

# Garchen Rinpoche's Comments on the Seattle Drikung Center

July 27, 2024

So, the dharma center in Seattle, that is benefiting everyone, is my center that Abao Lama is looking after and taking charge of. In case of his absence, we have Thubten Suba Gyamtso Rinpoche looking after the center. The center has turned out really wonderful, and that is because of all your great effort. It has really improved and coming along well. And that is an incredible merit & virtue. That virtue will remain with you, until you achieve enlightenment. It is said in the "excellent words of advice" by Sakya Pandita that the effort of someone who possesses merit is like the sun, so whatever they do will naturally be accomplished. And so that kind of merit is the merit we accumulate through the holy dharma. And that is the kind of merit that will remain and not decline until we attain enlightenment. It will never come to an end.

And so this center is a precious place where we hold the Buddha's teachings. And it is much more significant to have such a place in an area where the dharma has not yet widely spread. Actually, the Buddha himself had said that, for example, we have great monasteries in India, Nepal, and so on. But actually a small center like this is more beneficial. So the Buddha himself had said it's more beneficial to start a small dharma establishment in a place where the Buddha dharma has not yet spread than to have a huge, a vast dharma establishment in a country where the dharma has already spread. And so now this place of democracy, is a place where the dharma has not widely spread and it is a dharma establishment for the people.

There is this particular quote from the Samadhi Raksha Sutra, the king of Samadhi Sutra. And so that is where the Buddha said, and so the quote is generally long, but in essence this is where the Buddha had said that it's more beneficial to engage in a Dharma activity in a place where the Dharma has not yet spread than in a place where it has already widely spread. And so there is this establishment of the precious teachings of the Buddha. So there are two kinds of Buddhist communities. So there is the lay Sangha community, and then there is the ordained Sangha.

And now for us, I mean, in a Dharma center like this one, you can see yourself as a community of lay Sangha members. But in general, what is a Sangha member? A Sangha is mainly somebody's mind. And that means whoever possesses bodhicitta is a Sangha. So it's not about the outer material things that we possess at all. Even if you have a wealth of material things, if you have no bodhicitta inside, you're not an actual Sangha. And so now in this world, we have two traditions, the Mundane and the Dharma tradition.

And really anyone, anywhere in the world who accomplishes the benefit of others is a Sangha.

And so you know that, and you all have great faith and you have a pure perception. So always remember that I'm a Sangha, I'm a lay Sangha. And that means I have to cultivate immeasurable love for all sentient beings. So with this understanding, continue to practice at the Dharma center. And what's also important is that you hold discussion groups at the center. So you listen to the Lama's teachings, and then you discuss the meaning of these teachings. That's very important. And that's really a kind of a mission I have in this life.

What I have in mind when I start Dharma centers all over the place, this is really a commitment that I have to establish these Dharma centers all over so that we can increase and spread and uphold the Buddha Dharma. And so I know that you love me, and also know that after I have passed away, I still need merits, I still need roots of virtue. That's also because after this life, I actually bring with me all the things I've taken on, the negativities and the karmas and so forth of thousands of people.

And so I certainly do need merits and your roots of virtue. And so that's actually also the purpose of the various rituals that we do, like the long-life rituals for those who are living. And then the various ceremonies we do for the deceased. We do that to benefit them through merit. And so since you love me, and I'm going to pass away eventually, this is what you have to continue on to benefit me and also bring me some merit after I have gone. So if you love someone, you want to help them. And so the way to do it is really to look after the center also in the future and to keep working on it and just making it better and better.

This is really what makes me happy. This is what pleases me, makes me happy really the most. And this is what will also help me beyond this life. So therefore, it's something I ask you to please keep in mind.

So there's actually a difference in practicing by yourself alone at home and practicing together with the Sangha, the group in the center. And practicing at the center with the others is actually of a greater benefit. That's because the group is a community of Sangha. And so what's a community of Sangha? A community of Sangha is when four Sangha members come together. Then we can say that's a community of Sangha. And that means we also receive the blessings of the Sangha. So three is not enough. We need to have at least four to have a community of a Sangha.

And that it is so powerful because as a community together, we all pray and practice for all sentient beings, limitless space. And since we are as a group, we are all together and also together with all the backed-up supports by the Buddhas of the three times. And so actually, for example, if you would make a hundred prostrations alone at home, that would be less beneficial than to make a single prostration at the Dharma Center.

And so why is it of a greater benefit to practice at the Dharma Center? So first on the outer level in the Dharma Center, you have all the representations of the Buddha's body, speech and mind. You have the offerings, for example, the butter lamps and so on. On the inner level, there is a

continuous stream of practice happening at the center. And therefore, the Dakas and the Dakinis, they stay there at the center continuously. They're always there naturally, just like a flower or just always being there. And so what is really the root essence of this power that we generate at the Dharma Center? And so it actually does three powers coming together. Number one is the power of your own intention. So you yourself must have a pure faith and immeasurable love and compassion for others. And you must have a wish to want to benefit everyone in the world, all beings. That's number one.

Number two is then when you have that, you also have the second power, which is the bodhicitta of all the Buddhas of the three times. All the Buddhas only care about helping sentient beings and nothing else.

And so if you connect to that, then you also connect to the third power, which is the power of the Dharmadhatu. And that means that every sentient being, even those sentient beings living in the lower realms, possess Buddha nature. And so as you practice together at the Dharma Center, you sort of access the force of those three powers. And that is why it's so important for you to practice at the Dharma Center. And it's good for you to understand that. So it's my wish that you come to the Dharma Center and practice and also hold discussion groups at the Dharma Center. And so just please keep this advice in mind and Tashi Delek.

At the Dharma Center, it's important for you to keep this advice in mind. So at the Dharma Center, it's important that you receive teachings and you go there to practice. But then it's also very important, the main thing, actually, the most important thing is to hold discussion groups to discuss the meaning of what you have learned during those teachings. For example, nowadays, there is a discussion group online on the Bodhicaryavatara prayer. And so we hear teachings about that. And then when we discuss them, we analyze that, we think about what is really the meaning of that. How can we understand that? And then so through this dialogue, we then are able to get a deeper understanding of the meaning. And that is significant because when we just read the prayer, we won't really go into the deep meaning of each word.

We may understand some things here and there, but we won't really understand or really think about the deep meaning. So that's why discussion is very important. So what you can do is just to organize a discussion group. Sometimes maybe you can invite one of the more senior disciples and have them lead the group. And then that person in the future may also actually become a teacher. And you can ask them. If they don't know the answer, you can ask Khenpo. And if they don't know the answer, you can ask someone else. So in this way, by asking, you're improving your understanding. So that's very important. Thank you.

And then there's a story about the great merit that comes from respecting, paying respect to a temple or a Buddha. And so that is a story on the origins of King Ashoka, a Dharma king of the past in India. So when there was a young boy, and he was playing on the road with his friend. They were playing with the sand on the road and making little sand castles. And so they were saying, oh, this sand is the gold, and that sand is silver, and we make a nice castle out of it and so on. And so then while they were playing with the sand, the Buddha walked along the road

with his attendant Ananda. And when the Buddha saw that one of those two boys, he said that, oh, this boy has a lot of merit.

And so the reason was because when the boy saw the Buddha, he felt so happy to see the Buddha that he wanted to make an offering to the Buddha. And so since he had this golden and silver stupa, in his mind, this was not sand. In his mind, this was like a precious golden castle or like a stupa.

He wanted to offer the most precious golden castle or a stupa to the Buddha when he saw the Buddha. And so the Buddha had a begging bowl, and he wanted to offer that into the Buddha's begging bowl, because this is where the offerings go. But then the boy was quite a bit shorter than the Buddha.

The Buddha was quite tall. And so then the boy crawled and kind of climbed on the shoulders of his friend to reach the Buddha's height with the sand in his hand. And then he poured that sand, which really was the golden and silver stupa, into the Buddha's begging bowl. And he said, here is the gold stupa for you. And so the Buddha realized that this is extremely precious. And so he said to Ananda, this boy has a lot of merit.

This is very precious. So this sand, actually, this offering is extremely precious. So he told Ananda to take it to the temple, to wrap it in a scarf and to take it to the main temple and then set it up there on the shrine. And then due to this merit, then later on, this boy became the renowned king Ashoka. So the merit goes back to having made this offering. And so this is a story that comes from the Vinaya scriptures. And it speaks about the benefits of paying respect to the Buddha and to the temples and so on. So that is also one story that you can keep in mind in relation to the Dharma Center. It's really an incredible merit to look after a temple, a Dharma Center. Tashi Telek and thank you!!

Rinpoche said this prayer, may bodhicitta arise where it has not yet arisen, may it not decline where it has arisen, may it ever further increase. And so for this to be accomplished, so that we increase and not lose our bodhicitta, you need to have patience. In the 37 practices, it says to those who desire a wealth of virtue, all those who do harm are like a precious treasure. And so therefore, treating everyone with compassion, without any hostility, treating everyone with patience, without any hostility is the bodhisattva's practice. So that's the key. You have to be patient, you have to be patient.

Abao Lama: Rinpoche please bless the center and the shrine room

Rinpoche: Now you have a wonderful center. And it's up to you to uphold the center and to keep it going. That depends really on you. So you should really think that this is my place, this is my center. I have to uphold it, increase it, and spread it.