



The Power of Buddhism

H.H. the 42nd Sakya Trizin, Ratna Vajra Rinpoche



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www.sakyatradition.org

Email: info@sakyatradition.org

Wechat ID : sakyatradition

Weibo: sakyatradition

IG: the_sakya_tradition

Facebook: TheSakya

Youtube: 萨迦传承 The Sakya Tradition

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By the merit of this work, may Their Holinesses the Sakya Trichen and Sakya Trizin enjoy perfect health and very long lives, and continue to turn the wheel of Dharma.

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CONTENT

The Power of Buddhism	1
Questions and Answers	13

The Power of Buddhism

We all wish to gain happiness and to eliminate suffering. We are busy with many activities in pursuit of achieving this goal. But in our attempt to gain happiness, most of us try to gain more wealth, fame, or other worldly aims. In the last few decades, there has been great material progress in this world, but, at the same time, people nowadays are not necessarily happier than a few decades ago. There still remains a great deal of physical pain and mental anxiety. This clearly shows us that inner happiness cannot come through only material development. The best way to achieve peace and harmony is by developing our inner mind.

To eliminate suffering and negative thoughts, we must develop positive thoughts and a positive mind. Our negative thoughts are the cause of suffering. It is thus very important to cultivate and practice loving-kindness and compassion. It is taught that compassion is the universal religion. When we develop positive thinking, then we can really help others. We will really want to

serve others; we will really wish for others to be happy; we will really wish for others to be free from suffering. These altruistic thoughts will always make others happy and stop us from harming others. According to Buddha's teachings, the cause of happiness is wishing for others to be happy, whereas the cause of suffering is wishing happiness for just oneself. Selfish thoughts are the cause of one's suffering, but altruistic thoughts are the cause of happiness for both oneself and others.

In Buddhism generally and in Mahāyāna especially, the practice of loving-kindness and compassion is the focus. Our loving-kindness and compassion are rather limited, however. Typically, we extend our loving-kindness and compassion to our family members, our friends, and a few others—but not to everyone. Buddha taught that we must extend our loving-kindness and compassion to all sentient beings without any exception and without any discrimination.

The purpose of Dharma practice is not for the sake of one religion or one group or one race. It is for all. It is for every race. We must not discriminate based on race, religion, or any other basis. When we practice loving-kindness, we make the aspiration: may all beings gain happiness, and may all beings engage in good deeds, which are the cause of happiness. When we say “may all beings,” our understanding must not be limited to only certain

religious followers or one group or one race. “All beings” means all and includes each and every sentient being. Their differences do not matter. So, we must extend our love and compassion to every being. There should be no boundaries to our loving-kindness and compassion.

If we really practice loving-kindness and compassion in a pure way, then there is no hatred to others based on religious or racial differences. There is no chance for hatred to arise because hatred and anger are the opposite of loving-kindness and compassion. They are contradictory. When we have genuine loving-kindness and compassion to all, we will not, at the same time, have hatred or anger to any being. When we have anger, we wish to harm others; but when we have loving-kindness and compassion, we wish to help others. Helping others and harming others are contradictory. We cannot generate these two different thoughts at the same time to the same object. So, if we have developed genuine loving-kindness and compassion to all beings without discrimination, then we can control our anger. Also, we can control our jealousy and other negative thoughts. If we can control our negative thoughts, then we will experience happiness.

As we know from personal experience, we do not feel happy when we are angry. We become ugly. Not only does our face become ugly, but internally we feel very uncomfortable. We don't

feel happy, and our anger makes others unhappy. Anger will always make both oneself and others experience unhappiness. To control our anger, we must develop loving-kindness and compassion.

Attachment is also an obstacle. Although we might think that our attachment does not harm others, our attachment can cause us to generate negative thoughts like anger or jealousy, which only create more suffering. This is especially true if we have very strong attachment. Having attachment is not right because it will lead us to commit many negative actions.

To gain happiness, we must control our mind. If we control our mind, then we can control our physical behavior and verbal expressions. It is important to have not just an intellectual understanding of loving-kindness and compassion; we must bring this knowledge into our daily life. We must materialize this meaning into our actions. We can impact or transform our mind only through our practice. An intellectual understanding alone will not have a strong impact.

Knowledge and practice are related; they have a cause and effect relationship. First, we must know how to practice. With this cause, we can undertake the actual practice of infinite loving-kindness and compassion to all sentient beings without any exception. This practice will make both oneself and others happy.

As human beings, we should emphasize the similarities of all beings in general and especially human beings. We should not emphasize our differences. We should not emphasize whether people are from different religions or races or countries. The more we emphasize these differences, the more bias and negative thoughts will arise. That will lead us to experience more suffering. Instead of emphasizing differences, we should emphasize our similarities, of which there are many. For example, our features are generally similar; we have one face and two hands. Moreover, we all have the same wish to gain happiness and eliminate suffering. We all have this common goal that we wish to achieve.

It is not right if we ignore the welfare and well-being of others, and care about only ourselves. Such thinking will not bring us real peace and happiness. To begin, we should be harmonious with our family. Then we can extend our peace and harmony to our neighbors and other beings. Gradually, we should extend this harmony to all beings without any exception. In this way, we can make this world more peaceful and more beautiful.

We can change the world with our mind. Physical and verbal actions are like the mind's attendants. Whatever the mind orders, our body and speech will follow. If we can control our mind, then we can control our physical and verbal actions.

Generally speaking, Buddha’s teachings can be regarded as methods on how to train the mind. Through practicing Buddha’s teachings, we can tame, control, and subdue our mind. Then we can experience genuine happiness. As it is said in the *Prātimokṣa Sūtra*:

མྱོག་པ་ཅི་ཡང་མི་བྱ་ཞིང་།།
དགེ་བ་ལུན་སུམ་ཚོགས་པར་སྦྱང་།།
རང་གི་སེམས་ནི་ཡོངས་སུ་འདུལ།།
འདི་ནི་སངས་རྒྱས་བཟུན་པ་ཡིན།།

Commit not a single negative action,
Practice excellent virtue,
Tame the mind completely:
This is the Buddha’s teaching.

To suit the different mentalities of beings, Buddha has turned the wheel of Dharma by bestowing an immense number and variety of teachings—just as a skillful doctor will prescribe different types of medicine to cure different types of sickness. Similarly, Buddha has bestowed many different teachings to suit our different mentalities. His teachings are a method or path that will lead us from suffering and dissatisfaction to temporal and ultimate happiness. So, we should regard Buddha as a skillful doctor and his teachings as medicine. Further, we should regard

sentient beings and ourselves as patients, we should regard our defilements and negative thoughts as sickness, and we should regard receiving and then practicing Dharma teachings as like receiving and then following the doctor's advice. With this in mind, we can properly practice the Buddha Dharma.

If a patient merely listens to the doctor's advice but does not follow it, the patient's sickness will not be cured. The patient must follow the doctor's advice by, for example, taking the prescribed medicine at the right dosage or following the prescribed diet, or by abandoning the wrong diet or medicine. By following the doctor's advice, the patient can cure their own sickness. Likewise, listening to Dharma teachings is beneficial, but it is not enough. After listening, we must follow the teachings. If we follow them or put those teachings into action, then we can make an impact on our mind. We can change our mind. We can make our mind more peaceful.

It is very important for each one of us to practice Dharma. If, for example, a wealthy patient donates medicine or sponsors the medical care of poorer patients, those poorer patients can be helped. But everyone's sickness will not be cured just through the wealthy patient's generosity. Rather, each patient has to actually take the prescribed medicine. Only then can each patient cure his or her own sickness.

Likewise, it is meritorious to sponsor or encourage others to practice loving-kindness and compassion, but it is not enough. To cure or to control our negative thoughts, we must practice ourselves. Supporting or encouraging others' practice will not—without our own effort—help control our negative thoughts. Everything depends on ourselves. Whether we attain genuine happiness or not depends on our own practice and how we follow the teachings. If we follow the teachings properly, then we can gain happiness.

Also, please do not think that Dharma practice is for oneself alone. We should never think this way. We should think that every practice we do is for everyone—for the sake of all sentient beings. So, we must practice to overcome suffering and the defilements that are the cause of suffering.

If a person who does not know how to swim falls into an ocean, then that person cannot save his or her own life. That person will drown and also cannot help fellow beings who are also drowning. Likewise, at the moment, we are bound by our negative actions and thoughts. We are sinking or drowning in the ocean of saṃsāra. We thus cannot rescue fellow sentient beings who are also drowning in the ocean of saṃsāra. To be able to rescue others from saṃsāra, we must liberate ourselves from saṃsāra by attaining enlightenment. To accomplish this, we must

practice and follow Buddha's teachings. We can then help others more effectively.

We accept Buddha's teachings not by faith alone but only after a thorough examination or investigation. Buddha himself said that his followers should not accept his teachings just out of faith but should thoroughly examine them. The more we examine or inspect them, the stronger faith we will have in Buddha's teachings. When buying gold, one checks whether the gold is genuine by burning, cutting, or rubbing it. Through these tests one can be convinced that it is indeed genuine gold. Buddha said to examine his teachings in a similar manner. After that, we will be convinced and can accept Buddha's teachings, which are actually very vast and deep.

Dharma practice will lead us to a better state or happiness. This word *happiness* has varied meanings; there are different types of happiness. Real happiness is beyond saṃsāra and can be experienced when we become a buddha. Now, however, we do not experience real happiness. Our happy feelings are not genuine happiness but are the suffering of change, which is one type of suffering. When a poor person moves into a luxurious house, that person might feel very happy at first. But if the luxurious house is the real cause of happiness, then that person should be happy so long as he or she stays in that house. After some time though,

that person will experience suffering—one way or another. This proves that so-called happiness can become suffering. Mundane happiness is called the suffering of change. What we really need is not the suffering of change. We need genuine happiness that is beyond saṃsāra. We cannot experience genuine happiness within saṃsāra. To overcome suffering, we must gain liberation from saṃsāra.

Moreover, each and every one of us has the potential to gain liberation and become a buddha. This is because we all have a mind, and the nature of our mind is pure from beginningless time. It is never stained with negative thoughts. These negative thoughts are temporary and are not the nature of our mind. Rather, they can be eliminated. For example, the dirt on a white cloth is not the nature of the cloth. The dirt is temporary. Because it is temporary, the dirt can be removed if we use the right remedy to clean the cloth. Likewise, the nature of our mind is pure; it is not anger, jealousy, or attachment. If we apply the right remedy—the Dharma—then there is no doubt that we can eliminate our negative thoughts. We should be encouraged and believe in ourselves. We should have confidence that each one of us can gain liberation because our mind is pure since beginningless time.

It is very important to have confidence. If we believe in ourselves

and our practice, we will be more diligent. Through our diligence on the right path, we can achieve a great result.

We must recollect, however, that our life is impermanent. We will not live forever. We should think that our life provides us with the best opportunity to practice loving-kindness and compassion to all beings. Although it can be said that certain animals, such as dolphins, are intelligent, they cannot practice meditation like us. They cannot extend their loving-kindness and compassion to all sentient beings. Generally, only human beings have this power to practice infinite loving-kindness and compassion.

With our present life, we have the golden opportunity to practice loving-kindness and compassion. This chance will not be easy to obtain again in the future. While we have this chance, we should use it wisely and practice infinite loving-kindness and compassion. We should not have strong attachment to this life, but we should take care of ourselves and use this life as a vehicle to reach the next destination. We should use this life as a boat to cross the ocean of saṃsāra and reach the shore of liberation.

We should not waste our life but should use the precious opportunity of this life with the understanding that it will be discarded at the end. We cannot keep this body for hundreds of years—but maybe for a hundred years at most. We know that not

everyone will live to the age of one hundred. Some die in their mothers' wombs; some die right after birth. There is no certain lifespan for human beings. So, we should use this life in a positive way without delay.

We should never think, "I will wait until I'm older to practice loving-kindness and compassion." There is no certainty that any person will live until a certain age. We should think that this life in this body is like a paper cup. We will keep this paper cup until we are done using it. After using it, we discard the cup without any attachment. Similarly, we should use this life in an effective way. Then, we will have no choice but to accept death. Our body will be disposed by cremation or another means.

In short, this life is very precious. We have the best chance to practice loving-kindness and compassion. In this human life, we have the best chance to make this world more peaceful and harmonious. Yet, this life is very short. We should use this life properly. By our practice of infinite loving-kindness and compassion, we can really spread peace and harmony—not only in one country, but everywhere.

Questions and Answers

Question: Should we wait until we are enlightened to help others, or can we help others along the way?

Answer: Actually, practicing Dharma does not mean only doing our practices alone—such as recitations or meditation. Physically helping others is also part of our practice. Our practice must include helping others and performing wholesome deeds. Dharma practice can be done anywhere at any time, even when we are doing a mundane job. If we have a genuine heart and sincere intention to help others, then our mundane job is also a path of Dharma practice.

Question: Is practicing Buddhism more difficult in certain countries because of wealth and possessions?

Answer: In this modern time, there are more distractions. It is more challenging to practice, but at the same time, some people explore a lot. They use modern technology a lot, but still they do not feel real happiness. They realize that modern facilities and technology are not the actual way to achieve real happiness. Through this, they can come back to practice loving-kindness and compassion.

Question: What is the best way to overcome limitations or the weaknesses of one's mind?

Answer: It is most important that we do not feel discouragement. If we are discouraged, then we become weak. If we become weak, then we are like a sick person who cannot actively move ourselves, let alone lift heavy objects. When we are very discouraged, we are not strong; we will lack the wish to undertake big tasks or accomplish big goals. We must have self-confidence. Even when faced with a very difficult situation, we can overcome

the challenge if we have confidence. The future can be brighter like the saying goes, “there is light at the end of the tunnel.” When we are in a tunnel, we should not think there is no sunshine at all. At the end of tunnel, there is sunshine. So, we should not lose hope or discourage ourselves. We should have confidence in ourselves.

Question: How do we avoid being overcome by anger?

Answer: Anger and other negative thoughts have obscured our mind for a long time—not only in this life but since beginningless time. So, it is not that easy to control. We must apply effort to control negative thoughts. If we become angry when someone steals our possessions, our anger will not necessarily bring us back the items stolen by the thief. Instead, we should use skillful means and try to get them back. Also, one will not feel happy if one is angry. By thinking about the consequences of anger, we can recognize that having anger is pointless.

Yet, anger cannot be easily controlled. If we reply with anger when someone is angry at us, that is not right. Instead,

when someone is angry at us, we should think that this situation is the best opportunity for us to practice tolerance. With a compassionate attitude, we should think about how this other person has no control of his or her anger. We can then improve ourselves and accumulate merit. But if we just react with anger, we will experience more problems and there will be more suffering for both sides. Anger is always the cause of suffering. So, by thinking of the consequences that anger incurs in this life or in future lives, we can control our mind.

Anger can arise in our mind anytime and anywhere. We don't need to make an appointment to have anger. Due to sudden factors, due to even small or minor factors, anger can arise in our mind. We can control this by thinking that when someone is becoming angry at us, it is not the other person's fault. Rather, he or she has become overwhelmed by anger and lost control of themselves due to anger.

As I said before, physical and verbal actions are the attendants to or the followers of this mind. Mind is the boss and gives the order of what to do. If we control our mind, our anger can be controlled.



■ His Holiness the 42nd Sakya Trizin, Ratna Vajra Rinpoche, is the eldest son of His Holiness the Sakya Trichen (the 41st Sakya Trizin). Renowned for his erudition and the clarity of his teachings, His Holiness the 42nd Sakya Trizin is regarded as one of the most highly qualified lineage holders in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. He belongs to the noble Khön family, whose successive generations have provided an unbroken lineage of outstanding Buddhist masters.

Since his youth, His Holiness the 42nd Sakya Trizin has received an ocean of sutra and tantra teachings, empowerments, transmissions, and pith instructions from His Holiness the Sakya Trichen, as well as many other learned and accomplished masters. After years of rigorous philosophy studies at Sakya College in India, he was awarded the kachupa degree. And starting from the age of twelve, he has completed numerous meditation retreats, including the Hevajra retreat. With utmost humility, he travels extensively to bestow teachings and empowerments at the request of students across the globe.



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