

# THE BHIKSHU VOWS

A Teaching Given by the Venerable Geshe Rabten Rinpoche

Translated by *gelong* Jhampa Kelsang

## HOMAGE TO MANJUSHRI!

Nowadays in a number of western countries you will find *gelongs* here and there. They think that they are practicing *gelongs*, thinking, "I am a *gelong*, I am a *gelong*," but many of them do not know what their commitments are. They do not know what is to be avoided and what is to be followed. They do not know what their practice is.

Not knowing that they do not know when they are committing downfalls and when they are not. So, having become a *gelong*, it is of extreme importance to know, to check up, to make investigation, to find out exactly what is to be abandoned, what is to be followed, and then to follow it. Without doing that, without even knowing what is involved in being a *gelong*, and just taking the vows and living like a pig, then this has many disadvantages and it would probably be better not to become a monk in that case. So now that we have become monks it is of extreme importance to know what has to be done,

In the *sutras* it says that for some, spiritual discipline (*sila*) is joyous and for others miserable. The reason for this is that having taken a certain number of precepts, then if one knows what these are, investigates them, and follows them as well as one is able, then the result of this, from life to life in the future, is that it leads to greater and greater joy. Whereas if one simply becomes a *gelong* because one likes the name, thinking it a nice title, but does not even know what is involved and just acts on that basis, without knowing when you are committing downfalls and when you are not, then for all of the lives in the future you just go from misery to misery. So in this way the vows are—for some joyous, and for others miserable.

There are three baskets or collections of teachings (*tripitika*), and of these three, the most important is the *vinaya*. The reason for that is that the *vinaya* teachings show the very, very exact nature of cause and effect, and it is necessary to know this in order to live in accordance with it. If one doesn't know this and lives accordingly, contrary to cause and effect, then one falls into the lower realms. So it is especially these *vinaya* teachings that prevent you from falling into the lower realms.

Preceding any teaching on the *vinaya* it says:

## HOMAGE TO THE OMNISCIENT ONE!

The reason for this is that the *vinaya* teachings, the subtle relationship between cause and effect, can only be understood by an Omniscient One, a buddha. In general there are seventeen "bases for practice" for a *gelong*; of these, three are most important. One is *sojong* (confession), one is the taking of the summer Rains Retreat, and the third is the Release from that retreat. These are the three most important things which act as a basis for one's practice, one's precepts, which is to cultivate everything that is in harmony with one's precepts and to eliminate everything that is out of harmony with one's precepts.

So as you have heard but probably not understood, during the *sojong* there comes a point when Rinpoche recites from the *sutras*, as Buddha himself spoke in the time of *sojong*, when He Himself was directing it, saying to the Hearer *sangha*, the *gelongs*, "You *gelongs*, you are ones who have very little interests and few activities. You have very few things to do and

there is really nothing that should occupy your minds or bodies except for the Dharma. This is in contrast with the lifestyle of a householder.”

So we have very few concerns and few activities. And what is the most important activity, the first one we have? *Sojong*.

There is nothing more important for a *gelong* than to attend and follow the practice of *sojong*. So at the beginning of *sojong* Rinpoche recites this and then he says “And this being the case, have all the monks collected?” This is asked and then if there is someone missing, then someone is sent to go and ask this missing person why he has not attended. His reply is then brought back to the monks at *sojong*, and then this is told to the *sangha*. So although these details of the *sojong* do not come in the set of vows, because it is so very important, Geshe Rinpoche wanted to say these few words.

At the beginning of *sojong* there are offered three prostrations and then not long after that we say the prayer འདྲུལ་བ་རྒྱ་མཚོ་, and then there is something we repeat three times. That

first recitation (done three times), the point of this is that during the two weeks preceding that *sojong* we have committed many downfalls and other faults, and the ones that we have not disclosed or proclaimed to other people, but have just hidden in our own minds, kind of suppressed them, then these at this time are brought to the surface, like shaking a blanket to make the dust come out. So this first repetition is to bring these hidden faults up in the mind. So when we begin the second threefold recitation, which is very similar, this is the actual purification of these downfalls that have occurred. The third threefold recitation is called the blessing of the downfalls. So what this is all for? In the first recitation we bring the downfalls up in the mind, in the second we sweep them out, and in the third we are asking for a blessing on the downfalls that we have forgotten, which were not made to manifest in the mind. So we are asking for a blessing that any potential is removed from them. Without this kind of preliminary, the *sojong* would not be correctly done.

Then we all sit down and recite the prayer written by Je Rinpoche called “Praise of Buddha Shakyamuni.” If you read this you will find that it is a very beautiful piece of poetry. We offer this at this time because the one who has given us this *vinaya* is the Buddha. So this praise is offered to Him. After that we recite the Heart *sutra*. The reason for this is that there can arise certain hindrances or obstacles for the disclosure and confession of the downfalls. So in order to dispel these we recite the Heart *sutra* which is the supreme means of doing this, on the one hand, in order to be able to confess these downfalls, and then in order for the hindrances to be eliminated.

The next part of the *sojong* is the making of offerings. They are made to four kinds of beings:

1. the Three Jewels of Refuge,
2. the Yidams,
3. the Buddhas and *bodhisattvas*, and
4. the Twelve Guardians (who were particular guardians of Tibet).

This is done for the accumulation of merit. The recitation of the Heart *sutra* was done for the accumulation of ‘mental merit;’ the offerings are done for the accumulation of ‘physical’ merit.

So next the senior *gelong* asks Geshe Rinpoche to recite the Pratimoksha Sutra and another one called “The Sutra Proclaiming The Dharma”. However Geshe Rinpoche does not reply immediately. He first says “Let us now all offer prostrations to the Buddha.” We all do this together, and then only after that does he reverently mount the throne and begin to recite the *sutras*. In the first one recited—“The *sutra* Proclaiming The Dharma”—the benefits of pure *sila* and the disadvantages of poor *sila* are accounted. It then goes on to describe the present opportunity of having gained a Precious Human Rebirth, meeting the Dharma, and

coming into contact with a Perfect Guru. Then it explains how important it is to practice now, how this life is very short, how death is rapidly approaching, and also how the deterioration of the teachings is approaching.

Previous to that there was a general confession recited (just after the Heart *sutra*), which is an excellent method for purifying the mind from harmful imprints. After this last point then the Getsuls all have to leave.

So you should understand that up to this point and on a bit further is only the actual preliminary for the true *sojong*. It is possible that after the Getsuls have left that the *gelongs* have picked up some more downfalls, and so to purify these another blessing is given.

Then there comes a purification, blessing of the actual abode of *sojong*. The reason for this is that in the recitation there comes a statement saying that our abode of *sojong* goes from this point to that point, from that wall to that wall (Geshe gestures), and it does not go further than that. Obviously the Getsuls have been put beyond that point because they are no longer any part of the *sojong*. Then if a layman or similar should come into this abode of *sojong*, then this is incorrect. After this is done, the Abbot says first the Sanskrit and then the Tibetan name of the Pratimoksha Sutra. Then all pay homage to the Omniscient One, and the Rinpoche goes on to recite the whole Pratimoksha Sutra. During this recitation, if you understand what is being said, it should be listened to very carefully and you should contemplate the meaning. Even if one is unable to understand the meaning still you should pay heed and be respectful. So that part right there, that recitation of the Pratimoksha Sutra, that is the actual *sojong*.

This is an extremely brief explanation of the *sojong*, but later if the opportunity occurs then Geshe Rinpoche will teach us the entire process of *sojong*, with much more elaboration. In any case now we have understood it roughly, this should be kept in mind and we should practice the recitations so that we are able to do this fluently and know what is happening, to be able to follow it mentally. If we do not follow the process then we do not really know what is being said, or why it is being said, we do not know what is happening at all. If we just go in and swing our heads around then it loses some of the meaning. However, even if one does not recite orally from the *sojong*, the Confession, if one has not memorized them but is still thinking, now this is happening, now that and so on, and even if one has not been able to memorize the Pratimoksha Sutra, if one listens with an attentive mind then this is enough, this is sufficient, this is qualified as attendance of *sojong*; it is not the equivalent of not going at all, it is certainly better than nothing.

So nowadays, as Geshe Rinpoche was mentioning, there are centers in England and France where you have an individual *gelong* here or there saying "I'm a *gelong*, I'm a *gelong*," but they do not really know what the *gelong* vows are. They do not know what is entailed in being a *gelong*, they just have this name. What this really is, is an object of compassion. It is terribly unfortunate. So we have the opportunity to understand what is involved in being a *gelong*, to know the vows and so on. So this needs to be remembered, understood and followed. This has to be done for ourselves, it is not like you can just sit there and someone else will do it for you, like making a tormo for you. If we were tormas, if we were like tsampa, then Geshe Rinpoche could make our practice, and he could make it very nice, a little bit here a bit there and so on, he could put it together like that. But since we are people it is more difficult!

So although there are many commitments and practices for a *gelong* to follow, these can be synthesized into 253, and for the *bhikshuni* the number of vows was 364. However the lineage of the *bhikshuni* vows has been broken and so there are not any *bhikshunis* living these days and have not been for hundreds of years, although there are some people who think there are, but Geshe Rinpoche says that this is just their own trip. Actually if there were still existing *bhikshuni* vows then among the thousands of nuns in Tibet there would have been many who would have gladly received this vow and His Holiness would have found out

where such a lineage still existed and he would have delightedly sent nuns there to receive this precious lineage. So for the nuns there is nothing more than the novice vows.

The first classification of the precepts of a *gelong* are the heaviest; these are called the བཏོག་པ་ (pen pa), which means defeat. They are called defeats because they cut the strength of a *gelong* vow. They cause them to degenerate. The reason for calling these defeats is that if two people are fighting and one loses, he is defeated. And so in the same way if we should commit one of these defeats it is like the precepts defeat us and we are the defeated.

## THE FOUR DEFEATS

There are four defeats:

1. sexual intercourse.
2. taking that which is not given.
3. taking human life.
4. a specific type of lying

### (1) Sexual intercourse

This defeat occurs when one has sexual intercourse with either a human or a non-human, e.g., an animal. The way the actual defeat occurs is: first there arises lust/attachment/desire in the mind to engage in the act, then it involves one of the three pathways of the opposite sex, this other being. These three pathways are, for a female, the mouth, the anus, and the sexual organ. So if one's male organ enters any of these three pathways, then as soon as there arises the physical pleasure from just the motion or activation of the semen, this defeat is incurred.

During the time of the Buddha there were some *bhikshus* who thought a defeat would occur only if sexual intercourse was carried out with a human being, but that it would not if it were carried out with an animal. They acted upon that attitude and then the Buddha told them that they were committing a defeat by acting in this way. Also some other *gelongs*, not knowing exactly what was involved in this defeat, thought there would be no defeat if intercourse were carried out with a corpse. So they did this, with just half a corpse even. They wanted to keep the *vinaya*, they wanted to keep their vows, but they did not know how. So the Buddha explained that the vow included corpses, either half or whole, and that a defeat was incurred when any of the three pathways were entered.

### (2) Taking that which is not given

This excludes two cases:

- the first is that if some person has said that this food is for you, and he then sets it out, and then you come along and take as much as you like, there is no downfall.
- the second is taking that which others have discarded, that have been thrown away, not wanted anymore.

So these two do not constitute a downfall. But now for other things, things that are not one's own and belong to another person. If there arises the motivation "I would like to steal that, I would like to take that for myself," and then having this motivation one goes out and takes it or sends someone else to do it, then as soon as the thought or attitude arises, "Now it is mine, now I have got it," this defeat takes place. So this defeat occurs whether one acts directly or indirectly. In order for this defeat to occur it does not mean you have to wear a mask, hold a revolver, and generally carry on like a thief, holding somebody up—like that. It also occurs if one should rob someone openly, to their face, snatching something from them by force perhaps. There is also a third way of stealing, and that is through deceit or trickery, lying or deceiving other people in order to get something from them. So in each of these three ways this defeat can occur.

### (3) Killing

This involves killing a person<sup>1</sup> or one who is to become a person. A person is defined as one who has come from a womb—a human—or one who is still in the womb when the head and limbs have already formed—a human fetus. This is called a person, and this is what is created when the male and female elements come together and the consciousness enters that mixture. In either case of killing, one should have the motivation “I would like to put an end to, to cut the life of this being,” and with that motivation to commit the act, either oneself or causing someone else to do it. Like saying to another person, “Please give this person poison, please shoot this person.” In either case, if the individual dies before oneself, then this defeat occurs.

There are many ways in which one is able to kill someone, e.g. amongst those who think of themselves as practicing Dharma, there are some who use a certain kind of mantra, very violent mantras that can be used to kill a person. So one could apply these mantras and thus take the life of another being, and although one may have that the feeling that one is a great Tantric Master, what has occurred is simply a defeat.

Question: What happens if the person committing the act dies before the victim? Is the effect different or changed? And if this is so, then why is it?

Answer: There is a difference. For example, if one gives some slow-acting poison to someone else, obviously with the intent to kill him or her, and then in the meantime one dies, and later this other person dies, then if one asks, “What is the time that the person was killed and the defeat incurred?” it would obviously be at the time that the victim died. If the person doing the killing had already died and had taken birth as a bug, or something similar, then it cannot be said that that this bug killed that person because it certainly did not. So there would not be anyone who was responsible, because the person who set out to do the killing is no longer existent.

### (4) Lying

This refers only to a specific kind of lying. Not all kinds of lying result in this defeat. This defeat specifically refers to lying about one’s attainments. For example, if one should be lacking the attainments of Samadhi, Samatha, clairvoyance and one should tell otherwise. Or if one should claim to be the incarnation of this or that particular Lama when one obviously is not, as soon as such a false statement is made about one’s attainments and another person hears it, then this defeat occurs. This act of lying does not even have to be a verbal action; e.g. if one is a Guru and one’s disciples are saying “It really seems as though you have great clairvoyance,” and one does not say anything, one just sits there silently agreeing, giving the impression that one is agreeing, or just giving a knowing smile or laugh, then this defeat would occur. If one is just joking about one’s insight and others accept it as a joke, then the defeat does not occur; there still occurs a sort of downfall, however, but not a defeat.

However, if you are playing around and the other person is not aware of this, it would not be a defeat, but a downfall, which is only just below a defeat and therefore still very heavy. The only kind of results that come from a defeat are suffering, and so if you should try and describe the virtues of committing one of these defeats, there is really nothing to say.

There are two kinds of downfall. The first is called a natural, i.e. it is such that whoever commits it, whether with or without vows, whoever is engaging in it, when he does something that is unwholesome, that leaves an evil imprint on the mind. This is called a natural evil act.

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<sup>1</sup> ལྷོས་ལུ་

**Question:** If someone borrows something with the intention of returning it when one has finished, but fails to ask the person for it if he is not around at the time one needs it, is that considered as stealing, having the intention to give it back, but not specifically asking for it?

**Answer:** It would not be a defeat because one does not have the intention to keep it forever. However, a downfall would still occur although it would be one of the less heavy ones.

So Geshe is not teaching us this so that we can become learned, have great knowledge of the *vinaya*. This is entirely in order to be put into practice. For example other things like compassion, Bodhicitta: if we can put these into practice and meditate on them, then this is excellent, but if one cannot, then the result is not[*sic*] going to the lower realms. But now that we have the *vinaya*, the result of not practicing this ... very difficult! So this is something that simply must be practiced; there is no way we can avoid practicing it. So the Buddha told the *gelongs* that they were to have few concerns, few activities and few desires. Which would leave them content with just a few things, clothing and so on. Whereas if they had a lot of desires they would always be getting this and that for themselves, acquiring many things. So Buddha said that there are thirteen things, specific articles to have, and these are sufficient.

## THE THIRTEEN REMAINDERS

The next set of downfalls for the *gelong* are called ལྷན་མི་, which means ‘remainder’ or ‘sediment’. This is implying that having committed one of these 13, there still remains a little bit of the vow in the mind stream which can then be restored, which is done by openly going to the *sangha* and confessing. There are many things for the *sangha* to do. The offending monk can be taken from his position in the *sangha* (seniority position that is) and put to the bottom of it, there being many mean tasks he would have to perform. Then after a period of time he comes again before the *sangha* and the vow is purified. So what this is implying is that he still has the vow, that there is something left to purify. Whereas with a defeat there is nothing remaining, there is nothing to restore, the vow has completely degenerated.

### 1. Intentional emission of semen.

With the motivation of having the pleasure of seminal activation, if one touches one’s body in some way that causes the semen to be activated, this remainder is committed. The semen does not have to be emitted, as soon as there arises some intentional pleasure from the motion of the semen then this remainder occurs.

### 2. Having contact with a woman’s body

This occurs by first having a motivation of lust for the body of the woman. Then if with one’s hand one caresses the arm or some part of the flesh, or not even the flesh, just the hair. Then as soon as pleasure arises from that contact, this downfall occurs. This remainder also includes contact with a woman’s clothing, provided it is being worn at the time.

Geshe Rinpoche says that the time has come for speaking straightforwardly and with honesty. Here in the west there is no sense of shame as regards physical or sexual contact among the sexes. Since this is the general attitude—that people are all over each others’ bodies with little or no restraint, it would be very easy for a young *gelong* to think that as this is the custom it would be all right for him to engage in such action, and then to do so. Of course such an attitude would be completely incorrect and misguided. Because of this downfall we have to be very careful. In the case of family and relatives, one is often obliged to indulge in physical contact, but of course this should be done with an attitude of compassion, and not that of lust, then there is no danger of this downfall being committed.

In the *vinaya sutras*, Buddha has compared women to fire, especially so for monks. That is, wherever you touch it, it does nothing but burn. So now for a *gelong*—if he should speak

or play around with a woman, there would just arise faults. If a *gelong* has intercourse with a woman, then nothing needs to be said about that. So in all ways, any sort of contact with women will just lead to faults, and so is likened to fire. For example, in Tibet, if a woman should come up to a monk with her hand outstretched, intending to shake his hand, it would blow his mind; the monk would be completely amazed that she had no sense of shame for that. However in the West this is the custom, and if we were not to do so—if we were, to withdraw—then it would be more difficult to come into contact with people, to have a relationship with them. So if one does not have lust as a motive then there is no downfall or fault, whereas if one is doing it with lust, then with a handshake one has to be very careful. So Buddha has said that a monk should not touch the body of a woman. But in the case of a monk standing by the shore of a river and he sees a woman drowning, what he should do? Buddha said the monk is to look upon that woman as either one's mother or sister, and with that attitude, without any attachment, thus go out and retrieve her from the river.

So Geshe Rinpoche has us all, living together as monks, and because of that we have less contact, thus less burning, not so many downfalls arising from this. Whereas if one goes into a place where all of the men and women are almost naked and you are swimming around, namely a public swimming pool, and some woman comes along, starts playing around, smacks you on the bottom ... very dangerous!

So if you have to go swimming, it is better to go in a place that is private, or if that is not possible then, one should go either early in the morning or late at night, when there will be very few people.

Question: Does the thought of attachment have to precede the contact? For example, if a woman sits next to us on a train. At the moment of contact there is no lust but maybe with prolonged contact a lustful thought arises.

Answer: So, from the beginning, this woman coming in and sitting next to you, there is no fault except that she is a little violent, but besides that there is no actual downfall from it. But, if while this is happening, the mind starts to transform, and you are rather enjoying it and feeling some kind of lust, like that, then this very heavy downfall does occur.

### **3. Speaking about Sexual intercourse**

This occurs in the presence of a woman. A motivation of lust arises, and with this mind one speaks of sexual intercourse. As soon as the woman hears it, this remainder occurs.

### **4. Recommending sexual services from a woman**

This is not so likely to occur for most of us. It mainly refers to a person who really considers himself a highly developed person, and this remainder would occur in the following way. If a *gelong* meets a woman and says "I am an immaculate *gelong*, a very perfect and pure monk. I am a very highly realized person. Now if you really want to devote yourself to me, to make a great offering, then you should offer me your body in sexual intercourse." If one were either to speak like this, or even infer that, then this downfall would occur.

Before the Buddha appeared in this world there was not any *vinaya* or any such thing. It was only after he came that this discipline was founded. Just as the case with the Dharma coming to the West, where people do not know the Dharma, it has to be explained to them, likewise, when Buddha appeared, he had to explain to these young *gelongs* who were maybe thinking "There wouldn't be any fault in this, or that, and so on". So since they did not know, they had all these uncertainties, then Buddha had to say "This has to be abandoned, this has to be followed." And he explained each point.

### **5. Matchmaking**

This means bringing a man and a woman together so they can become married. So if a *gelong* should look upon two people who don't have a relationship yet and say "It would be very good if you two came together, were married." If, as a result of that speech, they should form a marital relationship, then the *gelong* would receive this downfall. This applies not only to a couple who have not yet come together in a relationship, but also those that have been married and then split up, maybe divorced or separated. If a *gelong* should suggest that the separated couple should come together, and if after such speech they do, then he receives this downfall.

Question: Does this remainder refer to only sexual intercourse, or to marriage in the general sense?

Answer: The point of being married is to have sexual intercourse. One does not become married to meditate.

Question: In the West; we have couples living together as though married, and because of that if two such people are living in a Dharma Community then this can create a bad impression with local people. So if one should be asked for advice in such a case, what should one answer?

Answer: This remainder is really referring to inciting people to have sexual intercourse, although Geshe has used the word marriage. So now in the described case, if a *gelong* should give advice to get married, then a downfall would have occurred, even if the only difference would have been, a signature on a piece of paper, as there would have been a change in attitude brought about by this. This would have become a more permanent relationship, now we are really man and wife, you are mine, and so forth. So for a *gelong* to give advice towards this result then the downfall is committed.

Question: As a monk one is often asked for advice by young couples experiencing relationship problems, wanting to separate, etc. Is one then allowed to say something like "Take it easy, give things a chance to work out." One's intention is not to bring them together in a sexual relationship but just to explain that going off with another person will not really solve the problem. Does such speech constitute committing the downfall or no?

Answer: Rinpoche says that Buddha, in speaking of the lifestyle of a *gelong*, says that he has gone from the *householder state* to the *homeless state*. So since we have entered this way of life, to confront such a problem as described, which is the very essence of home life, is outside of our sphere of activity. So if a couple like that should come up to us we should not answer in the way suggested but should point out that the conflict is due to ones' anger, attachment, and ignorance manifesting within the relationship. One should suggest that the couple try to subdue these "Three Poisons"—that, and no more. If the couple should insist on some specific advice then one must tell them to figure it out for themselves, that if one were to say one thing it would please one of the persons involved but not the other and vice-versa. They should just be told to subdue their negative minds and think for themselves.

Geshe Rinpoche says that this might occur for us but it occurs even more for him. The most prevalent question he is asked when people come to see him is exactly this, disharmony between a couple, and what he says is exactly this.

## **6. Building a house too big or on improper ground**

This involves an instance of a *gelong* wishing to build his own house on a piece of land that may be under dispute, legal problems, etc. He must go to the *sangha*, explain his intentions, and then they will send a qualified person to look at the land. If he is satisfied then permission to build is given; if he is not then it is refused. If a *gelong* bypasses this procedure and builds the house on this improper piece of land, then as soon as the house is nearly



finished this remainder occurs. It does not even have to a piece of land that is unstable legally, but even one that, if a house were to be built on it, there would be a danger to the insects and other animals that live on it. There is also a specific measurement for the house. If one surpasses the measurement then the full remainder occurs whereas if one keeps within the restriction but still breaks the other part of the vow, then there is a downfall but not quite as strong.

There are three classifications of dimensions for a *gelong*'s own house. The first one is if you can touch the walls by stretching out the arms. The next one is eleven sq. cubits, and the next is eighteen sq. cubits. Any larger than these, the remainder occurs.

## **7. Building a religious house on improper grounds**

Whereas the previous one was involving only a personal house (for one, two, or three *gelongs*), this one deals with a general *sangha* dwelling, a monastery, or a temple. The term *sangha* refers to four or more *gelongs*; any fewer than that is not *sangha*. Because the inhabitants constitute *sangha*, then the house is considered a sacred object. For this reason it is called a "Great House." The remainder refers only to the land on which the house is to be built, and not to the size of it. This remainder cannot be committed in the case of restoration.

## **8. Baselessly accusing a *gelong* of defeat**

This involves a pure monk (one who has not committed any of the Four Defeats) and someone who has a dislike for this monk, but knows that he has not committed any of these defeats, and who then goes around saying that this other monk has had sexual intercourse or has stolen something, etc. As soon as this is said, and another person hears it, this remainder occurs. This defeat is called "without basis" because if this other *gelong* had actually committed any of these defeats, there would be a basis for this accusation, but since he has not, there is no basis.

## **9. Baselessly insinuating a *gelong* has committed defeat**

This remainder is very similar to the previous one, except one implies rather than directly says a monk has committed a defeat.

## **10. Causing a Division within the *sangha***

For example: In a community of monks like this one, which is living in harmony. If one likes one group of monks but dislikes another, and one has the motivation to split these apart, and with this motivation spreads rumors, causes strife and so on. In such a case the *sangha* will send an emissary, to this person, telling him that his actions are causing, or leading to, a division within the *sangha*, and that this is an immensely evil and harmful action, and that he must stop such action. If the person does not listen, and carries right on, then two or more times the *sangha* will again say that this really must stop. At the conclusion of this entire process, if he still continues with this action, then this remainder occurs. Note that there has to be four or more *gelongs* to constitute there being a *sangha*, and four or more on each side for a division to be made.

## **11. Siding with a schismatic**

In this case there is already one *gelong* who is setting about causing a division in the *sangha*. Then another person having the same motivation comes along and helps him; he also wants to cause that division. The *sangha* would then come to him as described in the previous remainder, and tell him that he must not help this person who is engaged in the harmful action, that he must resist it by all means. Then if he does not heed this he is asked twice more, and at the conclusion of these appeals if, despite all the efforts of the *sangha*, he still continues with this action, then this remainder occurs.

**Question:** Is this division caused when the division is caused or when the offending person refuses to stop trying to cause the division?

**Answer:** The latter is the case, an actual division does not have to be caused.

**Question:** Is causing a division in the *sangha* as described the same as one of the Heinous Crimes of a similar name?

**Answer:** No. In the case of the Heinous Crime, the division one causes is such that it causes one section of the *sangha* to actually become non-Buddhist, to engage in something that is completely contradictory the Teachings of the Buddha.

## 12. Causing a lay people to lose faith in the *sangha*.

This remainder is committed when a *gelong's* behavior has been such that it causes laymen to lose faith in the *sangha*, and when he has ignored the three-fold appeal made to him by the *sangha*, who ask him to turn away from such action. For example: if a group of *gelongs* are invited to a householder's home for a meal or similar, and amongst these *gelongs* there is one who acts in a very improper way, e.g. drinking, fighting and so on, then the *sangha* would say to him that he must stop, because such behavior will cause a lot of anger and disgust on the part of the householder, which could cause him to abuse the *sangha* and indulge in other unwholesome activities, thus being very unfortunate all round. So he is told that he must stop, but he continues in his degrading behavior and he then might, out of his anger (due to being told off by other *gelongs*), say that the *sangha* were acting hatefully towards him, out of jealousy and so on. Then the *sangha* would come to him three times and ask him to cease such activity, if he refuses their three-fold appeal then the remainder would occur.

In the above case there is mentioned the whole process necessary for a remainder to be incurred, but if one has that motivation, and goes in that direction, preparing for it, then there are many other downfalls incurred. In the *sojong* it says གྲུབ་བཞི་གྲུབ་བཞི་ལྟར་བ་དང་, which means “preparation for the preparation” for committing one of these. So there are many downfalls that can be incurred before one commits the actual remainder. The defeats and remainders are the heaviest of all the vows and this is the reason why, during *sojong*, we say གྲུབ་བཞི་གྲུབ་བཞི་ལྟར་བ་, whereas for the lower ones we just say གྲུབ་བཞི་ལྟར་བ་དང་ “just preparing to do so,” without preparation for preparing to do so. This is because the first two categories are heaviest. So if one is going to rob a householder in Vevey, if one is just sitting here having the motivation to do so, that is committing the downfall of preparation for that defeat. To take the train there is committing more downfalls, walking along the street in that direction, more downfalls are committed all the time. The reason for this is that such actions are preparations for committing a defeat.

**Question:** If a person commits a defeat, does he cease to be a *gelong*?

**Answer:** Actually, no. One continues to be a *gelong*, What is cut is being a pure *gelong*, that is finished, but one is still a *gelong* and there is still a degenerated vow. So now if having committed one of these defeats, if after having done so one thinks that “I am no longer a *gelong*, that I am the same as a layman,” and then goes on doing the same sort of thing, more and more, then one just goes on getting one downfall after another.

## 13. Not heeding advice about your offences.

This remainder occurs when a *gelong* commits a downfall which is been seen by another person, and then the other person, with a motivation of compassion tells him that he must desist from such action, that this is a downfall with negative results. The *gelong* who has

committed the downfall replies, "You don't have to tell me that, I am completely pure," denying the downfall. So after that the *sangha* will come to this *gelong* and tell him that it is obvious that he has committed the downfall, and that he must not deny it. If, after this approach, he persists in his denial, telling the others to mind their own business, then he commits this remainder.

Going back to the defeat of taking that which is not given: there has to be a motivation like "I want to steal this." Without this, if one sees an article and one believes it to be one's own, whereas it really belongs to someone else, this defeat does not occur. Similarly, if one thinks an article does not belong to anyone, if it was just lying around, this defeat does not occur.

As Geshe Rinpoche said before, to some the *vinaya*—the *sila*—is joyous, whereas for others it is miserable. The reason for this has been explained already. The *vinaya* is something that we have already agreed to guard ourselves with.

The manner of purifying a remainder is rather difficult. Firstly it must be confessed openly before the *sangha*. Then the *sangha* gives the person a number of tasks to do, for a specific length of time. He is also taken out of his position of seniority amongst the *sangha* and put at the bottom. He remains there while he carries out his tasks, and after some time, if he has pleased the *sangha*, and they feel that he has carried out his task properly, then again he comes before them, there is then a particular ceremony that is gone through, and then the vow is purified. So this is generally the way but nowadays the custom is no longer in use, for a number of reasons, and what should be done is that one should apply the Four Opponent Powers and practice such things as Vajrasattva practice. So by applying these opponent powers and doing purification practices, the broken vow can be purified.

Question: What about purifying a defeat?

Answer: With regards to restoring a defeat, there is a similar process to be gone through. There are two cases.

- If one commits a defeat and then tells no one, then there is no restraining the vow.
- If one does disclose it, confess it before the *sangha*, then again the person is taken from his position in seniority, put at the bottom, given a certain amount of work to do for a specific period, and then after that he goes before the *sangha* and he offers up his vows, he disrobes, and then he takes on new vows. However the best method is the Four Opponent Powers, which have to be practiced from the heart, not just reciting a mantra or something. There is no evil that cannot be purified by the Four Opponent Powers.

## THE THIRTY DOWNFALLS TO BE AVOIDED

The next category of downfalls, ལྔ་ལྔ་, is so-called because the downfall occurs in conjunction with an object or an article, e.g. a robe or something similar. When confessing one of these downfalls, whatever the article is, one has to put it aside, or into someone else's custody, for one day, and one has to think that this article is no longer mine. So the putting it aside is the punishment for this downfall, and then after the day has passed, one can retrieve it. So that is the way of confessing these downfalls. The set following the thirty is a set of ninety, called the འབའ་ཞིག་པོ་, which means "sole" or "single." The reason for the difference between these ninety and the previous thirty is that with the group of ninety there is nothing that has to be abandoned; one simply confesses or discloses the downfall.

This first group of thirty is divided into groups of ten.

### 1. Keeping unblessed cloth more than 10 days.

The first one concerns something that a *gelong* is allowed to keep in his possession. After the first light on the 11<sup>th</sup> day this downfall occurs.

However for other things, like clothing made out of goat, camel or rabbit hair, a *gelong* is not allowed to keep these; there is no talk in these vows about blessings for them. As soon as such a garment comes into the possession of a *gelong*, he receives a fault. The reason for not being able to possess such garments is because they are usually very soft and comfortable, and thus attachment for them would be easy to rise.

This downfall applies not only garments; any piece of cloth larger than one square cubit must have this blessing. Geshe Rinpoche thinks that this downfall refers only to cloth with which one intends to make clothing in future, and not simply a dust rag, book or mandala cover and similar.

This downfall also refers to more than one piece of cloth, e.g. if you get a piece of cloth today and do not get it blessed, tomorrow you get another one and do get it blessed, then after 10 days have passed, even though the second piece has a blessing, if you join the two pieces together into one garment, then because of that part that does not have a blessing there is incurred a downfall for the whole garment. So if there is going to be a piece of clothing made there should be a blessing for all of the constituent parts. So now we are all young *gelongs*, starting out, and if we wish to be good ones we should have just a few articles, only those that are essential, useful and beneficial, and we should get these together and get them blessed. Then we can keep and use them, but not to let them get out of hand, not to let one's room become cluttered with things. Then if at sometime in the future one has to get another article then as soon as one gets it, it should be blessed. By doing so one avoids all of these downfalls concerning blessings on clothes. On the other hand if one has a lot of articles, and some have a blessing and some do not, then there come many faults. For example, Geshe Rinpoche's own position is very difficult, having so many things in Rikon and here. However we are not to think "I do not need that, and this, etc., and start giving away things that we need, like warm clothes for the winter. We should not go on an ascetic trip because from that will arise many health problems.

Question: If one has an old article that has been blessed, and one wishes to get rid of it, is there any special procedure to be followed?

Answer: In this case it is very simple; you just throw it away, thinking, "Now it is not mine anymore." Then the blessing is gone from it.

Question: If one has a blessed piece of cloth and a layman touches it, does the clothing lose its' blessing?

Answer: Nothing happens.

Question: Does this downfall apply to all one's belongings, e.g. a pair of blue jeans that one keeps for occasions such as visiting parents?

Answer: Geshe Rinpoche says that all things that are offered e.g. images of Buddha, offering bowls and things that one uses on the altar, there is no need for blessing these. Also for books and the cloths they are bound in, but all the rest that a *gelong* is allowed to keep, even a drinking bowl, all of these should have a blessing. As regards a pair of blue jeans or the like, these a monk is not allowed to keep in any case, and since this is so there is no talk about getting a blessing on them. Things that are necessary for the winter—sweaters and so forth—are to be seen as individual cases.

This is not a signal for us to go on an ascetic trip. If we give away our warm clothing then we will get sick in the winter, which will be a hindrance to our practice. So the *vinaya* was revealed by Buddha relating to specific instances that occurred in India, where, as we know, it is quite hot. There was not any fault about having sleeves or things like that to keep warm. But later in Tibet where it was cold, there was a necessity to wear things like sleeves, sweaters and jackets—things we need to keep warm. Geshe Rinpoche thinks that there is probably no fault with that.

Question: Is it possible for us to have a sort of group ownership, a place where we can keep all our blue jeans and the like, because it is sometimes necessary to use them.

Answer: You do not have to put them in another room; just leave it in the room. Put down the thought that this is mine, just think that whoever should use it, either myself or some layman, it is just there to be used, but it is not mine. If that is done, the downfall is avoided.

There are three different types of blessings given. One is for basic necessities, i.e., the three robes. The next is for extra items that are less essential, but that a monk is allowed to keep. Finally there is a blessing for all the other items.

Question: We understand why, when one is practicing a *sadhana*, it is necessary to bless the offerings. So could it be explained why it is necessary to bless all our possessions?

Answer: Geshe Rinpoche says that without the blessing it would be natural for a *gelong* to start acquiring more and more articles, and then by doing so, more and more attachment would arise and his mind would be filled with all sorts of concerns about how to keep his possessions. So as the blessing has to be given it acts as a brake on the activity of the monk. Getting a blessing each time one acquires something is too much trouble. Thus this remainder was designed to prevent attachments from developing and thus leave the *gelong's* mind freer to practice Dharma. Our task is to win liberation, and for that there needs to be pure *sila*. To help attain this we have this tradition of blessings, to help prevent attachments from arising. Thus one is more able to keep pure *sila*.

## 2. Separating from the Blessed Robes.

This concerns the three basic articles:

1. The Namjar (ལྷན་རྒྱུ་),
2. The Chögö (ཚོང་གོང་),
3. The Shamtab (ཤམ་ཐང་).

These three robes are blessed when one becomes a *gelong*, and they must be kept for the rest of one's days, as long as one is a monk. During this time, if one is sleeping outside, the robes must not be inside, and if one is inside, they must not be left outside. This applies to both day and night. So one must pay great attention when they are being washed, especially if another person is doing it. So one should not be separated from them at all.

Without the blessing on the robes, this remainder cannot occur. The robes do not have to be in the same room as oneself, just in the same building. And for those who have substitute pieces of cloth instead of these three robes then these should be treated exactly as though they were the real thing. Only one shamtab, the essential one in which one received ordination, need be kept all the time. One should keep careful track as to which this one is, and not forget. The other shamtab, if one has one, will receive a different kind of blessing, as an extra garment. If one commits this remainder then it is essential to purify it with the Four Opponent Powers, or with the general confession that we recite in *sojong*. It is essential to receive the essential blessings from a master, but the blessing for non-essential articles we will be able to do for one another. When one receives this blessing from an older *gelong*, one offers three prostrations first, whereas if one receives it from a *gelong* of the same 'age' as

oneself then one just makes a respectful gesture with the hands, like rubbing our outstretched palm on the other, in sweeping strokes, away from the body.

### 3. Keeping a small unblest piece of cloth more than 30 days.

This refers to a monk who does not have the three essential robes, but has a piece of cloth, and is hoping to get some extra cloth to add to this so that he can make his robe. He can keep such cloth for thirty days without a blessing, then at the end of this period, on the morning of the 31<sup>st</sup> day, this remainder is committed if the cloth is still not blessed.

For the second and third downfalls, both of these, concerning the Namjar only, there was a special kind of ceremony, a tradition that existed, but does not any longer. This tradition was that during the Summer Rains Retreat the monks remained in very strict retreat, and when they were released at the end of this period there was a time of relaxation, more or less a holiday, during which the monks could go out wandering or whatever. Some of the monks thought that it would be too difficult, and did not want to carry their Namjar with them, like Jhampa Tashi going to America. It was possible at this time to take one's Namjar and place it on a very large communal piece of cloth. So all the monks could do this, with their Namjars only, and then a special blessing would be given. There would then be one monk who would stay in the monastery and would look after these robes. In such a case the monks who had left their Namjar could then be gone for a certain number of days and no downfall would be committed. This tradition would cover pieces of cloth that were to be made into Namjars as well.

### 4. Having a *gelongma* wash your robes.

This remainder occurs when a *gelong* gives any of the three essential articles as described above to a *gelongma* so they can be washed. So referring to the women who like to come and help with the washing: for the actual downfall to occur there would have to be a *gelongma*. So if these women who help, if their motivation is faith then it is all right, if there is no coercion. Also, if the nun is a relative then no downfall is incurred. However, if for example, a nun were washing the monks clothes with a motive other than faith then this would be a very easy source of attachment or lust, and there are cases of it arising in such situations. Also if a monk had a girl washing his clothes, then they would obviously be coming into contact, a friendly relationship developing, and attachment could grow. So to avoid that situation then Buddha has made this rule.

### 5. Accepting robes from a *gelongma*

There are cases in which one may receive robes from a *gelongma* and those in which one may not.

- If a *gelong* is without robes and a *bhikshuni* offers some to him, he is allowed to keep them.
- If he already has robes and a *bhikshuni* offers him some, if the offering is made with very great faith and compassion, and generally with a pure motivation, then he is allowed to keep them.
- If the *bhikshuni* offering the robes is a relative then he is allowed to keep the articles even if they are extra. However if there is a motive other than those mentioned and a *gelong* already has a set of robes then he is not allowed to keep them.

The actual full downfall only occurs with a *bhikshuni*, and there are not any now. But even if a female novice (*getsulma*) should make the offering, although the full downfall is not incurred if the circumstances are not any of the three mentioned above, then there is a fault. Actually the *vinaya* is much more elaborate than this, but Geshe is giving a very concise account of it.

## **6. Unnecessarily begging and obtaining robes from a householder.**

This is a case where a monk already has a particular robe, say a chögö, but then goes to layman/householder who is not a relative and asks for a chögö. If the householder gives it, this downfall is incurred.

## **7. Asking for, and obtaining, more cloth than you need.**

Consider the case where a *gelong* does not have a chögö. He goes to the house of a layman and begs the cloth needed. A *gelong's* cloth would generally need to be twice that needed by a layman, but if he receives more than the necessary amount, say one cubit more, he must return the unused cloth as soon as the robe is made and he sees that this is so. He must offer it back to the layman. If he keeps the extra cloth, he receives this downfall. The reason for this is that one is allowed to take sufficient cloth with which to make one's robes but no more.

## **8. Pushing a householder to give more than he intended.**

Consider the case where a patron is thinking about giving a *gelong* a particular robe, say, a chögö. The *gelong* happens to find out about this, and acting out of attachment and impatience, goes to the person in question and says, "Please give me a chögö." Knowing that the person will grant it, he makes the request. If the person then gives it to him, this remainder is incurred. So a person wishing to give a robe, etc. should be allowed to do so in his own time; he must not be coerced.

## **9. Getting more by asking husband and wife individually.**

Whereas the previous downfall concerned just one person, this one concerns two, a couple, a man and wife, both of whom wish to give a *gelong* a particular robe. If the *gelong* goes to each of them, impatiently, requesting/begging for the robes he knows he will be offered, he incurs this downfall.

## **10. Obtaining robes by reminding a lay servant more than six times.**

This one is a little complicated, and is most easily understood through an example. For example, we take a case with Geshe Rinpoche as the *gelong* and Charles as the monastery servant, the one who acts in a very helpful way, doing our shopping, etc. Imagine Jean, the very tall Swiss man, to be Geshe's patron. Geshe Rinpoche needs a chögö, and Jean wishes to offer him one. It would be improper for him to offer money so that Geshe Rinpoche could go and buy the cloth himself: this is not the task of a monk. Rather, the patron would give this money to the monastery servant who would then arrange for a chögö to be made. Then he would offer the chögö to Geshe Rinpoche.

So the *gelong* is aware that this is all going on, and when after some time the robe does not come, he would go down and speak with the monastery servant and remind him that he needs the chögö. If after reasonable time the robe still did not come he would repeat the requests again and again, six times altogether, and still no chögö appears. So after all this if the *gelong* should go to the patron and say that the monastery servant still hasn't given him the chögö that the patron has paid for. Then after that he goes home and the servant should make the robe and give it to him, at that time (of accepting the robe) this downfall is committed. The reason for this is that the monk has gone to the monastery servant so many times, which is getting him into a lot of attachments, besides which he has also caused strife between the patron and the monastery servant.

To avoid such situations, the Buddha has made this downfall - such things occurred during the time of the Buddha. So what should happen is this: there would be no fault incurred if the *gelong* should go to the patron and say that he hadn't received the chögö, and

the monastery servant also goes to the patron and apologizes saying that he has been so busy and has not had time to make the robe, but that he was able to do so now and would straight away do so. So if after that the *gelong* receives the robe then there is no downfall.

The reason for there not being a downfall in the second place is that the monastery servant goes and apologizes to the patron, so the patron is not made unhappy by that, he would see that such things happen, that sometimes there just is not time, so there would be no conflict. Whereas if this did not happen then the patron would become unhappy, having given the money and the robe not having come through, thus strife would be created and it is to avoid this that this downfall was made.

Question: Does this mean that if somebody offers us some thing we shouldn't take it ourselves but ask him or her to give it to Charles?

Answer: If someone should come along and give you something you shouldn't just think "I am an immaculate *gelong*, I wouldn't touch this stuff ", then tell them to give it to Charles, because this would cause difficulties, you can imagine what would happen, and so in order to avoid such difficulties we can receive offerings directly.

Among these ten downfalls, with the first three there is some danger of faults occurring, so we have to be careful. But for the other ones, for instance, there are no *gelongmas* existing, so we do not have to worry about those, and then there is not such a great likelihood of people giving us gifts these days, so there is not too much danger regarding those downfalls.

#### **11. Using a costly (cotton) mattress.**

The first downfall in the second group of ten concerns things made of cotton. That is, cotton in a place where it is a rare kind of cloth; this applies not only to cotton but to silk and other very fine fabrics. If a monk has his mattress (not the dingwa) made out of one of these fine substances, in a place where they are rare, then when the mattress is more or less finished this downfall occurs. The reason for this is that attachment can very easily arise toward such an item, and so this downfall is to prevent that happening. It is not the same thing if one lives where cotton is very common or ordinary; cotton is commonplace around here, for example.

#### **12. Using black woolen mattresses.**

In India, wool was not so common, and black wool was especially rare, of more value. So if a *gelong* should have a mattress made out of pure black wool, then he would commit this downfall. This refers to only a new mattress, like having one made. It is not the same if someone should give one that has already been used; then there is no fault.

#### **13. Using a mattress of predominantly black wool.**

If a mattress is a mixture of black and white wool, say two parts black to one of white, then with the possession of a new mattress like that, this downfall occurs, whereas if the proportions are the other way around, there is no downfall.

The reason for these last two downfalls is that mattresses made as described are likely to be a source of attachment, and so to cut through such grasping/attachment, Buddha has made this precept.

Question: Does this apply to all items that are valuable and rare which come into one's possession?



Answer: The black wool is just indicative of things that are very rare and highly valued in one's region. Likewise the mattress is only indicative. E.g. if one has a shirt made out of silk or very fine wool and one values it highly, and in general if it is a costly and highly valued item, then this downfall is incurred. Whereas if one is keeping the article out of necessity—for one's health, for example—then this would be a different case. However it would be better not to keep articles made out of valuable materials etc. but if one has no attachment for the article then it would not be quite so bad, Geshe Rinpoche did not say there would be no fault though. So we should think well, otherwise we will be taking off all our clothes and throwing them into a big pile saying, "This is too good for me," and so on.

#### **14. Getting a new mattress within six years.**

This one again concerns only the mattress, not the dingwa. The monk should have his own mattress, and except if it is completely ruined, or if it is giving him sickness or something like that, this concerns only a good and usable mattress, and this should be used for a minimum of six years. If during the six years, the monk, already having a mattress that is usable, decides to have another mattress made and does so, then this downfall occurs. This downfall only refers to ones' own exclusive mattress, not ones that are 'common' as they are here in this center.

#### **15. Not patching up a new dingwa with a piece of an old one.**

When one has a new dingwa made, it is necessary to take a piece from the old one the size of a Buddhas' cubit (which is a Buddha's forearm length, which is equal to one and a half of ours). This piece is then used as the strip across the middle that we see on dingwas around the place. The reason for taking this piece from the old one and putting it on the new one is to help prevent attachment from arising, so that the new dingwa does not look too nice. If one does not have a dingwa, one should add an old piece of cloth of approximately the same color. If one does not do these things, this downfall occurs.

#### **16. Carrying a big load too far on a road.**

This downfall is in regard to carrying heavy loads. In India there would be, for example, wool coming down from the north, and a *gelong* might be carrying some. If a *gelong* is alone, and has no-one else with him like a Getsul or a layman, then he is allowed to carry a heavy load for approximately one kilometer, or 3,000 feet.<sup>2</sup>

If one is not alone, if one has a Getsul or a layman with one or along one's path, then one can only carry the baggage or load for the one kilometer, but if there is no one who can help you, then a distance of approximately eighteen times that is allowed. In Tibetan the terms are རྒྱུད་ཕྱག་ and དཔག་ཚམས་ respectively. In either case, if the load is carried further, this downfall occurs. Note that two *gelongs* going together are classified as same as going alone.

The reason for this vow is: if a layman were to see monks carrying great burdens they would be disillusioned, thinking that they should be meditating instead of behaving like beasts of burden. Also carrying a lot of things like things is not a thing for a monk to do; this implies that he has a lot of activities, a lot of concerns, into merchandising or similar. So for these two reasons, a *gelong* should not carry large burdens.

Question: If one is walking with a layman and one has a large bag, say one is going to a train station several kilometers away, then how should one resolve the problem concerning, one's vow? Should one after one kilometer put the bag down there, saying, "That's it, my vows do not let me carry this bag any further." What should one do?

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<sup>2</sup> One རྒྱུད་ཕྱག་.

Answer: This is a bit different. On the one hand we are not surrounded by people who would have less faith if they saw us carrying suitcases; on the other hand if the friend or acquaintance is not likely to carry one's bag, then it is almost the same as if he were not there as far as one's bag is concerned. So then one can carry it the full distance as previously described. However if the person is someone who would help, then the limit is this one *gyang trak*, about one kilometer.

### **17. Having a *gelongma* make yarn of wool.**

This one concerns having a *gelongma* who is not one's relative washing one's wool, which is for oneself. E.g. asking a *gelongma* to wash wool and she would have to separate the wool and do many things to it. So if she should then do these things then this downfall is incurred. The reason for this vow is that having a *gelongma* do this could cause some friendliness between oneself and her, which could then lead to attachment either from the monk to the nun or vice-versa, and thus problems arising, so to avoid this happening there is this vow.

Question: Is the wool symbolic of all items, because such a thing with wool is not likely to happen these days?

Answer: This concerns all things that are directly on the body of a *gelong*, personal things. It is not good to have a woman doing things like that, can cause attachment, but generally it is not against the vows to ask women to do things for oneself. For example, Millicent, asking her to repair one's watch, so things such as that there is no problem, there is nothing in the Scriptures about that. If we do not know how to do sewing ourselves and the woman doing it for us is doing it out of faith, then there is no fault. However if the monk's motivation is that he would like to get to know this girl better, asking her to do things for him, then there is fault with that.

### **18. Fondling your own gold, etc.**

This one concerns touching precious material, like jewels, gold, silver. If the article is in danger of being lost or stolen then the *gelong* is allowed to pick it up and move it to a safe place; there is no fault with that. But if he has some jewels and likes to play with them, fondle them, with a lot of attachment, then when he touches them then this downfall occurs.

### **19. Making a loan with interest.**

This does not refer to monks making loans to laymen on behalf of the *sangha* in general, but only private business transactions. If a monk has some extra money and he found a layman who wanted to borrow it, and then sets an interest rate, when the money is returned with the interest, and if the interest is enough to buy just one cubit of cloth, as soon as the monk receives the interest, he receives this downfall.

As regards keeping money in bank accounts, Geshe says that it is rather impractical for a monk to keep a lot of money in his room, because he would probably be spending it too fast, etc., and then if he uses it all up quickly then he is left with no money, then it is a big obstacle toward supporting himself while practicing Dharma. Also nowadays it is the custom to deposit one's money in the bank. So for these reasons, if a monk is thinking like this, to keep his money safe so that he can use it for his Dharma practice, then Geshe thinks it is not so bad. Whereas if the monk is thinking, "What is the latest interest rate? How can I get a good rate out of that, make a good investment there?" and really think about it like a business, then this downfall would occur.

Question: As regards the remainder concerning touching precious articles, does this apply to paper money, say large denomination notes, 500 franc etc. Also what about if one is given a valuable watch as a present and one wishes to keep it because its accuracy is very useful,

especially in a country like Switzerland. And lastly, what about if one is a treasurer of an institute, e.g. Instituto Lama Tzong Khapa, and in that capacity one has to handle money. Could these points be clarified?

Answer: As regards paper money, that is all right, there is no fault with touching that. Although one can buy gold with it, it is only paper. As regards the watch, one can use it, for it is useful, but at the same time it is important to decrease any kind of attachment to it, to meditate on the harmfulness of attachment for such objects. Lastly as regards the money one handles in an official capacity, if it is paper then that is alright, but if it is gold or silver or precious stones then that is a different case. With regard to a golden mandala base, water bowls and so on, as this is all for the sake of offering; there is no fault with that.

## **20. Making profitable business with lay people.**

This one concerns merchandising or getting involved in trade—selling things. If the *gelong* is in heavy debt, if he has borrowed some money and has to pay it back, then Buddha has given permission for him to sell some things to get a profit, in order to pay off his debt. But without such a case, if the *gelong* just wants to get more money or profit, then if he gets involved in trade, and makes enough just to buy one cubit of cloth, as soon as he gets this profit this downfall occurs.

Question: What happens if one goes back home and wants to sell some things that one has left over from the time before one was a monk?"

Answer: Our present situation is rather different from that which existed in India and Tibet. For example in those places a monk could really have nothing but his robes and his alms bowl, and if like that he went out begging then he would really get food, no problem. For example in Tibet if there were a village like this then a monk could go out carrying his alms bowl asking for some tsampa, then whoever he asked would just give him a big handful of tsampa, and this would happen at whatever house he called at so in no time at all he could have a nice big bag of tsampa, he could sit there and eat all day if he liked. That was the custom there whereas nowadays if we should go out, to the Park Hotel, asking for some tsampa, they probably would not give you any, they would probably call the police, put you in handcuffs. Thus the situation is different. So if we have things that we wish to get rid of there is no point in just throwing them out, better to either sell them oneself or have someone else to do it for one, but to do so with the motivation of wishing to spend this whole lifetime dedicating oneself to the practice of Dharma, and for this purpose I would like to use this money. In such a way one could do this with no downfall.

So these next two in the third group of ten both concern the use of alms bowls.

## **21. Keeping unblest alms bowls beyond ten days.**

With this vow there is a downfall if the alms bowl is kept for more than ten days without a blessing, and in another case, if the alms bowl is kept for just one day without a blessing.

A *gelong* should have an alms bowl, but we are living in a country where they are not available, so it is a bit different. The shape of the alms bowl in the Tibetan tradition is slightly different from that in Theravadin countries, where it is shaped like the bottom half of an egg. A monk, having received his alms bowl, is allowed to keep it for ten days without getting a blessing. On the first light of the eleventh day if he still has no blessing for it then he commits this downfall.

The second case concerns keeping an alms bowl for more than one day without a blessing, and applies only to *bhikshunis*.

## **22. Blessing and obtaining an extra bowl from a householder.**

If a *gelong* already has an alms bowl of suitable proportions and then goes to a householder and begs for another one, as soon as he receives the bowl he incurs this downfall. This is therefore called The Downfall of Receiving an Extra Alms Bowl.

Many of us have mugs and cups etc., but for eating purposes a monk should only have one bowl. If he goes out and begs for a second he receives this downfall. The extra bowl is called ???, meaning that he must not be separated from it. What he has to do with this second one, although he has the other one which he uses, is to keep it clean, polish it, etc., and then he has to carry it with him wherever he goes. So although he has to carry it around with him and care for it, he is not allowed to use it; he must use the previous one.

As punishment for having this second bowl he has to present it to the *sangha*, and then this bowl goes throughout the whole *sangha*, who then compare their own alms bowls with that one. Any monk who likes it better than his own exchanges this nice second bowl with his old one, and then it goes down the line, and maybe another monk finds that this old one is better than his, and he exchanges bowls. This can go on several times, going down to the last *gelong*, until he finds that he has been given back the poorest alms bowl of all the *sangha*, and it is then given back to the person who was greedy enough to have to get a second one, who then has to carry this around with him just as before, without using it.

The next two downfalls involve a weaver.

### **23. Not paying a weaver for cloth you ordered.**

Suppose a *gelong* has his own yarn, and he takes it to a weaver to have robe made with it. The weaver agrees to do so, and a fee is established. If the weaver makes the robe and the *gelong* does not pay him for it, the *gelong* commits this downfall. If the weaver has waived a fee, there is no downfall for not paying, because the weaver agreed to do the work without a fee. If a fee was not discussed when the *gelong* took the yarn to him, the weaver asks a fee when the work is done, then the monk must pay the fee or he commits this downfall.

### **24. Adding to a sponsor's order to a weaver.**

The next one is best shown by an example. Suppose Lix (from Geneva) is a patron of Geshe, and she wants to make an offering of a robe to Geshe. She has her own yarn and goes to a weaver and asks him to make the garment, "because I want to make an offering of this to Geshe Rinpoche." If Geshe should find out about this and go to the weaver and ask that the garment be made a bit bigger or a little bit nicer, and the weaver does as the monk has asked, when the robe is given to the monk, the monk must go to the weaver and find out the extra amount needed to do the extra work; this amount must be paid by the monk to the patron, or this downfall is incurred.

### **25. Taking back an object given to another *gelong*.**

This is a downfall of stealing that which was given. Suppose a *gelong* were to give some item to another *gelong*, then later on quarrel with him, and want that item back. If he should take it back then he receives this downfall.

### **26. During rains retreat, taking or distributing non-food offering made to the *sangha*, or not sharing at the end of the rains retreat.**

During the Summer Rains Retreat, which is a very special time, many lay people make offerings, such as food and clothing, to the monks. If the offering is food, it is immediately shared with the *sangha*. If it is clothing, it is placed with the treasurer, and is not distributed until the release from the retreat. Those things offered during the rains retreat belong to the *sangha* in general, not to specific monks.

Now, if a monk sees one piece that he particularly likes, and takes it for himself, as soon as he takes it he commits this downfall.

The second way to commit this downfall is for any member of the *sangha* to divide offerings up *during* the Rains Retreat. The time for the dividing up of these offerings is on the day of release of the Retreat. Geshe says that if something is offered to you individually then it is yours, and if it is offered to the *sangha* in general then it belongs to the *sangha*.

There is an exception to this rule about dividing offerings made during the Rains Retreat. If there is danger of the offerings being lost or wasted, and the only way to prevent this is to distribute them immediately, then no downfall is incurred.

During other times if something is offered to, or belongs to the *sangha*, it is to be used by the *sangha*. If a monk wants to take an item shared by the *sangha*, he has to make a special request to the *sangha*. This should be done when all the *sangha* are gathered together. If permission is given, the monk is allowed to use the item, but if he either does not ask or permission is not given, and he uses the item anyway, the fault incurred, and it is very great. The reason for Buddha saying this—that things should not be divided up during the Rains Retreat—is that if they were then a monk may get his share of the offerings and decide to leave, thinking that, since he has got his offerings, there is no point to stay around. So this was to prevent the monks from committing the downfall of leaving before the end of the Summer Rains Retreat.

At the end of the Rains Retreat, something called རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་འཕྲུ་ takes place, which is the lifting of the restriction on moving beyond the boundaries which were established at the beginning of the retreat. The monks are now free to go wandering, to relax. The third type of downfall occurs if the items that were offered during the retreat are not distributed to the monks on the day of release. If the treasurer or whoever is keeping them waits beyond this day then he incurs the downfall. The reason for this is that the monks might leave for a while, not claiming their share of the offerings. Some of them might be spoiled or wasted. So things must be divided on the day of release.

An exception to this rule of dividing the offerings on the day of release is the case where a patron makes his offering of clothes etc. during the Rains Retreat, but he does it with the request that he would like to make this a personal offering—to give it with his own hands—to the *sangha*. He cannot be present at the day of release to make these offerings himself, but can do so later. In such a case there is no downfall if these things are not distributed on the day of release. Geshe Rinpoche says that it is very meritorious to make offerings to the *sangha*, especially during the Summer Rains Retreat.

## **27. Separating from your robe for more than six days, in retreat.**

The Namjar is the most precious belonging of a *gelong*. In fact it says in larger *vinaya* Scriptures that a monk can have a Namjar made out of any material he likes, the nicer the better. He can have it made out of satin, anything he likes. In Tibet most of the Namjars were made out of brocade, very beautiful, whereas now the monks in India just have them made out of cloth. If a *gelong* goes into retreat, he must take his Namjar with him. But if he has a very nice one, there could be the danger of thieves stealing it. The monk has the alternative of leaving his Namjar in a safe place. But during his retreat he must return to his Namjar every six days; then he can go back to his retreat. The monk has to do this for the full extent of the retreat. If he lets seven days pass without being in the place where his Namjar is then he commits this downfall.

Question: What happens if one loses his Namjar?

Answer: There is no ceremony to go through, the ceremony was just that of losing the Namjar. However there is a fault incurred, that of not having a Namjar, so as soon as possible one should have a new Namjar made. During the period the monk is without his Namjar, he should get a square of cloth (one cubit) and have it blessed; that is sufficient. When it says that you must have a Chögö and Namjar, it means that you must have ones that blessed. If there is no blessing on them, it is the same as not having them at all.

## 28. Early or late possession of a rain cloth.

During rains retreat one needs a covering to protect oneself from the rain. This protection is a piece of cloth, and is obtained through begging for it, not buying it. Monks are allowed to do this the month before the start of the Rains Retreat. If one begs for and receives a rain cloth earlier than a month before the start of the retreat, this downfall is incurred.

For example, if the Rains Retreat were to begin on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the 6<sup>th</sup> Tibetan month, one could start begging for the rain cloth on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the 5<sup>th</sup> month. So if an impatient monk were to go out on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the 5<sup>th</sup> month and get a rain cloth, he would commit this downfall.

In addition, a monk must dispose of the rain cloth within 15 days after the day of release; if he keeps it any longer than that he commits this downfall. The monk may either give the cloth away or throw it away.

Question: Does this apply nowadays for umbrellas and raincoats etc.?"

Answer: Raincoats and umbrellas are part of the custom in the West. It would look rather strange if we were to go down to Vevey wrapped up in a big blanket. So although it is the custom to have umbrellas etc., there are many virtues to having a rain cloth. For example where it rains a lot a *gelong* must also sleep and so he can use this rain cloth like a groundsheet, or a bed covering to keep off the rain, so it is very practical. But nowadays this is not so practical and so we have umbrellas instead, and as there is no mention of them in the *vinaya sutras*, we do not have to break them over our knee or throw them out into the street at the end of the Rains Retreat, just keep them all year.

## 29. Making a patron change the dedication of an offering.

Suppose Lix wants to give Jhampa Kelsang a piece of cheese. Another *gelong* hears of this and wants to get it for himself. He then goes to Lix and says, "It would really be good if I had some cheese. It would be very beneficial for my body and health. However I am unable to buy any myself, although I wish I could." He goes on hinting like this, with the intention of getting that cheese for himself. If the person making the offering changes her mind, and thinks "I will give it to him," then gives it to the second monk, the monk receives this downfall.

The same is true if the patron has in mind to make an offering to all the *sangha*, and a *gelong*, knowing of this, goes to the patron and says "I wish I had this," implying that patron should give it to him instead, if the patron changes his mind and makes the offering to the monk, the monk receives this downfall.

The same is true for a large monastic university, like Sera, which contains many colleges. If a patron is going to make an offering to the whole university, and a monk from a particular college goes to this patron, and hints that this offering should be made to his college rather than the university as a whole, if the patron then makes his offering to the college, and the monk receives it, he commits this downfall.

Similarly if a patron wishes to make an offering to a college, which consists of many houses, and a monk hints that it should be given to his house, if the patron changes his dedication, and the monk receives the offering, he incurs this downfall.

Also if the offering is for the *sangha*, and a monk hints successfully that it should be given to him personally then he also collects this downfall.

The same is true with the directions reversed. If the offering is intended for a particular house, and the patron is persuaded by a *gelong* to give it to the *sangha* in general, then the downfall is collected.

What is implied here is that the offering should be made exactly as the patron wants. This was emphasized as being very important in the monasteries in Tibet. There were monks whose job it was to put patrons in contact with monasteries. They were the ones who made the offerings reach the desired destinations. But for such monks there was the danger of redirecting the offerings. If a patron wanted to make the offering to one monastery and the monk said that it would be better if he made to another monastery, then the monk committed this downfall. It says in the texts that monks should be very careful to avoid committing this downfall. Geshe Rinpoche says that this a very brief explanation of these vows, and they should be understood in greater detail when that is possible.

### 30. Keeping food longer than allowed.

This downfall concerns storing food. It involves 4 types of what are called medicine:

1. foodstuffs—things that are put into the mouth to eat, which can only be taken in the morning up until midday.
2. that which can be used from the morning until the evening, but no longer, not until the next day. Such things must be blessed.
3. types of medicine that can be used up to 7 days, but not beyond.
4. the medicine for a sick person. These can be used for the duration of the illness.

For example, when a monk partake of food, it must be food that has been blessed, that is to say, given by someone who does not have full admission into the *sangha*, who does not possess *gelong* vows. In this process of giving, the food receives a blessing, and the monk is allowed to eat it. But if the *gelong* just finds some food and eats without anyone giving it to him, then he commits the downfall of eating that which is not given (this downfall comes later in the group of 90). So there must be a blessing on the food. If a monk takes blessed food and only eats part of it, keeping the rest for later in the day, if he keeps the remainder beyond midday, he receives this downfall.

We are talking here only about food that is to be eaten before midday, after it has been given by a Getsul or a person not having full admission, and received by the *gelong*, if he should keep it beyond midday, then he receives the downfall of storing food; then if he eats the food, maybe the next day, he commits another downfall of eating that which has been stored (also in the group of 90).

Nowadays we do not have people without full ordination giving us food. This being the case, there is a special way to act. As we sit down at the table where all the food is laid out, we should not immediately dive in, but pause for a moment and think of this food as belonging to no one; anybody that wants to eat it may. Like the food of the Northern Continent is natural growing, we call it maize, they look upon that food as not belonging to anybody—anyone who wants it can have it. This is the way we should consider the food on the table. Then having thought of it like that, without grasping at it, then as we eat, it is sufficient as a substitute for actual giving, and it is called the “giving and receiving of the Northern Continent”. After having eaten the meal, if there is something left over on the plate, a piece of bread or similar, one thinks, “this is not mine,” completely separating oneself from it. This quality of “giving and taking” is cast off[?], and by so doing one avoids the downfall of storing food.

If one keeps really strict *vinaya* as described here, there comes nothing but benefit from it. By being so strict in the *vinaya*, it becomes quite easy to attain Samatha.

Question: Suppose there is a bowl of fruit on the table, and one takes an apple. But instead of eating it, one puts it on one's altar. Is there any fault incurred?

Answer: Taking food for an altar is not like stealing from the *sangha*, but just taking it from the place where the *sangha* takes it. But it would be a better offering to leave it for the *sangha*, because an actual offering to the real *sangha* is preferable to putting it on an altar. To make this very clear: if food is set out for all of us to enjoy as we like, instead of taking a piece and putting it on the altar it would be better either to eat it yourself or leave it there for the rest of the *sangha*. To take something that would normally be eaten by the *sangha* and instead to offer it to a picture or any representation of the Buddha, this is like taking food to be offered to Geshe himself, and instead offering it to a picture of Geshe. It makes more sense to offer it to the real thing.

Question: If there is some food that one has gone to the store to buy specifically for the purpose of offering it on the altar, what is the position as regards that?

Answer: When make a private offering on your altar of things you buy, when they become a little bit old and you do not want to leave them there anymore, you can eat them, but first you should go through this thought process, before midday of course, thinking that these items do not belong to oneself. The downfall of storing does not occur while you keep the food on the altar, because this is an offering to the Buddha, Dharma and *sangha*, but later when it becomes old and is removed from the altar, you have to go through this process.

The reason that these thirty downfalls are called ལྷོང་ལྷོང་ “abandoning and downfall,” is that with clothing when one has committed the downfall, the item of clothing with which one has committed the downfall has to be put in another place outside of one's own dwelling, and then for one day one has to feel that this is not mine, there is no relationship, it has just gone, and then one needs to confess it. Then the next day you can receive it back and then receive a blessing.

For downfalls involving food, whatever food has been received in that way, you must give it away and then carry out the confession.

Question: In that case, if you give the Namjar away for a day then you are breaking the vow again, is this the case?

Answer: In that case one is receiving a punishment and one does not receive another downfall.

Question: What is the difference between the second and third kind of food, the ones that can be kept for a long time and those that can only be kept for seven days?

Answer: Things can be kept for that duration only if they have received the blessing. Something that falls into the second category are things like tea, and things that fall into the third category are things like honey etc.

If it is necessary to buy a quantity of food, as sometimes it is, the situation being rather different here to that which prevailed in India during the time of Lord Buddha, then what one has to do is to eat what one wishes, and then instead of throwing the food away one can put it away somewhere, but abandoning it with the mind thinking that it is alright if a mouse, a cat, or someone else eats it, it does not belong to me. Then the next day it is all right to start eating the food again if one blesses it first.



## NINETY SOLITARY DOWNFALLS

Next are the Ninety Solitary Downfalls, so-called because there is nothing that has to be rejected when one incurs the downfall. འབའ་ཞིག་པ་ (*ba.shig.pa*)

So now we come to the first group of ten of the Ninety Solitary downfalls.

### 1. Telling the common type of lie.

In general there are four kinds of lie:

1. the kind that falls into the category of Defeats
2. the kind that fall into the Remainders,
3. the kind that falls into the Downfalls, and
4. the kind that falls into the Faults.

Lies that are defeats are with regard to one's spiritual attainment, claiming it to be other than it is. Lies that are remainders are claiming, without any basis or evidence, that a pure monk has committed a defeat. Most of what the world recognizes as lies are this first downfall. An example is when somebody asks you if you are going somewhere and you say, "No, I am not going there." As soon as the other person hears the lie, one receives this downfall.

### 2. Speaking of a *gelong's* fault.

This downfall is finding a fault with a *gelong*. If the motivation is based on the kleshas, i.e., speaking out of anger and the like, and one says that this *gelong* is like this or this, he is hot tempered, complains about *gelong's* to another person, and so on, as soon as these words are heard by another person, the downfall is committed.

Geshe Rinpoche says there is no point in lying in any situation. For example, even though one usually keeps one's dorje and bell secret, and also one's initiations, if someone asks whether you have received a particular initiation or whether you have a dorje and bell, then you should answer truthfully. If however someone asks to see the dorje and bell, or asks for details of the initiation, then you should explain that these are things you never show to people or talk about. On the other hand if someone does not ask you whether you have received a particular initiation, but just out of conceit or to proclaim it to the world, you say that you have received such-and-such an initiation, this is something that is not allowed.

### 3. Trying to divide friendly *gelongs*.

If two *gelongs* are living in harmony, and, in order to divide them, one starts spreading rumors, or telling one *gelong* one thing and the other *gelong* another, as soon someone hears you speak these divisive words, the downfall occurs. It makes no difference whether the *gelongs* actually become divided. By following this rule as set down by the Buddha, all kinds of unwholesome speech naturally stop, and one has excellent results.

### 4. Reviving a settled controversy among the *sangha*.

If two or more *gelongs* were quarreling, and the *sangha* pacified the situation, such that the disputants are living harmoniously again, then if another *gelong* comes along and tries to stir up trouble again, with the intention of creating more conflict, as soon as the words he has spoken are heard, the *gelong* commits this downfall.

### 5. Teaching to a lay woman.

A *gelong* is not allowed to teach a laywoman Dharma she has not heard before; he is not allowed to utter six or more words in this way, if she is unaccompanied. It is a different situation if this is a scholarly woman, one that really has some understanding, learning, and intelligence. But with an ordinary sort of woman as soon as the *gelong* utters six or more words of Dharma she has not heard before, he commits this downfall. The reason for this division is to prevent situations that might lead to sexual intercourse between the *gelong* and the woman. But if the woman is a scholar and has some understanding of Dharma, then if the monk should start to lead the conversation towards sex, the woman would recognize it, would see what was happening, and she would turn away from it. Whereas if she were just a simple person that would more or less believe anything that was said, then wherever this *gelong* would lead her with his conversation, she would go right there, which could lead to misfortune. So this is the reason for this distinction.

However this vow does not preclude or prohibit any teaching that is done with the motivation of compassion to any woman, this is not the point of the vow. This *vinaya* and the Teachings of Buddha are called the Supreme Teaching, the Unsurpassable Teaching, and that is because it is just like a teacher speaking to his disciple, just showing him very clear and beneficial paths: if you do this, this is the result, and so on. By following that path exactly as described it has a tremendously beneficial result.

In response to the question asked about teaching a woman alone, with the motivation of compassion, Geshe thinks that such compassion would be very difficult, more or less forget it. If one had Great Compassion, it might be a different case, but for ourselves, if we can simply follow exactly what is described in the *vinaya*, this will certainly bring the best results, both in this life and future lives.

## **6. Reciting with non-gelongs.**

If a *gelong* recites any portion of teachings of the Buddha, direct or indirect teachings, including things like Lama Chöpa, with persons who do not have full ordination, this downfall is received. The reason for this vow is that if one is reciting scripture at the same time as those of lesser ordination, it is conducive to the feeling that we are all on the same level. So better than reciting all together is for the *gelongs* to do their recitation and then the Getsuls and the others to do their recitation.

But nowadays this vow is not followed. These days we recite the Lama Chöpa together. The reason for this is for the Getsuls and the laymen to be able to accumulate merit, which they do by reciting together with us. If we were to tell them that they are not allowed to recite it with us, they would not be able to handle that, they would not accept that, they would get upset, and since this is the final period of the Buddha's teaching, in general the situation is most degenerate. So in order for people to accumulate merit, with all these things in consideration, it is considered suitable to do nowadays. And like a symbol is the fact that the chant leader is a *gelong*; he starts before everybody else, and this is symbolic of the *gelongs* reciting first. So Geshe Rinpoche considers that this is sufficient, and the fact that in actuality, except for the chant leader, everyone is reciting together is not of great significance.

## **7. Speaking to non-gelongs about a *gelong*'s defeat or remainder.**

This next downfall is when a *gelong* has actually either committed a remainder or a downfall, one of these first two types of downfall, and then another *gelong* feeling dislike toward this one who has committed the downfall, and if he should go and tell of this persons', this *gelong*'s downfall, to a person not having received full admission, then when these words are heard by this other person he commits this downfall. Note this applies only to when a downfall has actually occurred. So for example during the beginning of *sojong*, when the *gelongs* are doing their private confession, then you notice that the Getsuls are not

allowed in at that time, they are only allowed in after this has been done, then when the Pratimoksha Sutra is recited again there comes a point of confession at that, so before this *sutra* is recited then again the Getsuls are sent out. The reason for that is this vow. And so to speak very honestly Geshe Rinpoche says that for those people who somehow become a *gelong*, and they just live by themselves surrounded by laymen, and they would not know this kind of thing about the *vinaya*, the vows, not knowing what it really means to be a *gelong*, what needs to be followed, then his life style is just a preparation for going to hell. So the situation is very different if the *gelong* should know what the commitments are, a great difference in quality with these other *gelongs* who do not; they live together and are able to support each other and follow the precepts as well as possible, then the results from this are tremendously beneficial. So we can see that there is a very great difference between those two situations.

To give an example one might be feeling that one is a very great Dharma practitioner, doing very many preliminaries, prostrations and so forth, doing these practices as a *gelong*, then when you have finished these prostrations etc. go to live with a layman, getting into that scene, then while you are living with them the downfalls you are receiving would be coming like rain in comparison to the merit you are receiving from the prostrations.

So it is much more beneficial if one is doing preliminaries or whatever to be within the community of the *sangha*.

## **8. Needlessly speaking of your attainments to non-gelongs.**

This downfall is speaking about attainments you actually have. It is different from the defeat of lying about having attainments you don't have. Consider the case of someone that has actually attained Samatha or Vipasyana, for example, and that there is a special circumstance to relate this to a layman or anyone who has not received full admission into the *sangha*. It is allowed to do this under certain circumstances. But if he tells anyone who has not received full admission to the *sangha* with a good reason for doing so, as soon as his words are heard, even though they are true, he receives this downfall.

Question: If someone should ask one if one has any attainments, and in fact one has, should one say no?

Answer: This will be understood more easily if Geshe tells the reason why the Buddha gave this downfall. If *gelong* has attained Samatha, for example, and he tells other people and lets it be widely known, then it would be natural for others, who have no way of checking up or verifying this internal attainment, to start saying the *sangha* lies a lot, that this monk does not really have such an attainment; doing so would cause them to accumulate unwholesome karma. To avoid that, a *gelong* is not to speak of his attainments without special need. If another person asks, if there is a special need for it, and one has attained Samatha, then one can say "Yes, I have attained Samatha," but if the person is just asking out of curiosity, then there is no need to answer at all. There is no need to lie; one just does not answer at all.

One must use intelligence in each case to see why the person is asking. If he is asking out of faith, if he really has a purpose, if we see that he is very earnest and will accept the answer, then one should give a truthful answer. However if he is just asking out of idle curiosity, then he probably would not believe the answer anyway. In this case one should say something like, "Whether I have this or that attainment, what does, it matter to you?" and leave it at that.

Geshe was asked about some of the greatest Lamas living today who say that they have no practice at all, have no Bodhicitta, have nothing. Wouldn't it be rather strange, if we did attain Samatha, to announce that when these truly great Lamas say they have no realizations? Geshe replied to this saying "We are not even similar to these great beings, because they, great beings like Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche in the Kadampa Tradition, really look upon

themselves as being the lowest of all beings, the servants of all beings, so their minds are completely pacified, whereas ours are ...

...if one *gelong* pops up, then another one pops up like that (he gestures with his hands) and so on, this really competitive egotistical attitude among us - so we are not in any way similar. So this being the case we should just speak straightforwardly, if we have a practice not to say that we do not, and so on. However if later on we reach a stage where we really feel that we are the least of all creatures, if we—like Drom.ton.pa—could actually carry the boots of other people on our back, or feel ourselves to actually be the servant of all creatures, then it is a different situation. But for the time being, we should speak honestly. So if we have attained samatha and someone asks us if we have and we say no, if we say that we do not have any practice when in fact we do, then we might as well say, if we are asked “Are you a *gelong*?” that we are not. To the question “Do you keep sila?” “No, I do not.” and one could continue like that *ad absurdum*.

We are in a rather peculiar continent, this western land, where if a person out of humility says that he has no practice then everybody thinks that he indeed has no practice, and puts him down. Whereas if a person lies and says that he has a tremendous practice or attainments then he is accorded a lot of reverence. On the one hand it is very stupid and on the other it is very straightforward, very honest.

## 9. Accusing a monastic servant of favoritism.

This one concerns abusing a monastic servant: it refers to the cook or administrator, the treasurer—a person who is acting as a servant of the monastery. If he is doing the best he is capable of doing, and this is recognized, but then a monk, disliking him, accuses him of favoritism and not acting fairly, as soon as these words are heard by someone else, he receives this downfall.

## 10. Despising the *vinaya* during *sojong*, etc.

This one takes place during *sojong* when we are reciting the confession, the first part—going through the threefold repetition. If a *gelong* thinks “What is the point of reciting or concerning ourselves with such minor little vows as these?” he commits this downfall. This downfall can be committed by either the mind alone or by speech. So this vow refers only to the time of these repetitions during *sojong*. It says in the *vinaya sutras* “occasions such as *sojong*,” so this implies that there are other occasions the words of Buddha are being recited.

Question: <unheard>

Answer: By applying the four opponent powers it is true that one can purify the mental imprints, the karma from that so that one does not need to experience suffering in the future. Doing this prevents the vow from becoming degenerated, or more degenerated, but there is a difference between purifying a vow, and purifying the negative karma that has been created by breaking the vow. To restore the vow, the ceremony of going before the *sangha* has to be carried out. Generally it is like that, that is the way the vow is purified, but there is another way, and that is to become a Non-Returner; as soon as one attains this, the vow is purified.

With regard to the previous vow (10), the reason why this applies only during *sojong* and other similar occasions is that this is when the *vinaya* is being emphasized.

Question: Suppose one is in a situation whereby one is walking down a road with woman, a situation that arisen through means out of one’s control, for example, one was just walking, then one was joined by a woman, this kind of thing, then is one allowed to say “Excuse me but for me to walk along the road with you in this manner is against one of my vows,” or should one keep the vows secret in such cases?

Answer: To answer this question, e.g. if there is a great need for the sake of Dharma to go some place with a woman then it would be a different situation, it wouldn't be so bad. Whereas usually when there wasn't a great need then it would be necessary to look ahead to see that if that happened I could be caught in that particular situation and then prevent the situation from arising. Also we should speak of our vows to any who have not received the full admission. So if you get caught in a tight place, where you have already landed in it, and you have to get out of it, then, it is better not to speak of your vows, but to use skillful means. This can be quite easy. For example, if you asked why monks do not eat after noontime, you can say that it makes my stomach heavy, it makes me sleepy, it makes my mind foggy in the morning. There are many reasons, and these are the reasons for the vow in the first place.

In response to the question about teaching Dharma as some of us have had to do and all of us will have to do, in these situations women sometimes come to you with personal problems, and naturally they come alone and ask for advice. If one does not have Great Compassion, as is usually the case, what should one do? Geshe Rinpoche says that this is a little bit different because this is a case where there is a question and answer, and there is a need, and the motivation is not that one wants to get a relationship going, just because a woman has asked a question. So there should not be an adverse result. It is very important to recite the prayer asking permission that was given out a few days ago. One makes prostrations and asks permission from the Buddha to do things that normally fall in the category of downfalls, but only for those for which there is this particular allowance for special circumstances; for some downfalls there is no allowance ever. For example, touching fire, or eating that which is not given, or eating that which has been stored, or reciting the scriptures along with Getsuls, cutting vegetables and so on. By reciting the prayer in the morning downfalls are avoided throughout the day if you should have to engage in one of these activities for one of the two reasons: for the sake of others or for the sake of Dharma.

The way to recite this prayer is to get up in the morning, wash your face, clean your room, and do three prostrations to a representative of the Buddha. Then you squat down and recite the prayer. After reciting it you offer three more prostrations. Without reciting this prayer it is likely that many downfalls occur during the day, whereas by reciting the prayer there will be only a few. So it is very important.

### **11. Destroying viable seeds or growing plants.**

This begins the second group of ten downfalls, and is called the downfall of destroying seeds. This includes seeds such as barley, things like turnips and potatoes, fruit, and includes cutting grass, felling trees, all of these kind of things. If one does not first ask permission (as described above), one receives this downfall by eating or destroying any of these things—taking a hammer and cracking a nut, for example. The *vinaya* is of extreme importance; we don't yet have attainments such as Samatha and Bodhicitta, but the *vinaya* is something that we can apply again and again, right now. It is extremely practical.

### **12. Abusing or slandering a *sangha*-serving *gelong*.**

This downfall involves a monastery servant: the treasurer, the administrator, a cook, etc. This downfall occurs when one accuses such a servant of treating one unfairly, without basis. As soon as someone hears your accusation, the downfall occurs.

### **13. Responding improperly to Dharma advice or questions.**

This involves replying incorrectly to advice given to oneself by another *bhikshu*. Suppose another *gelong* asks you, with faith and respect, if there is any harm in touching fire. If you reply in a nonsensical or unrelated way, like saying that it is very nice weather today, the downfall is incurred. Or suppose another *gelong* comes and asks if it is important to request

permission in the morning, and to this serious question one replies in a nonsensical way; one commits this downfall.

Another way to receive this downfall is to ignore advice regarding your behavior, or to treat it in a nonsensical way. Suppose a *gelong* says to you that you should be careful, because yesterday you broke a particular vow; if you give an reply like “It is nice weather today,” or ignore him, then you commit this downfall.

#### **14. Improperly airing *sangha* mattresses.**

Traditionally there has always been one monk in a monastery who duty it is to look after the mattresses—to air them, to dry them when they become wet, etc. He takes the mattresses outside to do this. But if while they are out there, he must go somewhere else for any reason, he must either collect all the mattresses and put them inside, or he must ask another person to look after them while he is away. They must always be kept, safe. If he goes more than 49 spans (approximately 49 x 2 meters) from the mattresses without putting them away or getting someone else to look after them, he commits this downfall.

#### **15. Not tidying up after using mats in a *sangha* place.**

Traditionally this involved grass or leaf mats used by monk to sit on in temples, rooms, etc. These mats shed bits grass and leaves when they were used, especially when they were lifted up and taken away. Monks were to sweep up after themselves. Not cleaning up the bits of grass and leaves from the mat is this downfall. If a monk has to leave a room in an emergency and has no time to clean up, there is no fault.

The fault is actually committed by moving more than 49 spans away from the place where the mat was.

As Geshe Rinpoche described before, our monastery building and temple over there are abodes or dwellings of the *sangha*; there is a very, very great merit in cleaning such places, and very heavy negative karma in making these places dirty. The negative result is birth in the hell called not the heaviest hell, one of the occasional ones.

#### **16. Evicting a *gelong* out of dislike.**

If one dislikes another *gelong* and evicts him from the dwelling of the *sangha* for that reason, and he goes more than 49 spans from the boundary of the dwelling, then one commits this downfall.

#### **17. Disrespecting *gelong* who arrived before**

This one is committed by a younger *gelong* with regard to an older one (the older one having lived in the dwelling of the *sangha* for a longer period than the younger one). If this newcomer puts down or disdains or makes fun of the older *gelong*, he commits this downfall. The actual vow says that a younger monk must not disdain, make fun etc., orally, an older monk, but of course the same goes the other way around—an elder monk should not abuse a younger one. In general, one should not abuse or disdain anyone.

#### **18. Sitting down forcefully on chair on roof of *sangha* house**

In some of the houses of the *sangha* (in India) the roof is quite thin. They used to be made of grass and such thing. If a *gelong* should sit on the roof of such a house, on a stool or a chair having pointed legs, he can sit on it but he must do so very gently. If he sat down heavily then there would be a danger of the legs of the chair or stool going through the roof and thus damaging the house. So if one has to sit on such roofs one should do it gently.

The rules of the *vinaya* fit very closely together, such that if one truly follows them one avoids all kinds of harmful acts. So this is in the western way of doing things, mechanics and

engineering, etc. In general things are done very precisely here, very precise measurements and everything is fitting together with very great care, thus something very strong and firm is made. So the way we do things is the way the *vinaya* is, very precisely fitting together and thus very strong.

### **19. Handling water, wood, etc., for others, while deliberately ignoring insects, causing them to die**

This involves such things as water or wood or green grass, and is a case in which a *gelong* thinks that there is a likelihood of there being animals in either the water, grass or wood, but then thinking that it doesn't matter anyway if they are harmed, he just casts aside that question. Then when he splashes around in the water, or cuts down a tree, or cuts grass, things like that, as soon as he does such things then whether or not any animals are killed he commits this downfall. The lives of very small insects are very delicate and fragile and it is extremely easy to give them harm, even by just touching them, so this vow is to prevent that harm being given.

Question: Should we avoid antibiotics?

Answer: These should not be taken in any case. If one is a *bodhisattva* cherishing others more than oneself, then it could be a different situation, but for us there is no case in which we should take any kind of medicine that could be of harm to any type of insect or worm or anything, any kind of organism in the body. The motivation is very poor, taking the lives of others for one's own sake, so this should not be done.

In general if one can find any other way of solving the problem besides killing these organisms then this should be done. If one has a really lethal kind of complaint which is probably going to kill one, and one really has a very strong determination to practise Dharma, and the motivation would be to practice Dharma, still if one is going to kill insects in order to practise Dharma then it is a very peculiar situation. So if one can avoid it then this is best.

Geshe is giving this advice totally from the point of view of Dharma. The word རྩ་ does not just mean just insect, it means organism in the body, so if for one's happiness one is killing these organisms then there is no way to call that a Dharma activity. However there can be things like tuberculosis, this is caused by organisms in the body, and the treatment that is given kills those organisms, so if one was not to take that treatment then there is a possibility of death, so in these cases Geshe Rinpoche says that if one has really renounced samsara, renounced attachment, then it would really be better not to take any medicine, but to live out the consequences, and even if one dies at least it was done in accordance with Dharma. If one is not able to do that then one has to figure out what one has to do for oneself, Geshe cannot give advice saying that for your own sake you should take the lives' of others. But in general if one is sick and one takes some medicine and has no idea that it will kill anything in the body, simply taking it to get well, and as a result some organisms are killed but without one's motivation or knowledge, then this downfall is not committed, an evil action is not committed. So what this present vow is concerned with is that if you think there are insects in the water or grass or whatever, but you think that whether they are killed or not does not make any difference and with that motivation go on and do whatever you wanted to with the water, grass, etc., then this downfall is committed. But if this motivation is lacking, if one has no idea that anything will be killed, then it is just like taking a walk down the road, one has no intention of killing but it is very likely that during the course of the walk some insects will be killed. So it would be similar in that there would not be this karma of killing incurred.

### **20. Laying more than 3 layers of bricks in one day**

This involves building housing using bricks. If you are using bricks that have been baked, and thus made very hard like rock, it is allowed to lay up to four levels of bricks in one day.

But if the bricks have not been baked, and are not very firm, then one can lay no more than three levels in one day. The reason for that is that although the house would be finished quickly, it would not be very strong, and might collapse, injuring others or oneself.

## **21. Teaching to *gelongma* without appointment**

Sometimes monks are sent to teach Dharma to *bhikshunis*; there is no fault in this. But if a monk, of his own volition, goes to nuns specifically to teach dharma, he commits this downfall of teaching dharma to *bhikshunis* without being appointed. This does not apply to a *gelong* who has attained miraculous powers, as these were probably attained as a result of having achieved Samatha and Vipasyana, and he would not have the problem of lust in teaching the nuns. But for an ordinary *gelong* if he were to go and teach without being appointed, there would be a danger of complications arising. This actual downfall would not occur nowadays because there are not any *bhikshunis*, but still there are female novices and although the actual downfall would not occur, there would occur a fault instead. But obviously where monks are appointed to teach language, etc. around the monastery, then there would be no fault.

## **22. Teaching to *gelongma* after sunset**

Occasionally *gelongs* are asked to give Dharma instruction to a number of *bhikshunis* for an all night session, and if this is done, it would obviously be done in a temple or similar place, so in that case there is no fault, but in another case if a *gelong* is appointed to teach Dharma to a number of *bhikshunis* in a place where there are such things as thieves and robbers or other dangers, and if the *gelong* teaches to the *bhikshunis* after the sun goes down, he commits this downfall. The reason for this is that the *bhikshunis* would have to return home after dark, and if there are robbers and so forth, there would be a danger of them being robbed, molested and so on.

## **23. Saying *gelong* teaches *gelongma* for food, etc.**

This is a case where a *gelong* teaches dharma to *gelongmas*, and does so with the motivation of compassion, with the motivation of being of service to others. Another *gelong* then accuses the first, saying that he is just teaching because he is hoping to get some kind of reward—food or something like that. As soon as another person hears this accusation, the accusing *bhikshu* commits this downfall.

The reason for this vow is that if one *gelong* defames another publicly, then other people believe the accusation and spread it among themselves, increasing the harmful actions. So in order to avoid this, the vow was made.

## **24. Ordering or making robe for *gelongma***

This involves making clothing for a *bhikshuni* who has the material to make it for herself. The downfall is committed when the clothing is completed, and the *bhikshuni* is not a relative of the *gelong*. However, if the *bhikshuni* really does not know how to make the clothing, and is very poor, then Geshe thinks there is probably no downfall,

## **25. Giving your robe to *gelongma***

This downfall occurs when one gives clothing to a *bhikshuni* with the motivation of getting to know her better, of establishing a relationship. It also occurs when one gives robes to a *bhikshuni* when she does not need any.

It does not occur when one gives robes to a *bhikshuni* who needs them (assuming the motivation is proper).



This and other vows concerning interactions with *bhikshunis* address the natural tendency to develop relationships with them out of attachment. So in order to prevent this from happening in the first place—before a relationship can be formed—the Buddha established these precepts. For example, if one wants to stop the flow of a river, one goes up to the source of the river and put a dam there.

Question: Why do these vows not include lay women as well. It seems that there is even more danger possible with them?

Answer: More will be said about this later, but for the present, Geshe thinks having an improper relationship with a *bhikshuni* results in downfalls not only for himself, but also for her. Having an improper relationship with a laywoman results only in downfall for the *gelong*, but not for the woman.

## 26. Going more than one km on road with *gelongma*

This downfall involves walking alone with a *bhikshuni*, without a need for doing so, just because one or the other enjoys the company. The downfall occurs when you have walked steadily a distance of 500 armspans (about 3,000 feet or one kilometer) without resting. However, there is no downfall if you walk less than a kilometer, rest for a while, and then continue walking.

Question: Does this apply to only *bhikshunis* or to all women?

Answer: This downfall specifically refers to *bhikshunis*. However if one does the same thing with other women, there is not the direct downfall from this vow, but still there is a fault. This vow does not apply when there is a real need for the monk and nun to walk together. For example, the nun needs an escort to walk through a dangerous place. But apart from such exceptional cases, the motivation for walking together will probably be attachment, and the downfall will occur.

The primary concern of a *bhikshu* is to keep very pure spiritual discipline. With regards to keeping the precepts and a pure spiritual discipline, the situations in which we are likely to receive the most faults or downfalls is with women. In order to avoid these, we have these vows relating to women.

There is another reason these vows relate so often to *bhikshunis*. As you know, Buddha gave these vows in regard to specific instances that occurred during his time in India. While Buddha was living with six *gelongs*, they continually engaged in one improper act after another. (These six monks are said to be manifestations of Arhats, and they were doing these things for a specific purpose.) Anyway, there were these six monks doing wrong things, and there were also twelve *bhikshunis* doing improper acts. Then they started doing wrong things together. So Lord Buddha made many of these vows as a result of that conduct.

Question: What is exactly meant by a fault (ཉེས་བྱས་) as opposed to a downfall (ལྷོང་བ་)?

Answer: When we speak of a ལྷོང་བ་, this means an actual downfall. When we speak of a ཉེས་བྱས་, this means something not quite so heavy; it is still negative karma, but not quite as heavy as an actual downfall. For example, a thief decides to go out and steal something. When he actually takes the object he commits the downfall of stealing. While he is walking along the path on the way to the place where he will steal the object, with the intention of stealing it, he commits a fault.

## 27. Going more than one km in boat with *gelongma*

This is similar to the above downfall—once again one travels with a *bhikshuni* without any particular need. However if there is a need—for example, to escort a *bhikshuni*—then there is no fault. This vow was made, Geshe thinks, at the time the six *bhikshus* and twelve *bhikshunis* were just cruising around for fun.

## **28. Sitting in solitude with a woman**

Sitting in solitude means sitting in a place that is covered or concealed, either by walls or maybe in a forest. This vow applies not only to *bhikshunis*, but also to woman in general. The downfall is committed when the *bhikshu* comes within one span of the woman in a secluded or concealed place. The downfall does not occur if the woman is a relative. This vow came about because a laywoman was sitting in such a situation with a *bhikshu*, and Buddha said that this was improper.

The definition of solitude is a place where no other people are present; this downfall can be incurred in a monastery, not just in a wilderness. If a monk is in a room where there is no one else but a woman, and he sits within one armspan of her, he commits this downfall. If one is in a room studying and a woman comes in, closes the door and sits down next to one, it is not necessary to flee; one just has to use intelligence in that situation. There is no need for a monk and a woman to cuddle up close just because they are in the same room; there is enough room for both to do their tasks.

## **29. Standing in solitude with a *gelongma***

This downfall is the same as the previous one, except one stands within one span of the woman, instead of sitting by her. Again, this takes place without any particular need (other than attachment) and the *bhikshuni* is not a relative.

Question: What about being in a train or a car with a woman?

Answer: In the case of a train there is no concealment because there are windows, and unless the blinds are pulled down there is no downfall.

In the case of a car, if one has to go somewhere and cannot drive oneself, there is a need because the woman has to be the driver (sometimes). As regards sleeping compartments on a long train journey the train company quite often puts a men and women in the same compartment. In such cases, as there is no other place one can sleep, there is no downfall, because one obviously needs to be in that compartment.

## **30. Accepting offerings made because *gelongma* exaggerated your qualities**

This involves a *bhikshuni* who is not a relative and laymen who are not relatives. For example, if a *bhikshuni* goes to the home of a layman and exaggerates the qualities of a particular *bhikshu*, saying that he should be offered a very fine meal and given very nice things, because he has incredible attainments, whereas in fact he does not have them, and if the householder agrees to that and then comes to the house and takes the food that is offered, as soon as he takes it he commits this downfall.

## **31. Eating more than once in one day with different families**

If there is a need for a *bhikshu* to eat frequently there is no downfall. For example, if the *bhikshu* is working or travelling, he needs to eat more. If he is on vacation, say, after the Summer Rains Retreat, he is allowed to eat more frequently. At other times, without any particular reason or special need, if in one day a *bhikshu* should be invited by one householder to come to eat, and after doing so he also goes to another householder who has invited him for food and eats again, twice in the same day, he commits this downfall. After

eating at the house of one householder, then going by invitation to another householder, one is not allowed to eat there; still one can accept a small gift or something of that nature.

### **32. Eating 2 consecutive meals in extremist's home**

This involves going to the house of an extremist (non-Buddhist) patron, eating a meal, staying overnight, and having a second meal at this same house. Eating the second meal constitutes this downfall. The reason for this is that one's beliefs are contradictory to those of the host; coming in to contact with him presents a danger of deterioration of one's practice. There are a variety of ways such problems could arise; these are eliminated by this precept. For example, if Thubten Donyö were the patron inviting Geshe Rinpoche, a *gelong*, to have a meal at his house and he has to stay there one day, and then he was to stay there overnight and again have food the next morning, then it is possible that the friends of Thubten Donyö would look down on him, thinking, "He was Hindu but now he is acting as a patron for a Buddhist monk." So it would create problems for him and also for the *gelong* that came because his practice could degenerate. Geshe says he is not sure what the *vinaya* says about staying at homes of non-Buddhists who are related to oneself, but he thinks that we can act safely as though this downfall only applied to non-related persons. The reason for this is that the vow was designed to prevent any disputes from arising between the *bhikshu* and the patron, so if it is one's parents for example, there would be somewhat less danger of such disputes arising.

### **33. Eating more than 1 large, 2 medium or 3 small bowls full**

This precept involves a householder who is not a relative, and who also does not gladly give monk food or whatever. If the *bhikshu* has a small bowl, he is allowed to take three bowls of food, but if he takes more than that, or more than one large bowl full, or two medium bowls full, then he commits this downfall. People who do not eat an evening meal might have a large appetite at lunch, such that they eat the food of two or three people. In these cases it is a little bit special and so maybe they can eat more than the specified amount.

### **34. Eating after having stopped eating for the day**

This precept involves eating after the noonday meal. If a *gelong* eats something like a sweet in the afternoon or evening, he commits this downfall. However in the time of famine, when there is not enough food, if a *bhikshu* should eat after lunch time, after having said that he has finished, then he does not commit this downfall.

### **35. Offering food to gelong who has stopped eating for the day**

The noonday meal is finished when some sort of ceremony—prayers, for example—are done at the end of the meal. If a monk offers leftover food to another monk after this ceremony, the monk who offers the food incurs this downfall, regardless whether the other monk accepts the food.

### **36. Four or more gelongas eating separately from sangha**

If four or more *gelongas* take their food and eat together somewhere away from the rest of the *sangha*, this downfall is incurred. This has been prohibited because if people divide into national (or other) groups within the *sangha*, this is really causing a division within the *sangha*, a feeling of separateness within the *sangha*. In the case of monks in retreat, although there is nothing mentioned about this in the *vinaya*, Geshe thinks that these monks eat

separately for the benefit of their practice, in order to avoid the confusion of eating in a big group. Geshe doubts there is be a downfall in this case.

### 37. Eating between noon and dawn

A monk is allowed to eat between morning and the time the sun is overhead—midday. From midday until the first light of the following morning a *gelong* is not allowed to take food. This applies not only to solid foods, but things like milk and curd (although if one has some milk in a cup of tea) there is no downfall. If one takes a drink of milk, then this downfall is incurred.

There are exceptions for special cases, which involve harm to the body, or to one's health in general. For example, Geshe Rinpoche has been instructed by his doctor to eat six times a day for the sake of his health, and so he does this. Geshe thinks that one is allowed to eat until about one o'clock. He is not sure how correct or incorrect it is to eat after this time (if one has not yet had lunch). There is no permission that is granted to eat after noontime.

It is permissible to put butter in one's tea after midday. This is because if one were to take a lump of butter and heat it in a frying pan, it would just slowly disappear; there would be nothing left at the end. Whereas if one were to do the same with milk, one would have lump of something left at the end. Also if one were to do various things with milk one could end up with such things as cheese; so milk has that solid element to it and that is why it is not permissible to take it in any other than a very diluted form after noon.

### 38. Eating stored food

Stored food is that which has been blessed, and kept for longer than the prescribed period—in other words, stored. Any *gelong* who eats such food, whether he originally prepared it or not, incurs this fault.

There are two subsidiary faults (ཉེས་བྱས་) related to this vow to this vow.

If a person such as a Getsul gives the food to the *gelong*, then there is no fault. But if for a reason other than that of eating, a *gelong* should touch food belonging to the *sangha*, he commits this fault. If that food is, in turn, eaten by another *gelong*, that *gelong* commits the second of these subsidiary faults. When we touch food for the sake of eating it, we do not incur any fault.

If one wants to keep food from being destroyed and one puts in a safe place, then there is no fault. If one does the morning recitation one avoids this fault, since it is included in request for permission.

Geshe says that all the Teachings that Lord Buddha gave are extremely practical; there is no practice that Buddha gave that cannot be followed. So all of the vows are things that can be followed. For example, eating after noon, if there is a need for this (one's health might suffer if one did not eat) then there is no problem, Buddha has given special permission in such cases.

For a *gelong* to cook and cut raw vegetables in a kitchen that has not been blessed incurs a fault for him, but in a place like this, where there are many people using the kitchen, it is not possible to give it a blessing, so in this case it is necessary to ask permission, which is included in the morning recitation. There is also a fault in taking raw food and keeping it in a kitchen that has not been blessed (keeping it overnight), over the duration of one whole day. So if one does not put the raw vegetables' etc. in a place that has been blessed and then cooks it, then this fault is incurred. But of course reciting the prayer for permission in the morning excuses one from this transgression.

The reason for these complicated vows is as follows. The way that the Buddha prescribed is that the monk should have his little hut, then he has a little separate place, his རྩ་ཁར་, his food cooking place, and this place receives a blessing; at the prescribed time he makes his food there and eats it before noon, it is all done very simply and straightforwardly without any complication. On the other hand if he did not do that and just lived his life in all different directions, in different places at different times, then as regards food there would be a greater danger of him eating after noon and many more complications would arise, he would have a lot more things to think about. In order to avoid that Buddha gave these vows.

### **39. Eating food not given by non-gelong**

This has been described already; if one who has not received full admission gives the food to a *gelong* then this is the proper way of doing it, of receiving food. On the other hand if he just goes ahead and eats it, without it being given, then each time he swallows the food he receives the downfall. So if the person is very hungry with each swallow he receives a downfall, so in a full meal he could incur 50 or 60 downfalls.

Geshe has already described how we can avoid this downfall, by considering the food before oneself as belonging to no-one, just like the food of the Northern Continent which is completely without an owner. So having thought in that way one avoids this downfall. Thus there is no necessity to commit that downfall if one simply uses one's mind. If one does not, then well, that is that. Also, if there is no need to eat after noon then with each swallow one commits a downfall.

### **40. Begging for special food**

This downfall involves a layman who is not a relative, and who does not gladly give monks food. If a *gelong* has great desire for food and goes to this layman, and urges him very strongly to give him some food—maybe some curd or milk or some other especially delicious food—then as soon as he receives the food he has begged for he commits this downfall.

### **41. Handling water, wood, etc., for your own purpose, while deliberately ignoring insects, causing them to die**

As it says in the Getsul *sojong* recitation there are four kinds of killing: killing humans, killing animals, killing insects etc that live in water, and making use of some substance that kills animal.

The fourth way of killing is the one dealt with in this precept, the first of this next group of ten. This involves water or some such thing, when you know that there are animals in the water, but you think that, "It does not matter, I will use it anyway. So if one uses it and in this process some animal is killed then this downfall occurs. So when we receive full admission, we are given a strainer, indicating that, if we are using water we should carefully look at it, and if necessary use the strainer in order to prevent harm to any creature there.

The more extensive *vinaya* Scriptures describes the means of checking out the water. First one looks on the surface and then one looks in the middle, and then the bottom. When one is quite certain that there are no insects or animals in it, then one can take it. Likewise with such things as grass (like the dry grass one gets after cutting grass), or wood where there probably are insects or organisms, if one should burn it or act in any way in which the animals and insects are likely to be harmed, this is a downfall. Geshe Rinpoche says that we should carefully check any food that we are washing, and if one is reasonably certain that one has taken out the creatures that are there, then it is all right to use it there is no fault. However if one does not look, or is casual about it, not really caring and then goes ahead and uses it, then it would be better just to forget about it. If one has any qualms about serving or

preparing salad, thinking that one will inevitably be killing, then if it affects one like this it is better not to use such foods.

As far as water is concerned, here in the West it is pretty much alright as we take it from a treated source so there is not much chance of there being any living creatures in it, whereas in India when Buddha made these precepts, and also in Tibet, when people used water it was taken either from a well or running water was used, and especially in a well it would just be filled with insects, so using such water would be very dangerous to the animals living in it.

#### **42. Sitting near people having sex**

This involves a couple preparing to have sexual intercourse. If, during this preparation, a *gelong* should sit down and watch, he commits this downfall. There is no reason for him to be there at all.

#### **43. Standing near people having sex**

The previous one was with a *gelong* sitting whereas this one is related to a *gelong* standing in similar circumstances.

#### **44. Without purpose, feeding non-Buddhist naked ascetic**

This is about giving food to an extremist, or a non-Buddhist *sadhu*, someone like that. If this other person, regardless whether male or female, is very poor, or ill, then there is no fault in giving this person food or something of that nature. Also, if the non-Buddhist is thinking that Buddhist monks are very bad, and that Buddhism is very bad, and then out of compassion one should offer him food, trying to help him out of that idea, then again there is no fault. Whereas, if for no particular reason, with no real need, if a *gelong* gives food to the non-buddhist, he commit this downfall.

#### **45. Uninvited, going to watch military activities**

If a monk leaves the monastery grounds, uninvited, to watch military maneuvers, one receives this downfall. A military maneuver involves eight or more soldiers marching, playing bugles and drums, practicing, or actually fighting. The *vinaya* Scriptures define the boundary of monastery grounds as one armspan (six feet, two meters) from the outermost buildings of the monastery.

However, if one is on his way somewhere and happens to pass through a group of soldiers, there is no fault. Also, if one going somewhere and sees some military activities going on, and then stops to watch, enjoying the spectacle, then although this is not this particular downfall, it is still a fault.

#### **46. Needlessly staying with army more than 2 days**

If one goes into a group of soldiers, and stays overnight, then at the first light in the morning, one commits this downfall. However if there is a need to remain, if a President or a General says that one must go, and it really becomes a critical situation, then a monk is allowed to go, and he can stay for a duration of two days with the soldiers, but on the morning of the third day he commits this downfall.

#### **47. Touching weapons, etc., inciting war preparations or going to watch a war, even if invited by king**

This downfall involves going to a training camp for soldiers. If a *gelong* goes to such a place, looking around, inspecting this and that, looking at guns, seeing what the training is

like, he commits this downfall. As far as war films, westerns, detective stories, and other thriller films are concerned (this is in response to a question), although the actual downfall does not occur (because real thing is not happening), there is still a fault. So we are not allowed to look at that kind of thing. However if one is just walking along the road and sees a billboard advertising some film then there is no fault incurred just by looking at it. As far as books go, if they are beneficial to the mind then they are alright, but one should avoid reading just any kind of magazine or newspaper or book that might come to hand. The same is true of receiving, Dharma, when one is desiring a Teaching, one should choose very carefully the Dharma one hears, and not just honoring any kind of lama that comes along, or likewise, just reading any kind of Dharma, having respect for all different types of Dharma, because some of them are obviously incorrect. So if one is just random in what one absorbs in terms of reading matter or hearing Dharma and so on, then one attains what is called a distorted intelligence, or useless intelligence. So this is saying that by developing one's mind in the Dharma, then there comes a certain power of intelligence. However if one spreads oneself about reading this and that, then the power that was gained becomes lost, becomes useless. So that is one thing to be avoided. Geshe Rinpoche says he is not suggesting that we not receive Teachings from anyone besides him, but he did say that we should check up on what we absorb. So that would be one kind of fault, making one's mind useless by such a means

...

...and then the second type: if one hears the Dharma and puts it into practice, then the Dharma can be truly of benefit; whereas if one receives teachings and more and more teachings, just listening to the teachings with a feeling of "What is he going to say now?" or "Maybe I can hear something new now?" just listening like that out of curiosity, then after a time one thinks "This is no good because I have already heard this before, I have already heard that." So to such a person no matter how much Dharma is taught to him it is of no benefit whatever. So it is said that in the world, even those that have committed very great harm and very great evil, like a soldier that has done a lot of killing, if one should teach them little bit of Dharma, then it can definitely be of benefit to their minds. However to a person who has received a lot of teaching but not made use of it, and is just listening around to hear something new, then to him no matter how much teaching is given, it is of no benefit whatever. If for example one takes a piece of leather and works it very much with butter or oil, then gradually it becomes soft and very workable; whereas the leather that is used as a pouch for butter no matter how much butter is put in it, although the butter is right there in the pouch, the leather does not become soft and flexible; it remains just the way it is. This is an example given to illustrate how the person who makes use of the Dharma is like the leather that is worked with butter, the piece of leather that can be used; whereas the person just listening to everything out of curiosity, his mind is like the piece of leather holding the butter. For example when Geshe Rinpoche was giving a course a few years ago in Rolle, there was an old woman, and as Geshe was giving the teaching on the nature of actions and their results (karma) and in the teaching the old woman came up to him and said that she knew all of this already, probably she had just heard it before. So this is the second great fault to avoid.

So this a special danger in the West because for one thing before coming in contact with the Dharma many of us have done a lot of studies, maybe a dozen or more years, and during this time all the studying, reading, etc. has been just for the sake of studying, not for the sake of practice. So then it would be very easy to carry on a similar kind of attitude right into the study of Dharma. So that would be one danger, and the other danger would be that since the Buddha-dharma is just newly flourishing, starting out here in the west, there is a danger of as soon as we hear someone say he is a Lama, someone coming here with a great name, we say that he must be very great, and go and listen to what he has to say with great reverence, without making any investigation, just because he is there. So just like a cow jumping around every time a fly lands on its rump, without regard to the type of fly or whatever, some people

go for Dharma in a similar way. So to be honest this is a danger, but this we should think out for ourselves, and if we actually think that Geshe is not actually meaning what he is saying and we think something else is better then we should go ahead and do that. If we think that Geshe's teaching is quite straightforward, that he means exactly what he says, then we should think about that for ourselves as well.

So there is an axiom in Tibet which says that looking at all different kinds of scriptures or books or treatises leads to this kind of useless intelligence, So if this is true about reading all kind of different things about Dharma then it would be even more true for reading things like books on the Second World War or all different types of magazines and things like that.

#### **48. Striking a gelong**

This downfall is committed by one *bhikshu* striking another with his fist or a stick, or throwing something like a rock or dirt. If a *gelong* throws even a blade of grass at another *gelong* out of anger, the first *gelong* receives this downfall. (Translator Jhampa Kelsang says afterwards that he is not sure whether a blade of grass is meant, or a clump of it.) Also if a clump of grass, with earth on it in which there are some little stones, is thrown there are those who say that a downfall is incurred for every stone in the clump.

There are two types of faults that could be involved: the first one was just throwing a clump of grass. If it does not bring any harm to his body, it does not receive this first kind of fault, but simply because Buddha has forbidden this act, there is this second type of fault.

#### **49. Threatening to strike a gelong**

This downfall concerns physically threatening to strike another *gelong*. Gen has seen in the movies, and on television, when a person is about to strike another, his jaw comes up, his face grimaces, his fist is brought up ready, for action. Although a punch is not actually thrown, just by this gesture this downfall is incurred. (Geshe mentioned that 'the physical gestures of westerners are different from those of Tibetans in a similar mood.) Threatening actions are prohibited because they are a preparation for giving harm to another, and since the *vinaya* or spiritual discipline is for the sake of preventing harm to others in all situations, at all times, such actions are prohibited.

#### **50. Concealing defeat or remainder of other gelong**

This downfall occurs when a *gelong* knows for certain that another *gelong* has committed either a defeat (ཕྱི་མེད་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་) or one of the thirteen perverted actions (ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་); it is his responsibility to tell the other *gelong* (assuming the other *gelong* does not know he has done it) that he has committed this downfall, that there are disadvantages in this, and that it should be confessed and purified. If the *gelong* does not do that, but just with an evil or unwholesome state of mind says that "That is his business," then he commits this downfall. It is his responsibility; he must tell the other.

In general one must tell another *gelong* that he has broken one of these vows with the motivation of being of benefit to him, but on the other hand if this *gelong* would not listen to what one says, if he would be likely to start bickering or quarreling or maybe fighting with him and starting quarrels within the *sangha* in general, then this would be a special reason for not telling him. So in such cases, even if the *gelong* does not tell the other about the broken precept, then there is no fault.

#### **51. Asking householder, who invited other gelong, not to feed him**

The first of the next group of ten is the downfall of cutting out a person's food. A *bhikshu* must eat solid, substantial food before noon, so if one *gelong* should dislike another and with hatred or dislike toward him say today you should not have any of that kind of food,



although really he should have it, as soon as another person hears him say this, a downfall occurs.

So we have the morning recitation requesting permission and by reciting this it eliminates some of the downfalls occurring throughout the day, but for other ones it does not make any effect at all, the downfall still occurs. So it is up to us to reflect for which ones there is permission, and for which ones there is not.

For example, there is eating without having been given and received; if one recites this request in the morning --- Geshe says that there are three different interpretations that one can put on this request. As Geshe has already described, one recites this in the morning requesting permission for the day; others say that this is not sufficient, that one has to recite this each time one has to transgress a vow, and the third one says that all that has to be done is that one just has to mentally think of asking permission at the time of having to engage in such activity. So to give one example, eating without something having been given and received; if one actually makes the request, not merely reciting something from the mouth in the morning, but actually makes the request, and then at noon takes the meal, then even though there is not the actual taking and giving, the downfall is avoided. Whereas even if one recites this in the morning, but then when one is eating one thinks that this is really a trivial vow, and why did Buddha ever complicate our lives, then if one eats the food with that kind of motivation, which is unwholesome, then, due to the force of this attitude, the power of asking for permission to avoid the downfall is eliminated. In other words, the downfall occurs anyway because of the motivation.

## 52. Touching fire

Here, fire refers to ordinary fire, not things like electricity. The downfall occurs if, without asking permission, one touches fire oneself, or causes someone else to do so.

Question: Although one may think that everything that was spoken by the Buddha is perfect, it seems that it is still possible to think that some of the vows are a little bit impractical in the twentieth century; the help they are able to give is very relative to the situation. So if one is thinking like this and not just disregarding the occasional vow because of the difficulty of keeping it, but due to one doubting the benefit in this day and age, is this allowable?

Answer: Gen says that the answer has already been given. When we received the Getsul and *gelong* vows, there were five conditions for taking the vows. One was that we should have the motivation that these vows can be kept at any time, not just at one time, then at other times not being sure, and also in any place, not feeling that I can only keep these vows when in the presence of a Lama, but I am not too sure if I can if I am in another place, e.g., in the West. If one does not have such a motivation then one does not receive the vows. Thus it is important not to think this way.

Geshe says that such things as lighting a match is not touching fire, so that is no problem. When one offers candles or incense to the Three Jewels there is no fault even if we do touch the flame, because that is a special situation. This can be understood by knowing the reason for the vow, which is that this human body has to be protected, and if one is putting the body into flame, then this harms the body, and in order to prevent that, this precept was made. Geshe also says that there has to be the motivation to touch fire for the downfall to occur. If one's body should come into contact with fire by accident, there is no downfall.

So once again the thought might come up, "What is the point of such little vows as that, they do not really mean anything?" But if one checks up one finds that all of these vows and the Teachings of the Buddha in general—especially the vows—are intended to cut off at the source all actions which are likely to be of harm to either oneself or others, so one should be careful of such thoughts. So once again it is very important to be careful on this and not to disdain any of the precepts or vows. For example, as many of us have heard there was this

Amandala, which was the name of a naga who had a tree growing out of the top of its head, thus causing excruciating pain. This situation was caused because Amandala had formerly been a *bhikshu*, living in a cave and meditating, and on the pathway to the cave there was a tree or bush which always brushed against him as he went in and out of the cave. The thought came to him that the precept forbidding a *bhikshu* to cut grass did not really have any meaning. He thought, “Why did Buddha ever say this; it does not mean anything, it is completely trivial.” And so with that motivation he tore out the bush and threw it away. When he died he was born as a Naga with a tree growing out of his head—this was the result. So it is very important not to disdain or disregard the vows. Nagarjuna stated that in worldly matters, if one commits some mistake or breaks the law, one can go to a government official, make offerings to him, petition him, in order to avoid punishment. Whereas with the Dharma, if one breaks precepts or goes against the Dharma, there is no way except for confessing, disclosing the downfall or the fault that has been committed. If one fails to do this, then there is no doubt that the fruit from that karma will ripen.

Question: How does one harm others by cutting grass, burning seeds, etc.?

Answer: The large *vinaya* scriptures discuss this in some detail. It is possible that insects live in plants and trees, and harm can come to them if we cut grass and trees. Besides that, monks should be practicing Dharma, not going around cutting down trees and so forth; these are unnecessary concerns. In addition to these two reasons, if laymen see monks engaging in such work, they might think that monks are no different from them, and lead to disrespect the *sangha*. However one should not apply similar reasoning with regard to cleaning the monastery and temple, thinking that these are also unnecessary concerns; such jobs should be done.

### **53. Withdrawing support for *sangha* decision**

This one involves a number of *sangha* activities—*sojong*, and others as well. If a *bhikshu* is not able to come to the *sojong* for some reason, he makes a request to the *sangha*, asking to be excused from *sojong* (or whatever other activity), giving his reasons, but saying that although he is unable to attend the activity, he completely supports it. Thus one exhibits one's desire to take part even though one is unable to do so. But if later on the monk who asked to be excused should feel some anger toward the other monks, and withdraws his statement of support for the activity, then he commits this downfall.

### **54. Sleeping in same room as non-gelong more than 3 nights**

This sleeping in the same room with someone who has not received the full admission to the *sangha*—a getsul or layman—and this involves sleeping within one armspan. A *gelong* is allowed to do this for two nights, but on the first light of the morning of the third night, this downfall is received. The point of this vow is to avoid, from the side of the *gelong*, disrespect toward his own vows—feeling himself to be the same as the getsul or layperson. It also avoids disrespect of the Getsul or layperson toward the *gelong*. For a Getsul if he or she should sleep within one span of a layman for more than two nights, then he also commits this downfall, whereas for the *gelong* it applies to anyone who has not received full ordination. There is also a fault if a *gelong* goes to sleep in a lighted room because he is afraid of the dark. If one is going to sleep with just a little candle or a light on the altar as an offering then there is no fault. But if a light is left on because the *gelong* is afraid to be in a darkened room then there is a fault (but no downfall).

### **55. Not giving up negative views after five requests**

The Buddha has said that the breaking of any of the five kinds of precepts is a hindrance to the attainment of enlightenment. Suppose a *gelong* says that, in general, the vows are good, but the minor vows do not seem very significant. Another *gelong* then points out that such an attitude is improper, that the Buddha set forth these precepts because they are important, and that the *gelong* should abandon that view and recognize the importance of all the vows. If the *gelong* does not agree to abandon his incorrect attitude after this appeal, the whole *sangha* meets, and then, as has been described in relation to other vows, they ask the offending *gelong* to reconsider. If, after five such requests, he does not discard his wrong thinking, he commits this downfall.

#### **56. Socializing with evicted *gelong***

If the *gelong* still persists in this view, the *sangha* evicts him from the place of the *sangha*. If the *gelong* recognizes his fault, he then comes before to the *sangha*, apologizes, admits his mistake, asks for the other monks to be patient with him; the *sangha* then accepts his apology and he comes back into the place of the *sangha*. However if he (the offending *gelong*) does not recant, and another *gelong* supports him, this *gelong* receives the same downfall as soon as he voices his support. Geshe is not sure in this last case whether there has to be the process of appeal by the *sangha*, the fivefold appeal, or not. We can check this out for ourselves in the commentary to the Pratimoksha Sutra.

#### **57. Socializing with evicted getsul**

This is similar to the last one except it relates to a Getsul or a group of them. If *gelong* gives either food or teaching to Getsuls who have been evicted, he commits this downfall.

#### **58. Wearing robes of unpermitted color**

This refers to the wearing of un-dyed clothing. In general there are three colors that are suitable for the *sangha* to wear: red, yellow and blue. If a *gelong* should wear colors like white—wearing a white or a black chögö for example—then he commits this downfall. In some of the *vinaya sutras* it says that white and black are also suitable. This refers to only one of the three classes of articles of a *gelong*. One class is the three essential robes. A second class is the extra robes allowed a *gelong*. For these two classes of articles, only these three colors are suitable. For the third class—completely secondary articles like a blanket, rug, etc—things that can be used by anyone—these can be white or black, it does not matter.

#### **59. Fondling others' gold, etc.**

There are two types of downfall with regard to touching precious materials. We have already covered the first one, the ལྷ་ཕྱོད་. The second downfall is this one, the ལྷ་ལྷ་མོ་. This one refers to precious things like gold, silver, and diamonds belonging to other people. If one handles these for the sake of making offerings or out of real need then there is no downfall. But if one touching them out of attachment, wanting to see what they are like, this is a downfall.

#### **60. Bathing more than once a fortnight**

This regards washing or bathing too frequently. If one bathes either half of the body—the upper or lower halves—more than once each fortnight, one incurs this downfall. However, during the three hottest months, or if one has some kind of illness for which bathing helps, one can bathe more frequently. It says in the *sutras* that in extremely hot places (like India), where it gets so hot it is almost as though there are flames burning under the earth, then it is

allowed to bathe every day, but in places where there is not such great heat then one should not bathe more than once each fortnight.

This vow was made with respect toward those who have a lot of attachment toward the body, and who bathe in order to smell nice, or because they really enjoy it. So the vow was to prevent that kind of activity. Taking a shower is more or less the same thing, one washes the entire body. However, if there is a good reason for bathing / taking a shower, i.e. if the body smells bad, or if by not bathing it causes a lot of hindrances to one's meditation, study, or practice, then Gen thinks that one may ask permission, and then it would not be so wrong.

It also states in the *sutras* that if one is bathing, whether on one's own or with others, one should wear bathing trunks or shorts of some kind, some kind of covering. On this point it is very easy for the thought to come that if no one can see one then it would not matter whether one had any covering on or not. Gen speaks from his own experience on this point. At one time when he was in Lucknow, it was extremely hot and bathing was essential. Gen had a shower room (together with some other monks) which was completely private, and Gen did not have any swimming trunks. When he went into a shower cubicle he was able to lock the door, so he was completely alone. His room was next to Khen Rinpoche, the former abbot of Namgyal Dratsang Monastery. He told Rinpoche that while bathing he did not wear anything, he was completely naked, but that he thought it was all right because it was so private. Rinpoche then told him that it did not matter how private it was, Buddha had already prohibited that. He said that even if people could not see one, one should wear trunks.

### **61. Killing an animal**

The first downfall in this next group of ten is the downfall of killing an animal. One recognizes that something is an animal has the motivation to kill it and then does so.

Question: The fact that this vow is placed in the same group as other vows like not eating in the evening and wearing trunks while bathing seems to be very strange. It seems to me that killing an animal is of a much heavier nature than the examples I have mentioned. As it is in the same group does it mean that the severity is the same as other vows in the group?

Answer: Although these vows are placed in the category of 90 solitary downfalls, nevertheless there is a wide variety of heaviness of karmic results within this category. It is true that the fully ripened karmic result for killing an animal is heavier than for, say, eating at night. Just because vows are included in the group of solitary downfalls it does not mean that they have the same heaviness of result."

### **62. Causing a *gelong* to regret virtue**

This downfall occurs when one *gelong*—disliking another, and with a motivation of hatred—causes the other to regret some virtuous act. This can be done by saying things like when you received your ordination you did not really receive the vows, or telling the other monk that he has committed a defeat when in fact he has not. As soon as one says such things, with the intention of causing regret in the other, this downfall is incurred.

### **63. Tickling a *gelong***

Tickling can be done anywhere on the body, and as soon as it is done, one collects this downfall. This vow came about due to the actions of the previously mentioned six *gelongs* who were going around committing one improper act after another; they tickled each other a lot. This action naturally caused a degeneration of faith in some laymen. So some other *gelongs* went to Lord Buddha and told him what was happening. Lord Buddha said that such activity was not suitable for a *gelong*.

Later when we study the more extensive *vinaya sutras* we will find instance after instance when monks came to the Buddha asking if a particular activity was allowed. Sometimes the Buddha said "No," and sometimes he said "Yes."

#### **64. Playing in water**

This involves water coming up to the waist or higher. If it only comes up to the knees this downfall is not committed. Any sort of playing around, swimming, etc. in water above the waist results in this downfall.

Gen thinks that being in water above is only be allowed in exceptional cases such as when one has a fever where it is necessary to cool off. However if one wishes to swim because one likes the cool refreshing feeling of the water, Gen does not think that there is special permission for that. Gen thinks that maybe swimming would not be quite so bad if it were done in a private place where one would not be seen by others, although Gen can not say that there is be nothing wrong with it. However in a public pool, where there are be a lot of women who are be virtually naked, and a lot of men in the same state, all swimming together, playing around, Gen says that if the Buddha were to see this happening, with *gelongs* taking part in it, it would be almost as if he had a nervous breakdown<sup>3</sup> on seeing it.

The reason Geshe said that we could go swimming last year was because we were living in Schwendi in very close quarters, doing a lot of studying in a very dense atmosphere in Schwendi, and this being the case it would be very easy for the mind to get really depressed and small. So in order to release this energy, to let it come out, become relaxed, Gen said that at times we could go swimming. However Geshe cannot say that there is no fault in going swimming because the Buddha has said that it is not a suitable activity for monks.

#### **65. Passing the night alone with a woman**

This involves sleeping in close proximity (one armspan) to a woman, without another person being present. Gen thinks that this refers to a woman who is not a relative, but the text is not clear on that point. If one is travelling on a plane, for instance, then one might not have any choice about sleeping within one span of a woman, but there are other persons on the plane, and to collect this downfall there have to be no other persons present. The reason for the vow is to avoid any danger of sexual intercourse and that would not be very likely on an airplane.

#### **66. Trying to scare a *gelong***

If, with a harmful motivation, one wishes to scare another *gelong*, just by trying to do so, whether or not the other *gelong* is actually frightened, one commits this downfall. To give an example would be some thing like creeping around in a mask trying to scare people. This can also be done by sounds and screeches. The reason for this vow is that to scare someone is to harm that person, so to avoid that there is this precept. The downfall can also be incurred by ordering another person to scare a *gelong*.

#### **67. Hiding an ordained one's requisites**

This involves one of the essential articles of another *gelong*, and is done with either the motivation of just joking around or with anger and so forth. If one does this, although it does not fall into the category of taking that which is not given, this downfall occurs.

#### **68. Unpermitted use of robe or bowl you gave to *gelong***

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<sup>3</sup> རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་:

This is the situation where one *gelong* gives an article—a chögö, for instance—to another *gelong*, and later, without permission, goes and uses the article he has given; he commits this downfall. If this action is done out of compassion, or with the knowledge that the article may be lost or destroyed, these are special situations for which there is no downfall.

#### 69. Baselessly accusing *gelong* of remainder

This precept is similar to the one of accusing a *gelong* of committing a defeat, except this one refers to a remainder,<sup>4</sup> and is done without any evidence, just doing it because one dislikes the monk.

#### 70. Going more than one km alone with a woman

The final one in this group of ten is walking along the path with a woman and without another male companion. It applies in situations where there is no particular need for doing so, and involves going beyond one རྩུ་ཁྲི་ (approximately one kilometer) in the company of this woman. The woman is not a relative.

Question: Why is it that Lord Buddha decided that the vows of a monk, and those of a *gelong* in particular, should not be known by the person wishing to take them before he does in fact take them?

Answer: The reason for this secrecy concerning the *gelong* vows—vows which are exclusive to the *bhikshu*—is that if they were available for anyone to look at, then we would have people looking at them casually, thinking "this is a weird vow, that one is strange," and by doing so, they would be accumulating all kinds of negative karma; all kinds of unwholesome thoughts could arise in their minds. The same is true for Tantric vows; they should only be looked at by those who are suitable to do so. However the *bodhisattva* vows, which are primarily based on cherishing others more than oneself, when other people see these, harmful thoughts do not arise so much; thus they can be shown to others.

Question: Actually, in asking the last question, I was thinking mainly of those persons who are about to take the *gelong* vows. Why are not they allowed to see them until after the ordination?

Answer: Gen says that if we were allowed to see the vows before the ordination then we might be thinking, "I would like to take that one, but maybe not that one; that one seems out of date," and so on. Such thinking is of course not wholesome; when one decides to take the vows of a *gelong*, one wishes to enter fully into the *sangha*, to fully commit oneself to the path of liberation, and thus one follows the precepts that were laid down by Lord Buddha for the success of this aspiration. It is not for us with our deluded minds to decide how we are going to follow the path; we put our faith in the wisdom of an enlightened being instead."

#### 71. Going more than one km with a thief

This next one begins the eighth group of ten, and involves accompanying a layman, whom one recognizes as a thief, more than one kilometer on a path, without any particular need to do so. There are a couple of reasons for this precept. One is the possibility of the thoughts or attitudes of the thief rubbing off onto the *bhikshu*, but the most important reason is that if householders were to see a *bhikshu* accompanying a thief, it might cause a degeneration of their faith. The reason that this vow refers only to laymen who are thieves is that there are very few monks who are thieves; so by mentioning laymen the vast majority of thieves are included.

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<sup>4</sup> རྩུ་ཁྲི་མེད་

## 72. Giving full ordination to someone under twenty

This downfall is received by giving of full ordination to someone who is not yet twenty years old. The person giving the ordination must know that the person to whom he is giving ordination is less than twenty years old for the downfall to occur.

## 73. Digging earth

Without need, digging in soil. The amount of soil is four finger widths, and is actually on the ground, not just some that is piled up on some rocks or similar. So if a *gelong* digs to a depth of more than four finger widths in the ground he commits this downfall. However if one recites the permission request in the morning, this is included in it.

Question: How would En define "need" in this case?

Answer: There are two types of need: one is if the activity is for the sake of Dharma—if one digs in soil for some reason that is of benefit to the Dharma, then there is no downfall—and the second if it is for the sake of others. If one digs in the ground with either of these two motivations, and having asked permission with the morning prayer, then there is no downfall.

There are a couple of reasons for this precept. One is that there are many small animals and other organisms living in the soil which could be harmed or have their homes destroyed by digging in the soil. The second is that the monk becomes involved in many householder-type activities, which could lead to loss of faith of householders who see monks digging in the ground.

## 74. Staying in layman's house longer than invited or more than four months

This downfall involves a *bhikshu* being a guest in a layman's home. Suppose a layman invites a *bhikshu* to his for holidays or something like that. If the layman has given a time limit for this stay, the *gelong* is allowed to stay only for that specified time, no longer. If the layman has not given a time limit for the stay, the *bhikshu* is allowed to stay up to four months. If he stays any longer, he commits this downfall. Gen says that if staying at the house of a layman is detrimental to one's Dharma practice—if all one is getting is food and no other benefit—then one should not stay anyway.

## 75. Refusing advice on vows from gelong

If reasonably learned reasonably learned should give another *gelong* advice on vows, something like "without asking permission you should not touch fire," or "without asking permission you should not dig in the ground," and the *bhikshu* receiving the advice says that he does not need that advice, that he does not consider the other *gelong* to be particularly learned, that he will go to another more learned *gelong* for his advice, the second *gelong* commits this downfall.

## 76. Eavesdropping for sake of quarrel

Suppose two *gelongs* have been quarreling, and then the argument is finished. But one of the *gelongs* holds a bit of resentment. This one then sees the other *gelong* talking to some companions. With a motivation of resentment, he goes up and eavesdrops on them in order to hear what they are saying. By doing this, he commits this downfall.

## 77. Leaving sangha activity without informing another gelong

This involves a particular Dharma activity, like *sojong*, an activity in which the *sangha* come together as a group. It can be either physical or verbal activity. When the activity has begun, if a monk has to leave, he should tell another *gelong* why he is leaving before he leaves. If he leaves without saying anything, he commits this downfall. The reason for this

precept is that when someone leaves a gathering of *sangha*, they might wonder why he left. By tell one of the *gelongs* why he left, this could not occur.

### 78. Acting contrary to authoritative advice

Suppose a *gelong* has been asked by the *sangha* to do certain task. Such a request must have three features:

- it must be in accordance with the Teachings of Buddha,
- it is requested by the *sangha*,
- the person is able to perform the task.

If all three features are present, the *bhikshu* should do as he has been asked. If he refuses, he commits this downfall of disrespect.

### 79. Drinking alcohol

This includes any kind of alcohol, even the grain or fruit from which the alcohol has been taken. If a *gelong* drinks even so much as one drop of these things, he commits this downfall.

For some vows like eating without something having been given and received, or digging in the ground and other things like that, there are cases when there is permission to do so. But drinking alcohol is never permitted, and it is said that one should desist from drinking alcohol even at the cost of one's life. Gen says that with regard to food that has been prepared with, say, wine, that if the food has been well cooked, then the alcohol will have evaporated, and thus there is no fault in eating it. We have to check up for ourselves on this sort of point at the time, bearing in mind the importance of this vow.

When we offer Tsog, we all take a little drop of alcohol; although it smells like whisky, the alcohol has been transformed into ambrosia. Gen says that this is actually a very delicate case, if when we are taking this little drop of liquid and we think that this is actually ambrosia, and then take it, that is one case, however if one were to take a glass of whisky and think that this is milk and then drink the whiskey like that, of course one stills gets the downfall of drinking whiskey. So this is a little bit delicate. As regards the inner offering that we are doing each day in Lama Chöpa, if a *gelong* is doing this with liquid then it should be done with black tea. But during Tsog, it is said that there must be alcohol given at it, and that this is transformed into ambrosia and taken like that. So it is important to think about this during the recitation, thinking that it is actually being transformed into ambrosia. If one does not do this and takes the liquid thinking that this is alcohol then it gets to be difficult.

### 80. Going to a layman's place between noon and dawn without telling a *sangha* member

The downfall of going to the village without telling anyone: this applies between midday and dawn. During this period, if a *gelong* should go to the village or city without telling anyone, he commits this downfall. The reason for the precept is that in a city there are a lot of people and a lot of distractions; thus there is a greater danger of a *gelong's* precepts being broken. Furthermore, if someone goes to the village without telling anyone, there probably a reason why he didn't want to tell anyone. Put these two reasons together and you have the reason for the precept.

When Anila Ansermet was here there were monks going back and forth between the monastery and her place. Gen does not think there was any fault with that, because the place she was living was more or less like our own monastery. Also, if one just goes for a walk, even as far as Mont Pelerin, there is no need to ask permission, even after lunch.

This vow also includes going a layman's house. Gen says that when one is at the house of one's parents, which is already a householders abode, going from there to the village is like from a householders abode to a householders abode, not like going from a monastery to a



house. In such cases there is no one to tell anyway. So the best thing one can do is to come back to the monastery soon.

### **81. Leaving patron without instructions to prepare food timely for other monks / Visiting more than 4 householders between noon and dawn**

This downfall involves a *gelong* who has a friendly relationship with a householder. If, based on this friendship, the householder should invite a monk or a group of monks for a meal, then the *gelong* must tell the householder to have the meal ready by midday, because monks cannot eat after midday. But if the *gelong* does not tell the householder, but leaves the house to do other errands, as soon as he goes beyond the vicinity of the house, he commits this downfall. The reason for the precept is that the householder would not be likely to know that *gelongs* may not eat after midday. If the *gelong* did not expressly tell the householder this, it would likely that the *sangha* would have to eat after midday, and this would damage their vows.

This is similar to a previous precept, where the *sangha* has been invited to someone's house for a meal. If one *gelong* needs to leave this gathering in order to do some other business, he should tell one of the *gelongs* that he has to go and gives him reasons for doing so. But if he leaves without telling anyone, he commits a downfall.

### **82. Going to a king's palace between sunset and dawn**

This downfall involves going to the palace of a king, who is a layman, and who has a wife, a queen, and it involves going after lunch. So were two types of kings in India. One type was a monk king, and the other type was a householder king. This vow involves the latter type. If one visits the palace without the king's request, and stays there until the next morning, at the first light of dawn, one receives this downfall. However if the king has given an invitation or demanded that the monk come to the palace, there is no downfall.

### **83. Belittling precepts during recitation of Pratimoksha Sutra**

This is a downfall of disdaining one's precepts or vows. It involves maybe the vow of tickling, or any vows that one considers to be of minor significance. Actually, this precept refers to all of the vows one has taken; it is just that it is more likely we will disdain the seemingly minor ones if we are going to disdain any at all. So if one knows that a precept has been given by the Buddha, it is written in the *sutras*, but one feels that this precept is of such little significance that it is not even worth talking about, not even worth knowing, if one feels this kind of disdain for the precepts in question saying that one does not know about that vow, that it can be looked into later, just putting it off into the future, as soon as one says such a thing, one commits this downfall. This precept was given because a *gelong* did exactly as was described above, then some of the other *gelongs* went to the Buddha and spoke of this and thus Buddha said that this is not to be done, that if one does this then one commits a downfall.

### **84. Making or ordering a needle case**

This downfall involves a person having a needle—doing tailor work. It is alright to have and use a needle. But if a *gelong* should make a special sort of holder for his needle, say made out of horn, bone or metal, then he commits this downfall. The reason for this precept is that a *gelong* should not be involved in too many activities; if he wants to put his needle somewhere he can just stick it into a piece of cloth. A *gelong* should be spending his time practicing Dharma, not getting involved in all kinds of jobs.

Gen says that we new monks might have some funny ideas about that, thinking that if we already have a needle holder as described then we have to throw it away. Gen says that this is not necessary. If somebody gives one or if we already have one, then we are free to use it; there is no fault.

### 85. Having bed or seat with legs higher than 1 cubit

Having a bed higher than the prescribed limit—one cubit—is a downfall.

### 86. Covering *sangha* bed with cotton lint

This downfall occurs if one takes something like a dirty rug into a house where *sangha* live. If one casts off bits of dust etc. on articles belonging to the *sangha*, one receives this downfall. The reason for this precept is that articles belonging to the *sangha* are sacred, holy, not because of the things themselves, but because the *sangha* is sacred and these things belong to the *sangha*.

### 87. Having oversize dingwa

Whether one makes one's own dingwa<sup>5</sup> or has somebody else do it, it should not be too big. The prescribed measurements are three cubits in length, two cubits plus eighteen finger widths in width. Gen says that the length is three cubits because if one sleeps with a pillow, then the length of the body that is not on the pillow is about three cubits. Thus one uses the dingwa to sleep on.

Dingwas that have already been made for the *sangha* can be left as they are because we did not know the dimensions. But if possible, it is best to make all new ones with exactly the right dimensions, bearing in mind that it will vary for each person because of the varying length of a cubit for each person (forearm, from the elbow to the fingertips). However in the present case where they are being made for all the *sangha*, it is not necessary to make each one different.

### 88. Having oversize skin eruption cloth

Monks have a special cloth to absorb issue from rashes of the skin. The cloth can be 6 cubits long and three cubits wide. If it is larger than that, one commits this downfall.

### 89. Having oversize rain cloth

The rain cloth can be up to nine cubits long and three cubits, six finger widths wide.

### 90. Having robes bigger than or as big as Buddha's robes

This downfall is having a chögö of the same dimensions as that of Buddha Shakyamuni. Although Buddha Shakyamuni was a man, his body was very large; so naturally his chögö was in proportion to the dimensions of his own body—in other words, very large. So if one does not have a body as large as that of Buddha Shakyamuni, but has a chögö as large as his, one commits this downfall.

That concludes the ninety solitary downfalls.

Question: In the downfall that refers to walking with a known thief, does that refer specifically to thieves or does it include all socially undesirable persons?

Answer: The actual downfall in such a case would not occur if one accompanied, say, someone like a dope dealer, because the Buddha never specifically cited that example. But

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<sup>5</sup> གདིང་བ་

still there would be a fault arising from it. Gen thinks that this vow is particularly relevant in the East, but maybe not so much here, because when lay people see a monk walking peacefully down the street or maybe debating, they think that this is very strange; but when they see people smoking dope, they do not think that strange at all. So because of the attitudes of the lay persons in the West, Gen does not think that such action as described would cause a degeneration of their faith. If, however, we should go to a place like Sri Lanka or Thailand, or somewhere like that, then we must be very careful because who you associate with is very important in those places.

As Gen was saying sometime ago it is very important to have a sense of shame and consideration for others, but as these are not qualities that are particularly cherished in the West, then Gen thinks that we do not have to be so aware of what others might think of us.

## **THE FOUR INDIVIDUALLY CONFESSED DOWNFALLS**

### **1. Eating food begged from *gelongma* in or near village or on road**

If a *bhikshu* begs food from a *bhikshuni* who is not a relative, and receives it from her, and then eats it in a city or at a crossroads, he commits this downfall.

### **2. Eating food served in wrong order because of *gelongma* without correcting her**

This downfall occurs in a case where a *bhikshuni* serving the food in someone's house, or is the hostess to a number of *gelongs* who have been invited there to eat. She may be very friendly with one of the *bhikshus* and sets out special food for him, or feeds him first although he is not the senior monk in the company. In this case her manner of distribution of food to the monks is incorrect.

So if this *bhikshu* who is her favorite should say, "No, I cannot accept this. Please give it to the senior monk," and then the food is passed out in the order of seniority, then this *bhikshu* has no fault. But if he sits there very quietly and takes the food out of turn, before the other monks receive theirs, when eats that food he commits this downfall.

### **3. Eating food begged from certain householder against *sangha* ruling**

Consider the situation where a patron of the *sangha* has been continually making offerings to them, but recently has become very poor. Out of compassion, the *sangha* would agree amongst themselves that they must not go to this patron begging for food until he is in good financial shape again. So, if knowing this, a *bhikshu* quietly goes off and begs from this person who is experiencing hard times, as soon as the *bhikshu* receives something from the patron, he receives this downfall.

### **4. Begging and eating food in unchecked forest**

Now consider a case where there is a forest about a kilometer from a village or settlement, and the *sangha* wants to go and eat in this forest. A *bhikshu* is dispatched to see if there is any danger there, like from tigers or lions or leopards, bears, spirits, and especially from thieves and bandits. If he finds that there is no danger, the *sangha* may then go there and eat. But if this checking is not done, and they go anyway and eat in the forest, when they sit down and eat, they commit this downfall.

The reason for this precept is that in India during the Buddha's time, most of the bandits got most of their plunder from monks, who, if bandit or robber came up and started to rob them, would just sit there and wait until he had finished. They would not do anything, not fight him or anything. Whereas if robbers went to the house of a layman and tried to rob him, the layman would most likely retaliate; obviously this was more dangerous for the thief than robbing *bhikshus*. Gen says that thieves would not stand a chance against today's kind of

*bhikshus*. Gen stresses that when the *bhikshus* sit down and eat in a forest that has not been checked out, as soon as they begin to eat, they all receive this downfall.

Gen says that of the five kinds of precepts for the *gelong* he has now been through four of them, and the final set of 112 faults will be described later.

These vows are extremely specific, very detailed, which makes it difficult to put them all into practice. It is perhaps not possible at the moment. The reasons for this are that, on one hand, we live in an environment with many unfavorable circumstances, because our kleshas and disturbances are so strong. This makes it very difficult for us to follow every kind of practice that Buddha prescribed, as *bhikshus* used to do. But if one practices to the best of one's ability, this has an extremely great benefit. The reason for this was described by the Buddha himself. He said that when the Dharma is strongly flourishing, and a *bhikshu* were to follow all of these vows, even down to the most subtle ones, day and night for his whole lifetime, of course there would be benefit from that.

However on the other hand when the world situation has become very degenerate, and the Dharma is at the point of being lost altogether, when it is in its final stages, then if a *bhikshu* should just for a very, very short time, five minutes or half an hour, or just for one day, follow his vows, then this has even greater benefit. To give an example: if there were a very wealthy person, and one gave some offerings to this person, because he is already affluent he would not value the gift so highly because he already has so much. Whereas later if this person should become extremely poor, become a beggar, become very ill, right on the verge of death, if one were to come along and give him a little bit of food, then he would be extremely grateful because it would be so greatly beneficial to him. In the same way, when the Buddha-dharma was flourishing strongly, this is similar to the rich man. Whereas nowadays, when the Dharma is right on the point of disappearing altogether, this is like the sick man on the verge of death; just going to *sojong* once is like giving this person a small amount of food. It has very great benefit.

The Buddha Maitreya made the promise that for a person who becomes a *gelong* during this period of Buddha Shakyamuni, if this person protects his vows as well as he is able, he will enter the *sangha* when Maitreya appears in India, and at that time he will become an Arhat.

Gen says that having heard all these teachings (on the vows) that we should not become very tight-minded or depressed, straining very hard to be able to hold each tiny little thing. We should not do this, although in the short term it might be possible, because it certainly would not be over a long period of time. So rather than be like this, Gen says that we should try and be relaxed, and consider ourselves very fortunate that we have come into contact with the Dharma, that we have become *gelongs*, and to meditate on this and keep a cheerful outlook. Then on that basis, to follow our precepts as well as we are able, with a long-term attitude.

Gen stresses again that we should be relaxed and cheerful in our practice. For example, in reference to vows such as when bathing in the bath tub, that is alright because if one checks the depth of the water it does not come up to the waist, and then at other times if one is feeling very depressed and morose, then if one wants to listen to Bob Dylan or something like that, with headphones, then this is alright, if it really is for the sake of lifting the heaviness of the mind, to help put the mind in a better state. However Gen stresses the necessity to recite the prayer requesting permission each morning.

Then, regarding when we go to our parent's home, if our parents ask us very forcefully to come home, we should go home, because many of us have been away for a long time, and we do not wish to make our parents unhappy. So go home, and do one's best at following the

vows, and then come back soon, because staying in one's parents home is rather like staying in a fire. That is to say, that wherever one touches it, it burns.

Question: What if one's parents prefer that he not wear robes at home, and eat with them at night. If one does this, is it a complete downfall?

Answer: Gen says that the actual downfall would not occur, but there would be a fault. This is why Gen said that going home is tantamount to sitting in a fire, because it is harmful. But still you have to do it, because if you did not do it—eating at night and things—your parents might get very upset. In that case it is not so bad as the actual downfall.

Gen says that our present situation is very good, but that if we have to go home, we should be very careful. For example once when Rechung was with his Guru Milarepa, he became very insistent that he had to go home and see his parents, and because he was so insistent, Milarepa told him to go ahead, but warned him that it was likely he would be bit by a dog. What Milarepa meant was that Rechung would encounter some problems with a woman. So Rechung went home, and he indeed did meet a woman, and they did not get along very well. She started to get very angry towards him. One day the woman was serving some soup; she had a big pot of boiling soup and was serving it with a big wooden ladle. While serving the soup she hit Rechung over the head with it. The ladle happened to be full of soup, and of course the soup went all over him. Then Rechung said "Up until now I have received many initiations (འདུལ་ཁྲིའི་), but never before with a ladle. And I have worn many adornments (during initiations), but never before adornments of vegetables."

So now we have gained full admission into the *sangha*, and although people might not give us much respect, nevertheless, to such beings as Devas and other creatures that have heightened awareness, clairvoyance, a *gelong* is an object of homage or devotion, and so this should be remembered.