

## **Dhardo Rimpoche and The Bodhisattva Tradition**

*by Padmavajra*

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### **Introduction**

Brothers in the Dharma,

#### **Spring**

*The quick sap rises in the dry stalk:  
On naked boughs the furred green buds appear;  
Returning swallows beat about  
The clay-built house they left last year.  
Earth smiles, and like an almond tree  
The Bodhichitta flowers in me.*

This was a poem written by Bhante in 1962, and it's appropriate to read it now, it is after all springtime, at least the beginnings of springtime. But it's appropriate in another way, because it was in 1962 that Bhante received the Bodhisattva Ordination from the Venerable Dhardo Rimpoche. That was on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October in Kalimpong. And Bhante said of the Ordination, that in Dhardo Rimpoche he'd found someone who he could revere as a living Bodhisattva. He had found, in other words, an Ideal Preceptor; an ideal preceptor for the Bodhisattva Ordination. He also said that after the ceremony, Dhardo Rimpoche explained the Sixty-Four Bodhisattva Precepts he'd just given to Bhante in considerable detail. So today, on the occasion of the 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dhardo Rimpoche's death, it seems appropriate to have a little look at these Bodhisattva Precepts. We won't have time to consider all of them, but we can look at the main ones.

But before that, I want to say something about the Bodhisattva tradition that the Bodhisattva Ordination which Dhardo Rimpoche gave to Bhante is part of. And of course to understand this, we have to go back to the Mahayana tradition in India. You're all aware of that tradition, aware of the great sutras on which that tradition is based - sutras like The White Lotus sutra, The Perfection of Wisdom sutras, the Vimalakirti Nirdeśa, the Sukhavati Sutras and so on - but there are many other sutras as well, smaller sutras on all sorts of subjects, and some of them go into quite a bit of detail about the way a Bodhisattva should behave. There's sutras which have, which really deal with the precepts of a Bodhisattva, there's the questions of Kashyapa, the questions of Upali, the questions of Surata and so on. And a lot of these go into, in a lot of detail, the way in which a Bodhisattva should behave. So what you actually find is there is a kind of Bodhisattva Vinaya, or Bodhisattva Pratimoksha. There's a kind of codification of ways of behaviour, that go into the details of how someone who's dedicated to the Bodhisattva Ideal should actually behave. And these sutras are very important, and they're highly influential on the Bodhisattva tradition.

But perhaps even more influential are the works by the great Acharyas, particularly Nagarjuna and Asanga early on, but also later teachers like Shantideva, Chandragomin and Atisha, and others as well. All of them wrote not only great philosophical works, but works

dealing with the way in which a Bodhisattva should actually live. And all of this material was of course transmitted to Tibet, a lot of it went to China as well but let's just stay with Tibet, all this material was transmitted to Tibet, and of course the Bodhisattva tradition became extremely important in the spiritual life of Tibetan Buddhists. It *pervades* Tibetan Buddhism very, very strongly. And eventually the great teachers of Tibetan Buddhism of all schools, whether of the Gelug, Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu and all the sub-schools, discerned two great traditions which describe the way in which a Bodhisattva should live. First of all there's the tradition of the Profound View. This tradition is regarded as having been inspired by the Bodhisattva Manjushri, was transmitted by Manjushri and was, the kind of lineage goes, Nagarjuna, Shantideva and so on. And then you've got the tradition of Extremely Vast Conduct - lovely expression, the tradition of Extremely Vast Conduct. And this is inspired by the Bodhisattva Maitreya, who communicated this to Asanga, and then there's Vasubandu, Chandragomin and Atisha.

Particularly important for these traditions, particularly for the lineage of Extremely Vast Conduct, is the chapter on ethics from Asanga's Bodhisattvabhumi. The Bodhisattvabhumi is a huge work, was written in the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century, dealing with all aspects of the Bodhisattva path, it means "the stages of the Bodhisattva," Bodhisattvabhumi. And the chapter on ethics is particularly important. Tsongkhapa wrote an important and influential commentary upon it, and that's the basis for all later Gelugpa commentaries. So there's a kind of lineage that comes down to us. There's the Buddha, the Great Bodhisattvas, Asanga, or rather Nagarjuna, Asanga, Vasubandu, Atisha, eventually Tsongkhapa, the Gelugpa school, Dhardo Rimpoche, Bhante.

So there's a kind of lineage. Not, of course, that Bhante's given us the Bodhisattva Ordination in the way he received it from Dhardo Rimpoche. We're part of, as it were, a lineage, but he hasn't transmitted the Bodhisattva Ordination and I don't expect he will. As you all know, Bhante has come to think of these things in a somewhat different way. But I think we can say, what we can definitely say, is that the Bodhisattva Ordination is, in a sense, contained within the Dharmachari Ordination that we take at the time of Ordination. The arising of the Bodhichitta, the altruistic dimension of Going for Refuge is brought out *explicitly* in the verses of acceptance that come towards the end of the public Ordination ceremony. Those verses of acceptance end with '*for the benefit of all beings I accept this Ordination*', for the benefit of all beings I accept this Ordination. So it's quite clear that you're receiving the Ordination, and the Ordination is given in the spirit of gaining Enlightenment for all living beings. The verse before '*for the benefit of all beings*' is '*for the attainment of Enlightenment I accept this Ordination*'. So we do accept Ordination for the attainment of Enlightenment for all beings. So the Bodhisattva Ideal inspires our Order, our movement, I don't think anybody would dispute that. Or it should do, it should inspire our Order, and our movement. If it doesn't then we're not being true disciples of Ugyen Sangharakshita, we're not true disciples of Dhardo Rimpoche.

Bhante himself speaks of, when he discovered the Bodhisattva Ideal, of being thrilled, exhilarated, uplifted, and inspired by the Bodhisattva Ideal. And Dhardo Rimpoche himself was deeply motivated by the Bodhisattva Ideal. At the time of his enthronement, when he was brought from his Nyingmapa Monastery, from his Monastery on the borders with Tibet, when he was brought to Lhasa, to the Gelug college where he would do his training - because, I don't know if you realize this, Dhardo Rimpoche is an incarnation of a Nyingmapa Tulku, but who was trained as a Gelug. So he's sort of thoroughly Gelug, but he has this kind of Nyingma affiliation as well, rather unusual. But he said when he was being enthroned, and

of course he was regarded as the incarnation of a very great Lama, somebody who was very close to the great Thirteenth Dalai Lama. He was regarded, he was looked on, when he was taken to his enthronement, as a living Bodhisattva, as a Tulku. Tulku, I don't know if you realize, this translates the Sanskrit Nirmanakaya, but he was looked on as a living Bodhisattva. But he reflected, "Well, I don't feel that way, I don't feel like that, but if that's the way people regard me, then I will make myself into a Bodhisattva, I will live like that, I will become a Bodhisattva". And it's interesting, later on when he was talking to Suvajra and Mokshapriya and some other Order members, he said very, very strongly, he said "what does it mean to be a Rimpoche? To be a Rimpoche means that you're a Bodhisattva". And he said "I've turned myself into a Rimpoche, I've become a Rimpoche, you too can become Rimpoches, you too can become Bodhisattvas, if you live the Bodhisattva life". So he was obviously somebody *deeply* motivated by the Bodhisattva Ideal.

Recently, in order to understand the Bodhisattva tradition more, in order to live it better, Subhuti has been, in the College of Public Preceptors, leading us through material associated with the Bodhisattva Precepts that Dhardo Rimpoche gave to Bhante. We spent a week studying Bhante's translation of the Eighteen Mulapatis or Root or Major Downfalls. (Yes, that's right, we just did the first eighteen). So these are the first eighteen of what Bhante calls the Bodhisattva Precepts, the Eighteen Root Downfalls from the Bodhicitta. Subhuti's also taken us through some of Asanga's chapter on Ethics, with Tsongkhapa's commentary, which these precepts are taken from. And I believe in Tuscany and out in India, he's given lectures on Asanga's chapter on Ethics from the Bodhisattvabhumi. So this material's beginning to flow into the Order, and I myself have found it very useful, very inspiring; but very, very useful indeed. And I've led study and given talks on aspects of this material on various retreats. I took the Mitra Convenors through some of this material, which people found very useful, and I took some people I'd ordained through a text by Chandragomin, which was concerned with the same material. We've also studied it in the Ordination team. And it does - I think everybody's found, that it's all very useful, very stimulating - and it does give a new perspective on how to practice the Dharma.

So this afternoon, I'm going to take a look at the first four of the Eighteen Root Downfalls from the Bodhicitta. The so called - Bhante calls the Eighteen Root Downfalls and the Forty-Six Branch Downfalls collectively the Bodhisattva Precepts - but the more proper term is Downfalls, downfalls from the Bodhicitta, downfalls from your Bodhisattva Vow. And these first four Downfalls sometimes occur as a set in their own right, so they're very important. In fact, the Forty-Six Minor Downfalls are said to be different manifestations of the Four Root Downfalls - I'd better not dwell on this too much, it gets too complicated. But anyway, the first four are regarded as a set in their own right. They're the basic, the most basic, the most fundamental ways in which we fall away from living the Bodhisattva life. And I want to look at these today so that we can discover ways in which we can live the Bodhisattva Ideal more effectively. Usually on a day marking Dhardo Rimpoche, we have talks about his life, stories about him and so on. But this time I felt we should look at some teachings that he would have known, that he would have been imbued with, he would have practiced, would have embodied. As Rimpoche told Suvajra, "I became a Rimpoche, I became a Bodhisattva, you can do so as well." So it's good to know more about how we can do it.

### **The Four Root Downfalls**

So the four Mulapatis, the four Root Downfalls, in Bhante's translation are:

1. It is a bad thing - they're all prefaced with this 'It is a bad thing' - It is a bad thing to praise oneself and disparage others.
2. It is a bad thing to withhold the wealth of the Dharma from others.
3. It is a bad thing to punish and refuse to concede repentance.
4. It is a bad thing to give up the Mahayana whilst still pretending to belong to it.

So before looking at each of these individually, I want to say something about the Root Downfalls in general. First of all, looking at these Bodhisattva Precepts, let's call them that, they really do seem to be addressed to people in positions, for the most part, in positions of responsibility. That really does seem to be who they're addressed to, or certainly *many* of them are. Well I think that's very relevant to all Order Members, and all people preparing for Ordination for that matter. All Order Members are in positions of responsibility, they're in positions of responsibility in relation to one another, and of course they're in positions of responsibility to those who aren't Ordained, regardless of whether you have responsibility as a Chairman or as a Mitra Convenor or whatever it is, we are all in positions of responsibility. I think we do need to be very clear about that. I mean, I think people often feel it, don't they - when they're Ordained, when they have the Kesa, when the Kesa goes on, and their name is given and they turn up at the Beginner's class or go back to their Centre - *suddenly* they realize the responsibility they have, just by virtue of being an Order Member.

It's said by Tsongkhapa and other commentators that these four Root Downfalls correspond to what is known as the Four Defeats of a Bhikshu, this is interesting. And the Four Defeats of a Bhikshu are sexual intercourse, murder, theft, and making claims about attainments you don't have. If you're a Bhikshu and you do *any* of these, you're expelled from the Monastic Order, and you cannot be Ordained as a Monk again in this lifetime. You've really blown it. And you notice that the Four Root Downfalls are pitched at a different level really from the Root Downfalls in the Bodhisattva Tradition. The Root Downfalls in the Bodhisattva Tradition are Downfalls, I think, or rather a falling away, from a much higher level of Practice. You fall away from the Bodhisattva Vow, from the Bodhicitta, not through having sex, you'll be relieved to hear, for example, but through praising yourself and disparaging others. You fall away not through stealing - although that would be falling away - you fall away through withholding the wealth of the Dharma. You fall away not because of murder - though it's not saying you should murder people - but you fall away through punishing and not conceding repentance. And you fall away not through making claims about attainments that you don't have, but through pretending you are a follower of the Mahayana.

So it's a much more subtle level of practice that we're dealing with, with these Bodhisattva Downfalls. And also you can see that the Four Root Downfalls are for everybody, for monks or laypeople, they're not referring to a particular ecclesiastical status. You know, a monk having sex, well of course he ceases to be a monk because he's no longer celibate. So, as I've said, the Mahayana precepts are pitched at a different level. And it reminds me of a teaching that Bhante passed on from Mr. Chen. Mr. Chen once likened ethical observance in the three Yanas, to three different kinds of bowls. So, Hinayana observance is like a clay bowl: break the rule, well, it cannot be mended. So the Four Defeats are like this, it's like a clay bowl that's been broken. You can't do anything about it, it's smashed, that's it, your monastic status is finished, it's gone. But in the Mahayana it's more like - the ethics in the Mahayana, and the Bodhisattva - is like having a brass bowl: You *will* dent the bowl, you will dent it, because you're trying to do something that's very difficult, so you'll dent it. You *will* fall away in different ways from the Bodhisattva Precepts, because they're much harder to

practice. But you can't *break* the bowl, you can only dent it. But then you have to kind of bash it back into shape. The Vajrayana, it is said, Mr Chen has said, is like a crystal bowl: You cannot break it, because there's been no precept to take in the first place.

I think you can sort of forget the Triyana way of looking at it. I think, in a way, it's just describing different levels of ethical practice. As we go on, our *standards* get higher, our standards change. We expect more of ourselves. A Bodhisattva expects *more* of himself. There's a kind of constant upgrading of ethical, spiritual, and spiritual practice. Until the Realization, as it's put in one Mahayana sutra, that all dharmas are Vinaya. All Dharmas are Vinaya, all things are the ethical code. That means that you're then totality in tune with the way things are. Of course, that's the morality, if you can call it morality, of a Buddha. He's naturally ethical, his ethics are indestructible, and in a sense, then in a way, you don't have ethics anymore then.

So let's now have a look at these Four Root Downfalls, or as Bhante calls them, the first four of the Bodhisattva Precepts which he received from Dhardo Rinpoche.

### **The first Root Downfall: It is a Bad Thing to Praise Oneself and Disparage Others.**

So, first of all, "It is a bad thing to praise oneself and disparage others." This would seem to be really the most basic of all the Downfalls, the most serious of ways we can fall away from the Bodhicitta, from striving to gain Enlightenment for all living beings. Obviously there are different levels to it, from the very gross levels to the very subtle levels. But if we praise ourselves and disparage others, what are we doing? We're giving expression to rank egotism and competitiveness. We're expressing a fundamental lack of empathy and sympathy with other people. It could be, as I've said, very gross, the expression of ambition and the desire for position, it could be something like that. Indeed the Bodhisattva Bumi describes it as, "with a longing for gain and respect, to praise oneself and deprecate another." With a longing for gain and respect, to praise oneself and deprecate another. And this Downfall is also described as self-vaunting, you promote yourself, and you promote yourself by reviling others. You pump yourself up to push others down, you push others down to pump yourself up. And, I notice it particularly when gossip goes on, when I do gossip. You know what it's like, getting together with friends, and you start talking about others not present. And you start speaking about the people not present critically, and it makes you feel good, it makes you feel secure. It kind of boosts your self-confidence, it doesn't really of course, but that's the way it can feel, you know, it can feel, "we're all right". I remember one friend of mine used to pick us both up on this, we'd be talking about somebody not present in a critical way, and he's say "but we're all right aren't we." And it was like he was just blowing the whistle to say, "come on, let's stop, let's stop doing this". But there's more subtle forms of it, I think it can occur when we don't give due weight to the good that others have done. We might get a lot of praise for something, or something like that, but actually a number of other people might have been involved in the project, and we don't give due, you know, we don't give them their due, you know, we don't point that out to other people.

I think what this Downfall represents is really a falling away from Interconnectedness. Interconnectedness. The Bodhicitta, the Bodhisattva Vow, they're expressions, they're a kind of vision, an experience even, of Interconnectedness with all beings, especially all other human beings. To then go around pumping yourself up in relation to others, to compete with others, and try and gain respect by doing others down, is a turning away from Interconnectedness - a turning away from the basic Bodhisattva emotion, which is *anukampa*,

which literally means “to shake with.” It’s something like sympathy, empathy. It’s often translated as compassion, compassion itself I believe etymologically, means simply “to feel with.” So we’re moving away from that basic sense of that basic sympathy, that basic shaking with other people, that basic sense of solidarity with others. It would also be a falling away from the kind of observance of the First Precept that Bhante has enjoined upon Order Members.

It’s very interesting, this is just an aside by the way, that I was looking through some Padmasambhava texts recently on the Bodhisattva tradition, on the arising of the Bodhicitta, and then he described the Precepts that somebody who’s trying to develop the Bodhicitta observes. And they were the Ten Precepts, the Ten Precepts that we observe. So that was very interesting. I believe there’s a Chinese or rather a Japanese Tradition, the Tendai tradition, that gives the Ten Precepts that we observe as the expression of the Bodhisattva Vow.

But anyway, in *The Ten Pillars of Buddhism*, Bhante speaks of observance of the First Precept in terms of the “*cultivation of a profound imaginative identification with others.*” In fact, to illustrate this, he refers to Shantideva’s teaching of Paratma Samatha, the realisation of the sameness of self and other, even the realisation of Paratma Parivartana, the transference of the self and other. But, just to stay with the Paratma Samatha, the sameness of self and other, Shantideva puts it like this, “when happiness is liked by me and others equally, what is so special about me, that I strive after happiness myself? When fear and suffering are disliked by me and others equally, what is so special about me, that I protect myself and not another?” So this is the fundamental Bodhisattva attitude, realizing that everybody wants to be happy and wants to avoid suffering. The realization that we’re not that special when it comes down to it, that we’re all profoundly the same. This is also said to be the basis for the cultivation of *metta*, realizing that others are essentially the same as us, they want to be happy, they’re trying to be happy. We, they, might be trying to be happy in the weirdest of ways, but that’s the fundamental motivation.

Dharo Rimpoche of course, was someone who realized the sameness of self and others. In the book *Dharo Rimpoche: A Celebration*, which I would *warmly* recommend, there’s some wonderful stories which illustrate this, especially, I think, from his Tibetan disciples. Jigme Wangchuk Kalhden, the second son of Jampel Kalhden, said:

*“Rimpoche used to say, that if you have one Rupee and buy something for yourself and enjoy it all alone, after five minutes it’s gone. If you divide the Rupee into two, you can share it between two people, and if into then four between four people; and that’s a greater happiness. He said that the happiness and peace of mind you get from seeing the happiness of those you have shared with, is greater than the happiness of taking for ourselves alone.”*

So this little teaching of Rimpoche’s shows the expression of the realisation of sameness, in terms of generosity.

### **The Second Root Downfall: It is a Bad thing to Withhold the Wealth of the Dharma from Others.**

So this brings us to the second of the Root Downfalls, “It is bad thing to withhold the wealth of the Dharma from others.” All of us have had the great, good fortune of having received the wealth of the Dharma. There’s so many ways the Dharma has been given to us, and

continues to be given to us. There's Bhante's innumerable, innumerable - well they're not innumerable, they're numerous - numerous lectures, seminars, personal communications, books, and so on and so forth. So much he's transmitted, there's a wealth of teachings and practices that we can take up, teachings and practices that we can actually use. And the wealth has come to us and continues to come to us in other ways - Order members give talks, we go on retreats, we are recipients of Kalyana Mitrata. On this retreat itself, Subhuti is giving a number of talks all about - I don't know what they're on actually, but they must be something to do with the Order. We also have, you know, the wealth of the Dharma continues to be communicated. Yes, we're part of the communication of that wealth.

Then there's facilities, we're recipients of the wealth of the Dharma with extraordinary facilities. You know, we provide these facilities for one another. It's worth reflecting on, well, we can have a large Chapter Convenors retreat because we've got a big retreat centre in which to do it. We really are very rich and very wealthy with the Dharma in so many ways, I think it's well worth pausing and reflecting on how much is actually available to us. Our teacher, Bhante, cannot be described as having the *acharyamuti* as it's called, "the tight fist of a bad teacher who holds things back." And within the Mahayana there's much emphasis on taking the Dharma out to people, making it available, making teachings and practices available, befriending people, providing facilities for them. There's much emphasis, by the way, on the providing of facilities to people. That the Bodhisattva - there's all sorts of different lists of ethics that the Bodhisattva takes up, but many of them are providing people with the facilities for practice. There's one set of ethics, it's the ethics of "gathering a crowd." What it means is, it's like the Sangharavasti, its creating a community but, a lot of, part of the ethics in that means providing the facilities for practice. Well, we're all trying to do that collectively.

So this is another very basic Downfall. We take, or there is, the Bodhisattva Vow to liberate all beings, at Ordination we accepted our Ordination for the liberation of all beings. But what would that mean if we then withhold the Dharma? If we don't give out of the wealth of the Dharma that we have? We're going against what we dedicated our lives to. So why should we, why would we, withhold the wealth of the Dharma? First of all, I think it's because we don't realize that we possess it in the first place. We don't recognize what we actually have. I think it's well worth not just pausing to reflect on what we have, but kind of looking around the world, you know like, it's good to look at a map of the world, we do this at the end of a Guhyaloka course. We put a big map of the world up, and then we just show where the FWBO centres are. Well even if you were to add all the other Buddhist centres in the world, you'd still have these *vast* spaces where as far as we know there's no Dharma, there's no Dharma being taught. And when you actually stand back and look at the world, and you look at the forces that are kind of going on the world, well, our little centres - and they are little centres when you compare it with what's going on in the world, really are little flickering lamps of Dharma, and I often invoke this image. You know, little lamps flickering in, you know, a lot of very heavy winds. You know, and we can look at ourselves and we can be - in relation to this - we can be either indifferent or overcritical about it all; but in comparison to the strife, the lack of meaning, the ugliness of the world, we're in possession of something extraordinary. We really are in possession of something extraordinary. But, you know, because we don't realize it, we don't pass it on, we don't make it available. I sometimes reflect on this in relation to the whole issue of harmony. I know some people think that there's a lot of disharmony in the Order. Some people kind of claim that - recently in Shabda, there's been things on that. But actually if you compare the world, and the disharmony and strife in the world, I think the degree of harmony compared - you know

when you think about how spread out the order is – is absolutely remarkable. There's an incredible degree of harmony. So we often don't realize this, we don't often realize what we've got *in comparison to the world*. So that can make us, you know, not want to, or forget about giving the Dharma to others, giving the Sangha to others for that matter.

And I think related to this is lack of confidence. We can think that we don't have much to offer personally. You know, but we've got an enormous amount to offer personally. I always used to notice this on the Kalyana Mitra retreats that we did, especially the early ones, where we did these retreats for Order members to look at the whole issue of becoming Kalyana Mitras. And the main issue, I think, why people were holding back on becoming Kalyana Mitras was because they weren't confident. They didn't realize how much they personally had to offer because they were going for Refuge to the Three Jewels, because they were practicing, they had a lot to offer but they just didn't realize it. So we can withhold the wealth of the Dharma because of lack of confidence.

We can also withhold the wealth of the Dharma through laziness, simple as that. We might not want to put up with personal discomfort. Giving the Dharma might mean we have to put ourselves out. It can be very tiring communicating the Dharma. If you take on doing lots of classes, giving talks, taking retreats, seeing people, spending time with people – well yes, it's a responsibility, it does make you a bit tired sometimes. It can be *really* difficult in some parts of the world, if you're trying to communicate the Dharma in India for example, it can really cause you a lot of hardship, as we know. But I always feel that if that's influencing me, it's laziness on my part. If a bit of, you know, a little bit of hardship is preventing me from going out of my way to communicate the Dharma, it's simply laziness, it's nothing else.

Sometimes we might withhold the wealth of the Dharma out of fear. We might not speak out in certain situations because we're worried about being criticized. This doesn't... maybe we don't go to certain places. I remember years ago Bhante saying that, I don't know how practical this is, but he thought that, he was saying to Order members, "well why don't you try and teach the Dharma in working men's clubs or, you know, go to factories and places like that, you know really sort of take people on." Well, I'd certainly think twice, thrice, loads of times, before I did anything like that, because I'd be frightened, it's as simple as that. Sometimes it can be even within our own sangha. You know somebody can be behaving in a certain way, or saying certain things, and you believe "well this is not the truth, this is not the way things are," and you don't speak – you withhold the wealth of the Dharma, you withhold the wealth of the truth. So we can withhold the wealth of the Dharma through fear.

Giving the wealth of Dharma means, of course, having it, possessing it, which of course means knowing the Dharma in breadth and depth. It means therefore that we have to plunge into the Dharma, study the Dharma, reflect upon the Dharma, meditate upon the Dharma, so that we're rich with Dharma. The Bodhisattvabhumi actually describes this Downfall in another way, it says:

*"While the goods exist in his, the Bodhisattva's, possession, to coldheartedly fail to donate material things, and not to teach the Dharma out of stinginess."*

So it's not just withholding the Dharma, it's withholding wealth. It's talking about generosity with material things and with the Dharma. Dharo Rimpoche was an exemplar of both of these things. Mr. Tashi Dorje, who's a teacher at the ITBCI, said:



*“Many Rinpoches came from Tibet, many of the big Rinpoches would only respond to those who were wealthy or powerful, but our Rinpoche was ready to go anywhere. There was a place called Banglan where the beggars slept. Whenever one of the beggars was sick or died, Rinpoche would go. He wasn’t concerned for himself, he cared for the common people, that’s why he established our school.”*

This is an oft repeated theme in these interviews that Mahamati did with these Tibetan disciples - that Rinpoche would go anywhere, he’d go to anybody, to give the wealth of the Dharma, without regard for personal hardship, without regard of how people treated him. You know, there was another person described going on tour with Rinpoche to these areas, where very, very poor Tibetans - uneducated, uncultured Tibetans lived, mostly followers of kind of Nyingma tradition - and Rinpoche didn’t bother about any kind of sectarian stuff, he’d join in with them, join in with their chanting, and these people would drink and, you know, they were a bit rough and ready, it didn’t matter. Rinpoche communicated to them, communicated the Dharma to them, and he wasn’t bothered in any way about personal hardship. He’d give so much in terms of material things as well. There’s so many stories of him giving money to children, to beggars, day in and day out, incredible these stories.

### **The Third Root Downfall: It is a Bad Thing to Punish and Refuse to Concede Repentance.**

Thirdly, “It is a bad thing to punish and refuse to concede repentance.” Another translation of this Downfall describes this as “not accepting an apology and holding a grudge.” And the Bodhisattvabhumi speaks of it in terms of anger and using harsh words, and even striking others. So, obviously there’s a number of areas covered by this Downfall. First of all, it addresses the whole issue of anger and retaliation. And these unskillful states, anger and retaliation, are regarded as the very worst thing a Bodhisattva can do. Mahayana sutras go so far as to say that greed is not so bad, you’re all relieved to hear, because at least with greed you’re not cutting off from others, you’re not cutting yourselves off from others. But anger for a Bodhisattva is terribly serious, because when he gets angry the Bodhisattva cuts himself off from others.

This was really brought home to me many years ago in India, by an Order member named Amoghaditya, I lived with Amoghaditya for a number of years in Bombay, and I was kind of a Kalyana Mitra to him. So, a lot of contact with him before he was Ordained and just after he was Ordained. And one of the things that used to happen - I say used to happen to me, I used to do in India - I used to lose my temper, I used to get angry. And I can remember on retreat one time with Amoghaditya and other Order members, and I think it was a Mitra retreat, in the Chapter meeting I lost my temper about something. Something hadn’t been done to my satisfaction, so I started to shout and, you know, say harsh things. Anyway, the next day at lunch, I was sitting next to Amoghaditya and he said to me, “You shouldn’t be like that Padmavajra.” And he didn’t know much English, but he knew enough to make his point. He’s very – his name means “Unobstructed sun” – and he is an obstructed sun, he just kept saying it, “You shouldn’t do it Padmavajra, you shouldn’t be like that.” And I said, “well people shouldn’t behave like...” And he said, “No, you shouldn’t do that Padmavajra, you shouldn’t be like that.” And then he said, “You shouldn’t be like that because you’re a good person and you can benefit people, and if you get angry people stay away from you and you can’t benefit them then.” And, well what do you say to that? I mean I was speechless, I tried to speak, I could even barely finish my meal, it was such a *strong* thing to say - because, well he was saying I was a good person, he was rejoicing in my merits, but he was saying

you're doing something which spoils that, which keeps people away from you; people are afraid to come to you, they don't want to be treated like that. So that was a *real* teaching, and I've certainly never forgotten it. Whether I've been any good at practicing I don't know, I think I've got better than I was when I was in India in those days, but it was a really good teaching. Any of us here, but especially Order members, especially Senior Order members, especially Kalyana Mitras, especially Preceptors, have to be very, very careful with this one. Very, very careful - we have to be very careful not to behave in a way that alienates people from us, because we're cutting people off from the Dharma. That's what's going on if we get angry.

But this Downfall is addressing more than anger and retaliation. It's addressing the whole issue of holding a grudge, holding on to resentment, and not accepting other people's apologies. It's addressing the whole business of wanting to blame others, blame others for our unhappiness, blame others for things going wrong. These emotions are particularly destructive of human society, and they're very destructive of spiritual community. And of course we live in an age, it seems to me, where there is just so much complaint and so much blame. We live in a time where, well, you can go to court to have all your blame, you know, made money out of. And we certainly, I think, need to resist this culture of blame, I think, in our Sangha, and to develop the great spiritual quality of forgiveness, the great spiritual act of forgiveness. Yes, we can feel wronged by others, sometimes objectively we may have been wronged by others. Maybe other people have treated us badly, even very badly, or just thoughtlessly. Sometimes, of course, we imagine that we've been wronged by others. This is what happens. The thing is, either way, whether a real wrong has been done, or whether it's an imagined wrong, Buddhist tradition – *all* Buddhist traditions – are adamant that there is *never* any justification for retaliation, resentment, grudge-holding and blaming; never, ever any justification for it.

I think - I've been thinking about this quite a lot - and we talk quite a lot about it when we study this material. And I was trying to look at myself, when I feel wronged by somebody, whether it's a real or imagined slight. I suppose it goes something like this: I feel made small, I feel humiliated, I feel in a way that my existence has been denied and, you know, the world therefore goes wrong, it's out of alignment, it's not right. Something's gone wrong with the universe because I've been made small, I've been denied. And I want to win back the sense of myself, my self-confidence I suppose, or the kind of balance in the universe. And I think I can win it back, and I can bring back my feeling of dignity by attacking the other person, by blaming them, by bringing them down, and even demanding that they apologize, humiliate back I suppose. This is an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth morality. But, of course, it never happens like that. I know, whenever I've gone back at somebody, I never feel satisfied, I never, ever feel satisfied. I always feel even more frustrated, it's impossible to kind of win back that sense of harmony through retaliation. There is a frustration, an inherent frustration, in anger. We think that if we got it out, then the frustration would go. But I just don't believe it, I think the frustration just goes on. There's a *dukkha* in anger. Shantideva says, "*there is no way that an angry man can be happy.*"

I think that this bring us on to the practice of forgiveness, which I think is a lecture in itself. It would be good to have a series of lectures in it. But I think if we want to practice it, we need to perhaps go through a number of stages. First of all, have they done anything wrong? We can be so convinced that somebody's done something wrong. I had an exchange with Padmadaka a few weeks ago, and I was convinced he'd said something to wrong me, absolutely convinced. And of course he hadn't, it was just one of those misunderstandings. I

sort of wanted him to have wronged me, so that I could get him back. It was pretty perverse. But have we actually been wronged? Is it just a misunderstanding? Have we misconstrued what's been said? If they have, then we have to develop understanding. I don't know if you remember, in the Sutra of Golden Light, in the section on Confession, we confess all the faults that we've done through the oppressions, all the different oppressions: the oppressions of existence, the oppressions of time, the oppressions of the arrival of an evil friend, and so on and so forth. It's as if life, there are so many kind of pressures within life, yes, we will be unskilful. And yes, you confess that, you take responsibility for that unskilfulness. But in relation to other people, we try to understand. They've done that because of all sorts of conditions, all sorts of pressures upon them. And if we can understand them, we can let go of the anger, we can forgive, we can develop sympathy. So, understanding.

And then thirdly, I think really in the end to be able to forgive, to *always* forgive, to forgive whenever anything happens, I think we need Insight. Is it "*to err is human, to forgive is divine*," I think Alexander Pope said. Well, I think it's not just divine, it's transcendental. I think we really learn to forgive when we recognize, well, we've been born into an imperfect, a very imperfect world, and it's a world where these things happen, it's in the nature of things. And we say that not in a cussed way, not in a "Well, it happens, dunnit," you know, "they are like that." Not like that but, "well, this is the nature of Samsara, Samsara doesn't conform to our desires, it doesn't even conform to our spiritual aspirations." There's a... I was turned on to this particular point, when I was reading a book by John Middleton Murray called *Keats and Shakespeare*, which is a wonderful book. But in discussing Keats' "negative capability," his famous doctrine I suppose you could call it of negative capability, he talks about forgiveness. And Middleton Murray kind of comments on a saying of Chekhov "And all things are forgiven, and it would be strange not to forgive." And Murray says (he talks about) a forgiveness which forgives not only men, but life itself, not only the pains which men inflict, but the pains which are knit up in the very nature of existence. He also says, "we have no word for this, we've scarcely even a sense of the quality itself; let it be called, though the word cannot fail to be understood, 'Acceptance'." Capital "A." So that's what we have to kind of aim for.

Like I say, the world doesn't even conform to our spiritual aspirations. We put, as aspiring Bodhisattvas, you know as novice Bodhisattvas, you know, we throw ourselves into things - you know into building centres, running centres, spending time with people, being a Kalyana Mitra, we put loads into our Chapter, loads into our community. And then, you know, people seem to sort of let us down, they don't seem to be interested, or they might be rude to us, or whatever it might be, or... you know the sorts of things that happen. But we carry on, we can forgive it all, because we know, "Well this is what happens, this is the nature of things." So, a Bodhisattva is this strange creature, this strange being, who works tirelessly for others, fully engages with them, emotionally engages with them, builds a Sangha, spreads the Dharma, is profoundly emotionally involved - but he knows the fragility of it all at the same time, so he can let go, he can forgive. It's an extraordinary quality, it must be an extraordinary being, a Bodhisattva, to be like that - incredibly emotionally involved but understanding how it can go, how it can turn out. I remember being very struck, almost shocked when I saw an interview with the Dalai Lama when he first came to England (this was before I'd become a Buddhist). And he was asked about his attitude to Mao, to Chairman Mao, and the Dalai Lama just said straight out, "He is my greatest friend." And the interviewer was shocked. And he said, "He is my greatest friend because he teaches me patience, he teaches me forgiveness." Well, what a thing to say. And of course this is classic Shantideva teaching, isn't it?

I've been thinking as well, that I think forgiveness is when compassion is mostly itself. I was very struck by this in doing the Vajrasattva Sadhana intensively on a solitary retreat. And in that Sadhana you purify yourself of all your evil through visualizing Vajrasattva above your head - he purifies you and all beings - that's what you imagine anyway. And then, towards the end of the practice, you confess to him, and he forgives you, he says "My son, from today, all your sins, as well as all those of other people, are wiped out." And it seemed to me at that time, that that was kind of the heart of the practice, the essence of the practice. That I was sort of seeing, getting a glimpse of compassion at its most... its most pure, its most quintessential. Yes, compassion is being fully itself when it forgives. That in the face of evil, in the face of, you know, bad things being done to you, compassion forgives. Incredibly... incredible thing, yes forgiveness is when compassion is mostly itself. Of course, we just have to begin all this process by just letting go of all the little hurts, real or imagined. You just let them go, you don't make a big song and dance about them. You know - somebody doesn't bring you tea, somebody doesn't say the right words, somebody forgets something - you don't make it into a song and dance, you just let it go, just let it go.

Dhardo Rimpoche was naturally forgiving, he was a very compassionate man, but people said that he always did what was right, what he thought was right. He always acted in accordance with the Dharma, and if that meant criticizing others, being outspoken, he did so. And he was particularly outspoken to the Tibetan aristocracy, and to the vested interests of the Tibetan Government in exile, the Tibetan Government in Tibet when he was in Tibet. And this annoyed and angered many people, and apparently Tibetan Government officials in particular, treated him extremely badly in all sorts of ways, including preventing him from seeing the Dalai Lama. There's even a story - but apparently Dhardo Rimpoche was never, ever angered by this, he was complete... always forgiving, you know never returned it - and there's even a story about a man who treated Rimpoche very badly in Kalimpong, was always harming Rimpoche and his work. But when he died, Rimpoche went to him, and immediately performed the man's death ceremonies. There was no hesitation, there was no, "Well he treated me badly so I don't want anything to do with him."

#### **The Fourth Root Downfall: It is a Bad Thing to Give up the Mahayana Whilst Still Pretending to Belong to it.**

So fourthly, the fourth Downfall, "It is a bad thing to give up the Mahayana whilst still pretending to belong to it." So here we have a kind of false, a counterfeit, practice of the Bodhisattva path. We might talk about compassion, and caring, and helping others; but it finds no expression in actual deeds. Bhante's comments are interesting here about Mahayana Buddhists he'd met, you know who were kind of... their allegiance was to the Mahayana. He met Tibetan Lamas who could, you know, could expound on the Bodhisattva path, on the Bodhisattva Ideal - but they were doing nothing, or very little, to put it into practice. But it's true for us, of course, we can use the language (as I've been doing in this talk), we can use the language of caring and sympathy. It's very much the language of our times - care, sympathy - especially in spiritual circles, and people can be very earnest, but it's so easy to be sentimental. We have all the language, all the patter, we can even have the look of the "caring sharing person," but actually live a thoroughly self-centred life. A Bodhisattva is not like this - he not only talks about compassion, he actually lives it, he practices it, he does it.

There are other interpretations of this Downfall, and one of them says that it means rejecting the Mahayana Sutras, being choosy about them. It says you should accept the Sutras in their

totality. So I think the point being made here is, you know, you'll like the teachings on *sunyata* and Buddha-nature but you don't really want to look at Sutras that deal with renunciation, for example. The Bodhisattva accepts the totality of teachings.

Another interpretation is that one devotes oneself to counterfeits of the Dharma, and teaches those counterfeits to others. And I remember years ago, Bhante being particularly concerned about this, he read that article by an American Buddhist teacher who talked about the need for Buddhism to be democratized, feminized, and was it... domesticated or integrated? And he wrote that very strong article called *The Idols of the Marketplace*, he thought that was a complete misrepresentation of Buddhism. The Dharma is always in danger of being hijacked by the false Views of the age. But a Bodhisattva doesn't allow himself to be hijacked, he's rooted in the Dharma and able to communicate the Dharma in his time, and in his place, without compromise. And, of course, Dhardo Rimpoche was a great example of this – he lived the Bodhisattva path, he lived the Mahayana – The Great Way, The Great Vehicle, the vehicle that carries all to Buddhahood. *Dhardo Rimpoche: A Celebration* (that book) is just full of stories of his compassionate response, his care for others, his practical care for others. Some of these stories are very, very touching - the sorts of ways he'd personally care for the children in his school, actually doing things for them, of all kinds. Reading these stories, I just couldn't help but be reminded of Shantideva's descriptions of a Bodhisattva as being "a protector for those without protection, a guide for those who wander." And Dhardo Rimpoche was totally rooted in the Dharma, of all schools, of all traditions, and he was very concerned that it should be practiced properly. And he was completely non-sectarian in his approach to the Dharma. He said, he told me, that he'd studied, the school, all the schools of Tibetan Buddhism very deeply, and he'd come to the conclusion that there was no essential difference between any of them. He was generous and principled. Jampel Kalhden, in his piece in the book *Dhardo Rimpoche: A Celebration*, [said Dhardo Rimpoche] always insisted when he gave an Initiation, that the Initiation must be practiced, "you must practice the Sadhana associated with the Initiation." And Jampel Kalhden, for this reason, only took one or two Initiations from Dhardo Rimpoche. And when great Tibetan Lamas came to Kalimpong, unlike the other Tibetans he wouldn't go and take initiation from them – because of Rimpoche's concern that the Dharma should be practiced properly, that everything should be done properly.

### **Concluding: Stories about Dhardo Rimpoche**

So, hearing this, I've used the Four Downfalls, in the end, to talk about Dhardo Rimpoche. I've told a few stories about him. But no wonder Bhante felt he could revere Rimpoche as a living Bodhisattva. And read that book, *Dhardo Rimpoche: A Celebration*, and Suvajra's book. You can really see *why* Bhante felt he could revere Rimpoche as a living Bodhisattva. Bhante would have seen, when he lived in Kalimpong, Rimpoche's continuous, uninterrupted love and compassion; his constant awareness and wisdom. He would have seen it, not just in his teaching of the Dharma, but in his deeds, in the way he lived. And no wonder Bhante wanted to take the Bodhisattva Ordination from Dhardo Rimpoche. And we're all so fortunate, we're all so blessed to have this connection to Rimpoche through Bhante. And we're especially blessed, here at Padmaloka, to have a portion of the Relics of Dhardo Rimpoche. I'm so grateful to Bhante for enshrining the Relics here, and giving us the Relics, if you like, and enshrining the relics in our Stupa. And, at Padmaloka, we all feel a deep and strong connection with Rimpoche, we feel that he's present in some way. A couple of years ago, Jampel and Mrs. Kalhden came here for a visit, and that was a wonderful event, and it

really did seem to seal the connection with us and Rimpoche and his disciples, watching them worship the Stupa.

And sometimes it's almost as if he's teaching us, and the other day we had a teaching from him. It was a particularly dramatic teaching. There were some very high winds a few weeks ago, and we'd tied flags to the top of the Stupa, as we often do, but we hadn't taken them down. And the winds were so strong that they pulled off the top, the whole of the top of the spire off the Stupa. It went crashing down, and broke rather dramatically. And we were all very upset and very disturbed by it. But I was reflecting on this later, and I can remember something that Bhante said about Rimpoche. He talked about Rimpoche's mindfulness. He said this mindfulness, this awareness... that was kind of uncanny, magical. You remember the story that he told about how they ended up at Bodh Gaya on that tour that Bhante and Rimpoche and the prominent Buddhists from Border areas undertook. They didn't know they were going to Bodh Gaya, they thought they were going to a cement works – you know the organization that can sometimes happen in India – they ended up at Bodh Gaya and they had no offerings. There was, in those days, there were no stalls where you could buy offerings, Bodh Gaya wasn't organized like that in those days. So there they were, these prominent Buddhists from border areas, with nothing to offer to the Bodhi Tree. And Bhante looked at Dhardo Rimpoche and saw him pulling out, from his voluminous Tibetan robes, enough candles and incense for everybody to make an offering. So Bhante said he had this kind of mindfulness that just, kind of, looked ahead. Well, the teaching for us was – we weren't aware, we weren't looking ahead. If we'd stopped and looked we would have realized that flags, heavy winds, equals Stupa being broken. So we got a teaching, and it was a great shock to us, and we take it as a teaching from Rimpoche to be more mindful, to be more aware, and to look ahead. If we're gonna be Bodhisattvas, we really do need to have that quality of awareness.

If we never want to fall away from the aspiration to attain Enlightenment for the benefit of all beings, we will need not only constant kindness and compassion, but constant awareness, mindfulness and vigilance. By the way, I'm pleased to say that somebody else did have the mindfulness that looked ahead. Rob Drew, who made the Stupa, had actually hidden at Padmaloka, lumps of stone from the original stone, for just this eventuality. So Rob Drew's got a bit of that mindfulness. Take note, people who know him, especially when you're discussing his Ordination request. The Stupa of Dhardo Rimpoche is a constant reminder of the qualities of a great Bodhisattva. When we worship that Stupa, as we will be doing later on, we do so not only to express our reverence and devotion, we do so also in order to develop the qualities that Rimpoche demonstrated – the qualities, his qualities, in our own lives, the wondrous qualities of the Bodhisattva. May we all, inspired by Dhardo Rimpoche, devote ourselves to the development, to the cultivation of the Bodhicitta, and to following the endless path of the Bodhisattva. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]