



Buddhism in Everyday Life

HH the 43rd Sakya Trizin, Gyana Vajra Rinpoche



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EDITORIAL



PREFACE

What if everything you call "reality" is just an elaborate trick of the mind?

In this text, you are challenged to confront a startling question: if you cannot predict your very next thought, do you truly know who you are?

Read on to disrupt your assumptions, shift your perspective, and discover the radical power of simplicity.

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What do we really know?

We are here today in Seattle. Maybe we think we know Seattle. We say, "Oh, I know this city, I know this park..." But what do we really know? We probably don't have any idea about what there really is to know about this park, or about Seattle. It's the same with people. Do you really know your friends? "Yes, of course, I know them. We spent forty years together. We went to school together." You will say things like you know when a friend got married, or that he got married here or there, and that he did this or that. And so, you think you know all about your friend.

But is it true? If you know all about this person, can you tell me what they are going to think tomorrow at ten o'clock? Not what they are going to *do* at ten o'clock, but what they are going to think. If you really know everything about a person, you should be able to say. We might be able to guess what a close friend will be thinking tomorrow, but none of us can say for sure.

What about your family members--your brothers, sisters, parents, uncles, and aunts? What about your spouse? Again, your first response might be, "Yes, I know these people very well." But it is the same: You might know things about them, but you cannot know what they are going to be thinking tomorrow at ten o'clock.

Maybe it's easy to agree that no, we don't really know all that much about *other people*, but we know ourselves, right?

Do I know myself? When I first seriously asked myself this question, it was a big moment in my life. Of course, I am not crazy. I'm not a mental case. I know myself to some extent. I know I like this ice cream, or that corner restaurant, or this place or that. I know where I went to school, and so on. We can all make big lists of the things we know about ourselves, and then we can say, "There, I know myself. I'm not crazy."

But ask yourself if you know what you are going to think tomorrow at ten o'clock.

You might answer, "That's pretty far in future, so of course I don't know." Well, what about five o'clock today? What about lunchtime, which is only an hour away? Do any of us know what thought will be in our minds in precisely one hour? It's not possible. How about half an hour from now? How about ten

minutes, five minutes, one minute from now? How about in the very next second?

This is an important question to ask ourselves. If we answer honestly, we have to say that we have no idea.

I have no idea, not a single idea, what I will think in the next second, and this means I have no idea who I am. How can I claim to know myself when I have no idea at all what thought will arise in my mind one second from now? I can't even guess.

It's the same with happiness. We adopt all kinds of goals for ourselves and want big achievements in life because we want happiness. Maybe you want to become rich because you assume that this is the way to be happy and have a peaceful life. And maybe you become rich, and then what? Who sets these goals and where do our wants come from? We struggle at work, we argue with our colleagues or with our family because we are unhappy and we want to be happy. We think we know this.

But when happiness is out of the picture, then all those goals and all those arguments and struggles are kind of meaningless. Discovering this is the way of Buddhism—discovering that there is no happiness other than the state of our minds. If the "happiness" we think we need to find does not exist, then all the goals that we are trying to achieve are meaningless. And

when there is no goal to be achieved, our anxiety and stress will diminish.

Every time we feel stressed, there should be a good reason, right? We are trying to achieve things, we are trying to get somewhere, and we want things to happen that are not happening, when all this is only in our imaginations, in our minds. And it brings us stress. I believe that can achieve peace if we break down everything in our lives this way.

If I am happy, the whole world is happy. Everything is beautiful and good. If I am not happy, the whole world is a dark and miserable place. When people see the whole world as dark and miserable, they abuse themselves and others. They see everything as lost—the work they cannot or did not get, the things that happened that they didn't want. The meaning of life vanishes.

I have seen and experienced this myself, and I have seen it in others because I talk to many people about their lives. According to my understanding, when these kinds of things happen in our lives, we literally stop thinking. We paint ourselves into a corner and we literally stop thinking. When people reach that point, it's how they end up committing suicide, or doing all kinds of other destructive things.

Generally speaking, everyone has an answer—advice to give to someone else. If you ask a hundred people, you will get a hundred different words of advice. But then, when the same thing happens to them, they will also have no idea how to solve their problem. They will also go blind. They also stop thinking.

When people in these situations come to me, whether with a family problem, a work problem, or something else, I try to explain something that I try to do. Namely, imagine that someone else has the problem you have, and think about what advice you would give to them. I don't mean that you should want someone else to have your problem, only to think about what a friend, for example, should do if they had the same problem.

The reason for doing this is because we are too attached to ourselves; This makes the stress of the problem very high for us, and then we are unable to think clearly. Imagining that someone else has the problem and thinking about what they should do is a way to think clearly and without attachment. You can start to think rationally and openly. Whatever makes sense to you for the other person to do if they were in your situation, you can adopt that course for yourself.

The more attachments you have, the more problems you will have. I will give you a simple example. What causes you stress,

the things you care about a lot or the things you don't care about? If someone steals your old socks, or a pair of worn-out shoes you never wear anymore, things you were planning to get rid of anyway, are you going to call 911? Are you going to be miserable and distraught and call your family and your neighbors?

Of course not, because they are things you don't care about.

This is an important question for me. But it's different with the precious things in your life—your jewelry, your TV, your mobile. And what about the difference between an old TV or mobile you bought ten years ago and one you bought recently? The new one is more precious. But why? We are not as excited about something we bought ten years ago as we are about something we bought yesterday because our attachment for the old thing is not as strong as it is for the new one.

Our level of stress and suffering depends on how attached we are. Understanding this, we can say, "Oh, so all this suffering is coming from my attachment. The more attachment you have, the more suffering you have."

Imagine an accident happened somewhere far away and people died. At the most, you would feel compassion for them. As Buddhist practitioners, we would feel compassionate. But that

is as far as it goes. You would not lose sleep, cry, or scream about it. Now, what if that accident happened in Seattle? It's closer to home, in one's own city. Now, what if somebody you sort of knew died in that accident? With each of these steps, you would be more concerned.

Now, what if someone close to you died in that accident? What if you family member or spouse died? Now you are very concerned. What is the difference? The accident is the same, the same number of people are going through the same tragedy, but your level of stress and suffering will be much higher as it gets close to you and the people to whom you are attached.

The more attachment you have, the more suffering you will have. Right? These are simple but effective examples to show something important to know.

Acceptance

A very effective tool that we can use to reduce stress and suffering is acceptance.

When we accept whatever problems we have, they won't be problems anymore. There are people who have lost their hands or legs and who accept it, and then they live normally. As long as we remain in a state of emotion, or of loss, we will continue to feel that we are suffering.

The sooner you accept the situation, the better. I like to give this example: I'm forty-six years old. The sooner I accept that I am forty-six years old and not twenty, the better. I'll be happier. No matter how much I exercise, no matter how many treatments I undergo, or vitamins and supplements I take, I will never be twenty years old again. That's a given, right? If I cannot accept that I am forty-six, that this is my skin color and this is my hair, if I am constantly trying to be better and different than what I am, through regimens of exercise and medicine and all kinds

of treatments, then I will never be happy because I'm trying to achieve something I can't achieve. The sooner I accept my physical appearance, my financial situation, my family, my work, and whatever else I have, the sooner I will be free of anxiety. This is a simple trick that I use myself, and I feel it's very effective. "Acceptance" is one simple word, yet it can solve most of our problems.

Most of the problems we have involve projections into the future. Right? We think something bad might happen, I might lose my job or have some disease, something may happen to my child or to my family. We imagine all kinds of future possibilities that will cause us to lose the things we are attached to. Whenever there is attachment, there is anxiety and suffering. Acceptance can reduce that anxiety. It's like closing a chapter and moving on.

The Buddha himself discovered and taught this. When he was a prince, he was surrounded by luxury and the deception that life could be all about satisfaction and without suffering. Whatever he wanted, he had it. It was only when he walked out of the palace that he learned about sickness, old age, and death. Later still, he learned about peace.

Siddhartha was married. He had a son named Rāhula. Siddhartha had already lost his mother, Māyādevī, when he was

very young. Because of that experience of loss, he knew that he would lose his father one day, too, no matter how much he loved him. He knew that he himself would die and lose everyone he loved. For myself, I also know that my parents will die, my wife will die, and my children whom I love very much will die. It's not a question of if. Whoever is born will die. I'm not trying to give you a very bad picture, but this is the reality.

Siddhartha realized that suffering is coming for everyone. Nobody has a guarantee that they will be alive tomorrow. Only death is guaranteed.

If someone is hungry, you should give them food. If they are naked and poor, you should give them clothes and so on. If someone is cold, you should give them a jacket. But these are temporary solutions. Give someone food tonight, and they will be hungry again tomorrow. Give them food tomorrow, and they will be hungry again the following day. Siddhartha knew this, and he sought a solution that would wipe out the cause of suffering from the root. That's why he left the palace, went to the jungle, and meditated for six years. Finally, he found the solution, and then he gave the teaching about the truth.

The first teaching he gave in Varanasi was about the truth. He discovered the truth about things. The truth the Buddha taught

is not the truth because the Buddha taught it. The truth is the truth, and the Buddha discovered it. But in the beginning, he didn't think he should teach it to others. Why not? We all say, "I want to know the truth," but I'm not sure that we are ready for the truth.

The Imaginary

Happiness is an imaginary thing. All of our problems, including the problem of happiness, are imaginary. If we get rid of what is imaginary, we are left with the truth.

This is why the Buddha talked about relative truth and ultimate truth, and about saṃsāra. We understand mostly at the level of relative truth. We see a simple thing like a cup or a bowl, and at the level of relative truth, there it is. You see this object with your eyes, but in your mind, you should see the ultimate truth, in which the cup or the bowl does not truly exist and is the result of causes and conditions. Because of the causes and conditions, you can see a cup or a bowl.

When you think about the ultimate truth of things even though you experience them at the level of relative truth, your attachment will diminish and then disappear. And then, you can enjoy your life. You can do whatever you want and whatever you think is enjoyable. But only so long as there is no attachment whatsoever.

I'm sure some of you will go away thinking, "Rinpoche said I can do whatever I want, and so I will." But you will be leaving out the second part: as long as there is no attachment. This is a very simple way of explaining the teaching. It is very complicated—or it can be, if you want to make it complicated.

Life itself is simple: we are born, we grow up, we work, we get married or whatever, and then we grow old and we die. But is it so simple? There are so many complications, every day. Every single moment involves some level of stress. Remember and try to think about your own life. I have to do this about mine, too; I'm not saying only you should do this. Try to think of a time when there was no stress. Nothing at all.

Every moment involves some degree of stress, even if it's small. "Oh, I don't have mobile signal." Stress. "They are out of vanilla ice cream." Stress. "They only have Pepsi, not Coke." We usually think of stress in terms of bigger things like one's work-life or family matters. The things I mentioned are very simple things, but they are also stress. My point is that there is never a moment in our lives when there is no stress at all and nothing at all to worry about, because there is never a moment when we are not attached to something.

We are always attached to one thing or another, and this is why we experience our so-called suffering. By understanding the

truth, we will realize that this suffering doesn't really exist. And we will also discover that the things we ordinarily think of as happiness are also suffering. The common example in Buddhist texts carrying a load. Carry it on your right shoulder for a while, and your shoulder starts to ache. So, you shift it to your left shoulder. Momentarily, you feel relief. But this is actually the beginning of further suffering. After a few minutes, you feel pain in your left shoulder. You change it back to your right, and so on. Temporarily, the level of suffering was smaller because you shifted the load to the left or to the right, but over time, the suffering only grows stronger.

In essence, there is never a moment where there is no stress. It isn't only because a lot of what we call happiness is only temporary relief. There are other things that we don't ordinarily identify as suffering that are also, in truth, suffering—good things in our lives, like the weekend.

The moment you realize this, and the moment you realize that your family will die and you will die, that the people you would give your life to save are going to die, is the moment you will be ready. When you really understand how pervasive suffering is, you will want to find a solution to it.

The only solution is to realize that all the things that we experience are actually imaginary. All of this is imaginary.

You may be shocked or offended at this. "What do you mean, it's all imaginary? This is real life." If you think this way, you are thinking only in terms of relative truth.

How can we live in relative truth and ultimate truth at the same time? I like to give an example. If you are playing basketball, you can't follow the rules for baseball. They are totally different games. What we have to do is similar to this, even though it seems impossible. What we are trying to do is acknowledge the relative reality of the world we live in, while also trying to understand another reality. This is very difficult. We have to try to play two games at the same time—while playing basketball, we have to also play baseball.

To do this, we have to unlearn what we have learned, what is deeply ingrained.

I saw an interview in which a martial arts teacher was asked what he thinks about students who already have some experience in other martial arts, in boxing, and so on, who come to him. In other words, if somebody trained in boxing or in Jiu Jitsu wants to learn karate, is it easier for them or harder? The teacher said that students who already know something, a little bit of knowledge about martial arts, are much more difficult to teach. When they are supposed to be thinking in terms of

karate, they are thinking in terms of boxing or Jiu Jitsu. He said that first they have to unlearn everything they learned before and start over, and only then can he begin to teach them karate.

We are like the person who has been thoroughly trained in boxing, and now we need to learn karate. We have believed for so long [in the fundamental reality] of the things we experience—whether it is the sky, a cup or a bowl, or this color or that.

We don't know anything that we haven't learned; everything we think or imagine to be the case is so because we learned it. We learned that this or that is "red," that this or that is "yellow," and so on. If people had told you since the time you were a young child that red is called "green," then this is what you would believe today. If I asked you what color this is, you would automatically say "green." Or, in America, this is considered yellow, but it is considered red in Asia. If you were raised in America, you would say, this is yellow, and if you were raised in Asia, you would say this is red. It is simply because we have been taught to see this way and to give things these names. Who named the colors? Who named the sun, the moon?

Who named you? You could have been given any name at all. But when you try to think of "you" without your name, it's an

interesting practice. This is one I am trying to do now. If you think of yourself without your name, you become lost. We can't do anything without our names; we'd go mad because everything is based on that name. Even though it's possible to go down to a government office and officially change your name, which proves that a name is just a name, we give great importance to our names. I am Jnana Vajra, I exist as Jnana Vajra.

All this is basically imaginary, but it's real and exists this way. This is red, I am Jnana Vajra. Believing that my name is this, I exist, and the whole package of suffering comes with that. The moment we understand or realize this, then all our problems will be solved naturally. This realization solves the problem from the root, permanently and not temporarily. When the problem is solved from the root, it won't return tomorrow.

Then, the question is: if it's so simple, why are we experiencing all this trouble? We already know that we are in saṃsāra. If we know the teachings, we already know why we are in saṃsāra. We are in saṃsāra because of the three poisons. It's so simple and easy, right? So, why are we still going through this suffering, if we know where we are and why? We know what is causing this and where we are: the dark circle of saṃsāra, this dangerous and poisonous and evil saṃsāra where we are going

around and around and around, suffering unnecessarily. Why are we in saṃsāra? Because of our three poisons: ignorance, anger, and desire. Why do we have the three poisons? Because we have doubt and hope. Why do we have doubt and hope? Because we have attachment.

In every aspect of your life, down to the most fundamental and in the tiniest details, you have to examine it this way. You need to ask why, why, why. When you are angry, if you ask, "Why am I angry?" "Where is this anger coming from?" You will not discover an answer. By the third why, or maybe the second, you will discover this. If you research your experience and analyze the anger, you will not find your anger, because it doesn't exist.

After knowing all this, why are we still going through suffering? It's just like when I want to lose weight, it won't happen overnight. I have to go to gym and exercise. Just knowing that I am overweight and why I am overweight is not enough. If I know all that, why am I still fat? Because to lose weight, I have to exercise and eat healthy food. It's a process. It takes time.

Similarly, we believe now that this cup exists as it seems and that the "I" exists. We have been believing this way for a long time. We have been told as long as we can remember: "Oh, you are so-and-so." In my case, Jnana Vajra. You are this, or you are

that. And it's been this way not only for the whole of this life but for all our countless previous lives. What we are trying to do is believe in another reality, one where you don't exist. That's why it takes time to acquire realization.

For example, if you want to go to New York, it isn't enough to want to go and it isn't enough to know about air travel. To actually go to New York, you have to go to airport, take the flight, and so on. I could just say, "Oh, it's easy. Just go to the airport and fly to New York. It's simple." But to really go takes time and effort. Just like that, to realize or actually believe the truth is a process. The sooner you realize the truth, the sooner you will become more relaxed and happier.

There is something I want to add here. I mentioned before that all our suffering is in the future; we are less likely to worry about the past because it's already gone while the future is yet to come. What's going to happen? What will happen to me and my family and whatever else it is that we worry about, like our belongings. There is so much worry. But we are in the present. The past is gone, so you don't have to worry about it; the future is yet to come, so you actually don't have to worry about it either. It's not here. Only the present is here. We are here, we are alive, we can experience things. I can touch things, I can eat things, I can experience all this and that. The present exists.

This is what I told myself when I was trying to understand the philosophy of Buddhism. When my masters told me and when I studied in the texts that the present doesn't exist, I wondered, "What do you mean, the present doesn't exist?" If I am here, if I am not dead, and I can experience things, then how can we say that the present doesn't exist? It took me a while to grasp this.

I eventually understood that, if anything exists, it must have a beginning and an end. It seems obvious that the past is gone, the future is not yet, and therefore the present must exist. But what do we mean? Let's agree that this year, the year 2025, exists. But we are right now in December, a part of 2025. And in what part of December, which day? In that day, which hour? In that hour, which minute? In that minute, which second? In that second, which millisecond, which microsecond? If you continue to drill down this way, what do you find? It's an endless flowing of fleeting instantaneous microseconds. That's all you find, and that's why there is no present as such.

When I say the present doesn't exist, I mean that it's impossible to point your finger at it because it vanishes before you can do that. You cannot point your finger at this very moment. That's how I discovered that now doesn't exist. So if now doesn't exist, then where do I exist? I obviously did not exist in the past, and it's impossible that I'm existing in the future. The only way I

can exist is in the present. And yet the present has no inherent existence, either. So where do I exist? How can I exist?

This is how to practice getting rid of your attachment, because when things don't exist, it's hard to be attached to them. For example, when you've dreamed about something, and then you wake up, it's hard to be attached to things you dreamed about. The house that you dreamed about, or the car in your dream, or the bike. You are not going to worry whether or not you turned off the gas in your dream, or whether you vacuumed the house that was in your dream, or whether you insured the house. The house doesn't exist. By establishing that whatever it is does not exist, you will get rid of your attachment. This takes time because you have been believing that things exist for so long.

Today is Saturday, but how does Saturday exist? It doesn't exist anymore solidly than the year 2025 that we considered before. It could also just as easily be called Monday or Tuesday or Friday or any other name because, as I said before, these are just names. But if we agree to call it Saturday, we need to discover or realize the way that this present, this Saturday, doesn't really exist the way we think. And neither do you or anything else in this world. What happens then is that you are no more. And your attachment diminishes and goes away. When there is no attachment, then you are more stress-free. When

you are stress free, then you will make rational decisions. And importantly, when you make rational decisions, everything will be more stable and calmer.

When there is no attachment, there is nothing you can't do. We are suffering because of our attachment. The important thing is that by understanding these minute things, by dissecting things like time and names and things, everything in your life, the way that we did and not find anything, you will lose your attachment. What does it mean when the Buddha said that we are all enlightened beings because we all have the buddha nature? The true nature of everything is empty, and this is the reason we can say that we are all buddhas. We say every sentient being is enlightened but needs to discover or realize their buddha nature.

If we all have this buddha nature, then there are no ordinary sentient beings as we ordinarily think or see them, and that's why you should not harm them or do anything bad to other beings. If you do, you are basically harming the Buddha. You can't do anything bad to anybody else, and you can't do anything bad to yourself. It's important to keep yourself physically healthy and mentally stable and peaceful. That's how you will discover peace. You can do this because you are already enlightened.

What happens when we receive initiations? All initiations have a preliminary part, the main part, and the concluding part. The preliminary part includes offerings and so on. The main part basically consists of transforming the body, speech, and mind into the deity's body, voice, and mind. Let's say you are imagining that you are the president of the United States. You would have to think like a president, according to your position. You couldn't just say, "Oh, I want to go home early," or have fun on the weekend.

All the initiations are basically your master's experience of when he saw the deity with very clear vision and was transformed into the deity; we are trying to re-enact that. It's like when you are watching a movie and in the emotional scenes, we are all crying, and in the funny scenes we are all laughing. When something scary happens, we are all scared. Well, why are we scared? But we are. When we re-enact our master's experience, it's like this. When we go through that experience, re-enacting our master's experience, we are trying to experience what the buddhas or what our masters have experienced. By transforming yourself into the deity, you will for a short moment start to think like a buddha. This is very important.

The only thing stopping you from being enlightened is you, your perception that you are an ordinary person rather than a buddha. “I am a working person,” “I am a family person,” I am this, I am that. All of that kind of thinking is basically an excuse, according to me. If you are a Buddhist, then you are already no longer an ordinary person. You can be either an ordinary person, or you can be a Buddhist. You can’t be both at the same time. I will tell you the reason. As a Buddhist, every practice that you do is for all sentient beings. There is not a single practice that you do for yourself, for your family, for your own benefit. Every practice is for all sentient beings. Can a person who is doing work for all sentient beings be an ordinary person? Please ask yourself. I am not telling you; you have to ask for yourself. In worldly terms, when someone saves others from danger, maybe one hundred people or two hundred, or an entire nation, we consider that person to be great. Even a person who is looking after his own child and his own family might be considered a great person, in worldly terms. Well, it’s his own family, and he is meant to care for them, so there is nothing great about that. Then, if this person looks after other people who are not family, we really consider them great. For every Buddhist, especially every Mahāyāna practitioner, and Vajrayāna is a part of Mahāyāna, there is not a single practice that you do for yourself or for your family or for your nation.

Every practice is for all sentient beings. Even before you start the main practice, your motivation is “for the sake of all sentient beings.” And at the end, you dedicate whatever merit to all sentient beings. This is the case even with simple practices like circumambulation or cleaning statues, as well as with *sādhanā*, rituals, retreats, and whatever else you do. It’s done for all sentient beings, and the merit is dedicated to all sentient beings.

According to my own limited understanding of Buddhism, I believe these are all practices to keep your attachment, or ego, to a minimum. As soon as you are doing something for yourself, then you start to feel special, like someone big. I’m sorry to give a bad example, but if ten people died it sounds very bad, a big number. But in a stadium, where there are 100,000 people, maybe ten dead is not so bad—only ten people died! If one person out of a million died, it’s even smaller. Now, when you say “all sentient beings,” you as a single person are almost invisible. If there are seven billion people in the world, forget about other animals, you almost don’t exist, you are so small. If you think that you are the center of the universe, then of course you will feel very important, but if you think of yourself in relation to seven billion people in the world, then you are very small. Now what about all sentient beings? This is how every practice keeps your ego or keeps your sense of self minimized.

By understanding these things, you can make your life as simple as possible. Life is very simple. It cannot be any simpler than this, but we make it complicated. Sometimes I feel it's as if we want to suffer, or we cannot live without it because we've always been with it. We say we don't want suffering, but then we create it for ourselves. Even if nothing bad has happened, we think something bad could happen tomorrow. We exercise our imagination to bring ourselves problems that don't exist but could exist tomorrow, and we ruin today. By seeing this through mind training, by acceptance, our problems will be gone.

Suffering is now a reality for us. You lose somebody in your life, somebody close to you—it could be anybody in your life, or it could be a pet—and you will cry and suffer, you will miss work and be unable to function until you reach the point when you can accept that this person or this beloved animal has gone. Of course, this isn't something unimaginable; death is part of life. By practicing Buddhism, one biggest change I've felt in my life is the change in point of view. When you practice Buddhism, you change your perspective. The words themselves might not matter, but then if you think carefully, that makes all the difference in the world.

Whether you are happy or not, whether you are a good person or not, is dependent on your perspective, or on your

understanding and your explanation of your own life. These are simple tricks that all of us can practice. It will take time, but it will happen. First of all, believe in yourself. It's the most important part. Then try to implement these ideas like acceptance and emptiness, or the true nature of reality. If I go to the gym for one day, I'm not going to change my physical appearance. By cooking for one day, I'm not going to be a chef. You can't become a professional in one day. Achieving such things in life takes time. You need to work at it not only for days or weeks or months, but for years. We shouldn't become discouraged, then, if it takes time to change our perspective on fundamental things, as I've described.

It's not something that you—and this is very important—don't already know. Whatever I've told you, you already knew. I haven't told you anything you didn't already know. That is very interesting to me.

Whatever I told you, you already know that. It's like when you take a group picture or when you see a lot of things, for example, when you look at this beautiful temple, whatever your mind is going, for the thangkas, or doors, or paintings, lights, or whatever, you will only notice those things. For all, there are millions of things in this room.

You won't register everything in your mind. So just like that, how do you say, by accepting these things, then you will have a much more meaningful life, satisfactory life. You turn your knowledge into wisdom, but the only way to do that is by experiencing it. We could bring out hundreds of different dishes for you to see and smell, but until you actually eat them and taste them for yourself, you won't truly experience that food. The experience of tasting it is what we are looking for. The creating, making, and seeing it are all secondary to what we are trying to achieve, which is the experience. All the teachings that we are reading today, all the rituals, all the *sādhanā*, all the philosophies, these are all methods for us to have the experience. There are two things, method and wisdom. Everything you do to achieve the goal of seeing the true nature of everything is method.

Sometimes we become too involved in the practice itself, or in its details. We think we should be sitting like this or that or wearing this or that clothing. Sometimes we are too involved in the process that we get lost and lose sight of the real goal, which is to achieve enlightenment, or to see the true nature of everything. As I said, buddhas don't make us enlightened. No master can. But they can guide and show the path, and if we follow the path, then we can attain enlightenment.

These are simple things. I'll try to explain what I go through every day, what I experience every day, what I think about every day. All the beauty is in simplicity. The more complicated you want things, or the more complicated you make them, the more suffering and headaches you will have. By keeping it simple, you can make your life simple. As I said, life is simple: you are born, you live, you die, you go to the next life. But we create all these problems. If we understand that, I think we will be able to have much better, more meaningful lives.

I'm sorry you have listened for so long, and whatever I have told you is only my experience. Now you have to see your own experience. In the Buddha's teachings, he never said, "This is my vision, and now you must follow." He never said that. He said that before we follow his instructions or guidance, we must check for ourselves whether or not it is right for us, whether it is the path that we want to follow, and whether or not it is the truth. The Buddha is the only master who asked everyone to check for themselves whether what he taught this is right or wrong. So, each one of you should do that. Then, when you are convinced, you will be the kind of practitioner the Buddha wants. Most of the time, we are just following in a relatively blind way. We think we like this or that temple or lama, and so we start to follow without thinking very hard about all the

important parts. If someone is nice and smiles, we tend to follow them. These are simple things, but they're also important aspects that we must think about. The beauty is in the details.

You should do this practice in your life. When I say practice, it sounds very tough, very disciplined. But practice really means to think. People say, "Oh, I can't meditate. I'm a simple person." And I say, "Do you think about what you're going to eat tonight, or what you're going to wear tomorrow? If you can do that, then you can meditate." Meditation is no different than thinking about those things; it's just a different subject. Meditation is not just sitting with your eyes closed. Many people have told me, "Oh, I feel very relaxed today, I meditated." Meditation is not that. Meditation is hard work. The beginning part is trying to bring your mind to one point. The mind is like a horse. They are strong animals, and if you ride an untamed horse, it will run all over the place. You won't be able to direct it where you want. There's no point in riding that kind of horse. You have to tame it first. When the horse is tamed, you can use the full power of the horse, going left or right or wherever you want to direct your horse.

First, you have to understand your mind. Then you can channel it. You cannot control your mind; you can only channel it. You can channel your wisdom.

I want to give you one more example. As I said, one of the biggest hurdles we face is thinking that we are only ordinary beings. But our minds are very powerful. Think about how many shoes there are in the world. How many shoe companies and how many shoe designers. In every country, there are companies and designers creating new shoes. Every season, they're releasing new designs for new shoes. But think about it. Have our feet changed? Do our feet change every season so that we have new designs for what we cover them with? This shows the power of our minds. These people who design all these shoes—they are so-called “normal” working people and family people. Can you imagine that they'll stop designing new shoes? Can you imagine them ever stopping? Could there be a declaration that, beginning in 2030, there will be no more new shoe designs? Is this going to happen? Of course not. A hundred years from now, there will still be people designing new shoes, even though our feet are the same.

How many songs have been written in this world? People are writing new songs in every language, in every country, in every city. How is it possible? There are endless songs! Today, there are millions of people in the world writing songs at this very moment. A hundred years from now, there will still be millions of people writing songs that have never heard before. How can “ordinary people” do these amazing things?

We are underestimating ourselves. As I said in the beginning, we are underestimating the power of our wisdom, the power of our knowledge or understanding. The first thing to do is to overcome this by seeing the true power of our minds. Then, if you have the right understanding, whatever else you do, whatever practice you do, will be all downhill from there.

It's so easy. It's just a matter of time. It's not a question of *if* you will become a buddha, or if you *can* become a buddha. There's not a single doubt about this. The only question is "When?" How soon can you become enlightened?

Thank you for tolerating me for one hour or so. I'm very happy that I could be here and share my experiences. I feel very fortunate. This is a holy place for us because this temple was first established by Dagchen Rinpoche, one of the greatest masters of our time, and so I feel very blessed. We are all blessed in this holy place.

This is not just any ordinary temple. There are many temples in this world, but this is one of the special ones, especially for his followers, because he is our master. Through the wisdom of our masters, through their experience, and through their actions, they show us the way and guide us 24-7. Even now, through their experience and their teachings, we are gaining

understanding of the teachings, and we are getting closer to attaining enlightenment.

Now we would like to do a short prayer for Dungse Ananda Rinpoche. Then, for the sake of all people who are going through suffering or losing their lives all over the world, we will do the Samantabhadra 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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