

## Harmony in the Sangha

We find ourselves in this life on the border, the border being our own mind. If, with our own mind, we each develop an aspiration for enlightenment, a truly positive orientation toward all sentient beings, then we will create the capacity to find ourselves in the buddhafi elds. But if we develop the expression of our own negative emotions, then we will create a future in the lower realms. Thus, we find ourselves in a critical situation in this lifetime. What I hope for all of you is that you will develop the positive side of your mind, that you will develop an uncritical, loving sense for each other, and trust and confidence in Dharma. Thus, you will be of benefit to yourselves and others. We are all brothers and sisters in Dharma, and it is of utmost importance that we keep our precepts of harmony and trust in each other in the community.

Now a feeling that one might get is a real, true sense of devotion to our spiritual master. We can keep our precepts with our master, but the other students who are around in our community — that's bit too much, that's too hard. We can't maintain harmony with the other people who are around, just with the teacher. This doesn't go; this is not a positive attitude.

The communication of enlightened mind was passed from the Buddha Shakyamuni through an unbroken lineage until us now. In a physical sense, Shakyamuni left the world, but in the sense of understanding, he never left the world because he communicated his understanding. It was communicated through the lineage and, so, the understanding of the guru is still the understanding of Shakyamuni. The communication of Dharma is like my rosary. The bodies are different, like the different beads, but the mind is one, like the string that holds the beads. They stay together because of the keeping of the precepts. You'll notice that when you cut the string of a rosary, the beads fall off. Wherever you cut the string, it doesn't matter where, *all* the beads fall off. That symbolizes that by breaking the faith, breaking your relationship with the community, the lama, or the precepts, there is no longer communication of enlightenment in the world. All the beads fall off, and there is no lineage for you.

A spiritual community like this one here, can be of very great benefit, but perhaps can also be a great danger. All people who make a connection with this community — even if it is making a symbolic offering of one penny — wherever they go in this life and in future lives, will benefit from all the merit created by all the practitioners of Dharma who practice within this community now, and for so long as this community persists. A person who participates in this community reaps great benefit from all the practice carried out by all the members. Even if a person would spend only a month as a participant in this community, they continue to reap great benefits. Infinite benefit is created by a person who participates in this community even if it is only for one hour, even if it is only for one session. If a person finds himself incapable of staying in a community and leaves the community, this is certainly a fault.

If a person should arrive in the community who is of a rough, aggressive demeanor, then one must relate to such a person with care. If such a person of bad demeanor should enter the community, we should not feel that he is not a fit person for our community because he is too aggressive, too violent or too mean. Rather, we should welcome him into our community as a very valued member, a person who will be able to teach us how to be patient, how to be forbearing, a person who will be able to teach us to deal with difficult circumstances and about the reactions in our own minds. We must all gather around and pay special attention to such a person, treating him in such a way that we do not react to his aggressive or rough demeanor. If we do this, and if the person can persevere for even a short time, we will find that the character and demeanor of that person will change by force of their relationship with the community and they will become a person of positive attitude. We must treat all the members of our community with great care, as valued members of the community. Treat all our fellow Buddhists, wherever they might be, with great care. Treat all people, all beings, with care. In such a way, we will not create conflict.

*This is an excerpt from a talk given by H.E. Garchen Rinpoche  
at Riwoche Temple in Toronto, Canada shortly after his arrival in the West,  
Transcription and editing by Khenmo Trinlay.*