



| Inner Balance

His Holiness the 43rd Sakya Trizin, Gyana Vajra Rinpoche



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Published by “The Sakya Tradition”

<https://sakyatradition.org>

Email : info@sakyatradition.org

Wechat ID : sakyatradition

Weibo : sakyatradition

IG: the_sakya_tradition

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Acknowledgement

His Holiness the 43rd Sakya Trizin, Gyana Vajra Rinpoche, bestowed this talk in Montroyo, Spain, at the request of Sangchen Norbu Ling, Spain, on August 15, 2023. In 2024, this English transcript was prepared, edited, and published by The Sakya Tradition, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and making widely available the precious Dharma teachings of the glorious Sakya lineage. The text was translated into the Chinese language by The Sakya Tradition translation team.

This publication was made possible by the generous donations of Sue Strong, Chan Ziping, Mai Rubin, Cheah Poh Peng, and Cheah Poh Kheng. We also want to thank all volunteers for their dedication and effort in putting this teaching together.

By the merit of this work, may Their Holiness the Sakya Trichen, the 42nd, and the 43rd Sakya Trizins enjoy perfect health and very long lives, and continue to turn the wheel of Dharma.

Right at the beginning of the teaching, His Holiness poses a fundamental question: What is enlightenment, and how can it be attained? This is a vital issue that every Buddhist should ponder deeply. While various worldly pursuits may seem to offer happiness and benefits, reality often shows that these transient pleasures are inherently painful and lead to suffering. Thus, the ultimate aim of the Buddha's teachings is to transcend this fleeting life and achieve profound, lasting bliss. Only by overcoming saṃsāra, the endless and repetitive cycle of existence, can we reach this lofty goal.



What, then, keeps us bound in saṃsāra? What is the true purpose of Dharma practice? His Holiness challenges us with another thought-provoking question: Why don't goats and foxes need to shop, but we humans do? This question urges us to explore the deeper themes of his teaching and to reflect on how Dharma assists us.

Enlightenment and the journey toward it are closely linked to maintaining inner balance, which is also crucial for achieving success in worldly life. In this teaching, His Holiness helps us understand and cultivate this balance, offering essential and valuable guidance for both our everyday lives and our spiritual practice.

**EDITORIAL
PREFACE**

Inner Balance

I've been asked to talk about the practice of balance. If you think about it, this is an important part of Buddhist practice because Buddhism is a form of mind training. In this evening's initiation, for example, we made offerings to the deity, promises to keep the samayas of body, speech, and mind, and other things, and these are all mental trainings to help us attain enlightenment. To understand why Buddhist practice is fundamentally a form of mental training, we need to understand what enlightenment is and how we reach it.

The Simplest Thing

As Buddhists, we say it's better to work for your next life. We believe in reincarnation and that we should focus on future lives rather than this life. Ordinarily, we try to improve our situations in this life—for our old age or for our family and

children. However, this life is short. It is fragile. We don't know whether we will wake up alive tomorrow. We have no control whatsoever over this. Maybe we will fall down the stairs, or somebody will hit us with a car, or an animal will attack—there are many things that could happen and many reasons why life is fragile.

According to our teachings, it's better to work for something that you can be sure of than to work for something whose results you cannot rely on. If I work now to be happy when I'm sixty or eighty years old, then all my work will be for nothing if I die tomorrow. Many people misunderstand this because in Buddhism we have Medicine Buddha to help keep us healthy, wealth deities, and so on. Thinking that the goal is ordinary happiness, they do Medicine Buddha, or Amitayus, or Jhambala, or White Mahakala. But the goal of all these practices is not merely to have a healthy life, or a long one, or to get rich. If you do the practices this way, then you don't understand Buddhism. You will be acquiring more defilements—more bad merit than good merit. The real purpose for practicing these deities is for the sake of enlightenment. For example, if you want to help somebody, you need your health. If you are not healthy and strong, you cannot even help yourself—forget about helping others. These deities give us the power to live long and

to have enough food and wealth so that we can follow the Buddhist path.

Our goal is to get out of saṃsāra. If you don't have that vision and understanding, then all your health and riches and long life will only create more sins that will keep you in saṃsāra. In Buddhism there is no creator, and we are in this existence in saṃsāra because of our own karma. We will be reborn in saṃsāra again and again—be born, grow old, die, and take rebirth—unless we get out of this cycle. We say saṃsāra is like a circle, without beginning or end. How many of you know the board game with snakes and ladders? If you end up with a snake, then you go back to where you started. Saṃsāra is like this. If you do bad things or negative deeds—actions motivated by anger, desire, or ignorance—then you will remain in this cycle. But good deeds will help us get out.

The material which makes saṃsāra is nothing other than your mind. The mind is like a flowing river or a waterfall. When you look at a long and wide river, you see a river, but not the drops of water that are in constant motion that make up the river, even though you understand what the river is made of. The droplets are joined together and flowing, but when you see it, you see one river. Just like this, the mind is a stream of thoughts, many thoughts flowing together seamlessly. You might be

thinking about food, then about sleeping, about shopping, about holidays: all these thoughts are joined together and flow smoothly, so it seems like one “thought” or mind when it is actually many. The circle of saṃsāra is made up of our different thoughts, joined by our imprints.

Another word for enlightenment is awakening. If you wake in the middle of night and you can't see anything, you will be very cautious with your hands in front of you so that you don't stumble around. There could be a hole, or a stone, or a table in the way, and so you proceed carefully because you don't know what's in front of you. In the light of day, you don't need to walk like this because you can see. Enlightenment or awakening is like the moment you see everything clearly. I'm trying here to explain it to you as simply as possible, because Buddhism itself is actually the simplest thing. There are many teachers who have said this, but people still don't believe it.

What is stopping us from seeing clearly? Let's say the sun is shining outside. If I put a thick cover over my eyes, I can't see anything. It might as well be night. If I wear red-tinted sunglasses, everything will be red, even though there are actually many colors. Just like this, our emotions—anger, desire, ignorance—distort our perception. They are like three players playing football in our heads, and they prevent us from seeing

the true nature of things, the true colors. Buddhist practice means stopping those emotions. Like taking off the glasses, we will then see yellow as yellow, red as red, green as green, blue as blue. We will see things as they really are.

According to the teachings, these three emotions come from our hope and doubt. Hope is wishing for something. Doubt is worry about something we don't want to happen. We are caught up in the two attitudes, hope and doubt, and they create all our emotions. Hope and doubt, in turn, come from selfish thoughts, or self-thought. When you have *you*, then there is naturally the *other*. It's like *left* and *right*, or *rich* and *poor*. If there is no left, there is no right. For someone to be rich means that another must be poor. It is similar with everything in this world: there is handsome because there is ugly, and so on. When you have love or have affection for *you* and *yours*, then there will be opposition to other people's different thoughts. Enlightenment finally boils down to getting rid of selfish thoughts, or self-thought. In a rough manner of speaking, this is enlightenment.

That's why the Buddha said that the moment you understand yourself, that is Buddhadharma. The Buddhadharma is not about learning anything new. This is very important. We all have hands here. Some of you may know how to cook and some of you don't, but we all have the ability to cook. If you don't

know how to cook and some day you learn, it doesn't mean that your teacher has given you a new pair of hands.

Goats and Foxes Don't Go to the Store

I was thinking recently that even if we live in a remote place—a retreat, or a temple—we still need things like clean water and to go shopping. We cannot just live someplace without ever going out. I believe this illustrates our lack of knowledge. Goats and foxes don't have to go to store. Why can't we survive in our surroundings with the trees—let's say, the olive trees around us now?

If we didn't know that olives are edible, or if you find a seed and think, "Oh, I don't know what this is," then you would never eat it. There are many different trees, and I'm sure there are many things we can eat, but if we don't know what they are, then we can't survive. And so we have to go to the shops because we lack knowledge. If you put somebody who has never lived in a remote area—a city person—in this place, then it would be difficult for them to survive. But that does not mean it isn't possible; it just means that the person doesn't know how. Teach that person how to survive in a remote place, and you're not giving him a supply of all the things he will need for the rest of

his life, but you are giving him knowledge, or wisdom. You are awakening him.

Buddha's teachings are the knowledge or wisdom that we need. The Buddha didn't say, "If you pray to me, I will bless you and suddenly good things will happen." The Buddha's teachings are meant to awaken our wisdom, or to grow the seed of our buddha nature. If you pour water on the ground, keep it at a good temperature, and look after the soil, nothing will grow unless there is a seed in the soil. Like this, we already possess buddha nature. We just have to realize that or we cannot be enlightened. Every sentient being has buddha nature, not just human beings. Animals and the beings in the hell realms all have buddha nature. We just have to work on it and then we will see the results.

In order to do that, we need balance in our lives. We cannot change all our habits at once and suddenly become buddhas. It doesn't work that way. Because I joined a gym today doesn't mean I have a good body today. I need to work on it—maybe for months or years, going to the gym every day. The mind isn't like the physical body, but it does need training, and we need certain things we can do to make this training easier and more effective. One of the most important of these things is balance.

Too much of anything in this life is not good for you, and this includes your Buddhist practice. If you think, “Oh, but practice is good,” and then try to do practice twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week, that's not good for you. You need rest; you need to go to the toilet; you need to eat. You can't run a marathon like a sprinter. You need to go slowly so that you can finish. Like this, we should maintain balance in our practice, in our family lives, and in our work lives. I cannot tell everyone how much time to spend on practice each day because everyone has different capacities. Two hours might be right for some and not for others. You have to find your own balance.

Spending too much time with your family can also be challenging, and too much medicine is poison. Too much sleeping is not good. Too much standing is not good. I like to give the example of loved ones: your children or a spouse. If you tell them that you like them, that you love them, and then you hug them, this is good for about two seconds. After that it's too much. It's uncomfortable. If you hug them too many times, they'll see you coming and run away. So you can see that even too much love is not good. There's nothing in the world where too much makes it better. Too much wealth and too much power make people crazy. It's the same with everything in this world.

Balance is the key to a more relaxed life. I don't want to say a “happy” life because our goal is really to keep our minds stable.

Happiness means up and sorrow means down, and we can't be happy all the time. It is better to have a more stable life. When you are too happy or sad, you cannot make good decisions. They will not be based on reality or logic. The benefit of a stable mind is the ability to make rational decisions.

Just yesterday, we were taken to the Mediterranean Sea on a boat. If you want to swim, you can jump from the boat into the water. Now, there are people who know the sea or who have swum like this before, and they just jumped into the water and were very relaxed. Although I knew there was no danger, I was not used to this. In a swimming pool, you can see the bottom, and you can also go easily to the side of the pool. But it's not like that in the sea. It could be sixteen meters or one hundred meters to the bottom, and the sea is vast. It was a life lesson for me. The ones who were familiar with the sea were not emotional, neither extremely happy nor afraid. But I was not emotionally stable in that situation because I was not familiar with the experience of swimming in the sea. Similar to what I said about walking in the dark, this shows the importance of stability and rational thinking.

To understand the Buddha's teachings, you already have everything you need right now, at this very moment. Just think of the things you did rationally in your life, and think how this is

important for you as a Buddhist, remembering that what you do is going to affect your next life. Normally we say, “Oh, we should earn more money or power to have a better life.” But think carefully: Let's say you work your entire life to earn money. Our excuse is that it's for our family so that they won't have to struggle if they encounter difficult times. But how often have we seen in our lives that wealth is one of the main reasons why families break up, fight with each other, and even sometimes try to kill each other? I do not mean *do not work*, and I know that not every family will fight over money. The important thing is to understand that if your child or your family does not have the karma to be in that position, then no amount of work or earnings can guarantee it. Your child or other family member might make one mistake, and many other things could go wrong—maybe a bad business deal or bad investment. The key thing is karma, and if the child doesn't have the merit or karma to have that wealth, then everything is gone.

Seeing What Really Is: Stability and Acceptance

Again, I do not mean wealth is bad. Everything is okay as long as you have the right understanding of it. We should understand what wealth and power are. The Buddha said that

there are two things that always go together but that comprise almost different worlds: *what you see* and *what really is*. This is *relative truth* and *ultimate truth*, and the Buddha's teachings are all basically on this topic. For example, alcohol itself is not bad. The problem starts when you get drunk. We shouldn't say that alcohol is bad because it makes us drunk; alcohol itself is not bad. It is only when we consume it that it can make us crazy, get into fights, scream and yell, and so on. It's important to understand that we live in relative truth but in ultimate truth it is emptiness. If you have that understanding, then you will have less attachment to what is happening and less emotion. You will have a calmer and more relaxed life—a good, balanced life.

The second thing I usually try to advise is to accept your life, whatever it is. This brings your mind from the future and the past to the present. I'm forty-four years old. I have to accept that. I cannot think, "I want to be twenty or twenty-five." I'll never be happy if I think like that. There's the possibility that if I live long enough I'll become sixty years old. But again, that's the future. If you think carefully, we bring problems from the future to the present and then say, "I'm not happy. Things that have not happened might happen." This suffering from the future ruins the present. Therefore, you should accept whatever you are. This doesn't mean that you should not improve yourself. Accept

what you are, whether fat, thin, black, brown, or whatever. If you're rich, do not think, "I want to be richer." Richer does not mean happier. You can be happy, more relaxed, right now. You just have to accept reality.

Take the example of losing somebody you love. You become emotional. You cry, and you're physically disturbed. You can't eat food. All this difficulty stops when you accept that the person is gone. What keeps you from accepting this is your attachment to the person—you are not letting it go. To have a calm and good life, rational thinking is the secret. It's the key to a more stable life.

Stability and acceptance are what we mean by balance. I'm speaking about my own understanding of the Buddhist teachings here. I'm not saying this is the absolutely Buddhist way, or the only way. But I think that these two points can make our lives more meaningful. I don't mean that you must do whatever I'm saying, only that this is what I have found out. If you think that you can use some of this, that it might be beneficial in your life, then of course you can practice it.

Buddhism is all about wisdom or knowledge, which is why we call the goal awakening or enlightenment. Enlightenment does not mean that you will be able to fly or go to paradise.

Enlightenment is much better than paradise. Our minds are very powerful, and most people underestimate them. We must believe in ourselves and train our minds to be more rational. The Buddha knew that everyone has the ability to become enlightened, and that's why he taught—otherwise, he would not have bothered. Many people think they need to protect their religion or tradition, when the most dangerous thing to the tradition is you. That's my talk, and now we will do the dedication prayer.



- His Holiness the 43rd Sakya Trizin, Gyana Vajra Rinpoche, is the second son of His Holiness the Sakya Trichen (the 41st Sakya Trizin). He belongs to the noble Khön family, whose successive generations have provided an unbroken lineage of outstanding Buddhist masters.

At an early age, Rinpoche undertook his training in the principal rituals and prayers of the Sakya lineage. Rinpoche has received from His Holiness the Sakya Trichen most of the major initiations, empowerments, oral transmissions, blessings, and pith instructions that are inherent to the Sakya lineage. Furthermore, Rinpoche has received numerous common and uncommon teachings from some of the pre-eminent teachers of Tibetan Buddhism of our age.



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