



# How to Apply Buddhadharma in Our Daily Lives

His Holiness the 42<sup>nd</sup> Sakya Trizin, Ratna Vajra Rinpoche



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# Acknowledgement

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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.

What is Dharma practice?

Is reciting mantras or prayers,  
listening to a Dharma  
teaching,  
attending a Dharma event,  
circumambulation, meditation,  
or practicing a sādhana  
a Dharma practice?

Do we consider someone to be  
a diligent and excellent Dharma  
practitioner if one spends more  
time on the cushion doing  
practices?

This teaching,  
*How to Apply Buddhadharma  
in Our Daily Lives*,  
addresses the misconceptions  
that most beginners may have.

To ensure our efforts are well  
paid off, let us read and  
contemplate this teaching  
carefully.



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## Introduction

All sentient beings are the same. Before Buddha Shakyamuni became a buddha, he was an ordinary sentient being, just like us. Through thorough examination and research, he attempted to find the truth, the real source of happiness, and the real method to obtain happiness, not only in one lifetime, but for many lifetimes, for thousands and thousands of eons. Eventually, he found a method, and that is the Dharma—the reality, the fact, and the truth. Through Dharma practice, he then became Buddha Shakyamuni.

In reality, Buddha Shakyamuni attained buddhahood countless eons before appearing in this world as Prince Siddhārtha. In the understanding of common people, he descended from Tuṣita Realm, a god realm, to the human world, and was born in Lumbinī as Prince Siddhārtha.

At the age of twenty-nine, one day, he went outside the palace and saw a sick person on the streets. Instantly, he felt the

physical pain and mental suffering that the sick man was experiencing. He really felt that experience within himself and was determined to find a solution to overcome such suffering.

After years of meditation, he discovered the Dharma in Bodh Gaya. However, he did not teach the nectar-like Dharma for seven weeks, stating that no one can really understand such a precious and profound teaching.

Later, the powerful gods Indra and Brahmā supplicated to the Buddha, requesting him to teach the Dharma. Meanwhile, the Buddha observed that the right candidates were present to receive the precious Dharma teachings. All these conditions appeared together, and finally the Buddha bestowed the first Dharma teaching on the fourth day of the sixth lunar month, nowadays known as Dharmachakra Day.

From that time onwards, Buddha Shakyamuni gave enormous number of teachings to suit the different mentalities of the followers. For example, one type of medicine cannot cure all types of sicknesses, and a doctor needs to give different kinds of medicines according to the needs of his or her patients. We can perceive the Buddha as a doctor, the Dharma as the medicine, and that we as patients, while our negative thoughts such as anger and attachment are the various illnesses. Receiving the teachings and then putting them into practice is similar to receiving and following the doctors' advice. Buddhadharma is therefore like a medicine.



Although the Buddha appeared to be giving a teaching in one voice, he was actually giving teachings of the three yānas or vehicles concurrently to various followers who were at different places. In other words, one voice can deliver teachings to different followers at different places in different languages, as well as on different topics or different subjects. This is one of the qualities of the Buddha.



## What Is Dharma

**B**uddha gave an enormous number of teachings. Later, the great scholars who are followers of the Buddha gathered together and compiled these teachings. This collection is known as Kangyur (Tib. བཀའ་འགྱུར་) in Tibetan language. At the moment there are hundreds of volumes containing the Tibetan-language version of Kangyur.

Dharma is a Sanskrit word (Skt. *Dhamma*). It was clearly stated by the great Ācārya Vasubandhu that the word *dharma* in fact has ten different meanings. But here when we say Dharma, it refers to Buddhadharma, one of the three precious jewels, or one aspect of the Triple Gem. This Dharma is sacred, secret, profound, and precious.

Dharma is a method that can transform an ordinary sentient being into a buddha. Dharma can transform a person full of negative thoughts into an excellent being who is without any obscuration but just all the ultimate qualities. Once these

qualities are gained, the qualities will remain forever and will be irreversible. In other words, once buddhahood is attained, the attainment remains forever.



## Practice Genuinely

**S**o, what is considered as a real and genuine Dharma practice? Some people might think that just attending an important Dharma event—without any focus on the actual words and meaning the Dharma—is genuine Dharma practice. However, this is not a real Dharma practice.

To practice the Dharma, first and foremost, it is important to know the meaning of Dharma. Without knowing and understanding its meaning, it is impossible to practice real Dharma.

Moreover, when we receive and practice Dharma, it is important to have the right motivation. Without the right motivation, even if we do a Dharma practice, we are still not practicing real Dharma.

In ancient time, there was a great master whose name is Dromtopa. He saw another person was performing some kind of Dharma practice and advised the practitioner, “You should

practice Dharma.”

Hearing this, the practitioner thought that what he was practicing was not real Dharma and thus did another type of Dharma practice. Then, again, Dromtopa made the same remark: “You should practice Dharma.”

And so, the practitioner changed his practice and did a different type of Dharma practice. However, Dromtopa again said, “You should practice Dharma.”

I do not remember the three types of Dharma practices that the practitioner did. Nevertheless, the essential point that Dromtopa brought up was that merely doing the so-called Dharma practices—such as prostrations, reading Dharma books, meditation, retreat, or following a *sādhana* —is not considered Dharma practice. Because real Dharma practice should come from our own mind, which is developed by having the right motivation. Without developing the right motivation, whatever you practice, no matter how profound it is, it will not be a real Dharma practice.

## **Right Dharma Practice, Right Purpose, and Right Motivation**

### *Commence with the Right Dharma Practice*

When we begin a Dharma practice, first it is important to have the right Dharma to practice.

Merely having the right Dharma to practice, however, is not sufficient. Although one is going to practice genuine and real Dharma, without knowing the meaning of a genuine Dharma practice, one is not able to practice properly.

Even if one knows what a genuine Dharma practice is, yet one is practicing with distraction or without proper visualization, it is still not considered real Dharma.

Although the Dharma text is genuine, if one does not practice properly—knowing and understanding the meaning of Dharma, and practicing with concentration and proper visualization—one is not doing a real and genuine Dharma practice.

Further, although the Dharma text is real and the way one practices both physically and verbally is genuine, without having

the right motivation and intention, it is still not real Dharma practice. As mentioned in a full-length teaching of the great Ārya Mañjuśrī, the embodiment of all Buddha's wisdom to the great Sachen Kunga Nyingpo, the main master of the five founding masters of the Sakya tradition, the first line clearly states, "If you have attachment for this life, you are not a spiritual person." Our physical and verbal Dharma practices will not determine whether we are doing real Dharma practice, only our right motivation will.

### *Have the Right Purpose to Practice*

Moreover, when we practice Dharma, we should know why we are practicing the Dharma. Without knowing the real purpose of practicing the Dharma, if we just blindly follow what others are practicing, it is also not a genuine Dharma practice.

Some may have a purpose, if the purpose is worldly, although the worldly purpose sometimes appears to be positive, it is not considered a real Dharma practice. Why? Because worldly purposes are not the right motivation for Dharma practice. For example, if my intention of studying the Dharma for many years is to teach the Dharma, hoping to spread the Dharma to different people far and wide, such intention on the surface looks good, positive, and righteous, yet when we examine and think carefully, this kind of intention is not right!

In addition, our purpose of Dharma practice is not to preserve a particular school or religion or whatever my interest may be. Such thinking is based on selfish thought or self-clinging. No matter what practices we do, if it is based on selfish or self-cherishing thought, it is not deemed as real and genuine Dharma practice. It is therefore important for us to know what the right purpose is for pursuing the practice of Dharma.

*Harbor the Right Motivation the Entire Time*

I am currently giving this teaching. If, however, my intention to teach is to gain more fame or to gain more followers, then my intention is not right. Although what I am teaching is the truth, in accordance with the Dharma, due to my worldly intention of wanting to gain more fame or followers, which is not the right motivation, I am not practicing Dharma.

Therefore, whether we are learning, meditating, or practicing the Dharma, whatever practices we do can only be defined as real genuine Dharma practice if only our motivation is right. For instance, it appears as though I am currently doing a wholesome deed by giving a Dharma teaching according to the Buddha's teaching, but such an act alone cannot determine if I am truly doing a genuine Dharma practice. Only my mind, my intention, or my motivation can determine whether I am really performing genuine Dharma practice at this moment.



We may think that we want to practice Dharma in order to help, benefit, and serve sentient beings. We can say such an intention is the right motivation. However, if our intention is limited to just wanting to help my community, which consists of a hundred or a thousand people or hundreds of thousands of people, or for those who are following the Buddhadharma—if we practice and spread the Dharma with such intention, it is still not genuine Dharma practice. This is because we are not extending our loving-kindness or compassion to all sentient beings, without exception and discrimination. We are just focusing on a small group of people, for example, the followers of Buddha—and this is narrow-minded.

Followers of the Buddha are sentient beings. Yet they are not all the sentient beings. There is a big difference between all sentient beings and all the Buddhist followers. All the Buddhist followers are much lesser in number compared to all sentient beings. When we say all the Buddhist followers, we are referring to approximately millions and millions, which is just a small fraction of the entire human population, currently eight billion, in the world. When “all sentient beings” are mentioned, this includes all the human-beings in this world, all the animals on the earth, water, and elsewhere, as well as all beings in other realms. “All beings” means all sentient beings in the six realms of saṃsāra.

Unless and until we have generated the thought of renunciation, loving-kindness, and compassion and bodhicitta, to all the

beings, no matter what intention we have, we are still not able to make our Dharma practice real and genuine.

At the moment, it is impossible for us to have genuine motivation, loving-kindness, and compassion all the time. However, we can start generating such positive thoughts starting from short period of time, like for a few moments or few minutes, and then gradually extending the duration, and eventually we can harbor the right motivation twenty-four hours a day, for many days, until our motivation is strong all the time.

## Real Dharma Practice Should Come from the Mind

**W**e have three types of actions: physical, verbal, and mental actions. Generally speaking, our mind is more powerful than our body and speech, because mind is like a boss, while the latter two are working under the mind.

Mind has no limit; it can be improved. For instance, our mind is only one percent improved at present, and we have ninety-nine percent of room to improve. If Dharma practice is mainly referred to as a physical practice, then we will not be able to improve much due to the limited room for improvement.

Dedicated runners practice and train for a hundred-meter race. No matter how much they are trained, the fastest that a record holder has completed in a hundred-meter run is 9.58 seconds. We may have this record broken in future, but it will only be a few milliseconds or so faster than this. In other words, it is just impossible to finish a hundred-meter race much less than 8 seconds. There is little room for improvement.

Another example, the world's long jump record is 8.95 meters, and we may have this record broken in future, but it will not be a big height increase; it is impossible for athletes to jump from mountain to mountain.

Therefore, we can see that physical but not mental practices have limits.

Dharma practice is mainly a mental practice and hence there is no limitation. We may not complete all the improvements through our Dharma practice within one lifetime. But the improvement will continue life after life until buddhahood is obtained. Once buddhahood is attained, the quality of our mind becomes infinite, like space. So, we should always think that real Dharma practices should come from the mind, and not just physical and verbal actions.

When “Dharma” is mentioned, some may think that Dharma books or Dharma teachings are Dharma. Yes, these are considered to be Dharma. But these are methods that can help us to gain the Dharma. Real Dharma is realization, the inner quality. Although Dharma teachings are Dharma, if our mind is not impacted, changed, or improved after receiving them, they are ineffective. Such teachings cannot transform us to a real Dharma practitioner. Once again, it is essential to understand that real Dharma practice should come from our mind and through the right motivation.

When our mind is pure or harbors the right motivation, Dharma practices from our body and speech will also be genuine. Just like the root of a tree is medicinal, all the other parts stemming from this root are medicinal, too. Similarly, all our physical and speech activities motivated by a pure mind will be virtuous and positive, and hence is known as a Dharma practice. In contrast, when our mind is impure, sealed by worldly intention, no matter what practices we perform, it will not be genuine Dharma practices; it may appear like real Dharma, the so-called superficial Dharma.

## **Believe the Complete Law of Karma with Logical Reasons**

**I**t is impossible to determine the size, shape, or color of our mind, yet it is very powerful. Due to the mind, we have past and future lives. This present body will be disposed at the end of this life in one way or another. This mind, however, cannot be disposed like how our body is disposed. This mind continues unceasingly although it changes momentarily. Life after life, it continues without stopping, connecting the past to the present, and from the present to the future.

Our Dharma practice is based on our past, present, and future lives. If one does not believe in rebirth, then one cannot be a real Buddhist, a real follower of the Buddha, because his teachings are based on the law of karma, or the law of action. If we perform good actions, we will reap good results. Conversely, if we commit bad actions, then this will lead to bad results.

The law of karma is based on the birth of past, present, and future lives. Accepting only this present life indicates that one

is not accepting the complete law of karma. Therefore, it is essential to believe in the complete law of karma. However, we should believe in the law of karma for logical reasons, not merely because Buddha said so.

There is logical reasoning to explain the law of karma. As mentioned earlier, because of the mind we have connections to the past, present, and future times. This mind cannot be generated through any other causes or conditions or by other external factors or substances. The cause of the present mind is the previous mind itself. The present moment of the mind is caused by the previous moment of the mind, and so forth. So anyway, based on such reasons, we can believe in the mental continuum that never ceases, and for logical reason we can believe in this.

## Controlling Our Mind Whenever and Whenever We Are

**W**herever and whenever we are, we should control our mind. We should be vigilant. We should have conscious alertness all the time. This is also very important.

Dharma practice does not mean we should practice Dharma only when we are in the shrine hall, when we are in front of masters, or when we are doing *sādhana* practices. Rather, regardless of where we are, and whatever activities we are performing, even when we are at home or busy at work participating in worldly activities—we should always practice the Dharma. We do our best to control our mind such as not to have anger or other negative thoughts, not to commit any negative actions, and so on. In fact, controlling our mind and not being angry in itself is a Dharma practice when coupled with right motivation. This is how we infuse the Dharma into our daily lives.

Sometimes a student may remark, “I am practicing the Dharma because I am doing many *sādhana*s, reciting many mantras for



many years or even decades, and have received teachings from many great gurus. I have also performed many virtuous deeds.” Actually, just doing all these things is not sufficient. We should instead attempt to implement the teachings in our lives, not only during the practice and teaching session, and not also during post-teaching and post-sādhana sessions, but all the time in our lives.

“Practicing” the Dharma, such as practicing patience and tolerance during the teaching or sādhana practice sessions, is not difficult. It is not difficult to control our negative actions at those sessions. But when we are performing worldly activities elsewhere, when we are with our family or at work, it can be much more challenging to practice patience. It is not as easy to control our mind at that time. And therefore, it is essential to know how to control our mind and remain vigilant all the time.

Apart from that, we attempt to perform as many positive actions as possible, always remembering what is to be adopted and what is to be abandoned.

Dharma teachings will not be useful to us if we do not implement the teachings in our daily life. It is as though a person has spent months and years to learn culinary skills to be a great chef, yet if the person does not actually physically cook or if the food is not consumed by us or others, it defeats the purpose of the effort spent in learning to cook. Studying the Dharma like learning how to cook, and consuming the food is like truly experiencing the Dharma through the practice.

It is therefore very important to practice and meditate after studying and contemplating the Dharma based on the right motivation and right moral conduct, and to practice in our daily life all the time. If we really practice the Dharma, then there is great benefit in this present life as well as in future lives.

When two persons are facing the same challenges or problems, the one who understands and practices the Dharma can handle the difficult situation and stress much better than the one who does not practice Dharma.

## We Are Living in a Dream

**G**enuine Dharma practitioners know the whole world has the nature of suffering. As such, they typically do not have sad and excited feelings; their emotional state is stable. Even if striking a million-dollar lottery, the mind of a genuine Dharma practitioner does not become excited. And likewise, if a practitioner loses a million dollars, they do not feel sad.

Understanding the nature of saṃsāra, understanding that these phenomena are part of life or saṃsāra, not beyond saṃsāra, genuine practitioners are not attached to all these phenomena, and hence do not have worldly feelings, such as happy and sad.

I am not claiming that I am a genuine practitioner, because I have a lot of worldly thoughts, too. However, those real and genuine Dharma practitioners do not have worldly feelings. Whether they win or lose money, their feelings remain the same.

There is a prayer in one of the sūtras, Buddha's teachings, that

describes a young woman who had two dreams; in her first dream, she dreamed that she delivered a healthy baby and therefore she felt happy. In her second dream, she dreamed that her baby died, and this made her very sad. These two “events” happened in her dreams, yet she experienced happy and sad feelings as though they truly did happen to her. Similarly, we should know that all the phenomena in our lives are like a dream. It is pointless to feel excited when we win or be upset when we lose, because we should know all are like a dream.

No matter how much money we have, it cannot buy Dharma, it cannot buy Dharma practice, and it cannot even buy immortal life. No matter how rich we are, at the end we all have to die. Money also cannot help our future lives. We will have to leave behind all our money and possessions at the end of this life. We cannot even bring our present body, which we have become so attached to, into the next life. Only the mind, mental continuum, will go to the next life.

As such, it is crucial to know, for example, when we say, “my family,” “my house,” “my company,” “my monastery,” “my nunnery” ... we should think that I can say this for only the next few decades at most. I cannot claim to own these things for the next two hundred years or more. No one can own a house, a company, a monastery, a car, and so on for two hundred years because our life is not that long, so how can we own these possessions for a hundred years or more? That is simply

impossible.

When we think that we own our possessions forever, then we have more clinging and grasping onto all these things. In contrast, if we understand that all these, including ourselves, are just temporary or impermanent—we may own them for at most a few decades—such thinking will help us reduce our attachment and clinging.

If we think carefully, in general our life is short, even if we live up to a hundred years. When we are young, we feel that a year is extremely long. Yet when we grow older, we feel that time passes quickly. So, we should think all these external phenomena are temporal and are like a dream—that we are living in a dream and thus nothing is truly existing and permanent.

With such understanding, if we attempt to practice Buddhadharma, using our body, speech, and mind as much as possible with the right motivation, it will certainly bring us great benefit. We can also influence others to be on the right track or path, the path of attaining liberation and perfect enlightenment.

## Have a Positive Mind

**T**he main point is to have a positive mind. Some people may think that by changing their dwelling place, their problems will be solved, and they will have a better life. Of course, moving from an underdeveloped country to a developed country with better facilities may solve some of our basic requirements, such as stable electricity supply, clean water system, better road conditions, and so forth. However, these are not the only problems we face in life.

When we are in a well-developed country, although we may not have electricity or water problems, we are still facing many other problems, both physically and mentally. It has been reported that cases of suicide are high in developed countries, clearly indicating that living in developed countries does not grant us genuine happiness.

Real happiness comes from our mind.

## Conclusion

**T**o summarize, in order to have a better life and future, we must change our mind—not merely change our physical conditions—but change our mental attitude from negative to positive. We must transform our mind from negative to positive.

Dharma practice is the real method to help us change or transform our mind, because Dharma has the ultimate and positive mind. The real positive mind is none other than the genuine Dharma practice. We should therefore attempt to practice the Dharma and infuse it into our daily lives all the time: controlling our mind, attempting to be a good person, such as not to criticize or use harsh words but being polite, mentally not harbor any anger or other negative thoughts, and to have a positive mind.

Anger, in fact, is always bad and is the enemy of our Dharma practice. Anger is the enemy of peace, harmony, and happiness. If we want to defeat our so-called enemy, our enemy is anger, not

others. We should always have the intention to defeat our enemy, which is our anger. Anger is not elsewhere, our anger is within ourselves, within our mind. This is why it is important to control our mind. Many negative thoughts will arise in an uncontrolled mind and, as a consequence, problems will arise for us and others.

Through the above-mentioned methods, we can truly implement genuine Dharma practice coupled with right motivation. By doing so continuously, we will be free from saṃsāra in general and specifically from the three lower realms, and eventually attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

-The End-







- 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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