



Wisdom Is the Key to a Happy Life: A Teaching for the Reading Transmission of the *Mañjuśrī-nāma-saṃgīti Tantra*

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By the merit of this work, may His Holiness the Sakya Trichen enjoy perfect health and a very long life, and continue to turn the wheel of Dharma.



Wisdom The Key to Happiness

We all want to be happy, and our definition for happiness and the way we pursue happiness vary. However, the happiness that most people are aggressively pursuing is temporary.

From the Buddhist perspective, only wisdom can one gain real happiness, which is ultimate and permanent.

How do we acquire wisdom? As we have heard, Mañjuśrī is the embodiment of wisdom. This teaching was from the reading transmission of the *Mañjuśrī-nāma-saṃgīti Tantra*. His Holiness explains how wisdom could be acquired in a clear and orderly manner, guiding us to explore the adventure of wisdom.

Wisdom Is the Key to a Happy Life: A Teaching for the Reading Transmission of the *Mañjuśrī-nāma-saṃgīti Tantra*

In the world in which we live, there are many different people, different ideas, and different cultures. There is, however, one thing that we all have in common. We all wish to be free from suffering and to obtain happiness. For the sake of achieving happiness, every individual—and every society, too—is running towards the things that they think will bring it. Modern progress and economic development arose in pursuit of happiness. In the last century, there has been tremendous progress in science and technology, and this has produced many benefits. However, it is clear that real happiness cannot be found through outer technological development. To achieve real happiness, we must change our minds. To do this, what we need more than technological development is spiritual development so that we can free our minds from defilements.

I personally believe that every major world religion has its own beauty and its own way to help mankind. Different spiritual

traditions are necessary in the same way that we need different medicines to cure different diseases. The key to happiness that I am talking about here is from a Buddhist point of view.

In the Buddhist perspective, the mind or consciousness has no beginning. It is one of the great wonders that consciousness has no origin. It is like a beginningless generation of seeds. How can we ever find the first seed? Similarly, there was no point in time that can be called the beginning of an individual consciousness. We have been caught up in saṃsāra from beginningless time, and as long as we are in saṃsāra, there can be no freedom and no happiness, and we must go through enormous suffering. We should make efforts, then, especially now when we possess such good opportunities, such as having been born as human beings, and when we have all the prerequisites which should not be wasted. We should try to achieve concrete results while we have this golden opportunity. Although there are many different kinds of spiritual paths, and we all possess different abilities, mentalities, and defilements, we can say that transforming the mind through cultivating wisdom is the essential thing.

The Three Kinds of Spiritual Paths

1) The Inferior Path

The Buddha said that all compounded things are impermanent, which means that anything that arises from causes and conditions is impermanent. Naturally, this includes our lives. Anyone who has been born is going to die: the end of birth will always be death. When we die, our physical bodies will be disposed of in one way or another, but consciousness will not simply disappear. Mind and body are totally different. The body is visible. We can see it with our eyes, and we can touch it and describe it. But the mind is something other than this, something invisible. We cannot see it or touch it, and it cannot simply disappear or disintegrate but will continue.

While we are living, our actions determine our future. If we have committed negative deeds, then this will cause us to fall into the lower realms, while virtuous deeds will cause us to be born into the higher realms. For those who fall into the lower realms, there is an unimaginable amount of suffering.

If we practice Dharma to prevent this suffering and to be born continuously in the higher realms, then this is called the small person's path. To carry it out successfully, you must abstain

from nonvirtuous deeds, practice virtuous deeds, and maintain good moral conduct. It is called the small person's path because the motivation is for rebirth in the higher realms, which is still within the circle of saṃsāra. Nevertheless, it is still a spiritual path. Even with this inferior or basic path, wisdom is needed. To practice it successfully depends on the wisdom that enables you to keep good moral conduct.

2) The Mediocre Path

Next, there is the mediocre person's path. This is the path of those who realize that suffering is the nature not only of the lower realms but of the higher realms, too. Of course, between them, there are different degrees of suffering. There is heavy suffering in the lower realms and less in the higher realms, but both are of the nature of suffering. Even the feelings that we ordinarily consider to be joy or pleasure in our lives are actually another form of suffering. This is why we as Buddhists consider the whole of saṃsāra, from the highest heavenly realm to the lowest hell realm, to be of the nature of suffering.

Those who realize that there is not a single spot worthy of attachment in the whole of saṃsāra will wish to renounce saṃsāra and seek liberation. To accomplish this goal, they will need to cut saṃsāra at the root, and the root of saṃsāra is self-

clinging. Not seeing the true nature of the mind, we cling to a self without any logical reasons. If you analyze the matter carefully and look for this self, you will not find it anywhere. It is only due to strong habitual tendencies that we have the habit of clinging to a self. Once there is self, then the other automatically appears. Self and other depend upon each other.

The fault here is ignorance of the nature of reality. Due to ignorance, we cling to self, and then the other appears, and whenever there is self and other, desire and attachment to one's own side and anger towards the other arise naturally. From these three basic defilements—ignorance, desire, and anger—the other defilements arise, such as pride, stinginess, jealousy, and so on. Because our minds are obscured by these defilements, we take actions and create karma which ties us to saṃsāra.

If you want to renounce saṃsāra totally, you need to cut the root of saṃsāra, which is self-clinging, and to do this you need the wisdom that realizes selflessness. Wisdom is absolutely essential to accomplish this goal. Without it, you cannot attain liberation from saṃsāra and reach nirvāṇa. We call this level the mediocre person's path because it is higher than the path of those who are only seeking higher rebirth, but it is still lower than the ultimate goal.

3) *The Great Path*

Next we have the great person's path. This is the path of the one who realizes not only that the whole of saṃsāra is suffering, as the mediocre person also does, but realizes, too, that every sentient being in saṃsāra experiences suffering. As a result of this realization, they make a vow to attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. We call this bodhicitta, or enlightenment mind, which is the wish to attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

As Buddhists, we believe that from beginningless time until now we have been caught up in saṃsāra, in endless cycles of rebirth, like a wheel that turns endlessly—the wheel of life. In this endless cycling, there is not a single sentient being who has not been at some point your very kind mother, father, relative, or friend. Every time that we have taken birth, these dear ones have given us tremendous love and saved us from harm. All of them have been very kind. However, because of the change of life, we do not recognize each other. We see some as relatives, some as friends, some as enemies, and some indifferently, when in reality everyone is our very kind mother, our friend, and so on. It is our duty and responsibility to pay them back for their kindness, love, and for the benefits that they have given to us. To ignore them and to seek liberation for oneself alone would not be right. Even at the worldly level,

even just in this life, if your family members or friends whom you love are in the midst of great suffering, while you are in a safe and happy place, you would not feel happy if you are a good-hearted person. Morally, it would not be right. With these thoughts, instead of seeking your own liberation, you think of other sentient beings and wish to relieve them of suffering and to place them on the path to happiness, and create genuine loving-kindness and compassion for all sentient beings without exception or discrimination.

When you have produced genuine loving-kindness and compassion, you feel you cannot remain idle. You must do something. And yet you cannot do anything because you are just an ordinary being and have no freedom. As ordinary beings, wherever the winds of karma blow, that is where we must go. Even if we have genuine feelings of compassion and a strong wish to help, we cannot. The only real way to help sentient beings is to seek full enlightenment. An enlightened one can save countless sentient beings in the space of a single moment.

Six Perfections

To attain enlightenment, you need to enter the bodhisattva's path. The main practice of bodhisattvas is called the six perfections, or six *pāramitās*. These are the perfection of

generosity, the perfection of moral conduct, the perfection of patience, the perfection of endeavor, the perfection of meditation, and the perfection of wisdom. The first five are method, and the last is wisdom. Without wisdom, the other five are like a blind person. These practices will not be able to lead us to our destination without wisdom, just like a blind person cannot walk to a destination without seeing the road. In fact, without wisdom, generosity and the others can never be perfect. To have the name of perfection, they must be combined with wisdom.

Method is like feet while wisdom is like the eyes. You need eyes to see and feet to walk with. A blind person with strong feet is as unable to get to the destination as a person with strong eyes but no feet. A person with strong feet and good eyes, however, is able both to see the path and to walk. The combination of method and wisdom is essential for the bodhisattva's path. In fact, for any path, wisdom is needed to see the way—whether it is a worldly path, the path of a higher rebirth, the śrāvaka path, or the path of personal liberation.

Vajrayāna Path

Even higher is the Vajrayāna path, also called the Mantrayāna. There is no difference between the Pāramitāyāna, also called the general Mahayāna, and the Mantrayāna in terms of the

motivation, which is bodhicitta, the realization of ultimate truth, and the goal, which is full enlightenment not only for one's own sake but for the sake of all sentient beings. However, there are four ways in which Mantrayāna is greater than the general Mahayāna.

The Four Distinctions of Mantrayāna

In the general Mahayāna, one gradually approaches the realization of ultimate reality through the practice of meditation. As ordinary beings, however, there is no possibility of seeing ultimate reality. One can have ideas about it but not direct experience or a direct glimpse. In the Vajrayāna, this is different. During a major empowerment, the transcendental wisdom descends. Then, by using yogic methods with the channels and elements and so on, even an ordinary person can have an experience of or a glimpse of ultimate reality. So, the first distinction is that Vajrayāna has methods to experience ultimate reality.

Second, Mantrayāna has more methods—many different methods. These methods utilize the body, the elements, the channels, the breath, and also visualization and recitation. These diverse methods have a powerful impact on the achievement of realization.

The third distinction is that Mantrayāna is meant for intelligent beings. The Buddha's teachings are vast and profound like the ocean. For ordinary persons, it is difficult to comprehend the tantric teachings which are bound with vajra words. It is necessary to have wisdom.

The fourth distinction is that the Mantrayāna allows one to practice without undergoing hardships. In the Pāramitāyāna, one performs very difficult practices like giving away parts of one's own body, and so on. But in Vajrayāna, we need not go through such hardships but can go from bliss to bliss.

Whichever of these levels of the spiritual path you follow, wisdom is absolutely essential. All of us possess the seed of wisdom because all of us possess buddha nature. The true nature of our minds is never stained with obscurations. The true nature of the mind is naturally pure from beginningless time. To awaken this seed of wisdom, however, requires the necessary conditions. A seed has the potential to grow into a crop, but if you keep the seed in a dry box, it will never grow. It needs the right conditions: fertile ground, moisture, sunlight, and the right temperature.

To awaken our buddha nature, then, we should seek the blessings of Mañjuśrī, the manifestation of all the buddhas'

wisdom. The practice of Mañjuśrī will help us—especially the recitation of the *Mañjuśrī-nāma-saṃgīti Tantra*. Therefore, I am going to give the reading transmission of this tantra today. I received this transmission from many gurus but most precious from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This is very important because it is the root of all the other tantras. As I read, as you receive the reading transmission, it is important that you have the right motivation. This should be the thought that for the sake of all sentient beings you must attain full enlightenment, and in order to attain enlightenment, you are receiving this reading transmission. After receiving the transmission, you should think that you will diligently follow the path with the right motivation and the right conduct, just like a patient receiving advice from a doctor.

[His Holiness bestows the reading transmission.]

Conclusion

It is very good that many Dharma centers are now being established. I encourage everyone to focus on the teachings that you have received and to try to bring them into practice in your everyday life as much as possible. Generally speaking, all of the teachings of the Buddha are based on compassion,

but for the Mahayāna in particular, the root is compassion. The sutras and commentaries emphasize the importance of compassion at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. Whatever little compassion we can generate as ordinary persons is very precious, so we must try to produce it, try to increase it, and even more importantly, try to put it into action.

We should generate universal compassion for every sentient being. Especially for us at our level, this means those who are around us: our neighbors, especially those who are sick and destitute or poor. As a Dharma center, we must try to help them as much as possible and to provide general social services. In this way, the Dharma center can manifest compassion in action. This is what His Holiness the Dalai Lama has emphasized. He has said that when he visits Dharma centers, he advises them on the importance of putting compassion into action through social service, environmentalism, and animal welfare. I believe that Dharma centers should take the initiatives and set an example.

Once again, I would like to thank you very much for inviting me today and giving me such a warm reception. I wish that all of you will meet with complete success in your personal practice as well as in your community work. May the blessings of the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha be with you now and always.



■ His Holiness the Sakya Trichen is revered as the forty-first throne holder of the Sakya lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. Born in Tibet in 1945, His Holiness is from the noble Khön family, whose predecessors date to the early days of Tibetan history and established the Sakya order in the eleventh century. In his youth, His Holiness received intensive training in Buddhist philosophy, meditation, and ritual from eminent masters and scholars.

Widely regarded as an emanation of Mañjuśrī, His Holiness is the spiritual guide to many in the next generation of Buddhist teachers and practitioners, and has bestowed Sakya's core teaching cycle known as the Lamdre (the Path with the Result) in both eastern and western countries. His Holiness manifests profound wisdom and compassion, tirelessly working to establish monasteries, nunneries, and educational institutions and to impart the Buddha's teachings to countless students around the world.



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