holy objects the more causes you create.

When you prostrate you should think of all the ten direction buddhas, Dharma, sangha, statues, stupas, scriptures, tsas etc.; if you have many, many pictures of holy objects it makes it very easy to visualize the ten directions actually filled with buddhas. This is also very good if you can't visualize very well.

When you are not prostrating but just entering the room where you have all the holy objects (the gomba or your meditation room), if you put your palms together to the holy objects every time, in that second it is unbelievably easy to collect extensive merit.

It is the same when you make offerings: if you visualize only one merit field, just one set of twenty-one Taras or just one set of the seven Medicine Buddhas, you only get the merit of offering to one merit field, one set of twenty-one Taras or just seven Medicine Buddhas, so you only create that number of causes of enlightenment.

Also when you do pujas, like the Four Mandala Offerings to Cittamani Tara, or when you make offerings or requests to just one set of twenty-one Taras, if you have many, many pictures of the twenty-one Taras, like a whole wall, it is very easy to visualize and on that basis multiply and fill all of space with the twenty-one Taras. In the puja there are four mandala offerings so just in that puja you offer four mandalas to the whole of space of twenty-one Taras, not just one set, so the merit you create is unbelievable. Your sadhana becomes of the most benefit and you are increasing your purification and merit in a very short time. Also it helps to develop a very strong feeling, you really feel that you are connected to them.

It is the same when you make offerings to one Medicine Buddha. By offering to Medicine Buddha you collect the merit of having made offerings to all the buddhas, so however many pictures of Medicine Buddhas there are, you offer to all the buddhas that many times; it is such an easy way to make the most extensive offerings to all the buddhas. That is why I like to have many Medicine Buddha pictures with me. Also it is a very powerful offering to Medicine Buddha, because each one is surrounded by 700,000 protectors and those protectors protect you every day; that is how your wishes get fulfilled.

It is the same when you make offerings to the Lama Chopa merit field, if you visualize just one you only create that much merit. If you have many pictures you can make offerings to all of them. The difference is like offering one rupee or one billion, zillion dollars. The difference is like that.

From the “*Sutra of the Exalted Compassionate-Eye Looking One*”:

*If even for 10 million eons one explains the admiration (benefits)
Of any human being who circumambulates this stupa of the savior of the world;
One is unable to finish explaining them.*

From the “*Sutra of the Mudra Entering, Generating the Power of Devotion*”:

Buddha said to Manjrushri:

Any of the race of the sons and daughters (lineage) and anyone

*Having made offerings every day of a hundred tastes of divine food and divine dress
To the self-buddhas (solitary realizers, arhants)
Equaling the number of atoms of the whole entire universe
For eons equaling the number of sand grains of the Pacific Ocean;
Manjushri, any race of sons and daughters and anyone who sees Buddha drawn,
Or the materialized form of Buddha such as drawings or actualized in form (statue)
or picture,
Collects infinitely greater merit than the previous one (of that number of arhants
making offerings for that number of eons).
Then no question if somebody puts their palms together or offers flowers or
perfumes or incense or light;
This one collects numberless greater merit than that (of seeing the painting of
Buddha or statue).*

So here you can understand how easy it is to collect the most extensive merit; you just need to open your eyes, if you are intelligent and know how to do it. In monasteries, nunneries, temples or centers it is important to have many holy objects, many statues, stupas, tsas and pictures, as many as possible. Also in your own house, in your meditation room, even outside, in the countryside, anywhere in the world, particularly in public places like roads so that many people can see the holy objects, you can actually build a big statue or stupa, or carve mantras on stone or wood.

When I was in Tibet in 2002 one Kham Lama carved the whole Kangyur on flag-stones and piled them up so that people could go around it. This was in Lhasa on a small hill behind where Songtsen Gampo did retreat in a cave. It was just unbelievable.

In Solo Kumbhu in ancient times people were so devoted they carved many texts on the roads, such as the Diamond Cutter Sutra, the Confession Sutra and the Sutra of Golden Light. They carved them all on stones and then people would walk halfway around them on the way down and on the way up they would walk on the other side so in this way they circumambulated. This is so wonderful, such an unbelievably easy way to collect merit; if people also rejoice in the people who carved the stones and in the people who sponsored them, they collect inconceivable, inconceivable amounts of merit.

These holy objects help other sentient beings easily purify inconceivable negative karma and create the causes of happiness, merit and extensive happiness, which definitely brings them to enlightenment quickly. Because it makes them create extensive merit, allowing them quickly to realize the path, it also helps them to improve their life very soon; from a very difficult life with many problems - business problems, relationship problems and many other things - to an easy life, having perfect enjoyments, external and inner prosperity at the same time, realizations of the path and a very happy, peaceful, inspiring death.

Even if you teach Dharma to sentient beings, not everyone comes to listen; some are not interested, some are children and some are old people and so cannot come. If you make

holy objects, not only inside but especially outside in public places then everyone can see, believers and non-believers, everybody gets so much benefit as Buddha explained in the quotations above. Because of the power of the holy object it doesn't require deep devotion or faith to gain all these benefits.

If you find it hard to understand this, think how the atom has the power to destroy the world and yet can benefit so many people. For example by creating power for electricity millions of people in a city can have comfort, enjoyments and easy living from the atom. In all the different countries in this world so many people benefit from electricity, so many houses use it. A seed has power in a similar way, its own purpose and function. If you plant, say, a juniper seed, from it comes this huge tree with many branches and leaves, intricate designs and shapes, every tiny detail comes from that seed; you can see how the seed has power.

If you look at other examples, other phenomena like holy objects have unbelievable power from which you collect limitless skies of merit, achieve all happiness, all the temporal samsaric pleasures and ultimate happiness: liberation and enlightenment. Even if you don't know or cannot teach Dharma, if you build these holy objects then not only in this life but after this life, wherever you are in the six realms, for however many years this holy object lasts, every day it liberates sentient beings from the lower realms and samsara, by planting the seeds of liberation and enlightenment and purifying their minds, helping them to create merit.

From the *Sutra Essence of Earth*:

*While there are the three rare sublime ones
Fulfilling the hopes without any effort
Like the unimaginable wish-granting tree and wish-granting jewel;
[But] believing the method to achieve happiness is something else*

*All the activities one attempts become only negative karma
And this precious human rebirth with qualified freedoms and richnesses,
Which is rarer than a wish-granting jewel, becomes meaningless and empty;
It becomes only a cause of harm;
This is more foolish than an animal.*

*Friend, by realizing this body, this life is like a water bubble
And material enjoyments like the dew on the tip of the grass
Attempt the white (virtuous) actions, offer to the three rare sublime ones (Buddha
Dharma, Sangha)
And take the essence from this essenceless body and possessions.*

*Due to this merit may I and each and every sentient being respect
And make offerings to the three rare sublime ones;
By the happiness of the joyful occasion of listening, reflecting, meditating and
practicing*

May all the transmigratory beings' wishes be completely fulfilled.

As was advised by our kind compassionate Buddha:

*All the happiness and comfort which are in the world
Arise from offering to the three rare sublime ones (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha).
Therefore if one wishes happiness and comfort
Attempt to make offerings to the three rare sublime ones.*

From the *Sutra Requested by Victorious Wisdom*:

*Because you wish to achieve all the qualities, especially the exalted qualities,
All the realizations of the path to enlightenment
(Not just the ordinary good qualities known in the world),
And especially all the exalted qualities, the realizations of the path
You must make offerings to the three rare sublime ones.*

Peace and happiness for oneself and the world are not independent, do not exist from their own side, they are dependent-arising, depending on causes and conditions. The causes: the great virtuous thoughts, non-ignorance, non-anger, non-attachment, the good heart, compassion, loving kindness, non-self-centered mind and so forth. Actions motivated by these pure attitudes become virtuous and the cause of happiness. Holy objects such as statues, stupas and scriptures of the Buddha become support for that condition, for peace and happiness for oneself, for others and the world.

The moment holy objects such as statues of Buddha are completed on a rock, painted on paper with a brush and colors, taken with a camera or printed on paper from the negative with chemicals etc.; the moment a holy object materializes it becomes a field of merit, like a field of crops, for sentient beings. It becomes only a cause for them to achieve happiness. For example if you plant chili you get chili fruit; you won't get raisins from a chili plant. Each fruit has to come from its own cause; in the same way only merit is the cause of temporal and ultimate happiness.

Generally for an action to become virtuous and the cause of happiness the activity needs to be motivated by a virtuous mind, unstained by ignorance, anger or attachment – only then does the action become virtuous. So first you need to put a lot of effort into making the attitude pure so that the actions of daily life such as working, eating, sitting, walking, sleeping etc. become virtuous.

With holy objects such as statues, stupas and scriptures you do not have to have a mind unstained by anger, ignorance or attachment to create merit. For human beings or even animals, simply seeing the holy object becomes the cause to achieve inconceivable awakening and enlightenment by purifying so many defilements. The special advantage is that just by their existence these holy objects make it easy for us ordinary living beings to create merit.

It is explained by Buddha in the *Sutra of the Mudra of Developing the Power of Devotion*:

*The minute you see a holy object you create infinite merits,
So no question, if you actually make prostrations,
Offerings and so forth, you create far greater merit.*

In the *White Lotus Sutra* it says:

*Even just making one sound, or a cymbal offering
Even just offering one single flower
To the form of one who has gone to bliss (buddha) on a stone wall,
Even if they make the offering with an angry attitude
Those living beings will gradually see ten million buddhas.*

*Anyone who puts their palms together completely,
Or with one palm or just one time bows down in respect
To a stupa which contains relics, even with a distracted mind (without virtue)
Verbally saying "I prostrate to the Buddha" just one or a few times –
All those beings will achieve supreme enlightenment.*

The infinite benefits of seeing, circumambulating and making offerings to holy objects even with an impure attitude of total non-virtue are explained in the texts. Holy objects such as the Jade Buddha and the Great Stupa [projects in Bendigo, Australia] simply existing in the world make it unbelievably easy for us sentient beings in this world now and those from other universes who will be born in this world to purify the obstacles to happiness, peace and realizations on the path, and to achieve liberation and enlightenment – so easy for us to create the causal merit. Only then can we change the distracted negative emotional thoughts, the ignorant nature of the mind that harms us and the world.

By having a happy, contented and satisfied mind one is able to develop wisdom to eliminate suffering for oneself and others; by having a happy, peaceful mind, patience and a loving heart towards everyone, one stops harming oneself and others and is able to only benefit everyone, bringing peace, happiness and compassion, the whole path to enlightenment. One is able to do perfect works to liberate and enlighten numberless other beings, who are devoid of happiness and who are constantly suffering.

So now you can see the importance of holy objects such as the Jade Statue and the Great Stupa – how they will illuminate the world and bring inconceivable peace and happiness; and how building these holy objects prevents destruction, of which so much is happening in the world, including war.

Buddha said in the *Sutra Requested by King Salgyal*:

*However many atoms there are in the stupa
And in the statue of the destroyer of the qualified gone-beyond one (Buddha),*

*The person who built this will definitely achieve kings' reign
In deva and human realms equaling that number of atoms;
Will achieve the concentration of the form and formless realm (based on shamatha)
By completing the experience of all the perfect deeds
And the ultimate state of enlightenment:
That which is devoid of suffering of rebirth, old age and so forth.*

From the 27th chapter of the *Guhyasamaja Root Tantra*:

*How incredibly wonderful it is to complete
The three holy objects of the one gone to bliss,
The three kayas; victorious peaceful, wrathful and secret one.
As long as these holy objects exist the Buddha's teaching will flourish:
It tames all the transmigratory beings,
Purifies the countless obscurations, completes the perfect merit.
Everyone who sponsors the building of these holy objects
Will have increased long life and auspiciousness in this and future lives,
They will achieve the pure land (of Buddha) and the country will be auspicious.
This imminent, sublime, complete method
Is the only means for the teachings (Buddhism) to last in this world.
Take this voluntarily; it will accomplish your wishes.*

Here it explains that the teachings of Buddha are the only medicine healing sentient beings' suffering and its causes: delusions and karma; it depends on the existence of holy objects such as statues, stupas and scriptures of Buddha.

From the root text of *Manjugosha*:

Manjrushri said to Buddha:

“At the moment, the object for sentient beings to make offerings and collect merit is you. After you pass away what can they do? Please give advice.”

Then Buddha said:

“There is not the slightest difference if my four surrounding beings (getsul, getsulma, gelong, gelongma) make offerings to me now or make offerings to my statues (in the future). It is equal in merit and ripening aspect (result).

That is due to the blessings of the Buddha.

Undeveloped (ordinary) beings don't know this and that is why there are no Buddha statues in their world.

Where are there no statues?

In the outlying barbarian countries and where the teachings of the Buddha have degenerated (stopped). Therefore non-Buddhists and animals do not see Buddha statues.

Therefore the statue is a manifestation of Buddha.

Here you can see that the statue is a manifestation of the Buddha. Even if you meet the actual Buddha, do prostrations or make offerings, the merit and result are not greater than circumambulating, prostrating, making offerings or offering service to a holy representation of Buddha. This is very exciting. The best way you can use and enjoy your life is by supporting the building of holy objects.

*It is only one time that one is able to meet the Three Rare Sublime Ones;
It is extremely difficult to see them for hundreds and thousands of eons.
Besides seeing, it is difficult to even hear the holy name for hundred and thousands of eons.*

*With every talent and effort of the capable (human) being
Actually attempt to make offerings all the time to your wish-fulfilling jewel;
The guru, rare sublime one, is the tip of the banner of devotion and respect.
Attempt the method to completely fulfill all the temporal and ultimate wishes of sentient beings
From whom unceasing enjoyments, peace and happiness come (one receives).*

This is the condensed benefit of what is achieved by making holy objects. It includes the donors, artists and anyone who is involved in the building of holy objects. You can see clearly that the bigger the holy object, the more atoms there are and thus the more merit. When you make a holy object of expensive material like jade, you collect far greater merit than making a statue with mud or plastic, so I am very excited and can't wait to see this beautiful Jade Buddha and the Great Stupa, which will bring unbelievable, unbelievable benefit to the world and Australia.

I would like to thank from the bottom of my heart everyone who is organizing these projects, especially the director, and all rest of the people involved as well as the benefactors, anyone who has offered financial support, time and intelligent ideas. I will dedicate for all your wishes to be fulfilled, for your happiness and for you to achieve enlightenment quickly.

In terms of the benefit of holy objects that are not even filled with mantras and consecrated; there are still incredible benefits the moment the holy object is actualized.

The following are some examples of the power of holy objects.

There was one leaf that had seven insects on it. It was blown by the wind and circumambulated three times a Vairochana statue that was near the ocean. Then the insects died. They were reborn as seven lower caste girls then, in their next life, they were reborn as seven daughters of King Titi. They made offerings to Kasyapa Buddha and received prediction of their enlightenment.

This shows how karma works. Another example:

A pig was being chased by a dog. Somehow they ran around a stupa, so that became a circumambulation. Then the pig died and was reborn in Tushita Pure Land.

Many animals cannot hear mantras but all they have to do to liberate themselves is circumambulate a holy object, even without the motivation - that is all. There are inconceivable benefits of stupas and specifically of the four dharmakaya relic mantras. The benefits of these mantras are unbelievable. Just by seeing, hearing, touching or thinking about any holy object that has the four dharmakaya relic mantras inside, one can be liberated from all the negative karma and sufferings.

We have many insects inside the retreat house in Washington (Buddha Amitabha Pure Land) so every day we catch as many as possible in large jars that have ventilation and space. We separate the various kinds of insects into different jars so they do not fight or frighten each other. We have a large altar that is full of holy objects, the relics of Buddha and many other relics, many photos and images of Buddhas, as many tsa.tsas as possible, as well as many stupas filled with the four dharmakaya relic mantras. So we circumambulate, running as fast as possible so that we are able to do as many circumambulations as we can, with the jars full of insects. Then we release them outside.

What is happening to those insects is exactly like the stories above. It is incredible how fast it will purify them; even their present life will get better and better. This is what happens when you take insects around holy objects: it directs their life towards enlightenment. You can see this from the stories. It means as we circumambulate with them we will give them all the body of a happy transmigrator in their next life, a happy rebirth. Not only that, but we give them the opportunity to practice Dharma in their next life, which is the most important thing, to have a better rebirth to be able to accomplish the path, cease the defilements and achieve enlightenment.

This is an incredible gift to them from us, it repays their kindness. They have been our mother numberless times and because of their kindness we have been able to practice Dharma. As our mothers they protected our lives from hardships and dangers every day, they bore so many hardships for us. All our present happiness, as well as all our previous and future happiness, all the realizations of the path up to enlightenment - these insects are the source of that.

For these reasons I asked for a stupa to be built in my house in California (Kachoe Dechen Ling). Now there is an extremely beautiful stupa that is filled and covered with so many tsa.tsas. The stupa is filled with the four dharmakaya relic mantras. These give the most power to purify and collect the most extensive merit.

The idea to build the stupa came because Venerable Roger wanted to have a dog, so we got a dog from somebody who could no longer keep theirs and if they couldn't find a home probably she would have been put down. The dog is called OM MANI PADME HUNG.

If you have a pet it is very good to give it a Dharma name rather than giving it a useless name that has no benefit for the animal. If you give your pet a Dharma name, such as

names of the path to enlightenment (renunciation, bodhicitta, emptiness – they can be in English, Tibetan or Sanskrit) it leaves a positive imprint on the mind of the animal.

So we called the dog in Kachoe Dechen Ling OM MANI PADME HUNG. Each time she hears her name it plants the seed for the whole path to enlightenment, it leaves a positive imprint on her mind. Also, it creates the cause for her to understand all the 84,000 teachings of Buddha because they are contained in OM MANI PADME HUNG: the two truths, the path of method and wisdom and the goal, dharmakaya and rupakaya. Each time we call her name it leaves a positive imprint for her to be able to hear the whole sutra and tantra, the complete extensive teachings of Buddha. This is incredible; definitely each time she hears her name it brings her closer to enlightenment. This is such an easy way to benefit animals and to bring them closer to enlightenment so we must do it, we must attempt every single way to benefit them. We must do it for others, to quickly liberate them from samsara, which is only in the nature of suffering and which has no beginning, which is continuous.

Understanding the incredible benefits just of naming your pets, it is very silly and foolish if you don't do even this. It's such an easy way to benefit them, even if you don't do bigger things like building a stupa to benefit the sentient beings living with you. What you can easily do is take them around holy objects, chant mantras, read lam rim prayers that contain the whole path, the Heart Sutra, Diamond Cutter Sutra, Sutra of Golden Light, Arya Sangatasutra, and chant powerful mantras as much as possible. There are so many practices you can recite next to them as well as many other things you can do, but if you can't do these then an easy one is giving them a Dharma name that will benefit them very much.

During Choden Rinpoche's teachings at Vajrapani a few years ago Rinpoche said that Lama Atisha called animals *sangpo*, which means "good-hearted." Probably he is not saying: I am good-hearted, but as Lama Atisha has bodhicitta maybe he is saying that his bodhicitta came from them. Lama Atisha gave teachings to numberless sentient beings, liberating them from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bringing them to enlightenment. As all this was received from these animals, from their kind heart, the reason Lama Atisha calls them *sangpo* is that he is naming the result on the cause. Sometimes he may have called them *triche*, which means "kind one." This is maybe to benefit one's own mind, referring to all animals as "kind one", remembering how all one's happiness comes from them.

The stupa that was built at Kachoe Dechen Ling was mainly for OM MANI PADME HUNG. I thought if we have a dog then we need a stupa so that the dog can circumambulate it every day. I asked Brian Halterman to build the stupa – I gave a rough design and he did it very beautifully.

Now as we have the stupa we also have three or four animal liberation practices every month, on the Tibetan 8th, 15th and 30th and on all Wheel Turning days. We buy worms, insects etc. and circumambulate them around the stupa as many times as possible; we

chant mantras and blow on water which we then sprinkle on them and then we liberate them - those from the water into water, those from the ground into the ground.

As we have many, many copies of the four dharmakaya relic mantras inside the stupa, just one circumambulation purifies the negative karma to be reincarnated in the eight hot hells:

- 1) reviving hell
- 2) black line hell
- 3) crushing hell
- 4) howling hell
- 5) loud howling hell
- 6) hot hell
- 7) extremely hot hell
- 8) hell of unceasing torment (*avici* hell).

In each successive hell the suffering is heavier. With one circumambulation all the heavy, negative karma gets completely purified and their lives get directed towards enlightenment.

If you have a thousand insects and worms in bags and you circumambulate them around the stupa three times not only will you liberate them from the lower realms, but also they will create the cause of enlightenment. Those circumambulations become the cause of their enlightenment, for them to achieve liberation from samsara, to have a good rebirth in their next life - so each time you circumambulate them you are giving all those thousands of insects and worms enlightenment, liberation and good rebirth. Also there is not just one stupa but many and each stupa has very many of the four dharmakaya relic mantras inside, so however many mantras and many stupas there are, with each circumambulation you are giving that many causes of enlightenment, liberation from samsara, happiness of future lives to however many insects you have – you are creating the cause for their unbelievably, unbelievably unbelievable purification and for them to collect merit and by the way also for yourself, no question.

In the same way, when you bring people around the stupa you are liberating human beings. When you educate people about the benefits of the four dharmakaya relic mantras and of holy objects, you are causing that sentient being to be inspired to build a stupa or to make circumambulations, prostrations and offerings. You are inspiring people to purify and to collect unimaginable merits.

By actually building a stupa or statue, without words you are continually liberating so many sentient beings – every day, anybody who sees, touches (including insects that touch the stupa), remembers, talks or dreams about the stupa plants the seed of enlightenment and purifies. The stupa is meaningful to behold so it liberates many sentient beings, insects and humans, every day. When the wind touches a stupa (especially if the stupa has the four dharmakaya relic mantras inside), the wind becomes blessed and then wherever it goes and whoever it touches it liberates from the lower realms, by purifying their negative karma. When the rain falls on the stupa, that running

water liberates any being it touches, all the worms in the ground etc., from the lower realms. It is similar with dust.

If you build stupas or statues to inspire people, without even teaching Dharma, for however many hundreds and billions of years the holy object lasts, it continues to liberate many sentient beings every day, freeing them from the lower realms, causing them to actualize the path liberating them from samsara and bringing them to enlightenment. Even if after you die you are in another universe, in the hell realms or a pure land, wherever you are the stupa or statue that you built is continually benefiting sentient beings. It is incredible how you can continually benefit sentient beings by having built a stupa.

One student said that even to be an insect that gets carried around a stupa would depend on having previously created good karma. I replied that even a virtuous action depends on having created the karma before, it is a virtuous imprint ripened.

The student mentioned that the dog that we looked after for a week, which I named Jangsem, must have been very lucky. We found this small Lhasa Apso dog lost in the local Wal-Mart parking lot; we rang all the pounds, dog shelters, radio station and even the police to let the owner know that we had found a lost dog. A week later the owner contacted us. The day Jangsem was due to leave we took him around the stupas, Buddha relics and other great lamas' relics, as well as the Kangyur, Tengyur and Prajnaparamita texts. We circumambulated with Jangsem many, many times and I said Jangsem is probably the luckiest dog in the whole of Washington.

When Jangsem first arrived in the house I recited many mantras and practices for Jangsem to meet Lama Tsong Khapa's teachings; also I recited Maitreya Buddha mantra, which has the power to cause one not to be reborn in the lower realms and to receive a perfect rebirth.

So let us all build these holy objects so that many people from different parts of the world can see and benefit from them.

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