

# How to Benefit Animals

## A Collection of Advice from Lama Zopa Rinpoche

### 1) Animal Liberation

I started the tradition of how to liberate animals. The way we do animal liberation causes long life but that alone doesn't ultimately help the animals, so the best thing to do is to circumambulate the animals around holy objects and to bless them with mantras and prayers. So you can carry the animals around a table in the middle of a room with many, many, many holy objects on it piled up, many tsa tsa, pictures of Buddhas, texts, whatever you have and then you take the animals around these holy objects.

One bag can have 1000 animals in it to be liberated, like crickets, worms etc. If you buy bigger animals, whose body are bigger and therefore experiences more suffering when they get killed, then this is also very good.

If there is 1000 statues and holy objects on the table then if you take the animals and insects around once it creates 1000 causes to achieve enlightenment and by the way 1000 causes to achieve liberation from samsara, 1000 causes for good rebirth and happiness in future lives. So each time you go around with the insects it creates that many causes of all those happiness's as well as long life. So if you have one billion insects and they are carried by many people in a container, you are giving enlightenment each time you go around to that many sentient beings. If you have 1000 sentient beings or 100,000 or 10,000 sentient beings then however many holy objects you have (like 100, 1000 or 10,000) then each time you are going around you are giving enlightenment that many times, as well as giving happiness in future lives and good rebirth. So as many holy objects you have then you are creating that many causes of enlightenment.

So that is really fantastic, most amazing benefit that you are offering to sentient beings.

Also this is extremely good for the other sentient beings, who need your help to be saved from being killed for food. Like lobsters who are boiled alive in hot water...can you imagine if that was oneself, how unbelievable the suffering would be, and we would try every single way to get out, but they are trapped and not only that they can't communicate, express. Like yourself, all sentient beings want happiness and no not want suffering, problems or discomfort.

### 2) How the 4 powerful mantras benefit

Also there are skies of benefit create by circumambulating the holy objects with the animals especially if the holy objects contain the 4 powerful mantras (the root mantra, heart mantra near heart mantra).

So the 4 powerful mantras are:

- 1) the most precious heart mantra of Stainless beam,
- 2) the most precious mantra of secret relic,
- 3) the most precious mantra of ornament of enlightenment
- 4) and the very precious root mantra of stainless beam. So even if it contains the heart mantra - you get all the benefits.

Just by circumambulating one time in a holy object, such as a stupa, that has one of these mantra, like the Dharmakaya secret relic mantra, then the negative karmas that you had collected to be born in all the 8 hot hells which would have resulted in experiencing the heavy sufferings gets purified. Just by one time going around or doing prostrations, making offerings to that stupa or holy object that contains these mantra. Also ones negative karma gets purified.

If there is the stainless beam mantra inside the holy object then just one time going around it purifies the 5 unending negative karmas (killing ones mother, killing ones father, killing an Arhant, drawing blood from a Buddha and causing a schism in a sangha community) no question about other karmas, negative karma and non virtues.

If one offers a bell to that stupa that contains these mantras, then any animal or human that hears the sound of the bell are purified of the 5 unending negative karmas. So you can see these mantras have unbelievable power.

In this way any holy objects that contain these 4 powerful mantras creates unbelievable benefit for the animals and then by the way for the people who come there to help carry the animals around, so by the way they get all these benefits. So it liberates both the animal and also the human beings carrying the animals from the lower realms and from samsara and bring them to enlightenment.

As you do animal liberation, circumambulating the holly objects with the bags of animals you should also chant mantras and then bless buckets or jugs filled with water, by chanting mantras and then blowing into the jugs. You can chant Medicine Buddha mantra, Chenrezig mantra, the 5 powerful mantras, Namgyalma mantra, Kunrig mantra, Stainless Beam mantra, etc. any of those mantras but at least Medicine Buddha and Chenrezig Buddha mantra. So chant one mala or more and then blow over the water after each mala. Then this blessed mantra you sprinkle on the animals, the birds, insects, and those animals living in water then you can pour over them and think it purifies their negative karma and liberates them from the lower realms and blesses them and it causes them to have a good rebirth. So that is your greatest gift for these pitiful suffering sentient beings.

Also you can chant prayers like lam rim prayers so that the animals can hear it and in this way it plants the seeds of enlightenment, the whole path to enlightenment so that they can meet Dharma, able to understand the Dharma and then actualize the path up to enlightenment.

So you can see animal liberation is not just a practice of buying animals and releasing them - you need to do practices for the animals, so I personally added these practices to benefit the animals.

### 3) Generally to benefit animals

If you love your animal very much then this is what you must do for them for their good rebirth and quick liberation from samsara.

### 4) When the animal has died or is dying

Recite Chenrezig Buddha mantra and other mantras such as Milarepa mantra and Namgyalma mantra and blow over the body. Blow strongly on the body after each time or you can blow on water, visualizing each deity absorbed into the water; each drop has the power to purify negative karmas. Then pour the water on the animal and think that all their negative karma is purified.

When the animal is dying, you can do the Medicine Buddha practice, visualizing the seven Medicine Buddhas on the crown of the animal, absorbing into the animal. Then you can also do the 35 Buddhas practice, with nectar coming and purifying the negative karma, taking strong refuge to the 35 Buddhas to protect and guide the animal.

### 5) What you can do for your animals in everyday life

It's not enough that you keep the animals and they give you comfort. You must do something of practical benefit for, so this is what you can do everyday:

Take them around holy objects - circumambulate. Everyday you can put on a table many tsa-tsas and statues on a table in your house or in the garden and take the animal around chanting mantras at the same time.

Recite prayers in their ears, verbally, to plant the seed of all the realizations of the path to enlightenment. This makes a huge difference. It has inconceivable result, unbelievable result. That makes them have a good rebirth next life, to be born as a human being and meet the Dharma.

There is a story when the Buddha gave teachings to 500 swans in the field and the next life they were born as human beings, became monks, and they all became Aryan beings, able to achieve the cessation of suffering and the true path. So the result is unbelievable, just by hearing Dharma words. Vasubhandu, Lo.pon Yig.nyen, were reciting one text called the AbhiDharmakosa and a pigeon on the roof heard this everyday. One day the pigeon died and Lo.pon Yig.nyen checked to see where the pigeon had been reborn. It was in a family who lived down below in the valley. He went down and saw the child and asked if he could have him and the family gave him to Lo.pon Yig.nyen. The child became a monk named Lo.pon Lo.den and became an expert on the text which he had heard when he was a pigeon. He wrote four commentaries on that text. Therefore, it's extremely important to recite Lam.Rim prayers and mantras - at least the mantras - to animals.

It's also extremely good before you give them their food, to bless it. If you can't do it at every meal, then you can bless it all at once. Recite the five powerful mantras if you know them and otherwise recite Om Mani Peme Hung, Medicine Buddha and Milarepa mantras. All this has power; it helps anyone who eats it to not get reborn in the lower realms, it blesses their mind and purifies negative karma. If one can, do it every time you feed them - recite the mantras and blow on the food. This is the biggest present you can give them: it causes good rebirth, so they can end samsara, achieve liberation, and the positive imprint of the Mahayana teachings and mantras that leads to enlightenment.

Especially for Buddhists who have animals, when the animals die, it should be different for these animals, for their future rebirth. One should attempt for them to have a special rebirth.

So that's why I asked the people who take care of our dogs at Tushita in Dharamsala. That time it was Tseyang-la, who is a translator at many centers and built the Kopan nunnery, and Maureen, a student from New Zealand who taught at Kopan for quite a number of years and then worked very hard at Tushita, and for me. I asked them to recite the Maitreya Buddha prayer and mantra, the Lama Tsong Khapa praise to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha - Having Found the Realization of Dependent Arising - and other prayers and mantras to the dogs, while holding a biscuit in the hand, so all the dogs wait, it looks like they were listening to the teachings, eyes looking at the biscuit and everyone is humbly sitting, respectfully listening to teachings, all their eyes looking at the biscuit. We gave some of the dogs away, and along with the dogs was the commitment to recite a Lam.Rim prayer or mantras. Some people did it for years. One lady from either the British or Italian Embassy in Delhi, who wasn't a Buddhist, did the Lam.Rim prayer, The Foundation of All Good Qualities, every day for years. Then one day, her maid left the gate open and the dog got lost. She was very upset. That's because she must be a very kind person even though she's not Buddhist; she did that prayer, she must be very sincere.

There's a story about an 80 year old man. After he entered into the Mahayana path, when the time ripened he became enlightened, did perfect works for sentient beings, bringing sentient being to enlightenment. So that means all that perfect work - enlightening all the sentient beings - came from himself being enlightened, and that came from having entered into the Mahayana path. Before that he was an Arhat and actualizing the path to liberation, which started from being a monk. He was able to be a monk because inconceivable eons ago, he was a fly following some cow dung around a stupa, so it became circumambulation - one circumambulation. So all these benefits - being Arhat, being enlightened, and enlightening all sentient beings - all these depended on the small merit by following the smell of cow dung which became circumambulation. So therefore, we should always keep in the mind how precious even one circumambulation is, how precious it is to take the animals around, and there's no question about us human beings intentionally going around, how that has incredible benefit. So therefore, one circumambulation of a holy object - statue or stupa - one must do it; since karma is expandable we shouldn't be careless even with small merit. All this means that each holy object is so powerful and can liberate so many sentient beings from suffering and bring them to enlightenment, and that it causes one to actualize the path. So therefore, even if one can't build a big stupa, even to have a small stupa is unbelievably precious - it brings benefit to you and other sentient beings.

If you have many ants in your house, for example, then of course if you're careless you kill them, but otherwise, with a soft tissue paper or soft cotton or broom or feather, pick them up and put them in a plastic bag and put some food in it. Put something they like, something they're excited about or fascinated by and then close the bag and take it around the stupa or holy objects as many times as you can to liberate them from lower rebirth and to achieve liberation and enlightenment. Then you put them outside, releasing them by opening the plastic bag, or shake it on the ground with the food. The only way you can help ants and other insects is only if they come into your house, in your kitchen, in your room. Otherwise, there's no way to benefit in this way. So this is a very good way, an excellent opportunity, to benefit the ants in addition to making charity by giving them food. If you take them around the stupa or holy objects, then there's Dharma charity, and charity of fearlessness. By purifying their minds, you're saving them from suffering. Also for dogs and cats, blessing the food with mantras is not only miscellaneous charity, but also becomes Dharma charity, charity of fearlessness, and charity of loving kindness because you have the intention to cause them happiness. So here you can practice all the four types of charity.

## 6) Why holy objects benefit

These holy objects help other sentient beings easily to purify inconceivable negative karma and create the causes of happiness, merit and extensive happiness, which definitely brings them to enlightenment quickly. Because it makes them create extensive merit, allowing them quickly to realize the path, it also helps them to improve their life very soon; from a very difficult life with many problems - business problems, relationship problems and many other things - to an easy life, having perfect enjoyments, external and inner prosperity at the same time, realizations of the path and a very happy, peaceful, inspiring death.

Even if you teach Dharma to sentient beings, not everyone comes to listen; some are not interested, some are children and some are old people and so cannot come. If you make holy objects, not only inside but especially outside in public places then everyone can see, believers and non-believers, everybody gets so much benefit as Buddha explained in the quotations above. Because of the power of the holy object it doesn't require deep devotion or faith to gain all these benefits.

If you find it hard to understand this, think how the atom has the power to destroy the world and yet can benefit so many people. For example by creating power for electricity millions of people in a city can have comfort, enjoyments and easy living from the atom. In all the different countries in this world so many people benefit from electricity, so many houses use it. A seed has power in a similar way, its own purpose and function. If you plant, say, a juniper seed, from it comes this huge tree with many branches and leaves, intricate designs and shapes, every tiny detail comes from that seed; you can see how the seed has power.

If you look at other examples, other phenomena like holy objects have unbelievable power from which you collect limitless skies of merit, achieve all happiness, all the temporal samsaric pleasures and ultimate happiness: liberation and enlightenment. Even if you don't

know or cannot teach Dharma, if you build these holy objects then not only in this life but after this life, wherever you are in the six realms, for however many years this holy object lasts, every day it liberates sentient beings from the lower realms and samsara, by planting the seeds of liberation and enlightenment and purifying their minds, helping them to create merit.

From the Sutra Essence of Earth:

*While there are the three rare sublime ones  
Fulfilling the hopes without any effort  
Like the unimaginable wish-granting tree and wish-granting jewel;  
[But] believing the method to achieve happiness is something else*

*All the activities one attempts become only negative karma  
And this precious human rebirth with qualified freedoms and richnesses,  
Which is rarer than a wish-granting jewel, becomes meaningless and empty;  
It becomes only a cause of harm;  
This is more foolish than an animal.*

*Friend, by realizing this body, this life is like a water bubble  
And material enjoyments like the dew on the tip of the grass  
Attempt the white (virtuous) actions, offer to the three rare sublime ones (Buddha Dharma,  
Sangha)  
And take the essence from this essenceless body and possessions.*

*Due to this merit may I and each and every sentient being respect  
And make offerings to the three rare sublime ones;  
By the happiness of the joyful occasion of listening, reflecting, meditating and practicing  
May all the transmigratory beings' wishes be completely fulfilled.*

*As was advised by our kind compassionate Buddha:  
All the happiness and comfort which are in the world  
Arise from offering to the three rare sublime ones (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha).  
Therefore if one wishes happiness and comfort  
Attempt to make offerings to the three rare sublime ones.*

From the Sutra Requested by Victorious Wisdom:

*Because you wish to achieve all the qualities, especially the exalted qualities,  
All the realizations of the path to enlightenment  
(Not just the ordinary good qualities known in the world),  
And especially all the exalted qualities, the realizations of the path  
You must make offerings to the three rare sublime ones.*

Peace and happiness for oneself and the world are not independent, do not exist from their own side, they are dependent-arising, depending on causes and conditions. The causes: the great virtuous thoughts, non-ignorance, non-anger, non-attachment, the good heart,

compassion, loving kindness, non-self-centered mind and so forth. Actions motivated by these pure attitudes become virtuous and the cause of happiness. Holy objects such as statues, stupas and scriptures of the Buddha become support for that condition, for peace and happiness for oneself, for others and the world.

The moment holy objects such as statues of Buddha are completed on a rock, painted on paper with a brush and colors, taken with a camera or printed on paper from the negative with chemicals etc.; the moment a holy object materializes it becomes a field of merit, like a field of crops, for sentient beings. It becomes only a cause for them to achieve happiness. For example if you plant chili you get chili fruit; you won't get raisins from a chili plant. Each fruit has to come from its own cause; in the same way only merit is the cause of temporal and ultimate happiness.

Generally for an action to become virtuous and the cause of happiness the activity needs to be motivated by a virtuous mind, unstained by ignorance, anger or attachment – only then does the action become virtuous. So first you need to put a lot of effort into making the attitude pure so that the actions of daily life such as working, eating, sitting, walking, sleeping etc. become virtuous.

With holy objects such as statues, stupas and scriptures you do not have to have a mind unstained by anger, ignorance or attachment to create merit. For human beings or even animals, simply seeing the holy object becomes the cause to achieve inconceivable awakening and enlightenment by purifying so many defilements. The special advantage is that just by their existence these holy objects make it easy for us ordinary living beings to create merit.

It is explained by Buddha in the Sutra of the Mudra of Developing the Power of Devotion:

*The minute you see a holy object you create infinite merits,  
So no question, if you actually make prostrations,  
Offerings and so forth, you create far greater merit.*

In the White Lotus Sutra it says:

*Even just making one sound, or a cymbal offering  
Even just offering one single flower  
To the form of one who has gone to bliss (buddha) on a stone wall,  
Even if they make the offering with an angry attitude  
Those living beings will gradually see ten million buddhas.*

*Anyone who puts their palms together completely,  
Or with one palm or just one time bows down in respect  
To a stupa which contains relics, even with a distracted mind (without virtue)  
Verbally saying "I prostrate to the Buddha" just one or a few times –  
All those beings will achieve supreme enlightenment.*

The infinite benefits of seeing, circumambulating and making offerings to holy objects even with an impure attitude of total non-virtue are explained in the texts. Holy objects simply existing in the world make it unbelievably easy for us sentient beings in this world now and those from other universes who will be born in this world to purify the obstacles to happiness, peace and realizations on the path, and to achieve liberation and enlightenment – so easy for us to create the causal merit. Only then can we change the distracted negative emotional thoughts, the ignorant nature of the mind that harms us and the world.

By having a happy, contented and satisfied mind one is able to develop wisdom to eliminate suffering for oneself and others; by having a happy, peaceful mind, patience and a loving heart towards everyone, one stops harming oneself and others and is able to only benefit everyone, bringing peace, happiness and compassion, the whole path to enlightenment. One is able to do perfect works to liberate and enlighten numberless other beings, who are devoid of happiness and who are constantly suffering.

So now you can see the importance of holy objects, how they will illuminate the world and bring inconceivable peace and happiness; and how building these holy objects prevents destruction, of which so much is happening in the world, including war.

Buddha said in the Sutra Requested by King Salgyal:

*However many atoms there are in the stupa  
And in the statue of the destroyer of the qualified gone-beyond one (Buddha),  
The person who built this will definitely achieve kings' reign  
In deva and human realms equaling that number of atoms;  
Will achieve the concentration of the form and formless realm (based on shamatha)  
By completing the experience of all the perfect deeds  
And the ultimate state of enlightenment:  
That which is devoid of suffering of rebirth, old age and so forth.*

From the 27th chapter of the Guhyasamaja Root Tantra:

*How incredibly wonderful it is to complete  
The three holy objects of the one gone to bliss,  
The three kayas; victorious peaceful, wrathful and secret one.  
As long as these holy objects exist the Buddha's teaching will flourish:  
It tames all the transmigratory beings,  
Purifies the countless obscurations, completes the perfect merit.  
Everyone who sponsors the building of these holy objects  
Will have increased long life and auspiciousness in this and future lives,  
They will achieve the pure land (of Buddha) and the country will be auspicious.  
This imminent, sublime, complete method  
Is the only means for the teachings (Buddhism) to last in this world.  
Take this voluntarily; it will accomplish your wishes.*

Here it explains that the teachings of Buddha are the only medicine healing sentient beings' suffering and its causes: delusions and karma; it depends on the existence of holy objects such as statues, stupas and scriptures of Buddha.

From the root text of Manjugosha:

Manjrushri said to Buddha:

*“At the moment, the object for sentient beings to make offerings and collect merit is you. After you pass away what can they do? Please give advice.”*

Then Buddha said:

*“There is not the slightest difference if my four surrounding beings (getsul, getsulma, gelong, gelongma) make offerings to me now or make offerings to my statues (in the future). It is equal in merit and ripening aspect (result).*

*That is due to the blessings of the Buddha.*

*Undeveloped (ordinary) beings don't know this and that is why there are no Buddha statues in their world.*

*Where are there no statues?*

*In the outlying barbarian countries and where the teachings of the Buddha have degenerated (stopped). Therefore non-Buddhists and animals do not see Buddha statues.*

*Therefore the statue is a manifestation of Buddha.*

Here you can see that the statue is a manifestation of the Buddha. Even if you meet the actual Buddha, do prostrations or make offerings, the merit and result are not greater than circumambulating, prostrating, making offerings or offering service to a holy representation of Buddha. This is very exciting. The best way you can use and enjoy your life is by supporting the building of holy objects.

It is only one time that one is able to meet the Three Rare Sublime Ones;

It is extremely difficult to see them for hundreds and thousands of eons.

Besides seeing, it is difficult to even hear the holy name for hundred and thousands of eons.

With every talent and effort of the capable (human) being

Actually attempt to make offerings all the time to your wish-fulfilling jewel;

The guru, rare sublime one, is the tip of the banner of devotion and respect.

Attempt the method to completely fulfill all the temporal and ultimate wishes of sentient beings

From whom unceasing enjoyments, peace and happiness come (one receives).

This is the condensed benefit of what is achieved by making holy objects. It includes the donors, artists and anyone who is involved in the building of holy objects. You can see clearly that the bigger the holy object, the more atoms there are and thus the more merit. When you make a holy object of expensive material like jade, you collect far greater merit than making a statue with mud or plastic.

In terms of the benefit of holy objects that are not even filled with mantras and consecrated; there are still incredible benefits the moment the holy object is actualized.

The following are some examples of the power of holy objects.

There was one leaf that had seven insects on it. It was blown by the wind and circumambulated three times a Vairochana statue that was near the ocean. Then the insects died. They were reborn as seven lower caste girls then, in their next life, they were reborn as seven daughters of King Titi. They made offerings to Kasyapa Buddha and received prediction of their enlightenment.

This shows how karma works. Another example:

A pig was being chased by a dog. Somehow they ran around a stupa, so that became a circumambulation. Then the pig died and was reborn in Tushita Pure Land.

Many animals cannot hear mantras but all they have to do to liberate themselves is circumambulate a holy object, even without the motivation - that is all. There are inconceivable benefits of stupas and specifically of the four Dharmakaya relic mantras. The benefits of these mantras are unbelievable. Just by seeing, hearing, touching or thinking about any holy object that has the four Dharmakaya relic mantras inside, one can be liberated from all the negative karma and sufferings.

We have many insects inside the retreat house in Washington (Buddha Amitabha Pure Land) so every day we catch as many as possible in large jars that have ventilation and space. We separate the various kinds of insects into different jars so they do not fight or frighten each other. We have a large altar that is full of holy objects, the relics of Buddha and many other relics, many photos and images of Buddhas, as many tsas as possible, as well as many stupas filled with the four Dharmakaya relic mantras. So we circumambulate, running as fast as possible so that we are able to do as many circumambulations as we can, with the jars full of insects. Then we release them outside.

What is happening to those insects is exactly like the stories above. It is incredible how fast it will purify them; even their present life will get better and better. This is what happens when you take insects around holy objects: it directs their life towards enlightenment. You can see this from the stories. It means as we circumambulate with them we will give them all the body of a happy transmigrator in their next life, a happy rebirth. Not only that, but we give them the opportunity to practice Dharma in their next life, which is the most important thing, to have a better rebirth to be able to accomplish the path, cease the defilements and achieve enlightenment.

This is an incredible gift to them from us, it repays their kindness. They have been our mother numberless times and because of their kindness we have been able to practice Dharma. As our mothers they protected our lives from hardships and dangers every day, they bore so many hardships for us. All our present happiness, as well as all our previous and future happiness, all the realizations of the path up to enlightenment - these insects are the source of that.

For these reasons I asked for a stupa to be built in my house in California (Kachoe Dechen Ling). Now there is an extremely beautiful stupa that is filled and covered with so many tsa.tsas. The stupa is filled with the four Dharmakaya relic mantras. These give the most power to purify and collect the most extensive merit.

The idea to build the stupa came because Venerable Roger wanted to have a dog, so we got a dog from somebody who could no longer keep theirs and if they couldn't find a home probably she would have been put down. The dog is called om mani padme hung.

## 7) Giving animals Dharma names

If you have a pet it is very good to give it a Dharma name rather than giving it a useless name that has no benefit for the animal. If you give your pet a Dharma name, such as names of the path to enlightenment (renunciation, bodhicitta, emptiness – they can be in English, Tibetan or Sanskrit) it leaves a positive imprint on the mind of the animal.

So we called the dog in Kachoe Dechen Ling om mani padme hung. Each time she hears her name it plants the seed for the whole path to enlightenment, it leaves a positive imprint on her mind. Also, it creates the cause for her to understand all the 84,000 teachings of Buddha because they are contained in om mani padme hung: the two truths, the path of method and wisdom and the goal, Dharmakaya and rupakaya. Each time we call her name it leaves a positive imprint for her to be able to hear the whole sutra and tantra, the complete extensive teachings of Buddha. This is incredible; definitely each time she hears her name it brings her closer to enlightenment. This is such an easy way to benefit animals and to bring them closer to enlightenment so we must do it, we must attempt every single way to benefit them. We must do it for others, to quickly liberate them from samsara, which is only in the nature of suffering and which has no beginning, which is continuous.

Understanding the incredible benefits just of naming your pets, it is very silly and foolish if you don't do even this. It's such an easy way to benefit them, even if you don't do bigger things like building a stupa to benefit the sentient beings living with you. What you can easily do is take them around holy objects, chant mantras, read lam rim prayers that contain the whole path, the Heart Sutra, Diamond Cutter Sutra, Sutra of Golden Light, Arya Sangatasutra, and chant powerful mantras as much as possible. There are so many practices you can recite next to them as well as many other things you can do, but if you can't do these then an easy one is giving them a Dharma name that will benefit them very much.

During Choden Rinpoche's teachings at Vajrapani a few years ago Rinpoche said that Lama Atisha called animals sangpo, which means "good-hearted." Probably he is not saying: I am good-hearted, but as Lama Atisha has bodhichitta maybe he is saying that his bodhichitta came from them. Lama Atisha gave teachings to numberless sentient beings, liberating them from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bringing them to enlightenment. As all this was received from these animals, from their kind heart, the reason Lama Atisha calls them sangpo is that he is naming the result on the cause. Sometimes he may have called them triche, which means "kind one." This is maybe to benefit one's own mind,

referring to all animals as “kind one”, remembering how all one’s happiness comes from them.

The stupa that was built at Kachoe Dechen Ling was mainly for om mani padme hung. I thought if we have a dog then we need a stupa so that the dog can circumambulate it every day. I asked Brian Halterman to build the stupa – I gave a rough design and he did it very beautifully.

Now as we have the stupa we also have three or four animal liberation practices every month, on the Tibetan 8th, 15th and 30th and on all Wheel Turning days. We buy worms, insects etc. and circumambulate them around the stupa as many times as possible; we chant mantras and blow on water which we then sprinkle on them and then we liberate them - those from the water into water, those from the ground into the ground.

As we have many, many copies of the four Dharmakaya relic mantras inside the stupa, just one circumambulation purifies the negative karma to be reincarnated in the eight hot hells:

- 1) reviving hell
- 2) black line hell
- 3) crushing hell
- 4) howling hell
- 5) loud howling hell
- 6) hot hell
- 7) extremely hot hell
- 8) hell of unceasing torment (avici hell).

In each successive hell the suffering is heavier. With one circumambulation all the heavy, negative karma gets completely purified and their lives get directed towards enlightenment.

If you have a thousand insects and worms in bags and you circumambulate them around the stupa three times not only will you liberate them from the lower realms, but also they will create the cause of enlightenment. Those circumambulations become the cause of their enlightenment, for them to achieve liberation from samsara, to have a good rebirth in their next life - so each time you circumambulate them you are giving all those thousands of insects and worms enlightenment, liberation and good rebirth. Also there is not just one stupa but many and each stupa has very many of the four Dharmakaya relic mantras inside, so however many mantras and many stupas there are, with each circumambulation you are giving that many causes of enlightenment, liberation from samsara, happiness of future lives to however many insects you have – you are creating the cause for their unbelievably, unbelievably unbelievable purification and for them to collect merit and by the way also for yourself, no question.

In the same way, when you bring people around the stupa you are liberating human beings. When you educate people about the benefits of the four Dharmakaya relic mantras and of holy objects, you are causing that sentient being to be inspired to build a stupa or to make circumambulations, prostrations and offerings. You are inspiring people to purify and to collect unimaginable merits.

By actually building a stupa or statue, without words you are continually liberating so many sentient beings – every day, anybody who sees, touches (including insects that touch the stupa), remembers, talks or dreams about the stupa plants the seed of enlightenment and purifies. The stupa is meaningful to behold so it liberates many sentient beings, insects and humans, every day. When the wind touches a stupa (especially if the stupa has the four Dharmakaya relic mantras inside), the wind becomes blessed and then wherever it goes and whoever it touches it liberates from the lower realms, by purifying their negative karma. When the rain falls on the stupa, that running water liberates any being it touches, all the worms in the ground etc., from the lower realms. It is similar with dust.

If you build stupas or statues to inspire people, without even teaching Dharma, for however many hundreds and billions of years the holy object lasts, it continues to liberate many sentient beings every day, freeing them from the lower realms, causing them to actualize the path liberating them from samsara and bringing them to enlightenment. Even if after you die you are in another universe, in the hell realms or a pure land, wherever you are the stupa or statue that you built is continually benefiting sentient beings. It is incredible how you can continually benefit sentient beings by having built a stupa.

One student said that even to be an insect that gets carried around a stupa would depend on having previously created good karma. I replied that even a virtuous action depends on having created the karma before, it is a virtuous imprint ripened.

The student mentioned that the dog that we looked after for a week, which I named Jangsem, must have been very lucky. We found this small Lhasa Apso dog lost in the local Wal-Mart parking lot; we rang all the pounds, dog shelters, radio station and even the police to let the owner know that we had found a lost dog. A week later the owner contacted us. The day Jangsem was due to leave we took him around the stupas, Buddha relics and other great lamas' relics, as well as the Kangyur, Tengyur and Prajnaparamita texts. We circumambulated with Jangsem many, many times and I said Jangsem is probably the luckiest dog in the whole of Washington.

When Jangsem first arrived in the house I recited many mantras and practices for Jangsem to meet Lama Tsong Khapa's teachings; also I recited Maitreya Buddha mantra, which has the power to cause one not to be reborn in the lower realms and to receive a perfect rebirth.

*Colophon: Transcribed mostly by Ven Holly Ansett, compiled from various teachings from Rinpoche given mostly in 2004. Lightly edited by Ven Thubten Labdron and Ven Holly Ansett.*